

MIDDLE-CLASS EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE GILDED AGE, 1865-1900

TIMOTHY R. MAHONEY
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

This article suggests that members of not only the “new” middle class but also the so-called old middle class contributed to the emergence of modern American society. The author examines the experiences of members of the “old” middle class from midwestern small towns and cities as they sought to situate themselves within six subcultures that were intertwining to form a regional and national middle-class culture—professional culture, corporate culture, politics and the law, boosterism, male subcultures, and gentility. In each, their efforts focused on responding to the erosion of personal networks, a proliferation of choices within an increasingly differentiated and fragmented social and institutional landscape, and an increasingly impersonal society. The author suggests that members of both the old and new middle class contributed to shaping new definitions of self, gender, and identity that helped define a new national middle class.

Keywords: *middle class; boosterism; middle West; masculinity; gender; gentility*

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the middle class had established a secure position at the center of American urban society. They had done so by living their lives according to a gendered social ideology based on individualism, reason, materialism, and faith. Middle-class men achieved success in the public world of work through self-control and discipline. Middle-class women established a moral, genteel, private domestic realm.¹ Together, they believed that as individuals with a secure sense of self, they could influence others within the small cohesive societies they lived in to live as they did and thus lay the foundations of social order.² Paradoxically, they sought to create group and social solidarity across the country by aligning the actions of autonomous individuals pursuing their self-interests while searching for identity and fulfillment.³

A new wave of industrialization and metropolitan development after 1865 changed nearly every aspect of this midcentury American social world.⁴ The growth of the metropolis, driven by economies of scale and specialization, dramatically enlarged the service sector the economy. Hence, the middle class suffered considerable growing pains as its members expanded their social space while increasing the complexity and diversity of their institutional struc-

ture. The proliferation of strata and institutions, and the differentiation of social space, atomized its social organization, undermined the stable sense of self, and eroded the assurance of the equal transfer of status implicit in the "parallelism" assumption that supported the "way of the town."⁵ Weakened at its core, thrown into confusion across its ranks, and assaulted on its borders, the "old" middle class in the Gilded Age drifted toward a crisis of order, purpose, and meaning.⁶

Most theories of the transformation of the American middle class during the Gilded Age have sought to explore how they responded to a growing sense of disorder. In his resilient classic, Robert Wiebe argued that in response to this crisis, a "new" metropolitan middle class undertook an organizational and bureaucratic revolution to create a new order. In doing so, they largely eclipsed the "old," local, self-owned, independent entrepreneurial, moralistic, middle class "living largely to themselves" in their proverbial small town "island communities."⁷ Historians Burton Bledstein, Alan Trachtenberg, Gunther Barth, Peter Hall, Olivier Zunz, James Gilbert, Mary Ryan, Howard Chudacoff, and Sven Beckert, following Wiebe's lead, have explored how they forged this organizational revolution by establishing new professional and corporate cultures, organizations, and institutions that valued bureaucratization, routinization, standardization, and control.⁸ To reinforce these efforts at social modernization, they reasserted their emphasis on self-discipline and hard work, intensified and then gradually altered the gender-based division of labor, constructed a new sense of self by redefining achievement and autonomy, and created a more elaborate, diverse, and accessible public and civic culture.

Although historians have made considerable progress in understanding how, in general ways, middle-class people were active agents in creating and implementing the organizational behaviors and standardized modes of social interaction in the metropolis that defined the "new" middle class, we tend to accept this framework so implicitly that few historians have asked who exactly these people actually were (James Gilbert, perhaps, excepted). Were they already "city people" who had had a head start in developing these modern "urban" behaviors and strategies that they could expand and elaborate on as their city developed into metropolis? Did native Chicagoans, for example, play a central role in creating "Nature's Metropolis" during the Gilded Age? Or were they joined by native-born middle-class immigrants into the city from the metropolitan hinterland, people who, by definition, coming from the world of independent, self-owned operators, belonged to the "old" middle class. What role, if any, did these people play in constructing the "new" middle class in the metropolis? Or did they, as Wiebe argued, tend to fall by the wayside as they sought and failed to navigate the new world by continuing to use the "customs of a personal society"?⁹ Questions such as these simply point out that we still really do not know how people experienced the transition from the "old" middle class to the "new" very well. Nor do we have a particularly good idea of who was really involved, especially in the middle realm beneath the manage-

