

## The Crowd Mind:

# The Archival Legacy of the Payne Fund Studies' *Movies and Conduct* (1933)

By Christina Petersen

In November 1932, *McCall's Magazine* began its third and final installment of a series reporting on the "far-reaching influence of motion pictures on the sleep, health and conduct of America's children" with the worrisome tale of sixteen-year-old Clarabelle, who lately had become "occasionally subject to strange attacks" or "seizures."<sup>1</sup> According to author Henry James Forman,

She spends an interminable time in front of her mirror and then trails languidly to dinner with her hair, which once fell in disordered small-girl curls about her face, brushed severely back from her forehead. Her voice, which had been a shade raucous until now, is carefully modulated, even faintly guttural. Clarabelle, wrapped in the nebulous clouds of her own thoughts, takes small part in the dinner-table conversation. She eats with astonishing restraint and finally, in that same curiously guttural voice, she begs to be excused and trails upstairs again.<sup>2</sup>

Forman quickly followed this litany of symptoms with a snap diagnosis, assuring readers, "Actually, there is nothing basically wrong with Clarabelle. She has merely been to see Greta Garbo at the local motion picture theater."<sup>3</sup> Indeed Clarabelle's plight was much like that of her fourteen-year-old brother, Jonathan, who "becomes abnormally tough after witnessing the homicidal activities of Jimmy Cagney or Edward G. Robinson."<sup>4</sup> In Forman's view, in both cases, these adolescents displayed a pathological inclination to imitate what they had seen at the movies, altering their conduct long after the film had ended.

While written, it seems, with tongue firmly in cheek, Forman's article, "Molded by the Movies," reported on the findings of the real social scientific phenomenon – the first attempts to study empirically the effects of the cinema on America's young – known as the Payne Fund Studies, which began in 1926 and culminated with the publication of seven volumes in 1933 and an eighth in 1935. As Mark Lynn Anderson and Lee Grieveson have discussed, the Payne Fund Studies were prompted by and fueled popular concerns about the susceptibility of America's youth to motion pictures and the issue of social control that they engendered.<sup>5</sup> To this end, Forman mined much evidence about the negative influence of motion pictures from University of Chicago sociologist Herbert Blumer's monograph, *Movies and Conduct* (1933). Blumer reported the results of eighteen hundred surveys from young factory and office workers, high school and college students about their experiences as the first generation to grow up with the new mass medium of cinema. *Movies and Conduct* reported that motion pictures served as a major imitative influence on adolescents like Clarabelle and Jonathan in both their conduct and worldview, with no distinction paid to race, class, or gender. This proved most disturbing, as Forman highlighted for the *McCalls* readership, as it indicated that middle-class, white, native-born American young people were equally susceptible to the vivid images on the screen as lower class, immigrant, and non-white moviegoers. Class, race, and birth no longer proved to be an inoculation against the mass contagion of motion pictures for the susceptible spectator.

My interest in the Payne Fund Studies lies here, in their role, and particularly that of Blumer's study, in reflecting and shaping the contemporary conception of what I have termed the "youth spectator" in the American mass cultural imaginary.<sup>6</sup> Youth spectatorship, as conceptualized by *Movies and Conduct*, includes both the conduct and activities of adolescent moviegoers in Blumer's study as well as a subject position characterized by a mimetic engagement with the cinematic experience that could transform an otherwise normal adolescent, or worse, a rational adult, into a member of a mindless crowd. Yet, as I will discuss, new archival findings demonstrate that youth spectatorship as characterized by *Movies and Conduct* originally included a mode of sophisticated consumption that stemmed

from the pleasures of abandoning oneself to the vagaries of the crowd.

