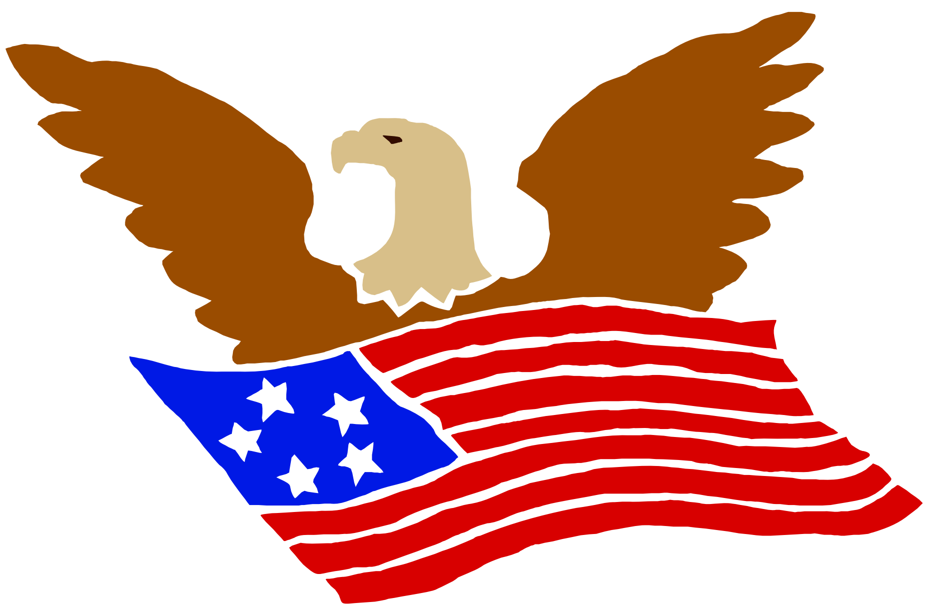
The Eagle's Eye:
The La Salle American Studies Student Review



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Welcome to *The Eagle's Eye*

Academic papers on the bizarre sport of competitive eating? On kitchen countertop design? On cinema concession stands? Seem unlikely? Not in American Studies. Just as it seems that anything goes in America, anything goes in American Studies, as well, just as long as a rigorously critical eye is brought to bear. And here in the fourth issue of *The Eagle's Eye*, Numbers 1 and 2, a rigorously critical eye *is* brought to bear on a wide range of interesting topics. Either explicitly or implicitly, seven of the nine essays concern themselves with the various relationships Americans have with food. Some of these essays enlighten us regarding issues that affect the regular eating habits of many of our nation's citizens. For example, in Volume IV, Number 1, Christie Walker's essay, "You Are What You Eat," explores the connection between diet and mental health, while Tiffany Robinson, in her essay, "Eating Away Our Health," examines how the poor eating habits of Americans are linked to the steady rise of health-related issues. Dovetailing nicely with these two essays is Lauren McManus's essay, "Aspartame—Are You Informed?," which provides a thorough discussion of the debate on the safety of this popular sugar alternative. From considerations of the various ways that our normal eating habits may affect us, we then turn to engaging inspections of the growing popularity of competitive eating in Maria Oberst's essay, "Hungry for Competition," and Carli Mell's essay, "One of the Seven Deadly Sins or an Organized Sport on the Rise?"

Rather than the consumption of food, Jaclyn Keammerer and Jamie Peteraf , in Volume IV, Number 2, instead scrutinize spaces within which food is prepared and displayed: the kitchen and the cinema concession stand. In "The Catastrophe of the Continuous Countertop: How the American Kitchen Stove Became a Back-Breaker," Keammerer analyzes the reasons behind the "creation and pervasive popularity" of the 36-inch-tall stove, which requires users to bend over to operate it. In "Lights, Camera, Action! America Goes to the Movies," Peteraf investigates the range of techniques employed by different theatre chains in their efforts to encourage moviegoers to purchase items to eat and drink.

Rounding out this year's offerings are essays by Katherine Cooper and James Rossi. In "Inner-City Schools: Can No School Be Left Behind?," Cooper takes a sobering look at the lack of effect recent federal school reform efforts have had—and will most likely continue to have—on inner-city schools. In "The Journey of John Mitchel," Rossi chronicles the life of John Mitchel, a significant nineteenth-century figure in both Ireland and the United States.

Special thanks and recognition go to Dr. Francis Ryan, director of American Studies, the American Studies advisory board, and contributors for their time and expertise in creating the fourth issue of *The Eagle's Eye*.

Dr. Kevin Grauke & Dr. Judith Musser
Faculty Advisors
The Eagle's Eye

You Are What You Eat: The Impact of Food on Mental Health

Christie Walker

Food is a source of nourishment that enables the human body to grow and perform effectively. Research has proven how food directly affects mental health in both positive and negative manners. The human diet has changed drastically over the past 60 years with an increased consumption of processed foods along with a decreased consumption of vegetables, thus altering mental health status around the world. Not only is it believed that one in every four people are likely to experience a mental illness at some point in their life, mental illness has now become the leading cause of disability among working age adults (Ryrie 23). A number of factors contribute to problems with mental health including age, genetics, environment, and nutrition. In fact, healthy eating habits aid in the development, management, and prevention of common mental health problems, such as depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, schizophrenia, and Alzheimer's disease.

A comprehensive study performed by the Mental Health Foundation, in partnership with the national alliance for better food and farming, Sustain, linked diets to well-being and mental disorders based on physiological and epidemiological evidence. The report showed that 60% of the human brain is composed of fat, directly affecting the structure and substance of the brain cell membranes, while amino acids omega-3 and omega-6 account for 20%. Furthermore, specific neurotransmitters that pass around the brain could only be synthesized, or combined, from other essential nutrients (Simonite 2). Similar to the heart and liver, the human brain is extremely sensitive to the consumption of complex carbohydrates, EFA's, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, and water.

Caroline Stokes, a research nutritionist for mental health at Doncaster and South Hamber NHS Trust, provides advice on dieting for people suffering from mental illness. Stokes stated, "I've worked with people with long term depression and people with the first onset of psychosis and in both cases I've seen differences and particularly, with depression" (Brody 18). Oily fish, folic acid from leafy green vegetables, and selenium found in Brazil nuts, are all specific foods found to fight depression that should already be considered part of a healthy diet.

Iain Ryrie explores the connection between diet and mental health in both childhood and adolescence, focusing primarily on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and the rising levels of depression in youths. ADHD appears in about four percent of the world's population, particularly during childhood or adolescence, yet is commonly found in boys rather than girls (24). Aside from behavioral management strategies and medication, Ritalin for example, support groups are turning to dietary changes for a more natural solution to the overwhelming problem. Two food groups have been implicated through clinical research: essential fatty acids and minerals. When compared to children without ADHD, those with the disorder have drastically lower levels of EFAs, specifically omega-3 fatty acids. Iron, magnesium, and zinc deficiencies have also been linked to characteristics of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

People with a diagnosis of schizophrenia are proven to have lower levels of polyunsaturated fatty acids, or PUFAs, in their bodies than those without. As with depression and ADHD, one of the primary suspects is the omega-3 fatty acid. A number of studies have shown reductions in symptoms with higher intakes of this EFA (Ryrie 25). In addition, antioxidant enzymes are lower in the brains of people with schizophrenia, suggesting that their brain cells are more vulnerable to oxidation.

According to Ryrie, high blood pressure, affiliated with high salt intake, is known to increase the likelihood of vascular dementia. To compound the issue, some medications prescribed to lower blood pressure coincide with an inflating number of adults suffering from dementia (25). Connections have been made between the occurrence of Alzheimer's disease and the amount of saturated fat, vitamins, and minerals in the diet. Moreover, methylation is the process that the human brain depends on to create, maintain, and repair cells and neurotransmitters, while homocysteine establishes how effectively methylation occurs. Poor methylation and high levels of homocysteine are also strongly associated with an increased risk of AD.

It has been observed that Japanese elders, known for their high fish consumption, have extremely low levels of AD. "Similarly, the Mediterranean diet, characterized by high intakes on mono-unsaturated fatty acids, has been linked to low rates of dementia in Italy, while high intakes of cereals and fish appear to decrease risk in North America and northern European countries" (Ryrie 26). A relevant trial looked at the effect of a mixed PUFA supplement on 100 older adults with Alzheimer's over a period of four weeks. Of the 60 that received the supplement, 49 were reported to show improvement in mood, co-operation, and short term memory. Ryrie includes another study that declares meat and fish eaters are more than twice as likely as their vegetarian counterparts to develop AD, based on the higher fat consumption of meat eaters. Nonetheless, lavish intakes of vitamins C and E conjointly lower the risk for Alzheimer's disease.

Joseph Mitchell's *"Mr. Flood's Party"* signifies how important a diet can be to mental health. For instance, the character Mr. Flood mainly relied on seafood as his source of nutrition. He believed that eating raw oysters is the best mood enhancer and will ensure a happy and positive mindset, as well as keep him healthy until the age of 115. As previously mentioned, research has proven meat and seafood to reduce the risk of mental disabilities and depression. "He is a diet theorist-he calls himself a seafoodetarian-and feels obliged to reach a spectacular age in order to prove his theory. He is convinced that the eating of meat and vegetables shortens life and he maintains that the only sensible food for man, particularly for a man who wants to hit a hundred and fifteen, is fish" (376). By following strict and rigorous eating habits as a 95 year old man who intends on living for another 20 years, Mr. Flood symbolizes the power of food over mental health.

Mr. Flood's nutritional habits exemplify only one of the multiple notions for living a healthy life. Natural and organic products are being advertised as an innovative technique on dieting. The National Institute of Medical Herbalists is one of the world's oldest professional bodies representing qualified medical herbalists. Today, people are searching for new and innovative ways to combat mental health. Ned Reiter, president of NIMH, observes that, "For a sizeable proportion of sufferers, herbal medicine can offer a gentle, safe and effective approach to treatment. Medical herbalists take a holistic approach to the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. Using herbal remedies to correct imbalance and normalize function, along with offering advice on diet, exercise, and lifestyle, a qualified medical herbalist will work with the patient towards a healthier and happier state of physical and mental wellbeing" (46). Although a vast amount of medicines claim to increase mental health, St. John's Wort, hypericum perforatum, is an herb that helps can raise the overall effect of serotonin in the body, thereby improving symptoms of depression. Herbs that have traditionally been used to treat anxiety and calm the nervous system include: vervain, kava kava, pasque flower, skullcap, and centaury.

Having outstanding mental health goes beyond the latest diet or newest medical supplement. An influential feminist illustrated a deeper affiliation to societal views and living a healthy life. Leslie Shannon Miller wrote "The Many Figures of Eve: Styles of Womanhood Embodied in a Late 19th Century Corset." Many aspects of the corset can be compared to perceptions of food and mental health. For example, women wore corsets in order to reach a desired goal or conform to some preconceived mold. Corsets were made of whale bone to physically restrain a woman's waist to fit in between 20 and 24 inches, alluding to the social and psychological restraints from men. "Despite the corset's embodiment of social control, it could accommodate a variety of roles and moral stances as we have seen, all formally supported by the shape of a woman's corseted body. That some of the roles seem to contradict each other-nurturing mother, sexy harlot, touch-me-not virgin- tells us that the woman who wore a corset was not simultaneously all three things" (142). Corsets were contradictory because they symbolized virginity and innocence, while bringing attention to the female body. By emphasizing feminine attributes, sexuality and childbirth became top priorities for both men and women. Women were objectified by men who perceived them as visual objects on display for men to control with their eyes.

Miller's analysis of female American Character corresponds to food and mental health today. Health fads, diet tricks, and sex appeal are top objectives for women to meet in society. Women are still expected to portray a certain image so that men will find them attractive and worth pursuing. Innocence and sexuality are paradoxes that currently exist. Consequently, the term "loose woman" refers to someone who is overly sexually active and morally unbound, yet physically unbound by a corset. Women are supposed to have the ideal body type, whether skinny or curvy, and are responsible for using any means necessary to reach a preconceived notion of perfection.

Every stage of life relies on nutrition to maintain mental health. Conception, pregnancy, and the first three years of an infant's life are critical stages in the development of the brain. Babies born at full term and at a healthy weight (i.e., those whose brains at birth are fully and healthily developed) have physical and cognitive advantages over pre-term or low-weight babies, with discrepancies noticed in IQ, language and reading ability. Infants with low birth weights are known to be less co-operative, less active, less alert, and not as happy as normal weight infants (Ryrie 23). Moreover, extensive evidence suggests that a mother's diet heavily influences a baby's birth rate. The trend continues throughout infancy with studies determining that babies who are breastfed have a neurophysiologic advantage over babies fed with formula milk, due to the higher levels of essential fatty acids in breast milk. Thus, diet and nutrition continue to impact mental health as the child grows.

Alexis De Tocqueville's theory of separation of spheres summarizes the various roles and responsibilities of men and women. Men were supposed to provide for the family and participate in politics, while women raised the children and took care of the house. Joan Burstyn, in fact, emphasizes the current existence of separation of spheres, which is portrayed through women giving birth. Women are naturally designed to provide for their child, especially by breastfeeding. Women are the sole resource for survival for infants and are the basis of a child's mental health based on the nutritional responsibility nature placed on the human race. Therefore, as long as women continue to bare children, separation of spheres will remain forever in that women are accountable for the creation and survival of their offspring.

The implication of breakfast clubs at schools to feed hungry children has provided insight to improved behavior in the classroom. Individuals who consumed a cereal breakfast each day were found to be less depressed, less emotionally distressed, and had lower levels of perceived stress than those who did not eat breakfast every day. Andrew Smith explains, "…that ingestion of carbohydrate can produce changes in neurotransmitter systems that are known to be related to mood" (401). Eating breakfast not only benefits children by enhancing cognitive functions, preliminary studies of breakfast in the elderly show an association between breakfast cereal consumption and intelligence scores (402). Consequently, a vast majority of breakfast cereals are now fortified with micronutrients known to improve mood.

Maureen Black referred to iodine deficiency as the most preventable cause of mental retardation in the world. Even though prenatal iodine deficiency can be tied directly to cognitive development, prevention could be attained through public health methods. A 1993 World Health Organization report estimates that 1.6 billion people or 30% of the world's population live in iodine-deficient area. Furthermore, public health methods, such as iodized salt, injections of iodinated oil or oral iodine, have been successful in preventing congenital hypothyroidism and mental retardation. Iodine is an essential component of at least two thyroid hormones that are necessary for skeletal growth and neurological development. Black continues, "When iodine deficiency occurs in utero, it leads to fetal hypothyroidism and irreversible neurological and cognitive deficits manifested as cretinism" (2). Cognitive delays can also occur from a lack of iodine, which is exemplified in a child's spelling and reading inabilities compared to healthy peers.

On the other hand, iron deficiency is the most common nutritional deficiency in the world, caused by anemia, vitamin A deficiency, deficiencies of vitamin B-12 and folate, malaria, HIV, or other infectious diseases. A number of observational studies show that children continue to demonstrate lower academic performance even after anemia is treated. "When standardized mathematics test scores were examined controlling for background variables, children with iron deficiency, with and without anemia, had lower test scores than children with normal iron status. These findings suggest that iron deficiency, even without anemia, may place children at risk for cognitive delays" (Black 3). In depth research concluded that four months of iron treatment produced improvements in both mental and motor scores on a standardized assessment. Nevertheless, iron has multiple roles in neurotransmitter systems and may affect behavior through its effects on dopamine metabolism, strongly influencing attention, perception, memory, motivation, and motor control.

Not only do zinc deficiencies compromise early motor development and neuropsychological performance, insufficient amounts of vitamin B-12 can also have negative effects on mental health. Black explains two studies conducted on children with vitamin B-12 deficiency. The first report identified severe delays in motor and language development. However, the second study provided more detailed insight; children with vitamin B-12 deficiency had slower reaction time on neuropsychological tests of perception, memory and reasoning, along with academic problems including poor performance in school, lower teacher ratings, attention difficulties, and delinquent behavior. Both observations provide evidence to support the claim that vitamin B-12 deficiency is closely associated with poorer cognitive ability.

Folate, a B vitamin found in foods such as leafy green vegetables and citrus fruit, may help keep brains sharp throughout the aging process. High levels of the amino acid homocysteine can be reduced by the ingestion of folate. Katherine Tucker, PhD, director of the Nutritional Epidemiology Program at Tufts' Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, said: "Unlike our prior work with population, in which we observed an association between low folate levels and lower cognitive test scores at one point in time, this study looks at the effects of these nutrients over time" (1). High folate levels, both in the diet and in the blood, also appeared to protect against declines in another category of cognitive skills known as spatial copying. Participants in the study were asked to copy various shapes and figures, and their drawings were assessed for accuracy. Men with low homocysteine levels showed fewer declines in recall ability, measured by a word-list memory test, as well as in spatial copying. In addition, Tucker also participated in the Tufts study that looked at cognitive decline that falls short of dementia, determining that low folate is independently associated with an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

Although neither Rita Bradley nor Mona Abdallah have medical credentials, both women have first hand experience on the effects of food on mental health from raising a child with autism. Rita Bradley has a seven year old son, Andrew, who suffers from Aspergers syndrome. Mona Abdallah's son, Zack, is a five year old, mildly autistic boy. Both Andrew and Zack are on rigid glucose free diets. A gluten free diet is completely free of ingredients derived from gluten containing cereals, including wheat, barely, rye, and oats. The pro-biotics found in yeast and other bacteria are believed to improve concentration and cognitive development.

By comparing the apparent outcomes of the diet, Bradley and Abdallah have noticed remarkable success. However, certain aspects may explain the wide range of severity on the autism spectrum. Unlike Andrew, Zack was born at full term and was breastfed through infancy, providing him the most opportunities for full development. As an infant, Andrew was non-responsive and noticeably lacking in cognitive ability. Perhaps the severity of Andrew's disability is due to the opposing factors that enabled Zack to grow at a more normal rate. The drastic differences in childcare and development support the previous research as to how food can impact mental health.

In 1998, the US government mandated folate fortification in flour and grain products, such as breakfast cereal. Dr. Andrew McCulloch, the chief executive of the Mental Health Foundation, stated that, "the government must look to nutrition as an option in helping to manage people's mental health problems" (3). Further research could assess the relationship between better nutrition and a decrease in mental problems, violence, and health problems, such as obesity. Perhaps if the government were more involved with nutrition and mental health, poverty, starvation, and mental disabilities would drastically decline.

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Eating Away Our Health:
How Some Health Issues Reflect Poor Eating Habits

Tiffany Robinson

Many of the changes that have recently occurred in the typical American diet can be connected to the increase of health related issues in the United States. There are several different factors that have contributed to the transformation of the American diet that began to take shape in the 20th century. These factors consist of the following: changes in food habits, the development and domination of the fast food industry, the revolution in agriculture, and a decline in the quality of food. As a result of these changes, many Americans are plagued with illnesses that can be linked to the foods and beverages that they consume. Many Americans struggle with dieting. There needs to be some significant changes in the consumer's attitudes in order to witness an improvement in their overall health and the food industry. This paper will show how changes in Americans eating habits have resulted in grave health issues.

Many of the changes in people's eating habits are a reflection of changes in American society. For instance, financial responsibilities in households have shifted, convenience is often cherished, and mobility is valued. These aspects of society have a great impact on American dieting.

Changes in the American household have had a crucial affect on American eating habits. The number of single-parent family households and the number of women working outside of the home has increased significantly over the years (Ritzer 188). Consequently, there has been a substantial decline in the number of home-cooked meals that are being prepared.

Women's role in many households has changed from what was typical before the 19th century. The cost of living in society is often burdensome, and as a result many families cannot afford their ideal standards of living on only one salary. There are also women who are single parents, and have no other option than to get a job outside of their home for necessary income. The prototypical image of women as homemakers is fading in America. Sylvester Graham would be appalled with the common American eating habits that can be found in today's society.

Sylvester Graham, who was a famous food reformer, would have a major issue with the decrease in home cooking, especially baking. Graham attached moral supremacy to home-baked bread. He firmly believed that home-baked bread was not only beneficial to people's health, but also helped the family structure. He asserted that the absence of bread baking in the household represented a loss of the crucial connection between mother and child. Many American feel as though that do not have the time to bake at home with their hectic schedules.

Another reason American eating habits have changed is because of how Americans value time. Many Americans live a fast paced life, and often view time as a commodity. People value things in life that are convenient. Few people feel as though they have the time to do following: shop for groceries, prepare ingredients, cook, eat, and then have to clean up afterwards (Ritzer 188). As a result, many consumers base their food choices on whatever is quick and suitable. People have moved from home cooked meals to more finger foods (Ford 49). The actual nutritious value of the foods is often not a top priority of Americans.

America is a society that places great emphasis on mobility, especially the automobile, and this also plays a role in eating habits (Ritzer 188). Many Americans prefer to constantly be on the move (Ritzer 188). For instance, the use of drive-through windows at fast food restaurants fits into this face-paced lifestyle. Drive-through windows allow people to pick up foods and drinks without having to stop to eat (Ritzer 188).

As the nation becomes more affluent, people are capable of being able to afford having fast-food habits (Ritzer 188). There are many Americans who eat at fast-food restaurants on a daily basis. The fast-food industry also provides low-income families with the possibility of having occasional meals out. As the United States became a wealthy nation, people also switched from eating bread and potatoes to eating more meat, chicken, and sweets (Brewster 1). These changes have helped with the development of the flourishing fast-food industry.

The fast-food industry provides Americans with a convenient meal option, but what it often does not supply are nutritious foods. They place greater emphasis on the quantity of the food rather than the quality of the food. The most successful fast-food chain, McDonald's, has constantly showed signs of its "bigger-is-better-mentality" (Ritzer 68). For a period of time, the most obvious symbols of this emphasis were the large signs that were strategically placed directly under the golden arches (Ritzer 68). These signs publicized the millions and later billions of hamburgers that were sold by McDonald's. The large quantity of burgers sold served to be an indication that the high quality of the burgers led to its successful sales (Ritzer 68). In this specific case, "quantity appeared to equal quality" (Ritzer 68).

Many fast-food restaurants place emphasis on the quantity of their products, so that people feel that they are receiving a large portion of food at a small and reasonable price (Ritzer 68). This is clearly evident in the clever names of their products. For example, McDonald's best-known food the "Big Mac" shows that it is a hefty burger. Many other restaurants also use this tactic with their selection of names for their foods. Burger King has its "Whopper" and "Double Whopper" large burgers. Wendy's has its "Biggies" menu, where the customer can get a large portion of specific foods such as Biggie fries. Pizza Hut has its "Big New Yorker" that indicates that it a hefty amount of pizza. There are numerous examples of this from other fast-food restaurants.

Many Americans have higher expectations of the quantity of fast food than the quality of it. They are more concerned with being "stuffed" and not necessarily being satisfied. People expect to get a lot of food and pay a little amount of money for it. Some people look at fast food as simply a way to "refuel" in order to carry out specific tasks (Ritzer 69). Quality is not a top priority. This type of attitude goes right along with the marketing strategies of the fast-food industry. The increasing influence of the mass media has largely played a role in the success of fast-food restaurants (Ritzer 189).

The fast-food industry spends more money on advertising than on the actual cost of the food (Gratzer 212). A significant amount of these advertisements are aimed towards children. McDonald's Corporation used similar marketing techniques as The Walt Disney Company in order to draw children's attention and interest. For example, Disney has characters such as Mickey Mouse and McDonald's has the Ronald McDonald character. This marketing technique is intended to not only draw children, but to also pull in their parents.

A similar approach was taken by the diner industry. The diner business was equally as cunning in their marketing approach to children. They believed that if they captured the loyalty of children, they would also gain the support of their parents. Consequently, diners created kiddie menus that contained food selections that would appeal to the kids. McDonald's and other fast-food chains also provide kids meals. Some diners would provide the children with lollipops. While the fast-food industry's "treat" for children is a toy that is included with their kid's meal.

America's supermarkets also use clever marketing techniques to lure in consumers. Providing quality food is not a top priority for most supermarkets either. Their main focus is increasing revenue. The designer of a supermarket's main goal is to create an environment that will increase spontaneous purchases of the products that they provide (Ford 93). They carefully choose the color of the paint that goes on the walls, and the style of lighting needed to emphasize products (Ford 93). One of retail lighting's main purposes is draw customers into the store. The inside of the store is arranged in a way that encourages customer spending.

The location of specific items are changed occasionally, because it is believed that it will increase a products overall sales performance (Ford 93). These items can often be found in the very front of the store near the checkout lines. Products such as potatoes chips and candy bars are strategically place in the aisles of the checkout lines. This enables the customers to purchase more products as they are waiting in line. There is a lot of research done in order to understand how to increase spending.

There has even been research carried out that shows the correlation between a person's mood and the products they choose to purchase (Ford 93). Some people tend to buy indulgences on Friday evenings (Ford 93). While there are others who tend to buy "comfort foods" on the Mondays (Ford 93). Specialties foods are popular during midweek (Ford 93). As a result of this research, supermarkets have specials that will accommodate the specific types of foods stated in the study. For example, on Monday they would probably prepare something along the lines of cottage pie or sausage and potatoes (Ford 93). They are mainly concerned with the quantity of products sold, and are less concerned with the quality. They cater to Americans' eating habits.

