

Welcome to The Eagle's Eye

Welcome to America—or at least an intensely focused “eagle’s eye” perspective on cultural and historical representations of American life.

The four articles in this first publication represent independent research and analysis on various aspects of American culture and history of the 19th and 20th centuries. Jessica Dischley demonstrates that Americans can bounce back as illustrated through movies, fashion, poetry, and photography during the 1930s. Rachel Bausinger provides a more recent example of recovery through Lance Armstrong’s racing career and battle with cancer. Michael Gallen argues that another American trait, independent thinking, enabled Alfred Thayer Mahan to empower America’s policy of imperialism. And finally, Amanda Parks concludes her analysis of *Life* magazine by suggesting that Americans of the 1950s were not very different from Americans today. If it is true that we learn from each other, then this magazine will hopefully engender discussion, debate, and dialogue on how we interpret these varied representations of American life.

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Dr. Judith Musser
Faculty Advisor
The Eagle's Eye

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I

American Character in the 1930s

Jessica Dischley

Facing the aftermath of the Stock Market crash in October of 1929, along with the beginning of the Great Depression immediately thereafter, the American outlook toward the nation's recovery at the beginning of the 1930s was not a pleasant one. What was once a land of hope and optimism now appeared to be a land of desperation and misery. The American people were questioning principles like democracy, capitalism, and individualism, principles upon which they had previously based their entire lives. While some Americans believed in continuing various political and economic traditions into the new decade, others were strong advocates for complete change throughout the nation. Questions were being raised concerning family relationships, individual success, and American distinctiveness as a whole. Some individuals considered ideas of radical reconstruction for society, but at the same time worried about some liberties that might be lost. As citizens searched for feelings of nationalism and unity, they also sought out the acceptance of a wider, more diverse American culture. There existed a desire to move in more than one direction at the same time, "to have it both ways, to live with or resolve contradictions" (Cooney xiv) in various public and personal spheres. By examining the movies, fashion, poetry, and photography of this complex decade, these competing understandings and ideas can be notably distinguished.

At the turn of the decade, the movie business was experiencing severe transition and growth as silent motion pictures were being overrun by "talkies," motion pictures with voices and sounds. The booming business was quickly brought down, however, as the depression began to take its toll. Of the 90 million people per week who attended the movies during 1930, one third had disappeared by 1933. Almost one third of the theaters had closed in these three years, admission prices had been lowered by a third in an attempt to attract individuals, and four of the eight large movie companies were in a state of failure. Fortunately, as an industry that tended to recover more quickly than older basic industries like steel and lumber, the movie business was able to get back on its feet by the second half of the thirties and weekly attendance rose once again to between 80 and 90 million viewers per week. In fact, twenty percent of the money that Americans spent toward recreational activities went toward the movies (Cooney 74). Moviemakers in the early 1930s exploited crime, sex, and political corruption in an attempt to lure audiences into theaters and it was during this time that the gangster movie was the popular genre. After much criticism and concern over the influence of movies from various sources, especially on children, the movie business began to generate milder plots and storylines that focused on hope rather than failure. Gangster movies, along with musicals and romantic comedies, were just a couple of the many categories of film in which contrasting values and styles could be found.

Leading examples of the gangster film sort included *Little Caesar* (1930), *The Public Enemy* (1931), and *Scarface* (1932). These types of films focused on individual gangsters who tended to be of a lower-class immigrant background and who were always driven by their desire for passion and wealth. In order to fit the standard pattern of the genre, the character had to achieve substantial success, but face ruin or death at the end of the movie. While many censors and conservative magazines were busy criticizing the problems created

by the films, movie audiences everywhere were flocking to theaters to watch more. Will Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, suggested that while too much emphasis on gangsters was unfavorable, the 1932 annual report showed that films successfully taught “crime does not pay” (Cooney 77). In turn, Warner Brothers stated that publicity campaigns should emphasize the law more than the gangster and prologues which were attached to some films to remind viewers that the successful characters they were about to see were evil. Robert Warshaw, a critic writing in 1948, suggested that the gangster movies represented the American imagination and the direction that the modern industrial world was traveling in. He brought about the idea of the emergence of the success myth: “all efforts to succeed involve aggression, every drive to stand out from the crowd leads to loneliness, and there is danger in being alone” (Cooney 78).

The tone of the film industry began to transform after 1933 as Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal changed the country's attitude toward the nation's recovery. Three of the most successful film musicals of the thirties appeared in 1933, *42nd Street*, *Gold Diggers of 1933*, and *Footlight Parade*. Each offered plenty of singing, dancing, and glittering distraction while also telling stories of people who were finally given a chance at success. In the last number of *Footlight Parade*, the dancers hold up flash cards of the NRA Blue Eagle and a smiling Roosevelt in reflection of the country's sense of hope and pride (Cooney 79). Movie audiences at this time, which consisted of primarily middle class, white adults between the ages of 14 and 45 (Balio 2), had no desire to see the unpleasantness and misery when they came to watch a film; therefore the film musicals full of glitz and glamour were immediately titled as highly enjoyable by moviegoers.

Not only were film musicals perfect for this desired diversion, but romantic comedies were ideal as well. Director Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night* (1934) is the story of the unlikely romantic pairing of a mismatched couple. A spoiled rich girl rebelling against her parents and a lower class, urban reporter find each other and create a modern tale with humorous sex appeal in which courtship and love triumph over class conflicts, socio-economic differences, and verbal battles of intellect. Throughout the film, the power is distributed evenly between the two characters; Claudette Colbert's character possesses social power while Clark Gable's character becomes her manly protector. It might also be said that the gender roles are somewhat reversed while Colbert proves to be more practical than the man and Gable grows more sensitive than the woman (Kendall 42). The comical and satisfying storylines of the romantic comedies and the themes of hope, determination, and success in the film musicals of the mid 1930s provided for a better feeling than the disheartening gangster movies of the early thirties.