### **One of the Crowd**

In 1929, University of Chicago graduate, faculty member, and professional football player Herbert Blumer began the study that would come to be known as *Movies and Conduct* at the University of Chicago. Blumer took the reins from colleague and pioneering Chicago sociologist Robert Park with the aim to measure qualitatively the effects of the cinema on the conduct of children and adolescents. In this way, Blumer's research differed markedly from the more quantitatively-inclined studies that measured young people's physiological reactions to motion pictures, such as Wendell Dysinger and Christian Ruckmick's *The Emotional Responses of Children to the Motion Picture Situation* (1933) or Samuel Renshaw, Vernon Miller, and Dorothy Marquis' *Children's Sleep* (1933). Instead, Blumer's study, following Park's ideas, was interested in how film helped to create "conceptions of the self" that could undermine the traditional influences of home, family, and community. In fact, Park had been especially interested in whether Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, both undergraduates at the University of Chicago, could have been influenced by movies to murder fourteen-year-old Bobby Franks.<sup>7</sup>

How did Blumer undertake his research and how did it differ from others in the Payne Fund series? From the first, Blumer's interest, unlike several of his fellow researchers, was in the influence of motion pictures on adolescents as well as children.<sup>8</sup> In his preface to *Movies and Conduct*, Blumer identified what he termed the problem of exploring the "intangible character" of social behavior through "customary methods of study used in social and psychological science."<sup>9</sup> He therefore "dispensed with sophisticated techniques," instead asking his teenaged and young adult participants "to relate or write as carefully as possible their experiences with motion pictures."<sup>10</sup> Blumer therefore situated his ethnographic approach interstitially between two previous types of inquiries into the influence of cinema on youth conduct – those which collected "the opinions of people on the supposed effects of motion pictures" and those which "sought to ascertain the influence of motion pictures under experimental and control situations."<sup>11</sup> According to Blumer, his method of collecting what he termed "motion picture life histories" or "movie autobiographies" for analysis differed from these previous approaches by downplaying the opinion of the subjects themselves in favor of "accounts of actual incidents, episodes, and experiences with motion pictures."<sup>12</sup> His goal was to collect this qualitative data and then analyze it for convergent experiences in order to draw conclusions about the general influence of motion pictures on youthful conduct.

Indeed Blumer's findings were fascinating in their uniformity. Based on accounts purportedly written by 634 students from two universities, 481 students from four colleges and junior colleges, 583 high students, 67 young office workers, and 58 young factory workers, Blumer argued that while children emulated what they saw at the movies, their mimicry was on the order of impersonation rather than imitation, as they put on and took off the guise of cop, robber, cowboy, or Indian as easily as an article of clothing.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, childhood impersonation held no long-term consequences. However, adolescents' mimetic engagement with the cinema, like that of Forman's likely fictional Clarabelle and Jonathan, was more alarming as these young people, in the midst of the most malleable stage of their lives, could be influenced to base their wholesale real world conduct, rather than instances of make-believe play, on what they experienced at this age.<sup>14</sup> The table of contents of *Movies and Conduct* demonstrates how Blumer laid all of this out neatly (Fig. 1), first detailing the relationship between impersonation and children's play and then adolescents' imitation of fashion, mannerisms, and "love techniques" on display at the movies. A chapter on daydreaming and fantasy follows, and then a four-chapter discussion of the more disconcerting phenomenon that Blumer termed "emotional possession."<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 2)

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**Fig. 2 Table of Contents of Movies and Conduct, p. xiv**

According to Blumer, "emotional possession" was marked by a spectator's loss of self-control and critical point of view. A film could possess its spectator through its address to emotions such as fear and terror, sorrow and pathos, love and passion, and thrill and excitement.<sup>16</sup> During emotional possession, "impulses which are ordinarily restrained are strongly stimulated" as "the individual identifies himself so thoroughly with the plot or loses himself so much in the picture that he is carried away from the usual trend of conduct."<sup>17</sup> Particularly in the case of fright, Blumer located emotional possession as the "arrest of reflective judgment." He then described this phenomenon:

To have induced emotional possession is a mark of the effectiveness of dramatic art. This is precisely what the dramatist endeavors to achieve to grip the observer and to gain control over him so that he becomes malleable to the touch of what is presented. This is probably also what the movie-goer seeks: a picture which has a "kick" to it, one that literally jolts him out of himself, one that figuratively pierces his shell, dissolves his existing feelings and attitudes, and sets his impulses and imagery in a new direction.<sup>18</sup>

