Introduction

Inarguably one of the most important and influential essays written about mass culture during the last century, Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," is itself one of the most reproduced, translated, and widely circulated works of cultural criticism ever published. *Twilight of the Idols*, like so many other books, is an implicit engagement with several of the insights in Benjamin's essay, an engagement, in this case, that takes seriously his claims that mass culture was making possible new types of cultural authority and new forms of knowledge that could only be understood as particular instances of reception. Such instances could no longer be the prerogative of the traditional critic or connoisseur, but were now controlled by the masses whose spontaneous yet coordinated responses to cultural works constituted radically new forms of diversified expertise. As is well known, Benjamin considered the technological basis of the motion picture as well as the industrial basis of the cinematic institution to be the most progressive manifestations of this social transformation. "It is in the technology of film, as of sports, that everyone who witnesses these performances does so as a quasi-expert."[1] However, Benjamin's view of the Hollywood film industry was similar to those held by many European intellectuals, seeing America's dominance in the world film market as the exploitation of these new conditions for increasing the profits and furthering the power of an elite capitalist class. Despite the progressive potential of a few Hollywood motion pictures—the films of Charles Chaplin, for example—Benjamin saw Hollywood as more or less concomitant with fascism in its mystification of a few exceptional individuals as personalities worthy of popular devotion. In other words, the Hollywood star system was, for Benjamin, little more than a cult of personalities.

Nevertheless, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" makes the film actor and the new technological conditions under which actors must perform the most sustained example of the types of expertise that were coming to be realized in mass reception. Describing both the temporal and spatial distances of the film audience from the actor's performance, a performance that is, nevertheless, viewed up close, as well as the mechanical mounting of that performance through editing, Benjamin discusses at length the actor's alienation from himself as image. It is the image only, and not the living actor, that now appears before the public. Because the film audience responds to a mechanically recorded performance its members assume a newly critical attitude toward that performance by identifying with the recording device, the camera/projector. Benjamin also describes this critical reception of motion pictures by the masses in mechanical terms ("a collective ratio") and he sees the audience as subjecting the actor's performance to a series of segmental optical tests, what we might now call screen tests. Given that some of these filmed actors were also widely known international movie stars whose images and voices were further duplicated and dispersed in newspapers, magazines, and on radio broadcasts—across those emergent mass media that so deeply interested Benjamin—it is somewhat surprising how emphatically he derided the star system as incapable of any revolutionary potential. "Not only does the cult of the movie star which [film capital] fosters preserve that magic of the personality which has long been no more than the putrid magic of its own commodity character, but its counterpart, the cult of the audience reinforces the corruption by which fascism is seeking to supplant the class consciousness of the masses."[2] Rather than treating the movie star as a commodity form itself, Benjamin views the film star as an epiphenomenal distortion of motion picture capital, an ideological effect leading to both commodity fetishism and audience reification. While such a position is understandable within the context of rapidly spreading fascism and in light of Benjamin's embrace of Dziga Vertov's anti-Hollywood militancy, I have always been dissatisfied with such a summary dismissal of the star system as holding any historical potential for progressive social transformation. *Twilight of the Idols* grew from that dissatisfaction. If, by the mid-1930s, the star system "may have long been no more than putrid magic," it is not at all clear to me that it always was so or that it remains so in every instance. With this book I contend that the early Hollywood star system functioned, like so many other early twentieth-century cultural institutions in the process of formation and like the cinema itself, as a means for the masses to take "an interest in understanding themselves and therefore their class consciousness."[3] By a certain point, definitely by the First World War, the star system had become so inextricable from the American cinema that it, in turn, would become one of the chief sites for the studios to fully wrest control of

the cinema away from a mass audience. Because the industrial and financial powers represented by the American studio system successfully narrowed the cultural context of motion pictures to principally issues of entertainment and consumption, in part through managing the discourse on personality, Benjamin and other cultural critics mistakenly identified the star system as inherently reactionary.

