Gender and the Business of Americanization: A Study of the Mobilized Women of Berkeley

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In response to World War I, American women rallied to wage war from the home front. On May 9, 1917, one month after the declaration of war, women of Berkeley, California, representing the Red Cross, women's clubs, and the public and private schools, convened in the ballroom of the Shattuck Hotel to prepare for battle. More than 150 local women's organizations came together to form the Mobilized Women's Army (MOBY), a group that would long outlast the exigencies of engagement. During the war years, at the apogee of their organization, the Mobilized Women counted over ten thousand in their ranks. Among their wartime activities, the Mobilized Women held numerous drives for the Red Cross and liberty bonds, promoted food conservation, launched a program for the moral protection of military bases, and commenced an Americanization program for immigrants that continued for over a decade.

Women reformers' involvement in Americanization flows from longstanding gendered notions of citizenship dating back to the Revolutionary Era that defined women's political participation in terms of their domestic roles. By the late-nineteenth century, progressive women had chipped away at the ideal of the separate spheres in practice but maintained maternalism as the path into politics. In the wake of war, threats of Bolshevism, labor unrest, and ethnic and class divisions spurred progressive clubwomen to take on the important political and maternal mission of assimilating immigrants. In their efforts to maintain an Americanization program, the Mobilized Women dove headlong into the public sphere by opening several successful businesses. Even so, as historian John F. McClymer has aptly pointed out, at the same time the women reformers were radically altering their own positions in society, they were simultaneously reinforcing traditional middle-class notions of domesticity and separate, gendered spheres through their Americanization methods.

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1 Meeting Minutes, May 9, 1917, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
2 "Officers to be Elected," News clipping, May 1920, Scrapbook, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
MOBY's "American House" sponsored classes for immigrant women in English, sewing, millinery, home nursing, hygiene, and cooking, but the reformers' Americanization curriculum failed to instruct its female students in the critical subjects of civics and suffrage. In the end, the curriculum, espoused by the Mobilized Women and other Americanizers, helped to perpetuate a gendered definition of citizenship, and a domestic ideal of womanhood that neither group seemed willing, or able, to emulate.

As war broke out in Europe, American society was deeply divided; labor unrest, the growth of industrial capitalism, and waves of progressive reforms revealed social and political cleavages in the previous decades. An influx of immigrants exacerbated these rifts and generated an upsurge in nativism and xenophobia that prompted President Woodrow Wilson to make an urgent call for unity and 100% Americanism in his 1916 election campaign. The president also launched a domestic war against potentially disloyal German-speaking immigrants and radicals. In the wake of these developments, the Wilson administration introduced a propaganda campaign designed to rally Americans around the war and to encourage unity, cultural homogeneity, and strict social control. 100% Americanism, immigrant Americanization, and repression all aimed to heal these internal wounds. The Mobilized Women's Americanization program took root in this rocky social terrain.

The progressive impulse prescribed Americanization as a panacea for the nation's immigrant ills. Americanization efforts began in progressive circles and settlement houses in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Reformer Frances A. Kellor spearheaded a national program for immigrant education in English and civics before the war, but engagement added urgency to her cause. Progressives—known for their pro-active efforts at social engineering and scientific management—approached Americanization through rational and systematic planning and execution; they organized night classes at public schools, coordinated educational efforts in factories, and trained social workers to make home visits to immigrant families. For Americanizers, assimilation would no longer be an organic process stoked by time, but a "conscious drive" to "heat and stir the melting pot." Patriotic groups, women's clubs, and fraternal organizations rallied behind Kellor's cause, establishing Americanization programs across the country. Public involvement was commensurate with the progressive spirit, and fulfilled Americans' desire to aid the war effort.