When reviewing fashion of the 1930s, there are two different aspects of the topic that must be examined: the daily wear of the average individual along with the effect of Hollywood film fashion upon societal fashion. Paris remained the fashion capital of the world throughout the thirties; however, French fashions were too high priced for most Americans. In response to the depression, dress designers throughout the nation implemented the values of simplicity and efficiency into the daily wear of the average citizen. They created copies of Parisian originals in order to offer elegance at a sensible price for the American woman (Layman 186). As compared to the flamboyant fashions of the previous decade, women's daytime fashion in the 1930s was a standard one. Rather than changing their look with each passing season, women wore a “simple print dress” made from

synthetic material and accessorized it with costume jewelry, dramatic hats, gloves, and stylish handbags. The hats were often worn tilted forward over one eye and women's shoes of the decade now had lower heels, sturdy straps, and pointed toes. Not only did their clothing become more natural in the thirties, but also their makeup. At the end of the decade, shoulder padding was introduced to accentuate the narrow waistline and create a more stylized look (Layman 190).

In the beginning of the thirties, many of the men's daily styles of the previous decade simply carried over. Their suits continued to emphasize the chest with high-waisted jackets decorated with higher pockets and buttons and short, wide lapels. As in the twenties, pants were wide, pleated, and high-waisted as well. The hairstyle of previous decades even carried on into the thirties; men still wore "finger waves" in their hair. A little variety was introduced, however, with the creation of the modern "two-piece suit" that replaced the traditional vest with a V-necked sweater or sweater vest. As women's daily wear became more stylized at the end of the decade, so did men's. Lapels became wider, shoulder pads were added to give a square appearance, and suits became narrower. Many men of the late 1930s rejected the idea of parting their hair and instead began to prefer the brushed-back look (Layman 190).

While reviewing the daily wear of average men and women along with popular Hollywood films of the decade, Hollywood's influence upon the fashion economy of the 1930s can be seen upon close examination. For example, when Clarke Gable revealed that he wore no undershirt as he undressed in the aforementioned movie *It Happened One Night*, men's underwear sales experienced a steep drop (Cooney 83). The fact that the hair color of the decade for women was "platinum blonde" is also a definitive sign of Hollywood's impact upon style. In order to capture the movie lights and accentuate their "oyster and cream colors favored in evening wear" (Mulvey 91), actresses like Jean Harlow possessed this sleek, sculptured blonde hair. Upon her heavy influence, women throughout the nation filled beauty parlors with the desire to have the same lustrous look. Since Hollywood executives began to notice the strict influence that the industry held upon society, they imposed limitations on costume design that led designers to reveal less skin in their enchanting fashions. Evening clothes were often made with a bare back, "the bare back achieving a sexy look without being too controversial or showing too much cleavage" (Mulvey 88). With the previously mentioned important role that movies played in the society of the 1930s, it is no wonder that the films had an extreme amount of influence over their viewers.

While movies were sometimes seen as an attempt to draw society away from the nation's grief and certain fashion trends were the result of the economic downfall, many forms of literature throughout the 1930s *directly discussed* the prevalent themes of economic justice and political change. The examination of poetry gives a deeper, more unique insight into each author's personal values and feelings during this difficult time in the nation's history. Rather than a means of promoting their own personal status, many poets of the decade saw their work as a major part of their relationship with the world, a way of getting involved in history, and a way of altering the values in the United States (Nelson 41). The "worker's correspondence" poem, the most prominent type of poetry in the thirties, most clearly demonstrates the importance of authorship and originality at this time. Some workers wrote original poems and called them "worker's correspondence," while others clearly edited letters to turn them into poems. Michael Gold and Joseph Freeman are two recognized

individuals of this form of poetry who wrote as a form of political action rather than as means for personal advancement.

In his "Examples of Worker Correspondence," Michael Gold includes four letters from Alabama, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan that discuss harsh times such as a funeral for a child who died of hunger, the world's poverty, and a Native American who has fought a "Ku Kluxer" and is awaiting his sentence in jail. Throughout his short poems, however, there are not just simple societal and personal problems, but federal and political ideas as well such as Communism and the American Legion. Joseph Freeman revolves his ideas in "Four Poems" more directly around the results of the Depression on society along with the hope of creating a new, better nation.

In poem 3 (47), he discusses the seemingly happy and youthful faces and eyes of society that in reality are growing old because of the many sites they have been exposed to and have had to accept as the harsh reality of the times. Freeman, however, calls in his next poem for humanity to "build new cities, a new world, ringing with the clear voices of new men" in order to diminish "the struggle of nations, classes, factions, individuals; hands that come empty into the world and leave empty" (48). These personalized poems of Gold and Freeman are just two of the many representations of some views of society in regards to the economic and social situations of the nation during the 1930s. Each poet presents upsetting situations, but also displays a desire for recovery and in turn stirs up feelings of hope for recuperation and stability in the reader.