In this book I examine the Hollywood star system of the 1920s as an important site for theorizing the historical construction and eventual containment of a mass audience. My aim is to demonstrate the cinema's participation in the popularization of a set of knowledge categories about deviance and identity, a popularization that was made possible, in part, by transformations of film stardom after the First World War and by Hollywood's historical and discursive relations to the modern human sciences: psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The film star of the 1920s, either through dramatic roles in modern photoplays or through public scandal, often embodied new popular scientific conceptions of personality and personality disorders. Furthermore, these new understandings of personality transformed the star system itself, in that they made the star both an object of a new rhetoric of interpretation based on the organic development of subjectivity and a new site for social intervention and industrial regulation. Thus, rather than seeing the film star as registering or reflecting emerging notions of abnormality, this project maintains that certain media personalities were productive of knowledge about deviance and disease, and that the audiences of film stars in the 1920s became both students of the deviant personality and potentially susceptible to the star's presumed destructive influences.

Drawing on historical resources such as fan magazines and trade journals, as well as newspapers and tabloids, *Twilight of the Idols* describes how Hollywood's promotion of individual stars (Mabel Normand, Wallace Reid, and Rudolph Valentino) was responsive to a growing popular interest in abnormal personalities and deviant behavior, an interest that was not simply the paranoid imaginings of the era's many conservative social reformers. The most convincing evidence for a widespread interest in deviant personalities is the amount and type of coverage that the nation's newspapers and tabloids devoted to sex, drug, and crime scandals involving both prominent celebrities and those whose celebrity was the result of their deviance. Furthermore, these celebrity scandals notwithstanding, star publicity of the postwar period sought to speak a more modern discourse about personality by reference to contemporary psychological and sociological theories of human development. Thus, this book draws on works of psychology and of social science, not so much to uphold a distinction between the original (scientific theory) and its quotation (publicity), but to chart out the logics of a larger

cultural construction of the deviant personality and to demonstrate and explain the cinema's contributing role.

Even though I discuss women celebrities here, much of my study concerns the personalities of male film stars of the period. The rationale for such a focus is that it was principally the dynamics of male deviance as an object of both public fascination and scientific inquiry that produced a specific transformation of the star-audience relation in this historical period. It was also during this period that deviance came to be understood more and more as a developmental phenomenon; males were often assumed to have a more complex trajectory of psychological and social development as a result of the demands of (masculine) public life. For these reasons, male deviance posed an important set of problems for a public institution such as the cinema. While there were certainly female stars who were considered deviant, or who performed deviance in different ways, women's relation to deviance was constructed differently and often understood in the literature on deviance within the more circumscribed sphere of the domestic. Hollywood's continual acknowledgment of its own social effects in this period, together with its attempts to educate its audiences about public life and social conditions, meant that male deviance, as an abnormality of psychological adjustment and socialization, had to be negotiated within a system of mass communications whose star system was thought to be as emotionally affective as it was educational. In other words, the film industry had to attend to and represent its own role in the creation or prevention of social problems.

Because I consider the ways in which the star system participated in transformations of modern understandings of personality and deviance, this project is in dialogue with current work in film studies (especially, of course, work on film stars and the star system), American cultural history, and queer theory. While each chapter is organized around specific media personalities, I am not centrally interested in producing studies of individual stars. I write about particular celebrities only in order to demonstrate the cinema's historical relations to other institutions and to specify as clearly as possible those discourses that spoke about particular types of identities that Hollywood movie stars of the period often exemplified through the ways they appeared before the public. Thus, *Twilight of the Idols* is not principally a book about male film stars or even masculinity, though gender definition counts throughout this study as a crucial context for mass cultural address and popular reception. In many ways, this study is more interested in contestations over gender and radical gender transience at particular sites of receptions where the gendering of audiences remained crucially indeterminate and, therefore, became an impetus for regulatory concerns. Such contestations over gender definition cannot be divorced from considerations of sexuality, social class, race, and ethnicity. During the period covered by this study, the matinée idol was a prominent mass cultural figure commanding the attention of