In emotional possession then, Blumer identified the cinema as a vehicle for suggestion – becoming "malleable to the touch of what is presented." Yet in addition to serving as a cause for anxiety, this malleability also seems to have served as a major impetus for moviegoing in general. Blumer writes almost presciently in the vein of Walter Benjamin's thoughts on the cinema as both the adult and adolescent spectator alike sought out film for its ability to "pierce his shell," and jolt him out of himself.<sup>19</sup> Yet while the first half of this statement suggests reason for concern, the second half appears to locate positive as well as negative potential in cinema's ability to "dissolve" one's "existing feelings and attitudes. As we have seen, however, the negative became the prevalent popular face of Blumer's study in Forman's *McCalls'* article and in Forman's popular write-up of the studies, *Our Movie Made Children*.

As other scholars have noted, the reasons for this focus on the negative aspects of emotional possession had much to do with the intellectual context of the term.<sup>20</sup> In fact, Blumer's argument about emotional possession was only novel in that it applied the central tenets of nineteenth-century crowd theory to the twentieth-century phenomenon of the cinema. As detailed in *Movies and Conduct*, the

concept of emotional possession closely followed French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon's notion of "emotional contagion" made popular in his bestseller, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895). In Le Bon's formulation, an otherwise rational individual caught up in a crowd could suddenly find him or herself "a barbarian – that is, a creature acting by instinct . . . induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests and his best known habits."<sup>21</sup> Le Bon further saw susceptibility to the emotions of those in a crowd as not simply a regression to barbarism but a feminization and infantilization as well, as he claimed that women and children represented the most impressionable demographics of modern society.<sup>22</sup> Blumer's colleague and former teacher, Robert Park, later refined Le Bon's idea to produce his own conception of what he termed "circular reaction," in which the response of one individual to an emotional stimulus reproduced that of another in the crowd in a seemingly endless loop of affective reinforcement and mimetic desire. By contrast, Park opposed circular reaction to what he termed "interpretative interaction," in which individuals' responses were formed not directly upon contact with a stimulus but only after a reasoned and critical discussion of it.<sup>23</sup> Blumer reworked this idea into the concept of "emotional detachment" in the ninth chapter of *Movies and Conduct*.

In this way, Blumer's academic inquiry into collective psychology at the cinema tapped into an existing discourse on the state of life in modernity<sup>24</sup> and subsequently bolstered the arguments of those who looked to criticize film's influence on America's youth. While Blumer concluded on a somewhat ambivalent note that "the motion pictures are a genuine educational institution" that could prompt the young toward good or ill,<sup>25</sup> Forman stated definitively for the *McCalls* readership that the Payne Fund Studies "demonstrated effectively that excessive movie-going is harmful."<sup>26</sup> In Forman's view, Blumer's conclusions were "perhaps . . . the most valuable among the many submitted" for offering specific details on this problem, particularly in emotional detachment's greater potential to combat the harmful effects of the cinema than censorship.<sup>27</sup> As an archive of the mass cultural conceptions surrounding the relationship between cinema and youth in this era, Blumer's study and its popular dissemination thus becomes central to our understanding of the concept of the youth spectator as signifying both actual adolescent moviegoers *and* a state of naïve consumption. Indeed when Forman mobilized Blumer's concept of emotional possession in *McCalls*, he reported that at the cinema, "certain children, *as well as adults*, are aroused to a point where ordinary control relaxes. The individual loses himself in the emotions of the picture."<sup>28</sup> No longer just an adolescent, the youth spectator in Blumer's study now constituted a member of a crowd *of any age* who relinquished conscious control when faced with the larger-than-life influences at the cinema.

### Archival "Raw Material"

While Blumer's conclusions and the popular summary of his work tell one story, a closer look at the methodology of *Movies and Conduct* as a repository of cultural conceptions reveals a more nuanced account of youth spectatorship predicated on class as much as on gender or race. Indeed, an examination of his method and the few motion pictures that survive from this study<sup>29</sup> reinforce how Blumer's training in collective psychology shaped his conclusions from the start. From these accounts, youth spectatorship is positioned as an activity in which one had to *overcome* a critical, emotional detachment in order to enjoy the pleasures of susceptibility to the emotional fluctuations of the crowd.

