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The American Dinner Party

By Amy Nash

The dinner party is a seemingly simple part of the American culture. At its core, a dinner party is a gathering of family, friends or honored guests, who come together to share in food, drink and conversation. Contradictory to this simple appearance, dinner parties contain a wealth of historical influence, social expectations, and gender roles. This intriguing part of American life is, unfortunately disappearing from mainstream society. This decline can be explained by the shift in American dining, from formal to informal, as evidenced by dinner parties.

The modern dinner party has historical roots that can be traced to ancient civilizations. Ancient Greeks would host gatherings that have elements of today’s dinner parties. As with modern dinner parties, the host could simply invite friends or family to gather for a meal, however the most popular and prestigious social dining experience in ancient Greece society was the symposium. The symposium, traditionally translated as "banquet", but more literally "gathering of drinkers" was one of the preferred pastimes for the Greeks.¹ It consisted of two parts: the first dedicated to food, generally a simple meal, and a second part dedicated to drinking. However, wine was consumed with the food, and the beverages were accompanied by snacks such as chestnuts, beans, toasted wheat, or honey

cakes; all intended to absorb alcohol and extend the festivities.\(^2\) The second part consisted of after dinner drinks and entertainment that usually included conversation or table games. The guests would recline on couches around low tables, which held the food or game boards. Dancers, acrobats, and musicians would entertain the banqueters. The idea of after dinner entertainment, either through conversation, games, or other activities is a common element of modern day dinner parties or social gathering. These great feasts, however, could only be afforded by the rich and were strictly reserved for men.\(^3\) These events were the ultimate statement of status and wealth in Ancient Greek times.

The Romans also hosted social dining events that contain elements of modern day dinner parties. The Greek practice of reclining and dining continued into ancient Rome, but with a few additions, for one, respectable women were invited to join the party, and for another, drinking was not a separate, post-dinner event, but became part of the dining experience.\(^4\) In Rome, couches for single, generally male, diners existed, but by the later part of the period the practice at dinner parties was for guests to recline on three large beds placed in a U shape.\(^5\) Reclining at parties continued to be primarily an elite practice; poorer citizens did not have the room for beds of this size in their modest homes. Although in previous years, reclining had been shameful for respectable women, they now reclined with men.\(^6\) Class and status was also reflected at these parties. There were specific places that were designated for the host, favored guests, and less-favored guests. The favored guests were situated on couches that were close to the food spread and entertainment, while the less-

\(^2\) Ibid, 177
\(^3\) Ibid
\(^5\) Ibid
\(^6\) Ibid
favored guests were placed behind or further away from the central group. The act of seating guest according to status or social standing can be seen in formal parties through the centuries, even in twentieth century dinner parties.

The birthplace of the modern day dinner party is arguably the Victorian Era formal dinner party. Elegant dinner parties were considered among the most popular form of entertainment in this age, and etiquette and tradition guided the host and guests through the formal affair. *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, one of the leading guides for etiquette in Philadelphia stated, “The most fashionable as well as pleasant way in the present day to entertain guests is to invite them to evening parties, which vary in size from the ‘company,’ ‘sociable,’ ‘soiree,’ to the party, par excellence, which is but one step from the ball.” The Victorians had an obsession with detail, and the attention given to preparing for such an event was paramount for its success. The lady of the house would send out invitations two days to two weeks prior to the gathering, depending on the elaborateness of the event, and some form of reply was expected. Again, Godey’s gave guidance, saying, “In writing an invitation for a small party, it is kind, as well as polite, to specify the number of guests invited, that your friends may dress to suit the occasion. To be either too much or too little dressed at such times is embarrassing.” The guests were selected to form a group of socially harmonious people who would be comfortable together. The people in attendance of the party were as, if not more, important than the meal itself. A party of highly respected guests was the sign of status within society.

7 Ibid, 52
9 Ibid
Once the guest list is assembled, the extravagant party can begin. In the earlier years of the period, dinner guests were received at 7 o’clock and could expect to find the formal table spread abundantly with food. As each course was finished, another was set out. These were usually solid and rich dishes, such as roasted or boiled meats, hashes, potatoes, and rich cakes. Guests could expect to dine for nearly two hours, after which they would sometimes retire to another room to eat a dessert of fresh or preserved fruits. A few years later, dinner party fashion had changed, and guests were now expected to arrive between 7:30 and 8:30, with 8 o’clock being the most popular time for dinner. Guests were expected to arrive punctually; period etiquette books recommended no more than fifteen minutes late. The guests, dressed in formal attire, for the gentlemen this meant black pants, waist-coat and jacket, with white tie, shirt and gloves and for the ladies, formal evening dresses and accessories, would gather in the drawing room before the meal. Receiving the guests was the duty of the hostess, and Godey’s, as usual, mapped the proper course,

“It is better to be ready too soon than too late, as your guests will be embarrassed if you are not ready to receive them…For the early part of the evening take a position in your parlor near or opposite to the door, that each guest may find you easily… As each guest or party enters the room, advance a few steps to meet them, speaking first to the lady, or, if there are several ladies, to the eldest, then to the younger ones, and finally to the gentlemen… Do not leave the room during the evening. To see a hostess fidgeting, constantly going in and out, argues ill for her tact in arranging the house for company…Prior to any dinner party, a good hostess had acquainted herself in
advance with everyone’s rank. Then, the hostess instructed the gentlemen as to which ladies they would escort into the dining room, one at a time, in strictest accordance to both their social standings; the persons of greatest rank or distinction went first while the remaining guests continued to mingle casually in the drawing room. The man of the house typically took the arm of the highest-ranking lady.”  

Victorian Era dinners were usually served “à la russe”, meaning that the footman would stand at the guest’s side, offering a dish from which guests served themselves, and the table remained clear of serving dishes and bowls. It was also common for the butler to take a portion from each serving dish that was on the sideboard, and individually arrange each guest’s meal upon a plate, then a servant placed the prepared plate before each guest. The number of objects that appeared on a properly set Victorian dinner table was staggering, and if a guest did not use the proper instrument for the proper food, it was seen as vulgar and uncivilized. In many cases, it was not unusual for as many as 24 pieces of silver to be at each place setting. As many as eight forks would be laid out, ranging from a fish fork and dinner fork to an ice cream fork. Knives could add up to eight pieces, being used for butter, cheese, game, roast, and fruit, all accompanied by individual knife rests. All the stemware that would be needed through the meal was placed on the table beforehand, arranged in two rows: a water glass, a glass for chambertin, champagne, a green glass for sauterne, a sherry glass, and a red glass for Rhine wine. Center pieces were also a vital element of the Victorian table setting,
including elements such as lace, garlands, fruit, flowers and even candies or bonbons. These elements could define a good hostess from a mediocre one.

The food at the Victorian dinner party was just as extravagant as the other elements. Victorian dinners were well known for the endless procession of soups, meats, salads, puddings, ices, and meringues or pastries. It was not unusual for a period dinner menu to consist of nine courses. *Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management* gives a sample menu:

“First Course: Julienne or Vermicelli Soup, Second Course: Broiled Salmon, Turbot in Lobster Sauce, Filet de Soles, Red Mullet, Trout, Lobster Rissoles, Whitebait, Entrees: Canards a la Rouennaise, Mutton Cutlets, Braised Beef, Spring Chicken, Roast Quarter of Lamb, Tongue, Roast Saddle of Mutton, Whitebait, Third Course: Quails, Roast Ducks, Mayonnaise of Chicken, Green Peas, Charlotte Russe, Strawberries, Compote of Cherries, Neapolitan Cakes, Madeira Wine.”

After dinner, it was customary for the women to retire to a separate sitting room while the gentlemen remained in the dining room or go to the library where they would pass around the port wine while exchanging stories. It was during this time that the men would smoke, something that a gentleman would never do in the presence of a lady. After about a half-hour had passed, the host would suggest to his male guests that they join the ladies in the drawing room, where they would enjoy coffee, tea, and mutual conversation for perhaps yet another half-hour. At last the evening would end, usually around eleven o’clock, and upon acknowledging a lovely evening, guests took their leave. Once again, Godey’s Lady’s Book had advice on how to say goodnight, “When your guests take leave of you, it will be in the

19 Ibid
20 Ibid
21 Ibid
22 Ibid
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drawing-room, and let that farewell be final. Do not accompany them to the dressing-room, and never stop them in the hall for a last word. Say farewell in the parlor, and do not repeat it.”23 The Victorian dinner party was controlled by social expectations and rules of etiquette. Both the dinner and the guests were expected to have a formal manner about them, as reflected in the strict etiquette of the event. The pressure to follow these rules while creating the perfect atmosphere of elegance and grace came down on the shoulders of the hostess. It was the woman’s role to execute the perfect dinner party to show the status of her and her family. The formal dinner party was not only a symbol of class and a snapshot of the woman’s role in the home, but also a portrait of the formality and strict social rules of the Victorian Era.

Many of the elements of the Victorian era dinner party are present in the 1950s formal dinner party. Similarly to the previous era, dinner parties in the 1950s came with their own set of strict rules of etiquette and expectations. *Amy Vanderbilt’s Complete Book of Etiquette: A Guide to Gracious Living*, 1952, is a guide of the appropriate etiquette for almost every element of life of the sophisticated American in this time. There is an entire section dedicated to entertainment, including the formal dinner party. The guide expresses important information the hostess must follow to have a successful party. First, she would need the room to seat all her guests at one dining table, because any variation of this configuration would disqualify the event as a formal dinner.24 This, as in Ancient Roman times, acted as a sign of wealth and status, for only a family with a large enough home could accommodate the number of people who attended these dinner parties. Also it is important

23 Ibid
to have a chef or real cuisiniere prepare the appropriate food that exhibits the sophisticated nature of the meal. Also, the hostess would have been expected to have a butler and trained wait staff recruited for the event. These were usually supplied by a catering service, along with any additional kitchen help that may be needed.\(^{25}\) Once the staff is in place, the next defining element of the formal dinner party is the table settings. According to *The Joy of Cooking* cookbook, originally published in 1931, table décor should include clean pressed linens, high quality flatware, stemware, and china. The table should include the appropriate silverware and glasses according to the food and drink that will be served at the dinner, much like the Victorian table. Also, like at Victorian parties, the table should be decorated with flowers or fruit.\(^{26}\) One important rule of the formal party is that there are never serving dishes on the table, unless they are for decorative purposes. Similarly to the Victorian dinner, the meal is composted of many courses, including a soup, fish, roast, salad, fruit, and dessert courses.\(^{27}\) In between each course, a guest should always have a plate in front of them; the plates for each course should be placed on top of the main course plate. The only time the place should be bare is before dessert, after the main course plate is cleared.\(^{28}\) Quite often, after the meal, guests retire to a separate sitting room for coffee or post dinner drinks, such as port. Either women exiting first, followed by the men, or both men and women exiting the dining room together was appropriate. Once the dinner is over, no guest could leave after a formal dinner in a private home less than two and a half to three hours and even then, not

\(^{25}\) Ibid, 265
\(^{28}\) Ibid, p. 266
until the guest or guests of honor have departed. The hostess was in charge of making sure that all elements of the evening unfolded without issue.

Formal dinner parties were the ultimate expression of social and economic class. However, in the beginning of the twentieth century, a new form of dining emerged, the semi-formal or company dinner. These gatherings did not have the stiff formality and elegance of a formal dinner party and were usually given for a smaller group of four to eight guests. This allowed for middle and lower class families to entertain and emulate the high-class event, without the cost of the formal dinner party. Even though these parties are not as extravagant as a formal party, the household was still expected to put its best face forward. These events also had the expectations for proper and formal etiquette to be shown. Hostesses were expected to be the picture of elegance and grace while she prepared and served dinner, entertained guests, and kept the flow of the party continuous. The ideal hostess became a vital part of women’s identities in the 1950s. This phenomenon is part of what is known as the Separation of Spheres. In the 1950’s the cultural hegemony of the time was that the man’s role is to be in the workplace, providing for his family, while the woman’s role is in the home, taking care of her husband and children. This is reflected in the idea of the perfect hostess. Society stated that a woman should be a “domestic goddess” and a dinner party is the perfect way to show others this trait. In the film Mona Lisa Smile, a modern-thinking professor comes to Wellesley College in 1953. She is faced with the classical ideas of the students and staff, who believe that a woman’s place is in the home once she is married, even though the students are highly educated, intelligent women. This idea is directly witnessed

29 Ibid
in a scene when the students are taking part of an etiquette class, hosted at the home of one of the professors. In the scene, the students stand around a properly set table and have clearly been learning how to host dinners. She then gives the students a hypothetical situation: their husband is in line for a promotion and is competing against two other people.

To get the edge, they invite the boss and his wife to dinner. An hour before the company arrives, they are informed that the two other competitors and their wives have been invited to dinner. The professor says, “Ever the Wellesley girl, you keep your cool, you understand that the boss is testing you as much as your husband”\(^{31}\). Etiquette and hosting was such an integral part of the woman’s role in society that an entire class was dedicated to it at one of the top colleges in the country. The idea of women needing to be the perfect dinner party hostess is also seen in the advertisements of the day. The United States Brewers Foundation ran a series of ads in the weekly and monthly consumer magazines to promote beer drinking at home. The ads were called “Home Life in America” and each featured an illustration of white middle-class families. One of these ads was Ray Prohaska’s painting entitled “The Bride’s First Dinner Party.”\(^{32}\)

In this painting, a woman is seen placing food on the table while her husband serves drinks to their relaxing guests. The hostess is dressed in a clean nice dress and a stand of pearls, with her hair and makeup done. Her physical appearance gives the impression that she is able to handle the pressure of hosting her first dinner party with ease and enjoyment. This illustrates that she is conforming to the social expectations of taking over the role of the perfect hostess after she is married. Gender roles are heavily reflected in the etiquette and expectations of the 1950s.

\(^{31}\) Lawrence Konner, *Mona Lisa Smile*, directed by Mike Newell (2003; Columbia Pictures), DVD
\(^{32}\) See Appendix, picture 1
Although the American dinner party has deep roots in formal traditions, a shift has occurred in modern society. Formality is no longer an important driving factor in dining and, especially, dinner parties. No longer are women being taught the fine art of hosting the perfect dinner party and the proper etiquette of which spoon to use or who should be seated next to whom. Guy Trebay of *The New York Times* discusses this shift in today’s culture in his article “Guess Who Isn’t Coming to Dinner: Saving the Endangered Dinner Party.” Trebay interviewed famous socialites from around the country and they agreed that the old-fashioned formal dinner party is a thing of the past. Trebay writes,

“Increasingly, such gatherings seem outmoded, squeezed out by overcrowded schedules, the phony urgency of affinity sites, restaurants cultism and overall tectonic shifts in how Americans congregate…The seated dinner, with its minuet of invitation and acceptance, its formalities and protocols, its culinary and dietary challenges, its inherent requirements of guest and host, alike is under threat, many say.”

Although formality is in a decline, the ideas behind the dinner party are still alive and well in America. Trebay continues, “‘If there’s one thing you learn in the etiquette business, it’s that life is cyclical,” said Judith Martin, the etiquette arbiter known as Miss Manners. “The idea of cooking for others is not something that is going to die.’” This statement is supported by a recent survey, given in May of 2014 to a group of Americans ranging in age and gender. The results of the survey state that of the 64 participants, 32 (50%) have thrown a dinner party, excluding holiday and birthday parties, within the last year. This is evidence that the

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34 ibid
35 Survey created by Amy Nash, May 2014, distributed online, data recorded and analyzed on surveymonkey.com. Hereafter, all references to this survey are from this source
basic idea of friends and family gathering around a meal is still a part of the American culture.

However, the presentation of these meals is vastly different from the formal, and even the semi-formal, dinner parties of the 1950s and Victorian age. First, the food that is served at modern parties is different. According to the survey, approximately 60% of the dinner parties that were thrown by the participants were single course meals, about 15% were cocktails and appetizers and 25% were multi-course dinners. This greatly differs from the nine course dinners of the Victorian era dinner party or the four course 1950s dinner party. There is also a shift in how people dress when dining, especially at dinner parties. In today’s society, people are just as likely to wear blue jeans to a five star restaurant as they are to a local diner. According to the survey, an astounding 87% stated that their dinner parties where casual dress, with roughly 20% stating that the dress was business casual and only about 3% stating that the dress of their party was semiformal or formal. This is also documented in photographs of the corresponding eras. In a snapshot of a 1950s dinner party, the guests are dressed in formal attire.\(^{36}\) The men are in suits or sports jackets and the women are in evening dresses and are wearing fine jewelry. This is greatly different from a photograph from a modern day photograph of a dinner party, taken for a magazine article.\(^{37}\) In this photo the guests are all dressed in casual attire. Another interesting difference in these two photographs is the table settings. In the 1950s photo, the table is set in a typical and proper fashion. The table is dressed with a tablecloth and adorned with a platter of fruit. Although the guests have moved to the coffee portion of the dinner, it is visible that they are using china tea cups and saucers. In the modern day photo, the table does not have a

\(^{36}\) See appendix, photo 2. Hereafter, all references to “1950s photograph” are from this source.

\(^{37}\) See appendix, photo 3. Hereafter, all references to “modern day photograph” are from this source.
tablecloth and the guests are using what looks like everyday plates and bowls. The quality and type of china, silverware and glassware that hosts use at modern parties have shifted from that of an earlier time. Trebay also touches on this point in his article saying, “What is surprising is that fewer still see the point in accumulating china, silver and crystal at all, a truth driven home by the dwindling of departments devoted to table-top appointments at traditional purveyors like Tiffany & Company.” 38 The last major difference in these photographs is the role the women are taking at their respective parties. In the 1950s picture, the woman that is assumed to be the hostess is standing up and reaching for a dish. It can be assumed that she is either serving a guest or is beginning to clear the table. These are both important roles of the ideal hostess. In the photograph of the modern dinner party, all the guests are sitting and are passing plates and serving themselves. This directly contradicts the proper etiquette of either plating the meals separately, having the hostess serves each guest, or the formal tradition of having a footman serve the guests. This not only demonstrates a shift in the etiquette of the dinner party, but also a shift in the role of women in modern society. No longer is the woman of the house expected to be the perfect ideal hostess that is in charge of every aspect of the party, but is now an actual member of the party and can enjoy the company of her guests. All of these differences point to the fact that American dinner parties have transformed from an elegant formal affair, to a casual gathering of friends.

American dinner parties are facing another attack on a different front. Many Americans are choosing to go out to a restaurant for meals with friends and family rather than host guests at their house. In the survey, participants were asked “When you gather

with friends, are you more likely to: a) go to a bar or restaurant, b) attend someone's home for a homemade meal or c) other. Only about 30% said that they go to a person’s home; 60% said that they would rather meet at a restaurant or bar. Another interesting fact about these results from this question is that the majority of people who responded with the answer a) they would prefer to go to a restaurant or bar, are under the age of 35. When asked why they chose this answer, most stated that it was easier than having to prepare a meal and clean their house for guests. Some also said that in the fast paced world, it is easier to incorporate everyone’s busy schedule to meet at a restaurant. As mentioned earlier, Guy Trebay mentions this factor as to part of the reason dinner parties are becoming endangered saying, “Increasingly, such gatherings seem outmoded, squeezed out by overcrowded schedules, the phony urgency of affinity sites, restaurants cultism and overall tectonic shifts in how Americans congregate.”39 People of the older generation who stated that they would rather go to a person’s home explained that they preferred the comforts and relaxed feel of being in a home. They also expressed that it was easier to have conversations in a home setting. This indicates that not only is the shift away from the formal dinner party is related to a change in accepted etiquette, but also is related to generational differences. This idea of the shift in dining being influenced by age and generation would make an interesting course of extended research. Also, examining how class and social status play a role in dinner parties, both historically and today, would be a fascinating study of American culture. Looking through an ethnographic lens and studying the American culture, as it is being lived out in today’s society has exposed this shift in the dining habits.