Kellor's leadership in the national campaign for Americanization, like that of the Mobilized Women in Berkeley, reflects the central roles women played in the Americanization movement, and their activism flows from longstanding gendered political roles in the United States. Following the Revolutionary War, the concept of "republican motherhood" placed an emphasis on women as the nurturers of the next generation of American citizens. In this


way, women claimed the crucial responsibility of maintaining America's democratic values and institutions. Gayle Gullett has also linked women's Americanization efforts to "home defense," a gendered definition of patriotism developed by women reformers in the early-nineteenth century. Proponents of "home defense" placed the task of "building family environments supportive of the social order" in the hands of American women.8

By the mid-nineteenth century, it became socially acceptable for women working as home defenders to be engaged in humanitarian work outside of the home in the male-dominated, public sphere. Women capitalized on these opportunities, making significant strides in breaking down the idyllic model of the separate spheres in practice, but rarely in theory. During the Progressive Era, women continued to engage in politics through maternalism, claiming that women's moral superiority would counter the corruption endemic to American politics.9 Through maternal politics, progressive women became savvy political veterans who had engaged in efforts in suffrage, conservation, moral reform, and consumer protection. Thus, women's Americanization endeavors can be viewed as expressions of their earlier political roles as "republican mothers," "home defenders" and politicized progressive reformers.

In the wake of World War I and the perceived threats of Bolshevism, labor unrest, class conflict, and radicalism, the Mobilized Women had much to fear and defend. For the Mobilized Women and many others, these threats rendered women's Americanization efforts an urgent matter of national security, increasing the weight and prestige of their work in the public sphere. In their view, the fate of the nation seemed to rest upon efforts to assimilate potentially disloyal and dangerous elements. Though the concept of Americanization was born from the humanitarian instincts of progressive reformers in the late-nineteenth century, during and after the war, fear was also a driving force. John Higham has pointed out the tension between currents of nativism, xenophobia, and humanitarianism that ran throughout the Americanization movement, reflecting these acute anxieties.10 Motivated both by fear and benevolence, the Mobilized Women's first Americanization activities aimed to gather information about the local immigrants in their community. In their monthly meeting, dated December 6, 1917, Blanche Morse set out a plan for Americanization work and named a committee to forward the program. Morse proposed that they compile a survey showing the number and nationality of foreigners in their area. She requested a weekly sum of fifty dollars to perform the considerable task. The Committee held Americanization drives and distributed Americanization registration cards secured from the Army to be classified and categorized. The Committee then dispensed the cards to the local Red Cross, public school officials, and to the Friends of German Democracy Society.11 Though Morse's report has not survived, press coverage reveals that the Mobilized Women

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8 Gullett, 75.
9 Baker, 620.
10 Ibid.
11 Meeting Minutes, June 16, 1918, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
worked with a variety of ethnic groups including: Italian, Portuguese, Mexican, Russian, Filipino, Scandinavian, German, and Irish immigrants, and at least one Chinese woman named Chiu Soo. Morse’s effort to compile data also reflects a desire to create an organized and systematic approach to the immigrant “problem.” Americanization groups like the Mobilized Women also used techniques that included house-to-house canvassing and “home visits” to ensure that no immigrants slipped through the cracks. By these methods, the long arm of Americanization attempted to master the potential immigrant menace.

Increasing fears of Bolshevism and the looming threat of war between capital and labor amplified the Americanization impetus as the war drew to a close, engaging American industries in the movement. Historian Frank Van Nuys has emphasized the close ties forged between business and Americanizers to tamp down burgeoning labor unrest and radicalism. By the end of World War I, the Mobilized Women had allied with the Sunlit Canning Company in West Berkeley to offer Americanization classes to foreign-born, women workers. During canning season, Sunlit donated space on their grounds to house a kindergarten and evening school for foreign-born employees and their children. The kindergarten served immigrant children and allowed their mothers to attend evening classes. Seventy-three children attended the kindergarten, while only twenty-five women enrolled for classes in their first month, perhaps showing the more pressing need for child-care among Sunlit’s female workforce. In October 1919, a streetcar strike postponed the opening of the Sunlit Evening School, evidencing the acute labor unrest of the postwar period.