Another one of the main reasons why Americans' eating habits have changed is the revolution in agriculture (Gratzer 212). Subsidies to farmers in the United States have led to immense over-production (Gratzer 212). This has resulted in the accumulation of "food mountains," especially things such as cereals, butter, and meat (Gratzer 212). American farmers even provide these items at below cost on overseas markets (Gratzer 212). This over-production has gradually brought a shift to eating more fatty, sugar-rich, and processed foods (Gratzer 212).

There has been a great rise in the consumption of processed foods at the expense of fresh fruits and vegetables (Gratzer 211). The amount of salt, fat, and sugar in these processed foods has increased progressively (Gratzer 212). In the United States, the sugar industry is greatly subsidized (Gratzer 213). The majority of the sugar consumed by Americans is currently in processed foods (Gratzer 213). There is not much done to limit the amount of sugar content in foods (Gratzer 213). It is intriguing to note that the US Sugar Corporation is one of the Republican Party's most charitable donors (Gratzer

213). The intake of salt has increased as well, and most of the salt that is consumed also comes from processed foods (Gratzer 213). There are also hidden ingredients in these processed foods.

The adulteration of food has increased with the assistance of modern technology (Gratzer 213). Modern food technology relies heavily on thousands of additives (Gratzer 213). Some producers of food depend on additives to make their foods look more appealing (Gratzer 213). Other food producers view additives as a means of making substances go further at a lesser cost (Gratzer 213). For example, a scientist of one of the largest food producers in America recalled its management telling their workers "the company's business is to sell air and water" (Gratzer 213). The whipped cream commonly found in supermarkets today is a great example of this type of product. The whipped cream that shoots out of aerosol dispensers is much fluffier than the original recipes for crème chantilly (Gratzer 213). Colloids, which are giant molecules that will disperse in a solvent, are used to stabilize whipped cream. Cellulosic polymers provide the texture for not only whipped cream, but also ice cream (Gratzer 213).

Many of the most popular foods in America such as ice cream and soda are loaded with sugar. It is alarming that Americans eat more than twice as much ice cream than anyone else in the world with exception of Australians, New Zealanders, and Canadians (Root 417). The United States now eats more than 750 million gallons of ice cream a year (Root 434). Americans drink nearly twice as much soda as they do fruit and vegetable juices (Root 421). Ice Cream and soda are an accustomed part of everyday life in America. They can be found in schools, homes, and even hospitals.

In addition to the colloids that are added to foods like ice cream, polyphosphates act as stabilizers of the so-called "meat emulations" (Gratzer 214). These "meat emulations" are not real emulations, but are instead watery suspensions of meat, fat particles and connective tissue (Gratzer 214). This type of meat is formed by chopping or grinding the remains of stripped carcasses (Gratzer 214). This meat is also produced by generating a slurry of meat, and other types of bodily remains, with the use of jets with high-pressure water (Gratzer 214). These materials made up of fat particles and fibrous matter are mixed with polyphosphates and "fillers" (Grazter 214).

These "fillers" consists of things such as starch, cereals, dried skimmed milk, eggs, and blood plasma. These mixtures are then turned into things like sausages and chicken "nuggets" (Gratzer 214). There is a possibility that the skin of the chicken "nuggets" may be the only part of the "nugget" that is actually derived from a chicken (Gratzer 214). Various parts of animals, such as the lungs and stomach, are extracted with alkali in order to yield soluble protein (Gratzer 214). Similar processes are also carried out to produce fish products such as fish "sticks" (Gratzer 214).

The poor quality of meat is not a new issue in the United States. In Upton Sinclair's prominent book *The Jungle,* he provided the public with insight of the deplorable conditions of the meat packing industry. He used the "shock and awe" effect to get his reader's attention and to evoke a desire for change. Jacob Riis also took the approach in his prestigious book *How the Other Half Lives.* This technique is used to invoke emotion in the readers, and inspire them to help correct these issues. The book, released in 1906, contained vivid details of what was really taking place at meat packing factories during that period. It caught the attention of President. It resulted in a series of events that led to the Food and Drug Administration. Politics play a role in meat regulations today (Nestle 62).

The producers of meat and poultry use the political system to their own advantage (Nestle 62). They often form relationships with members of Congress and officials in charge of meat regulations (Nestle 62). These producers make significant contributions to both political parties, and they are able to reap the benefits of doing so. When they disagree with polices that they think can potentially hinder their production, they voice their opinion to governments officials who make the necessary adjustments to satisfy them (Nestle 62). Along with meats, such as beef and pork, the quality of the fish being consumed is also an issue. Politics sometimes take priority over the quality of the food being produced and distributed.

John Harvey Kellogg, who was an American medical doctor, would actively assert that people choose vegetarianism as a healthier alternative to a diet that contains meat. Kellogg is best known for the invention of the corn flakes breakfast cereal along with his brother Will Kellogg. Kellogg is also recognized for his work at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, which was a place dedicated to improving people's health. People there followed a regime of healthy eating and exercise. They were dedicated to doing whatever is took to better their health. Many Americans in today's society need to become more committed to improving their own health.

It is reported that six of the ten leading causes of death in the United States are connected to diet (Brewster 5). These causes include heart attack, stroke, arteriosclerosis, cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, and diabetes (Brewster 5). These health issues account for about half of all deaths in the United States (Brewster 5). Two-thirds of Americans are reported to be overweight, and about 25% are said to be obese (Gratzer 232). There are major health problems associated with obesity, such as diabetes.

People who are overweight have an increased risk of getting diabetes. Diabetes is a deadly disease. It involves the failure of the regulatory mechanism (Gratzer 228). Diabetes is treated with insulin injections (Gratzer 228). Type 2 diabetes is more complex and is more common (Gratzer 228). It is a result of the failure of cells in the tissue to respond to insulin (Gratzer 228). Type 2 diabetes is often linked to diet (Gratzer 229). When untreated, diabetes can lead to things like nerve damage, blindness, and even death (Gratzer 229).

The change in many Americans eating habits contributes to the increased risk of diabetes (Gratzer 229). In earlier times, it was common for most societies to sit down for three meals, and then eat very little, if anything at all, between meals (Gratzer 229). Many Americans today are frequently eating snacks and drinking sugary drinks in between meals (Gratzer 229). A person's pattern of eating is likely established in childhood (Gratzer 229). As a result of the frequent snacking, "the normal sequence of metabolic events, in particular sharp rise in blood insulin after a meal, followed by a decline, breaks down. Instead the insulin is maintained at a high level throughout the day, and metabolic mayhem ensues" (Gratzer 229).

Many of these health issues are linked to the excessive intake of salt, sugar, and fats (Brewster 6). Most of American's fat intake comes from "separated" oils and fats such as margarine and vegetable oil. Americans today use more margarine and salad and cooking oils than ever before (Brewster 59). The use of sweeteners in Americans diet essentially has negative effects on their overall health. Sweeteners are simply “empty calories” that can replace more nutritious types of calories (Brewster 47). They also contribute extra calories to the diet, which is a key aspect of obesity (Brewster 48). Some researchers believe that excessive amounts of salt will lead to hypertension (Gratzer 225). Salt, sugar, and fats are the substances that make up most processed foods. Americans need to look for healthier alternatives to processed foods.

Many Americans realize that they need to improve their eating habits, but they struggle in actually doing so. Some diets can be confusing to the people who are trying to take the necessary actions needed to improve their health (Ford 23). Most involve a list of do’s and don’ts that are very difficult to follow. It is important that Americans understand that they do not need to go to complete extremes in order to lose weight. Diets such as the *Atkins Diet* and the *South Breach Diet* can offer some people false hope. Healthy diets are not simply a series of choices; it is a lifestyle that a person must choose to live. Many Americans struggle trying to make the necessary changes in their diet.

W. Somerset Maugham’s short story “The Three Fat Women of Antibes” is an entertaining example of the struggles that people can go through with dieting, and how it affects other aspects of their lives. In the story, three very large women try to uphold dietary discipline while fighting their own unhealthy personal desires of food. Their friendships are threatened by the frustration of absenting from particular foods. This process is even more difficult when the people around them are eating the very foods that they desire. They are all very self-conscious of their physique, and worry about how they are viewed by the public, like many Americans today. At the end of the story, the three women forget about their stressful diets and indulge in the foods that they were refraining from. This is often the type of scenario that occurs with Americans who are struggling with their eating habits.

In order to see an improvement in their diets and the quality of food, America as a whole must change its attitude towards foods and eating habits. There are many steps that need to be taken in order to improve eating habits and reduced the risk of diet-related diseases. There are three general plans that are aimed to increase the prevalence of healthy eating (Institute of Medicine 3). The first way is by “altering the food supply”, for example, reducing the fat in milk and cheese (Institute of Medicine 3). The second tactic is by “altering the food acquisition environment”, by providing more food choices that help consumers reach their dietary goals (Institute of Medicine 3). The third goal is “altering nutrition education” by sending dietary recommendations through resources such as advertisements and television (Institute of Medicine 4). These changes could help make changing eating habits more accomplishable and less stressful for Americans.

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Aspartame – *Are you informed?*
Lauren McManus

Aspartame is everywhere. Sold under the brand names Nutra-Sweet, Equal, Spoonful, and Equal-Measure, it is a low-calorie sugar substitute used in more than one hundred countries around the world (Mercola 27). In a country where the war against obesity is omnipresent and being slender is prized, consumers are demanding low calorie alternatives to their favorite foods. As a consequence, the use of aspartame in food, drink, and as the tabletop sweetener of choice has burgeoned. While it is clear that the diet industry as a whole has grown exponentially in response to this war on obesity, there is, at the same time, a war waging against what many feel is an industry that is choosing profits over health and well being. These consumer advocates have positioned themselves as watchdogs whose goal is to protect citizens from what they perceive to be a dangerous low-calorie substitute. It is their position that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the agency responsible for regulating food additives in the marketplace, is, at best, not doing its job sufficiently. At worst, there are claims of complicit collusion. As the tenets of each of these camps stand in strong opposition, a resolution seems very far off. Should the government step in and take aspartame off the shelves and the decision out of the hands of the consumer or should the consumer be allowed to make an informed decision and choose whether or not they want to continue using aspartame?

The FDA defines food additive as:

> "…any substance the intended use of which results or may reasonably be expected to result, directly or indirectly, in its becoming a component or otherwise affecting the characteristics of any food (including any substance intended for use in producing, manufacturing, packing, processing, preparing, treating, packaging, transporting, or holding food; and including any source of radiation intended for any such use…" ("FDA").

Given this definition, every ingredient on a food label could be considered a food additive. To clarify further, the FDA has divided the group into two categories: direct (intentional) and indirect (incidental) additives. Included under direct additives are flavorings, texturizing agents, thickeners and sweeteners, both natural and artificial. A nonnutritive sweetener refers to a sweetener that contributes significantly less calories to the food than sugars would (Gebo 28). Aspartame, therefore, is classified as a direct, nonnutritive sweetener.

Aspartame was born in 1965 as a result of an inadvertent taste test. Mr. James Schlatter, a chemist for G.D. Searle Pharmaceutical Company, was working on a treatment for gastric ulcers. He was mixing aspartic acid and phenylalanine, two naturally occurring amino acids that comprise the building blocks of protein. It should be noted, however, that aspartame is not a protein. Its chemical make up differs from protein in that, when digested, aspartame breaks down into aspartic acid, phenylalanine and methanol. All three can be found in naturally occurring in foods such as milk, fruits and vegetables (Gilbert). When a small amount of the compound got on Mr. Schlatter's hand,

and he licked his fingers in preparing to pick up a piece of weighing paper, he became aware of an intense sweetness in the creation that he was working on (Jacobs). "I licked my finger and it tasted good," he later recalled (Null). His amino acid combination lost its spot in the world of ulcer treatments (Mercola 38), but found new favor as a low calorie sweetener, more than 200 times the sweetness of table sugar. In 1973, Searle filed a petition to have aspartame approved as a food additive. It would take another eight years before the FDA put its final stamp of approval on it, allowing Searle to enter a growing market (Mercola).

Approval of aspartame was met with opposition, not just from mainstream activists, but also from medical professionals. Searle's research was tainted with accusations of "sloppy" work and collusion (Mercola). Martha Stone, professor at Colorado State University, Nutrition Advisor, and an advocate for aspartame is quoted as saying "Aspartame was the most studied additive ever approved by the Food and Drug Administration." It is her position that aspartame would not have gotten to the consumer level if it caused problems in humans (Stone). The question that needs to be asked is, does she equate "most studied" with safe, especially in light of the questionable results many of these studies produced. In 1969, Dr. Harry Waisman fed milk mixed with aspartame to monkeys. After three hundred days on the milk/aspartame combination, one of the monkeys died. Five of the remaining six suffered from grand mal seizures, yet Searle deleted this negative information when they submitted their evidence (supporting the safety of aspartame) to the FDA (Mercola). In 1971, two men, medical researchers and practicing physicians conducted studies of their own with onerous results. The study came from John W. Olney, M.D., a neuroscience researcher and Professor of Psychiatry at Washington University, and James Turner, a consumer attorney and founder of the Center for Study of Responsive Law (Mercola). Dr. Olney's study found aspartame to be responsible for brain damage in mice; specifically, it caused "holes in the brains of mice" (Mercola). Based on Dr. Olney's findings of the toxic effects aspartame had on the brain, the two men objected to its use in foods. Asserting that the damage caused by aspartame could also result in mental retardation, they were vanguards in the battle to remove the product from the shelves. Searle maintained their position that these studies raised "no health problems," and they failed to tell the FDA about the findings until after they were granted their approvals (Mercola). Olney and Turner persisted in their fight to have the product pulled from the shelves, and eventually they won a hearing before a Public Board of Inquiry, composed of three mutually acceptable scientists (two MDs and one PhD). In 1980, both sides presented their case before the task force. As a result of these hearings, the Public Board of Inquiry issued a statement that recommended taking aspartame off the market pending further testing (Mercola). The indictment was not strong enough to stop the process; instead, a second panel was formed. Five members of the Commissioner's Team of Scientists reviewed the information and voted three to two to ban it. At this point a sixth member was added to the team, resulting in a deadlock. Dr. Jacqueline Verrett, PhD, a toxicologist on the team, stated "Safety questions remain unanswered." In April 1981 aspartame was first approved for use in dry foods. In 1983 additional approval was given for use in diet soft drinks. Dr. Arthur Hayes was the Commissioner of the FDA at the time these approvals were passed. One month later, he resigned his position with the FDA and began working for Searle's advertising agency, Burson-Marsteller as their senior medical advisor (Turner). A recent attempt to interview a representative from the FDA resulted in a dead end when she would not commit to answering any questions on aspartame. Instead, she insisted that an “application” for information be submitted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. She stated that a fee would be applied, and that it could be sizable. A second attempt was more successful. Ms. Londell from the Office of Food Additive Safety, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition stated that complaints on aspartame outnumber any other complaints for her department. In fact, since 1988, 80 percent of all complaints to the FDA about food additives had to do with products containing aspartame (Mercola, 37). Despite the high number of complaints concentrated in this one area, Ms. Londell stated that it would be far too cost prohibitive to follow up on each one. In order for a case to warrant follow-up, they must be able to substantiate their complaint with scientific evidence. She was unable to clarify what that evidence would entail.

Senator Howard Metzenbaum, (D Ohio, 1974-1996) was sitting on the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources in February of 1986 when he wrote a letter to the chair of the committee, Senator Orrin Hatch (R Utah, since 1977). (see attached, Appendix A) It was clear that this was not the Senator’s first letter to the committee, and that he felt the committee was ignoring the evidence that he had submitted.

> *I am at a loss to comprehend the thrust of your recent letters on my request for hearings on the safety concerns raised in the scientific community regarding NutraSweet. When I sent you a 110-page report on February 6 on the failure of the U.S. Attorney to hold a grand jury investigation, you replied the same day that there were no health issues raised. You then asked that I share with you all information raising safety issues. Orrin, the report I sent you included a summary of current health concerns raised by nine different scientists. My report contained all the relevant references to medical journals and other citations. Now you have sent me another letter, dated February 18, in which you again request evidence.*

Senator Metzenbaum was never given the opportunity to present his finding to a review committee. Senator Metzenbaum cites Dr. Olney’s studies, as well as the studies of Dr. Richard Wurtman, Director of Clinical Research at M.I.T, Dr. William Pardridge, U.C.L.A. School of Medicine and Dr. Adrian Gross, a former FDA Toxicologist and member of the FDA Investigative Task Force. The common thread through all of these studies is the negative effect aspartame has on brain function and development. He also cited from letters published in the Annals of Internal Medicine and the American Journal of Psychiatry linking the use of this food additive to skin lesions and severe headaches caused “by chemical interactions with an anti-depressant drug, an M.A.O. inhibitor.” Despite these findings, Senator Metzenbaum expressed a frustration and concern over the committee’s disregard for the safety concerns that could be “potentially jeopardizing the health and safety of over 100 million Americans who are ingesting NutraSweet in everything from soft drinks to pudding to children's cold remedies.” Senator Metzenbaum was never given the opportunity to present his finding to a review committee ("Senator Metzenbaum to Senator Hatch").

Aspartame and Phenylketonuria (PKU)

There are specific areas of concern over the use of aspartame. One concern held in common by both advocate organizations and the FDA is that of the use of the additive by those with Phenylketonuria (PKU). PKU is a rare inherited disease that prevents phenylalanine from being properly metabolized. Because of this, it can accumulate in the body, thus causing serious health problems including brain damage and mental retardation. In the U.S., about one baby in 15,000 babies is born with PKU. They need to be placed on a special diet severely restricting phenylalanine from their diet from birth to adolescence or after. Pregnant women with PKU must also remain on this diet throughout the pregnancy, even if they have been asymptomatic for years ("Aspartame Myths: Phenylketonuria"). The amount of phenylalanine in aspartame is low as compared to other commonly consumed foods. For example, 100 grams of chicken (approximately 3.5 ounces) has a whopping 960 mg of phenylalanine, one whole egg, 320 mgs, compared to 74 found in 250 ml (eight ounces) of aspartame-sweetened cola (see chart, Appendix B) ("Aspartame and Phenylketonuria (PKU)"). However, it still must be vigilantly avoided by these segments of the population. Aspartame-containing foods are required to be labeled with the caution, "Phenylketonurics: Contains Phenylalanine" in the U.S. This warning was part of the initial prerequisite placed on Searle back in the 1960s, and was met with no resistant on the part of the pharmaceutical company (Null).

Other Areas of Concern

Other areas of concern, however, are not so free of controversy and conflict. On one side of the debate, the FDA and the makers of products sweetened by aspartame cite extensive studies that have ruled out any health hazard with "moderate use" of the product. While it is easy to find health and science professionals support this stance, it is just as easy to find professionals passionate about their belief that this food additive is detrimental to the health of the consumer ("FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS").

Aspartame and Pregnancy

Many pregnant women have questions about the use of products containing aspartame during their pregnancy. According to the findings of the Aspartame Information Service, provided by Ajinomoto Food Ingredients LLC, a producer of aspartame, aspartame is safe to use during pregnancy, for both the woman and her developing baby. They cite the Council on Scientific Affairs of the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition and the American Dietetic Association as their sources. It is their position that pregnant women do not need to be concerned about the components in aspartame, as these components are also found in other foods that are eaten everyday during pregnancy. The opinions of what is safe, however, vary widely. Alison Gamble, an author and Nutritionist at Highland Park Hospital in Illinois is of the opinion that there is no harm "to pregnant women as long as it is taken in moderation (no more than one diet soft drink per day)" (Gamble). In contrast, The Middlesex-London Health Unit in Ontario, Canada and the Ottawa-Carleton Health Department in Canada both state "It is safe to consume moderate amounts of aspartame during your pregnancy." They define "moderate" as amounts up to "approximately sixteen 355 ml (ten ounce) cans of diet pop per day" ("Caffeine, Herbal Teas and Aspartame During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding"). Merck, a global research-driven pharmaceutical company falls right in the middle, cautioning that 1-liter (approximately one quart) is the limit for pregnant women. More confusing are the varied opinions of whether or not, and to what degree, aspartame crosses the placenta. While Merck states that, not only does phenylalanine cross the placenta, it is concentrated in the fetus. They warn that toxic levels may cause mental retardation ("Drugs in Pregnancy"). Other sources state that, while some of the breakdown products may cross the placenta, the amount is insignificant and therefore safe (Gilbert). The National Institute for Health supports this stance, concluding “under foreseeable conditions of use, aspartame poses no risk for use in pregnancy” (Sturtevant).

In stark contrast is the position taken by Dr. Russell Blaylock, a neuroscientist who discusses this at length in his book, *Excitotoxins*. He is of the position that the concern over the consumption of aspartame is not limited to obvious birth defects, but also changes or damage to certain areas of the brain that are involved in complex learning. These symptoms might not be seen at all until after the child reaches puberty ("Aspartame / NutraSweet Dangers in Pregnancy"). William M. Pardridge, a Professor of Medicine at the University of California and a practicing endocrinologist has been doing extensive studies researching the blood-brain barrier transport of phenylalanine and other substances for many years. He is adamant that all foods and beverages containing aspartame should be avoided during pregnancy. William M. Pardridge, a Professor of Medicine at the University of California and a practicing endocrinologist, whose work was cited by Senator Metzenbaum in his letter to Senator Orrin Hatch, has been doing extensive studies researching the blood-brain barrier transport of phenylalanine and other substances for many years ("Aspartame / NutraSweet Dangers in Pregnancy"). He is adamant that all foods and beverages containing aspartame should be avoided during pregnancy. While he admits that the effects from ingestion during pregnancy are difficult to determine because of a lack of adequate studies, he is also convinced that, as Dr. Blalock stated, many of the adverse effects on the fetus would not be seen until after the child reaches puberty ("Aspartame / NutraSweet Dangers in Pregnancy").

Dr. Louis J. Elsas, II, M.D., Director of the Division of Medical Genetics, Professor of Pediatric Medicine at Emory and practicing pediatrician is extremely concerned over the effects of aspartame on the developing fetus. He pointed out that a mother who is supplying the fetus with all of its nutrients could easily consume up to 35 milligrams of aspartame per kilo of her body weight per day. In his opinion, the placenta will concentrate her blood level of phenylalanine two fold, so that the fetal blood circulation to her in-utero baby will increase exponentially. The fetal brain, then, will increase further that concentration into the brain cells two to four fold more. Simply put, the developing fetus will accumulate neuro-toxic levels.

Aspartame and Weight loss

According to the FDA, aspartame is a useful tool in the fight against obesity. A quote from Adam Drewnoski, Ph.D., director of nutritional science at the University of Washington states, "Anything that can help people cut back on [excess] calories is good.” They go on to cite credible experts in the field, such as the American Heart Association and the American Diabetes Association, as sanctioning its use for that purpose and as standing by in support of its safety (“FDA”). Further support from *Nutrition Bulletin*, an industry periodical published in England, which claims it can demonstrates positive results in its evaluation on many studies involving aspartame and weight control. Americans drink inordinate amounts of soft drinks annually; but the soft drink itself is not only what is consumed, it is what is in the soft drinks that consumers are obsessed with – *sugar!* Therefore, researchers from the *Nutrition Bulletin* determined that, by replacing sugar-sweetened beverages with beverages sweetened with aspartame, consumers could significantly reduce their caloric intake and weight. They went on to state the obvious; “There was also a close correlation between the number of calories saved and the weight loss achieved” ("New Study Shows Aspartame Helps to Reduce Calorie Intake"). This position is supported by the Calorie Control Council, a non-profit organization that defines itself as seeking to “provide an objective channel of scientific-based communications about low-calorie foods and beverages, to assure that scientific and consumer research and information are made available to all interested parties.” The information, however, is disseminated through a website called “aspartame.org” ("Aspartame Information Center Index"). There are many others in the field that would wish to discredit this information. Dr. Joseph Mercola, a board-certified osteopathic physician and surgeon, writes in his book *Sweet Deception* that research shows aspartame may actually *cause* weight gain. He explains that the amino acids that make up the bulk of aspartame rapidly stimulate the release of insulin and leptin. One of the jobs of these hormones is to signal the body to store fat. They can also lower the body’s level of serotonin, a hormone that signals the body when satiation has occurred. This can increase carbohydrate cravings and cause weight gain (Mercola 61-62). In fact, Dr. Mercola goes on to address a study done at Purdue University which found that lab animals that were given diet soda sought out higher calorie foods than the rats that were fed drinks sweetened with sucrose and fructose sweeteners. According to Leslies Beck, one of Canada’s leading nutritionists, “Your taste buds may be temporarily satisfied by the sweet taste of a diet pop, but your brain isn’t fooled, and it still wants to make up for the calories later on” (Mercola 62).