Along with poetry, photography was also used as a means to display the harsh realities of the Great Depression to American society. In 1935, Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the Resettlement Administration (RSA) to "aid the poor, rural Americans who were uprooted from their tenant farms during the depression and forced to move to urban areas and find jobs" (Hirsch 284). In an attempt to show the urban American a desperate situation and acquire support for new, upcoming federal programs, one staff member's job was to form a group of various photographers who could take poignant photographs to showcase the agency's effort and American rural life. Roy E. Stryker, the individual responsible for carrying out the mission, hired brilliant photographers like Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Marion Post Wolcott, and many others. Intending for the pictures to dramatize real subjects in their actual settings and link them to specific cultural messages, Stryker planned for the photographs to aim at the middle class people who were most likely unaware of the true lower class situations. He wanted the photographs to remain positive and to show rural people working in an attempt to improve their predicament. In trying to give a sense of cooperation and social equality and stressing the idea that these were good people having to experience difficult times, the camera angles and distance of the photos tended to follow the normal eye-level standards (Hirsch 286). By simply examining the work of one of the many influential photographers who assisted with the development and expansion of Roosevelt's new program, the reality of the true 1930s lower class life can be observed.

Her social consciousness being awakened during the Great Depression, Dorothea Lange's (1895-1960) impressive contribution to the Farm Security Administration (FSA, officially organized after the RSA was transferred into the Department of Agriculture (Hirsch 286)) consists of emotional, compelling photographs that focus on American individualism. Human subjects had always been most significant to Lange, and they continued to demand her full attention in the 1930s as she created visual images that spoke to the viewer's

conscience. One of Lange's most infamous photographs of the decade that most assuredly aroused pity for and suggested the reality of the lower class came to be an icon of the worst Depression years. *White Angel Breadline, San Francisco, 1933* captures the image of an individual man with an unshaven face and ragged hat waiting in line for bread, but who seems to be set apart from the rest of the crowd. His eyes are hidden under the brim of his hat; however, his mouth and jaw seem to emit a sense of misery. As he represents the numerous poverty-stricken Americans of the early thirties who were voiceless and helpless, the man stands back as the men with cleaner hats and coats push to the front of the breadline (McEuen 93-94). Lange's message in this portrait is one of desperation and it set the stage for her other works of the 1930s, including the infamous *Migrant Mother, Nipomo, Cal.* (1936) and *May Day Demonstration, San Francisco* (1934).

As seen throughout the movies, fashion, poetry, and photography of the 1930s, there were most definitely transforming understandings of American character and value as the decade progressed. First, through reviewing the early 1930s gangster films and the mid and later 1930s filmed musicals and romantic comedies, the shift of focus from violence and personal destruction to success and pride for one's country can be noted. The gangster films most likely tended to revolve around dismal storylines since the Depression had just begun, while the films during and after the middle of the decade introduced feelings of hope and happiness. As previously stated, Theodore Roosevelt's New Deal was responsible for this sudden sense of nationalism and hope among American citizens. The need for an escape from the harsh realities of the struggling nation led to increased attendance in movie theaters. Although the public was aware of what was going on in the world, they tended not to want to have it reiterated to them while they were enjoying their leisure time.

In the area of 1930s fashion, there was also a sort of shift in values and desires. While the economic setback of the nation led to plain and thrifty styles, the need for an amplified sort of fashion developed in both men and women and toward the end of the decade newer styles began to be introduced. The fashions of the first half of the decade reflected the American's resourcefulness of utilizing one simple outfit, but varying its style with accessories of all sorts. As this simplified sense of fashion led to uniformity, Americans began to desire a new, individualized style and this is when fashion began to make some changes. Hollywood's influence on fashion was neither direct nor subtle; it simply was what worked well with the stars and fashion society basically picked up on the unique styles. While most women were unable to afford any of the attire of famous actresses and models, the desire to continue admiring their outfits is what led many women to the movie theaters each week. Not only did the humorous movie plots keep American minds off of the grim circumstances of the nation, but the styles and fashions of the stars did as well.

Poetry and photography, on the other hand, acted as an eye-opener to the gloomy situation of the nation throughout the thirties. With poems filled with depressing and realistic situations and photographs showing poor, miserable immigrant workers, these two aspects of the decade served as the truth to the reality to those who were unaware or simply unwilling to pay attention. Poets like Joseph Freeman and photographers like Dorothea Lange can take the credit for looking at the other side of the decade that was sometimes hidden by such aspects as glamorous and deceiving movies. These two individuals focused their work on the lower class, and middle class individuals as well, who were directly

affected by the Great Depression. They regarded them to be on the same level and recognized them for the struggles and hardships they had been forced to endure.

Throughout examination of the 1930s, especially its movies, fashion, poetry, and photography, there hardly seems to be a clear distinction between male and female roles in society. The opportunities available to each gender appear to be equal, while it is the nationality aspect that seemed to be the deciding factor in opportunity for advancement. Actors of various nationalities tended not to appear too much on the Hollywood movie screen, most likely because the Civil Rights movement did not occur until later on that century. In reviewing the four mentioned aspects of the 1930s, various American values and characteristics, dating back to Benjamin Franklin, Charles Wilson Peale, and Noah Webster, of frugality, individuality and uniqueness, and national pride can be seen. One of the most relative topics to the Americans of the 1930s is Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis in which he proclaims that Americans have the ability to bounce back from things. As seen at the end of the decade, these Americans remained as strong as possible throughout the Great Depression and in the end were able to bounce back to a somewhat better life with the creation of new relief programs and a continued sense of hope.

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II

Lance Armstrong: The American Athlete Rachel Bausinger

An athlete is the epitome of self-determination and dedication. On the field, bike, or ice, an athlete must overcome all obstacles physically and mentally to stand out above the rest. Lance Armstrong, American pro-cyclist, showcases these qualities in his autobiography, It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life. However, as one finds out, he is not talking about the difficulty in reaching success through his sport. It is his miraculous recovery from cancer that leads any reader to believe that he is the ultimate American athlete based on his significant dedication to never give up in his fight for survival. Through his style as an athlete, his comeback, and overall philosophy to life, Lance Armstrong exemplifies the American character in more ways than one.