Education was not the only tool employed by the Mobilized Women; establishing social connections with immigrants also aided in the assimilation process. At the end of canning season, in December of 1919, the Sunlit Company joined with the Mobilized Women and immigrant employees for a

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12 “Mobilized Women Aid Oriental Mother to Learn Customs of America,” News clipping, ND, Scrapbook, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; With the exception of Filipinos (whose ethnic homeland was under American occupation), Asian (Chinese and Japanese) participation in the Mobilized Women’s program was extremely low, likely as a result of the racial divide. In Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizens, Frank Van Nuys has pointed out that the western states posed a distinct challenge to Americanizers, as it represented a “racial frontier”—a boundary between the American West, the Hispanic South, and the Asian East. Widespread anti-Japanese sentiment during this period suggests that the Mobilized Women may have favored exclusion over Americanization in the case of Berkeley’s Japanese population; other programs, however, such as those held by home-teachers in Los Angeles, did focus their efforts on Japanese women. The MOBY clipping also implies that Asian women may have been reticent to enroll in Americanization classes, likely because they feared the racism that was endemic in California at the time.

13 McClymer, 7.


16 “Strike Stops Work at Sunlit School,” News clipping, October 9, 1919, Scrapbook, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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chicken dinner to promote unity and cooperation and to celebrate a job well done during canning season. Anna Saylor, chairwoman of the MOBY Americanization Committee, spoke at the dinner, saying “that people didn’t ‘rub elbows’ enough for their own good. [Saylor] urged closer cooperation [among] all parts of the city for the common good.”17 Thus, Americanizers hoped to transcend both ethnic and class divisions through education and social functions that promoted a unified American identity.

The Great Red Scare of the post-war years made Americanization the centerpiece of the Mobilized Women’s “peace program.”18 In May 1920, a local newspaper declared Americanization the ultimate solution to the Red Menace.19 That month, the Mobilized Women hosted a lecture at the Whitecotton Hotel at the corner of Shattuck Avenue and Allston Street, in which R. Justin Miller of the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Housing educated the women on the imminent communist threat. Miller likely had the Mobilized Women gripped with dread as he described the urgency of assimilation. He emphasized the need for the immigrant to learn American culture and language in order to “think and act and feel that he belongs to this country.” He underscored the importance of English language classes for immigrant men, not to make their new lives easier, but to counter the vast “quantities of ‘red’ literature . . . placed in their hands, printed in their own language before they become acquainted with our [American] language and ideals.” Miller urged the Mobilized Women to infiltrate the insulated ethnic enclaves of Italians, Germans, and Russians, to integrate them and remake them into “real Americans.”20

While Miller and a majority of industrial Americanization programs focused on immigrant men, the Mobilized Women sought to reach foreign-born women who they imagined to be isolated in their homes. While the Sunlit Evening School and Kindergarten addressed the Americanization of working, immigrant women, the Mobilized Women opened an “American House” to cater to a wider demographic, displaying the humanitarian side of Americanization. The Mobilized Women touted the “American House” as the “first step in making . . . isolated and often lonely women feel welcome and contented in their adopted country.”21

The humanitarian strain of Americanization was rooted in the settlement house experience, and MOBY’s “American House” was likely modeled after that concept. Jane Addams’s Hull House, the first and most

20 Ibid.
famous of these American institutions, built its facility in an immigrant neighborhood to assist recent arrivals to Chicago in establishing their lives and helping to alleviate the endemic problems of urban poverty and dislocation. However, the settlements did not emphasize homogeneity or outright assimilation as Americanization programs did; they “tried to bind together and complete a neighborhood, not to make a nation.” MOBY’s “American House” also differed from Hull House in its means of monetary support; while wealthy donors and investors backed Hull House, “American House” was largely self-supporting.

In their determination to open the “American House,” the Mobilized Women faced the issue of funding. In their quest for capital, MOBY published a cookbook, started a recycling plant, sold produce and kindling, and opened three retail stores. The businesses that made the “American House” a reality also reveal the clubwomen’s entrepreneurial spirit and energetic engagement in the public sphere. Financing for Americanization programs during, and after, the war largely rested in the private sector, though the U.S. Department of Education supplied a small source of revenue in its early stages. Historian David M. Kennedy has shown that Americans’ underlying fear of state power resulted in private funding for the war’s many related social and aid organizations. In many ways, the Mobilized Women’s Organization and Americanization efforts, in general, powerfully reflect decentralization. The Americanization “movement” was highly fragmented and varied widely from state to state; in addition, the federal government encouraged local organizations to spearhead independent efforts. As a result, the Mobilized Women started several successful businesses to fund their programs without looting municipal coffers—a fact that they proudly publicized. MOBY President, Mrs. Lewis Hicks, reported the Mobilized Women’s purpose “as being ‘Americanization and thrift so combined that each will produce the other—the reclamation of waste materials as a means of reclaiming waste citizenship.’”