How did Blumer's method then determine his results? According to the first chapter of *Movies and Conduct*, he began the process of collecting motion picture autobiographies in January 1929 when "two classes of university students were asked to write in as natural and truthful manner as possible accounts of their experiences with 'movies' as far as they could recall them. No further instructions were given."<sup>30</sup> The assignment was written outside of class and handed in for credit and, as Blumer remarks, "from these and from subsequent documents recurrent experiences were selected as separate items; and from these items there was constructed a form or guidance sheet for the writing of the later motion-picture autobiographies."<sup>31</sup> Blumer then analyzed these "later motion-picture autobiographies" to produce the final volume. Blumer's account of his methodology thus reveals his data collection as a two-step process, in which the experience of two classes of university students, written for course credit, formed the basis for a guidance sheet used to direct the eighteen hundred participants who followed and whose autobiographies structured the conclusions of *Movies and Conduct*.

An examination of the guidance sheet further demonstrates how it asked questions that correlated directly with each of the chapters in *Movies and Conduct*. (Fig. 3) These included "Explain how movies influenced your play? Give concrete instances. What parts did you usually play (cowboy, policeman, Indian, etc.)?" and "Describe how motion pictures have affected your emotions and moods," further questioning whether subjects were "ever severely frightened or horrified by any motion picture or scene."<sup>32</sup> (Fig. 4) Finally, the guidance sheet asked participants to "Write fully about what you have imitated from the movies," including mannerisms, "ways of dressing and beautification," and sexual activity.<sup>33</sup> From this, we can see that Blumer not only directly solicited information to support his conclusions, but that the guidance sheet was organized largely like the final chapter breakdown of *Movies and Conduct* from the beginning.

*Guidance Sheet*

Write about only those items on which you have had experience.

1. a. *Trace the history of your interest in the movies.*

How did you first become interested in motion pictures? What kind of pictures did you like at first? When did you lose interest in them? What kind of pictures did you like next? Trace in this way the different kinds of pictures you have liked, and mention about how old you were at each change. Explain as fully as possible the conditions under which each change occurred.

Who were your earliest movie favorites? Who next became your favorites? Who are your present favorites? Explain why you like the movie stars you mention.

As a child, with whom did you usually go to the theater? (Alone, with parents, older brothers and sisters, chum, gang, etc.). What time of day did you usually go? How many times a week? Whom do you usually go with now?

Were you interested in serials? If so, describe your behavior.

Explain how movies influenced your play. Give concrete instances. What parts did you usually play (cowboy, policeman, Indian, etc.)? Did you engage in any escapades as a result of what you saw in the movies? Did you do any damage, or harm anyone as a result of doing something suggested by the movies? Did you do anything which you now feel to be wrong or improper? Describe.

What day-dreams did you have as a result of the movies? Explain fully what you imagined yourself doing. Do you believe that your day-dreaming in childhood was aroused especially by motion pictures, or more by other things? What other things?

b. *Describe how motion pictures have affected your emotions and moods.*

Were you ever severely frightened or horrified by any motion picture or scene? Describe as fully as you can the experience. How long did the fright or horror stay with you? How did it show its effects in your behavior?

**Fig. 3 Motion picture autobiography guidance sheet, Movies and Conduct, p. 204**

Have you ever cried at pictures, or felt like crying? Give instances. Do you like to cry at pictures?

Do you find it hard to control the emotions aroused by motion pictures? Do you get more enjoyment from a picture by letting your emotions go?

Do you find that the movies easily change your moods? How long do the moods last? Give specific instances.

2. a. *Write fully about what you have imitated from the movies.*

Have you adopted any mannerisms (any gestures such as the use of the hands and arms, the inclining of the head, walking in a certain way, etc.)? Any ways of dressing, any ways of beautification? Any poses? Give concrete instances of what you have imitated.

What have you learned about love-making from the movies? About how to behave with the opposite sex at parties and elsewhere?