All in all, it is clear that a movement away from the old-fashioned and formal has occurred in American dining, especially in regards to dinner parties. Through time, the face of these parties have evolved from the rigid extravagance of the social soiree in the 1800s, to the high societal expectations of the mid 1900 dinner party, to the casual and informal gathering that is the modern dinner party. Even though the rules of etiquette and social pressures have dissipated over time, the tradition of gathering friends and family together and enjoying each other’s company has not changed. This element of community will likely remain a facet of American life for years to come.
References


Ryan, Francis J. *La Salle University*. Fall, 2011


Appendix

Photo 1


Photo 2
http://amberreunion.blogspot.com/2012_03_01_archive.html

Photo 3

www.punchbowl.com
The Dream of the Other American- The African American
By Staci Arrington

The reason for this essay is to explore the structure of the African American family in contemporary and historic society. The research introduced in this paper will lend its hand to understanding films, such as Pleasantville and Women of Brewster Place. The angle taken in this paper is centered on the understanding of the theme- the American Dream, as it has to do with the assimilation and transformation of entire races. Pleasantville and Women of Brewster Place’s roles are important, in that they depict a deep contrast between the worldview of white and black America, although the depiction is indirect. In conjunction with other movies, documentaries, and readings this paper will seek to answer questions about there being a black American separated from the original American dream. Furthermore, while exploring the ideas surrounding the “American Dream”, this essay will highlight the “American character” as it relates to African American, social equalities, and the solidification of an African American underclass.

The Emergence of an American Middle Class

The year is 1945, and American troops began returning home from World War II. They returned to various American cities and to families who have lived without them for months and even years. Young and eager to begin families, troops and their spouses began to marry and have children at faster rates than ever seen before in America. The era became known as the Baby boom. With crowding cities and the need for more housing, America would witness the restructuring of the housing industry. While suburban communities were not exclusive to a certain state or region, the most notable developer was William Levitt who introduced Levittown in New York and Pennsylvania. These mass produced houses mimicked the assembly line approach of Henry Ford and the lay out became legendary, as contemporary developments would
adopt the idea. However, the debate over whom Levittown was met for still persists, and the obtainability of the American Dream is threatened for America’s various minority groups. One can argue that contemporary Levittown is the effect of racial segregation still effects the lives of Americans today.

In Pleasantville, the ideals of American suburbia are played out through a myth like depiction. The characters of Pleasantville lived a life Levittown was supposed to provide. There was no crime, no outside influences, but there was the absence of people of color. Everyone was on the same accord in Pleasantville, and the idea of there being an outsider infringing on the clean cut society seemed distant for the community. Just as racial inequality lawfully inflicted in real-life Levittown, it had a presence in Pleasantville. The truth about both Pleasantville and Levittown is that they both shut African-Americans out of the dream. For Levittown, racial discrimination was made law. As for Pleasantville, racial inequality is presented through the ignorance of the African American existence.

Racial ignorance and the practice of preserving the American dream for a specific race is practiced undoubtedly in Levittown’s society. Joshua Ruff, in his article titled Levittown: The Archetype for Suburban Development, writes “In some ways, Levittown resembled the ethnic composition of the military during World War II: Jews, Italians, Irish and Poles living side-by-side. But also like most of the military, African Americans were unable to enter this melting pot.[1]” In Levittown, this kind of discrimination was backed by federal legislation. The FHA, which financially supported William Levitt and his quest to build new communities, opted for racial separation. In fact, at the onset of Levittown, every lease issued to new residents left out those who were not of the Caucasian race. Not to say Pleasantville welcomed racial inequalities, but it is apparent that the thought of there being any race other than white was not one that the
residents had. The problem was not with race in Pleasantville, but about accepting what is real. What is real in the world is sin, and the people of Pleasantville were fearful of that fact.

Additionally, the keeping out of a race was defended by William Levitt, when he writes, "As a company our position is simply this: 'We can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem. But we cannot combine the two.'" Levitt’s statement aides to the notion that the American dream is really the dream of the people of non-color. With an entire race left out of the American dream, one may question where does the American dream start to benefit the African-American. Well, the dream did not benefit the African American in the way that it did Caucasians. For African-Americans, the American dream was found in their very own communities. Various government agencies enacted laws that would “improve” the condition of the African-American. The life of the African-American and what is left behind while many flocked to the suburbs in search of a better life is depicted in Gloria Naylor’s film titled, Women of Brewster Place.

The Women of Brewster Place is based off a Gloria Naylor novel. The film is about various women living a project community in an unnamed city. These women are faced with a variety of social issues stemming from racism to troubling men. These women face some of the same problems contemporary African-American women do. Selflessness is displayed by Oprah Winfrey’s character (Mattie Michael), the struggle to accept one’s reality is displayed in Robin Given’s character (Kiswana), and the African-American struggle with sexuality is played out by the lesbian couple Theresa and Lorraine played by Paula Kelly and Lonette McKee. All of these women are the product of their communities and often leading their families. As defined by the E. Franklin Frazier, the matriarchal status of the African-American family stems from slavery[2]. All of these women provide proof for Frazier’s findings. Furthermore, the women of Brewster
Place refute the social norms found in Levittown, because male depiction and status are both negative and perhaps non-existent.

The women and their families living in Brewster place suffer from the realities those in Levittown left behind. Although Brewster Place has no assigned city, it reflects the outcomes of FDR’s early New Deal. In the first New Deal, President Roosevelt established agencies that sponsored the construction of Levittown. Moreover, his sponsorship also financed the constructions of project communities in New York[3]. The projects were built in existing African American communities and were meant to manage issues of poverty while promoting segregation. As stated earlier in this essay, the appearance of Levittown was due to the returning of troops from World War II, but not all of the troops who risked their lives for the nation were able to reap the benefits of returning home. It was not because African-Americans could not afford to live in Levittown, but the exclusion of blacks was due to the FHA’s refusal to ensure the mortgages of African-American families.

What is often forgotten in the American Dream is what was left behind. As more people move into the realm of having the typical American lifestyle, there still is a group of people who will never have the chance to experience that sort of success. What is left of those people are determined by the circumstances they are subjected to. The residents living in Brewster place highlight every struggle that black women whom have fallen victim to their circumstances live out in contemporary urban cities. They are not to fault, but suffer the consequence.

Films In America often hold some kind of significance to the mainstream society at their respective times. The American dream story is one that is live out in A Raisin in the Sun. Taking place in New York in 1959, A Raisin in the Sun is an example of the lives of African-Americans shut out of Levittown and a direct reflection of the Women of Brewster Place. Although the
The notion of Levittown is never explicitly stated in the play nor book, the underlined point is there. The play finds its foundation on the acclaimed poem by Langston Hughes titled, *A Raisin in the Sun*:

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore— And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over— like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?”

- Langston Hughes[4].

The poem above is a true depiction of the internal conflict of the African-American. Throughout the play the audience witnesses a multitude of internal conflicts taking place on behalf of the characters. With the prospects of identity, wealth, and family betterment all on the table, the Younger family find themselves spending their lives chasing this dream. While the conflict persist in African-American ghettos, the prosperity found in *Pleasantville* is the truth for many of whom left for suburbia. The prospects of a child ever growing up and leaving places like Brewster place and ones depicted in *A Raisin in the Sun* are slim to none, thus increasing their chances of raising another generation in poverty. On the other hand, the continuity of success is almost guaranteed for those who moved out to Levittowns.
Much of what is seen throughout film in America is a clear depiction of what society is like. In films, such as the ones discussed in this essay, the idea of acceptance is played out in various ways. One could argue that early forms of immigration are aligned with the ideals of these movies. There are three themes that are consistent with what is seen in the films discussed. When thinking about the infringement of one’s culture onto another, one can argue the following ideals: structural functionalism, conflict theory (Marxist theory), and interactionist theory. Each of these theories deal with the social acclimation of human beings once they have entered into a society unlike their own.

The structural functionalism approach to assimilation is one that would be more appropriate for cultural pluralists. Popularized by Talcott Parsons, the structural functionalism theory relates society to structure. Parsons writes that, “stable cooperative social system is the basis of society. All elements of a society function together to maintain order and stability.”[5] Parsons also claims that rapid social change can throw off the equilibrium of society and social system. The question that would remain after society has been thrown off is how to restore it. One group that would be able to adapt to structural functionalism are those who identify as cultural pluralists, as this is the group with open minded ideals and approaches. A nativist may be one to stand in opposition to the theory.

When thinking of *Pleasantville* and the structural functionalism theory, one may consider the community represented in the film as nativists. The implication of anything outside of their social realm seemed to impact the community in a negative way. The idea of sex and diversity became the basis of fear for the community of *Pleasantville*. For all they knew, the world started and ended at the top of Main Street. The inclusion of color symbolized change, thus throwing off the equilibrium of Pleasantville residents rapidly. In order to restore the equilibrium back into
their society, they must be willing to adapt to the new social norms. In order to adapt, it is suggested that laws and ways of living are changed to adjust to the new normal.

Unlike the community represented in the Women of Brewster Place, the idea of cultural pluralism is welcomed. However, the context in which that change is presented is different from the way it is portrayed in Pleasantville. The change that would be represented in the Women of Brewster Place is one that would come in the form of a savior. The community represented in the film is in search of someone or something to save them from their current predicament. This is displayed at the end of the film, when the matriarchal symbols break down the wall that is enclosing them. The breaking down of the wall in the last scene of the film represents prosperity and affirmation of one’s identity. The saying, “we will overcome” has been shifted to mean, “we will over run,” which supports the idea of taking what one believe belongs to them.

The conflict theory, introduced by Carl Marx, explains what happens when tensions are the root of disagreement in society. Unlike the structural theory where the ending is a result of the equilibrium being rebalanced, the conflict theory ends with the acceptance of the disequilibrium—further fueling tensions amongst groups.[6] This ideology is displayed in Pleasantville, as the community represents the nativists, or people in power. Once that power is threatened, that is when the tensions rise. The one thing the community lacks is the Marxian false consciousness, in which the people in power become the victim in the eyes of the oppressed.[7] The reason for the absence of false consciousness is due to the lack of cultural pluralism that exists in Pleasantville. However, there could be the presence of cultural pluralism in contemporary Levittowns.

For the Women of Brewster Place the conflict theory is arguably more internal than external. The conflict is often displayed within the self; Kiswanna is a clear depiction of the
internal conflict theory. She struggles with her own identity, while forgetting who she really is. Furthermore, the end of the film is a depiction of the conflict theory for the entire community. The women begin to break down the wall that had served as a symbol of their oppression and struggles. Additionally, the idea of breaking down the wall is one that is connected to there being a break in the equilibrium of the society. Before, the people living in Brewster place were subjected to the life of despair, but by the end of the film that had been shaken and disequilibrium had proven itself to be beneficial for them. Just before knocking down the wall, the character played by Operah Winfrey says, “the harder folks try, the more suffer come along and smack ‘em down…there always something standing in the way of freedom.” At this point in the film it become apparent that the dream of these “other” Americans is freedom, but in order to do that the wall must go.

Lastly, there is the interactionist theory, which is presented by George Mead and seeks to prove that reality is socially constructed. The idea of the micro-social and macro-social world is present. In this theory, Mead also explains that there will be something called reciprocal transformation, which means that there is a degree of social routines that go unnoticed. Furthermore, Mead believed that there will be a time where the majority and minority will be able to coexist peacefully. The interactionist theory is one that plays itself out in both of the films discussed in this essay. The Women of Brewster Place and Pleasantville almost have their lines blurred in this theory.

In observing Pleasantville, one may notice that the realities of the community are socially constructed. Characters live a life of innocence, while being shut out to the rest of the world. To them, Pleasantville is the world. This is also relevant in Levittown, where there are no influences of the outside world. The communities create their own schools, fire departments, police forces,
and municipal governments. The standard of living is comparable to the three classes that live in the community, the upper middle class, the middle class, and the lower middle class. There is complete consistency in the way that ideals are conveyed throughout the communities. The communities hold citizens to higher standards, thus making anyone who does not conform to these standards apart of the “other” sub-group.

One could compare the Levittown communities with the contemporary and historical Chinatown communities. The Chinese have an extensive history in America, and just like the residents of Brewster Place, the Chinese found themselves victimized by the nativists and shut out of society. Within the Chinese community there were a number of agencies set up to aid those immigrants who needed it most, and these agencies create a foil between Chinatowns and Levittowns. The Chinese are noted for the establishment of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), also known as the “Chinese Six Companies.” The CCBA was charged with the task of ensuring adequate resources for newly arrived Chinese immigrants. The Chinese merchant class who became the spokesmen for the entire Chinese-American community ran the CCBA. Some historians regard the CCBA as a form of “invisible government.” However, the existence of the organization was the complete opposite, as it was head quartered in San Francisco, California. Just like the CCBA, Levittown communities found themselves structuring their communities after the Chinese. Levittown meant to shut out the prospects of cultural pluralism, as it would not allow any established government agencies to aid the community. The belief that is there was no need for outside government resources led Levittowns to be sustainable in their own right.

With the CCBA and the independently governed Levittown, it leaves one to question the community of Brewster Place’s attempt to self-govern. It is apparent that these kinds of
A community can only be derived from one resource, and it is money. The community represented in the *Women of Brewster Place* is a distinct depiction of what life is like in contemporary urban America. Communities such as the one depicted in the *Women of Brewster Place* are at the mercy of local, state, and federal government assistance agencies. However, just as these agencies failed to protect the influx of Chinese immigrants that had entered the country, it would appear to be doing the same for communities like African-Americans living in Brewster Place.

When thinking about Pleasantville and Brewster Place, it is important that the discussion of planning and development take place. Both films can be pulled out of their fiction lenses and examined non-fictionally. Planning of both communities are done by no mistake, and it is important to understand some of the reasons behind the strategic planning of communities like Levittown and Brewster Place. William Levitt alludes to the fact that the planning of Levittown is met to encourage the interaction of community. The photo above depicts the interaction that would be produced by aligning homes in rows on separate lots of land. The following is a community plan put forth by William Levitt for Levittown, Pennsylvania:

- 41 Sections with 17,311 single family houses
- 171 miles of roads
- 5 Olympic-sized community swimming pools
- Little League baseball fields
- Lots of green space and neighborhood parks
- Large, multi-purpose Community Hall
- Two large, centralized Shopping Centers
- Sites set aside & donated for churches & schools,[11]

The roads cross over one another with the idea that social interaction would take place. Moreover, this further affirms the idea of there being an “other” that is not let into the society. Levittown was built as a “self-contained planned community.”

The idea of the Levittown planning is depicted in *Pleasantville*. The characters are taught that the only existence beyond Main Street is start of Pleasantville again. Social interactions are encouraged throughout the film amongst generations, and the idea of community is solidified early on. However, once the threat of the “other” appeared, the idea of there being an outside world is realized. In this case the “other” becomes one of their own. Jennifer is the one who kicks off the rebellion against social norms with her free spirit and the introduction of these attitudes led to the shifting of equilibrium.

The planning of Brewster Place and others like it is strategic in that is separates the other from the nativist society. As depicted in the film, a wall separates Brewster Place from the rest of society, which is a representation of limited access to the free world. The tearing down of the wall symbolizes freedom. Many planners and developers attribute the structure of the American project community to racial attitudes of the country. The nativist attitude toward the “other”, as most of the communities are enclosed by a wall. At the same time Levittown is being constructed in Pennsylvania and New York, so were the rise of the American project communities. The idea of the project community suggests that the projects were meant to serve as the American dream for the African-American.

Not only were the Levitts instrumental in building the housing that make up Levittown, they were also key in developing who should live there. Although stated earlier in
the essay that it was the FHA who controlled the racial make-up of communities, it must be remembered that the Levitts complied with the FHA’s desire to segregate living communities. In 1955, just five years after the influx of Americans began moving into the suburbs, the NAACP filed a lawsuit against mortgage companies who refused to finance Levittown home for African-Americans. Thurgood Marshall, the lawyer who had successfully argued *Brown v. Board of Education*, represented the plaintiffs, but a Philadelphia court dismissed the suit after ruling that the federal agencies were not responsible for preventing housing discrimination.[12]

In 1957, William and Daisy Myers, a black couple and their children bought a house in Levittown, Pennsylvania from the former owners. There was a provision in the clause that provided white homeowners in Levittown to sale their homes to whomever they wanted to. However, their reception was not taken well by white residents of the community. The argument of the functional theory comes into play. By the Myers moving into Levittown, the equilibrium of the residents are thrown off, thus creating conflict. Historically, Levittowners are known for not being open to cultural pluralism. It was not that the residents who already lived in Levittown viewed the Myers as a threat, but they did not welcome outsider and whatever problems already existed in Levittown was amongst the nativists.

Levittown is a beacon of the American dream and the ideals of what it meant to have finally gained success in America. However, the idea of this dream is quickly altered with the implication of African Americans into the community. The argument againt communism was also had a strong presence in the Myers struggle, as members of both sides charged each other with socialistic views. White residents of Levittown and other still segregated communities across the country believed that “Americanism” was justification for racial exclusivity, and painted those who sought to enforce integration as un-American of allegiances, or communist.
Though the government attempted to address the severe housing shortage by launching some public housing programs, those programs were viciously vilified by right-wing politicians as a form of socialism. Senator Joseph McCarthy himself called public housing projects “breeding grounds for communists.”[13] The idea that the American dream could be obtained through hard work and dedication was present in Levittown and other communities like it, but for the African American that dream was not obtainable no matter how hard they worked. With Levittown being socially restricted to non-people of color, the idea of Brewster places and other project communities were ideal. They would serve as a barrier and management system for African-Americans. The flip side to this is the notion that education is the only way to relieve someone of bad circumstances; however, that benefit was not the same from those left behind in crumbling cities.

The American dream is something that has been debated for decades. Generationally, that dream changes. For the current generation, the millennials, the American dream has perhaps shifted back to city living. The city, the once pestilential territory as Thomas Jefferson once deemed it, is now the place where life is lived. The scope of the American family has now changed. Before the idea of domesticity was practiced throughout the country, now education and professionalism trumps life in a kitchen. Some may argue that America is in a post racism period, and that may be true in some aspects. The idea that African-Americans and other minority groups are equal are still there, but there can be argued that there is a modernized form. More and more the children growing up in Brewster places across the country are going off to college. On the other hand, the children growing up in Pleasantville [Levittown] like communities across the nation are continuing to reaping the rewards of nativists in the community. So, is the American dream truly obtainable to all Americans? A suggestion for
further research could be to examine gentrification progression in America’s major cities and how it poses a foster the idea of the new American dream.
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Do Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders Have Significantly Complex Eating Habits and Difficulties?

By: Mercede Burger

For many Americans, eating is a daily source of comfort, pleasure, and calmness. A large portion of the population indulges in meals and actively looks forward to satisfying their tastes. Americans typically consume a wide variety of culinary treats and gourmet meals on special occasions. However, children with developmental disabilities can have adverse feelings to meal times. According to professional studies and research, eating habits and difficulties are prevalent in approximately 80% of children with developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD).  