rial and business elite, most of whom, we do know, had family business backgrounds. To get a better sense of this, we need more studies that explore how individuals personally experienced and responded to these changes as they tried to situate themselves in the “new” middle class. One way to get at both these sets of questions would be to examine the experience within the changing dynamics not just at one town or city but across the whole urban and economic system in which people were acting. This would enable us to understand how members of the “many middle classes” of midcentury, located in outposts across the country, interacted and were gradually fused into a series of strata within one national “new” middle class.¹⁰

My approach in studying the middle class is to examine how members of the various “middle classes” spread across a regional urban system in the 1850s and 1860s were gradually fused into a national middle class during the Gilded Age. Rather than choosing middle-class people at random, my subjects are members of nearly 200 “old” middle-class families in western towns who I looked at in a previous study, *Provincial Lives: Middle Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West*.¹¹ By following the lives, experiences, and careers of as many cohort members as I can from the mid-1850s—when they believed they had established the “way of the town”—through the rest of their lives, one gains a wide-ranging experiential view into the transformations of the Gilded Age. To widen my view and sharpen my understanding of efforts to maintain or create group cohesion, I examine both those cohort members who stayed in the towns they had helped develop and those who left and migrated to other towns and cities in the West, Midwest, and East, and even Europe, between 1860 and 1900. The collective experiences of cohort members, analyzed through their interactions with each other and the transformative changes occurring across the urban system rather than in one place, indicate that most middle-class social activity focused not on trying to defend themselves against vertical social challenges from below or pressures from above them in society, but rather on simply trying to situate themselves laterally and establish a position and some order within the rapidly changing architecture of middle-class culture. The value of a cohort analysis is that it provides one with a common set of experiences, traits, and values, against which one can measure the impact of various forces through their various responses and thus understand more precisely the nature of how their actions, ideology, and identity were changed. In particular, because most cohort members initially belonged to what Wiebe called the “old middle class,” this cohort study provides a window into understanding exactly how they responded to the transformations of the era—whether they stayed at home or moved to the city—and to what extent, rather than failing and being eclipsed by the “new” middle class, some of their members responded creatively and positively and, in fact, contributed to the emergence of the so-called new middle class in the 1870s through 1890s.

Most cohort members shared personal and social stories with a common structure or framework. In general, this was the cohort that had constructed

“the way of the town” on the urban frontier of the 1850s. Most had arrived as members of “good society” in the 1830s and 1840s, and fused morality, reason, and gentility into a distinctive middle-class culture. The “gentlemen” among them had joined their wives in establishing “genteel” middle-class society to enhance their elite leadership roles. Living in a smaller western town, they recognized, however, that unlike in the larger cities of the East, their success as boosters relied on social cohesion, and, as a result, they could not afford to draw lines between themselves and the working class. To defuse tensions and cultivate unity, many middle-class men engaged in a male subculture of comradery and shared values involving male-bonding behaviors and practices that crossed class lines. As a result, male subcultural behaviors and values permeated the middle-class occupational subcultures of business, law, and politics, as well as, although to a lesser extent, gentility. This shaped a distinctive public culture of the booster ethos in the West. By about 1856, most cohort members believed that their social goals, rooted in localism, parallelism, and “the way of the town,” seemed in reach. The panic of 1857, however, cut short that possibility and forever changed the lives of every cohort member. Then, the rapid expansion of the country to the West, the Civil War, and the rise of the metropolis further undermined the stable foundations on which they had built their small-town middle-class societies.