Describe anything else you have imitated from the movies.

b. *Describe your experience with pictures of love and romance.*

When did you first become interested in love pictures? Tell how this interest developed. Was interest in boys or girls awakened through motion pictures? Did you ever fall in love with any of your movie idols? Describe. Did you ever imagine yourself playing a part with them in the pictures? Did you ever day-dream about them? Describe your experiences along this line as fully and concretely as you can. Did you ever write any love letters to your movie favorites? Did you ever practice love scenes in your play, as a result of the movies?

Write fully your experiences with love pictures and love scenes. Have you been thrilled by love scenes? Describe your feelings and actions on seeing such love scenes. Have you felt stirred as a result of seeing them? Have such pictures or scenes made you more receptive to love-making? Describe any experiences you may have had of this nature. Have any of your ideas of love been formed by the movies? Have you and your associates been accustomed to talk much about love pictures? What was the nature, in general, of your conversations?

**Fig. 4 Motion picture autobiography guidance sheet, *Movies and Conduct*, p. 205**

In this way, the autobiographies prompted by this guidance sheet come into focus as ambivalent and liminal texts. They represent both actual aspects of the experience of youth spectators but also in what an adult sociologist trained in the tenets of collective psychology was most interested. Yet in the years since the publication of *Movies and Conduct*, this latter aspect has often been elided in favor of reading the extant autobiographies as “raw material” for, among others, a history of the middle-class motion picture experience in the early twentieth century and phenomenological accounts of the physiological effects of film.<sup>34</sup> This was likely because until recently, only twenty-eight motion picture autobiographies from Blumer’s study were known to exist in their entirety. Seven are published in the appendix of *Movies and Conduct* and twenty-one additional life histories reside in the archives of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University, sent by Blumer to Payne Fund Studies council member William Short in April 1929.<sup>35</sup> Drawing on the Hoover Institution’s holdings, Garth Jowett, Ian Jarvie, and Kathryn Fuller’s volume *Children and the Movies: Media Influences and the Payne Fund Controversy* has provided an invaluable introduction to the Payne Fund Studies and its role in film history as well as reprinted ten of these extant autobiographies, making them widely accessible for the first time. By contrast the balance of Blumer’s survey set appears to be no longer extant.

However, four years ago, while looking through the papers of Blumer’s colleague, fellow sociologist Ernest Burgess, at the University of Chicago archives, I discerned what appeared to be ten of the original set of motion picture autobiographies (namely those written without the guidance sheet), which offer an alternative, yet equally mediated, account of youth spectatorship in the silent era. While at first these papers seemed much like other motion picture autobiographies as they detailed instances of play and imitation, the first clue as to the different provenance of these documents came from one life history which began, unlike the rest, with a reiteration of the prompt for an assignment, which directed: “Describe by means of a case study and explain sociologically behavior in . . . 1) an autobiographical account of attendance at the motion pictures.”<sup>36</sup> The simplicity of this assignment – to describe and then “explain sociologically” – *with no further instructions* identified these as potential examples of the original set of autobiographies once thought lost to film history. In addition, the film examples given in a few of these autobiographies also fit with the timeline of Blumer’s study, as

the most recent films mentioned – *Hula* (1927) and *The Way of All Flesh* (1927) – were both released in late 1927. Although their origin could yet be disputed, these texts at the very least allow us a brief glimpse into what an “autobiography” written without a guidance sheet at the University of Chicago in the late 1920s looked like.

