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Abstract

In recent years, rhetorical scholars have been increasingly interested in questions of borders and citizenship. Scholars such as J. David Cisneros, Karma Chávez, Lisa Flores, and D. Robert DeChaine have tended to contemporary struggles at the southern U.S. border, while others, such as Jeffrey Bennett and Robert Asen, have articulated theories of citizenship that are tied to notions of belonging. To complement this ongoing work in the field, there is a need for additional historic work that seeks to understand the underpinnings of contemporary debates. In this thesis, I argue that the New York Catholic Protectory, in its mission to shepherd thousands of Catholic immigrant youth into white American identity, emphasized an articulation of citizenship built around the negative term “delinquency” and the positive term “industriousness.” By analyzing archival documents such as letters and the Protectory’s annual reports to the New York State legislature, I demonstrate the ways in which the discourses of delinquency and industriousness secured a powerful foothold in shared conceptions of citizenship that persists to the present day. This historical understanding of the development of these norms of citizenship can be seen as part of an ongoing collective project to unravel contested categories of race, identity, citizenship, and belonging, with hopes of increased understanding that can be applied to contemporary crises.

“Saved to Citizenship”:
The Rhetoric of Delinquency and Industriousness in the New York Catholic Protectory, 1902-
1911.

By

Lucas J. Hann

B.A., St. John’s University, 2018

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Communication and Rhetorical Studies.

Syracuse University
June 2020

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Introduction

“DACA gives these bright, driven young people the peace of mind and stability to earn a college degree and to seek employment that matches their education and training.”

- Xavier Becerra, Attorney General of California, 2017¹

“In all our training the object is to make the boys learn those things which will bring them a position and make them wage-earners as soon as they are old enough to work. For our boys this is of prime importance—immediate occupation after they leave this institution.”

- Reverend Brother Henry, Rector, New York Catholic Protectory, 1911²

DACA (the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program) was created with a mission of aiding immigrant children in the United States in becoming productive members of society. DACA, and programs like it, are designed to be a “path to citizenship” for undocumented people living in the U.S.—but this logic presupposes that these individuals are not, or at least not yet, included in our national idea of citizenship. Further, the “path to citizenship” implies that becoming a citizen requires a journey from one point to another. In U.S. history, different pathways to citizenship have often become available or unavailable based upon notions of race. Matters of citizenship are fundamentally matters of exclusion, and within the historical context

¹ “Attorney General Becerra Sends Letter to Trump: We Stand Ready to Defend DACA,” *State of California Department of Justice* online, July 21, 2017, <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-becerra-sends-letter-trump-we-stand-ready-defend-daca>.

² The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Ninth Annual Report of the New York Catholic Protectory to the Legislature of the State of New York and to the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*. Westchester: The New York Catholic Protectory, 1911, 29. <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=BZUkAQAAMAAJ&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA29>.

of the United States, citizenship and the politics of exclusion have been consistently coded in terms of whiteness, such that the ability of non-white citizens to access “belonging” is limited. Even when President Barack Obama in 2012 announced DACA, it was highly conditional, covering just 800,000 of the 3.6 million childhood arrivals in the United States. While some credit Obama for helping at least *some* undocumented people in a political climate that is hostile towards immigrants, we shouldn’t mistake the creation of DACA for a larger kindness towards immigrants: due in part to more carefully picking his targets, Obama actually deported more people his first three years as President than his successor, Donald Trump has—nearly 1.2 million.

As immigration remains one of the most controversial political topics in the United States today, citizenship has become a site of contestation. While proposed “pathways to citizenship” would offer legal protection to certain immigrants, the key factor in determining who ought to be a citizen and who ought to be deported seems to be belonging. Immigrants who “belong” here would be allowed legal citizenship, while those that do not would be deported. These distinctions—drawn across lines of criminality and economic productivity, are rendered quite clear in mainstream Democratic proposals that focus on deporting individuals who are “threats to national security” and credit “good” immigrants as economically crucial, calling their entrepreneurship America’s “greatest competitive advantage” and noting that “working age immigrants keep our economy growing.”³ Even in the rhetoric of pro-immigrant politicians, inclusion in the nation is defined largely by economic productivity.

Discourse around immigration and citizenship in the United States is often built around common articulations of two tropes: the “good immigrant” and the “bad immigrant.” While a

³ “The Biden Plan for Immigration,” Joe Biden for President, accessed June 1, 2020, <https://joebiden.com/immigration/>.

number of varying characteristics are attributed to these two archetypes, two crucial attributes are criminality and economic productivity. The “bad immigrant” is understood to be poor and unemployed, with low prospects for finding work due to laziness, lack of education, or inability to speak English. These “bad immigrants,” as the story goes, come to make up an undesirable social class that is poor, criminal, and culturally incompatible with mainstream society. Rather than contributing to or being a part of the nation, they hold it back. The “good immigrant,” on the other hand, is the inverse: someone who embodies the mythology of the American Dream, working hard with entrepreneurial spirit, improving themselves through education and assimilation, and maintaining only the aspects of their cultural identity and background which are palatable additions to mainstream culture. These immigrants are able to become part of the nation by contributing to it and enhancing it.

In the United States, the discourse surrounding citizenship largely focuses on concepts of criminality and work. Those who belong to the nation, in other words, are those who do not transgress against the norms of society and those who are productive workers who can contribute to the national economy. These American assumptions have long served as the basis of efforts to create citizens, especially in assimilating immigrants into the nation. Institutions dedicated to training new immigrants have embodied and perpetuated the equation of citizenship to civil obedience and economic productivity throughout much of the history of the nation. As one historical example, the New York Catholic Protectory was a religious institution tasked by the state government with caring for and reforming delinquent and dependent—criminal and poor—youth. The rhetoric of the New York Catholic Protectory in the early 20th century perpetuated and crafted norms of citizenship in order to promote the Catholic church’s mission to protect and expand their following in the United States. The Protectory took into its care delinquent and

impoverished immigrant youth, primarily from Ireland and Italy, operating under the state's authority to produce good citizen-subjects. At one point in time the largest childcare institution in the United States, the Protectory was widely influential in the development of juvenile criminal justice, religious charity work, and the field of social work through its legislative and networking efforts. The methods employed by the Protectory and the rhetoric used by it to justify those methods in annual reports to the New York State Legislature both remain highly relevant in contemporary debates around immigration, particularly their emphases on reformation of criminal youth (and the question of who is—and isn't—deemed “reformable”) and the production of capitalist subjects. These barometers of belonging have persisted to the present day.

This thesis focuses on the rhetoric of the New York Catholic Protectory as it sought to shepherd young Italian and Irish immigrants into whiteness and citizenship. This study is undertaken with the hope that analyzing the rhetorical history of immigration discourse can provide insight into contemporary political debate. Historical case studies can help scholars studying contemporary issues by showing how categories like citizenship came to be understood over time.

In the United States, the category of citizenship has historically become entangled with other factors. As the nation's early years featured extreme racial divides along social and economic lines through practices such as slavery and violence against indigenous populations, race emerged as once concept deeply entangled in understandings of citizenship. As status in early American society became based upon categorization as a racialized other, race became a determining factor in who was allowed to truly belong to the nation as a citizen. In some ways, the history of citizenship in the United States is also the history of race—and the oppression of

racialized others—in the United States. Racialized others are labeled as different, dangerous, criminal, and a threat to individuals and society. Take, for example, Donald Trump’s infamous comments on Mexican immigrants during his campaign launch speech: “They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.”⁴ While of course false—and problematically casting every person who arrives at the United States’ southern border as “Mexican” despite their varied nationalities—these statements feed off of and reproduce centuries-old constructions of race and criminality in U.S. culture. Frequently, we see ways in which white subjects avoid labels given to racialized others such as dangerous or criminal even when engaging in the same behaviors, for example an activity as innocuous as recreational marijuana use, where Black Americans are over three times as likely to be arrested despite similar usage rates.⁵

In order to discuss the advantages given to white subjects, we need to interrogate the category of whiteness. It would be easy to look back at history and see the tens of thousands of Italian and Irish youth who made their way through the Protectory’s system as having white privilege based upon their skin color and contemporary understanding of those ethnicities. However, the relationship of race and citizenship in U.S. history is far more complicated than a simple equation that says white skin means you belong in the privileged category of citizenship. Karen and Barbara Fields note that the whiteness of free-born Englishmen was not enough to qualify them for citizenship in Virginia during the first half of the 17th century: “indentured

⁴ “Here’s Donald Trump’s Presidential Announcement Speech,” Time, June 16, 2015, <https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/>.

⁵ “A Tale of Two Countries: Racially Targeted Arrests in the Era of Marijuana Reform,” American Civil Liberties Union, April 17, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/news/criminal-law-reform/a-tale-of-two-countries-racially-targeted-arrests-in-the-era-of-marijuana-reform/>. The ACLU notes that it is difficult to measure disparities among other races, such as Latinx populations, because “The FBI does not count Latinx as a racial category and instead puts Latinx individuals in other racial categories — for example, Black or white. Data on white arrests thus might include many Latinx individuals, which would inflate the white arrest rate and mean that the actual racial disparities between arrests of white people and people of color is even higher.”

servants . . . could be bought and sold like livestock, kidnapped, stolen, put up as stakes in card games, and awarded . . . to the victors in lawsuits. Servants were beaten, maimed, and even killed with impunity.”⁶ Conversely, “African slaves during the years between 1619 and 1661 enjoyed rights that, in the nineteenth century, not even free black people could claim.”⁷ Noel Ignatiev adds that that in the 18th and 19th centuries, Irish workers were employed for dangerous jobs “where it did not make sense to risk the life of a slave.”⁸

Indeed, many of the young immigrant subjects who found themselves in the Protectory were themselves constructed as racialized others by the authorities of the day. Nineteenth-century social worker and philanthropist Charles Loring Brace, who founded one of the Protectory’s competing institutions, the Children’s Aid Society, considered the Irish immigrant population in New York City to be “dangerous classes” of “bad blood” and “inferior stock.”⁹ While these immigrant groups were otherized and faced xenophobia, their white skin made assimilation available in a way that would not have been possible for other groups. As Ignatiev writes:

The Irish who emigrated to America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were fleeing caste oppression and a system of landlordism that made the material conditions of the Irish peasant comparable to those of an American slave. They came to a society in which color was important in determining social position. It was not a pattern they were familiar with and they bore no responsibility for it; nevertheless, they adapted to it in short order . . . The outcome was not the inevitable consequence of blind historic forces, still less of

⁶Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: the Soul of Inequality in American Life* (New York: Verso Press, 2016), 122.

⁷ Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 126.

⁸ Noel Ignatiev, “How the Irish became white,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1994), 3.

⁹ Janet Butler Munch, “At Home in the Bronx: Children at the New York Catholic Protectory 1865-1938,” *The Bronx County Historical Society Journal* 52, no. 1/2 (2015): 31.

biology, but the result of choices made, by the Irish and others, from among available alternatives. To enter the white race was a strategy to secure an advantage in a competitive society.¹⁰

The New York Catholic Protectory, then can be understood as a religious organization that chose assisting immigrant youth in assimilating into whiteness as a strategy for protecting the Catholic Church's interests and enhancing its role in American society. As Irish and Italian immigrants were both stigmatized and understood to be overwhelmingly Catholic, Catholicism itself began to be otherized. Leslie Hahner writes that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was a "fear of Catholicism as a religion that prevented Americanization."¹¹ The Protectory was the Church's strategic mechanism for countering this stigma and producing white Catholic Americans through moral and economic training. This historical construction of a path to citizenship was, for some subjects, also a path into whiteness.

The historical struggles over who gets to count as a citizen continue to echo in contemporary debates. Where early Irish and Italian immigrants were offered a path to citizenship by avoiding subjective notions of criminality and embracing economic productivity, the same requirements are laid out for contemporary undocumented people living in the United States. Even among DACA's advocates, the fact that recipients are normal people who have lived in the United States for most of their lives is not enough to imagine them as belonging here. Caught in the artificial restraints placed upon discourse by white supremacy and capitalism, advocates frequently use economic arguments to defend the program, stating that *these* young people in particular—the few eligible for DACA—are the best and brightest and will be good

¹⁰ Ignatiev, "How the Irish became white," 2-3.

¹¹ Leslie Hahner, *To become an American: immigrants and Americanization campaigns of the early twentieth century* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2017), 127.

participants in a capitalist entrepreneurial economy. More broadly, pro-immigration arguments have a troubling tendency to over-rely on the prospective taxes paid by immigrant workers. A report from the Senate Joint Economic Committee Democrats, citing the Center for American Progress, reports that \$460 billion will be lost from the U.S. economy over the next decade if DACA is allowed to end. This speaks to the conditional nature of invitations to belonging for Latinx populations: even the Democratic party lacks the rhetorical imagination to formulate an argument beyond stating that DACA recipients should be allowed to stay *as long as it's good for the economy*, implying that their residency is not justified due to membership in community.

Numerous rhetorical scholars have analyzed and critiqued the various exclusions and biases in contemporary debates over citizenship (see the work of scholars such as Bennett, Chávez, Cisneros, DeChaine, and Flores). This thesis seeks to add to these critiques by offering an analysis of the historical roots of these exclusions. Through observing historical patterns of immigration practices, scholars can provide even greater clarity as to the distinctly historical origins of the now taken-for-granted methods that contemporary scholars and activists problematize in their work. Lisa Flores writes of a body of work she calls racial rhetorical criticism, in which “rhetorical scholars write and think at the intersections of race and rhetoric today, and their work calls us to intellectual, social, and political action and to disciplinary intervention.”¹² As she reviews the literature in this corpus, Flores points to directions for the continued study of race in rhetorical studies, including the need for “historically grounded analyses of race,” saying that these works help us “see and better understand the contemporary moment” and even stating that “without such historic accounts, we are left ill-equipped to

¹² Lisa Flores, “Between abundance and marginalization: the imperative of racial rhetorical criticism,” *Review of Communication* 16, no. 1 (2016), 5.

understand race *as* rhetorical.”¹³ Whiteness is not an all-powerful force, but rather a set of historically specific practices. Examining these practices within their historic specificity is crucial to understanding the dynamics of white supremacy and racism.

It is this line of scholarly thought that led me, in interrogating contemporary debates around immigration centered at the southern border of the United States, to not only consider the ways in which the rhetorical tools available to immigration activists seem limited but to turn to the past and wonder how those tools came to be limited. These historical productions can be traced, explained, and understood in ways that undo the mythologies of our cultural norms, as is done in scholarly work like Fields and Fields’ *Racecraft* and Ignatiev’s “How the Irish became white.” In this thesis, I explore the discourses of criminality, productivity, and citizenship as they were articulated and practiced by the Protectory in the early 20th century through the usage of two key terms: delinquency and industriousness.

To conduct my analysis, I rely on the tool of rhetorical criticism. Leslie Hahner writes that contemporary rhetorical scholarship “analyzes how discourse shapes culture.”¹⁴ The use of rhetorical criticism to analyze the documents of the Protectory seeks less to show how the institution persuaded immigrant youth to abide by the norms of citizenship, and more to identify the ways in which an influential organization articulated a specific vision of Americanism so as to shape cultural understandings of immigration and citizenship. In exploring the Protectory’s discourse, I focus on two sets of texts: letters sent from the Protectory to Father Antonio Demo, Pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii Church in Lower Manhattan from 1900-1935, and the Protectory’s annual reports to the New York State Legislature. The archival documents I surveyed from Father Demo’s collection spanned from 1900-1924. Among the Protectory’s

¹³ Ibid, 17.

¹⁴ Hahner, *To become an American*, xvii.

annual reports, I focused my analysis on digitally available reports from 1902-1911. This period is particularly significant because it represents the peak of the Protectory's influence as they successfully lobbied for legislative changes to increase their jurisdiction, became a national leader in social work and childcare, and expanded to include two new auxiliary institutions discussed in chapter three, St. Philip's Home for Industrious Boys and the Lincoln Agricultural School. In order to grasp the larger shared vision of citizenship articulated by the Protectory, sections of my analysis draw samples from different years and written by different officials—though always sanctioned by the institution via approval for submission to the legislature. This curatorial practice, which eschews chronology within the short window of 1902-1911, does not attempt to show how the Protectory's rhetoric changed over time but rather demonstrates the consistency in which they advanced a specific articulation of citizenship during the peak of their influence.