As the forces of regional development concentrated power in the hands of a metropolitan elite, members of the middle class in smaller urban centers found their economic lives undercut and social status badly undermined. Cohort members responded in a variety of ways. Although about half stayed to confront the difficulties of maintaining their status within regional society, the other half, economically ruined or damaged, or finding local horizons too restrictive for their ambitions, sought opportunities elsewhere. They used the same emerging networks of regional interactions that they had used before the Civil War to enhance their local social status and position by supporting their booster and professional ambitions as conduits along the well-worn paths to broader influence and opportunity—the regional bar, politics, and business—to Chicago, St. Louis, Springfield, New York, and Washington, D.C. The outbreak of the Civil War sent many more men and even some women into a national realm or experience. Collectively, as cohort members experienced the gradual integration of their local companies into regiments containing companies from a section of their state, and then into regional armies and ultimately into the national army, they entered a framework of broader experience, opportunity, and identity, and felt the forces of integration, aggregation, fusion, and homogenization change them and the world they had lived in. Many who served for the duration, moved up the ranks, or acquired government positions or war-related jobs in Chicago, St. Louis, or Washington would leave their towns for good or, on returning after mustering out, found the “old towns” too narrow and left again, starting new lives in more cosmopolitan or vibrant places. Many others sought mobility through the appointments in the national

government, doing all they could to gain benefit from the patronage many midwesterners considered their due during the Lincoln and, later, Grant presidencies.¹² Members of the regional bar and political community were appointed to numerous posts in the territories in the West or to diplomatic posts in Latin America and Europe, drawing them away from local concerns of the "old town" and into a new nationally defined bourgeois life. Others moved west to try their luck within the booster ethos of a western town yet again. By the 1870s, cohort members from these enclaves of the "old middle class" of the 1840s and 1850s had scattered across the country and world to more than thirty towns and cities from coast to coast, numerous places in Europe, and even a few places in Latin America.¹³

Yet the regional and national networks of interactions that throughout time would smooth out local and regional variations and thus allow members of what each assumed was the same social group to interact unambiguously and effortlessly from venue to venue across space only developed slowly between 1856 and 1900. In general, historians tend to overstate the ease of flow, movement, and exchange within emerging systems of the past. Just as the railroad maps of the 1880s portrayed an integrated system that in both travel and shipping was quite different from that image, so, too, the idea that middle-class people across the country created a unified culture of behaviors, values, and practices is overstated. As towns and cities became integrated into regional systems, at the center of which was the metropolis, the personalized networks of connections that interwove local social and regional enclaves, and the assumed equal transfer of status from one place to another, eroded in the face of the increasing numbers of people involved, the differentiation of strata caused by the widening distribution of wealth, the proliferation of choices and subcultures, the greater complexity of the institutional landscape, and, of course, the increased impersonalization of the social world. In general, middle-class people were compelled to respond to these forces in all aspects of their lives. More specifically, their responses were concentrated within the six subcultures or realms that had begun to develop before the War and would, in the course of the Gilded Age, be woven together to form the broader framework of a national middle-class culture. These realms were (1) professional culture,¹⁴ (2) corporate culture,¹⁵ (3) politics and the bench and bar, (4) civic boosterism,¹⁶ (5) male subcultures,¹⁷ and (6) gentility.¹⁸ In each realm, actors faced analogous developments and were compelled to respond. These were the dynamics and impact of (1) the erosion of personal networks and of status transferability from one place to another; (2) the proliferation of choices as the middle class differentiated into a hierarchy of strata or wealth, cultures, and social spaces, and fragmented into an larger and increasingly complex and diverse institutional structure; and (3) the increased anonymity, atomization, alienation, and impersonalization across the social landscape.