Specifically, autism spectrum disorders are a set of related developmental disorders that are commonly characterized in varying degrees by impairments and difficulties in social interactions, communication, stereotypical and repetitive behaviors, as well as sensory processing. In previous decades such as the 1940s and 1950s, autism was not a well-known and common term used in society. Since it was added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1980, autism has surfaced in the United States with a growing rate of research and awareness. The prevalence of autism is now increasing in 2014, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has currently estimated 1 in 68 children to be diagnosed. Society is in a constant state of change, and likewise there have been differences in American’s eating habits and diets over the years. The changes in food and eating in American

42 Ibid, 23.
culture has also exemplified a reflection on the eating habits of children with ASD. Among this population, the most persistently reported area of concern is that of problems associated with aberrant eating habits and difficulties.\textsuperscript{44} For these children, eating can be a complex and emotional experience, an extreme fear or revulsion, and/or cause sensitivity due to various factors. The nature of eating habits and difficulties is commonly manifested in food refusal and selectivity, along with sensory sensitivity issues including hypo and hypersensitivity. These habits and difficulties can increase a child’s risk for poor medical and developmental outcomes including nutritional deficits. Significant interferences with activities, academic achievement, and socializations can be a further result of eating habits and difficulties in children with ASD.\textsuperscript{45}

In American society in the 1950s, ASD was untypical in growing research and awareness. As a result, families did not endure the struggles that present day families are likely to have. The myth of the American family addresses that families confront many life challenges and simply are not perfect. The popular television show in the 1950s, \textit{Leave it to Beaver}, portrayed an ideal American family consisting of a mother, father, and at least two typically developing children. June Cleaver, the mother, was depicted as the primary homemaker, engaged in the cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children. In contrast, the father Ward, was more involved in the public sphere and work force, and primarily supported his family. Here, the cult of domesticity is present as women were clearly separated from men in their domestic roles.\textsuperscript{46}

In today’s society, individual family members take on various roles that are not necessarily in adherence with the cult of domesticity. For example, mothers and fathers may

\textsuperscript{44} Paul Whiteley, Jacqui Rodgers, and Paul Shattock, “Feeding Patterns in Autism,” \textit{Autism}, (2010): 207, doi: 10.1177/136236130004002008. *Eating habits and difficulties will be the umbrella term used throughout the paper to generally refer to food refusal and selectivity and sensory sensitivity issues, all conditions that adversely affect the nutritional status, health and well-being of children with ASD.


\textsuperscript{46} Francis J. Ryan. American Studies 100 Lecture Notes. Fall, 2011.
equally hold roles in the public sphere, and their families can experience complex challenges in relation to the issues of today’s society. One could say that families in today’s society are untypical. Families can be comprised of or in absence of a mother and father figure, children, and other relatives. Additionally, developmental and intellectual disabilities, including ASD, are commonly present in individuals such as children. Therefore, children can be diagnosed with ASD and exhibit aberrant eating habits and difficulties, which affect the activities and daily lives of the entire family.

According to researchers Bandini et al. from the University of Massachusetts Medical School, food refusal and selectivity commonly affects children with ASD and their eating habits as well as mealtimes. Often, children display rigidity in terms of a limited repertoire of food items or an excessive intake of selective foods. Bandini et al. further conducted a study to examine food refusal and selectivity in children with ASD and typically developing children in August 2010. The study consisted of 53 children with ASD and 58 typically developing children ages 3-11 years. Parents were interviewed about their child’s dietary habits, completed a food frequency questionnaire, and kept record of their child’s food repertoire for a three-day period. Findings concluded that children with ASD refused more foods in general and more foods offered than typically developing children. Food refusal was based on the total number of foods that the parent indicated the child would not eat, as well as the percentage of foods the child would not eat relative to the number of foods that were offered. On average, parents also reported that their child consumed significantly fewer types of foods over the three-day period, most commonly fruits and vegetables. Vegetables were evaluated separately, and the conclusion was made that children with ASD refused more vegetables than typically developing children. As a result of the three-day food record, Bandini et al. determined

the common nutrient inadequacies in children with ASD and typically developing children. Both groups showed nutrient inadequacies for calcium, vitamins D and E, zinc, iron, and fiber. However, lower intakes of vitamin D and calcium were significantly frequent in children with ASD. Consequently, Bandini et al. found an association between limited food repertories and nutritional deficiencies for children with ASD. Because of the characteristics associated with ASD, children are more likely to exhibit food refusal and selectivity issues in which parental concerns are evident. In an interview, Celine Stanton, who holds her Master’s degree in Special Education and works as an autistic support teacher at Northampton Area Senior High School, reported on the traits that are frequently found in children with ASD. In her personal experience and knowledge of ASD, Stanton explained that common traits include obsessive and compulsive behaviors, repetition, and the insistence of sameness. She stated that children typically exhibit fear of a “resistance to change.” Therefore, she noted how individuals prefer highly predictable environments and routines, such as meal times, that are structured and organized rather than those that are spontaneous. Stanton explained, “Individuals can become accustomed to particular routines and find it difficult to break their habits, which can result in feelings of frustration, anger, and confusion.” In addition, she noted that individuals with ASD use negative behaviors to voice their wants, needs, and concerns. As a result of these precise traits, food refusal and selectivity issues can inhibit an ASD individual’s activities, academics, and socializations with others.

Christy Marlin, a 20 year old resident of Philadelphia, PA, further elaborates on food refusal and selectivity in children with ASD in a personal interview. Marlin’s cousin, Jacob, is

48 Celine Stanton, interview by Mercede Burger, Northampton, PA, April 17, 2014. Here after, all references to the traits of ASD are from this source. *Pseudonyms were used for the individuals interviewed for confidentiality purposes.
diagnosed with ASD and demonstrates food refusal and selectivity issues.\textsuperscript{49} He is currently ten years old and exhibits anxiety and compulsive eating habits that affect his nutritional status and interfere with everyday activities. As researchers Bandini et al. have reported, it is common for Jacob to refuse and show hesitance about certain food items and to eat excessive intakes of particular foods. In the interview, Marlin first commented that Jacob has a particular breakfast eating schedule, where he will only eat pancakes and bacon. Jacob displays negative behavior when there is an infringement on his eating schedule and often develops temper tantrums when his family does not have a specific food in their house. A precise example shows that Jacob engaged in a temper tantrum when he asked Marlin for bacon and was denied. He refused to believe that there was not any bacon and would not have any breakfast at all without it. Here, it is apparent that Jacob is selective on his food choices and will refrain from eating something when a desired food is absent. In the school setting, Jacob’s insistence on sameness causes him to pack his lunches, which are primarily comprised of starches, carbohydrates, and fats, such as pizza, burgers, and chips. He refrains from eating fruits, vegetables, and drinking water, which are all healthy choices. Jacob also has a repetitive eating schedule on weekends. Marlin reported that his selective Friday dinners consist of specifically Pizza Hut’s pepperoni pizza. On Saturdays, Jacob’s family will travel to a McDonald’s drive-thru where he will only consume six-piece chicken nuggets and French fries. Brand and presentation of foods is therefore important to Jacob. While following these precise habits, Jacob also prefers to eat in his home setting because of his sensitivity to sound and loud social interactions. Therefore, the family utilizes the convenience of drive-thrus and delivery services to meet Jacob’s particular requests.

\textsuperscript{49} Christy Marlin, interview by Mercede Burger, April 10, 2014. Hereafter, all references to Jacob’s eating habits and difficulties are from this source.
As it can also be observed, Jacob and many children with ASD consume more starches and carbohydrates in their diets than any other type of food.\textsuperscript{50} Because of this, Jacob’s family doctor informed the family that he is overweight and at risk for serious medical conditions in the future. According to his doctor, he is at risk for obesity and ranges in a higher percentile for his age group. Marlin commented that the doctor recommended Jacob start a diet comprised of fruits and vegetables, and begin an exercise regimen. However, Jacob has had the same eating habits for approximately four years, and consequently he exhibits a resistance to change in routines and unexpected events.

In a larger scale study, researchers Schreck et al. analyzed food refusal and selectivity in 138 children with ASD and 298 typically developing children, ages seven to nine and a half.\textsuperscript{51} Parents were instructed to complete a food preference inventory to assess the variety of foods that children consumed. Overall, parents of children with ASD reported that their children refused a profuse amount of foods and had limited diets than parents of children without ASD. The food preference inventory contained items from each food group. Moreover, children with ASD consumed approximately half the numbers of foods than typically developing children. However, children consumed more foods in the starches group and overall ate fewer types of foods than their family members. Their restricted food choices were demonstrated to be preferences of their family. To conclude the study, Schreck et al. determined that children with ASD have a larger degree of food refusal and selectivity issues than typically developing children.


refusal and selectivity issues causing him to show negative behaviors and reactions. Michelle Long, Tyler’s mother and resident of Bethlehem, PA, commented that he was diagnosed with ASD shy of three years old. She described that Tyler, currently 12 years old, exhibits repetitive and obsessive behaviors that affect his every day eating routines. Specifically, she reported that Tyler has a strict preoccupation with macaroni and cheese as well as quesadillas. He insists on these two choices for lunches when he is at his house. He does not however show any issues with buying his school lunches. As a result, his eating habits do not impact or influence his performance and socializations in school. Long acknowledged that he occasionally has a temper tantrum or a physiological reaction, such as vomiting, when there is an infringement on his choices in the home setting. For example, he shows these negative behaviors when his family does not have the specific ingredients for his lunches and shows hesitation when introduced to new foods. Because children with ASD have trouble becoming accustomed to change and new routines, Long noted in an interview that Tyler appears to be “off task” for the day’s remainder if he does not consume his regular lunches. Consequently, Tyler adheres to his strict eating routines to avoid interferences and other potential reactions to surprises.

Furthermore, another study was undertaken to investigate and verify food refusal as well as selectivity in children with ASD. In 1998, E. Cornish interviewed the parents of 17 autistic children and collected a food frequency questionnaire and a three-day dietary recall. In the study, Cornish found that 59% of the children ate fewer than 20 different foods and 18% ate fewer than eight different foods. Jacob and Tyler, young children with ASD, demonstrate this

52 Michelle Long, e-mail message to Mercede Burger, April 9, 2014.
selection of few food choices in interviews with their family members. In the study, Cornish also
discovered that one child out of the 17 ate the recommended number of fruits and vegetables
with only one type of food (apples). In addition, three children ate no meat or meat substitutes,
three ate no dairy, and six children ate large quantities of dairy. As a result, these six children
obtained half of their energy requirements and nutrients from dairy foods. In all, Cornish
discovered that 53% of the children with ASD had nutrient deficits as a result of their eating
habits. In another study in 2000, Whiteley et al. completed a qualitative analysis of parental reports of the eating habits and preferences of 100 children with
ASD to further analyze food refusal and selectivity issues. The children were randomly selected
from a computerized database of approximately 1000 individuals involved in urinary studies at
the Autism Research Unit at the University of Sunderland, UK. In the study, 79 children were
diagnosed with ASD and 21 had Asperger’s, a high functioning form of autism.\footnote{54} Parents also
included reports about what their children ate, and one commonality reported that children ate
large amounts of cereal and dairy based foods. Eighty-three percent of parents reported a
restricted amount of foods, which compromised the child’s main diet. As noted previously,
parents concluded that any infringement on the selected food repertoire caused behavioral
reactions (tantrums) and physiological reactions, (vomiting and gagging).\footnote{55} Evidently, the
negative reactions can impede a child’s health status and involvement with other individuals.

Because of the nature of food refusal, selectivity issues, and the association of nutritional
deficiencies, it is common for individuals to assume that children with ASD have eating
disorders. In the movie \textit{Dying to Be Thin}, viewers are informed that individuals with eating

\footnote{54} Paul Whiteley, Jacqui Rodgers, and Paul Shattock, “Feeding Patterns in Autism,” \textit{Autism}, (2000): 208, doi:
10.1177/13623613000004002008.

\footnote{55} \textit{Ibid}, 209.
disorders may refuse certain foods because of their nutritional status, and strive to lose a certain weight to conform to society’s standards. Therefore, they are selective in food choices and have restricted diets, similarly to children with ASD. However, children with ASD do not exactly have eating disorders; but they display several of the common characteristics of eating disorders, including repetitive behaviors and the insistence on sameness. Because of common stereotypical and obsessive behaviors at meal times, children with ASD endure particular food refusal and selectivity issues that can affect their nutritional status. As it is evident, children with ASD do not restrict their diets to lose weight and achieve an ideal body image. Rather, their particular diets are a result of unusual eating habits and behaviors.

Sensory sensitivity is another major domain in which children with ASD endure aberrant eating habits and difficulties during mealtimes that can interfere with nutritional status, activities, and socializations. Individuals with ASD often treat sensory input differently from normally developing peers. A leading problem generally among children with ASD is known as sensory processing disorder. As part of the disorder, an individual’s brain has difficulty receiving and responding appropriately to sensory information from the environment. According to a clinical study completed in 2011, Nadon et al. determined that 78% to 90% of children with ASD have sensory processing problems. The types of sensory sensitivity and processing problems that children may exhibit can be classified into tactile, olfactory, visual, auditory, and taste sensitivity, reflecting the human senses. Problems of sensory modulation can

56 Dying to Be Thin, directed by Larkin McPhee (Boston: Twin Cities Public Television, 2000), VHS.
58 Elizabeth Strickland, Eating for Autism: The 10-Step Nutrition Plan To Help Treat Your Child’s Autism, Asperger’s, Or ADHD (Da Capo Press, 2009), 69.
be further expressed as hyper or hypo sensitive. Those with hypersensitivity (over-sensitive) can become overwhelmed as well as exhibit negative and anxious behaviors to a variety of sensory information, including eating meals. Hyposensitivity (under-sensitive) refers to individuals who are not sensitive enough to sensory information they receive. The issues of sensory sensitivity and processing problems can negatively impede the eating habits of children with ASD.

The sense of touch often presents challenges for children with ASD. Tactile sensitivity refers to the touch and the feel of foods in the hands and mouth. Individuals have preferences to touch and eat foods that are only soft versus hard. Textures of foods may need to be particular, such as crunchy, crispy, or only smooth. Consequently, food selectivity and refusal can be dependent upon the child’s sensitivity. In 2000, Whiteley et al. performed a qualitative analysis of parental reports of the eating habits and preferences of 100 children with ASD at the Autism Research Unit, University of Sunderland, UK. As part of their study, the researchers concluded that children held eating habits based on food texture which tended to fall into two categories: dry foods and soft foods. In the reports, Whiteley et al. found that children consumed primarily dry foods that are crispy and crunchy or soft foods with a degree of moisture or liquid. As it can be seen, individuals with ASD can be selective based on tactile sensitivity.

Once again, the issue of tactile sensitivity can be expressed in hyper or hyposensitivity. An individual who has tactile hypersensitivity may be unwilling to touch foods with their hands or use utensils. On the contrary, others may prefer to use their hands when eating, rather than

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60 Elizabeth Strickland, *Eating for Autism: The 10-Step Nutrition Plan To Help Treat Your Child’s Autism, Asperger’s, Or ADHD* (Da Capo Press, 2009), 69.
utensils. In an interview with Michelle Long, she explained that her son Tyler exhibits tactile sensitivity. She noted that he refuses to eat any types of food with utensils. Long said, “Tyler will not even eat ice cream with a spoon. He slurps it out of a bowl like soup. This presents difficulties when he eats in social settings as individuals are likely to stare.” Since he was five years old, Tyler has been accustomed to eating food with his hands. Long further commented that he does not respond appropriately to changes in routines, such as meal times, which is a general characteristic of those with ASD. Consequently, he will show considerable distress when his eating habits are interrupted, which interferes with his socializations. Furthermore, Tyler’s case exemplifies that individuals with ASD are likely to have a compulsive adherence to routine, making it challenging for them to adjust to the dynamic demands of their environment.

The effects of ASD and sensory processing disorder can be examined in an interview with Donna O’Malley of Bethlehem, PA and her daughter, Allison. At four years old, Allison was diagnosed with ASD and sensory processing disorder when she exhibited peculiar eating habits and other impairments. Particularly, Allison shows tactile sensitivity and is therefore selective about her food choices. O’Malley discussed that Allison, currently six years old, eats a limited repertoire of food with little flexibility. She will often gag and shake herself when she does not like something. Because of Allison’s limited communication skills, she exhibits physiological reactions to express her feelings of displeasure and frustration, similarly to other children with ASD. O’Malley discussed that Allison does not like to touch wet foods, after she

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62 Michelle Long, e-mail message to Mercede Burger, April 9, 2014.
63 Donna O’Malley, e-mail message to Mercede Burger, April 11, 2014.
was introduced to jello as a snack. Allison became upset when she touched the jello causing her to engage in a temper tantrum.

To further test Allison’s likes and dislikes, O’Malley stated that she made several attempts to give Allison fruits and vegetables, which also generally have a wet and moist texture to them. However, she noted that Allison threw away or pushed aside strawberries, grapes, and other foods after she did not like the textures. Therefore, Allison refrained from eating fruits and vegetables, limiting her intake of vital nutrients. O’Malley commented that she bought dehydrated fruits and vegetables to gradually introduce Allison to the flavors of healthy fruits and vegetables without the moist textures. Overall, Allison appears to prefer the dehydrated, crunchy, crispy fruits and vegetables, which better helps her issue with tactile sensitivity and eliminates negative behavior. As a result, the family brings snacks and dehydrated foods for Allison when they eat outside of their home. Currently, Allison takes vitamin supplements to help avoid serious nutritional inadequacies that her eating habits could cause. Doctors Bruns and Thompson note that an additional means of altering an ASD child’s diet is to try and include supplements, such as Pediasure and Ensure pudding, to help meet calories and nutritional needs. Furthermore, Allison receives intensive food therapy in order to cope with her eating habits and sensory issues.

The myth of the American dream focuses on individual achievement and opportunities. It states that individuals can achieve their own goals through hard work and perseverance. Because of the impairments that children with ASD and developmental disabilities can have, they may display the need for assistance in reaching their goals. In this way, the American dream is concentrated more on a group effort. Children with

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ASD often require a strong support system in helping them to monitor particular difficulties and eating habits. For example, Donna O’Malley, mother of Allison, stated that her daughter attends food therapy given by a speech therapist.\textsuperscript{66} The speech therapist collaborates with Allison to ameliorate her food refusal and sensory sensitivity problems. The therapist uses techniques, such as positive reinforcement, to introduce Allison to non-preferred foods. For example, Allison is allowed to play with her toys when she eats one non-preferred food and she is encouraged to play with her food to acquire a general feeling of different food textures. Evidently, she needs the support of other individuals to help her achieve goals and overcome eating habits and difficulties that are common in the ASD population.

Portraits, paintings, and other art forms can be insightful expressions of American life, culture, and eating habits. Moreover, pictures can be used to portray certain messages to viewers.\textsuperscript{67} Dr. Thomas R. Linscheid of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia designed a PowerPoint presentation to address the eating habits in children with ASD and how to treat them. In his presentation, he included a picture of a young girl appearing to shriek at the plate of pizza in front of her as shown in appendix A. Because the title of his PowerPoint addresses ASD, viewers are likely to assume that the girl has autism.\textsuperscript{68} Likewise, viewers may assume that the girl exhibits food refusal and selectivity issues and/or sensory processing problems during meal times, similarly to Allison. For example, the girl holds her hands away from the plate and her body language demonstrates that she dislikes the pizza. The position of her hands may indicate that she has tactile sensitivity and exhibits negative behaviors if she touches the pizza. The girl’s eyes are also focused on the pizza, indicating that

\textsuperscript{66} Donna O’Malley, e-mail message to Mercede Burger, April 11, 2014.


\textsuperscript{68} Thomas R. Linscheid, Ph.D., Presentation of “Picky Eating In Children With Autism and How To Treat It,” Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.
she may have visual sensitivity and prefer foods of only certain colors, shapes, and presentations. Furthermore, the girl may refuse to eat the pizza if it is not a particular brand or type. Regardless of the girl’s preference, the picture gives insight and serves as a representation of the complex eating habits and difficulties faced by the ASD population. Continuing eating difficulties for children with ASD can be presented in the form of sensory processing problems involving the sense of smell and sight. Olfactory sensitivity refers to the sense of smell. Often, children with ASD are hypersensitive to smell and can become anxious as well as overwhelmed by the odors of food preparation and meal times. Because their sense of smell is heightened, individuals may have physiological reactions, such as gagging and vomiting. These reactions occur more often when ASD individuals lack effective communication skills or may be non-verbal, unable to express their thoughts and feelings. As a result of strong odors, individuals may immediately refuse a certain food and omit it from their diets.69

Visual sensitivity is another common issue in children with ASD. Individuals may reject or strictly select foods based on their colors, shapes, sizes, and presentation. In discussion with O’Malley, she reported that her daughter Allison also shows visual sensitivity as part of her disorder. For example, she refuses to eat foods that are yellow, including bananas and corn. O’Malley commented saying that Allison tells her that the color hurts her eyes. In addition, Allison is sensitive to food presentation, as she does not like when foods touch one another. O’Malley ensures that Allison’s foods are equally spread apart when meals are served in the home setting. The proper structure and presentation of foods significantly lessens Allison’s

69 Elizabeth Strickland, Eating for Autism: The 10-Step Nutrition Plan To Help Treat Your Child’s Autism, Asperger’s, Or ADHID (Da Capo Press, 2009), 70-71.
anxiety and likelihood of temper tantrums. Once again, it is clear that Allison and other children with ASD prefer repetition and order in their eating habits and meal times.