This study did not begin with the Protectory or the two major terms used in their rhetoric, delinquency and industriousness, which serve as the framework for chapters two and three of this thesis. Rather, through an interest in the historical production of contemporary immigration debates, I began surveying various periods of European immigration to the United States with the goal of analyzing discourse of assimilation, race, and citizenship in contexts other than present discussions of Latinx immigration. I was drawn in this survey to the example of early 20th century New York City, and in the Center for Migration Studies archive I encountered the records of Father Demo. As Pastor of a large Italian immigrant community, his correspondence contained hundreds of letters from the New York Catholic Protectory regarding children from his parish who were in the institution, which immediately drew my attention—immigrant youth taken from (and in some cases given by) their families to a Church institution which would

reform them. The letters between the Protectory and Father Demo contained scant details and make up little of the analysis in this thesis, but the impact of holding sheets of carbon paper that contained the fates of impoverished youth from over a century ago left me in pursuit of additional information regarding the Protectory. I was particularly interested by the vagueness of the charges against many of the children—often labeled “disobedient” or “delinquent.” Luckily, some scanned copies of the Protectory’s annual reports to the New York State legislature are digitally available, which allowed me to observe the ways in which Protectory officials carefully positioned themselves, their institution, and the immigrant children in their care in public discourse. It was upon a critical reading of these annual reports that I was able to analyze the Protectory’s usage of “delinquency” as well as identify “industriousness” as a second key term in the Protectory’s articulation of citizenship.

The Protectory embraces the vagueness of a delinquency framework for juvenile reform, allowing them to subjectively equate social practices associated with poverty with the moral failure of immigrant criminality. As the institution—and its accolades—grew in the late 19th century, the Protectory positioned itself as the expert on delinquency, and therefore the arbiter for determining which children were delinquent and what method of reformation was best. Their articulation of reform was centered on the term “industriousness.” By instilling industriousness in the child, the Protectory made work ethic and productivity into a moral characteristic, setting up a dichotomy between the morally good, gainfully employed, industrious citizen and the morally inferior, idle, criminal non-citizen. The way in which they presented these as moral problems internal to the individual subject’s character and soul positioned the Church, as a moral and religious authority, to be the primary conduit for reform. In doing so, the Church not only

fostered belonging among immigrant youth, but created a role for itself during a time of anti-Catholic bias in early 20th century American culture.

The thesis proceeds in three main chapters, followed by a short conclusion. The first chapter sets the theoretical and historical stage for an analysis of the Protectory's rhetoric. I explore the contested landscape of scholarly work on citizenship in rhetorical studies, arguing that even as an exclusionary practice worthy of critique, citizenship simply matters too much to not be the subject of continued study. Next, I advance to discussions of the ways citizenship and race, and later citizenship, race, and productivity, are intertwined in U.S. life. These discussions illustrate the ways in which racialized others face a double standard of presumed criminality and often must be useful or productive in order to achieve partial acceptance. Chapter one also explores the context of American immigration in the Late 19th and early 20th centuries and the history of the New York Catholic Protectory, from its founding in 1863 through its official closing in 1939 and the descendant institution that carries its legacy to this day.

Chapter two focuses on the articulation of delinquency in the Protectory's rhetoric. Delinquency was employed in a wide range of situations as a catch-all for any number of offenses, with officials admitting that being a poor child and being a delinquent child was more or less the same. As such, the vagueness of the term meant it largely took on meanings that equated being delinquent with simply being a part of a lower social class. Focused on steering these youth towards Americanization, the Protectory's rhetoric shows the extent to which they sought to be the arbiter of determining delinquency. They cast delinquency (and therefore poverty) as an individual moral failure, positioning themselves as a religious authority as the obvious choice for an institution to fix what they deemed morally wrong within immigrant children.

Chapter three continues my analysis of the Protectory's rhetoric by examining the chief attribute they praised in their graduates: industriousness. The Protectory's emphasis on discussing their subjects in economic reductionist terms crafted a rhetorical pathway for individual economic success and self-sufficiency to be a means of belonging within a community and the nation. Officials drew a hypothetical, chronological relationship between youth delinquency and adult idleness, a widely-feared social ill during the time period (and, indeed, across history). This justified a Protectory curriculum which featured intense industrial training from an early age. To find examples of the Protectory's articulation of industriousness as a pathway to citizenship, I turn to the early years of two key auxiliary institutions in the Protectory network: St. Philip's Home for Industrious Boys and the Lincoln Agricultural School. Through proper training and work ethic, the Protectory argued that gainful employment would allow orphaned boys to find belonging in adopted homes as well as immigrant youth in general to find belonging in the nation by contributing to national economic development.

The thesis concludes by considering some of the limitations and implications of the current study. The urgent nature of contemporary political suffering can make it difficult to take attention away from present injustices and turn attention towards historical case studies and archival documents. However, interrogating the rhetorical tools we have inherited from our nation's history can, I hope, help us not only better use those tools, but also to navigate the contested terrain of citizenship and belonging in new, more just ways.

Chapter One

Citizenship and Otherness in the United States and Rhetorical Studies

Questions of citizenship, inclusion, and belonging are marked by their inverse—exclusion and otherness. While these questions have contemporary relevance, they also have histories. In the United States, one critical period for the articulation of these questions of inclusion and exclusion occurred from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century around the New York Catholic Protectory, a religious charity that provided aid to impoverished Catholic immigrant youth. The rhetoric of the Protectory invites us to critically examine two discourses at work: criminality and productivity. While each of these discourses present themselves as objective, moralized measures of individual worth, their historical underpinnings reveal that they are interwoven with racial and class prejudice in ways that can predetermine who is and is not a criminal, and who does and does not contribute economically. As citizenship marks belonging, circular logics of white supremacy utilize citizenship to reinforce racial discrimination while racial stereotypes are employed to reinforce exclusion from citizenship. Often, economic productivity is utilized as justification for extending invitations to belonging to noncitizen groups, but these invitations are frequently partial and the logic of inclusion that they depend upon reinforces the exclusion of groups deemed non-productive and criminal.

This chapter begins by tracing scholarly conversations about citizenship, from its basis as an exclusionary concept through the complicated ways race and productivity interact with historical context to shape the boundaries of belonging in the United States. As it progresses, I move through historical and contemporary examples, leaning on a number of theorists who show this interaction playing out in different settings. Finally, I examine the historical context

surrounding the New York Catholic Protectory, creating a framework of analysis for the rhetorics of criminality and productivity that emerge in the period's immigration discourse.

Citizenship Matters

Matters of citizenship are fundamentally matters of exclusion¹⁵, and within the historical context of the United States, citizenship is a loaded concept. This is true across legacies of immigration, slavery, colonialism, and other forms of oppression such as race and class. While citizenship is largely understood as a legal subject category which carries with it certain rights, privileges, and duties, I join recent work on citizenship in communication studies in arguing that this is just one aspect of citizenship. In addition to the state-sanctioned legal definition, citizenship matters as a measure of perceived and felt belonging in a national community.

Communication and rhetoric scholars have noted that citizenship is not merely possessed, but also practiced, such that *being* a citizen requires *doing* citizenship¹⁶. This work conceptualizes citizenship as performed, practiced, and embodied. Building on these theories, recent attention paid to the rhetoric of the border¹⁷ has furthered thinking that performances of citizenship are in turn constructive of identity¹⁸. This identity manifests on both an individual

¹⁵ See: Jeffrey A. Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood*; Karma R Chávez, "Beyond Inclusion"; Josue David Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us*; D. Robert DeChaine, "Bordering the Civic Imaginary"; D. Robert DeChaine, ed., *Border Rhetorics*; among others.

¹⁶ Robert Asen, "A discourse theory of citizenship" sees citizenship as process rather than status, "reorienting our framework from a question of *what* to a question of *how*."

¹⁷ While the study of border rhetorics and rhetorics of containment has become popular and widespread in recent years (including 2019's Rhetoric, Politics, and Identity conference carrying a "Containment Rhetoric" theme), the influential scholars who inform my understanding of border rhetorics include Karma Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*; Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us*; DeChaine, "Bordering the Civic Imaginary"; DeChaine, ed., *Border Rhetorics*; and Lisa Flores, "Constructing Rhetorical Borders."

¹⁸ Much recent work emphasizes the identity-construction of performances of citizenship over legal status, notably including Jeffrey Bennett's discussion of "banned blood" and how the denial of access to the civic performative of donating blood constructs the queer subject as abject. However, performance is not singular in its importance: Rosaldo, in "Cultural Citizenship," noted how minority groups can assimilate into communities without ever receiving recognition, and the dangers of the lack of recognition for otherwise-assimilated community members are seen every day in the United States through ICE raids and deportations.

level, as a sense of “belonging,”¹⁹ and on a communal or national level, shaping what Cisneros calls the “social imaginary” of citizenship, which informs how we understand civic identity and organize social spaces²⁰. Projects of inclusion in which citizenship and belonging are expanded to new groups often rely on reinforcing exclusionary boundaries in complex, and often counterproductive, ways.

Citizenship, simply put, matters. The works cited here and more demonstrate the rhetoricity of citizenship as well as the importance of struggles over the definition of citizenship to marginalized communities. Pham notes that “rhetoric scholarship is now more than ever attentive to questions and concerns of citizenship for the people on society’s margins. From these margins we find the limits of citizenship; we find its promises and potential for liberatory action and its charge meanings loaded onto formal legal status and informal belonging.”²¹ For Cisneros, “rhetoric enacts and contests borders and citizenship,” and he shows in his case studies how citizen vigilante border patrol groups and anti-immigration legislators “serve to restrictively define citizenship and civic identity.”²² For Bennett, discussing queer blood bans, “the mimetic force of blood donations acts as a method of recasting national identifications and making communal bond appear natural,” and the systemic exclusion of queer subjects from donating blood functions to exclude them from civic identity.²³ Additionally, many Black Americans live on the border of citizenship, born in (or naturalized to) the United States and entitled to the rights and privileges of citizenship in plain, “colorblind” law, but denied the embodied practice of those rights and privileges through repeated rituals of murder by police, racially biased laws and

¹⁹ See Irene Bloemraad, Anna Korteweg, and Gökçe Yurdakul, “Citizenship and Immigration.”

²⁰ For work in communication studies on public debates over the definition of the American subject, see Cisneros, “Contaminated Communities”; DeChaine, “Bordering the Civic Imaginary”; Flores, “Constructing Rhetorical Borders”; and Ono and Sloop, *Shifting Borders*.

²¹ Vincent Pham, “The racial matters of citizenship,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 104, no. 1 (2017), 95.

²² Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us*, 6-7.

²³ Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood*, 7.

sentencing, felon and non-felon disenfranchisement, and a litany of other evolving strategies of historical oppression. Rhetorical scholar Ersula Ore writes of the “rhetoric of civic belonging,” explaining how George Zimmerman’s “preoccupation with policing, judgement, and keeping blacks in their place” led him to report and act upon Trayvon Martin’s perceived lack of belonging in their Florida neighborhood, ultimately resulting in Zimmerman murdering the teenager and being exonerated for his crimes.²⁴ Current policy and advocacy surrounding DACA and the DREAM Act centers economic productivity as justification for continued residency or a pathway to citizenship, restricting liberatory end goals by limiting possible avenues for civic belonging. The rhetorical struggle over contested meanings of citizenship is ongoing, and inattention to the explicit rhetoricity of citizenship risks drastic outcomes for marginalized groups.

Critics of citizenship frameworks argue that the exclusionary nature of the concept renders it inadequate to imagine transformative liberation. Citizenship is deeply relevant to the history of rhetorical studies, but deserves to be problematized, as Chávez notes that the field has been “dominated by a perspective that belongs unambiguously to Western, white, heterosexual, physically and mentally able, educated, cisgender, citizen men in Europe and the United States.”²⁵ Chávez describes scholars’ evolving conceptions of citizenship, turning away from close textual analyses of speakers who the critic deems to be the “ideal orator” (wealthy, white men in positions of power) towards “normal people,” while noticing that the shift to the study of “normal” or “ordinary” citizens retains many of the exclusions and biases present in selecting ideal orators. The pursuit is plagued by the same questions: what is a citizen? What is the civic?

²⁴ Ersula Ore, *Lynching: Violence, Rhetoric, and American Identity* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019), 2.

²⁵ Chávez, “Beyond Inclusion,” 162.

Perhaps more importantly, who is *not* a citizen and what is *not* the civic? Why should our inquiries be centered on these subjects and in these locations? She writes that “as the discipline has considered public discourses more broadly, we have turned attention to the civic practices of ordinary citizens, many of whom demand inclusion in state and national formations in innovative ways, or attempt to broaden the image of who a citizen is and what citizenship can be.”²⁶

Ultimately, Chávez rejects a focus on citizenship, challenging that “projects of inclusion don’t rupture oppressive structures; instead they uphold and reinforce those structures by showing how they can be kinder and gentler and better without actually changing much at all.”²⁷

While the fundamentally exclusionary nature of citizenship should be (and largely is) acknowledged within contemporary scholarly work, there are still arguments for its utility, including the very real way in which public citizenship discourses impact material and political reality. Bennett argues that “citizenship’s radical indeterminacy does not suggest it has no material or political capital. It simply means citizenship is a fluid concept whose meaning is habitable in particular historical and cultural contexts.”²⁸ Scholars such as Cisneros and DeChaine have investigated the relationship between borders and citizenship, particularly in the context of the United States’ southern border. Cisneros writes “borders are important because they help us define who is a citizen and who is not, who belongs and who is ‘alien,’ indeed, what citizenship is and what it is not.”²⁹ DeChaine, similarly, emphasizes the related importance of borders and citizenship:

borders and border symbolism are formative in shaping public understandings of citizenship and identity. The production of civic identity reflects intense struggles over

²⁶ Chávez, “Beyond Inclusion,” 163-164.

²⁷ Chávez, “Beyond Inclusion,” 165-166

²⁸ Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood*, 7.

²⁹ Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us*, 5.

the cultural politics of recognition, struggles that often involve fraught negotiations of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. Such struggles and negotiations bear profoundly on ways that people view each other and are viewed by others as members of, or outsiders to, the national community.³⁰

Furthermore, Cisneros elucidates the relationship between borders and citizenship, analyzing how “attempts to tighten borders ... serve to restrictively define citizenship and civic identity.”³¹ While my case study of the New York Catholic Protectory does not deal directly with a *physical* border, the youth I examine in this thesis navigate what Cisneros calls *figurative* borders: spaces of identity, culture, and community.”³² As rhetoric “enacts and contests borders of citizenship,” the advocacy and administration of the Protectory can be seen historically as contributing to the work of defining citizenship and civic identity in ways which reinscribe whiteness and capitalist subjectivity.

The works cited above track ways in which oppressive forces work to limit access to citizenship and narrowly define civic identity. Building on this body of work, this thesis contributes a slightly different element to the conversation. Cisneros writes that “the borders of U.S. citizenship have been constituted across time, in concert with shifting power relations, to define the parameters of belonging,” calling attention to “the importance of historicizing particular configurations of border and citizenship.”³³ My project, then, complements a growing literature within communication studies of contemporary issues of citizenship and identity at the United States’ southern border and among Latinx people by exploring a different historical configuration of race, difference, and belonging. Rather than identifying how explicitly

³⁰ DeChaine, *Border Rhetorics*, 2.

³¹ Cisneros, *The Border Crossed Us*, 7.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

exclusionary forces rhetorically construct others, the New York Catholic Protectory reveals to us a historical moment in which citizenship was expanded, nuancing our understanding of the rhetorical dimensions of citizenship. Additionally, the details of this case study open avenues for critiques along the lines of Chávez's, demonstrating how a century of "progressive" mechanisms of inclusion implicitly reinscribed the same white supremacist norms.

Rhetorical scholar Leslie Hahner writes of "Americanization" movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries, which sought to transform immigrants into "true" Americans.³⁴ Particularly, she locates the early 20th century as a time when there was a "codification of patriotism into a set of normative expectations transforming what it meant to be an American."³⁵ Importantly, Hahner emphasizes that this time period was not simply a time of assimilation for many immigrant communities, but also a time in which widespread, deliberate strategies of assimilation created a rubric for American-ness that shaped the national conception of American identity. Through her broader study of Americanization strategies, she touches on the topic of child delinquency, noting that "many period pedagogues contended that children's clubs proved a tremendous force in the Americanization of immigrant youth."³⁶ While Hahner focuses her analysis of delinquency on secular "girls' clubs" such as the Camp Fire Girls and Girl Scouts, her arguments can be applied to the Protectory and its boys' division. She writes that for young daughters of immigrants in the early 20th century, Americanization was "an embodied, and thus privately and publicly identifiable, performance of national rituals and proficient domesticity."³⁷ These teachings align with the Protectory's girls' division, and are paralleled in the boys' division, which taught being American as a practice of maintaining productive industrial employment.