In general, as cohort members traveled into the broader world, they could rely less on the intricate personal network at the local and state level that they

had relied on so much to get things done. The Civil War, in particular, eroded the personal and local bonds that sent many men into battle in town regiments or enabled them to work together in the Army bureaucracy, in government administration, or in business. Inevitably, organizational developments responded to the erosion of these networks. Regional and national conferences and conventions increased in number and evolved a whole range of organizational procedures to deal with their increasing size and impersonality. Others sought to combat this by cultivating new networks based on new personal relations, memories, or experiences. In particular, Civil War veterans' associations and a culture of reunions would play an integrating role for many men. In the metropolis, the institutional and social structure of the middle class, once a rather small, one-dimensional, and tightly woven local and regional social network, became more discursive. So, too, the social geography of the middle class became increasingly diverse. No longer occupying single areas, they increasingly worked and lived in any one of a number of areas, including, of course, the suburbs. Many individuals became lost in the urban confusion and uncertainty, and wondered "where" the middle class was. For the most part, this diversification and multiplication of institutions, occupations, and experiences only intensified the diffusing of possible interactions, although there was much overlapping that could also create some sense of cohesion.¹⁹ As the number increased, the chances that one would network with a set group of known people outside one's immediate circle declined. Hence, one of the central goals of social interaction—to situate and thus define oneself socially within a coherent social geography—declined. Of course, each cohort member still maintained a network of friends and associates, but that closely integrated local network was itself eroded by mobility and migration.

As networks became more discursive, they, of course, became less useful and dependable. Thus, as middle-class solidarity dispersed and fragmented, the practical functional purpose and benefits of class membership and action declined. One increasingly lived in the middle class, but, other than membership in it, drew little or no benefit, aside from personal validation, from it. Indeed, those who tried to fall back on the older personal ways and use the "old boys' network" of "friends" and associates they knew to facilitate their careers or social status drew increasing criticism for their cronyism, nepotism, and personal favoritism.²⁰ Privacy, confidentiality, and nonjudgmental impartiality, rather than acting for one's "friends" no matter the cost and concerning oneself with their affairs, gradually emerged as the new ethical ethos of the middle-class life.²¹

This changing structure of interactions, of course, both complicated and facilitated the dynamics of transferring one's status from one place to another. The assumption of equality and the rights and obligations of personal sponsorship withered as the regional urban system became more differentiated, the number of people involved larger, and social life became more stratified, diverse, and impersonal. Moving or traveling from one place to another within

or along any realm or network of interaction became an anxious experience in which one worried whether the practices, behaviors, credentials, and status achieved in one town would translate to a similar status in the city and thus enable one to maintain one's assumed social position or status there or on a broader national level. As the differences among places increased, assumed or implied "exchange rates" that clarified comparative status in different places emerged. The system of letters of introduction, once the mainstay of personal sponsorship requiring reciprocal and equal treatment across the system that put the recipient under obligation to the bearer, while having already eroded somewhat before the Civil War, eroded further. In response, middle-class people struggled to establish broader and clearer standards. Meanwhile, institutions, organizations, and eventually governments stepped in to establish more formal trustworthy certification and references in an impersonal world. Diplomas and degrees, accreditation boards, registrars, government identification papers, licenses, and later more standardized impersonal testing helped individuals and groups navigate through and deal with anonymity. These kinds of impersonal identifications also emerged as the assumption declined that anyone's personal references would carry weight or be honored by putting the recipient under some obligation. On the other hand, they did allow those without contacts or friends to establish themselves within the middle-class world without knowing a soul. Hence, middle-class people gradually developed strategies and tactics that enabled them to operate in impersonal social realms of strangers. Personal contacts and information became both more and then, oddly, less important as more and more people figured out how to operate in the increasing likelihood that neither was present.

As obligations declined and individuals approached each other with more wariness, these kinds of connections, while legitimate, struggled to create any further obligation from holders. People began to differentiate the degrees of their social relationships and friendships among true "friends," colleagues, and mere "acquaintances." Likewise, many middle-class people eschewed the nature of club and institutional obligations by merely being members, but only so much as they wished—a problem reflected in unpaid dues, suspensions for nonparticipation, poor attendance, or chastisements for being not collegial, sociable, or "clubbable." The transition from the personal world of sponsors, personal "influence," and connections in which "conflicts of interest" were hardly recognized to an impersonal world that scrupulously avoided conflicts in public, but still used personal contacts to get much done, was long and difficult.