millions. He seemingly lived his life in public view, and he was available for projects far beyond the scrutiny of traditional authorities. The new possibilities of the matinée idol were quickly curtailed through trivializing his cultural significance as merely a symptom of a cult mentality. *Twilight of the Idols* refuses this trivialization and seeks a return to those unaccountable possibilities. As film historian Lea Jacobs has recently shown, the early twentieth century saw the emergence of a set of critical discourses on taste that eventually cast the romantic dramas of the early 1920s, that place where the matinée idol most commonly made his on-screen appearance, as overly sentimental, old-fashioned, and unsophisticated, attributions clearly not innocent of gender, racial, and sexual connotations. Jacobs convincingly demonstrates how those romantic dramas that were built around the single male star in the early 1920s were soon eclipsed in the latter part of the decade by Hollywood's promotion of the romantic star duo; how, for example, Rudolph Valentino comes to be replaced as a star attraction by Greta Garbo and John Gilbert as a star couple.[4] It is more than likely that the attacks on sentimentality discussed by Jacobs played a key role in disciplining a mass audience to see the conflicted passion of the heterosexual couple as the key dramatic issue worthy of their interest, investment, and aesthetic education.[5]

Important contributions to the study of stars have also been made in separate studies by Richard deCordova and Janet Staiger. They have sought to ground the study of film stars within analyses of the star system as both an economic and a semiotic system. In their work, the star is understood in terms of her or his historical conditions of existence within the institutional practices of the cinema.[6] For deCordova and Staiger, the star system emerged in the 1910s out of a particular industrial refinement of the picture personality (an actor's performed identity over a series of films), one that grafted onto that personality a publicity discourse about the real life of the particular performer. The revelations of the personal life of the film performer established a continuous circuit of consumption and a new model of spectatorship where every film appearance of a particular star and every mention of the star within a publicity discourse promised to add something new to the viewer's knowledge of and pleasure in that star's identity.

Staiger and deCordova seek to account for the historical appearance of the star within the parameters of the cinema as an institution. My study extends their work by analyzing some of the ways in which the appearance and development of the film star related to larger transformations of knowledge and subjectivity. I pose questions about the roles that film stars and the star system played within the broader cultural field of modernity outside of the cinema. Along these lines, deCordova ends his study by considering competing historical models of continuity and discontinuity to explain the star scandals of the early 1920s. Rather than settling on an account that views the scandals as a rupture or crisis within the system, he suggests, via Michel Foucault, that the scandals conformed to a

more encompassing modern project: "The star system continually set us out on an investigation, an investigation that is, both in its methods (eliciting confessions and unveiling secrets) and in its promised result (revealing the sexual as the ultimate, ulterior truth of the player's identity), closely tied to the construction and deployment of sexuality in modern times."[7] Taking deCordova's suggestion as my starting point, I seek to demonstrate that the star system as it developed after the First World War not only resembled those strategies of power described by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* and elsewhere—the confession, the case history, the life sciences—but that it was an integral participant in the elaboration of personal identity and psychological health during the early twentieth century.

Previous approaches to early film stars have often failed to provide any sustained analysis of the political importance of film stardom for changes in U.S. society and the entrenchment of a hegemonic mass culture.[8] This is partially explained by the predominance of the institutional paradigm of film history that grew out of apparatus theory in the 1970s, where the cinema's ideological work could be understood in terms of an autonomous system of filmic signification. Cultural studies, though, is one area where stardom has been analyzed within its larger social context. The work of Richard Dyer,[9] in particular, has led to an understanding of stars as unstable cultural texts that either embody or enact specific sets of social tensions or contradictions. As a film scholar, Dyer adopts a broader framework of cultural analysis that addresses the diverse and divergent reception contexts for celebrity personalities. For Dyer and others, the star-as-text functions to reproduce, resist, or unmask contradictions within dominant social ideologies for historically situated audiences. Drawing on the earlier work of Edgar Morin,[10] Dyer sees stars as composites of contradictory qualities that relate to societal instabilities at specific historical moments. The combination of innocence and sexuality of Marilyn Monroe, for example, can be related to conflicts between normative morality and discourses on feminine sexuality within 1950s patriarchy.[11] Because the star persona is an intertextual construct whose identity is informed by ideological contradiction, the star as a complex social sign is a potential site for oppositional readings, especially by marginalized social and cultural groups. Such an approach has produced some important analyses of individual stars and of the uses different audiences make of particular stars.[12] However, a difficulty immediately arises in determining to what extent the meanings that might be produced by marginalized audiences are, in fact, in any way oppositional. As media scholar Judith Mayne has cautioned, "it has been crucial to contest readings that would posit a wholly successful system of control and manipulation as the essence of mass culture, but all too frequently what is left out of the 'leaks' is the complex way in which subversion and the status quo are not necessarily opposed, but rather constantly enmeshed with each other."[13] Mayne points

to the need to interrogate the incoherencies and contradictions of cultural texts (such as stars) from a position that is skeptical about the easy decidability of their effects. Furthermore, she suggests that such incoherencies are often definitive of the normative work of many cultural products.