³⁴ Hahner, *To become an American*, xiv.

³⁵ *Ibid*, xvii.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 123.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 124.

Following Hahner's consideration of organizations like the Protectory as not just facilitating assimilation, but also contributing to a clearer shared national definition of what it means to perform being "American," there is clear value in examining the discourse of this period to understand how it impacted the historical trajectory of debates over citizenship and belonging in ways which carry significant ramifications for contemporary immigration debates.

In looking to the New York Catholic Protectory as an example of one such mechanism, I argue that further examination of the specific conditions of assimilation imposed upon some immigrant groups can reveal how pathways to citizenship do and don't make themselves available to various groups, inspiring deeper critiques of citizenship and race and how the two interact. Examining historical pathways and invitations to citizenship shows how American identity develops, exposing the racialized assistance offered to subjects who have strategic access to whiteness in order to preserve existing hierarchies. To repeat a crucial sentiment from Chávez, "all inclusionary logics seem to share that they reinforce existing structures and tend to obscure those structures' flaws."³⁸ By conceptualizing the assimilation of Catholic youth in the Protectory's care into white American national identity as a form of inclusion, I trace, expose, and challenge the inclusionary logics of citizenship that reinforce historical hierarchies of race and class, allowing us to challenge implicit assumptions about which bodies (and knowledges) are includable and redeemable.

Citizenship and Race

While citizenship is fundamentally exclusionary, that exclusion is not inherently racialized. To suggest such would be to reinforce outdated and disproven notions of racial biological essentialism. Geneticist Joseph L. Graves asserts that "the traditional concept of race

³⁸ Chávez, "Beyond Inclusion," 166.

as a biological fact is a myth.”³⁹ Rather than being biological, race has been socially and historically constructed to explain and justify historical phenomena, and in turn those constructed meanings have been reinscribed throughout history. Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields’ *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* traces the origins of how, why, when, and where race was historically constructed in the United States, and how these constructed meanings have had lasting effects. Among these effects are the utilization of racial tropes within criminal justice, as illustrated in the work of rhetorical critics such as Bryan McCann, in ways that also manifest in contemporary immigration debates.

Fields and Fields outline how and why race, as an ideology, was produced in American history. Focusing on political economy, they argue that race “occurred as part of a historical process” which “cast a long shadow over subsequent history.”⁴⁰ Their historical analysis of the emerging laws and conditions of racism in early U.S. history reveals that racial subjugation via slavery emerged only when it was economically convenient, and was dispensed of only when it was absolutely economically (and politically) necessary. In their understanding, the specific landscape of white supremacy that exists in the United States as a legacy of slavery was produced as a side-effect of a system whose primary goal was profit.⁴¹ As the model of indentured servitude became unsustainable, plantation owners turned to African slavery for a large, unpaid labor source. As Fields and Fields explain, Black populations who were violently enslaved were removed from their historical context of struggle and rights and thus “available for perpetual slavery in a way that English servants were not”:

³⁹ Joseph L. Graves, *The Race Myth: Why We Pretend Race Exists in America* (New York: Penguin Group), 2004.

⁴⁰ Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 111.

⁴¹ Other scholars, such as Cedric Robinson in *Black Marxism*, seem to emphasize the existence of underlying pre-slavery prejudice that Fields and Fields gloss over. I would suggest that while prejudice against black people certainly preceded slavery, Fields and Fields’ historical economic theorization accounts for how the uniquely violent and horrific oppression of Black people in the U.S. became normalized and accepted.

Africans and Afro-West Indians had not taken part in the long history of negotiation and contest in which the English lower classes had worked out the relationship between themselves and their superiors. Therefore, the custom and law that embodied that history did not apply to them. To put it another way: when English servants entered the ring in Virginia, they did not enter alone. Instead, they entered in company with the generations who had preceded them in the struggle; and the outcome of those earlier struggles established the terms and conditions of the latest one. But African and Afro-West Indians did enter the ring alone. Their forebears had struggled in a different arena, which had no bearing on this one. Whatever concessions they might obtain had to be won from scratch, in unequal combat, an ocean away from the people they might have called on for reinforcements.⁴²

Still, slavery should have been irreconcilable with the political ideology of the “white yeoman” class, those approximately two-thirds of free white southerners who did not own slaves and highly valued their political independence, self-determination, and self-sufficiency. Thus, in order to sustain slavery, the production of racial ideology became necessary because of these contradictions among different groups of the white population. Again, race was not inherent, but rather came to be through this process by which it provided onlookers with “the descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence” to “make rough sense of the social reality that they live and create from day to day.”⁴³ Without the rhetorical production of white supremacy, life in the Old South would have been incoherent—and more poor whites may have identified with slaves over plantation-owning elites, threatening the plantation model’s viability.

⁴² Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 125.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 134.

It is through this understanding of the historical production of race that Fields and Fields chastise U.S. historians for reinforcing the ideology of race—and thus perpetuating the “shadow” we live in—by universalizing it: “taking for granted that virtually everything people of African descent do, think, or say is racial in nature” and assuming “that any situation involving people of European descent and people of African descent automatically falls under the heading ‘race relations’.”⁴⁴ The implications of these critiques and realizations on scholarship as a whole, and my project specifically, are significant: if, as Fields and Fields argue, “since race is not genetically programmed, racial prejudice cannot be genetically programmed either but, like race itself, must arise historically,” it is not sufficient to simply use race to explain unequal invitations and pathways to citizenship. Instead, we must interrogate the underlying functions of these unequal invitations, asking how they work to reify state power, reinscribe western ways of thinking, reinforce neoliberal capitalism, and reproduce white supremacy. Furthermore, Fields and Fields criticize the invisibility of whiteness in discourse (i.e. “there are scholars and *black* scholars, women and *black* women”).⁴⁵

To tie this history of race in the United States into a discussion on citizenship, Fields and Fields teach us the ways in which boundaries of citizenship shift across place and time. By understanding how invitations to citizenship are/n’t extended, and to whom, and the terms of these invitations, we can critique the ways in which discourses of redemption and redeemability imply a racialized moral code which absolves societal structures of violence while also reinscribing them. Fields and Fields write of race as an ideology that was created in a certain place, at a certain time, for specific reasons: to persuade audiences to accept social hierarchies that protected economic interests. Race as we understand it in the United States, then, was

⁴⁴ Ibid, 116-117.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 115.

rhetorically constructed and has been rhetorically reproduced for centuries. Rhetorical scholars are uniquely situated to attend to the problematic discourses of “race relations” or “racial diversity” that buy back into the biologically essentialist idea of inherent differences between people of different races, reinforcing the racial ideology that Fields and Fields expose. Whiteness is an invisible term and animating force of the Protectory’s discourse—while race is rarely stated, the cultural norms and practices that the Protectory sought to adhere to were reproductions of whiteness. By sustaining Catholicism in this assimilation process, the Protectory created a pathway towards a particular form of whiteness that was still alien in the context of anti-Catholicism in the United States. To use race to explain the Protectory’s assimilation practices would be to risk falling into the “race relations” trap that Fields and Fields warn of. Rather, the Protectory ought to be viewed as a site where race was actively and strategically (re)produced. We can also answer their challenge to render whiteness visible by studying the discourses of inclusion that Chávez problematizes to understand how the creation of race has created sites of possibility for whiteness to seem gentler without actually forfeiting the exclusionary function of citizenship.

The late 19th and early 20th century, in particular, are an important moment in the trajectory of racialized criminality in the United States. As Hahner notes above, it was a crucial period for immigration and assimilation, with legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act institutionalizing racialized exclusion from national identity. Her research reveals that criminality for European immigrant youth was seen as a result of “the impossibility” of discipline from immigrant guardians.⁴⁶ This articulation of delinquency as socially created and inevitable occurs at a moment in history when reactive policing was replaced by full-time

⁴⁶ Hahner, *To become an American*, 126.

departments, which largely did not emerge in the United States until the end of the 19th century.⁴⁷ As the criminal justice apparatus grew in scope, its origins in the enforcement of racial ideology persisted. While slave patrols were evolving into police departments, “slave codes” were evolving into “black codes” and Jim Crow laws, producing unequal criminal justice outcomes for racialized minorities and European immigrants, even as the criminality of these immigrants was stereotyped and preinscribed into their identity. In consideration of the discrimination these immigrant communities faced, it is important to analyze the rhetoric of delinquency in this period to observe how the redeemability of white populations was articulated.

When considering redemption, and who is seen as potentially redeemable, we can see that certain groups of people receive invitations to citizenship that are less frequent, less full, and more conditional than those extended to privileged groups. Bureaucratically, these uneven invitations are facilitated through courts, law enforcement, government agencies, and implicit bias. Rhetorically, racial ideology justifies this disparity—often explicitly historically but more frequently implicitly in contemporary times through racialized tropes of criminality. As the Protectory facilitated the redemption and journey into whiteness of European immigrant youth a century ago, and contemporary immigration advocates attempt a similar project of inclusion for Latinx youth via DACA, we can interrogate the rhetorical processes by which immigrant youth are identified as redeemable. How do governmental and non-governmental actors justify the inclusion and exclusion of different groups? What are the rhetorical processes used to demarcate the boundaries of citizenship and belonging?

In contemporary America, race casts certain immigrants within the frame of criminality and the invitation to citizenship is rendered as conditional or partial. While the current thesis

⁴⁷ Gary Potter. “The History of Policing in the United States,” Eastern Kentucky University, June 25, 2013, <https://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/history-policing-united-states-part-1>.

explores the historical development of these conditional invitations, it is useful to develop a clearer understanding of contemporary practices. To do so, I turn to two case studies by rhetorical critic Bryan McCann. In a study of Stanley “Tookie” Williams, who was executed by the state of California in 2005, McCann aptly traces competing narratives of redemption, both from Williams’ advocates and his prosecutors. To use Chávez’s terms, the state’s narrative of redemption was inclusionary while Williams’ was transformative. In order to be spared execution, the state would have required Williams to formally confess to the crimes he had been convicted of, apologize for them, and “snitch” on other gang members. Williams’ own personal redemption narrative involved an alternative, transformative imagination of justice which acknowledged his misdeeds but also implicated segregated schools, the prison-industrial complex, regimes of exploitation, and white supremacy in the crimes he had committed. McCann writes that “for [Williams], redemption entailed both atoning for his personal sins and adopting a critical sensibility capable of deconstructing and confronting structural violence.”⁴⁸ Williams was executed because his version of redemption was based on knowledge produced by his lived, embodied noncitizen experience—knowledge that contradicts, and was therefore irredeemable to, white supremacist structures.

For Williams, the cost of inclusion was too high, the pay-off of a partial citizenship too small. One noteworthy site of differentiation between Williams’ narrative of redemption and the demands placed upon him by the state was snitching. McCann asserts that “he would not snitch; he would not empower the state to imprison more black youth.” He continues: “this refusal to cooperate functions as a divestment from the structures of inequality he associated with the American criminal justice system... [T]o remain faithful to his own radical rendering of

⁴⁸ Bryan McCann, “Redemption in the Neoliberal and Radical Imaginations: The Saga of Stanley ‘Tookie’ Williams,” *Communication, Culture, and Critique* 7, no. 1(2014), 100.

redemption, Williams had little choice but to deny the state's demand that he cooperate with their surveillance and incarceration of his brethren."⁴⁹ McCann's essay locates and analyzes one pivotal moment where a particular Black person was offered inclusion and refused the offer so as to avoid reinvesting in a system that had been violent and cruel towards him. The offer of redemption carried with it a specific, racialized moral code that demanded the absolution of the system—and it was incredibly partial, as he would have spent the rest of his life in prison.

In another case study, McCann examines how James Johnson, Jr., who murdered three people at the Chrysler plant where he worked, was found not guilty for reasons of insanity. Rather than being redeemable, Johnson's "blackness ... was itself regarded as pathology."⁵⁰ In this article, McCann dives into the contested history of Black mental health:

Mental health professionals characterized slaves as mentally and morally inferior to whites, and, therefore, unfit for participation in white civil society. Slavery's defenders, therefore, argued it was a desirable vocation for black men and women who would languish under anything other than conditions of servitude. Following abolition and the collapse of Reconstruction, clinical characterizations of former slaves came to reflect broader discourses of criminalization that portrayed freed blacks, particularly black men, as violent and hypersexual threats to the social order. People of African origin, in short, would never be able to properly assimilate into white society. Such sober conclusions, often delivered in deeply paternalistic ways, rationalized the continued exploitation, surveillance, confinement, and killing of black bodies.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid, 103.

⁵⁰ Bryan McCann, "Chrysler Pulled the Trigger: The Affective Politics of Insanity and Black Rage at the Trial of James Johnson, Jr.," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (2016), 136.

⁵¹ Ibid, 135.

While Johnson's life was spared due to the jury's perception of his "insanity," that verdict simultaneously precluded a full invitation to citizenship or belonging. Johnson's circumstances could be used to make a systemic critique similar to the one offered by Williams: resources were mobilized away from his home city of Detroit, and the state cracked down on Black activism, resulting in a "war zone" where 43 people were killed, 467 injured, and over 7,200 arrested in a five-day uprising in July 1967. On an individual level, Johnson was repeatedly passed over for advancement opportunities and received racial epithet-filled orders to do dangerous and unpleasant work. On the day of the shooting, Johnson had been suspended for insubordination after refusing to work in the ovens without suitable safety equipment. As was the case with Williams, the partial invitation that Johnson received to survival carried with it a narrative which placed responsibility for the killings solely on his insanity, denying credibility to critiques of structural racism across large-scale urban divestment and localized workplace discrimination.

McCann allows us to see, in these case studies, *who* redemption is offered to, *when* and *how* it becomes offered, and the price of admission for Black Americans from whom the state has already extracted costly tolls. The scholarship done on these individual case studies can be complemented by a historical perspective that allows for a broader understanding of the development of racialized practices of citizenship and belonging. By considering the invitations to citizenship made by the New York Catholic Protectory in the early 20th century, I will demonstrate the ways in which historical logics of citizenship have and have not changed over time, adjusting to appear kinder and more inclusive while retaining their exclusionary, white supremacist function.

Citizenship, Race, and Productivity

Scholarship within communication studies has theorized the relationship between the nature of labor performed by workers and their felt sense of belonging to a community. In one key piece, Raka Shome investigates the crisis of belonging created by colonialism when call center workers in India perform customer service for American corporations and clientele:

The spatiality and temporality of Gurgaon/Philadelphia blur and collide in her virtual world, as she finds herself at the messy intersection of multiple times and multiple spaces articulating each other in the transnational regime of telematics and global economy. Employees describe their lives as living India by day and America by night; thinking like an Indian by day and American by night, given that they work through the night when business hours are active in the day time in the US. The stress of living dual lives stretched across multiple times and geographies often takes the form of emotional toll and a transnational identity crisis of a unique nature.⁵²

While Shome's case study is unique due to the virtual nature of the work and diasporic spread observed in these call centers, the struggle of navigating different cultural contexts at home and at work resulting in an identity crisis can be seen operating at varying levels across colonial and immigrant experiences. Americanization campaigns which emphasized blue collar industrial work for immigrant populations functioned consistently with these processes, attempting to cultivate collective identity through labor.

Of course, as citizenship's inclusionary and exclusionary patterns are interwoven with racial logics throughout U.S. history, the linkages between identity and labor are as well. As McCann attests, historical traumas inflicted onto racialized populations in the United States have

⁵² Raka Shome, "Thinking through the diaspora: Call centers, India, and a new politics of hybridity." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 9, no. 1 (2006), 114.

contemporary ramifications. For example, discussions of Black labor and American identity are inextricably linked to legacies of slavery. As geographer Katherine McKittrick writes, “the legacy of slavery and the labor of the unfree both shape and are part of the environment we presently inhabit.”⁵³ How can it not, when contemporary Black inmates held in prisons like Angola State Penitentiary in Louisiana perform forced labor in the same fields as their ancestors once did as slaves and are housed in cell blocks in buildings that were converted from slave quarters? In the case studies from McCann presented above, the double-bind of Black labor within a U.S. historical context is presented. For Williams, systemic racism that denied resources and opportunities to young Black men combined with a social value system that prioritizes work and economic self-sufficiency to create the conditions for gang violence. Johnson, on the other hand, had employment but his job became a site for the repetition of subjugated labor normalized throughout history, as he was denied advancement, verbally abused, and forced to perform undesirable and dangerous work without safety equipment.