Likewise, cohort members, as they entered a more complex world full of potential charlatans and poseurs no matter where they went, had to develop personal communication, work, and social skills that enabled them to operate amid strangers and would help others do the same with them. Such skills required an ever broader social knowledge of the world and how things worked, so that one could place oneself in and navigate knowledgeably through society

and the new spaces of the public realm, and be able to recognize nuances and variations from place to place more precisely.²² Studying society and life around one thus became more of a social act that helped one situate oneself and establish one's identity. Likewise, one had to forge a self-reliant, confident, and independent sense of identity cut free from reliance on the approbation, support, or referencing of friends, for such contacts were short-lived and less reliable throughout time. Fending off loneliness, anomie, and a brooding anxiety about rootlessness with more elaborate personal narratives and more strongly articulated identities, and maintaining a busy and active routine and throwing oneself into work, appear with regularity in the course of such interactions. Indeed, it could be argued that as class-referenced identity eroded, and one felt oneself drifting into a kind of social limbo with little or no sense of belonging to any concrete social entity, the struggle to define oneself socially was forced inward. Increasingly, amid the anonymity, one sought core identity within oneself. In the effort would emerge the more modern sense of self that defined the new middle class.²³

This manifested itself initially in elaborate efforts made by various members of the middle class to reconstruct fictive surrogate families in associations, translocal networks, and communities of shared experience or common identity. Across the range of such responses in each of these translocal, regional, and national realms, cohort members found that many of their local ideas and ways of doing things needed to be continually revised as they moved from town to town. In time, they tempered the heightened self-consciousness that had generated such interactions and been prompted by their interactions with unfamiliar social situations and social "others," and gradually adopted more homogenized behaviors and strategies.

Within this broader cohort perspective, the interactions between small-town and city people become ones of give and take, interplay, action, and response. As they interacted within each of the realms I have mentioned, step by step, they compared notes; adjusted behavior, ideas, and values; and integrated their "localisms" within a set of more general regional and national standards. Rather than trying and failing, unilaterally, to "impose the known on the unknown, to master the impersonal world through the customs of a personal society,"²⁴ they, like so many others in the context of the modern metropolis, adjusted and altered their behavior. They did so both at home and in the city, and helped reshape both small-town and metropolitan cultures into a more generalized, categorical, national middle-class culture. While members of the "old" middle class who stayed sought to import whatever aspect of the life of the metropolis they could, others of their cohorts sought to soften life among strangers by instituting organic small-town and "village" ways, articulating small-town values, and trying to make the metropolis a more livable place. They did this even as they played central roles in establishing new ways and themselves became "new" middle-class people. Together, they all participated in and played an active role in the regional process of transforming the

old middle class into the new. Likewise, as I argue elsewhere, gender played a significant role in accelerating the integration of numerous local "middle classes" into a regional middle class, giving it a distinctive masculine "old boys" character.

In general, rather than living in separate worlds differentiated by pace of change or time, density, social character (personal or impersonal), and diversity, residents of all urban places, both those who were in the "old" middle class and those in the "new," were intricately connected and interconnected within regional economic, social, and cultural systems out of which gradually emerged a general regional and national mainstream culture. The transition from the old middle class to the new was, therefore, a complex process of lateral intraclass interactions that first sorted out and then smoothed over the terrain of middle-class life. That lifestyle, accessible and accommodating, would be in place as the economy continued to provide jobs and income that enabled more and more people to live middle-class lives. Therefore, in the course of navigating this shifting and expanding social terrain, both members of the old middle class as well as the new gradually homogenized their social actions and behaviors, and thus contributed to shaping new definitions of self, gender, and identity that defined a new national middle-class culture on the threshold of modern life.