Aspartame and Children, Adolescents and Young Adults

Aspartame information web sites, the FDA and the movement to remove aspartame from the shelves, and the diets of children all agree on just one thing: “Because of their smaller size, children consume proportionately larger amounts of all food ingredients than do adults in relation to their body weight” ("Frequently Asked Questions About the Use of Aspartame in Low-Calorie Foods and Beverages"). After that the opinions and “findings” of various studies diverge. According to proponents of aspartame, scientific studies that were done at major institutions, medical schools and universities, including the National Institute of Mental Health, Yale University Medical School and Vanderbilt University Medical School failed to reproduce any behavioral changes related to aspartame consumption. The results of these studies were compiled after the children were observed while given high doses of aspartame in food and drink. The indications were that aspartame does not cause behavior changes in children, including children who were previously labeled as “hyperactive” or with attention deficit disorder (ADD) ("Frequently Asked Questions About the Use of Aspartame in Low-

Calorie Foods and Beverages"). In fact, the FDA’s broad stroke coverage of the topic covers all food additives. When asked, “Do additives cause childhood hyperactivity?” the FDA’s reply was, “No. Although this hypothesis was popularized in the 1970's, well-controlled studies conducted since then have produced no evidence that food additives cause hyperactivity or learning disabilities in children” ("Food Ingredients & Colors").

The publishers of *The New England Journal of Medicine* maintain the web site, *Journal Watch*, providing a compilation of articles from other professional journals. From a February 1994 article submitted by *Pediatric Medicine and Nutrition,* their position was clear: Sugar and Aspartame do not affect child behavior or cognitive abilities ("Pediatric Medicine and Nutrition"). There is no surprise that the other side of the panel is in strong disagreement on this point. H.J. Robers, M.D., a physician on staff at St. Mary's Hospital and Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm Beach, Florida and Director of the Palm Beach Institute for Medical Research writes,

> I have observed severe intellectual deterioration associated with the use of aspartame products. It was usually manifest as great difficulty in reading and writing, obvious problems with memory and grossly impaired orientation to time, place and person (Martini).

Barbara Metzler, a mother and a teacher, told her story of aspartame and the effect it had on her daughter. At 18 years of age, this bright young woman excelled in school enough to compete against more than one million students from the entire United States and win a Telluride Association Scholarship to college, as well as other academic scholarships that paid her tuition and board in full. Her bright future began to spiral downhill when she began having epileptic type seizures, severe depression and cognitive problems. Medical specialists in Boston found out that she had been drinking one can of diet soda a day for a period of one year. They determined this to be the cause of her problems. When she eliminated all aspartame from her diet, she experienced a complete recovery, and went on to complete her masters degree and now has a demanding career as a computer programmer and financial analyst. One clinical neurophysiologist who examined and tested her said about aspartame,

> We are wondering whether, in fact, this substance may be capable of having a subtle effect on cognitive functioning that people may not necessarily be aware of. Think of the implications, for example, on an average college student who starts consuming a liter of this stuff during examination period and how it may, in fact, be interfering with his concentration and attention skills (Martini).

Aspartame and the Elderly

Aspartame studies in the elderly population are rare. One pilot study cited by the Department of Age and Aging in England found that they were unable to compare their findings with any others because no other data could be found. Their study compared the effects of phenylalanine concentrations between the young and the elderly. After administering weight-corrected doses of aspartame, it was noted that blood levels remained significantly higher for a longer period of time in the healthy elderly volunteers. They felt that the cause for this was directly related to deteriorating liver function associated with normal aging processes (Puthrasingam). As the Nation’s population ages, and people who were reared on diet foods and soft drinks take their choices into their senior years, this finding should, at the very least, warrant further studies and investigation.

Conclusion

It is said that there are not *two* sides to every story, but *three* – his side, her side and the truth, which lies somewhere in the middle. This has application here. As the consumer weeds through all of the information out there, trying to make sense of reputable studies that contradict each other in their results, he or she is called on to make an “informed decision” on whether or not to use this alternative to sugar. Even more compelling is whether these products should be given to children or even allowed in our schools. To some, the only thing more frightening than making a bad decision is giving power over to the government to make the decision for them. It is a tough call, but one that every person out there must consider, educate themselves on and make. And, for right now, the decision is ours to make.

Appendix A

Letter from Senator Howard Metzenbaum of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources to Senator Orrin Hatch, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources February 25, 1986

Dear Orrin:

I am at a loss to comprehend the thrust of your recent letters on my request for hearings on the safety concerns raised in the scientific community regarding NutraSweet. When I sent you a 110-page report on February 6 on the failure of the U.S. Attorney to hold a grand jury investigation, you replied the same day that there were no health issues raised. You then asked that I share with you all information raising safety issues. Orrin, the report I sent you included a summary of current health concerns raised by nine different scientists. My report contained all the relevant references to medical journals and other citations. Now you have sent me another letter, dated February 18, in which you again request evidence.

As you know, I met last Thursday with Dr. Roger Coulombe of Utah State University. You also had a conversation with Dr. Coulombe, as did your staff. Dr. Coulombe has informed both of us that his study of NutraSweet's effects on brain chemistry contains new and significant data. All of the 12 mice tested showed brain chemistry changes after ingesting NutraSweet. Four other mice received no NutraSweet and showed no brain chemistry changes. Dr. Coulombe also informed us that the issues raised in his study were not tested prior to NutraSweet's approval. So, the FDA never reviewed this research prior to approving NutraSweet. It is critical to note that some of the lab animals which had reactions to NutraSweet were fed doses at levels currently being consumed by humans. As you know, there have been many reports of seizures, headaches, mood alterations, etc., associated with NutraSweet. Dr. Coulombe's study, which, has been

accepted for publication in Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology, states: "It is therefore possible that Aspartame may produce neurobiochemical and behavioral effects in humans, particularly in children and susceptible individuals. Based on the foregoing, there is a need for additional research on the safety of this food additive."

Orrin, you have asked for new and significant scientific evidence about NutraSweet. Now you have it. Dr. Coulombe's research as well as the other research cited in my report raises new health concerns which have not been resolved.

We need to hold hearings on NutraSweet-- which is being used by over 100 million Americans. With an issue that is critical to the health of half the American population, how can you in good conscience say "no?" We cannot rely upon the tests sponsored by the manufacturer of NutraSweet, G. D. Searle, and ignore the concerns being raised by independent studies. We don't need the company which is making hundreds of millions of dollars on this product telling us it's "safe," particularly when the credibility of that Company's testing on NutraSweet has been severely undermined. You know that the FDA recommended a criminal investigation of possible fraud in NutraSweet tests. The FDA has never before or since made such an investigation.

Although NutraSweet was later approved, credible scientific concerns continue to be raised. The Director of Clinical Research at M.I.T., Dr. Richard Wurtman, has recently published a letter in Lancet citing case reports suggesting a possible association between Aspartame and seizures. According to Dr. Wurtman, the reports are compatible with evidence that high Aspartame doses may produce neurochemical changes that, in laboratory animals, are associated with depressed seizure thresholds.

Dr. William Pardridge, U.C.L.A. School of Medicine, has also cited a possible link between one of Aspartame's principal components, phenylalanine, and the lowering of seizure thresholds in individual\individuals. He has also questioned the possible affects of NutraSweet on fetal development. In July, 1985, Dr. Michael Mahalik of the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, and Dr. Ronald Gautieri of Temple University School of Pharmacy, published a study on the potential of Aspartame to produce brain dysfunction in mouse neonates whose mothers were exposed to Aspartame in late gestation.

They concluded that the possibility of brain dysfunction appears to be a viable sequela to excessive Aspartame exposure. In June of last year, Dr. Adrian Gross, a former FDA Toxicologist, and member of the FDA Investigative Task Force which reviewed the Aspartame studies, sent me a letter stating that depute their serious shortcomings, at least those studies established beyond a reasonable doubt that Aspartame is capable of inducing brain tumors in experimental animals.

In February, 1985, letters were published in the Annals of Internal Medicine and the American Journal of Psychiatry, linking Aspartame to skin lesions and to severe headaches caused by chemical interactions with an anti-depressant drug, an M.A.O. inhibitor. In December, 1984, Dr. John Olney of Washington University published a study on excitotoxic amino acids including Aspartate, one of Aspartame's two constituent amino acids. He concludes that excitotoxins pose a significant hazard to the developing nervous systems of young children. Dr.Louis Elsas, at Emory University, has raised concerns about Aspartame's other constituent amino acid, phenylalanine.

He has stated that if the mother's blood phenylalanine is raise to high concentrations in pregnancy, her child's brain development can be damaged. According to Dr. Elsas, it has not been determined how high the blood phenylalanine must be elevated to produce any of these effects. However, he believes that it has not been proven that all people can take as much Aspartame without fear of ill effects as they desire. Appearing on the news program Nightline in May of last year, Dr. Elsas warned of a whitewashed scientific review, most of which has been supported by the industry itself, which has obvious conflict of interest. All of these safety concerns have been raised after NutraSweet was approved for use in over 90 products. The FDA is currently considering petitions which would explain even further the dramatic increase in NutraSweet consumption.

My staff has provided you with the references for all of the scientific concerns raised above. I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision and to convene oversight hearings in the Labor and Human Resources Committee as soon as possible to consider these issues. By ignoring the safety concerns which have been raised, we are potentially jeopardizing the health and safety of over 100 million Americans who are ingesting NutraSweet in everything from soft drinks to pudding to children's cold remedies.

Very Sincerely Yours,

Howard M. Metzenbaum

United States Senator

http://www.sweetpoison.com/articles/senator-metzenbaum.html

Appendix B

The table below shows typical amounts of phenylalanine (Phe) in foods.

Food	Amount of Phe (mg)
100 g chicken	960
1 whole egg	320
100 g white bread	430
100 g potatoes	90
100 g peanuts	1050
1 aspartame sweetener tablet	11
250 ml aspartame sweeten cola	74

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Appendix C

FDA Interview Questions

1. How was it tested?
   - Clinical studies on animals

2. How long was the study?
   - Several different durations

3. How many people did the FDA test and how long did it take?
   - People were not tested, its hard to get volunteers

4. How rigorous are the tests?
   - Did feeding studies

5. Are the test just clinical trials or does the FDA do independent standard tests?
   - Currently no one has a paten on aspartame; Searle did at the time, which had certain specifications, which sends the FDA the clinical trails.

6. Are there any follow-ups, now that people complain of symptoms?
   - There are no reviews, it would coat millions of dollars to retest

7. Does the FDA get many aspartame related complaints?
   - Yes, most of the complaints have to deal with aspartame

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Hungry for Competition

Maria Oberst

"Americans are big, fat, infantile, stupid assholes who love to shovel shit down their throats, and so to shovel more shit down one's throat than any other is to be truly king of America."

A friend of author Jason Fagone emailed this condemnation to him when Fagone revealed that the sport of competitive eating would be the topic of his new book. In America, competitive eating has exploded in popularity. By combining food with competition, competitive eating strikes at the heart of many Americans. Americans love food, and Americans love competition. Americans often wonder who is the best. The Super Bowl is perhaps the most popular display of competition in this country, and one of the most watched television events every year. Talk of who won an award show, or who voters kicked off *American Idol* that week surrounds office water coolers across the country. Whether the bout is a sporting event, a beauty pageant, or a state fair, America wants to know who triumphs over all.

While the link between competition and athletic events is expected, Americans have extended their competitive spirit to include the most basic sustenance. Through competition, food becomes more than a life necessity. The role of food changes into a source of rivalry, entertainment and pride. Why have Americans turned the basic life necessities of food preparation and consumption into competitions? This American competitive spirit has developed over time to become part of the American character. In fact, it may be argued that the exploration of the western frontier fundamentally fostered this character. Food competitions such as the Iowa State Fair, the Pillsbury Bake-Off, competitive eating events and the television show *Iron Chef America* display the competitive drive of the American character.

America's state fairs are one of the earliest representatives of food competition as part of the competitive American character. In 1811, Elkanah Watson created the first state fair in Pittsfield, MA. Watson wanted farmers and their wives to learn how to improve their livestock and farming methods (Hanley ix). State fair fever spread west, and the first Iowa State Fair opened in 1854 ("Its Beginnings"). Since then, the Iowa State Fair has turned into the biggest state fair in the country, annually attracting thousands of people from around the world. In May 2004, *USA Weekend* listed the Iowa State Fair as the second top choice for summer fun in America ("2000-Present"). Furthermore, Rogers and Hammerstein's musical about the Iowa State Fair opens with the lyrics, "Our state fair is the best state fair, don't miss it, don't even be late. It's dollars to doughnuts that our state fair, is the best state fair in our state!" (*State Fair*)

Each year, Iowans of all ages enter food contests at the fair to see if they have the best pies, cookies, canning or meat loaf. Divisions, prizes and entrants have changed over the years through the development of sponsorship, talent and interest, but the blue ribbons have remained the same. More people want to enter and win. Food

Superintendent Arlette Hollister has worked for the Iowa State Fair for 23 years and has experienced the expansion of the fair. In 1983, the fair featured 25 divisions of foods, awarding a total of $6,000 in prize money. Today, the fair has expanded to include 196 divisions, awarding $56,000. Hollister has seen the number of divisions and prize money increase, in addition to the quality of food. The food has become less amateur and more elegant (Hollister). The contestants take the competition seriously, which is evident in the improvement of their product.

The wide variety of divisions also allows the increased elegance of food. People have a better chance at finding their niche and their best ability. For example, the divisions feature foods ranging from chili to chocolate mousse ("2006 Fair Results"). While people enter more unique competitions each year, the traditional food divisions such as pies and cakes still remain popular. As a result of the popularity of the cookie division, fair officials expanded the judging over two days. Previously, five judges worked from nine in the morning to five in the evening, judging all types of cookies. Since the long hours did not give justice to the judges or the bakers, it became necessary to expand the judging (Hollister).

The addition of ethnic and healthy foods is one way the number of divisions has expanded to incorporated more competitors. Currently, the fair has many ethnic categories such as Thai, Mexican, Scandinavian, German and Greek cuisine (Hollister). With the expansion of the melting pot of America, people of all diversities want to compete with the foods they create at home.

As for health foods, the Iowa State Fair has experienced a recent increase in the number of food competitions for specific dietary needs. For example, hospitals sponsor a number of divisions that encourage healthy cooking. New divisions include competitions for diabetic cooking, heart healthy cooking, and even lactose intolerant cooking. While divisions for contemporary diets, such as the Atkins and Ornish diets, have existed, their popularity does not last. Despite the lack of continual interest in diet food competitions, interest in health foods has remained. Each year Hollister attracts more sponsors for healthy lifestyle divisions.

Food competition sponsorship has allowed the competitive American spirit to remain interested. Competition sponsors provide the prize money for events. In 2006, a spice company awarded $3,000 for the first prize winner in a cinnamon roll competition at the Iowa State Fair. While people may compete for the glory of a win, prize money provides an additional incentive. Hollister has never experienced trouble obtaining sponsors for events. Food companies and restaurants benefit from sponsoring competitions since they can keep the recipes after the competition (Hollister). Winning recipes and company advertising are worth the cost of sponsorship.

Originally, prize money was not offered as an award. Winners received awards, diplomas, books, a membership in the Iowa State Agricultural Society (ISAS), or a silver plate. However, these small prizes, in addition to the pride of having the top title in the state, did not satisfy winners. Plain and simple, winners wanted cash. In 1864, ISAS President George Wright admitted, "While men ought to be, and in most instances are, actuated by other than merely sordid motives, yet without the money inducement we are satisfied that the gates of our fair grounds would rust upon their hinges and our halls decay from non-use" (Shanley 64).

The increase in prize money through sponsorship may have increased the popularity of the contests; however, sponsorship has not subtracted from the pure nature of the competition (Hollister). Money does not completely drive people to enter, but it is an added bonus. The thrill and challenge of competition, as well as the joy of victory, still encourage people to enter competitions (Amendt 43). Norma Herring, who has competed in the Iowa State Fair for the past 30 years and has won hundreds of blue ribbons, confesses, "I don't know why I keep competing. I guess it's sort of an Iowa experience" (Shanley 52-55).

While women traditionally dominate state fair food competitions, over the years more men have started enjoying the Iowa experience. They too want to join in the competition. Each year, more men enter these predominantly female competitions and win. Many of Iowa's top bread-makers are men, and in 2006 a man won the top pie award. Hollister attempted to create a food competition just for men; however, fair officials informed her that such a competition was a form of sexism. While men may secretly strive to trump women in the competitions, they do not seem to be intimidated by the large female population (Hollister).

In fact, many men enter these contests because they see cooking and baking as a relaxing hobby. To her surprise, Hollister has seen a rise in the number of men entering in the canning division. Canning's need for precision and time consumption stereotypically would deter men from entering. However, men say they enjoy canning because it separates them from what they do everyday. In addition, they can do this activity with their wives in the evening (Hollister).

The idea of cooking as a hobby has developed over the years. Since more people are contributing their spare time to cooking, the quality and respect for competitive cooking has increased. With the advent of fast food and pre-made meals, daily cooking has changed from a necessity to a choice. Today many people see cooking and baking as calming activities that remove them from everyday life. Food preparation stands out as more of an art form. Kitchen weekend warriors enjoy creating works of art, instead of the labor of daily cooking. Eileen Gannon, winner of over 140 blue ribbons at the Iowa State Fair, says, "There is so much more respect for these domestic arts than there was 15 years ago" (Moskin). She no longer has to hide her fair work in fear of compromising her professional image.

Iowan Herb Eckhouse sees this new respect towards food competitions as the regeneration of American respect for flavor. According to Eckhouse, "Before Iowa had all this artisanal goat cheese and fancy grass-fed beef and organic dairy, these fairs were already about the bounty of the land and about craftsmanship" (Moskin). People respected ingredients in 1854 as much as they do today. While there may be fancy new food divisions, most of the food still comes from the land and displays the chef's hard work. The expansion of divisions has brought out more creativity in people, thus reaching a broader audience (Hollister).

The fair's belief in the education of its contestants has allowed people to be more creative in their entries. Judging in the food competitions is open to the public so people can learn the winning qualities of each food. Open judging allows people to learn how to create the best food in the state. Instead of cutthroat, secret competition, people learn and share with each other (Hollister). To expand the knowledge of winning recipes, in 1983 the fair started publishing the *Iowa State Fair Cookbook* of prize-winning recipes (“1980-1989”). Now anyone can learn how to become a blue-ribbon cook.

Iowa State Fair winners may receive published fame through the *Iowa State Fair Cookbook*; however, this recognition is minimal in comparison to the fame and reward the winner of the Pillsbury Bake-Off receives. As a national competition, the rewards are bigger and the competition more tense. Here, men and women have the chance to become the best Pillsbury cook in America. In 1949 Pillsbury featured the first “Grand National Recipe and Baking Contest” as a celebration of the company’s 80th birthday. With an almost immediate change of name by the media to the Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest, the event exploded in popularity (“How It Began: the First Contest”).

Originally, the contest served as Pillsbury’s vehicle for promoting its goods and for housewives to show off their talent. Over time, the competition has evolved to adapt to the changes of the American female lifestyle. For example, in the 1960s more women entered the workforce and had less time to cook. As a response, Pillsbury made more convenience foods to accommodate women’s busy lives. With these added amenities, women saved more time. Refrigerated doughs, cake mixes, canned meats, frozen vegetables and processed cheeses began appearing in Bake-Off Contest recipes (“The 1960s Bake-Off Contest”).

In the 1980s, Bake-Off Contest entries reflected the extravagant, materialistic lifestyles of Americans. Fancy desserts for special occasions became popular entries. In addition, the 1980s brought about a growing emphasis on healthy cooking. As people started jogging and taking care of their health, more whole grains appeared in recipes. Furthermore, many main dish entries substituted chicken for beef, and low-fat dairy replaced the previously popular heavy cream (“The 1980s Bake-Off Contest”).

Today, many Bake-Off Contest entries blur the lines between ethnic and traditional American foods. Contestants have become more creative with their entries. New cuisines with bold and spicy flavors have kicked the competition up a notch. In 2002, Denise Yennie broke the tradition of grand prize-winning desserts and main dishes as her Chicken Florentine Panini took the crown (“The 2000s Bake-Off Contest”). People can eat a panini on the go, as many Americans now consume their food.

The recent entry of men into the Bake-Off Contest has changed the scene of the competition. In 2002, men accounted for 11 out of 100 finalists (Yennie). In 1996, a male became the Grand Prize Winner. Kurt Wait succeeded not only as the first male Grand Prize Winner, but he also became the first person to receive a $1 million cash prize (“Macadamia Fudge Torte”).

Yennie has her own philosophy as to why more women than men continually enter the contest. She believes women feel they have more flexibility to take time off from work to travel to and compete in the contest. Also, a man would need great confidence in his cooking ability to enter the contest and believe he could win (Yennie). As in the Iowa State Fair, the secret fear of losing to a woman may exist.

In regards to the competitive nature of the Pillsbury Bake-Off, Yennie believes Pillsbury started the competition as a marketing gimmick. She thinks corporations who create big-name competitions with big prizes have more of an interest in selling product than in discovering the best talent. At smaller chili cook-offs and state fairs exists a sense of, “I can do this better than the next guy” (Yennie). Cook-offs and bake-offs with less national attention have more sense of true competition.

Originally, and perhaps even today, the Pillsbury Bake-Off appeared as promoter of the cult of domesticity. Since women in the mid-1900s spent so much time in the kitchen, the Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest became a chance for them to competitively present their talent. The competition encouraged women to become the best housewife. Today, the contest has changed with the role of women; however, as a predominantly female competition, the Pillsbury Bake-Off can still link women with the kitchen. Yet with the use of Pillsbury’s pre-made food, the Bake-Off shows it has accepted women working outside of the home, women who do not always have time to make a gourmet dinner for the family.

Competitive eating is a type of food competition that does not involve the creation of food, but rather the eating of food. It is not enough to just cook better than everyone in America; some people attempt to eat faster than everyone. This competition exemplifies the rugged individualism of the American character. No one can assist a competitor as he or she eats the way to the top.

Competitive eating has swept America with its popularity. Since it involves mental and physical strength, many people consider competitive eating to qualify as a sport. The International Federation of Competitive Eating (I.F.O.C.E.) claims the competition may hold status as one of the oldest sports known to humanity (“About > History”). In the United States competitive eating dates back to 1916 with the first Nathan’s Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest (Rizzetta).

While competitive eating reaches as far back as the early 20th century, it has increased in popularity only within the past decade. Competitive eating’s mix of entertainment and athletic ability have attributed to its new found popularity. Similar to World Wrestling Entertainment competitors, each competitive eater has a personality to market. At the 2006 World Pelmeni Eating Championship I.F.O.C.E Chairman George Shea suggested to competitors as they took the stage, “And make a little show for the crowd!” (O’Connor 18). Entertaining competitors always draws more fans.

In 1997, brothers George and Rich Shea formed the I.F.O.C.E. as a way to organize competitive eating events and their competitors. The public relations firm Shea Communications, owned by the brothers, previously ran Nathan’s Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest. With experience in public relations and competitive eating, the Shea brothers formed the I.F.O.C.E. to organize competitive eating’s increasing demands. As the sport becomes more popular, the I.F.O.C.E must adjust to the growing fan base.

Crowds often fill the stands at events to see their favorite contenders. One competitive eater, Eric "Badlands" Booker markets himself as a rapper, and has created many raps about competitive eating. At the 2005 World Grilled Cheese Eating Championship in Venice Beach, CA, Badlands performed his rap "The Sweet Science of Competitive Eating":

I'll be that top gurgitator extraordinaire,
one that eats to the beat in a flash and flair
eat you outta house and home, no thought or care
fridge empty, cupboards bare …
y'know my name, I got that fame
for cramming food down my esophagal drain … (Fagone 4-5)

Just as many other athletes have become celebrities for their athletic ability, competitive eaters draw popularity from around the world. The need for food competition is not limited to the United States. While the largest fan base seems to come from Midwest America, competitors have fans ranging from Japan to the United Kingdom. This wide-ranging fan base is attributed to the worldwide locations of competitive eaters and events. Many competitive eaters come from the Midwest, but Japan's Takeru Kobayashi holds the current first-place ranking (Rizzetta).

One event Kobayashi has dominated is Nathan's Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest. In 2006 Kobayashi set a new world record by consuming 53 and 3/4 hot dogs and buns in 12 minutes ("Koby Wins!"). With Kobayashi's success at Nathan's Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest, the event has turned into a media frenzy. ESPN now broadcasts the event. According to competitive eater Arturo "The Natural" Rios, the 2006 contest attracted more viewers than the Stanley Cup Finals.

People are attracted to the gluttonous Nathan's Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest because of its many connections to Americana. The contest falls on the Fourth of July, America's birthday. This patriotic holiday celebrates the pride for American freedom and independence. Furthermore, the contest is located at Coney Island, America's old playground. Formerly the largest amusement park in the United States, people of all social classes mingled at Luna Park, Dreamland and Steeplechase Park. The theme park, "astonished, appalled and delighted the nation" (*American Experience*). Nathan's Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest draws these same reactions. Finally, few foods are more American than the hotdog. Created in America and popularized at Coney Island and baseball games, hotdogs has become the quintessential American food (*Time Machine*). By combining the nation's birthday, Coney Island and hotdogs, Nathan's Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest is emblematic of Americana.