In *Twilight of the Idols*, I propose that the star scandals of the early 1920s and the resulting "crisis" of the star system, as well as the subsequent transformations of the Hollywood film star, worked to reiterate and consolidate a set of new hegemonic categories of social deviance and psychological abnormality. It is important to note that these new categories were themselves often understood in terms of incoherence and disintegration, and I examine the ways that these notions of deviance and abnormality were articulated in the American cinema of the 1920s. By analyzing the various interrelations between star discourses and theories of human development and personality, I wish to situate the deviant silent film star within a broader context of cultural practices in order to demonstrate the star system's integration with other modern systems of knowledge production. In this way, I seek to contribute to ongoing discussions about mass culture and spectatorship by reading star culture as part of a broader cultural transformation that was significantly influenced by the historical emergence of the human sciences as a mode of popular understanding. For while the human sciences were certainly important for the industrial and governmental regulation of film through censorship boards, audience studies, and reform movements, they also provided a framework and a point of reference for film audiences to interpret motion picture stories and the stars who appeared in them. Furthermore, these "new" forms of knowledge about personality and development, as they were taken up by the mass media, gave audiences important new ways to understand their own relationship to film celebrities and the industry. How that self-understanding finally related to the definition of a mass audience in the 1920s is a story that *Twilight of the Idols* seeks to tell.

Twilight of the Idols also takes up and expands deCordova's argument that sexuality might be the ultimate "truth" of the star's identity, and that sexual identity, in large measure, accounts for our fascination with the star. I argue here that sexuality powerfully determined the ways in which star discourses operated and the ways in which particular star identities were able to appear within the mass media. I do not assume, however, that discourses about sexuality during the late silent period worked to reveal to audiences a fixed, autonomous, and private identity that was in some way perceived as the "true" personality behind the more "public" layers of a performer's identity. If the rhetorical gestures of sensational journalism and tabloid exposé supported such a model of identity, that model needs to be further contextualized within the interpretive strategies that were available to cinema audiences through popularized ideas of public life and mental health, as well as through their own social experiences. I seek to show that the

Hollywood star as deviant personality, particularly the male star, was produced and popularly received within the field of sexuality (as conceived through the scientific and institutional discourses of the period) primarily through his or her shifting relations to others. One of the implications of my argument is that audiences of the Hollywood film star in the late silent period were encouraged to understand the star's identity as a product of discernible social and psychological relations, relations in which those audiences themselves played an active part. This mutuality of the star-audience relationship is evinced in reformers' concerns about the influence of certain stars on susceptible audience members and the possible dissipative effects of stardom on the lives of the stars themselves. Such ideas about the social effects of motion picture personalities had relevance because they were coextensive with a logic of star promotion and publicity that emphatically deployed scientific models of personal development and social behavior to explain cinema stars' personalities and their popular appeal.

One of the assumptions of this historical project is that the very notion of personality was being contested within mass culture at this time. It has been assumed by many cultural historians that although there were many versions of "the psychological" recognizable in American culture during the 1920s, personality was always more or less equated with individuality and "the psychological" always represented some model of subjective depth. For example, in an essay on the popularization of psychology, cultural historian Joel Pfister works from the assumption that "by the 1920s a divide was often in place between movements of 'personal' and 'political' emancipation." He concludes "that the psychological was glamorized successfully as a value, an identity, and a performance of self in large part because it was connected to related writing of the self during the 1910s and 1920s."[14] Not surprisingly, the majority of the texts that Pfister uses to locate this "writing of the self" are taken from middle-class culture: Floyd Dell and Max Eastman of the bohemian socialist publication *The Masses*, the plays of Eugene O'Neill, and society magazines such as *Vanity Fair*. While these texts circulated at all levels of society, there is no reason to assume that their respective representations of personality were always received as validating the forms of middle-class individualism and subjectivity that they seemingly promoted. This study begins with the assumption that the political and the personal were not necessarily becoming mutually exclusive at all levels of American society during the 1910s and 1920s. It was only after a period of discounting and pathologizing alternative understandings and appropriations of personality that the modern ego gained widespread popular recognition.