The reclamation efforts of the Mobilized Women reflect a general emphasis placed on thrift and conservation during the war years. In wartime, the conservation of food and other vital materials was considered the patriotic duty of all Americans. The government promoted “Meatless Mondays” and “Wheatless Wednesdays” to unite the public behind the war effort and to supply U.S. allies with scarce resources. The Mobilized Women promoted food conservation and published and sold a cookbook of conservation recipes. The cookbook featured such appetizing and conservation-conscious recipes as “War Time Mayonnaise,” “Lima Bean Loaf,” “Meatless Mince Meat,” “War Johnny

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22 Higham, 236.
23 Kennedy, 142.
Proceeds from the sale of the Mobilized Women’s *Conservation Recipes* financed the groups’ various wartime programs. A local newspaper reported that with the money from their cookbook sales and various fundraisers, “these plucky and independent women are slowly but surely, winning the confidence and love of the foreign population.”

With the publication of their cookbook, the Mobilized Women straddled the separate, gendered spheres by using the domestic arts to further their public and political endeavors.

With the opening of “American House,” the Mobilized Women required a steady cash flow to pay the mortgage on their building located at the corner of University Avenue and Ninth Street, in the heart of industrial West Berkeley. MOBY’s most innovative entrepreneurial endeavor was a reclamation business that collected newspapers and magazines to recycle and raise cash. The Mobilized Women collected Berkeley’s waste with the efficiency and precision of a combat team. Hicks devised an ingenious and efficient plan for the Mobilized Women’s army to execute their war drives, and this plan was adapted to the collection of the city’s valuable salvage. The city map was divided into twelve districts with a “major” in charge of each. The districts were further divided into precincts directed by “captains,” and “lieutenants” presided over each city block. Local Boy Scouts and firemen assisted the Mobilized Women in newspaper drives, held every six months. They advertised their drives, showing how to fold, stack, and tie donated newspapers into neat and tidy bundles. In this way, the Mobilized Women and their volunteers managed to collect forty-two tons of paper in a single day.

In the same organized fashion, the Mobilized Women also collected clothing, shoes, furniture, and other household articles to be refurbished and sold in their “American House” thrift shop. Each lieutenant supplied the residents on her block with a numbered bag to dispose of their unwanted items, and each home was called on when pick-ups in their area were underway. Local journalist Helen Bell described the thrifty reclamation practiced at the “American House” salvage annex:

> While we were on our tour . . . the truck came in and the driver called out lustily to Mrs. Webster: ‘I got another donations today. Yep, an old sewing machine. Say, this one sure came out of the ark.’ But one can rest assured that

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29 *Meeting Minutes*, April 21, 1919, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
whether its genealogy dates back to the historic day or not, it will be used advantageously and turned into money.30

Eventually, the Mobilized Women opened three thrift stores in the Berkeley area—one at their headquarters on University Avenue, one in southwest Berkeley, and one in nearby Albany. Though reclamation was their primary source of revenue, the Mobilized Women also sold and delivered bundles of firewood and automobile rags, opened a successful produce stand, and held typical women's club fundraisers such as carnivals, bazaars, dinners, and dances. With all of their entrepreneurial activities, the Mobilized Women were able to purchase the “American House” building at 1002 University Avenue outright after their first year in business, and they purchased additional property adjacent to the building for a playground valued at $9,000.00. Treasurer Mrs. L.E. Blochman reported a gross income of $13,577.00 (more than one million dollars in current purchasing power) with $2,500.00 in expenditures for 1920.31