In the case of the New York Catholic Protectory and other European immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, labor served a key assimilatory function—but one that was available to them contingent upon their access to whiteness. It is important, following definitions of race from Fields and Fields and Graves, to note that whiteness is not simply an essential descriptor of skin color, but a socially constructed category. Nakayama and Krizek point to the difficulty defining whiteness, as

[t]here is no ‘true essence’ to ‘whiteness’; there are only historically contingent constructions of social location. However, they broadly understand whiteness as a rhetorical construction that is politically positioned as the invisible center that “affects the

⁵³ Katherine McKittrick, “Plantation Futures,” *small axe: a caribbean journal of criticism* 17, no. 3 (2013), 2.

everyday fabric of our lives but resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its position. It wields power yet endures as a largely unarticulated position.⁵⁴

My project continues the work they call for: “critically examining this space” so that “it gains particularity, while losing universality.⁵⁵ In his widely influential work “How the Irish Became White”, Noel Ignatiev investigates how “Catholic Irish, an oppressed race in Ireland, became members of an oppressing race in America.”⁵⁶ In many ways, Hahner’s “Americanization” and Ignatiev’s “becoming white” are similar processes, and indeed the New York Catholic Protectory’s work to Americanize the Irish and Italian immigrant youth in their care was also the work of shepherding these subjects into whiteness. At this point in American history, anti-Catholic sentiments had fused with xenophobia to create broad public anxiety regarding catholic schools.⁵⁷ Constitutional law scholar Douglas F. Johnson wrote that as of 2010, at least thirty U.S. state constitutions contained a variation of the “Blaine Amendment”—a failed 19th century constitutional amendment designed to prevent the flow of public funding into Catholic parochial schools.⁵⁸

Racialized others were excluded through the aforementioned historical legacies and the context of an early 20th century when racist immigration legislation restricted Chinese migrant workers from citizenship and set quotas which disproportionately favored entrants from

⁵⁴ Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, “Whiteness: A strategic rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (1995): 291.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Ignatiev, “How the Irish became white,” 2.

⁵⁷ Joseph G. Mannard, “American Anti-Catholicism and its Literature,” *Ex Libris* 4, no. 1 (1981): 2-9. For examples of case studies into these anxieties and the battles over education in the time period, see Paula Abrams, *Cross Purposes: Pierce v Society of Sisters and the struggle over compulsory public education* and Kenneth C. Barnes, *Anti-Catholicism in Arkansas : how politicians, the press, the Klan, and religious leaders imagined an enemy, 1910-1960*.

⁵⁸ Douglas F. Johnson, *Freedom of Religion: Locke v. Davey and State Blaine Amendments* (El Paso: LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2010).

European nations. In the same set of historical logics through which the marginalization and subjugation of racialized labor became normalized, labor and economic self-sufficiency were key values for the white working class—the group Fields and Fields call “white yeomen.” It is in this specific, historically produced articulation of citizenship, race, and productivity that labor became available to European immigrants as a pathway for empowerment, belonging, and entrance into white American citizenship.

American Immigration in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

As noted throughout this chapter in the work of Leslie Hahner, the time period from the late 19th century to the early 20th century was a crucial time for immigration and Americanization in the United States—and, importantly, governmental involvement in both. The federal government began exerting control over immigration with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and opening of Ellis Island in 1892, enforcing immigration quotas which favored arrivals from European nations. As this era developed, governmental and nongovernmental institutions developed roles in these processes. Hahner writes that in this period, “Americanization was undertaken by thousands of institutions, organizations, and individuals that varied wildly in their goals and approaches.”⁵⁹ In New York State, progressive legislators endeavored to educate immigrants to “think as an American, to feel as an American, to act as an American, to understand the spirit of America.”⁶⁰ However, while the government was concerned with Americanization, its enactment was often left to private organizations. For working adults, one example is Henry Ford’s “Ford Motor Company English School Melting Pot Rituals of 1916,” an assimilation program which culminated in a graduation ceremony where immigrant workers

⁵⁹ Hahner, *To become an American*, xiv.

⁶⁰ Committee on Education, *Americanization: Report of the Committee on Education of Governor Smith’s Reconstruction Commission*, by Abram I. Elkus and Felix Adler, Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1919, 4, quoted in Leslie Hahner, *To become an American*, 153.

climbed off of a mock boat on stage, entered a massive cauldron labeled “Melting Pot,” and exited wearing Americanized clothes and holding a U.S. flag.⁶¹ For immigrant and first-generation youth, a collection of religious and secular organizations emerged in New York State in the 19th century to participate in facilitating assimilation and, through that work, constructing American identity. These types of practices were not unique to Catholic youth during this period. Institutions such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School and the Hampton Institute also sought to facilitate the Americanization of children by taking them away from their family and cultural space and placing them into white-sponsored institutions where children were trained to become American by becoming workers. This thesis focuses on the New York Catholic Protectory, one of the largest and most influential childcare institutions in the history of the United States. The following section outlines the history and function of the Protectory as it sought not only to provide for the youth in its care but also to expand its cultural influence and reach.

The New York Catholic Protectory

Existing from 1863 until 1939, and serving over 141,000 children, the New York Catholic Protectory improved and saved the lives of generations of impoverished youth. During a time period where the state lacked sufficient social services to deal with delinquent and underprivileged youth, religious aid societies such as the Protectory emerged to serve the dual purpose of providing for the care of these children, and through that work, expanding their cultural influence. The Protectory cared for thousands of children at a time, providing religious services, education, and industrial training to help turn impoverished and misbehaving youth into self-sufficient, law-abiding alumni. While its system of forced assimilation into American life, Catholicism, and the capitalist industrial workforce is certainly ripe for critique, we might also

⁶¹ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 49-50.

ask: during a time in American history well-known for its brutal treatment of Black Americans in the South, Mexicans in the Southwest, migrant Chinese workers, and indigenous populations, how was it that such sympathy emerged for these at-risk youth of European descent so as to spark the creation and maintenance of a massive institution to house, feed, educate, and train them? To prime an analysis of the discourses of delinquency and industriousness, I look at a sampling of discourse around the Protectory, including letters from the personal archive of Father Antonio Demo, to assess the conditions of the invitations to citizenship offered to Catholic immigrant youth.

The Protectory's mission was aptly summarized by one of its directors in 1935, who wrote that the "fundamental purposes had remained unchanged:"

We aim to kindle within the boy a spark of virtue; to imbue him with a sense of religious and social values, to recre-ate around him a fresh environment that will reclaim his ideals and lead him to a finer sense of living; to instill in him those attributes of character, which make for his indepen-dence and yet bring vividly to his mind the integral part he must play in the social scheme. To achieve these ends we rely fortunately, not upon equipment but on the precept and example of men.⁶²

There is a clear investment in the development of these young European immigrant children (they use gendered language despite the Protectory caring for a large number of young girls as well), and for an organization that served poor children alongside teenagers convicted of multiple crimes, the charitable spirit is striking: within the Protectory, you could find teenage boys who were guilty of burglary and assault enjoying extensive musical instruction, attending

⁶² The New York Catholic Protectory. *Seventy-Third Annual Report of the New York Catholic Protectory to the Legislature of the State of New York and to the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*. Westchester: The New York Catholic Protectory, 1935.

weekly public lectures, and enjoying many sports and games. Legendary baseball player Babe Ruth visited the Protectory to speak to children. The Protectory band was a favorite of Theodore Roosevelt and they were invited to play at his inauguration.⁶³ Such investment in the reformation of young people is shocking when contrasted to even the present-day poor standards of care provided in Juvenile Halls, not to mention the care other racialized children of the same era received.

The Protectory began in the mid-19th century when wealthy Irish Catholic New Yorkers grew concerned with the methods of the Children's Aid Society, a major charity whose "orphan train program ... placed poor children in the West to live with Protestant farm families," removing large numbers of impoverished Irish immigrant children from the Catholic faith.⁶⁴ Led by Dr. Levi Stillman Ives, a group of 26 Irish-born or descended wealthy New Yorkers served as a de facto board and fundraising base for the Protectory's founding. Despite some pushback from the state legislature, the group was able to obtain the authority (and later funding) to care for children under 14 as entrusted by parents and guardians, children 7-14 years of age classified as "idle, truant, vicious, or homeless," and children 7-14 years of age as transferred by the New York commissioners of Public Charities and Corrections.⁶⁵ Empowered to take into its custody children found guilty of crimes, children whose families could not provide for their care, and any children who were homeless, truant, or otherwise delinquent, the Protectory had wide authority to take into its care any number of youth. From 1863 to 1865, the Protectory received no state funding and was run almost entirely by donations, though in the late 1860s the state granted \$50,000 (about \$750,000 in 2019 dollars) towards the construction of a new building and began

⁶³ Munch, "At Home in the Bronx," 42-43.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 31.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 33.

providing \$50 per child per year.⁶⁶ The charter and subsequent funding gains were, as is common with government appropriations, won through lobbying efforts from the Protectory's wealthy and powerful board members. This legacy of lobbying would continue as the Protectory sought to expand its influence.

Shortly after the Protectory's founding, New York passed the Children's Law of 1875, making it illegal for children over the age of 2 to be kept in poorhouses.⁶⁷ While this law was also pushed for by Protestant charity workers, it served to increase populations for relief agencies across the state who would now be tasked with caring for younger and additional impoverished children. The Protectory was active in lobby and litigation, and managed to have its fingerprints on the law, as "Protectory President Richard H. Clake, LL.D. was instrumental in" having an amendment added to the law which required that children either be placed with a family or in an institution with the same faith as the child's parents.⁶⁸ This further addressed the Protectory's founding concern of maintaining and growing the Church's influence and thus the statute not only increased the Protectory's influence by widening its age range and jurisdiction, but also by codifying that Catholic youth could not be entrusted to other aid societies. As a result of this law—and crucial amendment—the Protectory became the largest childcare institution in the United States, and its directors were careful to ensure they received every child the statute entitled to them, suing for custody when Catholic children were assigned to other organizations. The use of resources on these efforts moves well past a mission of service and clearly extends into a mission of control, expanding their reach, population, and influence.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 34-35.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 33.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 35.

These methods of control would only continue to grow. In the early 20th century, the Protectory advocated for the creation of a separate Children’s Court to handle cases involving minors in an attempt to reduce their obligation to return children to parents: under the new Court, Protectory officials wrote that “the commitments for short terms have been almost entirely banished... and this is cause for congratulation.”⁶⁹ It was not uncommon for children to have incredibly short stays in the Protectory, sometimes only for days or weeks as families attempted to scrape by in difficult times. However, administrators felt as though children who came for very short stays were utilizing Protectory resources without being afforded an opportunity for reform. To push back against this and ensure that stricter sentencing occurred, the Protectory advocated fiercely for the Children’s Court, demonizing parents:

The suspension of sentence in so many cases proves the forbearance of the Court, but it appears to us that, without intelligent and devoted probation officers to look after the children, the leniency may not be beneficial. Even with the most faithful probation officers, in poor homes, and with neglectful and depraved parents, the child can make no progress towards improvement.⁷⁰

The Protectory’s goals were clear: they did not seek to simply help make productive citizens out of delinquent youth, but rather sought to solve a societal problem in a manner which served the objectives of the church. Through keeping Catholic-born children in the church, indoctrinating and disciplining them so as to produce “good citizen” subjects, and centering themselves as a model for childcare and charity in the United States, the Protectory both created Americans—making citizens out of non-citizens—and contributed to the construction of

⁶⁹ The New York Catholic Protectory. *Fortieth Annual Report of the New York Catholic Protectory to the Legislature of the State of New York and to the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*. Westchester: The New York Catholic Protectory, 1902, 9. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112052918593&view=1up&seq=21>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

“American,” defining what citizenship means through citizenship production and strengthening norms of institutionalized religion, capitalist subjectivity, and whiteness.

While the Protectory directly sought to raise the number of children under their care, their influence also stretched far beyond the approximately 141,000 children they served in New York State. Due to its wide-ranging influence, the Protectory also became a model for social work and children’s services across the country. In June and July 1902, about thirty to forty practitioners from across the country visited the Protectory as part of the fifth annual month-long “Summer School in Philanthropic Work,” examining various services offered for the purposes of instruction.⁷¹ The Charity Organization Society of New York developed plans to extend this month-long course into a two-year program as “much has been accomplished by this summer school in educating workers who carry the methods of organization elsewhere.”⁷²

The Protectory’s massive reach also facilitated the reification of participation in the capitalist workforce as a means of performing citizenship and belonging. As gears of industrialization spun through the 19th and early 20th centuries, participation in dangerous, low-wage factory work became one avenue through which immigrants could assimilate into a working-class American lifestyle while contributing to the national economy. The Protectory prided themselves on doing this kind of work, calling the industrial training they offered “eminently useful and even necessary,” as “idleness has taught [the children] much evil, but this is greatly overcome or lessened by training the hand and eye simultaneously with the intellect—by teaching them how to work.”⁷³ This economization of immigrants did not originate nor end

⁷¹ Ibid, 11.

⁷² Colby, Frank Moore, ed., *The International Year Book: A Compendium of the World’s Progress During the Year 1902* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1903), 143.

https://books.google.com/books?id=gNRBAQAAMAAJ&ppis=_e&dq=1902+summer+school+in+philanthropic+work&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

⁷³ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Fortieth Annual Report*, 18.

with this era of European industrial workers, but it presents a troubling legacy whereby the criteria for expansions of American citizenship is the economic utility of immigrants and not their humanity.

The Protectory slowly faded as the 20th century wore on and legislative changes and an increase in comparable organizations and institutions saw reduced numbers of delinquent and dependent children taken into their care. At the Protectory's closing in 1938, some 1,200 children were in their care—a sharp decline from nearly the nearly 3,000 children that came through their doors annually at their peak. However, they maintained high operating costs, and those costs, in combination with a legislative ban on the sale of institutionally-manufactured products, caused the Protectory's trustees to sell their New York City property (worth over \$4 million in 1938) to the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which built the Parkchester housing development that still exists to this day as home to over 40,000 New Yorkers. The Protectory closed their girls department and chose to focus on “problem boys age 11-16,” and, having previously sold St. Philip's Home in 1922, relocated to the land in Lincolndale where the Lincoln Agricultural School stood.⁷⁴

Today, a descendant institution called Lincoln Hall Boy's Haven claims “a 157-year legacy of setting young men on a positive paths to successful, productive adulthood,” harkening to the Protectory's founding and taking pride in “enabling the youth in our care to become successful members of our society.”⁷⁵ The small institution includes the Ives School, an accredited private school for grades 7-12. In addition to standard academic offerings, the Ives School offers vocational training in auto repair, building trades, culinary, barbering, computers,

⁷⁴ Munch, “At Home in the Bronx,” 46.

⁷⁵ “Transforming Lives... Inspiring Hope... Serving Youth since 1863,” Lincoln Hall Boy's Haven, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.lincolnhall.org>.

photography, and media arts.⁷⁶ Their website features two alumni stories—both Asian-American, both sent to Lincoln Hall after running into trouble with the law, and both now successfully graduated from college, one working in cybersecurity and the other pursuing IT.⁷⁷ One of the profiles specifically states that he is the son of Chinese immigrants.⁷⁸ In 2018, Lincoln Hall was chosen to participate in New York Governor Andrew Cuomo’s “Raise The Age” program, allowing them to take up to 20 16- and 17-year-olds charged with nonviolent crimes who can no longer be held in institutions with inmates over 18 years of age.⁷⁹

The Protectory influenced and reinscribed the ways in which institutionalized religious participation and capitalist subjectivity are incorporated into American identity. To interrogate these core elements of participation in U.S. citizenship, we can turn back to the ways in which the children in the Protectory’s care were racialized and othered as immigrants, but successfully assimilated into whiteness. As social welfare organizations like the Protectory funneled poor European immigrant children into a particular vision of citizenship and belonging that was predicated on their access to whiteness, the suffering of brown, black, and indigenous children across the United States was ignored, enabled, or even encouraged. Just as the Protectory disciplined deviance from norms within its population, it disciplined non-whiteness through its investment in the suffering of white youth and divestment from the suffering of racialized populations. Through this, the constructed American identity that the Protectory trained subjects to perform was not just that of a church attendee and factory worker, but specifically a white one.

⁷⁶“Vocational Program,” Lincoln Hall Boy’s Haven, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.lincolnhall.org/vocational-programs>.

⁷⁷ “Adam Kim: A blessing in disguise,” Lincoln Hall Boy’s Haven, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.lincolnhall.org/copy-of-timmy-li>.

⁷⁸ “Timmy Li: No Limitations to what you can achieve,” Lincoln Hall Boy’s Haven, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.lincolnhall.org/alumni-1>.

