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Daniel A. Clark. *Creating the College Man: American Mass Magazines and Middle-Class Manhood, 1890-1915.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010. viii + 256 pp. $26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-299-23534-5.

Reviewed by Rick Popp (Louisiana State University)

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A Portrait of the Businessman as a Young Man

For nineteenth-century industrialists, college was seen as a great way to insure *against* a successful career in business. As ambitious young clerks learned the ins and outs of commerce, balancing accounts and scribbling correspondence, college students diddled away their time, studying dead languages by day, carousing by night, and all the while spoiling their work ethic. While this disparaging image of college remained the received wisdom in business circles as late as the 1890s, Daniel A. Clark asserts that by 1915 it had been replaced by a new view of college as the pathway to business success. What explains this remarkable transformation? *Creating the College Man* argues that its roots lay in the debates, narratives, and imagery about the university and young men that circulated through turn-of-the-century mass magazines.

In making this argument, Clark sketches out the cultural origins of the "organization man," when that figure carried largely positive connotations, suggesting the young man on the make, uniquely suited for the bustling world of corporate commerce. This archetype of middle-class masculinity will be immediately recognizable to scholars of twentieth-century America in icons like the Arrow collar man and the cocky Ivy Leaguers of Jazz Age literature. Clark argues that by tracking the growth of this figure, we can see how white middle-class Americans reshaped Victorian notions of manly success–previously centered on the self-made striver–to fit the radically new social, cultural, and economic climate of the corporate age.

He bases this argument on a complete reading of the articles, fictional stories, and advertisements that filled each issue of *Munsey's*, *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* from the early 1890s through the mid-1910s. Clark cites these magazines, all of which reached a mass audience of men and women, as powerful new interpreters of middle-class life. And as he shows, they devoted an inordinate amount of attention to university life considering the dearth of middle-class Americans who attended college at the time. *Creating the College Man* examines four broad narratives that dominated this discourse: the degrading of the nineteenth-century clerk, the transformation of the standard university curriculum, the popularization of college football, and the rise of the self-made college man. Each is the subject of its own chapter, and Clark weaves them together with great skill.

By the 1890s, business observers began to spot what Clark calls "the crisis of the clerks," or the sense that handling humdrum office tasks no longer realistically served as a stepping stone to entrepreneurial independence. Instead, the vast majority of clerks were doomed to a lifetime of paper pushing in enormous and impersonal corporate offices. Within the context of commerce stretched over a once-unimaginable scale, college began to look like the ideal site for training a new generation of managers equipped with the technical know-how to command sprawling business systems, the scientific mindset and critical-thinking skills to solve complex problems, and the cultural sensibility still considered a prerequisite for social leadership. Yet to continued discomfort among businessmen, college was still tarnished by its associations with effete, upper-crust pedantry and extravagance. College football, Clark argues, played an enormous role in reforming this distinctly unmanly view of

the university. The gridiron offered the perfect setting for young men to harden themselves at a time when many fretted that WASP masculinity was in crisis. Having acquainted themselves with their inner virility and learned to control it via football's systematic game play, college men were also honing themselves for the mean world of corporate battle. Clark argues that the pranks and rough camaraderie associated with fraternity life played a similar role, providing a middle-class corollary to the sporting culture of urban, working-class men. As athletics and fraternal camaraderie washed away the university's effete traces, another set of narratives helped to overshadow its aura of privilege. For Clark, stories of college men who worked their way through school updated the Horatio Alger success myths of previous decades. In a similar manner, stories of young college graduates forced to climb their way from the assembly line to the executive suite, learning each phase of business operations along the way, helped to give managerial fast-tracking the tint of meritocratic achievement. An additional chapter shows how each of these elements was combined in magazine fiction and advertising to suggest the ideal middle-class young man, who, seasoned by college, was ready to embark on a life of corporate success.

Throughout the book, Clark emphasizes that college manhood was overwhelmingly framed as an Anglo-American phenomenon: a new means of obtaining traditional forms of authority that WASP observers could only picture as appropriate for men like themselves. Women's university experiences, while not uncommonly addressed, were framed as training for lives of domestic companionship to college-educated men. And while new immigrants and African Americans appeared from time to time, Clark argues that they were marginalized as the exceptions who proved the rule. Yet by linking college to business success, mass magazines also revealed the new rules for upward mobility. In this way, they eventually helped to destabilize Anglo-American control over corporate power, as women and minorities fought for access to elite universities and fast-track management careers. Clark argues that new European immigrants were especially well-positioned to take advantage of these opportunities as they were gradually redefined as white.

Creating the College Man adds to the sizable historiography on early mass magazines, a field that beginning with Janice Cohn's 1989 study of the *Saturday Evening Post* (*Creating America: George Horace Lorimar and the Saturday Evening Post*), flourished over the next decade in the work of Richard Ohmann (*Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* [1996]), Jennifer Scanlon (*Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender and the Promise of Consumer Culture* [1995]), Matthew Schneirov (*The Dream of a New Social Order: Popular Magazines in America*, 1893-1914 [1994]), Helen Damon-Moore (*Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post* [1994]), and others. And by exploring how magazine archetypes helped shape thinking about gendered notions of young adulthood, the book makes a strong companion to Carolyn Kitch's *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (2001). Historians versed in these works will be familiar with the argument that magazines helped construct new ways of thinking about gender amid a budding consumer culture. Clark builds on this literature, though, by incorporating ideas about whiteness and masculinity that have grown influential since the late 1990s. In particular, Gail Bederman's work on racialized manliness (*Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* [1995]) provides a sort of overarching framework. Clark's discussion of college football's "civilized-primitive" (p. 84), for instance, does an outstanding job of showing how notions of manly decorum and masculine savagery were intertwined in popular culture. While *Creating the College Man* makes valuable contributions to the histories of media, gender, and business culture, Clark most directly frames his work within the history of education. By identifying magazines like *Munsey's* and *Collier's* as promoters of a whole new way of thinking about college at the turn of the century, Clark counters arguments that college life first arrived on the American cultural scene as a rite of middle-class passage in the 1920s.

Another strength of Clark's work is his skillful weaving of seemingly disparate bodies of literature. *Creating the College Man* merges the histories of magazines, higher education, business, sports, and masculinity in ways that make this novel combination seem intuitive. At times, though, Clark's arguments could have benefited from more fleshed-out descriptions of these areas. In the football chapter, for instance, the reader gets little sense of just how brutal the sport was during an era when players were maimed, or even killed, with alarming regularity. Similarly, Clark spends considerable time analyzing men's apparel advertising without elaborating on new ideas about dress and fashion. In these cases, the book misses a few opportunities to fully illustrate how "the college man," as an archetype, suggested a whole way of life thoroughly immersed in the era's new landscapes of work and consumption. Ultimately, these shortfalls do

little to diminish a work that tells us much about the interwoven nature of education, gender, and class. Clark shows how new ways of thinking about education were part and parcel of new ways of thinking about business. During an era of economic crises and budget slashing in higher education, this is an insight we would do well to keep in mind today.

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