A further distinguishing quality of children with ASD is that of choosing foods based on their taste or flavor. Many individuals look forward to satisfying their palates during meal times. However, children with ASD can exhibit taste hypo and/or hypersensitivity, which can negatively impact their experiences and cause opposite reactions. In the article, “Time to Eat: Improving Mealtimes of Young Children with Autism,” doctors Deborah Bruns and Stacy Thompson conclude that children who are hyposensitive generally prefer strong flavors that help to activate their under responsive oral receptors. To activate the oral receptors, foods with salty, spicy, sour, and bitter tastes are more common and appealing to children with ASD. On the other hand, Bruns and Thompson report that children with taste hypersensitivity tend to prefer bland foods or specific flavors. Highly strong flavors can trigger adverse and negative responses, as children with ASD do not treat sensory input in the same way as typically developing peers. Foods commonly eaten by hypersensitive children include bland foods, such as oatmeal, crackers, and pureed food.70 An additional sense used by individuals in meal times includes hearing. Eating is a complex experience where individuals can be surrounded by social interactions. Children with ASD show difficulty interpreting and responding to sensory information in their environments. Distant sounds, conversations, the preparation of food, and the manipulation of utensils can disrupt a child’s sensory input. These particular examples can be more likely seen in children with hypersensitivity. Because of the continual disruptions of sound,

individuals may not enjoy eating or engaging in other activities in social settings. Ultimately, this can deter a child from eating in public with family and friends, as well as limit opportunities for communication and socialization with others. In an interview with Christy Marlin, her cousin Jacob was shown to exhibit auditory sensitivity, and prefers to eat in the home setting. When he cannot avoid social interactions in the lunch room at his school, Jacob wears earphones to help reduce the sounds and avoids talking to peers. As mentioned, a primary characteristic of ASD includes deficits in social skills, communication, and language. Thus, auditory sensitivity can impede a child’s eating habits and routines, and cause them to refuse certain foods and meals if they have a prior negative experience or memory associated with it.

Furthermore, hyposensitivity negatively affects the eating habits of children with ASD. When this issue is presented with food, children may have difficulty telling food from non-food, or they may enjoy the feeling of eating certain non-food items for stimulation. Typically, children with ASD engage in stimulating behaviors such as spinning and flapping to express their feelings and emotions that they may not be able to communicate. The disorder, pica, refers to an abnormal craving for non-food substances, such as dirt, paint, and clay. The National Autism Center estimates that 25 to 30 percent of children with ASD develop pica. Additionally, evidence supports that symptoms of pica can result in response to nutritional inadequacies. Often, symptoms of pica are triggered when the child has iron and zinc deficiencies due to food refusal as well as selectivity issues. The National Autism Center states that children with ASD who demonstrate symptoms of pica are at a higher risk for nutritional

72 National Autism Center, “Pica,” last modified 2014, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/05/. Here after, all references to pica are from this source.
inadequacies and other serious health problems. As a result of consuming indigestible items, bowel problems, dental injuries, parasitic infections, and intestinal obstructions can occur.

To expand on the types of sensitivity and demonstrate the relevance in the ASD population, the University of Montreal conducted one of the first studies in 2011 to determine the relationship between sensory processing problems and the number of eating problems in children with ASD.\textsuperscript{73} The participants included 95 children, ages three to ten years, with ASD or Asperger Syndrome, a high functioning form of ASD. Families filled out questionnaires regarding their child’s mealtime behaviors, social skills of eating, food preferences, and other significant areas. Additionally, families were given the Short Sensory Profile, a questionnaire that helps identify children with sensory processing problems. The SSP consists of sections including tactile, taste, smell, visual, and auditory sensitivity. Parents needed to determine how often a statement occurs, such as whether their child reacts emotionally or violently to particular foods. Researchers calculated the scores using the terms “typical, probable, or definite differences” to describe the child’s specific eating habits. It was determined roughly half to two-thirds of children in the three significant sections had either definite or probable sensory processing problems in association with their eating problems or habits. The University of Montreal’s results overall suggested that certain sensory processing problems may highly influence the number of eating problems more than others. For example, the study also highly demonstrated that children with definite tactile sensitivity, exhibited unusual food preferences pertaining to specific brands, recipes, textures, and temperatures. Another significant association

was found between visual and auditory sensitivity, as well as the number of eating problems in children with ASD. The study discovered that the sounds of food preparation and utensils can be problematic and cause negative behaviors in children. Lastly, children with visual sensitivities were shown to react more to the visual stimuli of food, which can evoke certain unpleasant memories. Evidently, the University of Montreal’s study concludes that sensory processing problems contribute to the atypical eating habits and difficulties of children with ASD.

Currently in America, diet and nutrition as well as ASD are large topics in conversation. Based off of interviews as well as research, it is noted that children with ASD experience difficulties in food refusal, selectivity, and sensitivity. Difficulties can cause significant interferences in everyday life including activities, academics, and nutrition. As both continue to receive more attention, one will see that children with ASD can exhibit a variety of eating habits and difficulties that are more complex in nature than simply “picky eating.”

The topic of ASD and difficulties with eating habits can therefore be further researched in several regards. Many of the studies researched were focused on children with eating difficulties rather than adults. It is possible to research whether eating issues are prevalent in adults with ASD. One could consider the question whether eating difficulties in those with ASD diminish with age or remain roughly the same. Children with ASD are also often recommended to try the GFCF diet, commonly referred to as the “elimination diet.” The gluten-free, casein free diet is said to help treat the eating habits and nutritional difficulties that children can endure, such as food refusal and selectivity. Gluten is a protein found in wheat and other grains. Casein is a main protein commonly in milk and other dairy products. It is recommended that a child follow the strict diet for improved results. ASD individuals are additionally the most common offenders for gastrointestinal symptoms and other conditions, further giving reason to follow a regimented
diet. Other recommended diets include sugar free, specific carbohydrate, and dye free diets. As a result, more in-depth research could be conducted to determine the reliability of specific diets in aiding the eating habits and difficulties of children with ASD.

Specific diets, such as the GFCF diet, are becoming more popular in the ASD population and American society as a whole. The chapter in a previous course reading, “They Dieted for Our Sins,” by Barbara Haber, includes an in-depth description of Sylvester Graham, an early food reformer in the nineteenth century. Graham lived from 1794 to 1851, a period in which diets and health reforms flourished. Graham was a clergyman whose dietetic plan, the Graham System, emphasized vegetarianism, temperance, and sexual abstinence. His grain-based, natural diet, paralleled with his strict religious beliefs. The GFCF diet within the ASD population, in contrast, recommends that individuals eliminate wheat and grain products to help with dietary and gastrointestinal ailments. Graham also believed that human temperaments and impure thoughts could be aggravated or assuaged by certain foods. Moreover, he suggested that individuals refrain from particular condiments and spices and beverages, such as coffee and alcohol, which were said to excite sexual organs. In addition to following these guidelines and the grain-based diet with an abundance of vegetables, individuals were instructed to receive fresh air, cold showers, and exercise. After Graham’s death, Ellen Harmon White, a religious leader, followed Graham’s health initiatives and established the Battle Creek Sanitarium in 1866. The San, as it was commonly referred to, was the best-known health resort in United States. White further enforced Graham’s strict diet of fruits, grains, and vegetables and plenty of rest, air, and

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76 Ibid, 65.
77 Ibid, 65.
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Graham’s grain-based diet and legacy was later expanded on by John Henry Kellogg, who strived to create healthy food products that were more palatable. The Battle Creek Sanitarium further combined healthy diets, exercise machines, and other procedures to improve the overall health and lifestyles of individuals.

Lastly, one could make further recommendations for research regarding the topic of ASD and difficulties with eating habits. It would be interesting to examine how the diets of autistic children influence educational performances. One could research whether food refusal and selectivity issues in children with ASD negatively impact school performance in the classroom and on tests. With food refusal and selectivity issues, children can be at risk for nutritional inadequacies if their bodies are deprived of proper vitamins, minerals, and energy. One could also include whether certain foods and meals, such as breakfast, can help improve overall performance as several studies show that nutrition directly correlates to educational performance.

\footnote{Ibid, 70.}
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**Appendix A: Photograph**

![Photo of a young girl eating pizza.](image)

**Appendix B**
Interview with Celine Stanton: Autistic support teacher at Northampton Area Senior High School, Master’s Degree in Education
Date: April 17, 2014
Questions asked:
- How would you describe the common behaviors of children with ASD?
- Can you describe any personal experiences with children who exhibit food selectivity? Explain.

**Appendix C**
Interview with Michelle Long from Bethlehem, PA: mother of a 12 year old named Tyler
Date: April 9, 2014
Questions asked:
- When was Tyler diagnosed with autism?
- Does he exhibit any unusual eating preferences or behaviors? How?
- Does he have negative reactions when he does not consume a particular food(s)?

**Appendix D**
Interview with Donna O’Malley of Bethlehem, PA: mother of a six year old named Allison
- When was your daughter diagnosed with autism and sensory processing disorder?
- How would you describe sensory processing disorder?
- Does Allison have tactile sensitivity?
- Does she show sensitivity to foods based on their colors and sizes?
- Does she prefer certain foods more than others?
- Can you describe Allison’s reactions when she is given food she does not like or prefer?
- How does Allison act when eating a meal with family?
- How do you introduce her to new foods?
- Does she take any vitamin supplements to ensure that she is consuming proper nutrients?
- How has food therapy helped Allison with her particular sensitivities to certain foods?

**Appendix E**
Interview with Christy Marlin, a resident of Philadelphia, PA: cousin of a 10 year old named Jacob
- When was your cousin diagnosed with autism?
- What is his current age?
- Does he show anxiety, the need for sameness, and other common characteristics of ASD?
- Does he refuse certain foods or show selectivity?
- Does your cousin have a particular eating routine (such as eating the same foods for breakfast, lunch, and dinner)?
- How does your cousin feel about eating outside of the home?
- Does he experience sensitivity with foods (such as taste, texture, smell, etc.)?
- Is your cousin at risk for any nutritional inadequacies due to eating habits?
The Developing American Dream
By Erin Herman

The 1950s American Dream was considered by many as the “perfect” life: a married couple in which the father is the breadwinner and the mother is a housewife who has dinner waiting for her husband when he gets home from work, two children who argue about sibling issues, a four-bedroom home, a white picket fence that fences in the perfectly kept front yard, and a car in the driveway. During the 1950s, the American Dream was a phenomenon that just about everyone wanted. The perception of the American Dream in the 50s consisted of a happy family, a well paying job, and life long happiness. This dream is represented in the 1998 film, Pleasantville. The film is about a brother and sister who are polar opposites and come from a broken family. The brother envies a family life from his favorite television show, ‘Pleasantville’, where a family of four portrays their lives as wonderful, with overbearing happiness. The father is the hard worker in this film who brings home the money, — representing what other men dreamed of during this time. Meanwhile, the two children, Bud and Mary-Sue, from the show get along for the most part, while also having their sibling-type arguments. The brother and sister, David and Jennifer, enter the world of the television show to find out what the 50s American Dream life is like. Throughout the film, David and Jennifer change the course of the television show ‘Pleasantville’ and introduce the characters of the show to the notion of change.
By the end of *Pleasantville*, the characters in the television show have drastically changed. This film suggests change happening throughout the world; the change of the American Dream. The change shown in the film—characters changing when they experience something new and unordinary—exemplifies the changing, more profound American Dream. The theme of the film *Pleasantville* is a transition from the old American Dream to the new American Dream (the changing, unforeseeable life and future). This film suggests that change is not so much a bad thing; straying away from “the norm” or “the other” is not a crime, it is an experience that creates happiness within people. The change in the American Dream suggests that America is constantly changing and that the future of America is a question mark.

The American Dream from the 1950s to today has significantly reformed. Although the stereotype of the American Dream still lives today, today’s dream is more self-defined in terms of one’s personal happiness. On the contrary of a perfect family, the 2006 film *The Pursuit of Happyness* depicts a happy family with a father who works very hard in life to find a job to support his young son. This film represents the newly defined American Dream. Today, the American Dream is about finding happiness anyway that is possible. *The Pursuit of Happyness* depicts a father who struggles to find success and support throughout his life. This film illustrates the developing American Dream and how happiness is not earned by acquiring perfectness, but by finding the true meaning of happiness and chasing after that happiness. The American Dream is no longer about finding the perfect life and family; it is about discovering new possibilities and creating a happy life to live, perfectness is no longer happiness; it has transformed into the pursuit of happiness.

The American Dream from the 1950s is represented in the film *Pleasantville* by many different aspects of the film. The film focuses on this phenomenon in terms of the perfect family
made up of a bread-winning husband, a housewife, a son, and a daughter in that order. The family lived in a four-bedroom house, which had the perfect front yard with a white-picket fence. The Parker Family, from Pleasantville, fits the description for the 50s American Dream, along with all of the other families shown in the television show ‘Pleasantville’ watched in the film Pleasantville.

The article “Levittown and America” by Herbert J. Gans gives a general analysis of developing life in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in terms of suburban life at this time in the small American town of Levittown. The article touches on many points, which are supported in the film Pleasantville when the film refers to the “perfect American life” within David’s favorite television show. Gans discusses the part of the 50s American Dream about living in small suburban towns. The article refers to people who are produced from Levittown specifically. Gans mentions that Levittowners “are not really members of the national society, or for that matter, of a mass society” (Gans, 67). In this sense, Gans is referring to the fact that the people who live in Levittown, or most other small suburban towns for that matter, are fixated on the “perfect” life they live in these small American towns. People who come from suburban towns do not have a true grip on the rest of the world because they invest all of their time in whatever is happening in their town. In a general standpoint, Gans makes the point that people in small towns do not worry about other characteristics of the world besides anything that has to do with their own town. In the 50s, part of the perception of the American Dream was the desire to live in a town such as Levittown.

Pleasantville portrays suburban life in the 50s as described by Gans. The people who live in Pleasantville in the film do not show any knowledge of the world around them whatsoever. The only things they know and care about are things that have to do with their small
town. The characters in the television show do not know anything about surrounding towns. The characters are not even aware that surrounding towns exist in their world; they are extremely naïve. The only world they know is Pleasantville, their American Dream. The suburban life in the 50s was essential to finding happiness and a life worth living in the eyes of mostly anyone during that time. Pleasantville portrays “Levittowners” as Gans describes them in his article; the characters show a huge lack of worldly knowledge. For example, in the television show, the characters do not understand what a fire is. When Jenifer and David enter TV land and a fire breaks out, David explains to the firemen how to put it out. Later a boy asks David, “How’d you know about the fire? How’d you know how to put it out and all?” (Script) indicating that he, along with many others, were very confused about what a fire was. “Levittowners” are people represented in Pleasantville; people who are infused in their own too much to even learn or care about what goes on in the world around them.

Life is perfect in Pleasantville, nothing ever goes wrong, and everything is always the same. Bill Johnson, the owner of the restaurant Bud (David) works at, does not know what to do when ‘Bud’ shows up late for work, “I didn't know what to do” “Well--I always wipe down the counter and then you set out the napkins and glasses and then I make the French fries...but you didn't come so I kept on wiping” (Pleasantville script). Bill was not sure what to do when Bud did not show up for work because he is used to his perfect American Dream-like life where nothing ever changes. The film suggests that the intended perfect life everyone wanted in the 50s was played out exactly the same everyday. The film shows perfect houses with white picket fences and nicely cut lawns; the desired place to live in the 50s.

“Honey, I'm home” (Pleasantville script) is what echoed through the Parker house everyday to tell George Parker’s wife that he was home from work and ready for his home
cooked meal from his loving wife. Betty Parker emerges from the kitchen wearing a housewife looking dress and an apron asking her husband about his day at work. In the 50s, the American Dream included the husband, who worked to pay the bills while the wife stayed home, keeping the house clean, taking care of the children, and getting dinner ready. Pleasantville provides a representation of this portion of the dream by portraying a family with a mother and father resembling characters such as these. In the film, one of the first few scenes shows David watching ‘Pleasantville’ when George Parker is getting home from work. George, representing the working father, says to Betty, “Hey, Pumpkin! What's that smell? Is that your meat loaf?” (Pleasantville script) making viewers assume that Betty represents the perfect housewife of the 50s American Dream.

Along with a father and mother in the family, a son and daughter were also part of this “perfect” dream. The son and daughter fight about things that are usually fought about by siblings, but otherwise got along perfectly. In the beginning of the film, this brother and sister are illustrated in the show ‘Pleasantville’. Bud represents the perfect, successful son who can do no wrong. For example when Bud and Mary Sue talk to their parents, they tell their parents about Bud’s successful day, “First prize at the science fair. There were lots of swell projects--guess mine was just the ‘swellest’” (Pleasantville script). On the other hand, Mary Sue plays the role of a supportive, proud sister who follows her mother in terms of learning how to be a housewife. Instead of Bud telling his parents about the science fair, Mary Sue is the one to come forward and tell her parents, “Mother…Father…Bud has a little surprise for you” (script) representing a honored sister. In the show ‘Pleasantville’, Bud and Mary Sue represent a brother and sister who have minor arguments with one another, while also supporting each other.
As Pleasantville continues, and David and Jenifer are pulled into TV land playing Bud and Mary Sue in the television series, Pleasantville becomes a changed suburban town. Once the two enter the show, they begin to change the way of the characters in the show unknowingly since David and Jenifer are so used to living “in the know” at home. All the knowledge David and Jenifer have learned outside of TV land is knowledge they brought into the TV show, which explains why they brought change into the series. Many things began to go wrong when the two entered the show as Bud and Mary Sue causing the “perfect world” of Pleasantville to change, which caused controversy in the town.

In their lives at home, David and Jenifer are quite the opposites of the characters they ironically play in the TV show. For example, David is a quiet boy in high school who does not talk to many people. Mary Sue is very experienced with dating boys in high school and is part of the “cool” group in her high school. They are two completely different people than the characters they end up being in the show. David and Jenifer come into Pleasantville with knowledge that no one else in Pleasantville has except for the two of them. With this knowledge, they bring change to the world. For example, ‘Mary Sue’ finds a boy she is interested in and makes him “experienced” by taking him to lover’s lane. Another change is one that was mentioned earlier, when ‘Bud’ does things differently at work. His boss does not know what to do when Bud does not show up for work. These changes formed “new” characters in the show, which represent the people who live in modern-day America.

Pleasantville compares the American Dream from the 1950s to the American Dream of the 2000s and future. Once David and Jenifer are part of the television show, they eventually portray to the characters that the “changes” David and Jenifer bring along with them are positive influences. David and Jenifer bring awareness to the town of Pleasantville in terms of explaining
to the characters that there is more to the world than just their town. David and Jenifer explain that the world is not solely a circle that houses two streets, as the people of Pleasantville believe. The world of black and white has been forced to change to color for the better when David and Jenifer enter into the world of ‘Pleasantville’, the TV show.