NOTES

1. Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9-10.
2. Robert H. Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 287-90, 298-99.
3. T. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 17-19.
4. Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
5. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 32-39.
6. James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 6-10.
7. Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), xiii, 2-4.
8. Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: Norton, 1976); Alan Trachtenberg, *The Corporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Peter Dobkin Hall, *The Organization of American Culture, 1700-1900* (New York: New York University Press, 1982); Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Gilbert, *Perfect Cities*; Mary Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Howard Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
9. Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 12.
10. For a recent exploration of some of these issues, see Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston, eds., *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
11. Timothy R. Mahoney, *Provincial Lives: Middle Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

12. Harry J. Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, *Lincoln and the Patronage* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1943.

13. Between 1860 and 1880, cohort members took administrative posts in Missouri as well as in Kansas, Nebraska, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado territories, and were also on the ground in the early development of Kansas City, Missouri; Leavenworth, Kansas; and Nebraska City, Omaha, and Lincoln, Nebraska, as well as Salt Lake City, Utah; Sante Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces, New Mexico; Denver, Leadville, Breckenridge, and Boulder, Colorado; Boise City, Idaho; Lubbock, Texas; and Portland and The Dalles, Oregon. Cohort members also settled in Buena Ventura, Fresno, San Francisco, and San Diego, California. In Europe, cohort members held posts in Madrid, Paris, London, Brussels, and Berlin, and traveled to and lived in numerous resorts and spa towns from England to Italy.

14. Bledstein, *Culture of Professionalism*.

15. Zanz, *Making America Corporate*.

16. On boosterism, see Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1930*, introduction by Zane L. Miller (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1996). See also Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community, Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1981); Jeffrey S. Adler, *Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West: The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Jon C. Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland. The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Kay J. Carr, *Belleville, Ottawa, and Galesburg, Community and Democracy on the Illinois Frontier* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996); and Don Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

17. On male subcultures, see Chudacoff, *Age of the Bachelor*; Timothy R. Mahoney, "'A Common Band of Brotherhood': The Booster Ethos, Male Subcultures, and the Origins of Urban Social Order in the Mid-west of the 1840s," *Journal of Urban History* (July 1999): 619-23; Sean Willentz, *Chants Democratic, New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford, 1984), 300-1; Robert H. Wiebe, "Lincoln's Fraternal Democracy," in *Abraham Lincoln and the American Political Tradition*, John L. Thomas, ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986); Elliot J. Gorn, "'Good-Bye Boys, I Die a True American': Homicide, Nativism, and Working-Class Culture in Antebellum New York City," *Journal of American History* 74 (1987): 388-410; Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: Norton, 1992), 81-84, 92-116; Patricia Cline Cohen, "Unregulated Youth: Masculinity and Murder in the 1830s City," *Radical History Review* 52 (1992): 33-52; George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 76-81; Timothy Gilfoyle, "The Hearts of Nineteenth-Century Men: Bigamy and Working-Class Marriage in New York City, 1800-1890," *Prospects* 19 (1994): 135-60; Michael Kaplan, "New York City Tavern Violence and the Creation of a Working-Class Identity," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15 (Winter 1995): 591-617; Amy Gilman Srebnick, *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers: Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 51-58; Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Kim Townsend, *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others* (New York: Norton, 1996); and Katherine Snyder, "A Paradise of Bachelors: Remodeling Domesticity and Masculinity in the Turn-of-the-Century New York Bachelor Apartment," *Prospects* 23 (1998): 247-84.

18. Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

19. Beckert, *Monied Metropolis*, 263-65.

20. Timothy R. Mahoney, "Old Boys: Middle Class Experience in the Middle West during the Gilded Age," paper delivered at the Chicago Urban History Seminar, September 20, 2000.

21. Wiebe, "Lincoln's Fraternal Democracy."

22. See Philip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Ryan, *Civic Wars*; and Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

23. Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), ch. 1.

24. Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 12.

Timothy R. Mahoney is professor of history at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He is the author of *Provincial Lives: Middle Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West* (1999); “The Small City in American History,” *Indiana Magazine of History* (Winter 2003); and “The Rise and Fall of the Booster Ethos in Dubuque, 1850-1861,” *Annals of Iowa* (Fall 2002). He is director of the Plains Humanities Alliance.