The credentials of MOBY’s key members demonstrate the extent to which their endeavors had pushed women into the political public sphere.32 Anna L. Saylor, chairman of the Americanization Committee of the Mobilized Women, was elected to the California Assembly in 1918, and served in that post until 1926. Saylor was one of the first four women to serve in the assembly and, in her tenure, she campaigned for numerous maternalist reforms.33 For Saylor, involvement in war work proved to be the lynchpin to political success with the help of her primary voting constituency—Berkeley clubwomen.34 Adelle Tuttle Schloss, Vice President of the Mobilized Women served as President of the California Federation of Women’s Clubs, an umbrella organization founded in 1900 to link women’s clubs of the state under the banner “Strength United is Stronger.” Schloss also sat on the board of the Save the Redwoods League and served as Vice President of the Japanese Exclusion League (Schloss’s involvement in Japanese exclusion also highlights the racist attitudes of many Americanizers).35 Mrs. D.W. Ross, Chairwoman of MOBY’s Food Conservation Committee during the war, was appointed as Berkeley’s Representative of the State Food Administration for Food Conservation and was also made Food


31 “Local Women Purchase Their Own Home Here,” News clipping, February 1921, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

32 Baker, 636.


34 Ibid., 198-199.

35 Gullett, 93; Henderson, 167.
Inspector of Berkeley. Finally, in addition to her role on the Americanization Committee, Blanche Morse worked at the California Industrial Farm for Delinquent Women. Still, the Mobilized Women’s workplace retained a wholly domestic veneer despite the very public and political work being done inside. It is telling that they named their headquarters the “American House” and that the interior rooms were made to feel like a home. The name and home-like environment symbolize the ideal of women’s “proper” place in the private sphere and reflects the maternal face of women’s civic work. The Mobilized Women aimed to inculcate the domestic ideal embodied in the American House in their immigrant students. Although the Mobilized Women held political offices, managed successful businesses, and ran a non-profit agency, they attempted to inculcate in their foreign-born counterparts very different notions of American womanhood. While many historians have pointed out that Americanizers aimed to remake immigrant women in their own image, in fact, they drew on a traditional and idealized model of womanhood—not one that reflected the reformers themselves. The Mobilized Women put forth a domestic ideal of womanhood that reinforced the separate, gendered spheres, even while their actions in the public sphere eroded traditional gender roles.

This domestic ideal is evident in the courses offered to immigrant women. “American House” held classes in English and the domestic arts, including: sewing, hygiene, cooking, millinery, and home nursing. A local newspaper heralded the Mobilized Women’s work: “through the fashioning of fall hats and warm winter dresses, the women hope to implant their sisters from other lands with some of the ideals of the country of their adoption.” The message was clear—in order to be better citizens, immigrant women should learn to dress, shop, cook and clean in new, better, and more “American” ways. One anecdote published in a local newspaper highlights the “old world” habits Americanizers attempted to abolish. One afternoon in the thrift store, a clubwoman glanced into the empty baby carriage of Sadie, a young Portuguese mother. She noticed that the tiny blankets in the carriage appeared unkempt and took the opportunity to impress upon the woman the “importance of keeping one’s baby in clean and neat surroundings, if one is to be a truly American mother.” To her utter dismay, beneath the old tousled blankets she found banana peels from the baby’s breakfast and a pillow covered in a faded American flag. A lecture in dietetics, cleanliness, and proper patriotism

36 Meeting Minutes, Jan 31, 1918, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
38 McClymer, 4.
39 Ibid.
40 “Alien Women to be Taught Dressmaking,” News clipping, October 2, 1919, Scrapbook, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
followed. In closing, the exasperated columnist quipped, "[a]nd so this Americanization work continues."\textsuperscript{42}

Scenes such as this one could only be countered by crash courses in child-care and proper home management. Although the curriculum materials used by the Mobilized Women are not extant in the archives, primers developed by the California Commission of Immigration and Housing (CCIH) provide a window into the sort of programs presented in "American House" classrooms and home-teaching sessions. The CCIH disseminated teaching materials to independent Americanization organizations, and the primers, prepared by Amanda Matthews Chase, were specifically designed to educate immigrant women. "Proper" homemaking is clearly written in the subtext of Chase's curriculum. Reflected in her lesson plan is a domestic ideal of womanhood and a nearly-exclusive emphasis on home economics. In the first lessons, immigrant women learn the language of cooking, cleaning, sewing, and child-care. Series one offers pupils the basics in food and grocery shopping; the second, for cleaning, "attempts, besides teaching English, to drive home certain A B C elements of sanitation and domestic science."\textsuperscript{43} Lesson two engages pupils in "dramatic verb drills": "I cook. I wash. I iron. I sweep. I mop. I dust." Teachers are directed to perform "actual practical demonstrations" of cleaning where they may be "employed to advantage."\textsuperscript{44} Primer two instructs immigrant women in reading and in fashioning the ideal home: "There is no dust on the furniture. Everything is in its place. The kitchen table is very clean. The dishes are all washed and put away. Good citizens want to have a pretty yard. They try to have flowers and vegetables growing in the yard."\textsuperscript{45} Chase further instructs Americanization teachers to engage in one hour of industrious housework following each lesson.