Indeed a comparison between the content of these original autobiographies and the guidance sheet (and by extension, the conclusions of *Movies and Conduct*) yields the most striking results in relation to Blumer’s focus on questions of imitation and emotion possession. In the case of imitation, out of the ten motion picture autobiographies contained within Burgess’ papers, only four mention motion pictures as an influence on their childhood play and only two refer to imitating what they saw at the cinema as adolescents. Even more interesting is the balance between emotional possession and emotional detachment in the original autobiographies, although those terms are never used. While only two accounts describe what Blumer would likely classify as emotional possession – one enjoying the childish thrills of adventure serials and the other seeking the sexual thrills of what another calls “lingerie” pictures – half of the autobiographies describe some form of emotional detachment.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, as opposed to *Movies and Conduct*’s slight treatment of emotional detachment in favor of emotional possession (one twelve-page chapter as compared to fifty-five pages over four chapters), depictions of detached, critical spectatorship proved the most prevalent section of Blumer’s guidance sheet to appear in these life histories with the cinema. Such critical distance is readily understandable. As University of Chicago undergraduates, these writers represented a highly educated segment of the adolescent population, whose accounts of emotional distance ranged from simple boredom at unrealistic Hollywood narratives to a complete lack of emotional involvement in favor of critical enjoyment. As one particularly jaded participant wrote,

A movie never grips me so that I live the film. I never cry at a sad piece – I always feel rather dead and emotionless and I wonder at the emotion of those around me. Rather than the sad scene, I see the devices used to play on the emotions and marvel at them because of their affectiveness [sic]. That is all. I never form my thoughts or my actions as a result of a movie.<sup>38</sup>

Yet another concluded her analysis with a reference to Le Bon:

[movies] don’t affect me much, as a rule, and I have erroneously concluded that they don’t affect others much. This probably suggests that I am not as susceptible to emotional appeals and the presence of a crowd around me as others.<sup>39</sup>

In their responses then, these undergraduates registered their superiority to the emotional address of film through their status as educated consumers who were also in the process of being trained to think sociologically about their actions. And from these original accounts and their sociological interpretations, we gain a sense of middle and upper-class youth spectators perceiving their own emotional detachment as both a function and means of class distinction. In these cases, adolescents wealthy enough to attend an elite university viewed themselves as superior to the general “crowd” of moviegoers around them.

This distinction was the most pronounced in a motion picture life history titled “The power of the Motion Pictures,” in which one student, calling herself “Evelyne,” provided not her own life history with motion pictures, but that of her family’s former chauffeur, John, now sentenced to death at age twenty-two for murdering her father’s “wily little” French valet. Needless to say, this life history begins unlike any of the others with the preamble:

The following tragedy is a true story. It happened a year ago amongst our servants in Toronto. It is accurate because when I left John I wrote down what he said at once it so impressed me. I did not realize before that the movies really affected anyone, so I wrote up my visit.<sup>40</sup>

Complete with cinematic flourishes such as psychologically defined characters, flashbacks, and dialogue, “The power of the Motion Pictures” reads more like a screenplay detailing John’s downfall due to the influence of the cinema than a sociological document.<sup>41</sup>

Over the course of the autobiography, John recounts his melodramatic life story, in which the French valet, Paul, forced his attentions on the family maid, prompting John, the stalwart English chauffeur, to rush to her rescue. He lured the valet out for a ride in the family car, drove it off the road, and jumped out at the last second as “the car pitched to the bottom, caught on fire, and Paul was burned to death.” When asked why he took such drastic action, John tells Evelyne, “The movies made me, the movies made me confess too, and its because of them that I’m glad I’m going to die. It’s the movies and not fate that guided me [sic] whole life.” John then detailed how he obtained his desire for luxury from going to the cinema as a child in Britain and even obtained the idea to kill Paul from a western serial he had recently watched on his day off. In a final proclamation, John, as Evelyne writes him, declares,

Now I know life isn’t rosy and there’s no use living unless you can have all the things you see in the pictures, so I’m glad I’m going to swing and that I killed Paul for Marie first. Even now I can’t get the movies out of



my head and at night I dream of the pictures I've seen.<sup>42</sup>

More so than any of the other original motion picture life histories, "The power of the Motion Pictures" demonstrates, with its strong visual cues, the perceived class divide between upper-class Evelyne and lower-class John in cinema's effects on the youth spectator. Evelyne herself wrote that she "did not realize before that the movies really affected anyone" until her conversation with her former chauffeur.<sup>43</sup> Her sociological analysis of his case further reinforces our sense that middle- and upper-class college students in the 1920s did not readily identify themselves as suggestible creatures, but that such crowd responses to the cinema were reserved for the lower classes. Her account even effects something of a gender reversal, in which John, already feminized by his susceptibility to moving images, becomes the object of Evelyne's probing, almost clinical gaze. Her cinematic account of the effect of motion pictures on the young points to the always-already mediated nature of even those autobiographies not prompted by Blumer's guidance sheet. This student merely wrote the life history of someone she believed to have been impacted by the cinema, someone suggestible, unsophisticated, and distinctly unlike herself.