Throughout this film, the American Dream is illustrated as a developing phenomenon during the time the film was released (1998). Originally, *Pleasantville* explained the American Dream as a “perfect life” for everyone including all of the characteristics discussed earlier. Moving forward, David and Mary Sue establish positive changes throughout the film, which introduced the people of Pleasantville to the world around them. The characters in the show had the opportunity to learn things about the world they never knew before because David and Jenifer were put into the show. The ‘new characters’—David and Jenifer—introduced the people of Pleasantville to the fact that change is not so much a bad thing. The unknown parts of life can actually benefit people; Pleasantville was not aware of these things until David and Jenifer showed them reality. The characters of ‘Pleasantville’ represent the 1950s American Dream in terms of being naïve living in a small suburban town with their perfect families, which David and Jenifer represent the changing and developing American Dream of today’s time. *Pleasantville* describes when this change took place and explained that these changing factors are not so bad; they are actually helpful and part of a learning process.

The American Dream represented in *Pleasantville* in the 1950s, the American Dream individuals follow today is much different. At the end of *Pleasantville*, three of the characters (Betty, George, and Bill) discuss how they are unsure of what is going to happen next, which they seem to be very okay with. “So what’s gonna happen now?” (*Pleasantville* script). As this question is asked the other two characters seem to be okay with not knowing what is going to
happen; they now understand that the future is sometimes unforeseeable. The film *The Pursuit of Happyness* portrays an American Dream that is more suitable and fitting for today’s time. The present-time American Dream echoes throughout the entire film. The main character, Christopher Gardner, illustrates a life of a single father looking for support for him and his son. He is in search of a life that will provide him with happiness. Christopher’s dream is to pursue his dreams, which support the lifestyle he wants for him and his son. Christopher is in search of happiness and success; however, he begins to understand that it will not be handed directly to him; he has to fight for his happiness and learn what it actually means to be happy. Christopher explains that he has to understand what it means to have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; he explains that not everyone is able to be happy, but to live a life that allows individuals to achieve their own pursuit of happiness. Each individual’s pursuit of happiness is different, and it could take individuals a while to figure out what exactly it is that is going to make them happy, like Christopher suggests through his own character in the film. This is the new American Dream; it is a redefined term for what it is people dream about for their lives to be successful as portrayed in *The Pursuit of Happyness*.

Nowadays, the American Dream is not so much about having the perfect life in a perfect world, because realistically, who really lives a perfect life? Individuals, who lead others to believe that their life is perfect, are people who unwillingly come to terms with reality. As for Christopher Gardner, he truly understands that his life is not perfect and that he does not know what is going to happen next in his life. Christopher is okay with this because he understands that today, not everyone achieves a perfect life; people now make their own happiness and understand that it is what makes them happy that is the real American Dream. In the beginning of the film, Christopher drops his son off at day care and outside of the day care the mural on the
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wall says happiness on it. However, happiness is spelled with a ‘Y’ instead of an ‘I’, which Christopher mentions to the painter by the wall that he needs to fix the word and spell it correctly, “And the Y? The Y. We talked about this. It's an I in "happiness." There's no Y in "happiness." It's an I” (The Pursuit of Happyness Script). This misspelling represents the uncertainty of Christopher’s future; it represents that his life is not perfect, and never will be. Another suggestion the misspelled word makes as explained on a blog site is, “Second, the misspelling signifies an element of what this movie is really about. Just as "happyness" is not spelled with a "y", so a man's happiness (who happens to be a father) is not pursued by abdicating his responsibilities of fatherhood. When things get rough, for whatever reason, many fathers in America today don't know how to spell happiness. They reject the idea that happiness is spelled with an "i". That "i" in the context of this movie means that as a father "I" must take personal responsibility for my role if I am to be truly happy” (The Moral Premise Blog). The ‘Y’ represents that it takes more than just an individual to make their dreams come true. The ‘Y’ signifies that Christopher’s life is imperfect, and that perfect happiness is difficult to come across. Happiness is something individuals have to achieve on their own; the misspelled word at the day care suggests these ideas.

Christopher Gardner from The Pursuit of Happyness fights throughout the film to find true happiness for himself and his son. “Living in San Francisco in the 1980s, Chris struggles to make a living during an economic recession and provide for his wife and young son. When he loses everything, including his wife, and is left homeless and destitute, he uses his inner resources—his intelligence, charm, wit, and extraordinary tenacity— in a seemingly endless struggle to protect his son and gain economic security” (Radford). Christopher portrays a man who is pursuing his dreams in order to be successful and find happiness that fits into the life he is
dreaming of. Christopher’s dream is not about having the perfect family and life; it is about finding happiness for himself and his son. It is about fighting for the life he wants, understanding what true happiness is and knowing that the only way to achieve it is to follow dreams; that is the developed American Dream.

*The Pursuit of Happyness* is a film that takes an opposite look on the American Dream than the 1950s family from *Pleasantville* does. The dream represented in *The Pursuit of Happyness* is a more realistic dream; it illustrates a dream that people tend to follow in today’s times. The film explains that life is not about finding the perfect happiness, but about finding the pursuit of happiness instead. It is about chasing dreams and earning a successful life. The happiness portrayed in *The Pursuit of Happyness* is self-found happiness. As portrayed in the film, nowadays, the American Dream consists of what specific individuals want for their lives; how they want their lives to pan out. The American Dream today is different than the dream in the 1950s; no longer do people strive for the sense of a “perfect” life with a family (husband, wife, and two children), beautiful house, successful husband, a house wife, etc. Instead, individuals have founded the more important characteristics of life, like finding the pursuit of happiness.

The American Dream as explained in *The Pursuit of Happyness* demonstrates St. Jean De Crevecoeur’s belief about individuality and how important it is in terms of American Character. In *What Is an American?* Crevecoeur discusses what it is to be an American. In the reading, Crevecoeur resembles Americans and other individuals to growing plants. He explains that individuals begin their journey to American Character as “useless plants, wanting vegetative mold, and refreshing showers; they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war” (Crevecoeur, 193). Represented in the film, Christopher is a “hunger” individual who wants
happiness to be handed to him. In the film, Christopher begins by searching in the wrong places for happiness and tries to force things into his life that he believes will make him happy. In the beginning of the film, Christopher represents Crevecoeur’s example of a “useless plant”, who starves for happiness. Crevecoeur also discusses life after the growth of these useless plants, “but now by the power of transplantation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished!” (Crevecoeur, 193).

Benjamin Franklin considered thirteen virtues, which he believed, lie in each American character. These virtues are Franklin’s way of explaining a well, thought out plan for moral self-improvement. The virtues include:

“Temperance: eat not to dullness, drink not to elevation. Silence: speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation. Order: let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time. Resolution: resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve. Frugality: make no expense but do good to others or yourself; waste nothing. Industry: lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions. Sincerity: use no hurtful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly. Justice: wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty. Moderation: avoid extremes. Forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve. Cleanliness: tolerate no uncleanliness in body, clothes or habitation. Tranquility: be not disturbed at trifles or at accidents common or unavoidable. Chastity: rarely use venery but for health or offspring—never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another’s peace or reputation. Lastly, humility: imitate Jesus and Socrates” (The Prophet of the New Class, 29-30).

Within these virtues, Franklin outlines his belief of the American Character. Franklin thought every American should own and emulate these characteristics. In the film The Pursuit of Happiness, Will Smith’s character, Christopher Gardner, plays his own American Character while illuminating Franklin’s characteristics of this American Character. In the film, Christopher illustrates today’s American Dream and how it is more challenging to achieve the dream. Using
Franklin’s virtues and believe of what an American Character is, Christopher shows viewers what it is like to truly fight for success and achieve it.

“It was right then that I started thinking about Thomas Jefferson on the Declaration of Independence and the part about our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And I remember thinking how did he know to put the pursuit part in there? That maybe happiness is something that we can only pursue and maybe we can actually never have it. No matter what. How did he know that?” (Script). In the film, Christopher reflects on the Declaration of Independence and comes to terms with how difficult it is to be successful. He starts thinking about what Jefferson believes in terms of happiness; that it is the pursuit of happiness that people need to begin with. Without understanding that it is important to find the pursuit of happiness, to actually chase and earn success and happiness, achieving happiness is almost impossible. In this world, happiness is not just handed to individuals; it is achieved by pursuing individual dreams. Between Jefferson, Franklin, and many other influential American heroes, these heroes sought out what true happiness is and how to find it within each American. Being much different than the 1950s American Dream, Christopher Gardner identifies the meaning of happiness and takes into consideration what Jefferson explains in terms of the pursuit of happiness in the Declaration of Independence, while emulating Franklin’s virtues to find his own American Dream to fight for.

Christopher throughout the film tackles obstacles that get in the way of his dreams; however, he overcomes them in order to achieve his goals. In the beginning of the film, Christopher begins to go after the wrong things because he believes they will make him happy. The business he is in in the beginning of the film does not support him and his family the way he and his wife had imagined it would. Also, his wife has a difficult time with supporting
Christopher and his decision to continue in the business he is in. Christopher has to start over to achieve his dream of supporting his family. Christopher mimics Jefferson’s, Franklin’s, and Crevecoeur’s beliefs throughout the film in terms of finding what exactly he wants with his life and starting over. He begins by getting an internship and raising his son by himself, without the support of a wife. Christopher finds his own American Dream; he creates characteristics for what he wants and runs with his ideas, all the while using the characteristics established by these American heroes to find happiness in his life.

At the end of *The Pursuit of Happyness*, viewers are left with the assumption that Christopher found the *happyness* he wanted by the way the film ends with Christopher’s illuminating smile. This achieved happiness Christopher found is that of the imperfect happiness discussed earlier. The happiness reflected from the misspelled word “happyness” at the day care. Although it seems Christopher seems to have achieved the happiness he has been searching for, viewers are left guessing what happened throughout the rest of his life. How did he make out in the end? Did Christopher find the supporting job he was looking for? Was there another wife involved? How did his son turn out? Viewers are left believing Christopher earned his happiness by the explanation of his smile. However, after the film, viewers are still unsure if Christopher found exactly what it is he was looking for. In terms of the misspelled word “happyness”, viewers can assume that Christopher has found imperfect happiness and that his future is uncertain. The ending scene with Christopher smiling and walking on the street with all of the other people in the city represents the fact that Christopher is happy and that moment, happiness that viewers did not see any other time throughout the film in Christopher, and that he does not know where his future is headed. Although his future is uncertain, he is not devastated
about that fact; he understands that his future is still developing and accepts it, which is illustrated in the last scene of *The Pursuit of Happyness*.

The American Dream is a phenomenon that has drastically changed from the 20th century to today. As portrayed in the film *Pleasantville*, the American Dream from the 1950s was particular about running the perfect life including a family of four, with a bread-winning father, housewife mother, a son, and a daughter. This life, however, people began to see as unfulfilling because although it was a life of what many thought would make them happy, eventually people realized that a perfect life is not what leads them to the happiness they wanted. *Pleasantville* demonstrates the change from the 1950s American Dream to the “new” American Dream involving change and the unknown of the future. The portion of *Pleasantville* that demonstrates the importance of change in the world explains to the characters of the show in the film that change is a good thing; being unaware of what is going to happen next in life is beneficial because it helps individuals to grow. The characters from the real world illustrated in the film explain to the characters of the television show that life does not have to be perfect; the American Dream can still exist without life being perfect. This imperfect life is represented in *The Pursuit of Happyness* with Christopher Gardner living life to the best of his ability and trying to support himself and his son. As discussed previously, Christopher does not know what is going to come of his life, but he is okay with that. At the conclusion of the film, viewers are lead to believe that Christopher ends with success and happiness because of his emulating smile. However, questions still remain about the American Dream in terms of this film. Does Christopher get his happiness? Is the new American Dream a positive influence in everyone’s lives? Do Christopher and his son live a happy, supporting life? Why is Christopher happy at the conclusion of the film? What exactly is the new American Dream? These questions have
been unanswerable in terms of the two films. It is evident that the American Dream is much different today than it was in the 1950s, however, does the new Dream provide happiness for all? Is it always as hard to achieve as it was for Christopher? Many questions remain about the American Dream after viewing these films. Although there are still questions about the Dream, the important message still remains: the new American Dream is about change and running after happiness. Perfect lives do not exist, an individual’s dreams must be chased in order to succeed and understand how to achieve real happiness and live the American Dream.

Works Cited


American Schools in Popular Culture: The Differences of the Stereotyped Jock
Represented in Suburban versus Urban High Schools
By: Shannon Heydet

Education in American culture can be influence and viewed in many different ways; from the areas of which schools are located, to the teachers who teach in those schools, all the way to the students who attend the schools. Because students spend seven hours a day in the same building associating with friends, listening to teachers and participating in extracurricular activities, they are formed by whom and what they surround themselves with. This is especially true for high school students who get placed into social groups or cliques which are formed often by stereotypes. These groups of students can range from the popular kids, to the rebels and from the nerds, to the jocks and everyone in between.

Jocks may be represented differently in different situations but to many Americans, they are known to contain specific characteristics that make up their possible stereotype. This understanding of a jock is so common to the overall American that there are even seven steps on wikiHow which is known as the world’s largest, highest quality how to manual giving it credibility. WikiHow begins by describing a jock and stating that “being a jock is a great thing! You are at the top of the social ladder, get a good looking girlfriend, and enjoy the benefits of having an awesome social life.” 79 This initial description immediately sets the tone of the jock being popular and the head of the school. The seven steps include aspects such as playing sports, being cool, being sociable and to relax with confidence. 80 These characteristics of a jock demonstrate how most Americans view them because of the stereotype this popular website


80 Ibid.
gives them. Although this specific stereotype is understood among society, jocks are represented differently throughout popular culture. How are jocks represented in movies? How are male jocks represented differently in urban high school versus suburban high schools through popular culture? Through popular culture, especially movies, male jocks are represented extremely different in urban and suburban high schools. The typical jock is involved in school, plays sports, receives good grades resulting in possible college experience and is popular causing him to be well-rounded; but this is supported only in suburban high school movies. Instead, urban high school movies represent male jocks without the well-roundedness and instead with the mentality that sports are their outlet either away from their lower-classed everyday life, to college or to a better life.

In *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School*, Penelope Eckert discusses social categories based upon a study she was doing on ethnography and linguistic change. After completing field work for four years in five different high schools located in the suburbs of Detroit, Eckert found the same trends for jocks. She found that they are involved in school activities, play sports, receive good grades, will go to college and are normally a big figure in their school. This directly supports the view of jocks in suburban high school films. The jocks in these suburban sport films tend to have the same persona aside from this jock stereotype. They are normally white, ‘pretty boys’ and these jocks normally lead the school. Throughout the exploration of high school films represented in the suburban setting, the

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82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.
High School Musical Trilogy represented Troy Bolton, a jock, with characteristics of this typical jock stereotype. Troy Bolton is the star basketball player who is also popular throughout East High School. In the first and last movies of the High School Musical Trilogy, Troy was the star in the winning championship basketball games which ended High School Musical and began High School Musical 3: Senior Year.\textsuperscript{84} Besides supporting the characteristic of playing sports, Troy was involved in school with theater even though it was embarrassing to him at first. After singing with Gabriella when on vacation, she transferred to his school and they both signed up to audition together.\textsuperscript{85} He sung leading roles in a musical in High School Musical as well as in High School Musical 3: Senior Year.\textsuperscript{86} This involvement in his high school gives him that well-rounded personality that jocks are known to contain which is also probably why he was chosen to deliver a speech at graduation which further demonstrates popularity as well. Lastly, in the third movie, since it was East High’s senior year, there were various scenes where discussions about college were present. Since there was not even a question about Troy attending college, he must have received good grades supporting the suburban jock stereotype. The first situation was when Ms. Darbus said the Juilliard School was considering accepting Troy.\textsuperscript{87} This school is a very prestigious performing arts school which demonstrates Troy’s theatrical as well as academic capabilities. Another scene that included a discussion about college was when Troy’s dad assumed he was going to be attending the University of Albuquerque.\textsuperscript{88} This caused Troy to be

\textsuperscript{84} High School Musical and High School Musical 3: Senior Year, directed by Kenny Ortega (2007; Salt Lake City, UT: Walk Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2007), DVD.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} High School Musical 3: Senior Year, directed by Kenny Ortega (2007; Salt Lake City, UT: Walk Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2007), DVD.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
angry and storm off because he wanted to make his own decisions.\textsuperscript{89} Having many choices of colleges demonstrates once again how this jock is well-rounded. The last scene was when all of the character’s future college plans were being discussed and Troy stated that he would be attending Berkeley to not only play basketball but to also pursue his theatrical skills.\textsuperscript{90} With all of these scenes about college as well as the popularity, involvement in school through theater and Troy’s achievement in basketball being illustrated throughout these movies, this trilogy continues to support the argument of how filmmakers represent male jocks specifically in suburban high schools.

Another film that contains this jock persona with the pretty, white boy in a suburban high school setting is \textit{A Cinderella Story}. Although this movie is not strictly about jocks or football, one of the main characters, Austin Ames, is represented by the filmmakers to contain the jock stereotype. Austin is not only the star of the football team but he is the quarterback and known as a star player to colleges.\textsuperscript{91} After meeting on a Princeton chat, Austin constantly is instant messaging the mysterious “PrincetonGrl” whom ends up being Sam Waters, who attends his school.\textsuperscript{92} They finally meet at their school dance but she is wearing a mask so he does not know her real name or face. When she runs out to reach curfew and drops her phone on the way out, Austin puts up signs all over school the next day so he can find her.\textsuperscript{93} This is when the movie demonstrates how he is popular among the school, especially with the girls. All of the girls in school try to act like they were the girl he was with at the dance because of how popular and

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{High School Musical 3: Senior Year}, directed by Kenny Ortega (2007; Salt Lake City, UT: Walk Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2007), DVD.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{A Cinderella Story}, directed by Mark Rosman (2004; California: Warner Bros., 2004), DVD.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
good looking he is. They give insane answers to what his mysterious girl dropped at the dance such as “a fish” and “a wallet”. 94 Because all of the attention that his classmates give him, the filmmakers portrayed a popular role. Austin’s dream college is Princeton, which he got accepted to, but his father wants him to play football in college and has no idea about his dream. When Austin’s dad tells him about a scout coming to his game from the University of Southern California, Austin is not as excited as his father wished. 95 Austin finally sticks up to his father as he is running out of his championship game to follow Sam. His dad told him that he was basically throwing away his dreams when his future was set to play football because the scout was watching him run off. Instead, Austin says “no dad, I’m throwing away yours”. 96 This demonstrates that being athletic is not Austin’s only ability and he does not need football to get into college. Instead, he is academically capable to get into an Ivy League school because of the outstanding grades he receives and will follow that path. This movie demonstrates Austin as a well-rounded, smart and popular jock who although he is an amazing quarterback, he has a lot of other aspects to form his future.