Though the Mobilized Women focused a majority of their energies at the "American House" on educating immigrant women and children, they also opened their doors to men. The establishment of various, gender-specific "clubs" illustrates the prevalence of traditional notions of the separate spheres and gendered definitions of citizenship inherent in Americanization programs. The Bluebird Club for girls focused on the domestic arts such as sewing and millinery, while the Service Boys Club prepared young men for citizenship and loyal service to their country. The Service Boys Club was conducted using parliamentary procedure, and members learned the preamble to the Constitution. Each boy also received a copy of My Own United States, a 1918 screenplay and silent film adapted from the novel The Man Without a Country. The screenplay recounts the tragic tale of a disaffected Army lieutenant who commits treason, is exiled, and learns, over time, the value of the great nation he has forsaken. The

\textsuperscript{42} "Mobilized Women Do Good Work," News clipping, ND, Scrapbook, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

\textsuperscript{43} Commission of Immigration and Housing of California, Primer for Foreign-speaking Women: Part I (Sacramento, 1918), 11.

\textsuperscript{44} Commission of Immigration and Housing of California, Primer for Foreign-speaking Women: Part II, (Sacramento, 1918), 12.

\textsuperscript{45} Commission of Immigration and Housing of California, Primer II, 15,19.
Boys Club served the related goals of preparing young men for citizenship and military service, and disarming the threats of juvenile delinquency and disloyalty. Political groups for men and boys also engaged in discussions on business and local politics; one evening, the Filipino Club met to debate public and private ownership of the key system. On the other hand, the Progressive Club for Foreign Born Women met once per week to sew for the needy. Once again, women’s political roles are defined within the confines of domesticity and the private sphere, while men and boys learned skills critical to faithful, American citizenship. At the same time, as historian Sandra Henderson has shown, the progressive Twentieth Century Club of Berkeley, of which many of the Mobilized Women were also affiliates, empowered its native-born, female members to participate in politics, schooling them in public speaking, parliamentary procedure, and formal voting practices.46

In addition to household duties, Americanizers also aimed to impress economic norms on their students. Like other progressives, Gayle Gullett states, “[Americanizers] saw their political mission as creating social cohesion through responsible political actions that they defined as those efforts that maintained a productive capitalist system.”47 In addition, women had long been regarded as the primary consumers of the family, largely due to the production of new household products that actually created more domestic work but also, ironically, increased their power within the household.48 The “American House” thrift store served as a recruitment tool to enroll immigrants in Americanization classes and also helped to integrate them into American consumer culture. One story reported the immigrant child’s joy upon purchasing items from the “American House” shop: “[h]ow happy the child was with her new possession . . . How natural it was to hear [another] youngster pipe out, ‘Oh! maw! get me this.”49 Amanda Chase’s Primer for Foreign-Born Women carries a similar message of the joys of consumerism. In the primer’s third series entitled “Clothing” the student recites, “I am happy. I have money. I go to the store to buy cloth. I make a dress. I like my dress.”50 The Mobilized Women also attempted to impress upon their pupils the importance of economic self-sufficiency. By instructing immigrant women in thrift and industriousness, Americanizers believed that poor immigrants would save the community chest from the demands of charity. A local newspaper lauded the Mobilized Women’s lessons in home economy: “[w]hen the mother of little Giuseppe learns to cut down his father’s old trousers to fit him, she doesn’t apply through