⁷⁹ “Lincoln Hall Programs.” Lincoln Hall Boy’s Haven. Accessed June 1, 2020. <http://www.lincolnhall.org/lincoln-hall-programs>.

Conclusion

Citizenship, deployed as a way of measuring belonging in an imagined national community, involves complex practices of inclusion and exclusion. These practices are distinctly historical, emerging from moments and discourses that have contributed to the ongoing defining of American identity and culture, and they cannot be adequately considered in contemporary settings where they are taken for granted without an exploration of the rhetorical justifications and articulations through which they became normalized. This thesis seeks to contribute to this understanding of citizenship by focusing on the ways that the rhetorics of delinquency and productivity were articulated through the New York Catholic Protectory in its efforts to facilitate the pathway to belonging for the immigrant youth in its care. In chapters two and three, I focus on the articulation of delinquency and industriousness in the Protectory's letters and annual reports to the state legislature. Examples of letters sent from the Protectory to Father Antonio Demo, retrieved from his personal archives at Our Lady of Pompeii Church in lower Manhattan, demonstrate how individual children's cases were articulated to their priest, while the Protectory's annual reports to the state legislature both buy back into and shape conceptions of what American citizenship looks like in practice.

Chapter Two

The Rhetoric of Delinquency

Much of the work of the Protectory was fueled by a national anxiety around immigration, youth, delinquency, and criminal justice. A vague and slippery term, “delinquent” came to be used to describe a wide variety of behaviors and practices that ultimately labeled immigrant and first-generation youth as other. Leslie Hahner writes that “social reformers and social workers bemoaned the cultural rift between parents and their American-born offspring—a division that supposedly led to juvenile delinquency.”⁸⁰ Whether blame was placed upon poverty, cultural assimilation, or a generational divide, “a number of period investigations identified child delinquency as a condition created by the surge in new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe,” showing that across the country, delinquency cases were largely correlated with European immigrant parents.⁸¹ Hahner finds that delinquency of first-generation youth was the common cause blamed by public officials of the era for crime, poverty, unemployment, and prostitution. The New York Catholic Protectory, situated as a national leader in childcare and social work for immigrant and first-generation youth in the early 20th century, both operated within and helped shape evolving notions of delinquency as a means of facilitating the Americanization of Catholic subjects.

Even as New York State attempted to formalize the criminal justice process for juveniles in the early 20th century through the creation of a Children’s Court, the ambiguity around delinquency persisted. In a 1906 letter to the Protectory, the State Board of Charities wrote that “within the meaning of the Statute which provides for commitments to reformatories, the

⁸⁰ Hahner, *To become an American*, 125.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 125-126.

ungovernable and disorderly class, the vagrants and truants are considered to be delinquents.”⁸² Defining delinquency in relation to “ungovernable and disorderly” classes provides little clarity but does suggest the rhetorical importance of the concept of delinquency during this period. In this chapter, I will examine the rhetorical dynamics surrounding the term “delinquency” and the ways in which these notions of disorderly and ungovernable were framed in relation to the emerging sense of citizenship in the United States. To do so, I first explore the ambiguity of the term delinquency and the way the Protectory strategically employed the term and then examine the underlying relationship between delinquency and class before finally exploring the ways in which the institution itself sought to be in charge of determining delinquency.

Ambiguous Delinquency

The pervasive usage of “delinquent” and “delinquency” to describe youth in the Protectory’s care was deliberately ambiguous. Rhetorically, the usage of these vague terms allowed officials to use arbitrary thresholds for delinquency—they knew it when they saw it, meaning other markers of social difference, such as poverty, were frequently allowed to stand in for criminality. In archival records I sampled from 1904-1917, the majority of youth from Our Lady of Pompeii parish in lower Manhattan remanded to the Protectory’s custody had either “Disobedient Child” or “720 – Disorderly Conduct” listed as their crime. Protectory officials even pushed against more rigid classifications that could bound the seemingly limitless discretion of delinquency, calling attention to the term’s flexibility:

Previous to the establishment of the Children’s Court, commitments were made to the Protectory by Magistrates because of destitution of parents or for causes other than for

⁸² The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Fourth Annual Report of the New York Catholic Protectory to the Legislature of the State of New York and to the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*, Westchester: The New York Catholic Protectory, 1906, 6.

‘crime,’ being designated often as ‘ungovernable’ or ‘disorderly.’ However, an early report of the Institution says, ‘most of the children received during the first years were victims of indolent and vicious habits.’ Under the practice of the Children’s Court, a large number have been committed on conviction of specific offenses, viz: ‘petty larceny,’ ‘burglary,’ etc. It must not be presumed that the greater number of these children are more ‘criminal’ than those formerly received ... Thoughts of criminality and punishment must be banished from our minds in our efforts for their improvement. Children should not be burdened with the conviction of crime whenever it can be avoided.⁸³

In the tension between “disorderly” and “burglary,” an important distinction emerges between competing conceptualizations of the delinquency problem and its solution. The presence of a Children’s Court places the delinquent child as a defendant in a trial, naming a specific act that transgressed social norms and rendering time in the Protectory as a sentence for a crime. The Protectory sought a process of Americanization, not criminal justice, and thus imagined delinquency not as a criminal act but rather non-normative, un-American character. Delinquency, in the rhetoric of the New York Catholic Protectory, was not a quality of an action but rather a quality of a person, and in their annual reports to the state legislature they sought to demarcate the boundaries of normative, redeemable subjects as well as rationalize cases of non-reform. Thus, while contemporary definitions of juvenile delinquency may be rooted in criminality, it is important to note the ways in which the Protectory de-centered criminal acts in their rhetoric and framed delinquency as a flaw of internal moral training and not external actions—therefore casting it as a problem suitable to be solved in a religious institution and not a prison.

⁸³ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Third Annual Report of the New York Catholic Protectory to the Legislature of the State of New York and to the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*, Westchester: The New York Catholic Protectory, 1905, 9-10.

While this framing of delinquency was central to the Protectory's rationalization for its own existence, its sustenance required consistent results. In order to claim highly effective outcomes, the Protectory often moved the goalposts in efforts to rationalize cases of non-reform, promoting a wide, vague definition of delinquency while simultaneously demarcating the narrow boundaries of normative, redeemable subjects. In 1916, the Protectory wrote Father Antonio Demo that Giovanni Midlazo, a child from Demo's Our Lady of Pompeii Parish, had likely been committed to an insane asylum by his foster parent for "acting queerly."⁸⁴ The historical ambiguity of the term "queer" in this time period speaks to the erasure and loss present in these records: such was the motivation to obfuscate deviance from social norms that we are left unsure where various repressed identities haunt the ambiguous charges of "unruliness" and "disobedience" that fill these pages. In the Protectory's 1906 report to the state legislature, attempting to downplay anxiety regarding placing "poor" and "criminal" children side-by-side, officials cite the institution's practice of declining or returning children who are not "suitable subjects" for the Protectory, normally due to violent tendencies. The director of the Girl's Department, in that year's report, wrote that "if, at any time, it is found that a child is not suitable for the Protectory the case is immediately reported to our President, and the girl is transferred elsewhere."⁸⁵ In the same year, the Protectory's President reported that they "frequently exercised" their power to return children "confirmed in evil habits to the courts as improper subjects for our care."⁸⁶ The criteria for such a classification, however, followed a dubious logic that absolved the Protectory of any potential flaw, as it is noted that "we endeavor to shield each

⁸⁴ Letter, New York Catholic Protectory to Rev. A. Demo, October 31st, 1916, Church of Our Lady of Pompei (New York, NY) Records, 1892-1967, CMS 037, Series I: Correspondence, Box 10, Folder 119: New York Catholic Protectory 1913-1923, Center for Migration Studies Archive.

⁸⁵ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Fourth Annual Report*, 22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

child from any shadow of reproach by not making known the cause of commitment. Thus the standing of the child in the school, the workroom, in the social life of the institution, is made to depend simply upon her own good behavior.”⁸⁷ By the Protectory’s circular logic, delinquent children are redeemable, delinquency is a quality of character, and character is reformed through the Protectory. Therefore, when a child was not successfully reformed in the Protectory, it was not an indicator of the Protectory’s potential shortcomings, but the child’s. This elusive and ambiguous application of delinquency was strategically employed by the Protectory so that it always re-affirmed their work and presented a need for further work.

This dynamic is further developed in the Protectory’s discussion of children who underperformed academically while enrolled in their school. As indicated above, they conclude that children who are not reformed in the Protectory must not be reformable at all:

“When children have shown pronounced mental defects they have been transferred to institutions provided for such, but there are many children not normal retained in the institution. It is claimed that there should be a technical study of the defective cases, and that they should be cared for in an institution. It is believed that twenty-five per cent of children committed for delinquency are mentally defective in some degree.”⁸⁸

This argument that children who underperform academically do so because of inherent “mental defectiveness” serves doubly to reinforce the Protectory’s underlying assumptions of delinquency and character. Not only does claiming a large quantity of “defective” children absolve the Protectory from fault in cases where they fail to facilitate redemption, but it underscores their framing of delinquency itself: as an internal quality of the child and not simply a descriptor of one criminal act.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 22.

⁸⁸ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Ninth Annual Report*, 20.

The remaining children, who were successfully reformed in the Protectory's view and therefore made up the entirety of the population designated as reformable by officials, were the ones who responded well to the institution's rigid moral training. In this construction, a delinquent is not a normal child who has committed a crime, but a bad child with weak character, which may have resulted in a crime. The Protectory's director wrote that:

“What such children need is strength of will, force of character—the power to withstand temptation, to overcome themselves, to master their passions and control their appetites, and to battle against their disinclination to acquire habits of right conduct . . . It is the constant endeavor of the brothers . . . to lead them to correct what is evil in themselves.”⁸⁹

At each turn, the battle to correct the delinquent child's misbehavior is waged inwards, against “what is evil in themselves”—temptation, passions, appetites. This focus on the soul of the delinquent child, and the moralization of delinquency, is foundational to the justification of the Protectory's public charter and funding. As it was mobilized to expand the Church's influence and power in the sphere of social work, its acceptance foreclosed other possibilities. The delinquency problem was not a battle against poverty or crime, but a battle for the soul of the immigrant child itself, and therefore a battle to be fought in a religious arena and not a political one. It also turned the impetus for reformation back on the individual children themselves:

“when the child has acquired settled habits and the will is vitiated and weakened by evil indulgences and turned in the direction of wrong-doing, then comes the struggle in the youthful heart when called upon to root out the evil and plant the good.”⁹⁰ While the child may not be at fault for their delinquency, they do face individual fault for not answering the call of God to be redeemed through the Protectory.

⁸⁹ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Fortieth Annual Report*, 17.

⁹⁰ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Fourth Annual Report*, 14.

Delinquency and Class

Most importantly to the Protectory's construction of delinquency, the moral shortcomings of delinquent children are the direct result of their surroundings. The inferior moral training that immigrant children received at home led them astray; the superior moral training received in the Protectory led them to success. Thus, the way to "fix" the individual, internal moral flaws of delinquent children was to remove them from their families and place them in the Church's control for prolonged or indefinite stays. Consistently lobbying to increase their population through expanded jurisdiction and longer sentencing, Protectory officials were eager to blame failed reformations on parents and poverty, reporting that "no matter what may have been the improvement in the children under our training, discharges frequently must be made to parents or guardians living in bad surroundings, therefore it is not strange that the children sometimes relapse into their former state"⁹¹ and that "even with the most faithful probation officers, in poor homes, and with neglectful and depraved parents, the child can make no progress towards improvement."⁹² Such testimonies were incredibly important in underpinning the rhetorical logic of delinquency that served as the foundation for the Protectory's exigence. It follows neatly from the diagnosing of delinquency as a shortcoming of character and the prescribing of Church teaching as the solution, furthering the absolution of the Protectory for failed cases by shifting the blame onto the moral shortcomings of families and providing a justification for expanding the institution's influence and power as they sought to shape a generation of young Catholics into "good Americans" within their walls, and contributed to contested imaginations of American citizenship outside their walls.

⁹¹ Ibid, 5

⁹² The New York Catholic Protectory, *Fortieth Annual Report*, 9.

Thus, the Protectory established a concept of delinquency that emphasized the environment. Delinquency was, as the Protectory constructed it, a quality of the child's spirit and those with weak spirits were particularly susceptible to corrupting influences in their environments. The proposed solution, according to this framework, for juvenile delinquency was to improve the moral character of the child by removing them from the endangering environment, which ultimately meant removing the child from their home and parents.

In the Protectory's efforts to justify expanded control at the expense of vilifying immigrant parents, they found a convenient culprit: poverty. Hahner's discussion of the mythology of delinquency in the time period is illuminating: boys acted out as they lost respect for parents who were unemployed or worked low-wage jobs, and lacked training to find gainful employment of their own, and girls rebelled against their parents, "seeking American entertainments that often led to petty theft, premarital sex, and prostitution."⁹³ Scholars and policymakers alike prescribed opposite and gendered solutions to these parallel problems: boys required schooling and industrial training so they could find sufficient wages, while "girls should learn wholesome American ways before wages from employment perverted their appetites."⁹⁴ While the culture gap between immigrant parents and first-generation children is seen as important in the rebellious and delinquent actions of youth, the parents' "old world" cultural practices are often seen as being responsible for their families' poverty. This attribution of blame for delinquency to the impoverished condition of the family is already present in the above quotes, with references to "poor homes" and "bad surroundings." Through this tenuous causal equation of immigrant culture, poverty, and juvenile delinquency, poverty itself becomes

⁹³ Hahner, *To become an American*, 127.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

moralized, and poorness constructed as the moral failure of inferior immigrants who have failed to adapt to the new world and, in doing so, also failed as parents.

The Protectory was not shy about articulating this equation, as negatively depicting conditions in immigrant homes and attributing blame for delinquency to parents added powerful support to claims that more children should be placed in the institution for longer terms. Obfuscating the boundary between poor and criminal also allowed the Protectory to resist bureaucratic efforts to classify the institution as either a reformatory or poorhouse, which would have severely impacted their population. In doing so, they lean on the outside observation of A.J. Pillsbury, Secretary of the State Board of Examiners of California, who visited the Protectory in 1906: “the dependent and delinquent, as a matter of cold fact and common experience, are all the same sort of children, are more or less dependent, more or less delinquent, and are more or less without proper guardianship.”⁹⁵ The equivalence and placement of blame is clear: poor children commit crimes, children who commit crimes are poor, and in either case the parents are at fault. This equation of poverty and immorality is further developed in chapter three, which focuses on the ill of idleness and virtue of industriousness within the Protectory’s rhetoric.

Determining Delinquency

Throughout its history, the Protectory sought to position itself as the ideal arbiter for youth morality: who ought to be institutionalized, how long they ought to stay, and what the training therein should entail. In the midst of ongoing debates about the conditions of children in the city, the Protectory maintained a consistent insistence on the underlying nature of delinquency:

⁹⁵ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Fourth Annual Report*, 8.

The number of children committed to the Protectory ‘because of destitution of the parents’ has not been large since the organization of the Juvenile Court, because of the change of practice explained by us in a previous report. Formerly destitution was frequently stated by Magistrates as cause of commitment where some minor offense had been committed. Now the technical offense is mentioned, although poverty and neglect of the parents may have brought about the condition of the child.⁹⁶

By leaning on the outside expertise of Pillsbury and the larger discourse attributing delinquency to poverty noted in Hahner’s work, the Protectory’s reports to the state legislature portray an almost inevitable causal relationship between poverty and crime that perpetuates class stereotypes and works hand-in-hand with their characterization of delinquency as an internal moral shortcoming to moralize poverty itself. As the Protectory’s argument furthers these social portrayals, it works simultaneously to push against government’s reach into social work, criticizing the state’s classification of cases in a way that implies Protectory officials’ on-the-ground perspective—their experiential knowledge of the “cold facts” of the children who pass through the institution—positions them as the authority to determine the best way to provide for destitute and delinquent youth, not the state. This assertion was made rather bluntly by the Director of the Male Department in the same year: “false psychological and educational theories are often proposed by excellent people, who, having no practical knowledge of the training of children, fail to see the effect of their own erroneous ideas.”⁹⁷ The implication of the remarks are clear: the care and education of youth should be left to those doing the work, not imposed by outside authorities.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 7.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 14.