Armstrong's autobiography is a play-by-play account of his life up until the present day. He offers his past of the under-privileged son of a teenage mother who raises him with the philosophy to never give up in any task he endeavors. His first shot at cycling was a triathlon he participated in during high school that allowed him to first see his immense capabilities as a cyclist. As time progressed, so did his cycling abilities. At the end of 1995, Lance Armstrong was the #1 ranked cyclist in the world. However, within the next year, he was also suddenly diagnosed with testicular cancer in its third stage. This shocking discovery put him back a year in training, and many more years in competitive racing. After grueling months of extensive surgery and chemotherapy, Armstrong astoundingly recovered from a less than 5% chance of survival. Although he recovered from this dismal disease, it took him three years to finally get back into shape to the point where he was successful in winning a race. Today, Armstrong has won five Tour de Frances and multiple races across the world.

As the beginning of the autobiography reads, one can get a sense that Lance Armstrong is certainly an American athlete. From the start, his mother has engraved in him the idea that his own efforts would be rewarded if he tried hard enough. He says, "My mother told me, 'Look, Lance if you're going to get anywhere, you're going to have to do it yourself, because no one is going to do it for you.'" (Armstrong 29). Just as many Americans are individuals who work from the bottom up, Armstrong was no different. He was an individual at heart, which is most likely why he excelled in cycling. Furthermore, cycling is not considered a popular sport; and, if one knows anything about cycling, they know that those who do cycle are not your average person. Lance quotes, "Still, I felt shunned at times. I was the guy who did weird sports and who didn't wear the right labels...It was total conformity, and everything I was against" (Armstrong 33).

As Lance began his professional career as a cyclist, his American spirit endured even more. His dedication at becoming the best showcases what it means to be an American. He says, "I want to be the best rider there is. I want to go to Europe and be a pro. I don't want to just be good at it; I want to be the best" (Armstrong 49). This attitude remained his driving force to compete at a level that defied any other American's attempt at cycling. However, due to his American competitiveness, he managed to receive some criticism for it. Even Armstrong himself admits cycling is not the all-American sport. He humorously adds, "An

American in cycling was comparable to a French baseball team in the World Series” (Armstrong 51). In addition, cycling was not exactly the sport to show emotion and competition according to Armstrong. He says, “There was a big difference between the discreet jockeying of European cycling, and the swaggering, trash-talking American idea of competition I was reared with” (Armstrong 51). Armstrong was not prepared for the disapproval of his aggressive nature he held with opponents and racing officials. He admits that he held no respect for other racers, and he tried his hardest despite the downfall of others. This mindset is yet another quality that capitalistic America holds today.

On top of his qualities and style in cycling, his comeback from cancer proved to be one that will go down in history. After getting over the fact that he might never race again, Armstrong managed to pull through an intense year of recovery from cancer. However, it was his qualities as an athlete and more importantly an American that helped him to survive. He used his dedication as a cyclist in the same ways to overcome cancer. He took the toughest route of chemotherapy. Once he began treatment, he remained focused on the goal to live. He devotes an entire chapter on his methods of overcoming cancer. He opens the chapter with, “When something climbs straight into your mind, that’s way personal. I decided to get personal right back, and I began to talk to it, engaging in an inner conversation with cancer” (Armstrong 97). This methodology proved successful in that he could talk it down, mirroring his attempts at belittling opponents when racing. He referred to chemo as “The Bastard,” which he equated to his enemy or challenge. Even though it took him months to fully train in a competitive manner, Armstrong went on casual rides following his chemotherapy treatment. Although many questioned his poor decision at returning to the bike so soon, he said, “But now I knew exactly why I was riding: if I could continue to pedal a bike, somehow I wouldn’t be so sick” (Armstrong 86). Everything in cancer was equated to racing a bike. Just as racing was competitive, so was cancer. Just as racing was fast, so was his recovery. This progressive attitude also holds true for Americans. Americans must not back down because if they do, then they fail. If it was not for his inherent American and athletic spirit, Lance Armstrong might not have survived this great disease that tends to take more than it survives.

Perhaps the greatest lesson of all that any reader will receive from this autobiography is the philosophy behind Lance Armstrong’s life. Not only is this the most intriguing aspect of his autobiography, but also it is also the most moving. This philosophy is what gets readers. Lance Armstrong titles the book, It’s Not About the Bike for a reason. Although he is this famous cyclist who happens to be the first American to win the Tour de France on an American bike, it is not what defines him as a person. Cycling might motivate him, but it does not make him who he is. This idea is more prevalent following his recovery from cancer. Cancer most likely forces people to consider their life because they are faced with the issue of survival. Lance quotes, “I had a new sense of purpose, and it had nothing to do with my recognition and exploits on the bike. Some people won’t understand this, but I no longer felt that it was my role in life to be a cyclist” (Armstrong 151). Armstrong realized in his recovery that it was not about racing that defined him as a person, but it is the inner self that is what matters in the end. As he slowly made his way back to racing, he comments on a journey during a ride, “As I continued upward, I saw my life as a whole. I saw the pattern and the privilege of it, and the purpose of it, too. It was simply this: I was meant for a long, hard climb” (Armstrong 197). Although Armstrong has achieved prominence in his life, he

succeeded with a cost. This idea seems to shine with many Americans. Although we have succeeded as a nation, we have done so with the criticism of others and the recent cost of our nation being threatened by terrorist acts.