Ironically, while Nathan's Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest represents America, Japan's Kobayashi has won the contest for the past six years (Rizzetta). As much as the average American fills his or her stomach, a Japanese man holds America's competitive eating title. As quoted in *Horsemen of the Esophagus*, adult television cartoon character Hank Hill represents the confusion of many Americans when he asks, "Wait a minute? America isn't the hot-dog champion? Well, how could you let that happen? This whole nation is stuffing its face! Can't one of us do it at record speed?" (Introduction)

Americans may find Kobayashi unbeatable, but his domination of the sport has not deflated the number of American fans. Every year people travel great distances to populate the stands at competitions. For example, two men drove 11 hours to see a hamburger contest in Jackson, MS. One of these men described competitive eating as "sort of a celebration. A celebration of our prosperity. We're able to do this, so we might as well do it I guess" (Fagone 12). Since Americans have started paying more attention to competitive eating, media outlets such as *The New York Times, Sports Illustrated*, the BBC and *Smithsonian Magazine* have covered competitions. In addition, MTV, the Food Network, Discovery Channel, and an Australian television channel have produced documentaries about the sport ("Host an Event"). With more fans becoming interested each year, media outlets give increasing exposure to competitive eating.

Arturo "The Natural" Rios has been competitively eating for less than year, but he understands why people enjoy watching competitive eating. He believes, "This is a sport everyone can relate to. …you watch guys run up and down a court playing basketball, you know, not everyone plays basketball. Not everyone can relate to that sport… Everyone eats, and everyone can relate to what I am doing" (Rios). He also compares the sport to people challenging one another at the dinner table to see who can finish first. I.F.O.C.E. founder Rich Shea calls competitive eating "the sport of the everyman, because in America we're big eaters, and everyone likes to pig out once in a while" (O'Connor 19). People are personally aware of eating competitions, therefore it comes standard that they would have an interest in seeing it performed professionally.

In addition to the familiarity of the sport, competitive eating attracts fans due to the sheer ability of the competitors. Spectators watch competitors relentlessly shove large amounts of food down their throats, wondering who can gobble the most. Author Jason Fagone precisely describes the competitors' actions in his book, *Horsemen of the Esophagus*. In the opening pages, Fagone gives a vivid description of the World Grilled Cheese Eating Championship:

> The eaters rip in, dunking the sandwiches in the water cups and cramming them mouthward with no regard for manners or decorum. Quick-staining cheeks go unwiped; grabby hands churn the food… *Violent* is a word that comes to mind. *Assault* is another… How can they not choke? How can they not explode? Rich "The Locust" LeFevre, who looks like somebody's geeky uncle with his big plastic glasses and gray comb-over, is particularly fearsome, splashing a several-foot-diameter area with his first thrust of bread into water, soaking his own shirt. He rotates the sandwich once it reaches his lips, twirls it like it's corn on the cob,

> and mashes it inward, toward his pinker parts… He never alters his food-shoveling rhythm, a gluttonous metronome. There's debris, lots of it. Little ropes of bread, cheese, and water leak and splash onto the tablecloth below. This is not normal. (6-7)

No, competitive eating is not normal. Eating excessive amounts of foods in small amounts of time is no ordinary activity for the average person. However, Paul Rozin, a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, does not see normalcy in the regular act of consuming food. He contends, "Eating, like sex, is a vile, animal act. Every bite is a risk" (Fagone 101).

Rozin points out that food consumption is not always a glorious activity, as it is often portrayed. In fact, the body part that consumes food can be repulsive, since it is an orifice. The anus is also an orifice (Fagone 101). "These are truths we choose to forget in order to munch our potato chips in peace – except, of course, when we organize competitive eating contests, and choose instead to flaunt every dumb-animal impulse we've invested 40,000 species-years in civilizing" (Fagone 101). But does competitive eating exemplify humans reverting to animal instinct, or is it just another athletic competition such as football and hockey? Rozin sees this competition as a combination of America's love of food, passion for competitive sports, and obsession with ranking every human capability in hierarchical lists (Fagone 103-104). Just as rankings exist for NCAA football's Bowl Championship Series, the I.F.O.C.E. also ranks its competitors.

Since competitive eating does involve unattractive animal behavior, it seems women would have no interest in participating in the sport. Furthermore, people may assume that women do not have the physical ability to compete on the same level as men. These assumptions are incorrect. Three of the top 50 competitive eaters are women. Sonya "The Black Widow" Thomas hold the fourth spot in international rankings ("Rankings"). No all-female eating competitions exist, so Thomas competes alongside the men, often beating them. Weighing in at 105 pounds, Thomas holds records in mince pies, crab cakes, baked beans and fruitcake, among other foods ("Eater Profiles"). Matt Rizzetta of the I.F.O.C.E. believes Thomas' smaller stature creates a mystique that draws fans' attention. Her ability to compete in a sport dominated by muscular, athletic men, and her ability to eat more than many of them creates wonder (Rizzetta).

It remains ironic how a female can contend as one of the top competitive eaters in the world, and yet society encourages women to admire dieting and ultra thin bodies. This contradiction relates to how there is further criticism of competitive eating, yet the promotion of extreme thinness endures. In some international interviews, Rios receives the complaint that competitive eating creates one more way for America to promote obesity and overeating (Rios). Some people see the sport as promoting an unhealthy lifestyle. However, many of the top athletes stay in top shape and do care for their health. Rios says his awareness of the types of food he puts in his body has grown since he has started eating competitively. He also works out regularly and goes to the doctor to make sure that his competing does not negatively affect his health (Rios).

The I.F.O.C.E. also receives the complaint that competitive eating wastes food. Rizzetta fires back, "It's really no different than a sport like NASCAR. You know, who waste tens of thousands of gallons of oil and gasoline on race days." Every competition involves waste, however, the complaint remains with competitive eating since it involves food. This complaint gives food its intentional role as a precious nutrient that should not be wasted.

In the television show *Iron Chef America*, food once again sparks competition. Each week, an accomplished guest chef battles against one of the four Iron Chefs in the "Kitchen Stadium." Iron Chefs Mario Batali, Bobby Flay, Masaharu Morimoto and Cat Cora hold reputations for their specialty and excellence in different cuisines. The contender attempts to beat a chosen Iron Chef by creating four dishes more outstanding than his or her competitor. Each week a different secret ingredient is revealed that the dishes must include. While the winner receives no prize and the show focuses more on attracting viewers than chef rankings, the winning chef does earn bragging rights.

Iron Chef America was created in 2004 as a response to the overwhelming popularity of Japan's *Iron Chef*. The Japanese television show debuted on the Food Network in 1999 and soon formed a cult following. Dramatic lights, humorous dubbing and spectacular pageantry drew in nightly viewers. It was billed in promotional material as, "Ultimate Fighting Champion meets Julia Child" (Gallagher). With *Iron Chef*'s large fan base, the creation of *Iron Chef America* only became a matter of time.

While some differences exist between the two shows, the theme of competition runs through both. *Iron Chef* and *Iron Chef America* both display cooking as not just an art form or a service, but also as a "test of strength, speed, endurance and mental dexterity" (Gallagher). The chefs must move quickly in order to finish their dishes within the one-hour time limit. The chefs must rush their dishes, yet they cannot overlook details since judging is based on taste, plating and originality. The competition does involve quick thinking, but not as much it would appear. In the beginning of each show the contending chefs appear surprised with their secret ingredient. In actuality, the chefs are informed of a few available secret ingredients (Rosen). This revelation allows chefs to plan out possible dishes.

While cooking competitions at state fairs and the Pillsbury Bake-Off often appear as female activities, *Iron Chef America* has a strong male atmosphere. The original *Iron Chef America* did not feature current Iron Chef Cat Cora. Instead, all the Iron Chefs were men (Rosen). Japan's *Iron Chef* does not feature any female Iron Chefs. One episode on *Iron Chef* even includes a verbal reference to an Iron Chef's "humiliating loss to a woman" (Gallagher).

The set also adds to the male atmosphere of *Iron Chef America*. It appears strong and masculine, decorated with the show's signature silver and red colors. Even the name "Kitchen Stadium" reflects male athletic competition. The name insinuates that *Iron Chef America* is not a place for the delicious creation of homemade foods. Instead, it abides as a place where two chefs have come to see who can triumph. "Kitchen Stadium" is a home for the competitive American spirit.

The rapid pace of competition and camera shots, as well as asides from the judges and commentators, reflect a broadcast sporting event. Bruce Seidel, Senior Vice President of Program Planning and Special Productions at Food Network, has compared *Iron Chef America* to football's biggest game. "This is a sporting event but it's cooking. That's the concept we're trying to sell, that cooking can be a spectacle a la the Super Bowl" (Rosen). The show's visual style of using slow motion, zoom shots and instant replay are synonymous with sporting events (Gallagher). Similar to football's two-minute warning, announcements sound out to the chefs as the time winds down. The show has even been called the "*Monday Night Football* for cooking fanatics" (Rosen). Guest celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck has joked about *Iron Chef America*'s similarity to basketball, in that the last five minutes are the most interesting (Rosen). All *Iron Chef America* seems to need is a cook's challenge for an official review of the judging.

In keeping with its sporting event connection, *Iron Chef America* has incorporated the martial arts into the program. Japan's *Iron Chef* features the fictional billionaire gourmand Chairman Kaga as the charismatic master of ceremonies (Gallagher). On *Iron Chef America*, an actor simply called the Chairman replaces Chairman Kaga. Instead of being an eccentric food connoisseur, the Chairman is a martial arts expert, brilliantly displaying his ability as he introduces the chefs and the secret ingredient (Rosen). The decision was deliberate for the Chairman to have martial arts expertise. Seidel claims, "The analogy is that just as [martial arts are] disciplined, they're focused, they have to be strong, those same qualities apply to the art of cuisine" (Rosen).

These qualities of discipline, focus and strength remain integrated into the backbone of American character. Through them, Americans have often contended to be the best. Americans are not satisfied with second place. They are restless for blue ribbons, crowns and trophies. Their rugged individualism furthers their competitive drive. As seen in the American belief of manifest destiny, as well as in Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, the need to always be on top drove American land expansion.

During the 19th century, the idea of manifest destiny drove Americans to spread west. A fear of the unknown existed, but so did the excitement of a new beginning and hope for more. In J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's *Letter From an American Farmer* written in 1782, Americans are described as "the Western pilgrims, carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour, and industry" (Baldwin 86). These traits would assist Americans in settling the wild land and promoting the prosperity of the new country.

With God at their side, Americans believed they had the right to spread as far and wide as they could reach. In 1835, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville wrote his reflections of the United States in *Democracy in America*. In this document he claims "the gradual and continuous progress of the European race toward the Rocky Mountains … is like a deluge of men, rising unabatedly, and driven daily onward by the hand of God" (Baldwin 86). American progress would eventually drive Americans over the Rocky Mountains, south to Texas and as far north as Alaska. In 1845, Representative Stephen A. Douglas exquisitely captured the need for American expansion when claiming the necessity to "blot out the lines on the map which now marked our national boundaries on this continent … and make the area of liberty as broad as the contingent itself … not suffer[ing] petty rival republics to grow up here, engendering jealousy with each other" (Baldwin 88). With more land accumulation, America could grow stronger as a world power, closer to being the best.

As belief in manifest destiny spread throughout the country, some people did not see how it could last. At the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, Turner presented his thesis, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, announcing the closing of the American frontier. He saw Americans spread throughout the west and believed there was no space left for frontier exploration. The experience of the frontier had shaped American experience and character (Turner 683). From the dust of the covered wagons, a new American had risen.

The country's restlessness remains a noted part of the American character. Americans have a hard time settling and often need something new. This constant restlessness is the trigger for what Turner considers America's "perennial rebirth" (Turner 684). The east coast developed from a simple colonial government to a complex representational government, and from a primitive industrial society to a manufacturing civilization. As America expanded west, it needed to recreate this evolution in each new development (Turner 684). From underdog to champion, Americans worked from east coast to west coast to gain achievement. Just as the Iowa State Fair developed from grassroots to a great spectacle, the country has similarly developed.

With the closing of the frontier, Turner truly saw an ending of an era. Yes, the frontier would never appear the same, but neither would Americans. People changed due to the exploration, adventures and openness of the frontier. The American character evolved with the country, and found new traits. According to Turner, Americans owe their most striking characteristics to the frontier. He wrote:

> That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness, that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients, that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends, that restless, nervous energy, that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom, these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier. (690)

> These same traits of restlessness, nervous energy, individualism, exuberance and the inventive turn of mind exist in food competitions. Restless nervousness runs through a person as he or she waits for judges to announce results at the Iowa State Fair. The individual victory and exuberance a competitive eater feels as he or she dominates an event and sets a world record. Furthermore, the inventive turn of mind as a competitor creates dish that defeats an Iron Chef.

As Turner shows, the unique American character is a result of years of determination and triumph that Americans have worked for and created. The competitive spirit has become integral to the American character. Americans have fought environmental, personal and foreign battles to create this country into its current standing. Striving to become the best only comes naturally. Americans have transferred this competitive nature into food competitions in one more way to discover a champion. Chef Wolfgang Puck commented that a competitive cooking show would fare well “because America loves competition. We love a winner” (Rosen). Whether the competition is the Super Bowl, the Miss America Pageant, the Iowa State Fair, Nathan’s Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest, or *Iron Chef America*, America wants to find a champion. America is hungry for competition.

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One of the Seven Deadly Sins or an Organized Sport on the Rise?
Carli Mell

"Americans are big, fat, infantile, stupid assholes who love to shovel shit down their throats, and so to shovel more shit down one's throat than any other is to be truly king of America."- "Horsemen of the Esophagus: Competitive Eating and the Big Fat American Dream"

On July 4, 2005, Japan native, Takeru Kobayashi devoured 53.5 hot dogs and buns in a mere 12 minutes, mutilating most of his opponents (Lidsky). The closest was the American, Joey "Jaws" Chestnut who ate 52 hot dogs during the competition. Following, the third place finisher ate only 37 hot dogs ("Nathan's"). Currently, Kobayashi is the world record holder for the amount of hot dogs eaten at the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest ("International"). Competitive eaters who are involved in the annual competition are stuffing their stomachs with nearly 12 liters of food, almost 12 times what the average human stomach holds (Specht). "Gurgitators" around the world compete for such an honorable competitive eating title, but participants from two countries stand out from the crowd. Japan and the United States often produce competitors that are in the running to hold such a praiseworthy title as the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Champion (Fagone).

As world hunger and the obesity epidemic throughout America grow, competitive eating is also emerging throughout America. One cannot hesitate to inquire about the history of the controversial sport, the obvious health risks associated with this type of competition as well as the ethical issues surrounding starvation throughout the world. Competitive eating is sweeping through many nations, but it evidently was started here in America.

Although the history of the first Nathan's Hot Dog Competition is unclear, most of the traditions of the competition have been passed down orally through the years. The Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest is believed to have been started on July 4, 1916 when four immigrants attempted to resolve an argument by having an eating contest. The winner of the competition was declared the most patriotic among the immigrants. One of the participants put away 13 hot dogs but the other competitors could not keep up.

Since then, the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest has been held on the same day each year ("Nathan's"). The foods have changed, but the main idea of the competition is to "eat a lot, very fast" (Davis). But George and Rich Shae, representatives for the International Federation for Competitive Eating, argue that competitive eating dates back to long before Coney Island and hot dogs were even thought of.

Rich Shae suggests that the first instance of competitive eating occurred during the time of the cavemen. When a rabbit hopped into a cave, it was a competition to see who would get the rabbit first, and who could get the most food out of it. He explains, "Competitive eating is the most inherent sport known to man. Thirty thousand years ago, in a cave in Eastern Europe, in the dead of winter, 20 Neanderthals sitting around and a rabbit walks in. I would argue that was the first competitive eating situation" (Grossfeld). Competitive eating "stands alongside original athletic pursuits such as running, jumping, and throwing" ("International").

Competitive eating has grown since the time of the Neanderthal and is starting to stand out world wide. Countries such as Canada, Thailand, Germany, England and Russia all acknowledge competitive eating as a sport ("International"). Some Americans though, have widespread opposition to competitive eating. Opponents who believe that competitive eating is nothing more than gurgitation, such as Ralph Nader, see competitive eating as a "sign of societal decline" (Grossfeld). The Shae brothers are advocates in the "quest to make competitive eating a sport." The brothers work together to promote competitive eating and to make the American people believe that competitive eating is actually a sport (Lidsky).

Before many of the contests begin, participants "stretched, cracked their wrists, draped their towels around their necks, donned shades and pumped themselves up with music filtered through headsets" (Roberts). Compared to the way athletes of traditional sports prepare for a game or event, competitive eaters have many of the same rituals for their own events. George Shae also argues, "The baseline definition of a sport is a physical activity governed by a set of rules. It's no different than other sports except its hand speed, jaw strength, and stomach capacity. It's as fundamental as running and jumping" (Grossfeld).

The Shae brothers work together to convince audiences that competitive eaters are athletes just like Major League Baseball Players or National Football League stars. Shae states, "My point is competitive eating is a very fundamental sport. The fundamental sports are running, jumping, pushing, and fighting. Eating is even more fundamental: Who can eat the most to survive and in the quickest time when that mattered whether you survived. There are rules. We have a governing body, and we keep track of the records" (Caple).

The brothers have even helped to promote the IFOCE by creating a competitive eating circuit. The IFOCE goes as far as creating "rules, rankings, majors and personalities" for competitive eating, just as other modern sports do (Grossfeld). By establishing "a fair and equitable rating system for the various competitions," competitive eating can be compared to various other recognized competitions ("International"). The establishment and growth of the IFOCE has made believers out of people who once thought that competitive eaters used no athletic ability during events. Other sports have leagues which establish a set of rules and standings; much like the IFOCE does for competitive eating.

Jason Fagone, author of "Horsemen of the Esophagus: Competitive Eating and the Big Fat American Dream", suggests that the IFOCE was created to mock the popularity National Football League and Major League Baseball. He claims, "It was sort of a parody and a way to poke fun" (Wertheimer).

On the other hand, opponents of competitive eating look at the controversial sport as mainly entertainment. Challengers of this type of competition suggest that eating in such a way is gluttonous and unhealthy. There are many people who are arguing whether or not competitive eating should be considered a sport (Haaisen). "It's pretty disturbing" says Ava Greenspun, a psychotherapist from Arlington, who identifies the increasing number of children with obesity in America today. "It's not a sport. I watched it and I thought it was a wacko. It's glorifying gluttony" (Grossfeld).

Many argue that "glorifying gluttony" can lead to "stomach pains, obesity, and diabetes", as well as many other serious health risks. The director of the Gastrointestinal

Physiology Lab at the University of Michigan, William Chey says that this massive amount of food placed in the stomach is okay for a “normally functioning stomach”. In contrast, Keith Ayoob, a nutritionist from the Albert Einstein School of Medicine suggests that “The large amounts of calories all at one time puts a major strain on any organs related to digestion.” Because competitors are eating such a large amount of food in such a short amount of time, they risk “irritating the esophagus, choking, rupturing the stomach or developing acid reflux” (Specht).

In hopes of gaining an acceptance as a sport, the IFOCE established a rule suggesting that contestants be 18 years or older when participating in any competition to ensure safety (“International”). Matt Rezetta, the Public Relations Director for the IFOCE offered that during each competition, there is an onsite EMT available if there are any problems during a competition. One author goes on his own quest to explain the behind the scenes of competitive eating, even attempting to become a competitive eater himself.

Eat This Book: A Year of Gorging and Glory on the Competitive Eating Circuit written by Ryan Nerz follows several competitors during their preparation for the several competitions. Nerz attempts to sway his readers to believe that competitive eating is becoming a large part of American culture. After becoming an emcee for an IFOCE event, Nerz is amazed by competitive eating and tries his hand at the sport. He says, “As I was leaving the office, hat in hand, it occurred to me that this whole IFOCE thing treaded a fine line between fiction and reality, and I was deeply curious to find out how it all- this hat, this sport, and this league- came to be” (14).

Throughout his book, he tries to convince his readers that competitive eating should be taken seriously as a sport (Davis). Nerz himself attempts to become a competitive eater. He accounts the time he spent in bed with excruciating stomach pain and the associated health risks concerning his training.

His training consisted of eating dozens of burgers and drinking several gallons of water. Despite training and undergoing extreme pain, Nerz faced Kobayashi in a contest and lost. Throughout the novel, Nerz goes inside competitive eating and “sparing no one’s appetite, [Nerz] reveals the training, game-strategies, and other after effects of competition in this delectably shocking banquet of gorging and glory on the competitive eating circuit” (Nerz).

In his attempts to make readers believe that competitive eating is actually a sport, Nerz is opposed by, previously mentioned, Jason Fagone, who says, “It’s both an American horror show and an American success story at the same time.” Fagone’s book focuses more on the audience’s perspective of competitive eating. He also dives into the aspects of competitive eating by looking at how most competitors train. Fagone also examines the types of people that are involved in the competitions. He says that most of the competitors are everyday people. They are doctors, lawyers and construction workers.

On the other hand, there are some competitors who make the competitive eating circuit their life. They train by stretching their stomachs to hold a much larger amount of food than most human stomachs hold. Fagone says that most competitive eaters train by drinking gallons of water to stretch their stomachs. This stomach stretching allows them to eat more during competitions (Wertheimer). Shae does not approve any specific training method and does not suggest that anyone under the age of 18 attempt to eat competitively, although many of the competitors use similar training methods before competitions (Caple). Rezetta added that the IFOCE does not condone any types of training.

Arturo Rios, the 10th ranked eater in the world, was also able to provide information about his own preparation for competitions. In an interview with Rios, he claimed that in the beginning, he never used to train. As time went on, he started going to the gym to lose weight before a competition. He also said that usually a week before a competition, he would go to a buffet and eat a large amount of food. During this time, he tried to eat foods that are healthy and limit his fatty food intake. Rios said that he has never had any problems with his health before, during or after competitions. Since he began competitive eating, Rios said that he is more concerned with what he eats while not competing. He watches calories and makes sure that he attends the gym regularly.

Rios has been involved in competitions involving hot dogs, pizza, pork ribs, sandwiches, Buffalo wings, buffet foods (which is a pan full of Buffalo wings, roast beef, perogies, and hamburgers). In one competition, Rios actually attempted to each a whole turkey by himself. When asked, “A lot of people do not consider competitive eating as a sport. What is your reaction to this?” Rios answered by stating that all new sports will be challenged. He said that the validity of competitive eating will always be challenged, but from his own experience, he definitely believes that competitive eating is a sport. “We do train and it is very physical,” he said.

Kobayashi trains by eating cabbage and drinking gallons of water. He does this in order to expand his stomach (Specht). He is also known to consume over 20 pounds of foods per meal. This is how he trained for the 2006 Nathan’s Hot Dog Eating Contest. Kobayashi, along with 2 other competitive eaters, was featured in MTV’s True Life: I’m A Competitive Eater. Throughout the show, Kobayashi is followed in his journey to prepare for one of the most important competitive eating contests in the circuit.

The Nathan’s Hot Dog Eating Contest, as previously mentioned, is officiated by the IFOCE using the official rules of competitive eating. The dogs are cooked and allowed to cool before the competition begins. There are 20 contestants at war with one another to become the winner of the event. Parts of a hot dog count and the contestants are allowed to use both hands. There are official judges to make sure there is no cheating and there is an on-site ambulance for any problems during the competition (“Nathan’s”).

In hopes of beating his previous record of 53.5 hot dogs, Kobayashi trained with a significant amount of food during each sitting. He also viewed video tapes of prior competitions to find where mistakes were made to improve them for the next competition. In spite of his attempts, Kobayashi failed to improve his record. He still won the competition in 2006 and is the only person in history to win six competitions in a row.

Another competitor, Tim Janus, is known for the painted mask he wears on his face during competitions. He is also featured in MTV’s True Life: I’m A Competitive Eater. Other than being a competitive eater, Janus works on Wall Street. Janus, also know as “Eater-X”, is looking to compete on the annual Fourth of July Nathan’s Hot Dog Eating Contest. In order to make it to this competition, “Eater-X” must win a qualifying competition.

There are three ways to get involved in the Nathan’s Hot Dog Eating Contest. You can be an invited celebrity to the event, you can win a qualifying event or if you are the previous year's winner, you automatically receive a bid to next year's competition ("Nathan's"). In order to prepare for the qualifying contest, Eater-X practiced by consuming over 13 pounds of food during one sitting. He succeeded, allowing him to advance to the Coney Island competition.