Besides accounting for these emerging and conflicting conceptions of personal identity and their communication to a mass audience, my central concern is to investigate the kinds of complications in the status of knowledge about film

stars that resulted from the popularization of the human sciences, especially as that knowledge devolved toward questions of sexual definition. In this respect, my work draws on queer theory and recent contributions to the history of sexuality, particularly the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick argues that a series of epistemological contradictions around sexual definition (what she refers to as "homo/heterosexual definition") have been crucial to almost every Western political and cultural project of the twentieth century. One of the central contradictions of sexual definition that Sedgewick identifies is the repetitive coincidence of minoritizing and universalizing discourses. Minoritizing discourses produce the homosexual as a distinct identity, one that is isolatable from the rest of the population, while universalizing discourses assume "that apparently heterosexual persons and object choices are strongly marked by same-sex influences and desires, and vice-versa for apparently homosexual ones."[15] What is important for Sedgwick is not the dominance of either one of these types of discourses at a particular moment, but the ways that they are simultaneously mobilized to structure the conditions of modern knowledge and experience.

The intractable but productive contradictions that exist between the minoritizing and universalizing discourses of sexual definition, which for Sedgwick constitute the crucial twentieth-century trope of the closet, bear a striking resemblance to the theorization of the film star by Morin, Dyer, and others. The star's simultaneous accessibility and distance, his or her combination of ordinary and extraordinary qualities, would seem to suggest that the film star is a particularly rich site for analyzing the operations of the closet. I argue here that the star culture of the late silent period raised specific problems of sexual definition through the promotion of certain stars. The male film star as deviant personality was particularly salient in revealing the erotic basis of an identity that was held in place by the unpredictable contingencies of one's knowledge about his past and his present relations to others. I seek to use the deviant star, then, to think about the way star culture both participated in and accommodated itself to popular scientific ideas about personality, developmental processes, and modern society. More specifically, I hope to challenge the notion that the ideological category of deviance worked only to marginalize, stigmatize, or simply erase groups of individuals within mass culture.[16] Instead, my project investigates how deviance functioned as an important interpretive category for film audiences in a particular historical period.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the star scandals of the early 1920s, situating those scandals in the context of the public discussion about the health of the film industry and the need for government regulation and censorship. I pay particular

attention to the stardom of Wallace Reid and his death from drug addiction in 1923. The publicity around Reid's addiction was important for the way it problematized the idea of normative masculinity. Reid embodied many of the social contradictions of narcotic use, and his death helped transform popular notions about the identity of the addict and the causes of addiction. I briefly consider Reid's stardom in relation to that of Douglas Fairbanks. Fairbanks and Reid emerged as important film stars at approximately the same time (1914–1919), and both were promoted by the film industry as typifying the ideals of the new (white) American male. On the one hand, Fairbanks continues to be discussed as playing an important role in the consolidation of new cultural standards of physical and mental health for men through his athleticism, his pragmatic optimism, and his rational leisure.[17] On the other hand, little attention has been paid to the way Reid's stardom, especially his posthumous stardom in the 1920s, helped define new ideas about masculine vulnerability, disease, and the dangers of undisciplined consumption.