Even more than this philosophy, Lance Armstrong realizes the importance in setbacks. He claims he would rather have won his fight with cancer than the Tour de France for the immense impact it had on his life. He claims that when in a difficult position, one must be brave and take responsibility, or one will fail. It is courage that defines a winner in his mind (Armstrong 258-265). Likewise, courage is what defines our nation. America has stood against odds in the past, and continues to do so in the present. But, we seem to never go into a situation without confidence. Furthermore, as Armstrong began to convert his new philosophy to racing, he figured that it was not just about sheer determination and dedication, but love for what you do and respect for the chance to do it. He claims, "But with each race, I feel that I further define my capacity for living. That's why I ride, and why I try to ride hard, even I don't have to (Armstrong 270). This philosophy holds true for any American. If we must try, why not give it our all and get as much as we can out of it? That is why we succeed so much.

Although I have argued my case on why this autobiography exemplifies the American spirit in five short pages, I wish I could go on. Each page within this book is filled with inspiration for any American. Every motivating and even humbling response from Lance Armstrong defines what it means to be an American, and even more importantly, an American athlete. He illustrates the American individual through his style as an athlete, his comeback from cancer, and his philosophy of life in many ways. Furthermore, it is this book that truly leads me to believe that cycling is the all-American sport. And, it is Lance Armstrong who made that shift take place. He quotes amazing athletic defeats as a cyclist. Moreover, through his remarkable recovery from cancer and his personal success as an athlete, he defines what it means to truly work from the bottom up. This is most likely one of the greatest feats Americans can claim due to their historical survival as a nation among a more powerful world in the beginning. I recommend this inspirational story of an American man's struggle to find what it truly means to be an American to anyone who seeks more about life. After all, it's not about the bike.

III

Alfred Thayer Mahan: Strategy and Colonies

Michael P. Gallen

Alfred Thayer Mahan's theories of naval strategy were a major cause of imperialism. Mahan claimed that the possession of strategically placed colonies was vital to a strong navy. These colonies could serve as coaling stations for steamships and provide vital positions for controlling major trading routes and interdicting enemy commerce. His theories influenced major American politicians, particularly Theodore Roosevelt, and ultimately would cause America to embark on an imperialistic policy during the Spanish-American War. Mahan had identified several Spanish colonies, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, as important strategic outposts, making them targets for American conquest. Furthermore, the war was conducted according to his theories, with the navy playing a vital role in defeating the Spanish. Thus, Alfred Thayer Mahan's theories were a major cause of American imperialism during the Spanish-American War.

Alfred Thayer Mahan was not a likely exponent of imperialism. For much of his naval career, he opposed imperialism. In 1885, he wrote to a friend, "The very suspicion of an imperial policy is hateful; the mixing [of] our politics with those of the Latin [American] republics especially."¹ Mahan had developed distaste for imperialism after witnessing the bloody aftermath of an American diplomatic intervention in a Chilean-Peruvian war. He considered the pursuit of an imperialistic policy a certain recipe for disaster: "I have no mind to see the country travel towards...catastrophe via colonies or the Monroe Doctrine."²

However, over time he modified his views on imperialism in light of the needs of a strong navy. Mahan felt that the post-Civil War American Navy was dangerously weak: "We have not six ships that would be kept at sea in war by any maritime power."³ Many of the Navy's ships were obsolete and would not fare well in a battle with a modern navy. The government felt that because the heavy failure rate in developing new ships and the rapid rate of technological progress quickly rendered ships obsolete, it would be useless to spend money on new models of ships. Furthermore, America had no current enemies that would make a naval buildup necessary.⁴ Mahan disagreed with this and published a book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660 to 1783*, which outlined his beliefs on naval strategy.

Mahan believed that America needed a strong, modern navy to be a world power. He thought naval power could be the pivotal element in determining the victor of a conflict. For

¹ Quoted in Raymond G. O'Connor, "The Imperialism of Sea Power," *Reviews in American History* 4, no. 3 (September 1976): 411.

² Warren Zimmermann, *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002), 86-87.

³ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 87.

⁴ Benjamin L. Apt, "Mahan's Forebears: The Debate over Maritime Strategy, 1868-1883," *Naval War College Review* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 3.

instance, according to Mahan, control of the sea was critical to the Roman defeat of Hannibal's invasion of Italy.⁵ In his view, "History showed that the chief business of a navy at war is to destroy or at least lock up the enemy's fleet."⁶ This would ensure control of the sea and weaken the enemy. To do this in the late 19th century, a nation needed steam-driven battleships, the most powerful naval weapon at that time.⁷

However, a modern navy required a support system when it ventured far from its nation's borders. As Mahan noted, "Colonies attached to the mother-country afford...the surest means of supporting abroad the sea power of a country."⁸ These colonies would provide a base of operations and a source of shelter for the fleet. Ships at war could visit the colony to replenish their supplies, including coal. As he noted, "The necessity of renewing coal makes the cruiser of the present day even more dependent than of old on his port."⁹ According to Mahan, this had been the practice of all seamen, civilian and military, since the beginning of sea travel:

[The merchant seaman] intuitively sought at the far end of his trade route one or more stations, to be given to him by force or favor, where he could fix himself or his agents in reasonable security, where his ships could lie in safety...Such establishments naturally multiplied and grew until they became colonies.¹⁰

Mahan also noted that colonies would be valuable for commerce raiding, one of the United States' preferred forms of warfare. In order to attack the commerce of the enemy, a nation required "Ports very near the great centres of trade abroad."¹¹ Because the United States was not positioned near any of the great hubs of commerce, it would have to rely on either the ports of allies or on ports within her own colonies. It was especially important for commerce-raiding ships to have ports where they could seek shelter- because they were small and consequently had difficulty defending themselves.¹² Thus, Mahan considered colonies to be an important part of a nation's military infrastructure, both for the general fleet and for commerce raiding.

Finally, Mahan believed that colonies would be essential to the protection of America's commerce. Nations must establish "Naval stations, in those distant parts of the world to which the armed shipping must follow the peaceful vessels of commerce."¹³ If a

⁵ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History: 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1949), iv-v.