However as much as this student saw herself above the crowd of lower-class audiences though, one of the extant guidance-sheet autobiographies entitled "The Effects the Movies Have Had on Me," by a twenty-year-old white male university student, countered this expressed superiority with a wish to be one with the crowd and enjoy the embodied pleasures of moviegoing. After previously believing that it was a "weakness to show any kind of emotion at a movie," this undergraduate then painted a different picture of his reasons for going to the cinema.

I grew out of the idea that it was a sin to show emotion and began to see that to enjoy the film it was necessary to let one's self go with the picture from beginning to end, *sway with the crowd* and really let the picture work its will. I go now with the feeling that I am to be the *plaything of the picture* and try to make the scenes belong to me. I really enjoy the picture much more fully. Before I had been killing the central requirements for the enjoyment of the picture.<sup>44</sup>

In this account, spectatorial pleasure is derived from working against emotional detachment rather than relinquishing all capacity for critical thought upon sitting down in the theater. As this undergraduate suggests, the labor intimated in his attempts "to make the scenes belong to me" and become "the plaything of the picture" belies the idea that being one of the crowd at the cinema constituted a state of total passivity. The author even offered a menu for which films he actively sought out depending on his state of mind. For dreamy moods, a love story; after a football game, only a comedy; and "in a restless crowd I want a mystery story because the restless, breathless, silent motions in the crowd are more at home in a picture that continually scares one."<sup>45</sup>

This undergraduate's taste for film fare thus followed his moods, serving as a rejoinder rather than an impetus, and apparently prompted his own informal study of mass media effects. His own interest in the "methods employed now in order to produce a certain resultant effect on the audience" produced the conclusion that "the people seem to be interested in movies that depict the present conditions and in that respect [the motion picture] is the mirror of our lives. It is an exaggerated mirror no doubt but it shows *the crowd mind*."<sup>46</sup> In this view, becoming one of the crowd constituted one of the primary means of enjoyment at the cinema, where one could go to be alone with others and allow him or herself simply to "sway with the crowd" and become "the plaything of the picture."

In all of the incarnations of *Movies and Conduct* then – its findings, popular dissemination, and methodology – the youth spectator became characterized as the embodiment of the mimetic, suggestible mass consumer and the epitome of the sophisticated, critical viewer as well as something in between. Whether ruled by unconscious impulses, critical superiority, or the selective abandonment of such emotional detachment in favor of the sensation-based pleasures of motion pictures, the youth spectator conceptualized by *Movies and Conduct* was firmly situated within the context of contemporary fears about crowds and masses in modern society. In this sense, *Movies and Conduct* and its attending documents offer the film historian less an unmediated source of raw material than an archive of previously held conceptions invested in the consolidation and effacement of a multiplicity of narratives. In this sense, *Movies and Conduct* models the passage from private to public that characterizes the archive. Blumer's monograph, as a summary of existing conceptions bolstered by "empirical" research, served as a gathering place, a consolidation, of an overlying discourse and individual acts of signification.<sup>47</sup> By contrast, the autobiographies excluded in the final volume (including these earlier texts that likely informed the guidance sheet) remained external to this archive as they represent repositories of personal memory and experience that resist reconciliation with the text's central narrative.