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46 Henderson, 185.
47 Gullett, 74.
the charity agencies for clothing." One columnist even lauded the ascendency of the "American House" over "the vague visionary dream of a theorist" in aiding the poor huddled masses of Berkeley. It is difficult to know how immigrants themselves responded to the Mobilized Women's Americanization message, as none of the records document their voices. Other studies suggest, however, that immigrants largely rejected Americanization and that dropout rates were high despite reformers' best efforts. Some immigrants might have perceived courses in cooking, cleaning, and childcare to be condescending, as immigrant women ostensibly learned these skills in their own cultural milieux. The lessons for men and boys similarly suggested that they were disloyal, subversive delinquents. The question remains: why did immigrants patronize the Mobilized Women's Americanization program? And why did MOBY's program outlast so many others? By 1924, Americans had largely abandoned the idea of Americanization and opted for an alternate response to nativist sentiments—immigration restriction. In this new climate, many Americanization programs struggled for funding, but MOBY's lucrative fundraising schemes secured the financial resources that enabled them to continue. To some degree, immigrants' strapped, financial circumstances likely played a significant role in the longevity of the Americanization program, as the "American House" provided both bargains and opportunities for employment.

In addition to acting as a community center and educational facility, the "American House" served the economic needs of Berkeley's foreign-born population. The thrift shops, wood yard, and produce stand, all provided economical means for immigrant families to support themselves on often meager incomes. One immigrant mother of five said, "I don't know how I could have fed and clothed my family these last months if I hadn't been able to buy their clothes so cheap here that there was still money left for food." Kindergarten classes, a nursery school, and children's clubs also provided free child-care for working parents in the afternoons and evenings. In addition to providing life's necessities at low costs, "American House" also employed a number of immigrants. The staff included an "old Italian shoemaker," a "lusty" truck driver, a crew of women to sort and mend articles of clothing for the shops, and elderly and handicapped men in the wood yard and annex. The Mobilized Women also organized a free employment bureau for women that they advertised in local papers, stating that the agency could "provide women for general housework, washing, ironing, and cleaning. A practical nurse and a

woman to care for children [were] also available.”54 Soon after opening the employment bureau, thirty women had registered for work.

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Ironically, the domestic skills that the Mobilized Women had taken such great care in imparting to their students to transform immigrant homes into American ones, would often be used to maintain the homes of upper-middle-class women like themselves. Teaching immigrant women domestic skills did not empower or enfranchise them—it relegated many to the working class and provided “relief for the chronic shortage of skilled, inexpensive household help.”55 The class divide, to some extent, determined both groups’ inability to fulfill their roles as the homebound, ideal American housewife. Clubwomen, because they could afford to, spent their days engaged in political life and in the public sphere, while poverty kept immigrant women in the world of wage labor and, ostensibly, in the kitchens of the clubwomen. Thus, women Americanizers helped to maintain traditional notions of domesticity and the separate spheres to which they themselves would not, and their immigrant students could not, conform. In the process, the clubwomen helped to perpetuate ethnic and class barriers that kept women politically and culturally divided.

What both groups came to share, however, was a gendered notion of citizenship distinct from that of men’s.56 From the Revolutionary Era ideal of “republican motherhood” to progressive women’s “maternal politics,” domesticity remained the driving force behind definitions of women’s citizenship. The Mobilized Women’s Americanization program sought to inculcate these gendered notions of citizenship in the hearts and minds of their students. They aimed to bring American ideals into immigrant women’s homes “and assist in making all the potential mother-hood of Berkeley conservers of the ideals of Democracy, and its American institutions the home, the church and the state.”57 In their vision, “foreign homes” would become like their own, transformed into “cradle[s] of patriotism” that would eventually “send forth loyal and intelligent sons and daughters.”58 Decades in the future, a new generation of Berkeley’s “intelligent daughters” would become politically “mobilized women” themselves and would attempt to tear down the embattled barriers of the separate spheres and the constricting confines of domestic citizenship.

55 Gullett, 88.
56 Ibid., 73.
57 “Accept Plan of Sub-Committee on Memorial for Heroes,” News clipping, February 17, 1920, Scrapbook, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
58 “Mobilized Women Making Progress with Foreign Born People of West End,” News clipping, April 26, 1920, Mobilized Women of Berkeley records, BANC MSS 70/10 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
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