This battle over the shifting power dynamics of determining delinquency and potential for reform was reiterated throughout the Protectory's history, as Janet Butler Munch writes of "pushback" from the legislature even at the Protectory's founding in 1863, even though it did not receive any public funding in the early years. While the Protectory was never shy about seeing—and rhetorically constructing—themselves as the authority on the subject of child reformation, their need for legal custody of the children in their care and their constant advocacy for increased funding required sustained entanglement with state government. Despite their clear denominational religious affiliation, officials argued that "the Protectory has always been recognized as doing *public work*."⁹⁸ Even as the Protectory resisted the state's influence, they leaned into the legitimacy offered by their privileged position within the governmental bureaucracy, embracing the ability to synonymize "public work" with "religious work," and more broadly, American citizenship with participation in organized religion.

The Protectory won a major victory in the battle of determining delinquency when, in 1909, a New York State law was passed that prevented the conviction of children under 16 of a specific crime as an adult, instead committing them to an institution for "juvenile delinquency." As referenced above, Protectory officials had argued against the state's turn to a Children's Court with specific convictions in the earlier years of the decade. In practice, the Court's rulings had for the most part remained vague, but the prohibition of specific convictions marked an important turning point in the battle over defining delinquency by institutionalizing through statute the Church's preferred conceptualization. In their 1909 report, the Protectory's president lauded the law:

⁹⁸ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Fortieth Annual Report*, 12.

I am deeply grateful that legal enactment has taken away the stigma of crime from any culpable act committed by a child under sixteen years of age. To blight a growing career because one has committed some wrong act when young, is to dampen desire for well-doing and prevent one from achieving the full measure of one's future good impulses.⁹⁹

The state's acceptance of the Church's construction of delinquency as a moral flaw and shortcoming of character, consistent with the Protectory's continued charter to legally care for children and the thousands of children the state committed into the institution's care each year, functioned to overwhelmingly legitimize the Protectory as the official arbiter of delinquency and facilitator of reform.

When empowered, the Protectory rarely missed opportunities to exercise its authority with a particular focus on determining which environments its charges would enter and inhabit. Staff working in the "Placing-Out Bureau," responsible for finding good matches for jobs, foster homes, and adopted families for children who were ready to leave the institution, also conducted "inspections" of homes before releasing children back to their own parents, often citing church attendance and employment status/income as criteria. The records of Father Demo show that multiple parents who wrote the Protectory directly requesting their child's release were told they needed to obtain a letter of recommendation from their Pastor in order to have their child returned to them. Angelina Dabelli, a 13-year-old girl, was released to her mother only after her first communion, being confirmed, and making progress in school.¹⁰⁰ Often, children were released on "parole," conditional upon continued church attendance. In the aforementioned

⁹⁹ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Seventh Annual Report*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Letter, New York Catholic Protectory to Rev. A. Demo, January 27, 1914, Church of Our Lady of Pompei (New York, NY) Records, 1892-1967, CMS 037, Series I: Correspondence, Box 10, Folder 119: New York Catholic Protectory 1913-1923, Center for Migration Studies Archive.

internal battle of the delinquent child “to overcome themselves,” Protectory officials wrote that “the most potent force in aiding the boy in thus upbuilding himself is undoubtedly religion.”¹⁰¹ As the Protectory leaned on widespread conceptions of the causal relationship between poverty and crime and the scapegoating of immigrant parents in that production, their specific underpinning of that dynamic with an understanding of delinquency, and therefore poverty, as a moral failure allowed them to frame a social problem caused by material inequities as a battle over the souls of misbehaving youth. When this frame’s acceptance was institutionalized, the Church was able to use it to justify its authority over the issue as the clear and sole agent of redemption for delinquent youth.

Positioning itself as the path away from delinquency also positioned the Protectory, and thus the Church, as an integral part of the conception of American citizenship and Americanization. As Hahner has established, the problem of delinquency was widely considered the result of non-assimilated immigrant parents who did not sufficiently embody Americanism. In order to rely on this premise for their framing of the issue, any Protectory strategy for combatting delinquency needed to function as a technology of Americanization, with “good American” citizen-subjects as its product. The Protectory fulfilled this obligation, with nationalism embedded in its teaching and mission. The evening lecture series regularly featured lessons on American history, including in when 1909 children twice heard “Uncle Sam’s Own Story of the Declaration of Independence: The Days of ’76; the scene in Independence Hall, and the immortal men who signed the Declaration,” the only lecture given twice in a single year, as well as “The American Flag and the National Anthem: Development of American flag from emblems of the past to its present form, its significance in history; the story of ‘The Star-

¹⁰¹ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Fortieth Annual Report*, 17.

Spangled Banner’.”¹⁰² In 1904 the Director of the Male Department reported to the state legislature that:

Every Saturday afternoon, from 4:30 to 5:30, the whole 1,800 boys are assembled in the large hall and taught the words and airs of American patriotic songs, special attention being given to “The Star Spangled Banner” and “My Country, tis of Thee.” The results are proving most beneficial. The spirit of American patriotism becomes the dominant spirit in the minds and hearts of children whose parents belong to so many different nationalities.¹⁰³

Clearly, the performance of nationalist rituals was employed to facilitate the assimilation of European immigrant youth into white American identity, and such performances were showcased before elected officials and the public as evidence of the Protectory’s efficacy—perhaps most notably when Theodore Roosevelt personally invited the Protectory band to play at his inauguration.¹⁰⁴ Emphasizing the nationalistic tendencies of the Protectory also functioned as a strategic persuasive mechanism in their annual reports, which were sent to a government audience.

Appeals to nationalism by Protectory officials enabled the Church to gain legitimacy in matters of the government and state, ultimately furthering the prominence of religion in the norms of American citizenship. In what approximates a mission statement, the Director of the Female Department wrote that “we endeavor to cultivate self-respect, contentment, honor, piety in its fullest sense, of devotion to God, to parents, to superiors, to relatives, to country.”¹⁰⁵ A few

¹⁰² The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Seventh Annual Report*, 18-19.

¹⁰³ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Second Annual Report of the New York Catholic Protectory to the Legislature of the State of New York and to the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*, Westchester: The New York Catholic Protectory, 1904, 20.

¹⁰⁴ Munch, “At Home in the Bronx,” 42-43.

¹⁰⁵ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Fourth Annual Report*, 22.

years later, perhaps emboldened by the Protectory's legislative successes, the Director of the Male Department went even further, writing that:

Religion is the basis of all sound morality and national betterment. As President Taft says, 'The better the man keeps the laws of the Church, the better American citizen he will be.' Our motto is, for God and Country. A boy who is true to the Ten Commandments will be true to the laws and institutions of his country.¹⁰⁶

To call such nationalistic overtures from Protectory officials pandering would be to assign motive where there is no clear evidence of one, as it is entirely possible that these individuals were genuinely as fervently patriotic as was reflected in their writing. However, there is, at the very least, a clear convenience in the reports' appeals to American pride and national identity when targeting an audience of elected American politicians, and such devout adherence to a strongly shared value allowed for the insertion of religious teaching and authority into the mechanisms of Americanization.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the rhetorical construction of delinquency by the Protectory. As constructed by the Protectory, delinquency was a quality of weak spirited children who, due to this spiritual deficiency, were unable to overcome the corrupting influence of their environment. Parents, often immigrants and almost always poor, were insufficient guards against this corruption and outside forces, like the state and other intellectuals, were not familiar enough with these conditions to provide relief. Only the Church, operating in these impoverished and dangerous environments, could serve as a path away from delinquency and, importantly, towards appropriate citizenship. As the Protectory oversaw the redemption of delinquent youth and

¹⁰⁶ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Seventh Annual Report*, 20.

facilitated their assimilation into American citizenship, its wide-reaching authority and influence also participated in the development of what American citizenship itself meant. Hahner notes that technologies of Americanization during this time period codified “patriotism into a set of normative expectations transforming what it meant to be an American.”¹⁰⁷ By embedding itself—and therefore church teachings—so heavily in New York State’s delinquent reformation practice during the early 20th century, and articulating a specific vision of delinquency and morality that ordained the Church as the arbiter of redemption, the Protectory was able to influence the definition of American citizenship and advance participation in organized religion as a contested normative expectation of Americanness. In doing so, they not only made a crucial contribution to a centuries-long conversation regarding the role of religion in American life, but they also contributed to a centuries-long discourse of criminality and redemption. The boundaries and exclusivity of Protectory-sanctioned redemption participated in racialized rhetorical constructions of criminality by identifying white European subjects as “redeemable” in an era of extrajudicial lynchings of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples. Additionally, the ways in which the Protectory’s discourse of delinquency moralized poverty and attributed crime to internal individual moral shortcomings and not social conditions reflect a familiar pattern of criminal justice in the United States demonizing poor populations without attending to the underlying social conditions that create poverty. In each of these conversations, this analysis is not meant to suggest that the Protectory originated these discourses and arguments, nor that there is a direct causal relationship between prior historical discourse and the Protectory’s rhetoric, nor the Protectory’s rhetoric and similar contemporary discourse. Rather, in the task of tracing the rhetoric of American citizenship throughout U.S. history, this analysis suggests that the

¹⁰⁷ Hahner, *To become an American*, xvii.

Protectory's rhetoric provides a rich site for understanding the development of these different discourses. In a similar spirit, chapter three continues this work by exploring the ways in which the rhetoric of the New York Catholic Protectory can serve as a site for understanding the relationship between American citizenship and capitalist subjectivity in a specific historical moment.

Chapter Three

The Rhetoric of Idleness and Industriousness

The Protectory was constantly striving for increased legitimacy, not just as a private religious institution doing public work, but as a Catholic institution in a time of anti-Catholic bias that questioned the Church's ability to break from "old world" ways and produce modern citizens. In an effort to produce assimilated subjects who would "fit in" to American citizenship, the institution itself needed to take measures to demonstrate its own ability to fit in to the modern industrial nation. As such, the Protectory industrialized itself, its curriculum, and its subjects. Officials described the institution as if it were a business, discussing budget lines and efficiency rather than the moral or religious focus of their work. In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which the Protectory's rhetoric economized immigration by reducing the institution's work and the lives of their subjects to economic terms. In order to further connect their moral authority with the centrality of economic self-sufficiency to the American ethos, the Protectory articulated a particular vision of sub-citizen life in which child delinquency led to the widely-acknowledged evil of adult idleness. To stop this delinquent-to-idle progression, the Protectory proudly offered a robust industrial training curriculum which prepared children for work in offices and factories as well as on farms. The key teaching of the Protectory became "industriousness"—a work ethic that was superior both morally and productively. I examine Protectory officials' discussion of two key auxiliary institutions—St. Philip's Home for Industrious Boys and the Lincoln Agricultural School—to show how the Protectory articulated a particular vision of the industrious citizen which would allow their graduates to not only lead moral and economically self-sufficient lives, but also be accepted into families, communities, and the nation.

Economizing Immigration

The rhetoric of the New York Catholic Protectory's appeals to the state legislature for additional jurisdiction and funding functioned to construct a complex relationship between morality and delinquency, economics and idleness, and belonging and citizenship. As discussed in chapter two, the Protectory built a careful equation which moralized the delinquency of immigrant youth by arguing that their reformation was only possible through a sustained removal from their home environment and placement in the Church's care. While this framing of delinquency as moral failures on the part of both children and parents helped justify why a religious institution should be the agent of change, the Protectory also argued that the ultimate pathway to assimilation and successful, self-sufficient American life was through economic avenues. The Protectory framed Americanization as an economic issue and articulated delinquency in economic terms, arguing that while delinquent youth would grow into idle, unemployed, and criminal adults, youth who received proper industrial training would be equipped for a life as a good worker, and therefore, a good American. In this chapter, I turn my attention to this rhetoric of idleness and industriousness, where the Protectory's articulations of "idleness" and "industriousness" functioned to construct citizenship and belonging as products of wage labor and economic self-sufficiency.

To effectively articulate a vision of immigration as an economic problem, Protectory officials frequently reduced their discussions of their subjects to economic terms and established the institution as an ideal economic policy solution by equating unemployment with moral and religious failing through a progression from youth delinquency to adult idleness. Ultimately, the Protectory painted productivity as a pathway to citizenship, both through middle-class lifestyle and participation in the national project of American industry. One crucial way in which the

Protectory was defined in economic terms was through its persistent appeals for funding from New York State. These appeals were consistently driven by an economic rhetoric that promised a positive economic return on the state's investment into the Protectory's educational mission.

The Protectory, largely funded through donors and returns on investments (such as valuable New York City land purchased in the early days of the organization), was constantly lobbying the state legislature for additional funding for the care of the children entrusted to them. In 1902, Protectory President George B. Robinson wrote to the legislature that "in appealing as we do for more practical interest in the welfare of the Protectory, we seek for means to develop and improve our work beyond what is possible with the per capita payment allowed for children committed by the courts and superintendents of the poor."¹⁰⁸ The message is clear: while the moral virtue of the Protectory's work was paramount, such work required funding, and the Protectory as an institution was constantly engaged in struggle to secure sufficient funding to sustain and expand its reach.

Caring for immigrant children had specific costs, described by Robinson as "yearly maintenance" ranging from \$150-\$200 per child. The particularity of the word "maintenance" is interesting, and dehumanizing, as the children are seemingly referred to as individual machines. The responsibility for these costs was contested terrain, as the Protectory and legislature fought over whether the state's payments were seen as "a subsidy to private work" or funding of "public work."¹⁰⁹ As discussed in chapter two, portraying the Protectory's work as public allowed officials to equate religious training and public work. It also allowed the Protectory to shift the financial burden for their institution's work onto the taxpayer. Even the Protectory's own self-preservation was rooted in economic essentialism, as leaders argued that their efficiency

¹⁰⁸ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Fortieth Annual Report*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

warranted their continued and increased investment from the state: “the Protectory, instead of being subsidized, by its system causes a yearly saving to the public treasury of at least one hundred thousand dollars, in the care, support, education and maintenance of an average of twenty-five hundred children, who are *public wards* committed to us by *public* authorities.”¹¹⁰ While Protectory officials took pride in the institution’s quality and alumni, this rhetorical appeal for funding focused not on quality, but on efficiency—on fulfilling the state’s obligation to its youth at a lower cost per bed than alternate policy solutions.

Public macroeconomic benefits were even used to justify increased funding, as Robinson argued that the Protectory required additional staff members to place children in homes and jobs upon leaving the Protectory, as well as for the development of their agricultural school, which would diversify their ability to train workers in different industries. This argument was distinct from concerns regarding the internal operating budget of the institution and instead focused on the economic lives and impacts well-trained graduates had outside the Protectory’s walls. Just as the Protectory’s articulations of delinquency equated rule-breaking and crime with moral failure, their articulations of idleness and poverty equated unemployment, criminality, and moral failure. The logic, then, was that as the child with inadequate moral training would not only be delinquent, but would also grow up to be criminal and unemployed in adulthood. Through the contrasting rhetorics of idleness and industriousness, the Protectory framed assimilation in economic terms and portrayed its own institution’s training as the key factor in intervening in delinquent children’s trajectory towards idleness and instead setting them on the path towards industrious, American lives.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 12-13.

The Rhetoric of Idleness

Securing gainful employment would become another crucial element in expanding the Protectory's rhetorical framing of citizenship. Just as the Protectory argued for a spatial understanding of delinquency which required weak-spirited children to be removed from negative environments and placed in the Church's care, "negative environment" was crafted in economic terms. Impoverished immigrant homes, where parents could not find or maintain wage-earning labor, were framed as inadequate for moral training and "moral training" was, in turn, defined in economic terms. Both moral and economic failures of parents were caused by the same evil: idleness, and the goal of the Protectory was to turn delinquent youth into productive, not-idle adults.

While Protectory officials came short of offering a specific definition for idleness, the term has a well-established negative connotation towards the poor. In 19th century America, historian Sarah F. Rose writes that "doing useful labor was a crucial element of good morality" and that "idleness remained associated with sin."¹¹¹ It is in this historical context that the Protectory was able to articulate trained industrial labor as a pathway to citizenship and delinquency as a pathway to idleness. Rose quotes a social worker who in 1908 wrote "in individual cases it is often difficult to determine if poverty is the result of idleness, or idleness the result of poverty."¹¹² This is precisely because idleness was a quality attributed to the poor. The presumed connection between economic self-sufficiency and moral fortitude was not unique to this time. Tracing the historical meanings of idleness into the eighteenth century, Sarah Jordan notes that "it usually seems to be based on three ideas. 1st, the poor are not entitled to have

¹¹¹ Sarah F. Rose, *No Right to be Idle: The Invention of Disability, 1840s-1930s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 29.