Quite the opposite, some competitors do very little to prepare for the competitions. Sonya "The Black Widow" Thomas is a 100 pound female participator in the competitive eating circuit. In a Baltimore crab cake eating event, Thomas ate 40 crab cakes in only 12 minutes. Unlike other competitors, Thomas rarely trains. She focuses on her style of eating, believing that style will always beat speed. She believes that in order to win competitions, there is a specific technique to eating the food (Haissen). For instance, Kobayashi has developed the "Solomon Method" of eating. This technique requires him to first break the hot dog in half, and then eat the two parts together in just a few bites. He follows the hot dog with the bun ("Nathan's"). Thomas believes that techniques, not training, will win competitions.

There are several questions arising in the competitive eating circuit about the size of participants. Most believe that larger people will be able to devour more food because of their size, but Ed Kratchie, a competitive eater nicknamed "The Masbeth Monster" has a different theory (Conti). "There's a lot of speculation about this," Shae said, "First, everyone said the big guys are better. Then the Japanese come in, and they're all thin, and they're all better. Then the theory is that if you're too fat, it blocks the amount your stomach can expand. I now think size just doesn't matter" (Caple).

Kratchie has developed the "Belt of Fat Theory." He was the winner of Nathan's Eating Contest in 1995. A year later, a much smaller and leaner competitor took over the coveted "Mustard Belt" and took home the prize of 25,000 dollars (The Exceptionalist). Kratchie wondered if the weight of a person had anything to do with the amount of the food he or she could eat. He suggested that those who are heavy are restricted from eating a large amount of food because the amount of fat tissue on their abdomen. This fat tissue did not allow for the stomach to expand as much as those in thinner people. Many reject the theory, but most competitors and observers believe in his idea (Conti).

In the past six years, the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest has been won by a man who may be living proof that the "Belt of Fat Theory" actually exists. Kobayashi, who weighs a mere 160 pounds, and Thomas are very light weight compared to their competitors, yet they manage to out-eat others in many competitions (The Exceptionalist). With their victories, the underdogs of the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest have allowed the competition to grow in the world of sports.

Competitive eating has been looked at more seriously throughout the years. Broadcasters, such as ESPN, are airing the Nathan's competition and are attracting millions of viewers in households around the world. Americans are often reluctant to eat large amounts of food in public. These competitions are just the opposite as competitors devour large amounts of food while millions of onlookers watch in amazement (Wertheimer). Resetta mentioned that in 2006, only the third consecutive year of the competition being aired, two million viewers have tuned in to watch the Nathan's contest on television. He explained that the number of viewers has grown exponentially since its first broadcast on national television. Records even show that more people watched the Nathan's contest than the Stanley cup finals.

“Considered by enthusiasts to be one of the fastest-growing nontraditional sports of the 21st century,” competitive eating is also used a way to promote a product for a company (Roberts). If a company uses their product in a contest, the food is being promoted by the participants (Lidsky). The Fox Network has even taken advantage of the growing popularity of the sport by creating the “Glutton Bowl”. This competition involved several rounds of eating. After each round, a competitor was eliminated. Foods such as mayonnaise, butter and cow tongue were used throughout the competition.

The idea of gluttony has faced a number of opponents in the American culture. Figures from the past and present have looked at the idea of competitive eating as unhealthy and such competitions have seemed to venture away from the previous theories presented by Benjamin Franklin, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and Sylvester Graham.

For instance, Franklin states in his own 13 virtues the idea of temperance. Under this virtue, Franklin states, “Eat not to dullness.” Franklin insisted that those who followed his 13 virtues would live a healthy life. By following his virtue of temperance, Franklin says that you will live with “long-continued health” (“Franklin’s”). Moderation is also a significant part of Franklin’s virtues. Competitive eating does not succeed in following Franklin’s ideas of moderation.

Catherine Beecher, author of several cookbooks, believed that “to eat badly was sinful,” like other Americans in the early 1900s. Even before America was established, gluttony was considered one of the seven deadly sins. Unhealthy eating was considered “synonymous with immorality” (Root 227). Kellogg created an institute that followed Beecher’s beliefs. The Battle Creek Sanatorium housed those who were “sick and neurotic, the underweight and the overweight.” In the sanatorium, Kellogg insisted that his patients be restricted to certain diet as well as instituting a strict regimen of exercise and treatments to ensure a healthy life. Many criticized the sanatorium but Kellogg’s ideas gave way to a new line of foods. Today, Kellogg’s legacy still stands in a brand of grain breakfast cereals (228).

Graham’s notions were very similar to those of Kellogg’s. Graham “was not in favor of ceasing to eat entirely, but only of restraining one’s intake to the minimum amount of food which duly constituted medical authorities might decree to be necessary, and in any case going without dinner once a week” (161). Graham also showed a “disgust at gluttony” which he hoped other Americans would follow. He pushed for Americans to eat natural foods that he described as “the Creators” food (162). Graham made an impact on the American diet and created “Graham boarding houses” similar to those of Kellogg. These houses used “the Creators” foods as their general form of nourishment (163). Beecher continued writing cookbooks that satisfied the theories of Graham (164).

Graham, Kellogg, Beecher and Franklin’s ideas of food are much different from how we look at food today. Competitive eating is growing as a sport and many competitors are putting themselves in danger because of the massive amounts of the food they are forcing their stomach to hold. Many contemporary doctors consider this to be unhealthy and previous theories about watching what you eat have also been ignored. Although these theories were once functional and important to most Americans, they have been thrown out by many so that competitive eating will continue to flourish as a sport. Americans, once again, are competing to be the best despite the known health risks competitive eating involves.

In addition to competitive eating denying the, at one point, prevalent health theories, many ethical issues surround the idea of gluttony. Some believe that while Kobayashi is downing 53.5 hotdogs in 12 minutes, others are starving or have very little to eat. Shea said that the IFOCE has been given some problems with those who are trying to solve world hunger. "We're not thumbing our nose at those issues," Shea said. "We're not celebrating excess, we're not celebrating gluttony. It's a sport." A student at Georgetown University wrote, "The group boasts that it has coordinated events and membership in Ireland, Japan, Thailand, Ukraine and several other countries. Conspicuously absent from their list are starving countries like Niger and Sudan, who would love to be able to eat for survival, let alone entertainment (Rosenberg).

The St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church enforces this idea as a part of their mission within the church. The church seems to find "something wrong about this [competitive eating] in light of all the lack of food and starvation going on in the world." The church goes on to say that the cries of the malnourished and underfed have not been heard by the media, yet the Nathan's contest has ample media coverage each year (St. Thomas).

But there are those who doubt that competitive eating has any effect on world hunger after all. Competitive eating continues to grow as a sport in America, with little intention of ever stopping. The amount of food consumed in a competitive eating contest is not even a fraction of the amount of food thrown out or wasted in America alone each day.

The early developments of competitive eating may have started with the cavemen, but America has taken the competition to another level. By training and forcing a stomach to expand, competitors have put themselves at risk for health problems without ever realizing the long term effects. Further research could be conducted on the long term effects, such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease, of this sport. Since competitive eaters are digesting so much food at one time, the adverse health effects could be crucial to competing. Additional research may be performed on the different types of preparation during training. Known competitors use water and lettuce to train before competitions. It would be interesting to see if other types of food would be successful to stretch one's stomach during training.

Extended research could also look into how the media has influenced the growth of the sport. It is known that competitive eating has grown due to the media, but how much and why? Ethical issues surrounding competitive eating could also imply further research because some believe that it is associated with world hunger. Does competitive eating, in fact, influence the growth of world hunger? Finally, competitive eating is looked at by many religions as sinful. Research could provide answers as to what the religions are doing to protest the competitions and how this is effecting the growth of competitive eating. All supplementary research will be interesting to look into. The world of competitive eating, since its start, has influenced many aspects of American culture which we have only touched upon.

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The Catastrophe of the Continuous Countertop:
How the American Kitchen Stove Became a Back-Breaker

Jaclyn Keammerer

Throughout the years, Americans have spent countless hours working and eating in their kitchens. While the tasks of cooking, baking, and preparing food are still performed in the kitchen, modern-day kitchen appliances and technologies, such as microwaves and refrigerators, changed, and perhaps even aided the process. Despite these changes and additions, an aspect of the American kitchen infamously continues to cause the cook grief, and moreover, back pain – the stove. Why are most American home kitchen stoves exactly 36 inches tall, in spite of the widely accepted belief that work surfaces should be tailored to the height of the user? Why are the most popular ovens both low and in front, so they blast household cooks with heat while breaking their backs? Why, in other words, is the most important appliance in the American kitchen so poorly designed, and why is this poor design so pervasive?

Beginning in the 1930s, when the market for Modernism began, the continuous countertop was popularized and all kitchen work surfaces, including the stovetop, were constructed at the same height, forcing American cooks to endure the pain of bending over to reach the kitchen oven. This paper will examine three aspects of American culture from the 1900s to the 1930s that influenced the creation and pervasive popularity of the 36-inch American stove: American market and design trends, American household engineers, and gender roles in America. Furthermore, the measurement standards of American kitchen design, such as counter and sinktop height, which also influenced the establishment of the 36-inch stove, will be analyzed.

The notorious 36-inch countertop and stove now seen in almost all contemporary American kitchens did not always exist, at least not as the sole option for American consumers. In the early 1800s until the 1900s, American stoves were offered in an ample assortment of heights. In addition, these various ovens could be positioned under, over, and beside the cooktop, depending on consumer preference. However, by the end of the 1920s, the American stove industry consolidated and many small ranges were no longer available for purchase. Regardless, American buyers still had plenty of different stove heights from which to choose. For instance, the Sears and Roebuck catalog of 1927 offered "an assortment of stoves: two electric, two gas, two gas and coal, and five wood and coal. Not all heights-to-cooktop were listed, but this group included models at 29 ½, 31, and 33 ¾ inches" (Avakian and Haber 41). Because the majority of American consumers presumably desired varying stove heights at this time, the stove and oven market provided a hodgepodge of options.

As a result of the stove market granting the American consumer's wish, the demand for a range of stove heights and oven positions increased as the 1910s and 1920s progressed. In fact, in the early 1900s, the freedom from the need to stoop was a major selling point. According to Avakian and Haber, a 1907 Climax Estate gas stove catalog states that ranges with elevated ovens "must appeal to any one as being practical, common sense, and convenient. Access is easily had to the broiler, bake oven, and cooking top without stooping or bending. Full view of baking and broiling is a great advantage to the cook" (41). Thus, the research intimates that as a result of popular demand and such marketing and design techniques, the raised oven was extremely popular in the early part of the twentieth century.

Besides their varying heights, most American stoves constructed in the 1910s and 1920s had multiple ovens. The higher of the two ovens would be used for “everyday” cooking. On the other hand, the lower oven, known as the “holiday oven,” was used primarily on special occasions to cook turkeys and hams (Avakian and Haber 42) ***(See Appendix A)***. Because the popular “holiday oven” was mainly used to prepare meals for auspicious occasions, such as Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, presumably numerous Americans in the early twentieth century were focused on the ritualistic dimension of eating and drinking. In other words, to prepare those specialty meals, which are an integral part of the American ritualistic holidays, numerous Americans preferred a special “holiday” oven, which the market correspondingly provided.

As the aforementioned research and claims seem to suggest, the American stove market of the early 1900s was particularly attuned to the cooking needs and preferences of the majority of Americans, particularly regarding their desire for the convenience of a suitable oven height. Thus, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the American consumer appears to have dictated the oven designs built by the stove market. However, during the later half of the 1920s and gaining force as the 1930s progressed, the tides changed and the kitchen and stove market began to manipulate the American buyer into accepting the “streamlined look,” [1] which in terms of the kitchen refers to a level-planed and smooth curving counter and cooktop.[2] In other words, at the start of the 1930s, the “popular” American kitchen design principles were presumably determined and implemented by kitchen and stove companies. Interestingly, the influence of the streamlining design movement, which left the American consumer with fewer and less practical options for stoves and ovens, can be attributed to the American kitchen industry’s adoption of German architecture.

During the twentieth century, Germany housed most of the century’s prominent architecture. Thus, it is not surprising that American kitchen architecture followed this country’s lead. In *Mechanization Takes Command*, a well-known history of mass production, Sigfried Giedion discusses the German influence on the establishment of the continuous countertop by providing the following architectural examples of German kitchens. For instance, the Haus am Horn, a German-style single-family home displayed at Weimar in 1923, contained a single-level sink and sideboard along a lone kitchen wall. Similarly, a 1927 Weissenhof settlement in Stuttgart, included a kitchen with level L-shaped work surface (See Appendix B). However, it was the 1927 Frankfurter Kutche kitchen model that illogically finalized the continuous countertop as an integral component of a kitchen. All work surfaces in this kitchen were the same height, an architectural depiction of the “simplified line” admired by many architectural theorists (523-525). It was this “simplified line,” also known as the streamlined style that seemingly gave birth to the continuous countertop.

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[1] The “streamlined look,” also known as “streamlining,” was part of a popular design trend called Modernism. Modernism, which will be discussed in greater detail later in the paper, is characterized by “clean” lines and simplified forms that replaced the twisting curves seen in the Art Nouveau design movement (Avakian and Haber 45).

[2] This level-planed work surface will later be referred to as the “continuous countertop.”

At first, the continuous counter was admired by a few ultramodern architects, and if that had stayed the case through the thirties and forties, there is a considerable chance that only patrons of the arts would have adopted it by default (Avakian and Haber 44). However, the German architectural design quickly gained popularity in the United States. During the Great Depression in the United States, American design and fashion, in general, was straightening out, as Art Nouveau[3] gave way to Modernism. The "clean" lines and simplified forms of Modernism replaced twisting curves in everything from furniture and textiles to dinnerware. Consequently, the idea of thematic unity in home décor became extraordinarily prevalent. Accordingly, American industrial engineers began leveling uneven surfaces, including those in the kitchen, whenever possible (Avakian and Haber 45). In addition, American designers, particularly kitchen designers, rounded off sharp corners and edges in association with the streamlined look. Hence, the sense of modernity and forward progress streamlining conveyed, turned out to have considerable sales appeal to many Americans living in the depression (Hardyment 149). All these changes in fashion, as well as the depression were bad news for the American stove; just as it became one of the most useful and popular aspects of the kitchen, the American stove developed into a "rigidly conformist box," which was uncomfortable for almost all American women (Avakian and Haber 41).

But if the nation were entrenched in an economic depression, why would Americans be willing to buy a new stove of all things? After all, the early stove companies, such as General Electric and Standard Gas, had built such expensive and durable ovens.[4] Because the American nation was fixed in a depression and drowning in functional old stoves, the American stove companies cleverly convinced buyers that the old models were severely outdated. With the assistance of industrial designers, most notably, Norman Bel Geddes,[5] the stove companies persuaded Americans to buy these new streamlined models (Meikle 10-18). Unfortunately, these new kitchen designers came from the world of visual persuasion, and for them, outward appearance was just as, if not more important than functionality[6] (Meikle 83). As a result, the stove, and ultimately, the American cook would soon endure the painful consequences of this focus on fashion, rather than on practicality.

Thanks to the influence of impractical design and market trends, beginning in the late 1920s and strengthening throughout the 1930s, a streamlining trend was incorporated in nearly every aspect of kitchen design, creating a level-surface look throughout. Hence, countertop heights no longer varied and the completely level or continuous counter was

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[3] Art Nouveau was a decorative style of design that flourished from the 1890s until about 1910. It is an ornate style characterized by long, flowing lines and wavelike contours often influenced by forms in nature. The style developed as a protest against the mass production of the industrial age.

[4] A stove built in 1925 was most likely still working in 1935.

[5] Norman Bel Geddes, an American architect and theatrical and industrial designer, is known for his designs for the New York stage and for numerous industrial products. He also designed several theaters and other buildings in the United States and abroad (Meikle 17-18).

[6] Bel Geddes had started out in theatrical design and before recognizing his true calling – advertising (Avakian and Haber 46).

born. To be consistent with this "leveling" fad, the oven became a victim of the continuous countertop; that is, the previous "high oven" was now positioned below the cooktop and would never rise again. The transition from the high oven to the "modern" 36-inch stove fitted between continuous countertops is portrayed in a photograph of a 1934 complete electric kitchen from General Electric *(See Appendix C)*. One can notice the transitional model of the range. The stove is still up on legs and contains a high oven, but it is positioned as a continuation of the countertop, which itself is continuous. By decade's end, the continuous counter was a catastrophe's accomplice; the stove was locked at counter height; and that height was an equally locked 36 inches (Avakian and Haber 46).

But although this 36-inch standard allowed for the popular streamlined look of the continuous work surface, it made little practical sense, considering the height of the average American woman of the day. At that time, the typical American woman was about five feet three inches and the importance of proper working heights – roughly 32 inches, in this case – had been well known and widely broadcasted for almost thirty years (Freeman 26). Yet, the modern, streamlined look required most American women to stretch to adequately reach the 36-inch high counter. Regardless of American women's distress, the fad continued (Freeman 27). In fact, many stove advertisements throughout the 1930s and 1940s show examples of this then newly modern, yet back-breaking trend. For instance, a 1930s *Westinghouse Kitchen* advertisement, which endorses a "completely modernized kitchen," and a 1945 *Gas Kitchen* advertisement, which promotes "streamlined units" and "no dust-catching cracks," picture kitchens with completely level countertops that match up with the height of the stove and oven *(See Appendix D)*. Furthermore, other advertisements from this same time period[7] support the claim that the continuous countertop is not solely responsible for the demise of variable stove heights. The stove, like the level countertops, also needed to fit neatly beneath the assorted upper cabinets. Consider an advertisement for a General Electric Automatic Range from 1935, which states that "General Electric Ranges are beautifully styled in the modern mode of kitchen design" supposedly because "they can be placed flush against the wall and adjoining cabinets" *(See Appendix E)*. Hence, the research seems to propose that the stove became a box so that it would fit neatly between other boxes. Moreover, the stove seemingly had to be one standardized height so the maximum number of other "box-tops" would match up (Avakian and Haber 43).

Whether this 36-inch design appealed or worked for the majority of American female cooks, was no longer considered to the same degree to which it was in the early 1920s. In others words, the research seems to suggest that the popular fashions and market fads of the 1930s influenced – dictated may not be too strong a word – the stove purchaser's choice, while the opposite was true in the teens and twenties. However, even without these changes in fashion and the kitchen and stove market's manipulative promotion of them, some kind of radically new American stove was probably inevitable, thanks, in part, to a group of eminent women, the early household engineers. Kitchens, in late 1920s and early 1930s, were frequently designed by professional "household

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[7] Although only one advertisement will be discussed to support this claim, a thorough analysis of roughly ten other advertisements (not mentioned in this paper) from this period validate the argument.

engineers," such as Lillian Gilbreth and Christine Frederick, who are successors of original "self-efficiency" expert, Catherine Beecher (Meikle 7).

According to Ed Pell,[8] manager of market research at the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA), the concept of the continuous countertop is often traced back to the famous, household engineer, Catherine Beecher. In her 1869 book, *The American Woman's Home*, Beecher describes something very similar to the continuous countertop. Her kitchen design plan mentions a work surface, which she refers to as a "cook form,"[9] that is level with the sink (Beecher 34) *(See Appendix F)*. However, Beecher does not propose that other kitchen work surfaces should be level with the "cook form." Moreover, Beecher states that the stove should not only be separate from the "cook form," but it should also be located in another room, completely outside the kitchen (Beecher 34-35). Therefore, although several analysts of material culture attribute the birth of the continuous countertop to Catherine Beecher (Pell), the evidence from her book suggests that she cannot be blamed for this or the later development of the conformist, box-shaped stove.

Unfortunately, the evidence intimates that Beecher's heirs, Lillian Gilbreth and Christine Frederick are partially and ironically responsible for the origin of continuous countertop, which paved the way for the 36-inch standard. However, to appreciate the irony of these research-based claims, one must place these two household engineers into context.

As Dolores Hayden points out in *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, these two household engineers were determined to keep women in the kitchen (201). Thus, Gilbreth and Frederick were continuing the tradition of Catherine Beecher, who according to Root and de Rochemont, believed that women could be of equal influence or superior to men in the realm of the kitchen because the woman's control of the kitchen gave her a weapon by means of which she could control everything else. But though Beecher, Gilbreth, and Frederick felt that women should not relinquish the post of command provided for them by the kitchen, they saw no reason for accepting any servitudes connected with it, particularly ones embedded in the kitchen design itself (i.e., uneven and discontinuous work surfaces), if they could be eliminated (Root and de Rochement 221). Hence, according to Ed Pell, "step-saving," that is, eliminating the amount of steps a woman is required to take to complete tasks in her kitchen, was a major component of Beecher's, and later, Gilbreth's and Frederick's efficient kitchen design plan.[10] However, each of the aforementioned efficiency experts, wrapped up in the idea of step-saving, became mesmerized by the ease of moving objects on a level plane. According to Avakian and Haber, each of them understood perfectly well that the best counter height for making sandwiches is not the best for kneading dough; hence, they should have realized that fixing all kitchen counters at one specific height could be detrimental, as far as the user was concerned. After all, ensuring that work surfaces were the correct height for the

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[8] While Ed Pell is not an authority on all the historical aspects of the establishment of the 36-inch stove, he has done a considerable amount of academic and market-based research on this topic. See Appendix K for all interview questions.

[9] The "cook form" developed into the countertop seen in the majority of American kitchens today.

[10] See Appendix G, which includes Frederick's blueprints of several "efficient" kitchens.

person using them was one of the principle doctrines of the efficiency movement (48). Regardless, as the following research will suggest, the facade of efficiency and step-saving made possible by the "level-planed" kitchen work surface, eventually deceived Beecher, Gilbreth, Frederick, and the majority of American consumers.

Because individual tailoring was popular in the 1920s, Lillian Gilbreth considered height a critical feature in her kitchen designs. However, at five feet seven, Gilbreth was unusually tall compared to the average American woman at this time. Consequently, in the 1930s, her demonstration kitchen for the *Tribune*, which contained 36-inch tall counters, was planned with a five foot seven female user in mind (Avakian and Haber 50-51). But her miscalculations and detrimental influence on the 36-inch standard did not stop there. As a result of this kitchen display, in subsequent years, Gilbreth went on to design similar kitchens with the same height-standards for General Electric. Perhaps Gilbreth's designs would have been more logical and had less of a damaging influence on the standard work surface height, if she had considered an "average" American woman with regards to designing a surface height proportional to the height of the user. If this were the case, the proper height for the counter should have been approximately 32 inches (Oakley 31).

Unlike Gilbreth, Christine Frederick adamantly believed that the kitchen work surface height should be relative to the user. On July 6, 1913, not long after Frederick's kitchen design career had taken off, a *New York Times* article headlined "The Woman Who Invented Scientific Housekeeping" reported that "the ordinary houseworker, whether mistress or servant, … works at a surface too high or too low … yet how few think of changing the conditions even in their own houses. To obviate this, Mrs. Frederick has worked out a table of measurements for women of various heights." In fact, this table, as laid out in Frederick's book, *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home*, specifies heights in abundance: to the base of sinks, for standing kitchen work surfaces, and for sitting kitchen work surfaces *(See Appendix H)*. The standing work surfaces, presumably including stoves, ranged from 31 ½ inches, for a woman five feet tall, to 34 ½ inches, for a woman who was five feet six. All this was in spite of the fact that, as she claims only one page earlier, "No absolute rule can be given for invariable heights because not only the height of the worker must be taken into consideration but also the length of her arm, and whether she is short or long wasted, etc." (Frederick 38). Hence, Frederick recognized the importance for each individual American woman to have a work surface at an equally individual height. However, she later gave into the 36-inch standard most American cooks must grievously endure. According to Avakian and Haber, by the end of her career, Frederick had no problem conforming to the fad, for she nonchalantly announced, "Today we have settled on 36 inches as the most comfortable counter height for most workers" (50).

In their later years, Gilbreth and Frederick were so inconsistent about customized heights in the American kitchen,[11] it is difficult to imagine they would have utilized and indirectly influenced a universal standard so far off average. However, both were so wrapped up in the idea of step-saving, and to the same degree, deceived by the supposed

[11] Frederick and Gilbreth advised tall women to raise their counters on blocks and short women to saw the legs off of any kitchen furniture or appliances too high (Avakian and Haber 51).

efficiency and time-saving provided by a level work surface, they did not recognize that a continuous countertop cannot be all things to all kitchen tasks. In fact, the height at which American women washed dishes – the most treacherous kitchen duty according to the efficiency movement (Cowan 85-89) – induced the creation of the continuous countertop, and subsequently, the 36-inch stove.

In the early 1930s, before the establishment of the 36-inch continuous counter, countertops were generally about 31 inches tall, while the tops of freestanding sinks were a reasonable 36 inches (Avakian and Haber 52). Simply because the sinks were much deeper inside, the 36-inch tall sink was, in most cases, a suitable height for the user. Therefore, as the fad for streamlining and level work surfaces took hold, kitchen designers had to accept the following dictum: If an American woman does not want to break her back when it is time to do dishes, all measurements should not be taken from the tip of the counter, but from the bottom of the sink. In other words, when the streamlining trend gained control of the kitchen design market, the craze for the continuous countertop mandated everything from the stove burners to the sinktop to be constructed to the same height. Unfortunately, for American women of short to average stature, the sinktop was victorious and the 36-inch counter and oven height was conceived (Freeman 10).