*John Tucker Must Die* is another movie with the jock stereotype. This movie is about the star basketball player, who is seen as the best looking guy in school that every girl is obsessed with and wants to date. 97 He is then is tricked into falling in love to be taught a lesson for breaking many girls’ hearts. Although this does not seem to be about a jock, throughout the movie many of the typical jock characteristics are displayed in different scenes. John Tucker makes the winning basket in every basketball game included in this film which results in the

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 *John Tucker Must Die*, directed by Betty Thomas (2006; British Columbia, Canada: 20th Century Fox, 2007), DVD.
whole school cheering for him and everyone praising him.\textsuperscript{98} Right after John made a basket and won a basketball game in the beginning of the movie, there was a scene following this of him and his team walking into school the next day. Everyone was giving him high fives and staring at him; people were repeatedly saying “hi John” and “nice game last night John” and all of the attention was on him.\textsuperscript{99} This represents how John is popular and basically rules his school mainly because of his athletic abilities since this scene was right after the basketball game. Also during this scene, his involvement in school is demonstrated. John bought a raffle ticket, signed up for some sort of group, and gets a cupcake from a bake sale; these scenes were all also interactions with girls.\textsuperscript{100} This participation in school activities helps to form that well-rounded jock that is only really seen in suburban films. The popularity of this jock is demonstrated during many other scenes throughout the movie. For example, Kate is trying to break John’s heart even though he falls in love with her. In order to joke with him, when they were away for the weekend at a hotel for a basketball game, Kate told John to come down to her room through video chat.\textsuperscript{101} She told him there was something under his bed she wanted him to put on. Under his bed was men’s lingerie, specifically a man thong. Kate purposely told John the wrong room to go into and he got caught by a staff member. The whole school then saw him dressed in only a man thong because he got pulled into the hallway and he was then extremely embarrassed.\textsuperscript{102} That following week at school he tried to make a joke of it and wear the underwear while playing basketball in order to ease the embarrassment. The next day after he visibly worse the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
underwear, every male in school, even the teachers were wearing the same underwear.\footnote{Ibid.} Another popularity scene is during John’s big birthday party. It is located in a huge building where people can barely move because of how crowded it is. The party looks as if everyone at school is invited. A video was made to wish John a happy birthday with a cheer from the cheerleaders and various people in the halls at his school yelling “happy birthday John!”\footnote{Ibid.} Then, when Kate breaks his heart in front of everyone because of his lies in the past, the other teenagers speak their minds about John saying “you’re the man.”\footnote{Ibid.} Both of these parts of this scene demonstrate how everyone looks up to John, who is the jock as if he is the head of his school. Although all the jock aspects including college and grades were not incorporated into this suburban film, John’s amazing basketball skills, popularity and involvement in school activities still demonstrate a well-rounded jock even though the actual storyline is not just about him being a jock. These three movies contain basically all of the same characteristics as well as main characters demonstrating the similarity in jocks in suburban high school films.

There are endless movies of basketball or football players and teams in urban high schools and they continue to keep in common the idea that the sports are their outlet. These movies normally contain an African-American sports star that usually lives in the projects or is of the lower class. These teenagers usually face many obstacles, and either want to escape his life for something or somewhere better, want to go to college but can only reach that goal through sports or want to support his family. The majority of these films consist of basketball as the only outlet for basically anything in these films. There are many different films including fiction films and documentaries. There seemed to be many more of these films than the suburban films which
may demonstrate that society feels more inclined to watch a film about a teenage boy reaching his dreams through sports rather than a teenage boy having almost everything as well as athletic capability and becoming even more successful.

One of these movies that represented this urban jock is *He Got Game*. In this movie, Jesus Shuttlesworth is the number one high school basketball player in the United States. He attends Lincoln High School in Coney Island which exists in Brooklyn, New York. Jesus grew up in the projects where he faced many obstacles including his father, Jack accidently killing his mother in a fight as well as his father then being in jail the majority of his life. Jesus’ whole life growing up, his father pushed and pushed him to be the best basketball player he could be. For example, there are flashbacks of Jesus and his father playing one on one, running suicides, and his father is pushing him to the ground. During these flashbacks his dad would be saying, “you gotta work harder than the next man right? It’s the will of the man it ain’t the skill of the man.” Jack was also saying to his son in these flashbacks, “we out the projects baby, we out the projects. What you gon’ buy your mom son, what you gon’ buy her.” Jesus answers this by saying “a house.” This demonstrates that Jesus knew by practicing basketball and becoming better than the players around him, that he could escape the projects he lived in. Basketball would then bring him success to not only be able to help him leave his city but also he would be able to support his family and himself. When Jesus is actually in high school, his dad is in jail yet is offered the choice to shorten his sentence. In order to do that, the governor wants Jack to

106 *He Got Game*, directed by Spike Lee (1998; Buena Vista Pictures, 2002), DVD.  
107 Ibid.  
108 Ibid.  
109 Ibid.  
110 Ibid.
convince his son to attend Big State, the governor’s favorite college, to play basketball.\textsuperscript{111} This represents the sense of basketball being used for this urban high school jock as another outlet. Instead, his attendance at Big State is not only an outlet to get out of the projects but also an outlet to get his father out of jail. This movie demonstrates how differently the urban and suburban jocks are represented as well as their lives.

Another movie which is actually a documentary that represents this sense of basketball in high school as an outlet is \textit{Through the Fire}. This film follows the life-changing decision of Coney Island’s Sebastian Telfair to either choose the possibility of attending the University of Louisville or to take his chances and attempt to be drafted into the National Basketball Association during his senior year at Lincoln High School.\textsuperscript{112} Sebastian has been living in the projects and in poverty for his whole life and after seeing two men gunned down right by his apartment; he knows that joining the NBA is the only way to get his mother and eight other siblings out of this city.\textsuperscript{113} He works extremely hard at basketball because he knows that this is his outlet to a better life but he has a weight on his shoulder because of an incident five years earlier with his older brother. His older brother, Jamel, attended Providence College and had the same plan to get his family out of the projects but he ended up not being drafted and then had to play basketball overseas in Greece.\textsuperscript{114} The boys’ mother, Erica, was so distraught and Sebastian does not want this disappointment to occur for the second time. Sebastian originally said he was going to attend University of Louisville for basketball but then changed his mind and decided to

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Through the Fire}, directed by Jonathan Hock (2006, New York; Cinema Libre Studio, 2006), DVD.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
enter into the NBA draft. During this switch of gears, the media was then stating that Sebastian was not ready to be a professional basketball player. To escape these comments, he worked harder and harder with Jamel’s help in Greece as well as “Tiny”, a former Lincoln basketball star who did not get drafted into the NBA. Without spoiling the final outcome of the movie, this urban high school documentary shares a true story of how basketball really was used as an outlet into a better life and the ability to support one’s family.

Another documentary following the dreams of high school urban basketball players trying to make it to college and the big leagues is Hoop Dreams. Hoop Dreams is about Arthur Agee and William Gates who faced many obstacles including drug issues within their families, unemployment, a lack of money and broken families. This documentary follows these two teenage jocks through five years of their lives beginning with when they were recruited to play basketball at St. Joseph’s High School which is a predominately white, Catholic school in Chicago, Illinois. Even though both Arthur and William were reading at only a fourth grade level, they still both received little scholarships. Both Arthur and William are from poor, black neighborhoods, have to now commute 90 minutes to school every morning and know that “basketball is [their] ticket out of the ghetto” as William states near the end of the documentary. This statement in this documentary almost seems as if it is drilled into William’s head based off what he has heard his whole life, that high school basketball for this teenager living in the projects is his only outlet to either college or the professionals.

Unfortunately, despite the talk that their coach delivers about caring for the boys and what their

115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Hoop Dreams, directed by Steve James (1994, Chicago; The Criterion Collection, 2005), DVD.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid
future will be, Arthur is dismissed from St. Joseph’s in the middle of his sophomore year because of money that his family owes.\textsuperscript{120} Even though William struggled financially as well, his academics improved and he was playing outstandingly well on the basketball team so St. Joseph’s took the initiative to find him some sort of sponsor to help him with his tuition.\textsuperscript{121} Although William was receiving information from huge basketball schools, he faced some obstacles including having a child which caused the possibility of him being ineligible to play in college because his grades dropped extremely. These teenagers face huge obstacles at such young ages relating to money, race, social class and education and this documentary portrays that in order to get away from these urbanized issues, the jocks William and Arthur need to excel in basketball or else they really do not have anything else.

\textit{The Blind Side} based upon a book as well as a true story is a little different from the other movies and does not contain an urban high school setting. Instead a high school student who lived in the projects his whole life is now taken in into a nice suburban school. Although this does not follow the exact theme, Michael Oher is an African-American teenager from urban areas who has faced many obstacles in his life. He was in and out of foster care with different families because his mother had drug addiction problems.\textsuperscript{122} Michael then runs away almost every time he is placed in a new home. One night Leigh Ann, who is the mother of the wealthy, suburban Tuohy family, saw Michael walking on the road in the cold, pouring rain where he was walking to go sleep outside of a high school gym.\textsuperscript{123} Instead, she had him sleep on their couch that night even with her reluctant husband not agreeing. Michael got accepted into Wingate

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{The Blind Side}, directed by John Lee Hancock, (2009, Georgia; Warner Bros., 2010), DVD.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
Christian School because of how big and athletic he was, despite his extremely low and terrible academic records.\textsuperscript{124} Also, his academic levels are so low and he did not score adequate enough in any of the categories of a career aptitude test.\textsuperscript{125} The deal was that once Michael’s grades went up, he was allowed to play football. The Tuohy’s, especially Leigh Ann, took Michael in and helped him with his school work by getting a tutor, Miss Sue.\textsuperscript{126} If Michael could raise his grades, getting into college to play football was his outlet from his inconsistent life in the projects. Although Michael was never obsessed with that idea, Leigh Ann was. This mindset that Leigh Ann had eventually transferred to Michael causing him to commit to playing football at Ole Miss, even though there was many obstacles within this decision.\textsuperscript{127} He then went on to become drafted to the Baltimore Ravens to play in the NFL.\textsuperscript{128} Although Michael’s situation was not placed in an urban high school he still contained the characteristics because he grew up in an urban setting, faced obstacles, and used football as an outlet. By not only meeting the Tuohy’s but by becoming a football star, he was able to escape his previous life full of failure and poverty to get accepted into college and away from his past. This remarkable story once again demonstrates how sports, especially urbanized, can affect one’s life for the better and create success.

\textit{Coach Carter} is another movie that takes the idea of the jock in an urban high school setting but twists it a little bit. This movie is about Coach Ken Carter who accepts the job to coach at his previous high school in Richmond, California. The area is a poor area and all of the students are of some sort of minority, mainly African-American. All of the boys on the Oilers
basketball team do not work hard academically and are really playing basketball more as an outlet to get into college. When Coach Carter becomes the coach, things will change. He wants the boys to be able to rely on more than sports for their future and also to stay out of crime. In order to do this, Coach Carter implements a contract to ensure that all of his players attend class, maintain specific grades and behave. Since academics are really not what originally mattered to these jocks, many of them do not follow the contact. Timo as well as two other teammates quit the team because of the requirements that Coach Carter implemented. Although, after a scary event in Timo’s life he realized that he does want to get off of the streets away from violence and tries to rejoin the basketball team. In order to do this, he completes the thousands and hundreds of suicides, push-ups and foul shots that Coach Carter assigned to him. Then, when Coach Carter received input back from the players’ teachers, he realized that his players were not fully keeping up with the academics and a few of them were skipping class.

In order to further teach the boys a lesson about how basketball is not everything, Coach Carter locked the gym until everyone’s grades raised. When the school board ends the lockout, Coach Carter quits his job because he knows that the boys are not aware that they can not only depend on basketball. Once he quits, the players eventually come around to realize that their coach was right. They spent their time in the gym studying instead of playing basketball to higher their grades and when Coach Carter saw that they learned their lesson, the Oilers then

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129 Coach Carter, directed by Thomas Carter, (2005, California; Paramount Pictures, 2005), DVD.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
went on to play in the regional playoff basketball game.\textsuperscript{135} Because these players originally had the mindset to use basketball as their only outlet to college or away from their lower-class area, these jocks are represented in the way that the other high school urban jocks are represented. Also, all of the players have faced obstacles including babies being born, deaths in their families and a lack of money.

Why does popular culture, especially films, portray jocks in these different ways despite the generalization of the well-rounded involved all-American jock? Does this mean that jocks are represented as poor and hopeless in a city high school because that is what society thinks or does that form society’s thinking? The differences between the suburban and urban school setting are what cause these questions to be asked. They are extremely important to consider because these stereotypes surround everyone. With filmmakers portraying jocks in this way, it may be assumed that white, male jocks in the suburbs have easier access to success than African-American, male jocks in an urban setting who have to work harder. Is this because of money, opportunity, family life, or what?

The generalization of the all-American jock seems to be rare to come across. If it is not and there are so many varsity athletes with honors and active involvement in suburban schools, why are there barely any documentaries to prove it? All of the suburban movies discussed above including plenty of movies that were not even discussed, are fiction movies. This could either be because they do not exist or simply because Americans would rather watch a story about someone struggling yet making it through rather than a white teenager who is doing great in life and faces such simple struggles to even further succeed. Many suburban movies do not even include a storyline about a star basketball or football player rather than storylines about

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
characters’ lives and how cliques interact in schools. For example, not only some of the suburban movies mentioned above, but famous movies such as *The Breakfast Club, Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, Mean Girls,* etc. barely include anything about a successful future through sports whereas the urban films mentioned above do. Because of this, these movies can then portray that teenagers in urban high schools are only there for sports whereas suburban high school students are only in school for the social and identity aspects.

This is all important to explore because it then argues the differences that further separate white teenagers from black teenagers even though everyone is supposed to be “equal”. If students’ opportunities cannot be equal then how come Americans are supposedly equal? Although there are many other differences, the differences in this argument were represented through simply the stereotype of a jock in urban and suburban schools. In conclusion, as demonstrated in the three suburban movies, the jocks are not only seen as great athletes but also the head of their school, popular, involved and most likely college bound. Because of this demonstration through popular culture, these suburban highschoolers are then expected to contain the same traits as a jock. Both Troy Bolton and Austin Ames were the stars of their basketball and football teams, had controversies over colleges but were definitely going no matter what, and were popular. In the urban setting, the five movies demonstrated a jock or team who used their amazing talent in sports to be able to escape their lower class life and either achieve something better for themselves or for their family. Jesus Shuttlesworth, Sebastian Telfair, Arthur Agee and William Gates all lived in the projects with only one goal in mind which was to use their high school basketball career to leave the projects. With their athletic ability they planned to either be drafter in the National Basketball Association or to get accepted
to college to then play basketball there. These differences demonstrate differences in society which are all viewed through popular culture.
Bibliography


Philadelphians through the Lens of American Studies
By: Vinnie Murphy

American Studies extensively examines American character. Since colonial Virginia and New England many changes have been made. With those changes, the character of the country has changed as well. In the 18th century, St. Jean De Crevecoeur looked at the character in his essay, *From letters from an American Farmer*. The essay revolves around the question, What is an American? Crevecoeur goes into detail describing the melted nation as the American identity. He also is the first author to touch on the American Dream. The 19th century brought Frederick Jackson’s “Turner Thesis”, which stated that the conquering of the west, the country and its people acquired certain traits that were different than those of any other country in the world. In his mind, Americans were rugged, tough, strong and independent. A strong argument could be made that *Rocky* has had the same impact on Philadelphia that conquering the west did on the country a hundred years earlier. Sylvester Stallone’s 1976 movie highlights an American dream unique to Philadelphia. A Horatio Alger rags to riches, luck and pluck and take what one’s worth mentality are all themes seen throughout *Rocky*. The American dream is pursued all over the country, but so different in Philadelphia. The dreams of Los Angeles and New York City are two other famous cities people reach towards, but neither can compare to what the Philadelphia dream can offer someone. *Rocky* is such a powerful movie and loveable character that the city of Philadelphia has embraced since its debut. Rocky has become the city’s iconic figure. One hears its soundtrack during sporting events, when one sees the art museum they envision the training montage and other success stories like Vince Papale’s are compared to the film. Papale, a local 30 year old who rose from the bottom to walk on to the Philadelphia Eagles as a special teams member. He was not a champion but proved his worthiness through the same traits Rocky did.
Philadelphia has created its own character and dream that separates them from any other city in the country from one movie and it takes a special person to succeed in this town. Winning matters, but gutting it out with everything you have is what make someone a Philadelphian.

American Character and the dream that goes along with it was arguably first introduced by Frenchman, Crevecoeur in the 18th century in his ‘Letters to the American Farmer.’ He asked the question, what was this American?[1] As one reads into his letters the answer to that question is found, and Crevecoeur believed Americans to be, “immigrants transformed into the antithesis of his European past: “This great metamorphosis ... extinguishes all his European prejudices; he forgets that mechanism of subordination, that servility of disposition which poverty had taught him.” Fleeing from crowded and contentious domains ruled by exploitative aristocrats and kings, immigrants flocked to “this great American asylum,”[2] Americans in his view had thrown away all the things of England, they had religious tolerance, class systems seemed to be gone, or very limited and everyone was treated equally compared to England at the time. Crevecoeur later goes on to talk about the melted nation, that immigrants from all over the world were coming to America to achieve a common dream of religious freedom, land ownership and other rights that weren’t granted in their homelands. It’s interesting to see that the American Dream was sought out from almost everyone. The American character and the Dream go hand in hand, and during the 18th century Crevecoeur noticed that farming or farmers was the basis of the Character. Immigrants came over, were subsistence farmers, and no one cared about money because everyone was in the same situation. Crevecoeur, along with others believed that this was the best way for the country to consistently grow. Crevecoeur believed the American Character of farmers and the dream own owning ones own land would help the country grow.
Obviously as history continues the country moved away from the Agrarian economy when the Industrial revolution was beginning the late 19th century, but one constant remained; Scholars were still trying to define the American Character and the American dream. In 1883, German scholar and professor Herbert Baxter Adams wrote the “Germ theory of American History.” His essay stated that the English settlers brought everything they know from England and the East Coast and instituted them into the Western Frontier. The West was no different than the East coast or England and the American Character was the same all over the country.[3] Like Crevecoeur stated, everyone in the country had similar goals or ways of living so the character and dreams of the people were all very similar.

From the 18th-19th century, scholars that studied the American Character were both foreigners to the country. After reading Adams’ essay, a born American, Frederick Jackson Turner took his stab at the definition. In contrast to both Crevecoeur and Adams, Turner believed that Country was different depending on what state or area one was from. He challenged Adams, saying that the West was not a reflection of the East. The geography was different, the weather was different and the environment in general was different. These distinct differences caused a change in character to the common American. Turner stated that moving out west and settling the frontier changed the American character. Coarseness, strength, inquisitiveness, practical, grasp of material things, lacking of artistic ability but powerful, restless and a strong individuality were the traits Turner said the American had acquired from the frontier.[4] In general terms, the American character had changed from a common farmer or melted dream of owning land, to individual goals, to real and practical goals, the people were no longer prim and proper like England, but rough and dominant. Turner argued that these traits made Americans different than any other person around the world. Americans were no longer seen as a reflection
of the old country, but a country of all races with individual similar character traits and different dreams.

As the country was moving into the 1950’s post world war II the American character and dream again changed a little bit. American’s still had traits that were different than others but owning a house and raising a family was the main dream at the time. This was reflected all over the country, and has comparability to Crevecoeur and Adams because those two stressed that the same dream was sought out by everyone. As the country is now in the 21st century, the dream and character has again changed from that of owning a house with a family and housewife. All over the country, the American dream is graduate college, make it big somewhere and have a lot of money. That dream changed the character of the American person too; the common American cares for themselves and cares about money rather than raising a family. One doesn’t go to college to raise a family; one goes to get a degree to make money and a successful living. American’s and immigrants around the world flock to big cities like New York or Los Angeles because they offer such common dreams. Los Angeles has Beverly Hills and Hollywood, and New York City has Wall Street. The places may be different but the theme is common throughout; Hollywood and Wall Street both provide more than enough money to people who pursue those dreams. Even being on opposite sides of the country, the people pursuing Hollywood or Wall street have very similar characteristics because the common dream of Money and Success drive people to live and act a certain type of way.

New York is a great place to work, and a lot of people see success when they move there or commute to work there. The city provides many working opportunities in the business world. Wall Street being the main goal in mind, but there are also major magazine lines, Broadway and sports to try to achieve. Any business, marketing or accounting major would love to work on
Wall Street, it is like the Super Bowl of the business world. When people think of New York City they think money and success. The Yankees and their 26 world series and 200 Million dollar salary cap, the wolves of wall street selling stock and making millions and not to mention the incredible magazine and marketing lines that provide incredible high paying jobs as well. Shopping is also a big thing in New York, and not little thrift store shopping. This is high end, very expensive items that some celebrities cannot get ahold of. New York is also filled with very high profile celebrities. Athletes, musicians, actors, and even the fire and police forces are high profiled people in the city.[6] New York City screams Money, Fame and Success, the common American Dream and Character sought out by almost everyone.