⁶ Frank Uhlig, Jr. "The Great White Fleet," *American Heritage* 15, no. 2 (1964): 32.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Mahan, *Influence*, p. 83.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

nation's trading ships were not accompanied by adequately supported naval forces, they would be subject to the depredations of commerce raiding during a war. For these stations to be safe from attack, they needed the protection and support of a surrounding colony, just as British naval stations were supported by her colonies.¹⁴ In Mahan's opinion, the establishment of colonies by the American government would protect American commerce, while enabling steam-driven battleships to travel long distances and raid enemy trading ships.

Some researchers doubt whether Mahan's theories had much effect on government policy. For example, James A. Field has questioned the impact of Mahan's ideas on the real world:

Captain Mahan no doubt deserves some credit for the increased popularity of navies and the arguments for battleships, but his principal effort to influence policy misfired badly: thought his life remained convinced that his annexationist article on Hawaii had brought about his transfer by the Cleveland administration from writing and lecturing at the Naval War College to a greatly undesired tour of sea duty.¹⁵

Field believes that Mahan's theories were not important to the determination of government policy regarding imperialism. Furthermore, he claims that "no clear 'imperialistic' plan emerges" when one reads his writing.¹⁶ Mahan's theories were devoted to defending the western hemisphere from European intrusion, and were not concerned with developing an overseas empire. Field concludes that a "collective re-reading" of many of Mahan's writings may be necessary.¹⁷

Despite Field's claims, there is evidence that Mahan actually had significant impact on the development of American imperialism. First, his writings influenced the strategic visions of some government officials, especially Theodore Roosevelt. Mahan and Roosevelt first met in 1888, when Roosevelt gave a lecture on the War of 1812 at the Naval War College, where Mahan was teaching.¹⁸ Mahan's theories impressed Roosevelt, as is evident from a review of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* that he wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly*. Roosevelt praised the book, commenting that "His book is as interesting as it is valuable; and in writing it he has done a real service."¹⁹ When Roosevelt became Under-Secretary of the Navy, he would become an advocate of imperialism as envisioned by Mahan.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ James A. Field, "American Imperialism: The Worst Chapter in Almost Any Book," *American Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (June 1978): 649.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

¹⁸ Richard W. Turk, *The Ambiguous Relationship: Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan*, Contributions in Military Studies, no. 63 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 15.

¹⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, "A Review of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783*," *Atlantic Monthly* 66, no. 396 (October 1890), 567.

The influence of Mahanian theory upon government officials such as Roosevelt became evident during the Spanish-American War of 1898. This war was fought to obtain strategically-placed colonies which Mahan had deemed valuable. Mahan had been stressing for years the importance of two of the colonies obtained during the war. He considered the island of Cuba to be the most important target for American conquest. As he noted in an article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*:

Between the [peninsulas of Florida and Yucatan] the island of Cuba interposes for a distance of two hundred miles, leaving on one side a passage of nearly a hundred miles wide-the Strait of Florida-into the Atlantic, while on the other, the Yucatan Channel, somewhat broader, leads into the Caribbean Sea.²⁰

Because of its geographic position, Cuba controlled several major sea routes within the Caribbean, making it a valuable base for naval operations.²¹ The large size of Cuba made it virtually self-sufficient, so that it could provide supplies for any naval ships that docked there. Its size would also render it less vulnerable to a naval blockade, because there were "many directions from which approach can be made" to its ports.²² Furthermore, Mahan warned that if the navy of a hostile country were to be based in Cuba, the American military's ability to maneuver would be greatly hampered: "It is indisputable that a superior navy, resting on Santiago de Cuba...could very seriously incommode all access of the United States to the Caribbean mainland, and especially to the isthmus."²³ To Mahan, control of Cuba was a strategic necessity for the United States.

Mahan also considered Puerto Rico to be a potential strategic outpost for the United States. Puerto Rico's position in the Caribbean made it, along with Cuba, a potential barrier to any hostile fleet. As Mahan noted:

The phenomenon of the long narrow peninsula of Florida, with its strait, is reproduced successively in Cuba, Haiti, and Puerto Rico, with the passages dividing them. The whole together forms one long barrier, the strategic significance of which cannot be overlooked in its effect upon the Caribbean, while the Gulf of Mexico is assigned to absolute seclusion by it, if the passages are in hostile control.²⁴

Mahan claimed it would be impossible for the United States to defend Cuba if Puerto Rico was held by a hostile power. Puerto Rico was only five hundred miles east of Cuba, and the strait between the two islands could be quickly crossed by naval steamships. Thus, he concluded that Puerto Rico had to be annexed.²⁵

²⁰ Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* XCV, no. DLXIX (October 1897), 682.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 690-691.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 685.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 689.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Zimmermann, *Triumph*, pp. 294-295.

Mahan believed it was important to gain control of Cuba and Puerto Rico as quickly as possible. This was because there were plans at that time to build a canal across the Panamanian Isthmus. This canal would make the Caribbean a gate between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Mahan warned that this would make the Caribbean region a target of European imperialists: "To protect and develop its own [commercial and political interests], each nation will seek points of support and means of influence in a region where the United States has always been sensitive to the intrusion of European powers."²⁶ To prevent a hostile power from dominating the Caribbean and cutting off America's access to the Canal, the United States had to establish strategic bases within the region. Roosevelt agreed that the United States needed to seize the Spanish colonies in order to assure its own military dominance in the region. As he wrote to Mahan on May 3, 1897, "Until we definitely turn Spain out of those islands (and if I had my way that would be done tomorrow), we will always be menaced by trouble out there."²⁷ However, under the reluctant imperialist President McKinley, they needed an excuse to intervene in the Caribbean. Their excuse was not long in coming.