In Chapter 2, I look at the trial of Leopold and Loeb, two young and wealthy men convicted in the summer of 1924 of murdering their fourteen-year-old neighbor. The trial took place during a transitional period between the construction of star criminals in the early 1920s and the proliferation of criminal stars at the decade's end (Al Capone, "Legs" Diamond, for example), making it an important moment in the development of different types of celebrity discourses.[18] I argue that, by 1924, the cinema and the Hollywood scandals had already played an important role in constructing a mass audience for the trial of Leopold and Loeb. The celebrity status of the two young murderers depended, in part, on a new conception of the media personality that was made possible by the previous Hollywood star scandals as well as by the deployment of psychoanalysis by the film industry to teach audiences how to read and understand unconscious motivations. In this chapter I read the Leopold and Loeb trial as having registered specific tensions that were developing around star-fan relations; these tensions resulted from the way that the discourses of criminality, entertainment, psychoanalysis, and male homosexuality informed one another at that particular historical moment. Furthermore, the trial and the publicity surrounding it marked a crucial moment for a particular ideological linking of homosexuality and criminality.

Chapters 3 and 4 are both organized around the mass reception of Rudolph Valentino. Valentino's stardom has taken on critical importance for theories of female spectatorship and for analyses of historical film audiences, primarily through the work of Miriam Hansen and Gaylyn Studlar. These scholars have been attentive to how issues of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity complicated Valentino's star image to provide audiences with alternative images of masculinity

and gender relations. In Chapter 3, I take up Hansen's analysis of Valentino's masochism. For Hansen, the instability of Valentino's gaze supports an alternative regime of vision and desire for the female spectator. By approaching Valentino as a model of male deviance, I contextualize the so-called ambivalence of Valentino's erotic identity within a larger social conflict between divergent and competing popular notions of sexual identity. This conflict over the meaning of male sexual deviance resulted from differences between the visibility of the male invert in urban working-class culture—an identity appreciably different from our contemporary recognition of the homosexual—and middle-class ideas about gender, sexual identity, and object choice. The historical clash of these divergent conceptions of sexuality helps to explain how theories of sexual pathology played a significant part in Valentino's popular reception. I explore how the gender-transitive aspects of Valentino's star persona were intimately tied to a struggle over the meaning of male deviance and that the primary terms of that struggle were social class and ethnicity.

Studlar has situated the Valentino phenomenon within the rise of the "cult of the body" and the growing popularity of ethnic dance in the 1910s.[19] In Chapter 4, I continue this consideration of the star's relation to dance, but I shift the emphasis away from considerations of high-art ballet and middle-class dance culture. Instead, I inquire into Valentino's stardom in the context of a set of social concerns about race, ethnicity, and urban dance halls in the 1920s. I look at the ways cultural conceptions of ethnicity and race were involved in Valentino's deviant stardom and his association with exotic dancing. Richard Dyer has written about "whiteness" as a specific system of cultural discourses and practices that continues to play an important role in the creation and reception of films and film stars.[20] His work also suggests that "blackness," as a corollary system of signification and values grounded in racial difference, is similarly, though not isomorphically, implicated in the production of Hollywood film stars.[21] In this chapter, I isolate some of those sociological discourses within mass culture that figured blackness as a destructive social and sexual force which threatened to obliterate ethnic and racial distinctions altogether within the cultural hybridity of the metropolis. By performing various exotic ethnicities in his films, Valentino's Italian identity took on a fluidity that, while glamorous, was quite threatening to emerging notions of public health, social development, and the commodity form in consumer capitalism. I consider Valentino's stardom and sexuality in relation to these ideas about ethnicity, the modern city, and social disintegration, and I conclude that the imagined negating power of blackness, which helped underwrite public policies of racial segregation, played an important role in the different receptions of Valentino and in the construction of his audience.

Since the popular discourses on deviance that are evident within the mass media of the 1920s figured personality both as developmental and as socially relational, and since film stars of the period often performed deviant identities in a variety of ways, the audience's relation to the picture personality became an important area for scientific study and social intervention. Perhaps the most well-known result of this interest in star-audience relations was the publication of the Payne Fund studies in 1933, the culmination of more than six years of empirical research on the influence that motion pictures have children and young adults, investigations designed and conducted by various university educators and social scientists.