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## NOTES

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1. Henry James Forman, "Molded by the Movies," *McCall's* November 1932: 17.
2. Forman 17.
3. Forman 17.
4. Forman 17.
5. Mark Lynn Anderson, "Taking Liberties: The Payne Fund Studies and the Creation of the Media Expert," *Inventing Film Studies*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008) 42-43; and Lee Grieveson, "Cinema Studies and the Conduct of Conduct," *Inventing Film Studies* 9-10
6. For more on the concept of the youth spectator, see Christina Petersen, "Paradise for the Young: Youth Spectatorship in the American Silent Film Era, 1904-1933" (PhD. Diss., University of Chicago, 2010); and Petersen, "'Just Once I Want My Life to Be Like an 1980s Movie!': Female Adolescence and the Flapper Youth Spectator," *Rhizomes* 22, Summer 2011, 15 Oct. 2012 < <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue22/petersen.html>>. For more on the role of the Payne Fund Studies in constructing the "normal American child," see Nicholas Sammond, *Babes in Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Making of the American Child, 1930-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) 2, 72.
7. Garth Jowett, Ian Jarvie, and Kathryn Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 70-71.
8. For a discussion of the goals and content of each of the studies, see Jowett, et al. 63-72.
9. Herbert Blumer, *Movies and Conduct* (New York: MacMillan, 1933) xi.
10. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, xi.
11. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 2.
12. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 3.
13. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 27.
14. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 42.
15. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, xiii-xiv.
16. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 74.
17. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 74.
18. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 127. Blumer's discussion of emotional possession shares much with Hugo Münsterberg's ideas on suggestion at the cinema. See Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, *Hugo Münsterberg on Film: The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings*, ed. Allan Langdale (New York: Routledge, 2002) 96-97. For Münsterberg's work and its relationship to the Payne Fund Studies, see Jowett, et al. 22, and Grieveson, "Cinema Studies and the Conduct of Conduct," 3.
19. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," 2<sup>nd</sup> version, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, et al., (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008) 39.
20. See Richard Butsch, *The Citizen Audience: Crowds, Publics, and Individuals* (New York: Routledge, 2008) 43-45; and Grieveson, "Cinema Studies and the Conduct of Conduct," 20-21.
21. Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd* (1895; New Brunswick: Transaction, 1995) 52-53.
22. Le Bon 55-56, 59, 66.
23. Herbert Blumer, "Collective Behavior," *An Outline of the Principles of Sociology*, ed. Robert E. Park (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1939) 224-278.
24. Le Bon famously called the modern era "the Era of Crowds. Le Bon 34-35.
25. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 196.
26. Forman 62.
27. Forman 62.
28. Forman 55, emphasis added.
29. Including a new set recently uncovered in the Ernest Watson Burgess papers in Special Collections at the University of Chicago.
30. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 4.
31. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 3-4.
32. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 204.
33. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 205.
34. See Kathryn Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996) 172-173, 180; Alison Landsberg, "Prosthetic Memory: *Total Recall* and *Blade Runner*," *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows (London: SAGE Publications, 1995) 175-189; and Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) 55, 72-73.
35. Jowett, et al. 237.
36. Burgess motion picture autobiography #18C 11, Ernest Watson Burgess Papers Addenda, Box 287, Folder 3, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library [UCL].

37. Those mentioning emotional possession: 10 and C; emotional detachment: 10, 11, 13, 19, and C. Burgess motion picture autobiographies, Ernest Watson Burgess Papers Addenda, Box 287, Folder 3, UCL.
  38. Burgess motion picture autobiography 19 1-2.
  39. Burgess motion picture autobiography #11a 3; Burgess motion picture autobiography #13C 3, emphasis added.
  40. "The power of the Motion Pictures" 1, Burgess motion picture autobiographies, Ernest Watson Burgess Papers Addenda, Box 287, Folder 3, UCL.
  41. "The power of the Motion Pictures" 1. In his consideration of sociologist Frederic Thrasher's use of the case study at New York University, Dana Polan has also described the case study as a sociological method that lent itself particularly to the style of cinematic narrative. Dana Polan, *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginnings of the U.S. Study of Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 305-306.
  42. "The power of the Motion Pictures" 1-5. This narrative is also striking for its parallels to Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and the role of movies in prompting a male domestic worker to commit a crime.
  43. "The power of Motion Pictures" 1.
  44. Jowett, et al. 265-266, emphasis added.
  45. Jowett, et al. 266.
  46. Jowett, et al. 266, emphasis added.
  47. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 2-3.
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