¹¹² Rose, *No Right to be Idle*, 141.

leisure time [...] 2nd, the poor have an obligation to do work that will profit the comfortable class [...] 3rd, the poor must work with their bodies, mental work engaged in by the poor is but idleness.”¹¹³ Thus, idleness cannot be simply equated to unemployment, but functions more as a blanket term to describe the not-worthy activities of the working class. Even if one was working, but not earning enough to support themselves and their family, or if one was doing work not seen as contributing to society, their activities were seen as idleness. Rose quotes another prominent social worker, in 1922, as stating “every man ought to be self-supporting and also able to support a family, and no man has a social right to refuse to contribute in some way to the wealth and to the progress of society.”¹¹⁴ Eric Lott writes of the ways that anxiety surrounding idleness was racialized during industrialization, as working-class whites, particularly immigrants, “feared they were becoming 'blacker' with every increment of industrial advance, and countered with the language and violence of white supremacy.”¹¹⁵ The white working class therefore not only feared idleness, but saw describing their activities as “productive” as a site for cultural distinction between themselves and their black coworkers and neighbors. There was a basic expectation that every man had an obligation perform honest labor, and honest labor would lead to a good life. Therefore, anyone lacking a good life was presumed to suffer from deficiency of character or work ethic.

In this vein, the industrial training offered to children in the Protectory was not simply practical job training to prepare them for employment—though trade-specific skills were certainly an important part—but *industriousness* training. By learning industriousness, children

¹¹³ Sarah Jordan, “From Grotesque Bodies to Useful Hands: Idleness, Industry, and the Laboring Class,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25, no. 3 (2001), 73.

¹¹⁴ Rose, *No Right to be Idle*, 3.

¹¹⁵ Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 74.

developed not only a set of skills but an ethic of honest work. This was expressed in Protectory writings: “idleness has taught them much evil, but this is greatly overcome or lessened by training the hand or the eye simultaneously with the intellect—by teaching them how to work.”¹¹⁶ While “teaching them how to work” can be read as “teaching them how to use a printing press or paint a home,” the historical context around idleness outlined above presents another meaning: “teaching them how to work hard.” The link between morality, delinquency, economics, and idleness is the underlying value that maintained that hard work was a moral good.

By avoiding idleness, one could also avoid a host of other troubles. Officials wrote that “the education of these poor dependent children is, to us, a matter of paramount importance, their future success as bread-winners depending so much upon it,” adding that “in maintaining order and discipline experience proves that industrial training is a great aid, idleness being, as we know the parent of many a vice.”¹¹⁷ In this case, while children received plenty of moral training through religious teachings, industrial training was also moral training because the best way to keep out of trouble was to keep busy with work. The familial metaphor used for idleness in this case is particularly telling—it is the parent of vices, with unemployment literally *breeding* disobedience and delinquency.

Through the need for industrial training to break the cycle of idleness and delinquency in immigrant families, and their self-proclaimed superior efficiency in delivering said training, the Protectory worked to position itself as an economic policy solution for the economic problem of immigration—both on the individual level of destitution and the societal level of assimilation.

The logic of this articulation was self-perpetuating, as each positive assertion of the need for

¹¹⁶ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Fortieth Annual Report*, 18.

¹¹⁷ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Fourth Annual Report*, 22.

industrial training and employment to prevent crime in youth subtly implied that the immorality and poverty of immigrant parents were linked, emphasizing the apparent need to remove these children from their homes and place them in institutions such as the Protectory. For example, statements such as “over and above its other merits, manual work is also an outlet for energy that might otherwise be expended not quite so profitably”¹¹⁸ not only justify training delinquent youth for careers performing manual labor so as to prevent potential criminal or otherwise immoral activity, but it begs the question of how the impoverished and unemployed parents may be expending their energy if not “profitably” through wage labor.

Despite the dangers of idleness and its associations being prevalent in the Protectory’s construction of their subjects and work, the term itself is used relatively infrequently in their writings. Instead, the Protectory allows the threat of idleness to linger as the presumed alternative to their offering: moral and professional training that would create industrious, employable young workers who would contribute to society and, through those contributions, become part of society.

The Rhetoric of Industriousness

By escaping the pipeline from delinquency to idleness through productivity, the Protectory argued that the children in their care could more easily assimilate into normative American life and actually contribute to the national economy. As outlined in chapter one, citizenship is both performed ritual and felt belonging, and in the Protectory’s model, gainful employment could accomplish both tasks. Membership in the industrial working class was one of the crucial rituals of American life, and the wages earned in those jobs would allow workers access to participate in the other day-to-day rituals of American life. For these immigrants, many

¹¹⁸ The New York Catholic Protectory, *Forty-Seventh Annual Report*, 25.

of whom came to the United States from poverty or famine, securing industrial work for self-sufficient wages was the first step in pursuing an American Dream, whereby hard work would secure quality of life. For their children, achieving participation in this national process facilitated its own sense of belonging, as the children trained in the Protectory entered professional and social lives quite different from the spaces their immigrant parents inhabited. For the Catholic Church and Protectory, the intense industrious moral training served as a response to anti-Catholic anxieties, as leaders attempted to polish away every piece of culture deemed undesirable (except Catholicism itself). This led to the strategic choice to initiate Catholic youth in the practices of the Protestant work ethic and capitalism. The placement of Protectory boys in high-demand industrial and agricultural jobs introduced the notion of their participation in a larger national economic project, earning belonging through their labor developing the nation. In this section, I discuss industriousness as an American value and then analyze paths to industriousness offered by the Protectory, including the development of two key programs, St. Philip's Home for Industrious Boys and the Lincoln Agricultural School.

One of the core aspects of living a normal American life, according to the Protectory, was work. They were proponents of early and immersive vocational studies, arguing that they “should not be postponed till later years, but should be begun earlier, so as to accustom the boy to what may afterward prove to be the means of earning his own livelihood.”¹¹⁹ Traditional schooling was important to the Protectory, of course, and the children took classes and sat for exams, but there was a premium placed on those knowledges and skills which would allow for the child's self-sufficiency later in life—to earn his own livelihood after leaving the Protectory. The future orientation of the mission made the Protectory more than just a home for delinquent

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 14-15.

and dependent youth during their childhood, but the training grounds where delinquent youth could be turned into assimilated, non-idle adults. Protectory officials wrote of vocational training's central role in this process, saying that "to acquire a trade . . . will permit them to more readily obtain employment and save many from returning to evil companions on their discharge."¹²⁰ The argument was that exiting the Protectory equipped to find employment would allow these youth to, having previously been removed from the evil environment of poverty found in the immigrant family and placed in the controlled environment of religious moral training, be able to leave the institution and create a good environment for themselves. The claim that this training would transform the delinquent child into an ideal citizen-subject was not subtle, as officials sought to get children away from "evil environment and bad example," asking "what greater good can be accomplished than the provision of proper surroundings and educational opportunities, so that these children may be changed into healthy, intelligent and ambitious youth, preparing them for honest service to society and the State?"¹²¹ The Protectory's training—and the productive employment children would be able to find when building their post-Protectory lives—was argued to be instrumental to the living of a good, normal life.

The Protectory emphasized providing children with paths to industriousness throughout its history, offering boys wide-ranging training in "printing in all its branches, tailoring, shoemaking, laundry work, manual training in various forms, industrial and ornamental drawing, painting, sign painting, wheelwrighting, blacksmithing, bricklaying and stone work, baking in its different branches, plumbing and carpentry"¹²² and girls "sewing, knitting, the making of dresses and other garments, and domestic work of various kinds."¹²³ To further this mission of securing

¹²⁰ Ibid, 11.

¹²¹ Ibid, 12-13.

¹²² Ibid, 15.

¹²³ Ibid, 25.

employment for their alumni, the Protectory developed two key facilities in the early 20th century to provide for the assimilation of its subjects through productivity. In 1902, the Protectory opened St. Philip's Home for Industrious Boys, a temporary communal housing development where Protectory alumni could live while they sought employment or housing. Later that decade, they would open the Lincoln Agricultural School. Before, the Protectory had offered little farm training for boys, occasionally causing trouble as many of their wards would be placed in foster homes in upstate farming communities.

St. Philip's Home for Industrious Boys

One key advancement in the Protectory's articulation of the importance of employment came through the creation and perpetuation of St. Philip's Home for Industrious Boys. In most cases, children who left the Protectory's care returned to their families, though supervision by Church officials typically continued. It was fairly common, though, for children committed to the Protectory to lack relatives to return to. In these cases, the Protectory placed children in foster homes when possible, but there emerged a growing problem of these children returning to their old lifestyles upon leaving the institution. St. Philip's Home sought to reduce this recidivism by providing a "bridge" between life in the institution and life after the institution. By maintaining their control over these children, the Protectory used St. Philip's home to further funnel their subjects into suitable jobs and lives, with its director bragging that:

All our boys are in good positions: some learning office work, others in workshops, still others as factory hands. The reports from their various employers are not only favorable, but most gratifying and encouraging; and it is no little consolation to know that our boys

are eagerly sought after . . . We are unable to supply the many demands made upon us by merchants to send them boys from St. Philip's.¹²⁴

The professional successes of these boys, while partially credited to their time in the Protectory itself, was attributed to the superior environment offered to them in St. Philip's Home compared to fending for themselves.

Protectory officials took great care to cultivate the superiority of the St. Philip's environment. Alumni and lecturers regularly visited to maintain the residents' connection to the institution and inspire them to continued professional success. St. Philip's offered recreation, remedial schooling, and evening classes, preventing the evil of idleness:

Our typewriting and stenography classes seem to attract the boys in a special manner, and it is pleasant to see them, after their day's work in shop or office, manipulate the keys, or strive for speed in the hieroglyphics of shorthand. They evidently realize that time thus spent not only prevents them from idle converse or street-corner lounging, but it is a very safe investment, certain to yield them a profitable income in the not distant future.¹²⁵

In this quote, the director of St. Philip's clearly articulates the argument at the center of the Home's exigency: they were able to provide a superior environment that provided moral protection from idleness and crime as well as professional training to assist the production of self-sufficient, respectable members of society. The invocation of "idle" is particularly compelling, reinforcing that idleness is not merely unemployment, but any "not profitable" activity that the working poor may participate in. Despite having good jobs and performing well in them, the working poor boys at St. Philips were (as Sarah Jordan noted was a key feature of idleness) allowed no leisure time. The ethic of industriousness insisted continued climbing of the

¹²⁴ Ibid, 51.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 53.

social ladder and “productive” use of time. For these young men living at St. Philip’s, this meant that a long day of labor needed to be supplemented with education that could enable their advancement at work or transition to white collar jobs.

Throughout this chapter, discussions of economic self-sufficiency are deeply intertwined with an image of the “good life” that includes belonging within family and community. From the social worker in 1922 saying that every man ought to be able to support a family, to the Protectory’s concern over “future bread-winners”, it is clear that the end goal of industriousness was not simply to install an ethic built around becoming successful and accumulating wealth, but to be a part of something bigger and develop a more complete life. For the boys in St. Philip’s Home, many of whom were orphaned and too young to begin families of their own, industriousness was a pathway to finding a family. The director of St. Philip’s wrote that, when the Home placed a well-employed boy in a foster home, “generally the boy so placed has been fortunate, and found kindly treatment as a member of the adopted family. He grows up to regard the children thereof as his brothers and sisters.”¹²⁶ The explicit claim that an industrious boy is more worthy of adoption than an idle one and that a profitably employed boy finds greater love and belonging in adopted homes cements not only industriousness as a pathway to belonging but the crude economic essentialism which reduced the humanity of immigrant youth to their economic utility. The boy who could not find work was doomed to idleness and crime, homeless and without family, while the boy who found work with St. Philip’s assistance was able to develop into a moral young man who would be accepted by an adopted family. In the interim, St. Philip’s Home served as a makeshift site of temporary family and belonging for the boys, with recreation, holiday celebrations, and frequent interaction with the Home’s successful graduates

¹²⁶ Ibid, 53-54.

who sought to mentor and advise current residents—serving as sterling examples of the possibilities that could be attained through industriousness.

The Lincoln Agricultural School

Familial belonging through industriousness was a crucial rhetorical dynamic within the Protectory's instruction. While institutions like St. Philip's served as temporary families, the Protectory's goal of placing children in foster homes was also tied in with making them industrious and productive. The founding of the Lincoln Agricultural School provides an example of this framing. Protectory leadership had identified two related trends—that many of the rural foster homes they placed children into reported the child was ignorant of farm life, and that there was a shortage of trained laborers in agricultural industries in New York State. The Lincoln School was a convenient solution to both problems. By providing boys with simple agricultural training and acclimating them to a farm lifestyle before placing them in foster homes in farming communities, the Protectory would increase their successes and improve their reputation among potential adoptees. This endeavor could be rationalized using the logic of the field's labor shortage, framing the Lincoln School as the Protectory's solution to a larger societal problem. This framing, as articulated by Protectory directors, presented the Protectory boy who went to work on a farm as an important contributor to society, making that labor the key condition of his belonging.

In rationalizing the creating and financing of the Lincoln School, the Protectory points to parallel problems within their institution and in society more broadly. Their placing-out bureau reported in 1909 that “almost every boy coming under the supervision of our bureau finds a home among the farming communities of the State. Heretofore, we have been working at a great disadvantage, because the boys we had to offer for placement were entirely ignorant of farm life,

and had no conception of the duties expected of them.”¹²⁷ Throughout their annual reports, Protectory officials typically obfuscated or deflected blame regarding the institution’s shortcomings, whether it be onto parents, legislation, or the children themselves. Here, the Protectory rather straightforwardly acknowledges the deficiencies of boys who they have placed into homes in farming communities, turning it into an opportunity to justify the institution’s expansion. This is only for the benefit of the boys, though: “the farmers are in crying need of intelligent and capable farm help [...] every section of the state has the same cry to-day: ‘We cannot get the right kind of men...’.”¹²⁸ The presentation of these two observed problems side-by-side allows the Protectory to articulate expansion via the Lincoln School as not merely a growing religious institution, but a convenient and economical policy solution for the struggling farmers of New York State: “through the agency of the Lincoln Agricultural school, [the placing-out bureau] will receive boys who are not only conversant with the duties of farm life, but are practical and intelligent workers in every department of farm work.”¹²⁹ Just as with their overall discussion of the Protectory and immigrant children in economic terms, the framing here presents the Protectory to the legislature as a policy solution to an economic problem, positioning a religious institution to do public work.

The Lincoln School’s benefits were not solely for the public, though. The Protectory, ever concerned with their ability to produce graduates who could assimilate into American life and whose employment could be used to justify continued funding and jurisdiction, emphasized the benefits that the Lincoln Agricultural School would deliver to the boys who attended it: “The acquisition of the property at Lincolndale has so far given us hope that a large number of the

¹²⁷ Ibid, 45.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 46.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 45.

boys of the Protectory will be trained in agricultural pursuits and thus enable them to begin life on a farm, with a taste and a training for the work, and the probability that they will make it their life-work.”¹³⁰ With the Protectory’s help in introducing boys to farm work via agricultural school, not only would the boys be better workers for current farmers, but they may stay in agriculture and become farmers themselves, finding their “life-work,” an aspiration of continuous and perpetual employment that would secure the highly-regarded self-sufficiency and ability to start a family, all while working in an industry which was integral to the nation. The aforementioned emphasis on the need for agricultural workers in New York State further drove this line of argument, as the Protectory was able to attest that there was a high likelihood of success due to the demand for quality farmhands:

We believe there is a splendid field in New York State for trained dairymen, gardeners, and agriculturalists, and we purpose to leave no stone unturned to equip every boy in the Lincoln Agricultural School with such a practical knowledge of the work that the School will become favorably known for the class of graduates it turns out. There is a position waiting for every one of them, and with the means of a good livelihood within their grasp, there is no reason why our work should not be highly successful.¹³¹

Through this description of the attractive employment prospects for boys with farm training and the Protectory’s ability to produce these workers, the Lincoln Agricultural School was imagined as a policy solution which would be the site of cure for multiple social ills. This framing of the Lincoln School would allow for the Protectory to promote a specific articulation of citizenship and belonging through industriousness.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 15-16.

¹³¹ Ibid, 57.