One of the main goals of the Payne Fund studies was to measure the effects of the cinema on audiences (particularly child and adolescent audiences) in terms of motion pictures' contribution to two general types of abnormality: sexual promiscuity and criminal delinquency. While not exclusively linked to gender identities, the former tended to be viewed as a greater risk for women, the latter for men. Yet sexual deviance in men, in the form of homosexual desire, was also a recurring if understated (or usually unremarked) concern of these studies, especially with respect to star worship. I argue here that the models of spectatorship and the specific constructions of gender differences that were employed in many of the Payne studies were made possible by specific tensions that developed within the star system and around cinema audiences' relation to Hollywood stars after 1919. These tensions resulted from a commingling of the discourses of deviance with entertainment practices, the particular way they informed one another at that historical moment, and the way modern conceptions of personality were articulated within the popular media in general and the star system in particular.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the scandal that engulfed Mabel Normand after the murder of Hollywood director William Desmond Taylor. While the scandal was ostensibly about the actress' intimate relations with the slain director, the deeper issues concerned Normand's status as an intellectual movie star interested in questions of psychology and philosophy. The attenuation of her career in the mid-1920s illustrates how the rapid implementation of regulatory discourses during the period was making mass cultural products such as stars subject to various forms of verification and institutional certification. Normand's fading stardom is significant since it provided an effective means of imposing upon the troubled star system a truth functionality that stigmatized individuals (both film stars and members of their publics) who misuse the mass media in claiming for themselves lives, identities, and desires that were unavailable to sanctioned authentication or that ultimately failed when subjected to independent scrutiny. The rather startling success of this particular regulatory project which found Mabel Normand so unworthy of popular adulation suggests that the star system of the early 1920s was more amenable to regulatory control through interrogations of gender

and class than through the policing of race, ethnicity, and sexuality. At the end of the chapter, I once again look briefly at the Payne Fund studies and the impact that Hollywood film stardom, especially as it relates to the vicissitudes of deviance, had on these extensive sociological investigations of film audiences and sexual definition. Media historian Garth Jowett has pointed out that the Payne Fund studies, though a very important event in the history of film industry regulation, were not widely read by the public.[22] Yet, because the Payne Fund studies and their findings were often cited in news reports and editorials, they played an important role in shaping popular opinions about film and deviance. Moreover, these studies shared with a mass audience certain presumptions about audience-star relations and spectatorship. The Payne Fund studies did not use the category of the film star as a focus of research, but instead restricted themselves to a content analysis of films. Nevertheless, the rationale and research methods of many of these studies presupposed that the respective identities of the picture personality and the spectator were mutually sustaining ones. Whenever "test subjects" provided evidence of holding this same belief, however, they were seen as susceptible to the suggestive influences of the cinema. Thus, those types of mass cultural receptions that I have shown to have been cultivated by discursive problems of personality and sexual definition (through the intersections of star discourse and the human sciences) have now become definitive of a deviant film audience. I conclude the book by discussing the ways that the Payne Fund studies negotiated a terrain of mass culture where knowledge of socialization and psychological development had already left their mark.

A short explanation is in order about the title of this book. *Twilight of the Idols* is recognizable, of course, as the title of the English translation of *Die Götzen-Dämmerung*, one of the last books published by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche before he became insane in 1889. My use of this title is meant as a brash or even reckless act of appropriation, somewhat in the spirit of the philosopher's own work. However, this book is neither an engagement with Nietzsche's ideas nor an application of his thought. While he was arguably one of the first critics of the emerging human sciences (and perhaps also an early practitioner), and while many of his ideas about psychology resonate with ideas that appear in these pages, at present I have no interest in pursuing these particular relations. Many people in North America during the early part of the twentieth century considered the translated works of Nietzsche quite dangerous, particularly when read by those who were ill prepared to understand his thought or resist its influence. Young people were particularly susceptible, and, during the Jazz Age, the philosopher was sometimes seen as providing youth with a falsely erudite justification for their rejection of convention and embrace of amorality.[23] It is the Nietzsche of the culture wars in 1920s America that the book's title most directly references. Nevertheless, like this book and like the early star system, Nietzsche

was deeply interested in questions of pathology. His approach to health was one of curing pathology by seeking to understand degeneracy as an expressly human condition, thereby living through pathology's awfulness so as to avoid the real morbidity of delusion, hypocrisy, and rationalization. I propose that the Hollywood star system offered something similarly dangerous between 1920 and 1926.