Through the revolution in Cuba and the explosion that sunk the *Maine*, the United States was drawn into a war with Spain. Mahan played an active role in directing the war effort. He was called back from a vacation in Europe when war was declared, and served on the Naval War Board for the duration of the conflict. Even before he returned to America, he sent the government a telegram outlining the strategy that American forces used to defeat the Spanish in Cuba. He advocated trapping Spanish ships in their harbors, blockading them so that they could not leave.²⁸ Following this stratagem, an American fleet consisting of four battleships and two cruisers under Admiral William T. Sampson blockaded the fleet of Spanish Admiral Pascual Cervera in Santiago Bay. When Cervera and his fleet tried to escape from the bay on July 3, 1898, the American fleet, commanded by Commodore Winfield Scott Schley, destroyed the Spanish ships. The destruction of the Spanish fleet using Mahan's strategy left Cuba and Puerto Rico almost defenseless, ensuring an American victory.²⁹

American victory in the Philippines was also based on Mahanian doctrine. In 1894, under the leadership of Captain Mahan, the Naval War College had instituted a program to develop plans for future wars that might confront the United States. One plan regarding conflict with Spain suggested taking the Philippines in order to pressure Spain into surrendering Cuba. Acting on this plan, Under-Secretary Roosevelt ordered Commodore George Dewey to engage Spanish forces in the islands. On May 1, 1898, Commodore Dewey's fleet sailed into Manila Bay and annihilated the Spanish ships, which were smaller

²⁶ Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The United States Looking Outward," *Atlantic Monthly* 66, no. 398 (December 1890), 822.

²⁷ Turk, *Relationship*, p. 116.

²⁸ Captain W. D. Puleston, U.S.N. *Mahan: The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, U.S.N.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 187.

²⁹ Zimmermann, *Triumph*, pp. 281-282.

and older than the American ships. The defeat of the Spanish fleet illustrated Mahan's assertion that a modern fleet could dominate the sea. Furthermore, it was orchestrated by a plan, which had been designed under Mahan's guidance.³⁰

After the war, Mahan played an active role in the peace talks which resulted in the American acquisition of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines as colonies. Mahan attended three meetings at the White House at which the United States' demands were discussed. Along with Roosevelt, Mahan urged that the government demand control of Cuba and Puerto Rico. The government could not allow these strategic outposts to escape its grasp. Ultimately, the McKinley administration asked that Spain relinquish Cuba and allow the United States to annex Puerto Rico. When the Spanish balked at surrendering Puerto Rico, Mahan advised Secretary of State John Hay to threaten to resume the war. Intimidated, the Spanish allowed the United States to annex Puerto Rico and occupy Cuba. Mahan's theories and advice clearly played a critical role in the government's decision to take the Caribbean colonies.³¹

Mahan was less enthusiastic about annexing the Philippines. As he wrote to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, "I myself, though rather an expansionist, have not fully adjusted myself to the idea of taking them, from our own standpoint of advantage."³² Mahan felt that it was only strategically necessary to take Manila Bay, which could be used as a coaling station, and one of the smaller Philippine islands. However, others, such as Roosevelt, believed that it was necessary to take the entire Philippines. In their opinion, Manila Bay could not be defended unless all of the Philippines were under American control. Their concern that a base at Manila Bay might be threatened was partially based on Mahan's fear that there would be an "Emergence of an Asia armed with industrial weaponry that would challenge Western Civilization for world domination."³³ They especially feared the rising power of Japan, and wanted to be certain that the American military would be strategically placed to cope with any threat the Japanese might pose. Thus, even the decision to go beyond Mahan's wishes was based on his strategic theories, which stated that the navy needed outposts throughout the world so that its ships could reach any threat.³⁴

In conclusion, Alfred Thayer Mahan's theories of naval strategy were a major cause of American imperialism in the Spanish-American War. These theories outlined the need for colonies in order to have a strong, modern navy, and influenced the thinking of politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt. Mahan's ideas affected the conduct of the war itself, putting the navy at the forefront of the action. Finally, colonies were chosen based on their strategic value against potential enemies. Mahan and his ideas were an undisputable factor in the rise of American imperialism during the late 19th century.

³⁰ Uhlig, "White Fleet," *American Heritage*, p. 34 and Zimmermann, *Triumph*, pp. 268-270.

³¹ Puleston, *Mahan*, p. 198, Turk, *Relationship*, p. 35, and Zimmermann, *Triumph*, p. 314.

³² Quoted in Turk, *Relationship*, p. 36.

³³ Jon Sumida, "Alfred Thayer Mahan, Geopolitician," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, nos. 2-3 (1999), p. 55.

³⁴ *Ibid* and Turk, *Relationship*, pp. 36-37.

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IV

Life Magazine: 1950

Amanda Parks

When Henry R. Luce developed it in November of 1936, *Life Magazine* was a harbinger of magazines that centered on photography. The new magazine was more than just pictures; it filled the readers with emotions and knowledge. *Life's* readers actually could experience a news story millions of miles away through the pictures presented. Though it began as a weekly magazine, readers of today are only graced with its' presence semiannually.

When one looks at a present day issue of *Life Magazine*, he/she will be greeted with everyday events, gruesome pictures of American troops bombing Afghanistan, and a diverse group of men and women ranging from African American to Japanese. The advertisements would be for shampoo, food, sneakers, and milk ads. The year 1950 began the Korean War, a new style of women's fashion, and new cars. To find out more about how these popular topics were portrayed to Americans, I reviewed 3 issues of *Life Magazine* from the year 1950. I chose January 9, January 16 and July 17 because they depicted the American character of 1950 best.

