



Standard of Living: The Measure of the Middle Class in Modern America

By Marina Moskowitz

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Coined in 1902, the term "standard of living" grew popular in early twentieth-century America. Though its exact definition remained ambiguous, it most often reflected the middle class and material comfort. The term was not a precise measure of how people lived. Instead, it embodied the ideal of how middle-class Americans *wanted* to live. With increasing wages and the mass production of consumer goods, the standard of living became an important expression of the shared national culture that emerged in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. But what material and social components constituted this standard? Who decided what they were and how they were to be promoted?

In *Standard of Living*, Marina Moskowitz explores these questions, focusing on the relationship between middle-class identity and material culture through four case studies. In one, she examines the incorporation of silverplate flatware into the daily rituals of American life. Mass production made this former luxury item affordable, while advertising, etiquette books, and home advice columns stressed its value as a family heirloom and confirmed its place in the middle-class dining room. Moskowitz then turns her attention to the bathroom and the proliferation of indoor sanitation, bathroom fixtures, and a hygiene industry equally interested in profits and public health. Home ownership contributed an essential element of this standard, and Moskowitz next charts the mail-order home industry, which sold not just kit houses but also the very idea of owning a home. Concluding with a look at zoning and urban planning as a means of fostering and protecting the standard of living for whole communities, this book offers important evidence of and fresh insights into the history of the American middle class.

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Editorial Review

Review

A thoughtful contribution to understanding the forces that ushered in modern US culture, with all of its opportunities, limitations, and peculiarities.

(Choice)

Moskowitz offers important insights into the development of American middle-class ideals of material comfort, and of an emerging shared national culture.

(History)

An ambitious and far-reaching study with implications for material history, business history, and the study of the middle class in America.

(Enterprise and Society)

Well-researched, well-written, and convincing... Will certainly influence future discussion of the expansion of the middle class and the consumer culture of the early twentieth century.

(Journal of Social History)

The strength of Marina Moskowitz's welcome addition to this body of work lies in the author's choice of particular case studies, through which the book seeks to discover the role of material culture in defining the American middle class at the beginning of the last century.

(Journal of American Studies)

Moskowitz has creatively connected the rise of national culture and middle-class America to the emergence of a generally accepted standard of living.

(Register of the Kentucky Historical Society)

Imaginative, insightful, and lively... required reading for anyone interested in understanding how the United States became the quintessential middle-class nation.

(Michigan Historical Review)

In this well-researched monograph, Marina Moskowitz traces the evolution of the American concept of the

standard of living from 1870 to the 1920s through fascinating case studies on silverplate flatware, bathroom fixtures, mail-order homes, and zoning plans.

(American Historical Review)

Moskowitz's well-written and extensively researched book investigates how the concept of the 'standard of living' became the measure of middle-class well-being and the material expression of middle-class identity during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.

(Technology and Culture)

Refusing to recognize boundaries between social science and the novel, this innovative history rejects divisions between cultural and business history. Marina Moskowitz probes the 'standard of living' as a liminal aspiration between production and consumption that defined the American 'middle class' through the objects and spaces of the home in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

(Journal of American History)

At first glance, a study that offers in-depth case studies of such items as flatware and zoning plans might not sound like an energizing pageturner. However, Marina Moskowitz's book is both of these things and more. Moskowitz uses the stories of everyday items to craft a persuasive case for the emergence of a new, national standard of living in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America.

(Business History Review)

A compelling argument for the complexity and pervasiveness of a shared fascination with a standard of living.

(Journal of Interdisciplinary History)

Exceedingly well-written, clearly organized, and abundantly researched. There is nothing in the scholarly literature quite like this.

(Daniel Horowitz, Smith College)

From the Back Cover

Coined in 1902, the term "standard of living" grew popular in early twentieth-century America. Though its exact definition remained ambiguous, it most often reflected the middle class and its material comfort. The term was not a precise measure of how people lived, but instead embodied the ideal of how middle-class Americans *wanted* to live. In *Standard of Living*, Marina Moskowitz explores what material and social components constituted this standard, and who decided what they were and how they were to be promoted.

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About the Author

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Users Review

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Lisa Maurer:

Reading can called thoughts hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book especially book entitled Standard of Living: The Measure of the Middle Class in Modern America your brain will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every single aspect that maybe unknown for but surely will become your mind friends. Imaging every word written in a book then become one contact form conclusion and explanation that maybe you never get before. The Standard of Living: The Measure of the Middle Class in Modern America giving you one more experience more than blown away your brain but also giving you useful facts for your better life on this era. So now let us teach you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind are going to be pleased when you are finished examining it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary investing spare time activity?

Manuel Coury:

This Standard of Living: The Measure of the Middle Class in Modern America is great reserve for you because the content and that is full of information for you who always deal with world and also have to make decision every minute. This book reveal it details accurately using great plan word or we can point out no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole information in it. Doesn't mean it

only provides you with straight forward sentences but tough core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having Standard of Living: The Measure of the Middle Class in Modern America in your hand like keeping the world in your arm, details in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no e-book that offer you world in ten or fifteen second right but this publication already do that. So , it is good reading book. Hi Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt in which?

Daryl Thurmond:

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Blair Gant:

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