The final step the Protectory took to justify the work of the Lincoln Agricultural School was to link the labor that their graduates would do directly to assimilation, belonging, and citizenship. As mentioned above, before the Lincoln School, Protectory boys sent to farming communities were described as “entirely ignorant of farm life” and causing a burden to their foster families, who “had to teach them how to handle the most simple of farm implements, oftentimes at a season of year when almost every waking moment of the farmer’s time was taken up with active farm work.”¹³² A child who could not do farm work could not fit in with a farm family. In the previous blockquote, the Protectory hoped that the Lincoln School would become known by farmers to have good graduates, meaning that farmers would want to foster and adopt boys with agricultural training rather than boys without it. Just as with St. Philip’s school, industriousness and productivity was key to acceptance into foster households: “we have, therefore, every hope that the boys trained by the Lincoln School will be just the kind of boys who will be welcomed with open arms by the farmers of our state.”¹³³ Furthermore, their good standing with a potential foster family and productivity on the farm would lead to a larger acceptance within community and society: “the boys . . . coming, as they do, equipped for what probably will be a life work, their standing will be at once on a higher plane, and they will enter more fully into the spirit of their particular community.”¹³⁴ As the industrious child is prepared to take their place in a family, the industrious adult is prepared to take their place in the world, fully belonging to the spirit of their new community and performing the most important ritual of American life: work.

¹³² Ibid, 45.

¹³³ Ibid, 46.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

As an antidote to the moral ills of delinquency, the Protectory sought to craft paths away from idleness and towards familial and social belonging through industriousness in all three major sectors of the American economy. Children within the system could be trained to perform industrial labor, professional/technical tasks, or agricultural work. All of these paths led to industriousness, a work ethic which provided the social basis for familial and social belonging.

“Saved to Citizenship”

While the immediate, individual benefits of an industrious ethic for young boys were employment and familial acceptance, the larger patterns of the lives the Protectory built for these children were designed to shepherd them into something much more abstract: citizenship. As St. Philip’s Home bridged the gap between the Protectory and adoption or employment for many boys, its director wrote that it

has been the means of saving numbers of them to good citizenship and usefulness to society, where, otherwise, having no suitable or proper home to go to after leaving the institution, they would very soon become discouraged, lose their ambition to work and drift into association with disreputable characters, who are so frequently to be found in the cheap lodging places of the city.¹³⁵

In this passage, the ambiguity of the way the Protectory articulated morality and productivity is brought into conversation with citizenship. The image of who is and is not a citizen is described: a citizen is useful to society, has a proper home, has ambition to work, and participates in the proper social class. Someone who does not have a proper home or ambition and hangs with “disreputable characters” in poor neighborhoods is not considered, then, to be a citizen, regardless of their legal designation.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 44.

In order to counter alternate social programs which had sent Catholic children away from their family and Catholic schools to Protestant families, the mission of the Protectory was to Americanize Catholic youth while keeping them Catholic. The pathway towards citizenship that the Protectory offered Catholic immigrant youth, then, was not a means of procuring papers but a strategic choice to assimilate a population into homogenous American whiteness by emulating the moral, social, and economic practices and lifestyles of the average white citizen. As we have seen, idleness is an evil attributed not only to those who do not work, but even to those who do not do the “right” kinds of things when they are not at work. Becoming members of white American society was, as Ignatiev said, a strategic choice made by immigrant youth as well as made on their behalf by Catholic Church and state authorities. The way to break the cycle of delinquency and idleness, in reality, had less to do with moral improvement and more to do with simply fitting in.

While assimilation into American society is an ongoing process that preceded the New York Catholic Protectory, continued simultaneously outside of the institution during its prominence, and outlasted it to continue to this day, the Protectory’s strategic practice of facilitating assimilation into citizenship via economic productivity and “belonging” can be understood to have contributed to shaping our contemporary conceptualizations of how citizenship works. The historic success of assimilation technologies such as the Protectory provides support for present-day scholarly theories of citizenship such as Asen’s “discourse theory of citizenship” that emphasizes “the fluid, multimodal, and quotidian enactments of citizenship.”¹³⁶ At the public level, the successful economic arguments the Protectory employed to strategically facilitate assimilation into citizenship persist in the nation’s shared rhetorical

¹³⁶ Robert Asen, “A discourse theory of citizenship,” 191.

repertoire to articulate citizenship and belonging among immigrant populations. This chapter does the work of investigating one of many origin sites for this particular argument that underscores many immigration debates, helping develop an understanding of the industrious citizen as a phenomenon that was historically produced in a time and place where it served a strategic purpose, not a natural or essential element of belonging.

Conclusion

This project offered a rhetorical analysis of the New York Catholic Protectory's efforts to create citizens and shape citizenship in the United States in the early 20th century. Through a reading of the Protectory's reports to the New York State legislature, as well as a survey of archival documents such as arrest reports and letters sent to Father Antonio Demo, I have attempted to engage the Protectory's rhetoric in a way that can be instructive for advocacy and academic work surrounding contemporary issues of immigration and citizenship.

As discussed in my introduction, this work originated from an interest in the rhetoric of the contemporary immigration debate in the United States. While a tremendous amount of recent scholarly work exists on the subject, I endeavored not to critique contemporary discourse but to explore its historical underpinnings. What I discovered in my analysis has implications on how scholars and activists can consider arguments for citizenship and belonging in the present day. Upon starting this project, I had anticipated that race would be the largest determining factor in differentiating between the experiences of Irish and Italian Catholic youth a century ago and Latinx youth today. However, the category of 'race' was not articulated in the Protectory's discourse. Rather, the central question of whether those of Italian, Irish, or other Catholic ethnicities could be assimilated into the American conception of whiteness was an animating force in these documents. Creating a path for young people to escape the idleness and poverty of moral character of their homes and parents required removing them from these ethnic surroundings and, instead ensconcing them in spaces of labor and industry.

Summary

My project began framing analysis of the Protectory's rhetoric as a means of exploring the underpinnings of contemporary debates around immigration and citizenship. I outlined "good" and "bad" immigrant narratives that have persisted through history. Additionally, I argued that the Protectory's process of assimilation shepherded their subjects not only into citizenship, but into whiteness, a category that they had access to because of their skin color but were not placed into until they had performed cultural and economic assimilation. Chapter one discussed the contested nature of citizenship in U.S. history and rhetorical scholarship. I argued, following in the footsteps of contemporary rhetorical scholars, that citizenship ought not be considered as merely a legal designation, but as a status of belonging within a community and nation. Through the works of scholars such as Fields and Fields, Ignatiev, Hahner, McCann, and Shome, I laid the groundwork for understanding the complex relationships between citizenship, race, and productivity in the context of the United States. To conclude chapter one, I outlined the context and history of the New York Catholic Protectory to provide context for my analysis in chapters two and three.

My second chapter focused on the pervasive rhetoric of delinquency in the Protectory's documents. I demonstrated the ways in which "delinquency" was given a broad, ambiguous definition—and the ways in which the institution fought against efforts to clarify the term. Delinquency was used as a catch-all for crime, poverty, and flouting cultural norms, allowing the Protectory to cast a wide net to find children to enter their institution and conform into typical white American culture. I demonstrated that allegations of delinquency were deeply interwoven with class, and showed how the Protectory's articulation of poverty and delinquency as an internal moral failure positioned it, as a religious institution, as the ideal policy solution for

moral training. Chapter three focused on the Protectory's positive term: industriousness. Playing off of the social ills associated with idleness, the Protectory drew a chronological relationship between delinquency and idleness and offered their institution as an intervention to prevent delinquent youth from becoming idle adults. To accomplish this, they produced a specific articulation of industriousness which contained both the moral fiber of self-improvement and work ethic as well as the practical skills required to secure gainful employment. I examined two auxiliary institutions designed to facilitate industriousness, St. Philip's Home for Industrious Boys and the Lincoln Agricultural School, and closed the chapter by demonstrating the ways in which the Protectory articulated economic productivity and industriousness as the basis for social and familial acceptance, as well as membership in the nation.

Limitations and Possibilities

As with any work, this project remains incomplete. This analysis of the Protectory's rhetoric does not—and could not—render definitive conclusions on the questions of race, citizenship, and belonging. In the larger, collective project among scholars to interrogate these categories, the case study in this thesis presents just one small sliver of relevant materials to be considered. This project's limitations lie both in scope and in the materials used.

I chose to focus my analysis on a handful of the Protectory's annual reports to the New York State legislature. This decision was made based on the timeframe I chose—the peak of the Protectory's population and influence—and the reports included regarding the founding of St. Philip's Home and the Lincoln Agricultural School. However, they represent a small portion of the institution's overall external writings, which may contain rhetoric that reinforces, contradicts, or expands upon my findings. Beyond even the corpus of Protectory annual reports, the discourse surrounding the institution expanded far beyond their official writings to legislators. From court

battles to social work trainings to curriculum and outreach, the full scope of the institution's reach is far greater than what I was able to include in one modest project. Furthermore, this project considers the assimilation process from the perspective of the institution and its officials, but cannot account for perspectives that may be harder to find or lost forever—the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the over 141,000 children who at one point or another called the Protectory home. While it may be unlikely that there were many accounts, diaries, or interviews with the young people who participated in the system, it is notable that this analysis focused only on the official discourse of the institution.

This reduction of materials, both due to forces outside my control and as a result of my own curation, leave gaps in the telling of the Protectory's history. In particular, I wish that this project could have said more about the experience of the girls in the institution's care. It is perhaps indicative of the gender stereotypes of the era that the boy population in the Protectory was larger and a more central focus of the officials. The pathway to citizenship that the Protectory offered, as described in this thesis, is a pathway based upon a traditional masculine gender role, making it explicitly a pathway for the boys and not the girls. A more thorough discussion on the Americanization of girls in this era can be found in chapter five of Leslie Hahner's *To Become an American: Immigrants and Americanization campaigns of the early twentieth century*. Just as girls were cut out of the Protectory's articulation of belonging, the close ties between citizenship and labor in this era excluded other subjects who were not present in my reading, either because the institution excluded them or neglected to mention them. Particularly, disabled individuals would have had a precarious journey to citizenship within this framework. While there is not much to be found in this thesis on the topic, Sarah Rose's *No Right to be Idle: The Invention of Disability, 1840s-1930s* covers this tension.

Lastly, while this thesis argues that the immigrant populations in question were otherized and had to become white, it is still true that the project's primary focus is on fair-skinned, European men. In the history of U.S. immigration, there are multitudes of examples of populations that faced greater disadvantages and have been studied less who attempted to enter into citizenship with varying degrees of success. This study makes no attempt to project the experiences of Protectory children into universal rules of citizenship and assimilation; in fact, it makes the opposite assertion—that these strategies of assimilation came to be in a specific historical context and should not be considered permanent or essential.

This project's limitations, however, indicate exciting directions for future research on the larger questions I am grappling with. The Protectory stands as a hidden historical monolith, widely unknown now but considered during its time to be one of the earliest and most influential institutions in the emerging field of social work. There is plentiful room for additional research on the Protectory and its wide range of influence. Beyond this case study, though, exist innumerable others waiting to be unearthed that warrant the attention of scholars interested in questions of race, citizenship, and belonging. So long as these concepts remain tangled in meaningful ways which impact people's lives in the present day, there will be justification for scholars to look to history's examples for insight on differing historical articulations of these interwoven forces.

The Protectory and its texts offer a rich site for analysis that can be read in multiple contexts. While my study surveyed a selection of documents in search of understanding the norms of citizenship implied by the Protectory's practices, scholars interested in topics such as the history of the Catholic Church in the U.S., broader historical tensions between Catholicism

and Protestantism, criminology and youth delinquency, class development in the U.S., and others could produce new findings through examining these documents in different contexts.

Implications

As an activist, an educator, and a scholar, I am an immigration advocate. I am a proponent of abolishing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a federal agency founded within the last two decades which has functioned to terrorize, dehumanize, and both directly and indirectly kill Latinx people in my home state of California and across the country. I believe, adamantly, that deportation is a cruel and immoral practice that should be discontinued. My scholarly interest in immigration discourse comes from a place of personal and political frustration at its present state: one in which one of the most progressive mainstream proposals is DACA. As discussed in the introduction, DACA would protect roughly 800,000 childhood arrivals from deportation. That is 800,000 out of 3.6 million people who came to the U.S. as children, and an estimated over 10 million total undocumented people currently living in the country. Less than 1 in 10 undocumented people would be protected by DACA, while Barack Obama deported 2.5 million people between 2009 and 2015.¹³⁷ When our progressive articulation of belonging functions to exclude the vast majority of people in question, it is time to re-evaluate how we define belonging.

These are the concerns that bring me, with urgency, to the historical study of citizenship and belonging. When I took on the case study of the New York Catholic Protectory, I expected to find white immigrant populations who were granted a streamlined path to citizenship, starkly contrasting with the experiences of contemporary Latinx immigrants. However, I found a pathway to citizenship that was much more fraught with familiar anti-immigrant sentiments than

¹³⁷ Serena Marshall, "Obama Has Deported More People Than Any Other President," August 29, 2016, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obamas-deportation-policy-numbers/story?id=41715661>.

I expected. The Protectory serves as a historical marker of logics of criminality and productivity which dominate contemporary debates. Overcoming these barriers required not just cultural conformity and a strong work ethic, but what Ignatiev terms the strategic decision to enter into whiteness. These logics came to be within their historical moment and cultural context to serve the purpose of shepherding a specific group of immigrants into American citizenship. The way these measures of belonging have echoed through history speak to the way they resonated with the era's values and were effective in producing citizens and crafting citizenship. However, it is essential that present-day activists recognize that they are not fixed or essential determinants and articulate alternative visions of belonging that are better suited to relieve the oppression of present-day populations on the border of citizenship.

Latinx populations are so dehumanized by contemporary discourse that rather than argue that DACA recipients, for example, belong in the United States because they have lived here their entire lives, pro-immigration advocates argue in raw economic terms (i.e. the taxes paid by immigrants, the service and agricultural jobs performed by immigrants, and the individual entrepreneurial potential of young DREAMers makes them "worth it"). Doing so represents a crude racialized economic determinism that names Latinx people as allowed only to exist when their existence serves to promote the mission of the white, capitalist state. The pervasive institutionalized racism of the United States' criminal justice system is further weaponized against Latinx people who are undocumented: Obama attempted to contextualize his high deportation numbers by calling them the result of focusing more on criminal offenders, while Trump undid those measures by infamously casting all immigrants as criminals or potential criminals.

The continued economization of immigrants is particularly salient in one of the most prominent recent pieces of writing in opposition to President Trump's decision to end DACA, a letter written in July 2017 by California Attorney General Xavier Becerra and signed by 19 other Democratic Attorneys General. While Becerra makes passing references to belonging, the primary drive of the letter accomplishes two things: excludes wide swaths of the undocumented population by distinguishing DACA recipients as part of a "good immigrant" narrative, and defines DACA recipients by their economic values. Democrats conceded this rhetorical ground in negotiations with a President who has never indicated an interest in compromise or good faith, and while the letter became quickly outdated as Trump pushed forward to end DACA, the negative effects of these discursive concessions persist.

Becerra's letter serves to center the economic advantages of DACA. He writes that "they are boosting the economies . . . of our states every day" with "the purchasing power to buy homes, cars, and other goods and services, which drives economic growth for all."¹³⁸ This argument for belonging parallels the Protectory's assertion that membership in community and nation is contingent upon active and productive participation in the economy. In one line, Becerra writes that in addition to dramatically changing the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, "the consequences of rescinding DACA would be severe . . . for their employers."¹³⁹ He supports this claim: "American businesses would face billions in turnover costs, as employers would lose qualified workers whom they have trained and in whom they have invested."¹⁴⁰ Undocumented Latinx youth in the 21st century can stay in the United States insofar as they

¹³⁸ Xavier Becerra to Donald J. Trump, July 21, 2017, 1. https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press_releases/7-21-17%20%20Letter%20from%20State%20AGs%20to%20President%20Trump%20re%20DACA.final_.pdf.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

might represent a specialized laborer or a corporation's investment that has yet to yield a return. Immigrant European youth in the early 20th century could be accepted by society and avoid prison sentences insofar as they had the potential to become a useful and productive worker. If either fail to live up to their economic potential, the economic framework for belonging they exist within dictates that they lose the right to exist comfortably in their homes.

It, simply put, does not have to be this way. But in order to counter the harmful narratives of citizenship and belonging that center racialized notions of criminality and reduce people to their economic productivity, scholars and activists must continue the work of increasing our collective understanding of these narratives' origins and expanding our repertoire of alternate articulations for citizenship and belonging. This project's historical analysis of the New York Catholic Protectory demonstrates the ways in which criminality and productivity developed into two key markers of assimilation through the Protectory's articulations of delinquency and industriousness. Locating moments in history such as this one helps to demonstrate the ways in which these markers are not ahistorical—they came to be because of particular contextual conditions, and we can imagine futures where citizenship and belonging exist without them as conditions.

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