In 1950, *Life Magazine* was specifically targeted at middle-aged, middle to upper class Caucasian women. In the three issues viewed, not a single member from any other race was shown except to show the Mexicans, like the woman pictured on the cover, and the drama they were facing. There were also many advertisements for diaper rash, baby carriages, and children's songs. These advertisements prove to me that *Life* was a magazine that was for the middle-aged, American mother. Some of the advertisements were strictly for the upper-middle-class; they depicted a prominent looking woman either sprawled out on sheets, smoking a cigarette, or drinking wine or soda.

One particular article in the January 9th issue stressed that the newly released children's Christmas song, *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, had an underlying moral. "The reindeer around Rudolph, so the kids should note, were all too human in their behavior. They discriminated against Rudolph for not being just like every other reindeer in the herd". The idea of being yourself, as Rudolph was, stems from Coney Island, which just proves that American character is being influenced every waking moment, even through songs. Parents of 1950 wanted their children to be indiscriminate and realize that people's differences may prove to be helpful, like Rudolph's nose, otherwise they, the children, "would turn up to be a bunch of stinkers". Parents realized that if their children did not discriminate then the world would become more moral and diverse when they grew up.

The same issue of *Life* had many advertisements for soda; one particular ad catches the readers' eye. "Thirst knows no season," is the phrase printed at the bottom of the article. The Coca-Cola Company has tried to convince its audience that there is always a time where coca cola is needed. In the background you see three women lying on the beach in bikinis, flowers, Indian corn, a horse and buggy in the snow, a farmer's almanac, and a carving into a tree by two people in love. Coca Cola is attempting to appeal as something that is always available and forever thirst quenching. The women are relaxed and happy, like the two

lovebirds that carved their names in the tree. Each aspect of the picture appeals to the viewers' taste buds but in a subtle way.

The cover of the January 16th issue's cover shows a three-year-old little girl who is ice-skating; she has in her arms a doll and is looking very happy. The little girl's mother has taught her how to ice skate at such an early age and Charles Wilson Peale would be ecstatic to know that his idea that it was the parents' role to educate their children was being played out in *Life Magazine*. Intergenerational responsibility and family values are acted out in the article itself. Pictures of a family doing fun things together, in this case ice-skating, were also prevalent throughout the magazine. The American family of the 1950's included a mother and a father, which is much different from today.

The January 16th issue also lets women know what they should ideally look like. "Playtex Presents The 'Figure of the 1950's'", is an advertisement for a girdle. The girdle they are advertising is a 1950's version of the 1915 corset. The ad gives a timeline starting in 1915 with the corset, which gave women a "bulgy" figure, to 1926 and the boyish figure, 1947 saw padded hips, and finally 1950 and the "slim, supple, vital figure because, shorter skirts demand slimmer hips." Playtex promotes that their new girdle will not show any lines and can be worn under the "newest, narrowest fashions." Advertisements like these are what have influenced the American woman to become so self-conscious about her weight and dress size. These worries may commonly lead to anorexia or bulimia in young women of today. Bra advertisements also dominated some of the pages of this *Life Magazine*, showing that "superb uplift and lovable curves" were also an important aspect of the ideal American woman.

Hygiene was also a prominent factor in *Life Magazine* of 1950. There were numerous ads for toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, dandruff shampoo and other cleaning supplies. The prominence of hygiene in America began many years ago with Ben Franklin's thirteen virtues. He stresses cleanliness and ever after we have been one of the most cleanliness-orientated countries. When immigrants to America arrive, Americans are often disgusted by their awful stench but in their home countries hygiene is not encouraged as greatly.

The July 17th issue was released just after the Korean War and although it also had many ads on cleanliness, the main focus of the magazine was the troops who were fighting in Korea. Pictured on the cover is an American troop who has just "shot down a Yak," the negative term for a Korean. Throughout the issue there were U.S. Army advertisements welcoming young American men to join the army. They say that joining the army will help in continuing life prosperously because they are educated at the same time they began their career. Pictured in the ads are handsome, young men, talking with their new wives, smiling, and working in actual army vehicles. Today, young men are still being enticed to join the army for many of the same reasons. The army still promises a free college education for enlisting and serving faithfully for a set amount of years.

Life Magazine plays a role in paying a tribute to American troops. A four page special on the grief stricken families of young men lost and or fighting in the Korean War lets the viewers in on the sorrow that war can lead to. The article shows true stories about the grief stricken lives that families, girlfriends/wives and unborn children, of the lost men will have to suffer through. Even today Americans care for their families and friends and

strangers when they find out about the loss of their loved one. This issue of *Life* only shows that Americans have always been caring and loving individuals.

An advertisement for a career in the steel making industry reveals that America was once a place where industry and laborious jobs reigned. The ad shows John the “high school honor graduate” as he begins his career in the steel making industry, a job that “works for everyone.” In the 1950’s the steel making industry was where all of the money was.

Ever present anywhere and at any time, cigarette advertisements reigned free in *Life*. Classy women, rugged men, young, old, practically everyone was smoking. There were devices that “prevented” throat and sinus pain and even “mild” cigarettes. Americans today do not have advertisements for smoking but smoking is still prevalent in society and it could possibly be related to the precedence it had over 1950. It has been passed through generations like an unstoppable disease that is spreading to everyone, even adolescent teens.

Just from three issues I have realized that America has changed dramatically in some ways but our character has not changed as significantly. We are still the same people who love fast cars, beautiful women, cleanliness, and smoking. These few traits, although they may be slightly different, can be traced back to the colonial period. The *Life* Magazines have contributed to some of these minute changes, but our character will always rule as American.