Instead of focusing on the ridiculous and illogical height of the countertop, which as previously stated was too tall for most American female users, the kitchen design and stove advertisements cleverly drew the consumer's attention to the more comfortable height of the sink. For instance, Avakian and Haber cite a Standard Plumbing and Fixture Company advertisement from the 1930s that states, "Standard kitchen sinks, yardstick high, provide comfort and prevent back strain. How high is yours?" (52). However, an advertisement featured in the 1932 edition of *Good Housekeeping* portrays this idea, but not without deception *(See* Appendix I). The company does not show an "average-sized" American woman. Rather, with the yardstick conveniently provided, the woman pictured appears to be about six feet tall. Thus, the research seems to indicate that the market for the "yardstick standard" influenced the American consumer through advertising, just as the market for streamlining and Modernism manipulated many Americans to accept level work surfaces in the kitchen.

While the majority of American consumers would soon accept such falsities as the "proper" or normal height, many would not acquiesce without protest. As the stovetop rose with the 36-inch tall countertop, and the oven was forced to sink down below it, several Americans objected. For instance, the kitchen design industry's decision to lower the position of the oven was a particularly sore point, as shown by this journal entry, written by Joseph Kane, a carpenter, in 1928. Describing the introduction of the continuous countertop and how this affected the placement of the oven, Kane writes, "We are not justified in lowering the oven door to an incontinently low position. Yes, this awkwardly low location is necessary to produce a low tabletop. Maybe the industry should build higher counters then. Yet 36 inches is too high for most women to reach anyway. What ever happened to the high-range model!"[12] However, according to Ed Pell,

[12] Although Joseph Kane is not an expert in the field of kitchen design, he was a professional carpenter, who built his home's kitchen. Furthermore, while his opinion stated in his journal entry compliments the historically accurate viewpoints of several

this controversy over the lowering of the oven door, as noted in Kane's journal, did not last, at least not among stove makers. The popularity of the streamlined look of the tabletop range soon dismantled the disagreements over low oven positions. Continuing further on this point, Pell argues that by the late 1930s, the high oven was gone and its replacement, the modern 36-inch box stove, did not have the legs that might have made the stoves easily adjustable.

Although American kitchens gained an aesthetically unified and modern look with the streamlined oven, whose stovetop matched up with the height of the 36-inch counter, the puzzle still remains. Legs would have made adjustability easier and ovens more user-friendly. Similarly, it would not have been very expensive for the stove companies to construct bases with different heights; after all, stove makers certainly did not mind offering several versions of what was basically the same sheet metal box (Avakian and Haber 54). For instance, the Hotpoint stove catalog of 1928, as cited in Avakian and Haber's book, offered numerous "Special Features … Add them to Hotpoint's basic features and you have a modern range specially designed to meet your own specific needs." The American consumer could have a "choice of ovens" (certain ranges offered more wattage) and a "choice of broilers" (fancier ones were aluminum, standard was porcelain); there were choices in work surface arrangement, number of burners, number of ovens, and number of storage drawers. Moreover, the American consumer could opt for extra outlets, get spiffier hardware, even, if one paid more, avoid burning one's arms by getting the controls on the front of the stove instead of on the backsplash. However, the one thing the
American consumer could not request was a stovetop at a height higher or lower than 36 inches.
Under "Choice of Dimensions," which offered depths of either 23 or 25 inches, and lengths of 21, 39, 39 ½, 42, and 54 inches, there was the discouraging announcement: "Height of cooking top – all models are 36 inches from the floor" (55).

Admittedly, most of those "special features" were little more than cosmetic. Hotpoint could at least have offered adjustability to those who were willing to pay for it. But if they did, it would have blown away the modern-looking continuous countertop, and along with it the chance to sell the modular kitchen cabinets produced by furniture manufacturers, the electric sink, complete with disposal and dishwasher, made by Hotpoint itself, and by extension the increased use of electricity that the fully modernized kitchen would consume (Avakian and Haber 55). Yet, besides the influence of modernism and streamlining, the research implies that American gender issues are also responsible for the continual bending over and stooping housewives were forced to endure as a result of the 36-inch standard. Thus, it is critically fitting that one must examine what the catastrophic continuous countertop and 36-inch stove presumably reveal about American character, specifically gender roles.

The strain and pain the majority of American housewives were and are still forced to endure, as a result of the kitchen's improper working heights, seems to echo the physical constraints that the corset placed on the late nineteenth-century American

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dissatisfied American kitchen and oven users at this time, his words do not represent all Americans' stance on the lowering position of the oven and the principle of the continuous countertop.

woman. To adequately fulfill their “sphere”[13] of domestic responsibility, American women in the 1920s were expected to possess moral virginity, along with ability to reproduce. Hence, the corset, a common undergarment worn at this time, was shaped to accentuate the woman’s breasts and hips (motherhood) and to flatten the stomach (facade of never actually delivering a child) (Miller 134). Yet, the constraining fit of the corset presumably reveals something deeper about gender roles in the nineteenth century, which also appears to be reflected in the American kitchen’s uncomfortable counter and stovetop height. The corset and the height of the American kitchen’s work surface seemingly reflect the male hegemony intertwined in American culture and compliments the American myth of gender equality. The corset placed women below men, in that the women who wore corsets were compellingly dependent on others for practically everything (i.e., lifting, getting dressed, picking up dropped items, etc.), denying the possibility for functional labor. Similarly, although the height of the countertop compels numerous American housewives to prepare food at a straining height and the low position of the oven’s opening forces them to stoop to bake and broil food, the aforementioned research seems to suggest that the American cult of domesticity (woman’s domestic role) requires them to continue preparing meals despite physical discomfort.

The research that will now be presented on the role of twentieth-century American feminists in the general culture of kitchen design further compliments the claim that gender roles and hegemony, in part, allowed the 36-inch stove and continuous countertop to prevail. Many American feminists, as described by historian Dolores Hayden in *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, “demanded the transformation of the private domestic workplace, the kitchen,” into something large, centralized, and, preferably, cooked in by someone else” (208). For instance, the American feminist Marie Stevens Howland “passed over domestic work … as a job for ‘trained people’” (124). Similarly, feminist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman was an advocate of the kitchenless home, where housework would be done “by experts instead of amateurs” (195). Yet, removing the woman completely from the American kitchen, supposedly freeing her from the shackles of domesticity, ironically appears to have permitted the uncomfortable counter and stove top height to persist as a kitchen standard. As Hayden points out, the problem was succinctly stated by Laura Fay-Smith, who wrote in a *New York Times* article of 1915, “The feminist wants to climb high above the harsh labors of the house, on the shoulders of the women whose hard necessity compels them to be paid servants” (201). This disinterest in the actual physical labor of cooking left the field of consumer advocacy wide open for the previously discussed market and fashion trends, which restricted, and later eliminated, the adjustability of the American stove’s height. Nonetheless, the research seems to suggest that the nineteenth century feminists, unlike the earlier mentioned household engineers, mistakenly attempted to combat male hegemony by removing women from the kitchen completely, instead of addressing the problem of the

[13] In her book, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*, Joan Burstyn refers to the concept of “separation of spheres,” meaning each gender in the America household is required to fulfill a specific role. These roles involve specific duties; American men are expected to earn a living by entering the workforce (male “sphere”), while the women are expected to stay at home and fulfill their domestic duties, such as cooking and cleaning (woman’s “sphere”).

kitchen countertop height and the location of the oven, which were and are still not comfortably accessible to many American housewives.

Although since the 1930s the aforementioned kitchen market and design trends changed considerably, the household engineers died off, and the blurring of spheres took place, the 36-inch stove and the continuous countertop rapidly matured into a mighty dictator of many Americans' overall kitchen layouts. A 1936 General Electric kitchen advertisement provides an insightful peek into how the "yardstick standard" prevailed *(See Appendix J)*. Considering the legs on the gas stove range, the kitchen pictured at the top of the advertisement is presumably from the pre-Modernism era. The advertisement implies that this kitchen is "old-fashioned" and "full of work, crossed and re-crossed with countless steps" because it does not contain the "one-by-one" or streamlined units and counters pictured in the "modern General Electric Kitchen," shown below. The modern General Electric kitchen, unlike the older kitchen pictured above, has modular cabinets, a dishwasher, and all electric appliances. Moreover, the modern General Electric kitchen has a stove and oven placed at a height equal to that of the continuous countertop. Hence, once the majority of Americans were sold on the idea of the continuous counter and once they were safely locked in with the stove – the one essential piece of equipment that they could not hope to build or alter at home –, none of their old kitchen furniture fit. But thanks to the countertop's and stove's locked, uniform height, all of the new kitchen appliances and furniture on the market were just the right size. Hence, as this advertisement intimates, the opportunities for cooperative advertising were enormous.[14]

In addition, post-1930s kitchen designers and carpenters became equally accepting, even when they knew the standard height was likely to cause problems (Avakian and Haber 50). Consider Edward McGarvey,[15] who covered the subject of kitchen layouts in the 1961 Madsen Kitchen and Bath annual report. True to accepted ergonomic wisdom, he pointed out: "The practice in modern kitchen layouts having all surfaces on a level plane, using the 36 inch height of the stove as the unit of measure, places more emphasis on appearance than suitability. Different tasks performed in the kitchen frequently require work surfaces of different heights."[16] In spite of this

[14] The trend toward more up-to-date kitchens got a big boost in 1935 when the National Kitchen Modernization Bureau was established jointly by the Edison Electric Institute (now Electric Engineering Association) and The National Electrical Manufacturers Association to actively promote kitchen modernization throughout the country.
Tied in with the Federal Housing Bureau on general modernization of the home, the new bureau launched an extensive program that included the creation of model modern kitchen displays; radio programs' distribution of modern electric kitchen plan books; a feature motion picture entitled "the Courage of Kay," in which the subject was dramatized with numerous tie-ins with retailers, appliance and kitchen equipment manufactures, builders, and others (Avakian and Haber 55).

[15] Although the 1961 Madsen Kitchen and Bath Annual Report represents a single kitchen and design company's forced acceptance of the 36-inch standard, it compliments the historical research of June Freeman, who states that kitchen designers and carpenters utilized the 36-inch height as a standard or basis for all other measurements of kitchen construction (Freeman 32).

[16] McGarvey, in this report, seems to have taken for granted that the stove dictated the height of the counter. But the long history of variable stove heights, combined with their sudden jolt to rigidity just when the continuous counter became the sine qua non of

understanding, McGarvey, like nearly all other kitchen designers, did not protest the height of the range in the Madsen Kitchen and Bath report, perhaps because he knew there was nothing he or the company could do to avert this dilemma.

Faced with a juggernaut like that – the project was stopped only by onset of the World War – it is not surprising that high ovens and uneven work spaces were the odd utilities out. American women never stopped wishing for elevated ovens, though, and "Shopping for a Good Stove," Joy Parr's essay about how the business worked in Ontario in the early 1950s, could easily have been written about the United States:

> Historically, the most common Canadian solid-fuel-burning ranges had ovens beside rather than below the burners. Early gas and electric stoves followed this form. Buchanan,[17] skeptical when he could find only one Canadian electrical range, a McClary, with the oven at what the housewives claimed was the right height, referred the matter to an authority, Dr. J. B. Brodie, head of household science at University of Toronto. Dr. Brodie made common cause with the housewives, arguing that plans "to
> 'streamline' everything and have a working space around the kitchen at one level … are evolved by those who do not work in a kitchen and we know that they are not efficient." Her words were well chosen. Buchanan, a proponent of British Good Design principles, regarded streamlining as a heresy hatched by American salesmen (178).

In spite of considerable pressure from consumer groups, most Canadian manufacturers were unwilling to try reintroducing high oven stoves, at least in part because American market tests had failed. The one model built did not sell, and that may well have been because it just did not blend in with the streamlined look of a "modern" kitchen (Parr 179). Henry Dreyfuss, who disavowed the later excesses of streamlining while proudly claiming his part in having hatched it in the first place, offered the following analysis in his 1955 book, *Designing for People*: "Our grandmothers used [the high oven range] twenty-five years ago, but it virtually disappeared when the industrial designer came along and created revolution in the kitchen by making everything counter height, including the stove. Several years ago, however, research indicated a preference for high-oven ranges and a manufacturer offered an improved model. Women liked its greater convenience … but they didn't buy it. The table-top stove flush with the other cabinets in the kitchen had become such a style factor that the ladies refused to be budgeted away from it" (Dreyfuss 69).

Regrettably, Henry Dreyfuss seems to be right. The continuous counter still rules, probably at least in part because deconstruction finally solved the high oven problem at just about the time he was writing. By the end of the 1950s, wall ovens were such a cliché of "contemporary" kitchen design that English music hall comedians, Michael Flanders and Donald Swann could sing, in a 1957 performance of *A Drop of the Hat*, "I'm delirious about our new cooker equipment with the eye-level grill. This means that now, without my having to bend down, the hot fat can squirt straight in my eye."

American kitchen design, suggests that originally it was the counter that dictated the height of the stove, rather than the reverse (Hardyment 152).

[17] Donald W. Buchanan was head of the National Industrial Design Council (Parr 173).

Wall ovens are now commonplace in American middle-class homes and almost a given in those of the upper class. But the separate oven has done nothing to solve the counter problem, and though Modernism has been out so long it is enjoying a revival, streamlining never stopped defining this aspect of American kitchen design. Why would it? The continuous countertop is the best thing that ever happened to the multibillion dollar kitchen design and construction industry. All American mass-produced kitchen cabinets are still built to the 36-inch standard; so are most dishwashers; and for those Americans who must buy a kitchen range, the “yardstick standard” continues to prevail.

Throughout the course of this research, many other questions were discovered that could foster further research. Yet, for the sake of coherency and space, not all factors that influenced the 36-inch standard were examined in this paper. Thus, an analysis of urbanization, industrialization, and the replacement of wood and coal by gas and electricity would provide additional insights into the creation of the 36-inch box-top stove. An examination of the birth of the modern stove, more generally, could also initiate several possibilities for future research. For instance, electricity reduced the flexibility provided by the gas flame to a number of arbitrarily chosen points built on the stove’s rheostat; and when today’s almost completely automated stove developed, the genius of the individual cook appears to have been almost annulled by it. Perhaps then, one could research whether the mechanics of the modern stove makes it possible for almost anyone to cook acceptably. Beyond the suggested topics concerned with the American stove and 36-inch standard specifically, an investigation of how the American kitchen layout as a whole changed through the years in accordance with the ever-changing concept of American character would be riveting. Furthermore, a comparison of the measurement standards and layouts in an American kitchen versus kitchens built in other countries, such as England, deserves consideration.

Although there are many intriguing possibilities for further research, the information collected on this topic of the American stove reveals a great deal about the influence of design and market trends, “efficiency-based” architectural movements, and the role of gender on the majority of past and present-day American kitchens. Moreover, this analysis of the pervasiveness of a counter and stove top height, which is uncomfortable for most average-sized American female users, provides vivid snapshots into the complex and captivating notion of American character. Unfortunately, unlike the ever-changing concept of American character, it appears that the tyranny of the yardstick is as absolute as it was sixty years ago.

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Lights, Camera, Action! America Goes to the Movies

Jamie Peteraf

"We believe that to enhance the overall experience of going to the theatre, we've got to direct our concessions to various demographic sectors," said Garth Howard Drabinsky, chairman and president of the Cineplex Odeon Corporation (Cummings C-3). The following paper will closely examine the food and drink experience in the American movie theatre. First, a glimpse at the introduction of the concession stand into theatres will provide a foundation for procedures and standards utilized today. Overall, this study will include the following topics: lobby atmosphere, popcorn production, healthy product options, product combinations, popular products, specialty product offerings, outside food policies, and employee standards.

When one examines the theatres of the 1920s, he/she discovers that these were grand places where "white gloved ushers leading the way to plush velvet seats inspired awed reverence." Conversely, the attitude of the day was that the "smacking of burlesque and carnival food within the picture palace was most definitely not allowed" (Gwathmey and Margoues 102). The selling of popcorn and snacks, as we now know to be an American tradition at movie theatres, was not profitable enough before the Great Depression. The cinemas of this time were of superior design. Not only was it thought that popcorn and snacks would end up on the floor, ruining the sophisticated ambiance, but also that they were not equipped with vents to control the smoke that would occur while making popcorn (Smith 100).

Because food was considered a liability for the early classy theatres, shops were strategically placed next to door so patrons would be able to eat before and after films. However, the occurrence of the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s changed the dynamic of the food and drink experience in cinemas forever. As a result of the tragic American event, popcorn would make its big debut into most theatres across the country, though it was not a smooth transition (Gwathmey and Margoues 102).

Immediately after the effects of the Great Depression took place, attendance dropped at the cinema and the owners decided to seek more profits by way of food rather than ticket sales (Gwathmey and Margoues 102). Popcorn vendors paid around twenty-five dollars a month to sell their products outside theatres. What is important to note, however, is that popcorn costs were about ten dollars for a hundred pounds of kernels, and it is reported that within the first week of sales a vendor could make around five hundred and thirty dollars alone. Vendors would sell large bags of popcorn for anywhere between five and ten cents. Consequently, when theatre owners found out about the profits their renters were making in order to bring patrons into their establishment, they decided to cut out the middleman and sell the product directly from the cinema lobby. Additionally, popcorn makers discovered early on that it was ingenious to pop yellow corn versus white corn due to the fact that it appeared freshly buttered, which would appeal to hungry patrons (Smith 101-103). Popcorn began to make a permanent home in the American movie theatre after the great depression for the following reasons: it was cheap, easy to make, filling, nutritious, and the aroma was strong enough to attract patrons from the streets outside of the cinema doors. According to Gwathmey and Margoues "popcorn production became such a big business that it grew into a major farm crop during the forties." A saying went "find a good location for a popcorn stand and build a theatre around it" (Gwathmey and Margoues 102).

A final point about the early customs of movie theatres is the standards for hiring employees. Cinema owners "found that an attractive seventeen-year-old girl who has been properly trained can sell twice as much popcorn as a middle aged woman" (Smith 103).

"There was a general attitude in this business 10 to 12 years ago that going to the movies had nothing to do with the theatre environment," says Marc Pascucci, vice president of advertising and publicity for Loews theatre. "But that's changed a lot. A lot of exhibitors have decided to focus on better facilities and on customer service" (Matsumoto, sec. F). The lobby atmosphere of a cinema can reveal much about the food and drink experience a patron will go through when seeing a film. The spectrum of diverse environments within different theatres from Philadelphia and the surrounding are incredibly intriguing. From the dull and drab set up of the AMC Orleans theatre in the Northeast of Philadelphia, to the flashy, "one stop shop" arrangement of the Loews Cineplex in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and finally all the way to the sophisticated, shabby chic air of the Ritz Sixteen in Voorhees, New Jersey, movie patrons from these areas can have completely different food and drink experiences just within a few miles of each other.

(AMC Orleans 8 concession stand – Taken 12/4/06)

The concession stand of the AMC Orleans 8 pictured previously displays a dull and drab design. From the ceiling to the floor, the color scheme as well as the overall set up of this lobby is limited and lacking in luster. There is a combination of tile and carpet that is, to say the least, optically unattractive. Moreover, the lobby size is quite small as well as inadequate in providing seating for patrons who do not wish to stand in line for food and drink products. On the other hand, the lobby of the Orleans does provide its young customers with the option of playing arcade games, or taking memorable photographs in a photo booth. The overall feeling one has inside of the AMC Orleans 8 lobby is one of rushed feelings to quickly escape from its claustrophobic size and unappealing design so he or she can at least enjoy a film. The general manager, Jim McGovern, even said that fast service is one of the characteristics he is proud of in his theatre.

(Loews Cineplex Concession Stand – Taken 12/1/06)

Continuing, the lobby of the Loews Cineplex in Cherry Hill, New Jersey takes a step up in comparison to the Orleans. Just at first sight of the above picture, one can see how the design of the concession stand alone is optically invigorating. It is bright, flashy, and extremely eye catching. The ceiling is at least triple the height of the Orleans with glass panels for an attractive sky view. The sheer floor size of the lobby creates a welcoming traveling atmosphere as well as the rows of seating in front of big screen televisions to provide an area for patrons to eat full-sized meals before a show instead of just snacks. Moreover, there are two auxiliary concession stands, which can be opened when business is at its highest peak (Zarrillo). The Loews lobby is also equipped with an ice cream sundae stand, as well as a café for patrons to purchase cappuccinos and lattes. Cleverly located next to the ice cream sundae stand is a variety of arcade games.

(The Ritz Sixteen Concession Stand – Taken 12/1/06)

An article in the Christian Science Monitor describes a theatre in Toronto by stating that "the cinema lobby oozes into a bookstore that oozes into a café" (Walker 19). The Ritz Sixteen in Voorhees, New Jersey "oozes" with sophistication in every aspect of its lobby. Although it at first appears plain, the concession stand previously pictured influences its customers artistically by providing painted images of its products, rather than photographs. The counters are a sleek black, and the walls are a soothing gray. The entire lobby is carpeted for podiatric comfort (Wroblewski). Additionally, patrons are provided with leather couches as well as artistic magazines and periodicals to enjoy while waiting for the start of their film. Consequently, there are no arcade games or televisions in this lobby. Customers can breeze through The Ritz Film Bill to read about upcoming films rather than watch previews in the lobby. This suggests that patrons at the Ritz Sixteen are of literate standards. There is a stand that serves bakery and café items, which is more extensive in its menu items than that at the Loews Cineplex. Lastly, what is also worth mentioning is the optical appeal of the Ritz Sixteen. The lighting is dim, but not dull as the Orleans and furthermore, it is seasonally decorated with poinsettias that are kind to customer's eyes.

Continuing, a few years ago the Center for Science in the Public Interest issued a report on how unhealthy coconut oil is. Many theatres changed the type of oil they used for their popcorn; however, they switched back shortly after. According to Denise Mann's article "Don't let that blockbuster blow your diet," peanut oil is a much better option for making popcorn due to the fact that it does not clog arteries (1). Jim McGovern, general manager of the AMC Orleans 8, explained that many patrons in his movie theatre could possibly be allergic to peanuts and therefore if his establishment were to utilize this healthier option, not only would profits go down, but customers would be disappointed due to the fact that they could not consume their favorite snack when going to the movies. Thus, both the Orleans and Loews Cineplex use coconut oil. On the other hand, the Ritz Sixteen uses a healthier option of a mixture of coconut and canola oil. According to the managers of these theatres, this is the type of oil their patrons prefer and what sells.

To proceed further into the topic of healthy options, one can inquire into the problems a diabetic movie watcher might have when wanting to purchase snacks at the movies. Previously, the Orleans did sell sugar free candy; however, it was discontinued due to poor sales (McGovern). The Loews Cineplex has never offered sugar free candy. Consequently, there are no rules against patrons bringing in outside food to the theatre (Zarrillo). What is most interesting to note is the extensive list of healthy and sugar free options the patrons at the Ritz Sixteen have available. It includes sugar free candies, sugar free cheesecake, unsalted and air popped popcorn, as well as carob raisins and pretzels, which is a healthier alternative to chocolate (Wroblewski). In conclusion, people going to the Ritz have more healthy options rather than the other two theatres, which give hungry patrons no choices.

"To combat customer complaints about high concession prices, more theatres are offering the type of value packages that have become staples of fast food outlets" (Matsumoto, sec. F). This is true of both the Orleans and Loews Cineplex. Dominick Zarrillo, general manager of the Loews Cineplex, explains that value is added into their combos for their patrons. For example, when customers purchase a large soda and popcorn, they will have the opportunity to buy a hotdog for one dollar. In contrast, the Ritz Sixteen in Voorhees does not offer any type of combination of their products to reduce high concession prices. One can hypothesize that the Ritz assumes their patrons are not in need of discounted food and drink prices, but rather can afford the influx. In a like fashion, a theatre in Toronto also creates appealing combos to its customers by providing the option of themed meals like quesdillas for the showing of Zorro movies and peach cheesecake for Gone with the Wind.

Rick Wray, theater manager of the Film Forum in SoHo, is observed that "the type of audience the Film Forum serves is important. They want different films, they want different foods" (Cummings C-3). Accordingly, patrons of the Philadelphia located Orleans 8 want pretzels bites more often than not at the concession stands. This can be attributed to the tradition of the soft pretzel in the area, which is not the same for theatres on the west coast (McGovern). Furthermore, the Loews Cineplex has a reputation for also providing its customers with meals before the movie. Consequently their most popular product that comes in high demand is the chicken tender combo that includes french fries and a soft drink (Zarrillo). Of course, the Ritz Sixteen's patrons have a different pallet than that of the other two theatres, and consequently their most popular product is tiramisu cake. Staying true to its already stated theme, one can conclude that the Ritz serves a more sophisticated crowd than that of the Orleans or Loews Cineplex.