Move out West, and the same dream can be found in Los Angeles. Fame, money, success, sports, celebrities and every other detail found in New York is found in Los Angeles. Los Angeles can be described as, Elegant, Classic, Polished, and Luxurious.[7] They have beautiful expensive houses, they have a gorgeous beach, celebrity’s crawl out of the sewers, actors lives there, they have gorgeous women and every other ritzy characteristic one could think of. Like Wall Street and New York city, Hollywood is the main dream in Los Angeles. Actors all over the world strive to make it big or even little in Hollywood. Like the Yankees, Los Angeles has the Lakers and their rich history of success.

The two cities may have some different traits, a little different lifestyle, Los Angeles could be seen as a little more relaxing than the overwhelming pressure of Wall Street but the commonalities outweigh those differences. People go to the big cities because they are seeking power, fame, money and overall success. This is what the American dream has become; this is what American character is defined as. Americans are rich, powerful people who work in big cities. One last common theme between the cities is that the people who attain the success and
the fame really don’t have to work hard to get there. Politics plays a major part in success in these cities; it’s about who knows whom, what someone’s last name is and other situations of that nature. That clearly doesn’t describe everyone in the cities who attain success, a lot of people have to work hard for success but the people in the media like the Kardashian’s or Hilton’s have never had to work but they are granted anything they wish. Again this is not digging at the hard working people in both cities but it is a common stereotype seen in major cities.[8]

Miami, Chicago, Dallas, New Orleans and other major cities alike have common traits that are reflected all over country just like Adams said in the 19th century. One of the biggest cities in the country, though is very different from all the rest. It has unique traits that are not seen in any other city in the country. Frederick Jackson Turner said that moving out West separated the US from any other country, and Philadelphia is separated from any other city in the country. A major city like New York and Los Angeles, but Philadelphia is one of a kind. The character of the Philadelphians is a special one, and is driven by a rags to riches, luck and pluck dream, like that of what Horatio Alger wrote about in his *Ragged Dick,* story. The story itself revolves around a homeless boy named Dick, who makes very limited money shining shoes. Even so, he works hard to better educate himself every chance he gets. One day he gets on a ferry with a friend of his and sees a young boy fall into the water. Without question, Dick jumps into the water and saves the boy. Once they were both collected, the boy’s father, who was an accountant, offered Dick a clerk job that offered $10 an hour. Dick more than happily accepted the offer and began his new life.[9] Dick worked hard and he was lucky enough that something good happened to him. Philadelphians do the same thing. This is a blue-collar city, people work on railroads, construction, bus driving and other labor jobs. Of course there are the big wigs and
high paid rich people, but Philadelphia is nowhere near the level of affluence as New York or Los Angeles. More people are homeless in Philadelphia than both cities, a lot of the citizens struggle to make a living, but they keep on moving along hoping for that lucky break. What gives the people of Philadelphia that hope? Sports. The Phillies or Sixers even the Eagles have nowhere near the success that the New York or Los Angeles teams do but they have that special character that this city loves. Championships have been won in Philadelphia but the grinders and hard workers that embrace the city is why Philadelphians love those teams and players.

How did Philadelphia separate itself as such a different city than any other? A very strong argument could be made that Rocky is the reason. Others could argue that Rocky was based off the city itself, those traits were already instilled. That could be true, but facts support that the fictional southpaw instilled those traits into the city. Sylvester Stallone’s movie and Character have inspired so many people in this city, and Rocky has become the iconic figure. Rocky’s underdog story gives people hope of a better tomorrow. One could be down today, and have a chance of a lifetime the next. Rocky is a rag to riches, luck and pluck and true underdog story. The city has embraced these traits and made them their own. The Philadelphian character of a work hard, determined, blue-collar person has a dream for a better tomorrow, a chance to better oneself by working hard. Very different than the glamour dream of money that LA or NYC has.

Rocky begins in Resurrection gym, with Jesus looking down as Rocky fights an opponent Spider Rico. The arena is filthy, the fight is underground, dark and it shows how low Rocky is in his life at the time. His house is small, in a tough neighborhood, he fights for a living but his own trainer really doesn’t like him in the beginning. Rocky, heads to the gym only to find his locker was taken away from him from his soon to be Manager, Mickey. Rocky really is at rock bottom with his life at the time and his income comes from collecting money for an Italian mob
loanshark, which he absolutely hates. Rocky has two things keeping him afloat though. His will
to keep fighting and his love for Adrian, the sister of his good friend Paulie. On the other side of
the story, Apollo Creed, the Heavyweight-Boxing Champion of the world, who is from Los
Angeles is looking to publicize himself even more by giving a no body boxer a chance at the
American Dream he claims. A chance to fight for the Heavy Weight Championship of the world.
As the story unfolds Rocky is chosen, who is reluctant at first but takes the fight as he sees it as
his way to making himself a better person. Apollo sees this fight as a joke, to boast his nice guy
appearance, but Rocky is in no place to joke around. He trains day in and day out, runs on the
railroads, runs through the city and eventually makes it up the steps of the art museum. He drinks
raw eggs; jumps rope and punches raw meet in a freezer all for a chance to make his life have a
purpose. In between all of this fighting, his love story with Adrian unfolds as well, he helps her
come out of her shell, but she also does the same for him. For the first time in his life, Rocky can
trust someone; he can open up to Adrian. The night before the fight, Rocky tells Adrian he
doesn’t care about winning the fight; he just wants to go the distance with the champ because no
one ever has last that long with Apollo. As the fight begins, Rocky knocks down Apollo in round
one, something no one has ever done. As the rounds continue to climb both men are taking a
beating but Rocky is a mess. He can’t see out of his eye, his nose is broken and has blood all
over his face. Somehow, being completely drained he never gives up and makes the entire 15
rounds. He lost the fight but he reached his self procliaimed dream. He had come full circle,
started from the very bottom with a hope for a better life, and by the end of the movie he had. He
proved his worth to himself, to Mick, to the World, but most importantly to the city of
Philadelphia. He also bettered himself because he now had Adrian to live with, to love and help
him move on to better things in life. Rocky achieved his version of the American Dream; he bettered himself for the future and became a better person.[10]

Around the world Rocky is synonymous for the American Dream that Apollo Creed is trying to offer Rocky in the movie. This is a dream of fame, fortune, ultimate success and a different type of rags to riches dream.[11] This dream brings unlimited money, butlers and maids, and all the glamour one could think of. People around the world that watch Rocky see that dream unfold for him, but this movie means so much more than that to Philadelphians. Rocky is in searching of love, someone to care for and hold forever along with making himself a better fighter. Proving to himself that he is worth something, or can withstand a brutal beating and last 15 rounds with the Champ helps him achieve both. The training, the fighting, punching raw meat, running up the stairs, it’s not a journey towards making money or having fame, like the rest of the world thinks, it’s a journey to a better life. When Rocky finally makes it up the art museum stairs, and the viewer sees his emotion, they know all will end well for him win or lose. This movie changed the city of Philadelphia forever. It may not be luxurious or have Wall Street but it has this tough, but loving character that is contagious. Philadelphia embraces the underdog status because they have embraced Rocky, as a movie and a character. Why? It’s because Rocky is just an average guy who has worked extremely hard to make a living. He’s relatable to the common man; Philadelphians see this movie and want to be like Rocky.[12] The movie and the character have become Philadelphia, it’s the first thing people think of when the city is mentioned. Everything about the movie has a special meaning to Philadelphia and its character and dream. The training represents the hard work needed to succeed in the city, Adrian represents the future love every man desires, boxing represents the battle of the streets the people
need to fight to survive, Rocky’s journey or training montage is something that inspires people to take their own journey.

Another major part of the film was the music soundtrack. *Gonna Fly Now*, is arguably one of the most famous songs ever written for a movie. This song is played while Rocky is making his training journey, so it represents hard work and dedication, it represents the underdog character of Philadelphia and it represents the dream that Rocky is searching for,[13] a dream that because of Rocky, Philadelphians hope and search for. This city is rough, mean and will beat one down if allowed, the beginning of Rocky shows that, his junky house, his lack of friends or money, but if one fights back with every ounce of will power, good things will happen to that person. Rocky has helped Philadelphia realize that. When someone hears that Rocky theme song, it brings inspiration but it also has him or her think of Philadelphia. No other movie, or character has had that impact on a city like Rocky has for Philadelphia; it’s why a statue of a fictional character is still standing in the art museum. The city embraces hard work, dedication, and blood and tears, more than overall winning or money. Rocky loses to Apollo but his willingness to never give up and give everything one has is the trait instilled in this city.

On the other side of the spectrum, one could argue that those traits were already instilled before Rocky came out and Stallone created the character based of the character of the common person. Philadelphia was founded in the 17th century so it had to have built some character over the years correct? The answer is yes. Philadelphia did have a character or a dream before Rocky was even thought of but its dream was that of what Apollo had thought he was offering Rocky. The dream of fame and success or “keeping up with the Jones’s” was spread along the country so of course that impacted the city. [14]
Refuting that argument is a simple job though. Sylvester Stallone didn’t base the character off of Philadelphia’s common man; he based it off 2 boxers, Joe Frazier and Chuck Wepner. Frazier, a Philly native, was a former heavyweight-boxing champion. David Zirin, a columnist for philly.com wrote an article about the “real-life Rocky,” and was referring to Frazier. In his Article Zirin mentions how Frazier ran in the streets of Philly to train, he trained in humid gyms, punched meat in freezers and even ran up the art museum steps. All things Rocky did in the movie. According to Zirin, Stallone even copied Frazier’s sloping punching style for his character.[15] Wepner on the other hand was a jersey boxer, and most recently was awarded money from Stallone because Rocky was again inspired by his life. In one of his more famous fights, Wepner’s eye was so swollen in a fight against Sonny Liston that his trainer had to cut his eye open. In Rocky’s fight against Apollo he says to Mick, “I can’t see out of my eye, cut me Mick, cut me.” Wepner also was a rag to riches type of fighter and was never a champion. He had a tough early career, had a few knock out wins but also some tough losses. Eventually he was given the chance to fight for the heavyweight title out of nowhere just like Rocky was granted.[16]

Whether Stallone based the story and character more off of Frazier or Wepner, their opponent in their biggest fights came against Muhammad Ali. Apollo was Rocky’ Ali. Apollo could dance, had a quick mouth, a quick jab and incredible charisma. All traits that Ali had as well. Frazier’s fights with Ali are legendary, but Wepner’s lucky chance title fight with him is one to remember. Wepner lasted the entire fight with him and was only the 3rd person to ever knock Ali down to ground. Does that sound familiar? Rocky lasted all 15 rounds with Apollo, and when he knocked him down in the first round, the announcer makes a note that Rocky was the first to ever do that.
Whether Frazier or Wepner get the credit for the character’s inspiration is irrelevant this argument. Stallone didn’t draw inspiration from the movie from Philadelphia’s character traits and dream; he made up the movie because of two famous boxers, how they fought, and their opponents. Yes, Frazier is from Philly and Wepner close by from South Jersey, but Stallone didn’t copy their character traits, he mimicked their fighting styles, training habits and who they fought and made it into the movie. The hard work, Rocky’s loving personality, his love towards Adrian and his desire to better himself not by winning but proving he has worth in life is all original. All of those original traits have been instilled in the City because of this movie. Before Rocky, Philadelphia had the same American Dream that the rest of the country did, just like Adams and Crevecoeur mentioned. They wanted to “keep up with the Jones’,,” make money, own a house and have a glamour lifestyle. After Rocky was debuted in 1976, that all changed, this city changed, and peoples views of the city changed. Rocky instilled new character traits along with a new Philadelphian dream. Character traits that consist of hard working, tough, rugged, loving, and a belief that one can better themselves without reaching the gold prize or heavyweight title. A new dream that follows that character of just wanting to prove ones worth to themselves, and not caring what others think, a dream to be better than the day before. These traits and dream is why Philadelphia embraces and worships certain types of athletes. Allen Iverson, Brian Dawkins, both grinders, and gave everything and more for their team and this city, they never won a title but they are legends because they follow the mold Rocky created for this town.

During the same year Rocky was debuted, a real life Philadelphia icon was also making his mark on the city. Vince Papale, a former middle school teacher, turned NFL pro after a tryout with the Eagles. Vince has all the characteristics that Rocky displayed in the movie, and that
would soon take over the city of Philadelphia. Papale’s story is so inspiring that Disney actually made a movie about him. *Invincible*, starring Mark Wahlberg as Papale tells the story of how Papale became an Eagle. In the movie, Vince is seen losing his job as a substitute teacher, being left by his wife, playing rough touch football with his friends, and bartending at night just to get by. The Eagles, coming into the Dick Vermeil era, had open tryouts and Vince was persuaded to go. He blew everyone, including Coach Vermeil away and was eventually signed by the team.[17] During the movie, Vince is seen meeting Janet, his new love and eventual wife, while making his life better because of sports. Sound familiar? The common theme of Philadelphia of, rise from the bottom, make ones life better and fall in love. The theme of Rocky had instilled in Philadelphia. Now Vince’s real life story was similar to the movie, but had some differences. Those differences were made by Hollywood to fit the underdog blueprint left by Rocky. In real life, Vince did try out for the team, but he was invited after playing two years of the WFL with the Philadelphia Bell. In the movie, it was said that Vince never played organized football until he was 30 for the Eagles. Vince was actually left by his wife but years before the Eagles not weeks before like the movie. The movie did accurately present the note that was left for Vince though. It read, “You’ll never go anywhere, never make a name for yourself, and never make any money.” Well Vince did all of that in real life and the movie, just like Rocky did in his. Another difference between the movie and real life was how Janet was presented. Vince is actually married to her, but didn’t meet her until his playing days were over.[18] Janet in the movie, was like Rocky’s Adrian, a sign of better things to come even if sports doesn’t work out. The dream that Philadelphia had been given from Rocky was again presented in *Invincible* to inspire people. Vince played 3 years in the league, and was a special teams player. He never won a super bowl, or made the pro bowl, but his work ethic and determination has left a mark on the city just like
Rocky. The movie has given him even more recognition because it followed the Rocky mold of the Philadelphia dream. Whether is was Wahlberg’s character or the real Vince Papale, his character fits within the mold left by Rocky, the same mold Iverson and Dawkins fit in. this is why Philadelphians love players like that, they respect hard work, and dedication because it’s what they have to do to make their Philadelphian dream come true.

American Character has been studied for centuries now and has gone through some major changes. From the days of farmers and wanting to own land, to the pioneers in the west, to small town suburbia and now big city living, the character of the American people is a ritzy and well to do one. The dream has also changed, one of major success, a lot of money and fancy cars. All accept for one city. Philadelphia separates itself from any other city in the world because of a movie, because of an iconic and loveable character that has made the people of Philadelphia look at the American Dream differently. Rocky, showed Philadelphians what it takes to survive in this city, and having the ultimate success isn’t always the answer. Working hard, doing things to improves ones life, proving ones worth to them and falling in love was the dream Rocky showed the city. The city has embraced the character and Rocky has become Philadelphia. The music, the images, the journey Rocky takes, it all symbolizes Philadelphia and has laid the groundwork for what it takes to be a Philadelphian. Brian Dawkins followed, Allen Iverson followed, and Vince Papale followed. They all showed the tough, passionate, loving and rugged character than Rocky presented to the city and they had success. They never won a major title but they are and will forever be loved in the city. Rocky is more than just a movie; it has become a way of life in Philadelphia, a life of blue-collar work, different than the glamour of major cities. Rocky had made Philadelphia one of a kind.
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"What Five Words Describe the Style of Montage Beverly Hills/Los Angeles."


Forever Young: Exotic Diet Influence on American Longevity  
By Maria Phillips

As an American obsession since the development of the technological revolution, youth promises eternal beauty, prosperity, and happiness. Although one can alter his or her appearance using balding treatments, anti-wrinkle creams, or hair dye, adaptation of a healthy diet can naturally evoke youthfulness, allowing individuals to perhaps extend their life expectancies. The Paleolithic, or the “caveman” diet, adheres to the dietary regime of cavemen during the prehistoric era, focusing solely on hunting and gathering materials. The Okinawan diet, practiced by the nine hundred centenarians of Okinawa, Japan, requires consumption of only 1200 calories each day. Juicing cleanses the body of harmful toxins through fruit and vegetable smoothies. The breatharian diet, though not advised for practice, maintains that life is sustainable on oxygen and light alone. Though exotic diets in American culture, the Paleolithic diet, the Okinawan diet, the juicing cleanse, and the breatharian diet contribute to longevity for emphases on caloric restriction and organic materials.

In a comic from the New Yorker in June 2011, Alex Gregory demonstrates a common interpretation of the Paleolithic diet through an image of two cavemen having a conversation. Below the image, he writes, “Something’s just not right – our air is clean, our water is pure, we all get plenty of exercise, everything we eat is organic and free-range, and yet nobody lives past thirty.”136 Gregory’s cartoon cleverly illustrates a paradox that emerges with

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136 Comic illustration by Alex Gregory in The New Yorker, June 2011. Photo #1.
consideration of the Paleolithic diet. Despite their unsanitary living conditions and dangerous
occupational tasks, most Americans associate the mortality rates of cavemen with
malnutrition. Other popular newspapers, including the *Washington Post* and the *Atlanta
Journal Constitution*, also ridicule the Paleolithic diet through comics, such as a suburban
man leaving his house in the morning in an outfit made of skins with a club in his hand and a
caveman pushing a supermarket cart.\(^{137}\) Although most Americans interpret the Paleolithic
diet humorously, medical professionals and athletic trainers recommend the diet for its
contributions to physiological wellness.

Advocates of the Paleolithic diet primarily reference the genetic relationship between
humans and cavemen when endorsing this diet. S. Boyd Eaton, a developer of the diet and
author of *The Paleolithic Prescription: A Program of Diet & Exercise and a Design for
Living*, claims, “Cavemen, too, carried an ancient inheritance in their genes, an unbroken,
evolving chain a billion years old. And just as our children reflect our own genetic
inheritance, we reflect theirs.”\(^{138}\) Eaton suggests that humans’ genetic relationships with
cavemen are comparable to those of parents and children, despite an inheritance gap of
40,000 years. Since the genetic composition of humans has not evolved over time, they use
the same digestive systems as cavemen, thus validating the sustainability of the Paleolithic
diet as a lifestyle.

\(^{137}\) S. Boyd Eaton, *The Paleolithic Prescription: A Program of Diet & Exercise and a Design for Living* (New
The Paleolithic food pyramid below indicates the only substances consumed by cavemen during the prehistoric era:

Contrary to most diets of Americans today, the Paleolithic diet approves consumption of only proteins, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and berries, eliminating grains, dairies, and sugars. Though cavemen did not necessarily count their calories, they did not eat excessively. Their vast consumptions of protein maintained fullness and appropriate metabolic rates for extensive periods of time, allowing for rigorous manual labor.  

The cavemen’s diet influenced their health and athletic performances significantly. Eaton argues, “Our Stone Age ancestors were lean, tall, strong, and aerobically fit; while

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139 “The Success of the Paleo Diet.”
accidents and infectious diseases brought them down, they were free of the chronic ‘diseases of civilization’ that cause 75 percent of deaths in the United States today.” Eaton suggests that malnutrition was not the cause of cavemen’s early mortality. Instead, Americans’ deferral from hunting and gathering practices and reliance on agriculture and industry has influenced a series of modern diseases, including cancer, stroke, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and tooth decay. Since modern Americans are no longer subject to the unsanitary living conditions and dangerous occupational tasks of cavemen, Eaton maintains that practice of the Paleolithic diet results in overall wellness and a longer life.

The Paleolithic diet also discusses the role that social class has on determining longevity. In an article from the *Colonist – Times*, Angela Hickman reports that affluence affects obesity in the United States, as consumption of processed foods has contributed to its high demographic percentage. She explicitly references Lee Fulkerson, the director of the documentary “Forks over Knives,” a film that promotes a shift to organic eating. She quotes, “This is not a fad diet for a certain subset of people. It could really be a really important part of the solution to the health crisis that besieges America.” Fulkerson’s reference reveals a recent phenomenon in American culture that adoption of an organic diet versus consumption of processed foods not only maintains health, but also reduces the severity of diseases of

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142 Ibid.
affluence. The Paleolithic diet supports this phenomenon for its reliance on natural hunting and gathering materials.

Various athletic training programs advocate the Paleolithic diet for its contributions to muscular strength and endurance. For example, CrossFit Generation, a training program for muscular strength and conditioning, favors the Paleolithic diet because it excludes foods that impede athletic performance. In an interview with Barry Weidner, a certified CrossFit Generation trainer in Horsham, Pennsylvania, he discusses the benefits of the Paleolithic diet compared to those of others. He states, “You're essentially eliminating grains and eating more meat, so you're getting more muscle-building protein. Numerous studies show that the diet reduces blood pressure, increases good cholesterol, and helps aid in weight loss. So it is a win/win for both people who do CrossFit and those who want to improve health.” Since CrossFit Generation training requires muscular endurance, Weidner relays that the Paleolithic diet enforces muscular development through vast consumptions of protein. He also maintains that the diet offers benefits not only for participants in athletic training programs, but also for those who desire to improve their overall health.

Similarly, Weidner mentions that another advantage to the Paleolithic diet is its simplicity, as participants merely eliminate grains, dairies, and sugars from their diet. He offers his interpretation of the diet in the following quotation:

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143 Physicians commonly use the phrase “diseases of affluence” to describe specific diseases and health conditions that are thought to be a result of increasing wealth.

144 Barry Weidner, interview by Maria Phillips, May 2, 2014. Hereafter, all references to this interview are from this source.
In fact, it is not really a diet as much as an eating lifestyle. Plain and simple, eat meat, veggies, some fruit, no grains or dairy, and eliminate all processed food. I think the problem with most "diets" are that companies that sell their diet plans try and promote it as a quick fix…It is not sustainable and most diets fail in the end because there is no freedom to eat well and balanced. All these point systems that allow cheat rewards is absolutely crazy. They are enabling people to make poor food choices and promising them results that last. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. The Paleo diet is a lifestyle and not a quick fix.  

Weidner prefers that individuals practice the Paleolithic diet as a way of life versus an opportunity to lose weight within a short period of time. If one adheres to the diet for only a brief timeframe, he or she will likely regain the weight that was lost quickly, causing a weakening of his or her muscular growth. The Paleolithic diet also does not contribute to longevity if not maintained appropriately throughout an entire lifespan.

Like the Paleolithic diet, the Okinawan diet serves as a dietary lifestyle versus a temporary act. In a population of about one million in Okinawa, Japan, approximately nine hundred are centenarians. According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a city that has a similar population to that of Okinawa, has only about four hundred centenarians. This dramatic difference in longevity perhaps attributes to the remarkable differences in diet between the United States and Japan. In his article from The Guardian, editorialist Michael Booth states, “It is generally accepted that diet determines around 30% of how long we live. Some argue it can add as much as a decade to your life.

\[145\] Ibid.
\[146\] Horizon, How to Live to 101. BBC Documentary. Produced by Naomi Austin, London: 2008. Hereafter, all references to this documentary are from this source.
So…should we all switch to a diet of tofu, sweet potatoes, and squid?"\(^{148}\) Booth references the influence that diet has on determining human longevity. Though lifespan also considers levels of exercise, relaxation, stress, climate, spirituality, and sleep, diet alone is an essential contributor. Booth relates this percentage to the Okinawan diet, questioning whether a simple adjustment to one’s eating habits, like choosing tofu over chicken, is enough to extend life to perhaps one hundred years.

A reason that the diets in the United States and Japan differ is that the Japanese rely on seasonal produce, or “shun,” meaning “seasonal abundance,” whereas Americans consume mainly processed items.\(^{149}\) In an average American supermarket, processed items outnumber fresh produce immensely, featuring an abundance of packaged meats, frozen fruits and vegetables, and sugary snacks. Contrarily, the residents of Okinawa consume a “rainbow diet” that is rich in colorful vegetables, soy products, tofu, and other foods with plentiful antioxidants.\(^{150}\) According to the documentary *How to Live to 101*, for these reasons, “Okinawans have among the lowest rates of breast and prostate cancer in the world. Studies suggest that this could be to do with the levels of soya they consume across their lifetime.”\(^{151}\) Okinawans’ devotion to organic materials, depending on their seasonality, prevents disease and therefore promotes longevity for their avoidance of processed items.

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\(^{148}\) Michael Booth, “G2: The Diet of the Century: Japanese People are More Likely to Reach 100 Years than Anyone Else in the World, a Fact that Some Researchers Attribute to their Diet. So, Asks Michael Booth, are They Right – and is Eating Tofu and Squid the Place to Start?” *The Guardian*, June 20, 2013, 10.

\(^{149}\) *Horizon, How to Live to 101*.

\(^{150}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{151}\) *Ibid*. 
Americans’ apparent reliance on food processing serves as a source for diseases of affluence, contributing to their earlier mortality rates.

Another essential difference between the Okinawan diet and those of most Americans is their emphasis on caloric restriction. As a culinary tradition, before each meal, Okinawans say “Hara hachi bu,” meaning “Eat until you are only eighty percent full.”\textsuperscript{152} Within a typical day, an Okinawan consumes about 1200 calories, which is approximately twenty percent less than the average American.\textsuperscript{153} Okinawans view this tradition as preparation for the body to endure a potential famine. The narrator of \textit{How to Live to 101} explains, “It’s this ability to trick their bodies into starvation that may be keeping Okinawans physiologically so young. It’s a sharp contrast to the cultural habits that drive food consumption in other parts of the world.”\textsuperscript{154} By forcing the body to prepare for starvation, Okinawans gradually strengthen their physiological endurance, contributing to their longevity.

This tradition contradicts several found in other countries, especially in the United States. While the average Okinawan consumes about 1200 calories each day, at renowned American eateries, one commonly consumes 1200 calories or more in a mere meal. The national restaurant chain T.G.I. Fridays, for example, displays the calorie intake of all options on its menu. Though few of the healthier options range from three to six hundred calories, such as the $\frac{1}{2}$ California Club Sandwich and Grilled Chicken Cobb Salad without dressing, its most popular meals, like the Jack Daniels® Ribs and Shrimp and New York...
Cheddar and Bacon Burger, are 1300 to 1750 calories. Similarly, most of the menu’s dessert items exceed 1000 calories. Its Tennessee Whiskey Cake, for example, is 1270 calories. Americans’ inclination to gorge the body with excessive calories contributes significantly to diseases of affluence, especially obesity. Obesity then merely influences the development of heart disease, strokes, heart attacks, and other fatal ailments. While most Americans are not adopting the Okinawan diet directly, media has drawn more attention to the Okinawans’ long lifespan, thus promoting their dietary customs. More Americans have also acknowledged the benefits of organic foods, influencing a gradual shift from processed diets to healthier lifestyles.

An emerging awareness of the benefits of organic diets in the United States has also influenced the recent popularity of juicing cleanses. Juicing encourages healthiness for its ability to cleanse the body of harmful toxins through nutritious smoothies. While the ingredients of these smoothies, only fruits and vegetables, are available in all supermarkets, juicing seems to appeal more to elite societies. In her article from \textit{The Spectator}, Aimee Blanchette claims, “Green smoothies are the new Starbucks for celebrities in New York and Los Angeles, where juice bars are a dime a dozen.” Blanchette depicts juicing as a trend particularly among celebrities in urban areas. She relates the recent popularity of juice bars to that of Starbucks, a coffeehouse chain that commits to distributing high quality beverages.

\footnote{Menu from visit to T.G.I. Fridays, Abington, Pennsylvania by Maria Phillips on April 25, 2014. Hereafter, all references to this menu are from this source.}

\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{Aimee Blanchette, “Juice Cleansing is a Hit, but is It Truly Healthy?: Some Nutritionists Worry Smoothies Being Promoted as Weight-loss Tool,” \textit{The Spectator} September 4, 2013.}
for expensive prices. Blanchette’s analogy reveals that juicing cleanses appeal primarily to upper class Americans, as wealthier individuals are juice bars’ most frequent customers. Comparably, for those who desire to juice at home, juice extractors typically range from hundreds to thousands of dollars, marketing mainly to middle to upper class societies. Blanchette mentions that organic markets, like Whole Foods, sell individual smoothie bottles for eight to ten dollars, differing drastically from one to two-dollar juice bottles sold at lower to middle class supermarkets.¹⁵⁸

Despite its recent popularity, according to Joy Bauer, a nutrition and health expert on The Today Show, juicing cleanses have both nutritional benefits and deficiencies. While the diet promotes the convenience of receiving adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals in one glass, Bauer claims “The calories in these juice beverages come from carbs, including high amounts of natural sugar from fruits and vegetables. That means that almost all commercial juice plans are grossly inadequate in protein, a key nutrient that helps you feel full, focused, and energized.”¹⁵⁹ For the smoothies’ lack of protein, Bauer suggests that those who juice regularly experience low metabolic rates, resulting in headaches, fatigue, dizziness, and irritability. Juicing cleanses have proven much more effective in promoting healthiness for those who are not receiving daily nutritional adequacy than those who merely wish to lose weight.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.
¹⁵⁹ Joy Bauer, “The Juicing Craze – Health or Hype?”
For Joe Cross, a wealthy businessman and subject of the documentary *Fat, Sick, & Nearly Dead*, juicing essentially saved his life. Before attempting a juicing cleanse, Cross experienced high blood pressure and cholesterol, pre-diabetes, osteoporosis, liver disease, and was at risk for a severe heart attack. Over six months, he transformed his diet from mainly fast food, processed meat products, and sugary drinks to a solely juice and vegetable diet, leading to a loss of over eighty pounds. As a result, Cross’s blood pressure and cholesterol returned to normal levels, allowing him to live actively at the age of forty-seven.\(^{160}\) Though physicians do not recommend juicing cleanses for extensive periods of time, those who are malnourished, whether obese or significantly underweight, benefit from these cleanses.

Recent discoveries in therapeutic medicine in the United States illustrate the benefits of juicing as a treatment for chronic illness. In his article titled “The Raw and the Organic: Politics of Therapeutic Cancer Diets in the United States,” David Hess discusses juicing as an alternative cancer treatment. He states, “Much of the new politics of CAM revolves around the positioning of therapies as complementary to (alongside) rather than alternative to (instead of) conventional therapies.”\(^ {161}\) Hess claims that while oncologists endorse juicing cleanses as a therapeutic diet, they do not recommend them as an alternative to conventional therapies, such as chemotherapy or radiation. Instead, cancer patients who experience

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difficulty chewing, swallowing, digesting, and maintaining a healthy weight during conventional therapeutic treatments should juice to preserve the nutrients in their bodies.

Considering its nutritional benefits and deficiencies, Bauer succinctly argues for the necessity of juice cleanses in one claim: “If you want to try juicing, skip the full-on liquid diet and instead enjoy a green juice (heavy on veggies and lighter on fruit to keep calories and sugar in check) with or in place of one of your meals.”

Bauer recommends juicing only with or as a replacement for one meal. Juicing cleanses only influence longevity if an individual juices while maintaining a balanced diet and exercise routine. Contrary to the Paleolithic and the Okinawan diet, juicing cleanses should be only temporary versus a dietary lifestyle.

While the Paleolithic diet, Okinawan diet, and juicing cleanse value nutritional adequacy as the most pertinent contributor to longevity, the breatharian diet advocates that human life is sustainable on air and light alone. Breatharianism originated as a spiritual practice among religious around the world. Jo Nash, author of the article “Mutant Spiritualties in a Secular Age: The ‘Fasting Body’ and the Hunger for Pure Immanence,” claims, “With a particular focus on the significance of the fasting body, once a product of aesthetic spiritual practice and now cultivated by those seeking a range of experiences; including the anorexic, the model or celebrity trading in beauty elegance, and those in search

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162 Bauer, “The Juicing Craze – Health or Hype?”
of a new age spiritual enlightenment.”¹⁶³ Nash discusses the evolvement of breatharianism as the initial fast for a spiritual purpose, but broadening to incorporate anorectics and participants in the modeling and celebrity industries. Though he considers breatharianism as solely a spiritual practice, he acknowledges that these individuals share a similar belief in that they desire a “lost experience of the body.”¹⁶⁴ This desire derives from religious practices, such as Ramadan and Yom Kippur, and the media, influencing particularly women to adhere to fixated body images.

Breatharianism’s apparent appeal to women resembles the American Myth of Gender for its assumption that women, influenced mainly by their emotions, think less rationally than men.¹⁶⁵ The diet exhibits close correlations to anorexia nervosa, an emotional illness that causes an aversion to eating from an obsessive desire to be thin. According to the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, eighty-five to ninety percent of all patients with anorexia nervosa are female.¹⁶⁶ This statistic suggests that women are more likely to develop eating disorders from pressures to be thin than men, thus supporting the American Myth of Gender for the influence of irrational emotions. Despite this statistic, an increasing number of men in the United States suffer from anorexia nervosa and related emotional illnesses.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.
¹⁶⁵ American Studies 100, Fall 2011. Lecture on American Myths. Dr. Francis Ryan.
¹⁶⁶ Medical News Today, “What is Anorexia Nervosa?”
The documentary *Dying to be Thin* demonstrates the correlation between anorexia nervosa and breatharianism by mentioning the illness as initially a spiritual practice, performed specifically by Saint Catherine of Siena in the fourteenth century. The narrator explains, “Her pathway into that behavior is so markedly different; it is motivated by her faith. She also often gave away the food that she didn’t eat. So, in many respects, she is not at all like a contemporary anorectic.”167 The documentary stresses that Saint Catherine of Siena’s intentions do not resemble those of media-driven anorectics today who are affected by the pressure to be thin from magazines, advertisements, and films. Despite her devotion to her faith, Saint Catherine of Siena’s practice of breatharianism influenced her death from starvation at age thirty-three.

The saint’s situation with regards to this diet counteracts those of modern Breatharians, including Wiley Brooks and Ellen Greve, a woman popularly referred to as “Jasmuheen.” On December 9, 1981, Brooks appeared on the *Tomorrow Show* with Tom Snyder to discuss his devotion to breatharianism. At that time, at age forty-two, he had been a breatharian for seventeen years and claimed to be living a healthy and satisfying life. During the interview, he broaches several controversies concerning breatharianism and helpfully informs the audience of his beliefs. He maintains, “The fact is there is only one thing that keeps the human body alive, and that is breathing. The food that we take is the same as any other thing we take into the body, as it becomes a habit. In other words, eating

167 NOVA, *Dying to be Thin*. PBS Documentary. Produced by Larkin McPhee, New York: 2000. Hereafter, all references to this documentary are from this source.
is an acquired habit, just like drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes."\(^{168}\) Brooks refers to eating as merely a “habit,” an action that a person can disaggregate from his or her life if the self unites entirely with nature. When Snyder asks whether children can be Breatharians from birth, Brooks maintains that it is only possible if the mother is a “perfect Breatharian” who does not instill the habit of eating in her child.\(^{169}\)

Brooks also discusses the effect that his personal experiences have had on his decision to become a breatharian. He recalls, “I think I heard when I was a younger person that a man is ‘twice a child and once a man,’ and that is not the case. When a person gets older and wiser, he should get younger. He should not die in an unhealthy body.”\(^{170}\) Brooks’s reasoning for his devotion to breatharianism is his desire not to age within the duration of his life. Breatharianism has offered him an eternal quality of life that does not weaken as he ages. Instead, he relays that the quality of his life will remain stable until his death.

With regards to the spirituality of breatharianism, it is evident that Brooks relies heavily on faith to support his practice, but disparages the habitual nature of humans. He asserts, “The human body was created in perfection. And obviously, if something is created perfect, there’s nothing man can do to it but make it less perfect. The body needed nothing but the breath of life, which comes from the created source: God, or Universal Intelligence, or whatever the name you want to put on it.”\(^{171}\) Brooks argues that man is the sole cause for

\(^{168}\) Interview on the *Tomorrow Show with Tom Snyder*, “Breatharianism – Breatharian Wiley Brooks,” December 9, 1981. Hereafter, all references to this television interview are from this source.

\(^{169}\) Ibid.

\(^{170}\) Ibid.

\(^{171}\) Ibid.
the degeneration of human perfection. For a change of humans’ reliance on food to occur, he claims that there must be a gradual change of the mind developing from faith versus changes in the environment. He stresses that he does not recommend fasting, but instead a gradual leaning towards the original state of perfection, to which he interprets as breatharianism.

Several controversies and accusations also surround the development of breatharianism. Ellen Greve, or “Jasmuheen,” a dedicated breatharian and author of the book *Living on Light*, has been implicated in various deaths of breatharians around the world, particularly in Germany and Scotland. In an interview from *60 Minutes* in 1998, when asked about her support of the diet despite these deaths, she replies, “I don’t advocate it. In fact, I’ve spent three years traveling the world telling people that it’s completely unnecessary unless there is a calling so deep within them that they are guided beyond instinct to do that.”

Jasmuheen rebuts the accusations referencing her as the cause of the deaths of these individuals by stressing the spiritual significance of breatharianism. For breatharianism to be successful and to essentially achieve human perfection and longevity, one must first experience a spiritual calling to do so.

Despite the apparent success of Brooks and Jasmuheen, the breatharian diet is dangerous for humans. It is pertinent that, like Jasmuheen, humans do not advocate Breatharianism as an effective diet that promotes longevity. Breatharianism remains a predominately ludicrous diet among physicians and religious in America. Though increasing

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172 Interview on *60 Minutes* with Jasmuheen, “Breatharian Jasmuheen,” 1998. Hereafter, all references to this television interview are from this source.
in national awareness, adaptation of the breatharian diet more likely impedes the quality of life than enhances it.

Although each diet exhibits a separate guideline, the Paleolithic diet, Okinawan diet, juicing cleanse, and breatharian diet all influence longevity for a devotion to organic materials and caloric restriction. Since the Paleolithic diet forbids consumption of grains, dairies, sugars, and processed items, dieters can assume the health and athleticism of cavemen, thereby reducing the severity of diseases of affluence that cause an enormous number of deaths in the United States today. Similarly, the Okinawan diet consists solely of seasonal produce and permits consumption of about 1200 calories each day, leading the body to increase physiological wellness by strengthening for a potential famine. While physicians do not recommend juicing cleanses as a lifestyle, they are especially beneficial for those lacking nutritional adequacy, whether obese, significantly underweight, or experiencing cancer treatments. Their daily intake of vitamins and minerals also reduces chances of developing diseases of affluence. The breatharian diet, though promotes an entirely different philosophy than those of the others, apparently sustains life through sole consumption of light and oxygen. These diets have grown increasingly popular in the United States as Americans gradually shift from processed diets to organic lifestyles. As opposed to relying on artificial alterations of appearance, these diets offer a natural alternative for evoking youthfulness and vitality.
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Appendix

Photo #1:
Recommendations for Further Research

As addressed in this paper, physicians do not recommend the breatharian diet as a method for promoting youthfulness or extending life expectancy, despite breatharians’ claims. In a potential research paper, one could explore the discrepancies of the diet between actual breatharians, including Wiley Brooks and Jasmuheen, and physicians. This paper can answer the question, “Is Breatharianism possible?” by addressing the sustainability of the diet and its side effects. One could also research the accusations made against Jasmuheen and Brooks to determine if they are truly devoted breatharians. A paper analyzing this information could develop into an interesting account of radical diets in American culture.