One can now see a return to the refined style of the cinema during the 1920s through the food and beverages served today. The Plitt Century Plaza in Beverly Hills, California "offers not only a choice of imported beers, but even champagne by the glass." At the Film Forum in SoHo, one "can snack on home-style cakes and cookies, ice cream, nuts, and dried fruits as well as old fashioned egg creams." Conversely, the Cinema I and II at Third Avenue and 60th Street tried selling fancy goods, but the assistant manager David Klingham stated that they did not last due to the roaches. This suggests that gourmet products are only a place for classy theatres. The Loews Cineplex tries to incorporate more epicurean items for their customers with the addition of a café; however, the Ritz literally takes the cake in this category with a vast selection of desserts, coffees, teas, and bakery items available for patrons in the area.

Bruce Taffet, executive vice president of food service, marketing and purchasing for United Artists Theatre Circuit says that about 80% of his company's box office receipts go to the film distributors. As a result, theatres depend on concession sales to stay in business (Matsumoto, sec. F). Thus, this brings up the topic of outside food policies. Both the Orleans and Loews Cineplex would have to agree with Bruce Taffet; however, they do not see a need to impose a policy on their customers. Jim Wroblewski, manager of The Ritz Sixteen, does not mind outside food in the lobby. He does not want it in the actual theatre. "Our goal is making the movie–going experience as enjoyable for them as possible so they will want to come back," says Tony Adamson, director of marketing and advertising for AMC. "If that includes them bringing in hamburgers because we don't serve them, then we're not going to stop them" (Matsumoto, sec. F).

Dominick Zarrillo of the Loews Cineplex in Cherry Hill feels the same way. He has an open door policy for all outside food, which most patrons are not aware of. Recently there was an incident where a group of teenage girls were concealing soda bottles in their jackets, which kept falling out. Dominick assured the ladies that they did not have to hide their beverages because they were welcomed into the theatre with no consequences. Jon Matsumoto explains this incident in his article "Cover Story" by stating "The young movie going teen population may be the group most likely to smuggle in food into movie theatres. Young people are typically constrained by budget concerns and are more prone to rebellious behavior anyway" (Sec. F). Jim McGovern of the AMC Orleans 8 also has an open door policy on food. He would allow people to bring in a whole pizza pie if that is what would get them in to see a film. The only limits he puts on his policy is allowing in glass bottles due to the fact that they can easily break and injure patrons. What is most important to note is that all three managers do not see as many customers smuggling in food as most people would think. "It's just not worth the hassle to smuggle in food," says Paul Hiegel, 46, who enjoys the experience of settling in for a movie with a freshly popped bucket of popcorn (Matsumoto, sec. F).

The last topic to examine is the employee standards. In the past, managers were inclined to hire young teenage girls to sell their food products. But this practice this has changed drastically. Now, the Orleans, Loews Cineplex, and the Ritz all have the same requirements for hiring their employees. Their workers all must be willing to interact with the public and have a good attitude when it comes to customer service. Conversely, what is interesting to note is while the Orleans and Loews Cineplex encourage their employees to utilize suggestive selling to their patrons, the Ritz does not. One can speculate from this observation that the Ritz does not need to pressure their customers into buying any of their products. They are given the freedom to choose on their own, while the patrons at the other theatres are considered to need suggestions in making their food and drink choices.

John Harvey Kellogg would have been impressed with the options available at the Ritz Sixteen in Voorhees. Due to the fact that he created a specific diet, which did not include sugar, he would praise the selection of sugar free candies and cakes. Furthermore, he would appreciate the air popped, unsalted popcorn. On the other hand, Kellogg would not be pleased at not being able to utilize information about non-packaged products. Both the theatre managers at the Loews Cineplex and the Ritz were not willing to give out nutrition facts about food that was not already packaged; however, Jim McGovern said if a customer were to ask for information, he would gladly show him or her the facts printed on the bulk box behind the counters. Moreover, "The Three Fat Women of Antibes" would at first settle for the healthy options at the Ritz. This is mostly likely because they were at an establishment where they could not drink cocktails, but rather tea with no cream or sugar, and they were to eat the simplest food. One could theorize they would be ecstatic with the carob raisins or pretzels that is a healthy chocolate alternative. This way Arrow, Frank, and Beatrice would have the best of both worlds: health and taste. (American Studies 400 Notes).

Also, movie theatres today are similar to diners in that, generally, they are both highly accommodating to their customers. The Country Club Diner in the Northeast area of Philadelphia provides menu options for their highly Jewish populated neighborhood with matzo ball soup and Jewish apple pie. In like fashion, the Ritz Sixteen accommodates for diabetic patrons with sugar free candy and the Loews Cineplex provides meals for its many customers who think of the theatre as a "one stop shop" when they do not have time to visit two separate establishments for dinner and a movie. Moreover, both the Orleans and Loews Cineplex provide for teenagers by having an open door policy on outside food should they not be able to afford the concession stand prices (Peteraf 5).

As a result of the aforementioned research, when a family, couple, or even group of teenagers decide to go out to the movies on a Friday night, their choice of the cinema could mean a world of difference in their overall experience. Every aspect from the lobby atmosphere to the theatre's employees can affect the patron in various ways in an assortment of demographic locations. Nevertheless, trends in products and policies may come and go; however, going to the movies and enjoying a bucket of popcorn with a cold soda will always be one of America's favorite pastimes.

For further research concerning the food and drink experience in movie theatres, one might interview more movie theatre managers. Furthermore, taking polls of frequent movie –goers could provide extensive information on trends in product purchases. Continuing, Jim McGovern, general manager of the AMC Orleans 8 mentioned how the effect of the record of local sports teams can affect business. For example, if a major city's football team is having a particularly poor season, patrons are more likely to turn out to the movies than want to stay at home to watch their favorite team lose again. It would be interesting to see what other effects other public entertainment has on the number of people who attend the movies.

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Inner-City Schools: Can No School Be Left Behind?

Katherine Cooper

> Look at the situation, they got me facing. I can't live a normal life, I was raised by the street… They say I got to learn, but nobody's here to teach me. If they can't understand it, how can they reach me? I guess they can't, I guess they won't, I guess they front. That's why I know my life is out of luck, fool.
>
> -Coolio "Gangsta's Paradise"

In a single day, November 17, 2005, there were more than 20 fights at Olney West. 28 students have already been expelled to disciplinary schools this year. There have been 64 incidents of serious crimes reported this year compared to 76 at this time last year. The violence in the cafeterias is so bad that students are afraid to even enter the rooms. 75 overaged, under-achieving students were removed in August and September; at least 150 overaged students still attend the school. Located in North Philadelphia, Olney West is one-half of Olney High, which was split in September into Olney East and Olney West to "minimize disruptions" (Snyder). As one of the 11 inner-city high schools in Philadelphia School District's CEO/CARE region "targeted for special help," large-scale fights, unchecked roaming of the halls, vandalism, and constant commotion are just a handful of the complaints from teachers and parents about Olney High. Split or no split, the school is substantially troubled, as are the bulk of inner-city schools—and while success is possible (as evidenced by the model inner-city high schools studied in this manuscript), it is largely unattainable on a nationwide basis.

The notorious 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) with its "stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents" demands that every child will be proficient in Reading and Math by the 2013-4 school year (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_Child_Left_Behind_Act). Is this a realistic mandate? Can this law overcome the factors that impede inner-city success such as the high correlation between poverty and educational opportunity and outcomes, the lack of sufficient federal funding, the inaccessibility of higher education, and the individualistic American way of thinking? Just as school reforms alone cannot bring about higher achievement in urban schools across the country, neither can a single federal law.

Since Olney High receives federal Title I funding due to the great proportion of low-income students, it is required like all public schools in the district to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under NCLB as measured through state-chosen standardized testing and state-defined minimum levels of improvement. For the 6th consecutive year the high school has failed. Thus, for the 6th consecutive year Olney High has been labeled "In Need of Improvement" (greatschools.net). According to NCLB, the label necessitates the implementation of the following measures: school transfer options, supplemental services, corrective action, restructuring (planning), and restructuring (implementation). Each has been added gradually as the consecutive years of failure to meet AYP increases. Clearly, none have been significantly effective and "restructuring" is slow to develop. Olney High is in need of much more than improvement via NCLB provisions—full scale reform is necessary.

Is AYP important to Olney High? Can it stand to be important at this time? What is of greater consequence is the well-being of the students, not progress in standardized testing. Enforcing academic expectations is unjustifiable when the basic safety of a student cannot be ensured. Essentially, Olney High is an open system—that is, helpless and unprotected against the injurious external influences that come with an inner-city environment. Such factors include, but are not limited to: poor health care, inadequate resources, family stress, interruptions in schooling, exposure to violence, homelessness, overcrowding, and discrimination. The students in these schools coming from low socioeconomic statuses are twice as likely to be retained in a grade, drop out of a school, and experience a violent crime (Woolfolk 158). This is what teachers are facing; this is the reality of inner-city schools.

Rap artist Coolio implores in his 1995 hit song, "if they can't understand it, how can they reach me?" (letssingit.com). According to Deborah Meier, Vice Chair Emeritus of the Coalition of Essential Schools and founder of the successful Central Park East School (NYC):"It is not true that the best way to learn to deal with adult change and trauma is to know nothing but change and trauma. In fact, quite the opposite. Greater intimacy between generations is at the heart of all the best school reform efforts around today" (Meie 13). Using this as a foundation, a number of inner-city high schools do not resemble Olney High at all. These high schools were transformed from top to bottom through the efforts of individuals like Deborah Meier and through task forces such as the Small Schools Project (http://www.smallschoolsproject.org), What Kids Can Do (http://www.whatkidscando.org), the School Redesign Network (http://www.schoolredesign.net), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (http://www.gatesfoundation.org). Three specific cases have been chosen at random from such projects to illustrate what characterizes successful inner-city high schools. The selected schools are Landmark High School in New York City, New York; Fenway High School in Boston, Massachusetts; and Best Practice High School, in Chicago, Illinois. Individually, their success will be studied, and collectively, patterns will be extracted to determine what truly makes them successful.

Before investigating the schools, it is necessary to define "successful" or the terms of success. For this study, "absolute success"—reaching a level of well-being higher than where one started—will be used; the term was coined by Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick, authors of *The American Dream and the Public Schools* (Hochschild and Scovronick 12). Additionally, the "levels" used to determine success must be clearly stated. Using the official school profiles from 2004 provided by the districts, the following data will be considered: attendance rates, drop-out rates, graduation rate, higher education rates, standardized testing results, and anecdotal information. Variations between school profile criteria accounts for the lack of data in particular areas. Due to time constraints and unavailability of data, such factors as higher education achievement (i.e. grades, types of institutions attended, and graduation rates) and life and career outcomes (i.e. 5-10 years later) of the same students could not be explored in this study. Further research is encouraged.

The first case studied was Landmark High School in New York City. Landmark is one of the 11 new schools started in 1993 through the Coalition of Essential Schools efforts and in conjunction with other organizations and private funders; it is a school of choice, but the district also assigns children (who generally arrive with many problems) to this placement (Cushman). Led by Deborah Meier, the school thrives under two foundations: every Landmark student is well-known by at least one Landmark adult and consistently high public standards are held for academic work (Cushman). The 80 students enrolled in the first year were "totally disaffected and miserably unhappy kids who had no place to go to school…They brought with them enormous problems: learning problems, language problems, tremendous discipline problems, drugs problems, criminal records" (Cushman). The results were bleak. Most students transferred or ended up in GED programs. Some left the city, while others were even incarcerated.

In the 2003-04 school year, Landmark housed 398 students: 62.3 % of the students were classified Hispanic, 30.7% African-American, and 2.5% Asian and others. The percentage of Hispanic students was 26.6% higher than that of other city schools, which increases the percentage of ESL and ELL students. 81.5% were eligible for free lunch in the 2003-04 school year. This is a 10.3% increase from 2002. In addition, 34.7% of entering 9th and 10th graders for the 2003 school year were overaged and 15.3% (significantly higher than that in other city schools) received special education services. The percent of students passing the Regents Examinations (standardized testing for the state) in Math and Reading declined by approximately a little more than half from 2003 to 2004 but when compared to similar schools the results are still higher. The school did not met AYP for 2003-04 in all subject areas but is "In Good Standing" for the Title I funding. Attendance was up .6% (to 82.9%), suspensions were down 14.5%, and the graduation rate increased from 64% to 73%. 55.2% of the students attended 4-year institutions and 24.1% attended 2-year institutions after graduation when compared to 50.3% and 16.3% respectively for their counterparts in other city schools (nycenet.edu). Postsecondary success (anecdotally) was evident too. Former principal Sylvia Rabiner relates: "Our best students are doing extremely well, and even those who weren't as strong come back and say, 'The writing helps, I can understand a lecture, I can do a paper. I don't get panicked. I can sit for two hours, and I can meet a deadline'" (Cushman).

Another noteworthy high school that works for inner-city youth is Fenway High School in Boston, Massachusetts. Founded in 1983 as an alternative education placement for at-risk students from large district schools, Fenway was a pioneer in the small schools movement and a part of the Boston Pilot Schools project. "Personalized relationships between teachers and students, integrated, flexible curriculum, on-site, shaped decision-making, and learning partnerships with outside organizations" are embraced at the school (fenwayhs.org). As one of the first "New American High Schools" named by the US Department of Education, Fenway is studied worldwide as a model of success.

With 270 students enrolled at the end of the 2003-04 school year, Fenway maintained an attendance rate of 92.8% and an annual drop-out rate of only 3.6%. The student population was 51.9% African-American, 26.7% Hispanic, 18.1% White and 2.6% Asian; of them, more than half (59%) were eligible for free lunch. No students were suspended for the entire school year. What is most distinctive about Fenway is its graduation rate. In 2004, 94% of the students graduated and 89% were admitted to college (Boston Public Schools). The 2004 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Results show that 89% of the sophomore class passed the English Language Arts and Mathematics tests. Fittingly, AYP was made in both content areas. Comparative data (from year to year) and additional information concerning higher education were not included in the school's official report card.

The final model inner-city high school is Best Practice High School in the Chicago School District. Established in 1996 through a partnership with National-Louis University, Best Practice was the first small public high school in the city of Chicago. It was based on Deborah Meier's Central Park East model, employing an "innovative curriculum to prepare youth in pursuing higher education" (http://www.bphs.cps.k12.il.us). Safety and size are considered the rudiments of their achievement.

Demographically, Best Practice had the highest percentage of minority students of the three schools examined. Of the 446 students enrolled, 76.9% were African-American, 20.9%

were Hispanic, .4% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and .4% were Native American. 76% of these students were considered low-income. The attendance rate was 87.4% and the drop-out rate was 7.2%. 75.8% of students graduated in 2004 and 51% of the students were enrolled in college or some form of postsecondary education. More than half of the graduates were economically disadvantaged and ¾ of them were students with disabilities. 78% of the freshmen in the current school year are on track to graduate. Overall the high school has made gains of 4.5% in their performance on state standardized assessments. Although the school has not met AYP for 2 years, the percent of students meeting or exceeding standards as measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) has increased in Reading, Mathematics, and most notably in Writing with a 22.6% increase (Illinois School Report Card).

Landmark, Fenway, and Best Practice each reflected success in the places where most inner-city high schools are failing. In investigating their core values, internal and external structure, and teaching and learning methods, it is evident that there are distinctive attributes that can make inner-city high schools successful. These common threads regard size, safety, teachers, curriculum, leniency from state departments and district, budgeting, and family/community relationships. Alongside one another, they produce schools that work.

Size is the central aspect of inner-city high school reform, as demonstrated in efforts like the Small Schools Project and the Coalition for Essential Schools. "Decades of research have shown that high schools with fewer than 400 students (no more than 100 per grade level) provide the most benefits to students." These benefits come in the form of "higher student attendance, motivation, graduation rates, and college attendance; improved school climate and safety; greater parent and community involvement; and higher staff satisfaction" (Mullin). Lannie, a student at Landmark affirms, "…you're more of an individual. They care about your feelings, what's going on at home, and what's going on in school. You're not just a number" (Cushman). In consequence, safety is heightened. Students in small schools are far less likely to experience physical danger, loss of property, and the demoralizing facts of vandalism (Mullin).

A smaller school means smaller classes and a smaller teacher to student ratio; these effects are huge. On average, classes consist of no more than 20 students and the teacher student load is 40 as compared to 150 in large, traditional schools (http://www.schoolredesign.com). However, to find (and retain) highly-qualified teachers with years of experience is still one of the biggest tribulations for inner-city high schools, reformed or not. What makes these schools nonetheless successful is the trust and intensive collaboration among teachers. In Meier's model schools, at least six hours of collaborative planning a week is required; "sharing expertise— copying— is viewed not as cheating but as a useful way of learning" (Meier, 20). Also interesting is the staffing decisions made by these schools. 83.9% of the staff at these small inner-city high schools are teachers whereas the percentages of teachers versus other staff at the normal inner-city high school is cut just about even. While this means more responsibilities (i.e. advisory groups) are placed on the teacher in the former case, this also means that administrative positions that generally deal with functional duties, unrelated to the actual students themselves, take just as much precedence as teachers in the latter. $300, 000 was spent on administrative assistants alone in the large school as compared with $30, 000 in the small school. One could argue that the larger student population requires more such assistance; however, if one assistant is needed for 400 students, then proportionally, only 4 would be needed for 1, 600 students, rather than 10. Teachers then are essentially the foundation of an effective inner-city high school.

It helps that in these redesigned schools, teachers are less restricted by their curriculum; alternative curriculums approved by the district and the state replace the standard programs and scripted agendas. These alterations are crucial to the reformation of inner-city high schools; every student is different and therefore room for accommodations must be considered when determining and enforcing state and district regulations. Otherwise additional reforms that are merely functional (i.e. transforming the size of a school) become less effective or completely useless. In studying the particular inner-city high schools, three key aspects of curriculum design have been extracted: performance assessment, essential questions and core themes, and "real world" experiences outside of the classroom. This model is observable in action at Landmark:

> A ninth- and tenth-grade core curriculum centers on a number of "essential questions" and aims to develop fundamental skills and higher-order thinking. Eleventh grade begins the two-year "Senior Institute" which includes discipline-based courses designed to yield projects suitable for the Graduation Portfolio, as well as Internships and college courses. And for all four years, all Landmark students belong to small advisory groups in which an adult advisor provides continual coaching in both academic and social-emotional areas (Cushman).

Fenway follows an almost identical blueprint, also focusing heavily on student support through tutorials, advisory groups, co-teaching, and learning centers; it is important that students establish strong bonds with their classmates and are well-known by their teachers (Boston Public Schools).

To augment such support, community and family relationships are fostered through the schools as well. For instance, at Fenway, "collaborators provide professional expertise and mentoring, worksite experiences, and six-week fulltime internships for all seniors" (Boston Public Schools) and at Landmark, every Friday afternoon, ninth-grade students explore the community around them (New York City) via museums, theatres, colleges, etc (Cushman). Because inner-city high schools do draw their students largely from low-income homes, it is still difficult to promote strong parent-teacher relationships despite best efforts to do so. However, parents are still expected to participate to the greatest extent possible and such opportunities are still abundant. On Fenway High School's website, there are pictures upon pictures of celebrated events that would supplement relationships such as Family Math Night, male and female retreats, Community Day, and Red-Sox games (http://www.fenwayhs.org).

School reform is not all theoretical. In other words, finance reform, the way the school allocates resources, is also important to their success. By contrasting the budgets of a large, traditional school and a small redesigned school, it is clear what changes are making the difference. It is also imperative to highlight the similarities. For example, the per student revenue, teacher and administration salaries and benefits, and money spent on books, supplies, and services (relative to the number of students) all remained the same. In the small, redesigned school, however, money was not spent on the salaries of a principal, assistant principals, deans, librarians, department heads, or security guards; in the original school, a total of $740, 000 dollars was put toward these positions. While both schools receive $5, 800 per student, the reformed school is able to allocate more resources to the classroom through their conscientious budgeting, redesigned staff structure, and authentic curriculum. Case in point, a benefit of the small school is the safe environment which eliminates the need (and cost) of security guards; $90, 000 was allotted for security guards alone at the large school.

Overall, thriving inner-city high schools exhibit the following seven characteristics, as demonstrated through the work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:

- Staff and students are focused on a few important goals.
- Staff has high expectations for all students and a shared vision of good teaching.
- Staff has time to collaborate to improve instruction and meet shared challenges.
- Instruction and promotion are based on demonstrated learning.
- Every student has an advocate at school.
- The school environment promotes respect and responsibility.
- Technology is used as an effective teaching and learning tool (http://www.gatesfoundation.org)

Landmark, Fenway, and Best Practice make inner-city high school success a reality rather than merely an aspiration. These paradigms of triumph amongst urban environments yield hope and provoke more reform efforts. In a sense, they assert that the damaging influences of the open system can be conquered and that successful outcomes can be achieved by all students.

Revisiting Olney High, small-scale reforms there fizzled. Yet could this high school and its counterparts—despite the damaging powers of the inner-city— be as successful as Landmark or Best Practice or Fenway if the same reform measures were applied? Realistically, can these measures be applied to each failing school? In other words, is inner-city high school success largely attainable or are the models presented simply that—ideals, exceptions? Can these exceptions become the rule?

Inner-city high school success on a nationwide basis is simply unachievable through school reform alone. Its ineffectiveness cannot be attributed to one particular factor. Rather it is the result of many. In this study, the major rationale for the futility lies in the high correlation between the standard of living and educational achievement, the federal government's stringency and funding, and the lack of opportunities for postsecondary education.

Ultimately, "…the poorer the kid, the more likely she is to be a person of color, the more disadvantages she otherwise has in life and the more likely the school is to ignore all…of the above ideas" (Meier 23). These "disadvantages" are what can thwart even the best schooling in the nicest facilities with teachers who really genuinely care. Rick Takagaki, a veteran teacher at Warren G. Harding High School in West Los Angeles who is known for his profound impact on students, discovered over time that he could only do so much. "I was trained to believe that you need to reach every student, every minute. Yet what you come to realize is that in the broad sweep of their lives, you're little more than a speck of sand" (Rose 51). Even at Landmark this sentiment is felt with respect to the arriving students.

> Given that most of our youngsters come to us from lower-income economic backgrounds, with probably not terribly good educations before they arrived here, very low reading and math scores on the whole…They do not come here with a great work ethic. Punctuality is a continuous problem. What is lacking here is maturity…they're very distracted by the distractions of teenage life (Cushman).

On top of the "disadvantages" and "distractions," inner-city high schools, successful or not, are faced with undoing the poor instruction of eight or so years of previous schooling. By 4th and 5th grade, these students begin to give up, become victims of learned helplessness, and formulate that their education will be of no lasting consequence to their outcome in life (Golba). Reversing such damage and improving such low self-concept is not impossible but it is certainly an immense task. School reform at any level can neither reform the home life nor the economic status of a student; it cannot control what the child experiences once outside of its walls. In an interview conducted with a thirteen year-old girl of mixed heritage (African-American, Cuban, Mexican) and limited English proficiency, who attends Edwin Markham Intermediate School in the LA Basin, the topic turned quickly from school to gang life.

> The gangs be killing a lot of people right now – little kids, sometimes. They killed two of my uncles and I don't want that to happen again…
>
> My dad, he used to gangbang. He's in jail now. And all my uncles are in jail, too. So I know. And I see my friends gangbang. I don't want that to happen in my life…
>
> It is hard. It *is* hard. Everybody's gangbanging. Everybody's looking all bad. But my brother says to me, 'Don't you see my life – how it is? Don't you do it. You're life's gonna be dumb. That's dumb for you… [Slowly] I should know. I should know' (Rose 57).

The emphasis on "I should know" is important; this young girl has seen gang life ruin her family but still conveys that her future could involve the same destructive things. To extract schooling completely from culture is impossible. Schooling ends while culture is inescapable and unstoppable. Other examples of this are the roles of peer resistance and disidentification in the downfall of inner-city high schools. A student at a school like Fenway may be the only one in his neighborhood working hard, making progress, talking about college plans, etc. Even if he discounts his peers' opinions of him at one time, once out of the safe, semi-closed environment these reformed schools provide, it would be interesting to see if the habits of mind, high self-concept, and desire for education are preserved.

Disproportionately minority and low-income, these urban students are victimized before they start the first grade. "Because education in this country is delivered through school districts based on residence, and residence is based largely on wealth, the structure of schooling in America is inseparable from the structure of class" (Hochschild and Scovronick). It follows that adult economic status would be positively correlated with parental income then, as confirmed in a study called "Would Equal Opportunity Mean More Mobility?" conducted by Christopher Jencks and Laura Tach. America proclaims "equal opportunity" through "no child left behind" but what do these slogans mean? It would seem as though equal outcomes would be required for such promises to be fulfilled. Yet a child's chance of attending college is directly affected by their her/his income during high school. When states raise tuition at public colleges, the fraction of residents entering college generally tends to fall, but especially among low-income students. In 1967 and 2001, 1/6th of all children lived in homes with incomes below the federal poverty line; in 1967, tuition, room, and board at public colleges averaged 29% of the poverty line and by 2001, it had increased to 46% (Jencks and Tach).

Evidently, parental income strongly affects the child before, during, and after schooling. Between the ages of 5 and 7, a child's test performance is strongly correlated with the parent's income since the child's birth. The younger years are crucial to the development of a child and the economic status of the parents greatly impacts the health (through insurance) and education of that child. The effects of expanding Medicaid eligibility between 1984 and 1992 in particular states increased the children's chances of seeing a doctor, decreased the childhood death rates, and improved adult health in those states. "When significant cash expenditures are required, as they are for both college attendance and medical care for the uninsured, the effects of parental income are important" (Jencks and Tach 32). School reformers cannot negate this relationship and they cannot be held responsible to do so.

In comparing the United States to Europe with regards to the standard of living, provided expenditures, and educational outcomes, more insight on this issue is gained. The Luxembourg Income Study's "Comparing Living Standards Across Nations" done in February of 2002 reveals that European subsidies for housing are generally larger than in the United States. What is more significant is the fact that "all other nations in the study have higher living standards for the average low-income person measured in equivalent disposable cash income terms, despite the fact that all have average real incomes far below those found in the United States." The rich in the United States have a living standard 43% higher than the rich in any of the other 12 nations studied. The real income gap in the United States is $40, 327 meaning a high-income family has $50, 129 to spend per child while a low-income family has 18% of that, only $9, 802. It is then important to note that the nations with small social distances provide more equal chances for their children, both high and low-income. Research concluded that "societies with wide income disparities across families with children have less support for public and social goods such as tax-financed health care, child care, and education, because high-income families can privately purchase above average levels of those goods with their higher incomes" (Smeeding and Rainwater).

By and large, it has been found that Europe has a higher standard of living than the United States; it follows that the United States standing in the world deteriorates the further along the students are in their educational careers. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) shows that among seventeen year-olds in the last year of high school, the United States ranks just above Lithuania, Cyprus, and South Africa. Among these same nations, the United States no longer has the largest percentage of students in school at age seventeen and the graduation rate significantly trails that of many other industrialized nations (Peterson, Chapter 2).

Programs and support for public and social goods (healthcare and education being foremost) would then seem to be a critical complement to school reforms. Perhaps these would even gradually alleviate the need for massive school reform. Look at Fenway; this high school had the lowest percentage of students eligible for free lunch and yet the highest graduation and enrollment rates; the inversely proportional relationship between the two suggests that a better standard of living can possibly better the chances of a student's educational outcome. A better standard of living improves neighborhoods, reduces the disadvantages these students would normally bring to school, and makes the actual school more appealing for qualified teachers. Outside influences would be less harmful as the neighborhood improved and the school would, in turn, be safer. Another program to consider is free postsecondary education. In Europe, higher education is seen as a public good usually supplemented by government stipends for living costs. In February of 2004, when Prime Minister Tony Blair raised a proposal to allow

British universities to augment tuition in 2006 to help fund operating costs, outrage among European students ensued. Zena Awad, an international relations student at Brunel Unviersity in London, protested, “How are families supposed to put aside money for their children’s education if they’re barely making living wage in the first place?” (Zoepf) Students point out that this would leave poor classmates behind. Only 26% of all undergraduates in the United States in 1995-6 were low-income (Choy). Is this not a violation of our American slogan: “no child left behind”?

“No Child Left Behind” and its stringent mandates have not helped school reform efforts either. Inner-city high schools with fewer resources and more problems are expected to meet the same standards as that of rich, suburban schools. The delegation of school taxing authority to the local school district basically ensures major school funding inequalities:

> because of great intrastate differences in income and the value of real property… Even if finance were shifted directly to the states, differences in their resources would still insure that nationally some students would have more spent on their education than others…the only way to equalize the school finance base involves massive funding to the national level (Clabaugh and Rozycki).

In addition, funding is suspended from the schools that do not meet AYP; the poor, urban schools lose their Title I funding and are expected to meet AYP the following year. Is this reasonable? Small, redesigned schools like Landmark and Best Practice that are considered models of inner-city success do not even meet AYP.

No extra funding is provided but these schools do make “different choices about how to allocate the identical per capita budget allocated all schools” which can partly account for their achievement; they know that “smallness, self-governance, and choice become more important the scarcer the talent and the scarcer the resources” (160). School finance reform cannot single-handedly bring about inner-city high school success, but it certainly can alleviate the disproportionate circumstances. “The Constitution does not tell them that since more money will not help, we will give them less; that because their needs cannot be fully met, they will not be met at all” as stated by the New Jersey Supreme Court (Hoschild and Scovronick).

This is all besides the fact that high-stakes testing determining AYP can never really report if better learning and better teaching is taking place. “70 percent of seniors at Fenway High School failed the MCAS in 2000, before the high stakes went into effect, 90 percent went on, as they have for years, to college and did well there (131). (A study comparing the absolute success of model inner-city high schools before and after NCLB was introduced would be fascinating.) High expectations are essential but the NCLB expectations are impossible ones.

In response, critics argue that “too many of these schools would make an impossible system to maintain: how would we keep track, hold schools accountable, report to the public if all schools were operating to a different drumbeat?” (160) The system is barely maintained now as proven in the plight of poor inner-city schools alone; accountability is not improving schools and the reports through testing, as just proven, are of no real value. Then it seems as though there is a huge gap between the way of thinking of school reformers and educators and that of the federal government in determining what is “best” for American schools.

All things considered, the obstruction to large-scale inner-city high school success is not just the federal government’s outlook but the overall American attitude and way of life. Using Geert Hofstede’s template for comparing cultures, American extremes can be detected; together these have been found to be the major blockade against the success of inner-city high schools; what's more, through these central tendencies towards individualism, rigidity, and short-term results, we destroy Horace Mann's "common school" initiative to render schooling "the great leveler."

The heavy focus on the individual ("it's all about me") impedes the collective success of all children, rich or poor, the latter more so because their families lack sufficient individual resources. "And no parents, wealthy or not, want their children to lose ground so others may gain." A political activist who worked for Jesse Jackson's presidential campaigns grumbles, "When someone tells me, now it's your turn to feel the pain—these are my kids!...I do sympathize with parents of kids in other towns. But I don't think we should ruin the school system in the process" (Hoschild and Scovronick 59). Would collective success "ruin the school system" or would it ruin the competitive success of the well-off children? Another parent from a wealthy school district chimes in, "We've never aspired to be average here. If our costs are a little high, it reflects the fact that we want our children to be able to compete" (52). The implication is that the parents of poor children do not want their children to compete. The reasoning is unsound. This is an illustration of the Myth of the Lone Ranger and his rugged individualism, every person for him/herself. From the perspective of many, the existing school system is already decayed; it just does not seem that way for the children of the powerholders, whose money affords them the dominant opinions and control. Accordingly with America's large power distance less support is available for public and social goods like tax-financed health care, child care, and education because the rich can pay for the best services on their own, eliminating the need for federal support.

So when school reform is launched, these power holders with ulterior motives are not too concerned with education; instead the American emphasis on short-term orientation and strong avoidance of uncertainty enables them to save their own stakes in the situation and block reforms that ruin their agendas. In the same way, the economic status quo and large power distance are maintained. Generally speaking, the rich want to remain on top, rather than redistribute and narrow the gap, which would result from reforms.

To Americans, even when these reforms are implemented, if results are not immediate, then reforms are considered unsuccessful. This approach will never be compatible with school reform or any kind of reform for that matter. Worthwhile reform requires time, patience, and risk-taking. It cannot occur within strict boundaries; uncertainty cannot be avoided. Until these inclinations can be overcome, widespread reform will not be capable. Essentially "the difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from the old ones" (Kynes).

"For the people who think, 'This is not my problem': it is…We should spend our tax dollars in helping these families, not hindering their needs, so these children one day can be responsible, tax-paying citizens not burdens to our communities" (Hoschild and Scovronick 14). Again, the individualistic tone is evident in "This is not *my* problem." It is interesting then to look back at Olney High's dismissal of 75 overaged students at the beginning of the school year. While they assured that these students will not be released back to the "streets," there is no confirmation of this. The violent and disrespectful behavior they exhibited within the school will only translate to behavior that will then be exhibited outside of the school all day everyday. In a study done by the Correctional Education Association, it was found that 62% of approximately 1400 offenders (more than ¼ for violent crimes and just under ¼ for property crimes) did not complete high school (Smith 13). Almost half had not had a job six months to a year prior to incarceration and more than 2/3 had a close friend from their neighborhood (mostly from the city) who had been incarcerated (14). Clearly, quality and amount of education directly correlates with vocational and life outcomes. It is predictable that if the same people who complain that educating these low-income, inner-city students is not their responsibility, were robbed or assaulted by those very students, they would be absolutely outraged. While all blame cannot be discarded from an individual because of a poor upbringing, it cannot be cast as quickly either. The reality is that if Americans do nothing to help (and can), we are just as much to blame. Just because efforts will not solve every single problem does not mean efforts should be given up altogether.

Unabashed, Coolio writes of his trials and tribulations, of the “situation they got me facing”; his choice of “they” illustrates the fact that he did not pick this life, but rather he was born into it. Even more dismal is the last line that calls America hypocritical and unhelpful and his life “out of luck.” In other words, America preaches “equal opportunity” but will not do anything. He even goes as far as to say “they can’t” as if there is no hope. However Coolio expounds something of a solution—understanding. Inner-city high school success *is* attainable if we first empathize and second do something. A greater proportion of poor kids from the inner-city will do great things and go places in life if we think differently, if we empower them with the resources available, both in and out of the classroom. When an inner-city school is left behind, it is not because the kids are “bad,” the teachers are not highly-qualified, or the government does not provide enough money. In essence, we are all at fault. We are all a part of the problem and so we all need to be a part of the reform.

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The Journey of John Mitchel

James Rossi

For those who study the development of the United States of America, it is easy to name a certain group of men who were involved in the fundamental governmental principles of the country from the Declaration of Independence, through the Revolutionary War, and the signing of the Constitution. These men have become known as America's "Founding Fathers." Ireland's luck was not as good as the rebellious Americans of the late 18th century. The struggle for independence in Ireland was not a fifteen to twenty year battle; rather it was a fight that was passed from generation to generation, most profoundly felt in the 19th century and early part of the 20th century. The prolonged time between the idea for a republic and the formation of an independent, self-ruling Irish government, complicates the idea of "Founding Fathers" in Ireland. Instead of one group of men leaving their thumbprint on the foundation of the Irish government, Ireland was formed through many thumbprints, over an extended number of years. A man who left a large thumbprint on the independent cause, the British-Irish relationship, and the Irish-American population is John Mitchel. Although full Irish independence was not gained until 1949, John Mitchel left an impact on Irish and American society through his revolutionary ideas, journalistic abilities, involvement with young Ireland, and his settlement in the United States of American in the 19th century. His notorious conflicts with England, Gavin Duffy, and the Irish-American community of New York City all contribute to his thumbprint in Irish history.

Mitchel made his mark on Ireland through use of his voice and pen. P.S. O' Hegarty said of Mitchel's legacy left by his voice and pen, "Mitchel's soul lives yet for us in his writings, and his voice still comes out of the clouds, thundering" (Davis 98). To truly be able to dissect the personality and characteristics of Mitchel, it is imperative to look at his childhood.

John Mitchel, of Scottish blood, was born in Dungiven, County Derry on November 3rd, 1815 (Hutchinson 1). His father, the Reverend John Mitchel, was a Presbyterian minister in the county of Derry. His mother, Mary Haslett was a young woman full of intelligence, wit, and fire (Dillon 6-8). Both of Mitchel's parents were well educated and interested in politics. However, Mitchel's father felt obligated to God to keep his internal liberal thoughts to himself. "In politics [Rev. Mitchel] was a liberal; but he took no active part in such matters, his mind and thoughts being fully absorbed in the cares of his congregation and in the various charitable works of the town" (Dillon 4). Mitchel's father served as an opposite force in young John Mitchel's development into the fiery politician and activist he became later in life. However, it is apparent that Mitchel learned to dedicate himself to a cause, and to help those who were in need from his father. William Dillon notes that the Reverend Mitchel was so dedicated to his church that he would often sneak out of his house at night to pray with those who were dying from cholera (5).

From his mother, John Mitchel learned the trait that all great politicians must pick up in their youth; he learned how to capture an audience. Mary Mitchel was worshipped by all that knew her. She was the life of every party, and would fill a room with energy when she walked in. Mrs. Mitchel also supported her husband in all that he did. Later in life, John Mitchel would need the same undying support from his mother that his father had obtained years before him (Dillon 6-7). It is clear that John Mitchel's strong character was a direct result of his relationship with his mother. He adored his parents throughout childhood; however, that would change in adolescence.

Adolescence is a time of great change in one's life, and John Mitchel was no exception. Young Mitchel excelled in his studies. His Latin was extraordinary and his knowledge of the Christian religion impressed his tutors (Dillon 14). However, nothing captivated Mitchel like nature. Mitchel used to take solitary hikes into the hills of Ireland. During these long walks, Mitchel was overwhelmed by the beauty of the Irish landscape. There is no doubt that these moments of reflection contributed to Mitchel's love for Ireland.

For being such an independent young man, Mitchel spent most of his adolescence in the comfort of his home. He attended Trinity College at the age of 15, but spent most of his days away from class at home with his family (Dillon 16). During this time, Mitchel's relationship with his father began to deteriorate. The Reverend John Mitchel had planned for his son to follow in his footsteps and become a minister. When Young Mitchel decided to go into banking, he greatly disappointed his father (Harrison 382). It was at this time that Mitchel and his mother began to grow closer. Although Mitchel still loved his father wholeheartedly, their contrasting views on religion hurt their relationship (Dillon 18). There to always support her son, Mary encouraged her son to go out and become his own man. Upon graduating from Trinity College in 1834, at the age of 19, John Mitchel broke out of his shell.

Mitchel's emergence from the shell of youth is best seen in his twenty first year of life. The hammer that permanently shattered the introverted shell of John Mitchel was a young woman of only sixteen years named Jane Verner (Harrison 382). Enthralled by her beauty, he began secretly seeing her. After months of hiding, Verner's father decided to move the family to France. Unwilling to let his true love leave, the stubborn Mitchel ran off with young Jane to England. Days later, Mitchel was arrested in England and sent back to Ireland (Dillon 29). However, it was too late; the once private John Mitchel had now opened up his heart to Jane Verner. Mitchel was ready to settle down.

In the eight years that followed, Mitchel became a family man. He trained as a solicitor and practiced law in Banbridge after failing as a banker. He experienced the birth of a son, and the death of his father, events that weighed heavily on the emotions of a young man (Dillon 33). The rest of Mitchel's life would change in 1845, when he accepted the position that would cause him both pain and anguish.

To chronicle Mitchel's journey through the political world of 19th century Ireland, it is crucial to look at his roots in politics. As discussed above, Mitchel's father was secretly a political man. Mitchel himself kept his hands out of politics until his first son, John, was born. Then in 1839, Daniel O'Connell became interested in visiting Newry, the town which Mitchel had settled in after completing his apprenticeship. Newry, at the time, was the furthest point north that O'Connell had attempted to visit. Mitchel jumped on the opportunity, and had a peaceful visit and dinner with O'Connell. This experience opened up Mitchel's eyes to the degradation of his Irish brothers and sisters in the south. The dinner also proved to Mitchel that he could become an effective leader (Dillon 33). Mitchel, now equipped with an understanding of the law and a motivation to change the treatment of the Irish, began his writing career.

Over the next five years, Mitchel began writing editorials in local papers. His ever-growing bold thoughts and highly spirited ideas caught the attention of Charles Gavin Duffy; one of the three founders of the newly formed the *Nation*. Duffy described the Banbridge solicitor as "a man of prompt and receptive intellect and lively fancy" (Sloan 29). Soon after Mitchel joined the *Nation*, Thomas Davis passed away. Davis served as the man who had brought Mitchel and Duffy together to work for the *Nation*. It was in October of 1845 that Mitchel decided to move to Dublin from Newry and accept the chief writer position on the *Nation* (Buckley 35). Almost immediately, the differences between Duffy's cautious attitude and Mitchel's growing erratic behavior caused an internal struggle in the staffroom of the *Nation* (Buckley 35). Just as Mitchel and Duffy began to disagree, the potato crop failed. The events that would unfold over the next three years would shape young Ireland and Mitchel permanently.

Graham Davis and Patrick O'Farrell have argued that the idea of the Great Famine was not created while the actual Famine was going on. Rather it was the skillful writing, passion, and determination of Mitchel to expose the British government for what he believed they actually were. Davis proposes in his article "Making History: John Mitchel and the Great Famine":

> Mitchel's charge of genocide lifted the tragedy of the potato blight to the status of high drama, with 'villains in the highest political places' constructing a monstrous plot, 'designed to achieve racial extermination, emigration, and land clearances in the interest of the economic principles and power (101).

Mitchel did for the Famine what television did for the Vietnam War. His detailed writing and intricate use of language brought the Famine home to every Englishman's front stoop. Before the age of pictures and radio, Mitchel captured the emotion and tragedy of the Famine. Without his radical view of the Famine, the true nature of its wrath would have been hidden from the public for years.

The Famine became the tragedy that pushed Mitchel and Young Ireland out of their alliance with O'Connell. Young Ireland was able to respectfully pull out of the Repeal Association with a well-toned article. Although it did not express their disdain for O'Connell and the Famine, Young Ireland was officially free from O'Connell and the Repeal Association (Dillon 99). As 1846 pressed into 1847, Mitchel's distaste with England grew as the death toll rose. However, it would be the work of another young author that would put Mitchel over the edge.

James Fintan Lalor's ideas for land reform, which surfaced in the *Nation* in 1847, impressed John Mitchel greatly. Lalor's idea to end the Famine struck a chord with Mitchel. Mitchel believed that if England would follow Lalor's plan to feed the native population first, and then export the surplus to England, that the death toll in Ireland could significantly fall (Sloan 29). The ideas of James Fintan Lalor struck two chords in Mitchel. First, it would help the impoverished and starving, a cause that Mitchel had been feverishly writing about for two years. Second, it would provide a chance for England and Ireland to work together. Mitchel, at that time, was still optimistic that a peaceful agreement could be made that would cause a "revolution in the whole system of holding land" (Sloan 29). Even one of Mitchel's biographers, William Dillon, observed that, "[Mitchel] was Conservative by instinct, and he clung to the hope that some settlement might be devised upon the basis of which the landlords might consent to join the movement" (Dillon 199). However, the British did nothing of this sort, a result that discouraged Mitchel from ever reaching a peaceful agreement with England.

Evident by Mitchel's upbringing, in the case of the land settlement, Mitchel showed the discipline and care for the poor that his father showed as a reverend. However, as time passed, Mitchel became more and more angry. The fire and charisma he had inherited from his mother fueled his actions in 1848, the worst year of the Famine.

In 1848, both Mitchel and Lalor grew angrier. Lalor, using his ability to write, was able to stir the pot for Mitchel, who would eventually make the caldron of anger overflow. In a June, 1848 letter, Lalor opens with:

> Not to repeal the Union, then, but to repeal the Conquest – not to disturb or dismantle the empire, but to abolish it forever – not to fall back on '82, but act up to '48 – not to resume or restore an old constitution, but to found a new nation, and raise up a free people (Gray 160).

Arguably Lalor's greatest letter, this opening statement expressed the idea for a complete violent revolt. Mitchel, more on board than ever, fueled the fire when he left the Irish Confederation to start his new independent paper, *The United Irishman* (Buckley 36). Mitchel left Young Ireland/The Irish Confederation at its weakest point. On the verge of crumbling, Mitchel abandoned a group that he believed wouldn't get anything done as long as "Do Nothing" Duffy was a member. A far cry from the private nature of his adolescence, Mitchel had become the most outspoken, revolutionary, and recognizable figure of a Famine damaged society.

At the height of Mitchel's career, he embraced an issue that scared the British government so much, that it got him successfully tried for treason. Embracing the French Revolution in the spring of 1848, Mitchel saw, just as the martyrs in the Revolt of 1798 saw, a chance to attack England while it was at its weakest. In his March 4th, 1848 issue of the *United Irishman*, Mitchel advised farmers to hold their food and feed their families. Mitchel got his inspiration for this from a family named Boland, who had enough food to support themselves, but were forced to export it all for rent money. They eventually all died of starvation (Buckley 37).

In addition to calling farmers to abandon all trade with England, he desperately called the Irish to arms in the spring of 1848. This was the final straw for England, and Mitchel was prosecuted under the Act of Treason (Buckley 42). Preparing to be shipped to Tasmania, Mitchel's final letter to the *United Irishman* is described by Mary Buckley as "having a heightened tone and many examples of his abrasive style." She also goes onto write that, "An undertone of self-pity is to be heard; though a brave face is kept up" (42). Mitchel, a defeated man, had miscalculated and was going to go away for it. Thousands of miles away from the cause that had raised his blood to boil for the past three years, Mitchel had thirteen years to spend on Van Dieman's Island.

Bottled up for five years, Mitchel was able to formulate his thoughts. He wrote an autobiography called *Jail Journal*. He also planned how he could get back into the Irish cause. In typical John Mitchel fashion, he grew tired of Van Dieman's Island within five years. With the help of Patrick James Smyth, and Mitchel's loyal wife Jane, Mitchel was able to escape by sailing from Van Dieman's Island on June 9th, 1853. Mitchel and his team sailed to Tahiti, then eventually to San Francisco (Harrison 383). It was in the

United States that Mitchel would have a second chance at politics. However, San Francisco was no place to stir up a cause against England. Mitchel had to go to the Irish-Americans back east, specifically, New York City.

Upon arriving in New York City, Mitchel took no time in attacking his bitter enemies. One after one, Mitchel attacked everybody from the abolitionists to the Pope, to anything British, and even the Irish-born Catholic Archbishop of New York City (Knowlton 38). His new radical newspaper, *The Citizen*, published articles that exemplified his hatred for the British. This rapid fire approach to mending his past only got him in trouble. Once the Catholic Church of New York City condemned his outspokenness, he lost all support of the Irish in the North (Gleeson 105). Realizing he had been defeated again, Mitchel picked up his wife and kids, and moved them to Knoxville, Tennessee.

Mitchel figured that 1850's Tennessee would be a perfect place for his pro-slavery, pro-state rule ideas. Historians often point out the level of hypocrisy Mitchel possessed in being a pro-slavery activist. Bryan McGovern points out in his article entitled "John Mitchell: Ecumenical Nationalist in the Old South" that Mitchel saw parallels in the cause of the American South and that of Ireland. He also argued that the South's argument for secession was directly related to Ireland's cause for independence (107). This dismisses theories that Mitchel was a racist; in fact, he paired with the South because of its relativity to Ireland. Other characteristics are also seen in both the American South and Ireland. Both societies celebrate traditional values. In Ireland, this was the rebirth of Gaelic. In the American South, traditional values were slavery and owning land. The most important similarity is the type of nationalism found in both areas. "The Old South had embraced a type of nationalism that was compatible with Mitchel's ideals of ecumenical and Romantic nationalism" (McGovern 110). In other words, Mitchel identified with the preservation of the Old South, which in itself shared the same characteristics as Ireland: a hatred for England and a hard working agricultural economy.

After the American Civil War, Mitchel's health began to decline. Showing the discipline and will he had inherited from his parents and the stubbornness he had developed on his own, Mitchel returned to Ireland for one final shot in politics. In 1875, Mitchel landed in Ireland, settling in Tipperary. Within days, he was on the ballot for a seat in Parliament under the Home Rule Party. Overwhelmingly he was elected to Parliament. Prime Minister Disraeli called the election void, citing Mitchel's criminal record and failure to serve all fourteen years of his sentence (Dillon 292).

In late February of 1875, Mitchel gave his last public speech. Barely able to stand, he addressed the crowd with a long, funny speech. It was on this platform that Mitchel expresses his promise to the people of Tipperary. "As long as I have the honor of representing you I will not sell you. I will not trade upon you in any shape or form…I will never bring disgrace upon her [Tipperary]" (Dillon 293). As a nearly sixty year old man, Mitchel delivered a message without the radical point of view that had defined his career. He gave a speech that expressed what he had desired for years, a chance to protect and serve the people of Ireland. On March 3rd, 1815 Mitchel died peacefully at the age of fifty-nine.

Starting with his first articles in the *Nation* and ending with his speech on the streets of Tipperary, John Mitchel's political journey for social justice is unique and unlike any other of his time period. He did not grow up in politics. He became involved after experiencing the brutality of the Great Famine. His riveting words, thunderous speeches and never ending fight for the rights of the unrepresented were the highlights of his career. His call for premature violence, inability to work with Young Ireland, and failed political career in America contribute to his overshadowing in eyes of history. Nevertheless, he was instrumental in the fight for Irish independence. He along with the generations of Irish brothers and sisters who fought for freedom have made Ireland what it is today.

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