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THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF THE ICE CREAM INDUSTRY THROUGH ADVERTISING, 1920 – 1929

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ABSTRACT

Following the turn of the 20th century, America witnessed a boom in advertising for items ranging from cleaning supplies to beauty products to edible goods. By the end of the 1920s, advertising became a standard business practice for any company wishing to expand its publicity and profit. The ice cream industry adopted the practice of print advertisements in order to assume its role in the cultural and consumption landscape. As the growth and commercialization of the industry mirrored the rise of consumption throughout the decade, ice cream advertisements captivated the American public, and transformed from rural, backyard treat to a portable convenience food appropriate for any consumer in any setting. The ice cream industry provided both a response to and a promotion of growing consumerism, while its advertisements simultaneously epitomized and diverged from other endorsements of the time. In an effort to endorse their product, advertisers and manufacturers associated with the ice cream industry created advertisements with a specific target in mind. With an all-encompassing appeal to women, children, and the “modern” consumer, advertisements firmly established ice cream as a product consumed on a mass scale by the start of the 1930s while reflecting cultural changes that characterized the decade. This thesis explores this transformation through both primary and secondary sources, utilizing trade journals, ladies’ publications, and product points-of-sale.
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Introduction

Today, the ice cream industry maintains a strong presence in terms of frozen treats available to Americans and worldwide. Birthdays, barbecues, and holidays all provide an opportunity to enjoy the product, seemingly customizable to the customer’s tastes: options range depending on preference of flavor, ingredients, and even fat and sugar content. According to the International Dairy Foods Association, the country now produces more than 1.52 billion gallons annually. Today, the industry’s popularity shows little signs of slowing, especially with the expansion of brands and flavors to provide more variance in production to appeal to a wide range of customers. By the 1990s, the country consumed an average of 16 pounds per capita. Ben and Jerry’s, a nationally recognized and distributed ice cream company, even netted over 150 billion dollars as early as 1995. Now marketed for both private and public consumption, dozens of brands line the supermarket shelves, while many American towns can claim a Baskin Robbins or a family-run shop. But less than a century ago, ice cream was a virtually unknown product nationally, much less an item Americans even had the capability to store in their homes.

How did the ice cream business and production flourish into a multi-million dollar industry in such a short period of time? Though the growth of ice cream seems almost meteoric, the industry did not achieve success independently. Technological

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advancements, burgeoning consumerism, and even changing ideology aided the
development of the ice cream industry. This thesis explores uses print advertisements as a
lens through which one can explore the factors that contributed to the rise of ice cream in
the critical period of development in 1920 through 1929. It is through these
advertisements that the appeals utilized by advertisers, producers, and manufacturers can
be fully identified and examined, as the industry crafted appeals marketed towards to
middle-class housewives, children, and ultimately the new, modern consumer. These
specific appeals prove to be multipurpose. While designed to promote ice cream from a
variety of angles, they provide insight into the concerns, fears, interests, and attitudes that
characterized the middle-class family and consumer during this time period.

Early in the twentieth century, industries including ice cream recognized the value
of advertising. The practice of advertising as a promotional tool had been utilized for
decades, but the adoption of advertising as a necessary means of marketing as well as an
industry in its own right gained popularity by the 1920s. Advertisers and copywriters
endeavored to identify their ideal consumer, then take advantage of rising consumerism
to invade the market. In his book *Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and
Its Creators*, author Stephen R. Fox describes the role and angle of advertisements
throughout this decade. He writes, “Advertisements of the 1920s stressed the results of a
given purchase – health, happiness, comfort, love, social success – and the corollary
disadvantages of not having the product.”

The advertisements studied in this thesis
exemplify these qualities, and maintained the positive impact of purchase on children,
family, and even social status.

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(New York: Morrow, 1984), 95.
Even key industry leaders recognized the growing importance and even necessity of advertising, especially for a fledgling industry. In his speech, “Results Achieved Through Co-Operative Efforts in Advertising,” presented at the 1924 Annual Convention of the International Association of Ice Cream Manufacturers, producer G.W. Kenison encouraged the use of advertisements, and rendered them vital to the future success of the fledgling industry. To his colleagues and fellow industry members, he argued:

I believe there is another thing co-operative advertising can do. I believe it can raise this industry of ours out of the cellar and out of the back room of the fruit store and bring it out into the light in the public mind. We have already done that; we have spent thousands and hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars in putting in the very best of equipment, building the finest kind of plants – and hardly one person in a hundred knows the kind of plant in which our business is being done. I believe the effect of the public’s knowing that the ice cream industry is a real industry, with hundreds of millions invested in plants and equipment of the finest kind to turn out this wonderful food product of ours will be much greater than we anticipate.\(^5\)

The industry wholly embraced the practice of advertising and informing the customer, which became key to the success of ice cream as a product. In the analysis of following advertisements, it becomes evident how the ice cream industry’s manufacturers, producers, and advertisers recognized the desires, interests, and needs of the American

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people as consumers, and in turn embraced print advertisements as a viable marketing strategy.
Part I: How the Ice Cream Industry Appealed to the 1920s Female Customer

To turn the best profit on their product, advertisers and manufacturers alike had an ideal consumer in mind as a variety of industries began to utilize advertising heavily at the turn of the twentieth century. Advertisers used specific text and images to catch the attention of the target customer. Print advertising grew in popularity, and by the 1920s, one common theme prevailed throughout the advertisements, whether the product be a child’s toy, cleaning supply, or men’s aftershave. The housewife emerged as the ideal and frequent consumer, purchasing the majority of products for the household and family throughout the decade. According to His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology, “Advertising trade journals assumed that more than 80 percent of consumers were women. In 1937 McCall’s magazine restated the common belief: ‘Categorically, man is always the producer…woman, the consumer.’ This belief shaped advertising profoundly.” Advertisers typically directed the majority of their messages towards women because household maintenance, including budget management and child rearing, fell under the middle-class American woman’s primary responsibility. The attention paid to the woman as the main family consumer by industry advertisers helped ice cream break into the national landscape of modern consumption, and especially as a popular product. Ideally, advertisers hoped that middle-class housewives would respond positively to the advertisements, thus purchasing ice cream with a regularity for their families.

Through the appeal to women, particularly wives and mothers, ice cream

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advertisers and producers tapped into the desires to constantly improve the home and family. Advertisers believed a typical middle-class woman endeavored to purchase the best, safest, and most economical products for the betterment of her domestic sphere. Historically, the responsibilities conferred upon the housewife possessed far-reaching effects for both her husband and the economy. In his book *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern*, author Joshua Zeitz outlines the common reaction to the role in which many housewives found themselves in the 1920s. He writes:

> According to prevailing wisdom [in post-World War I America], it was a woman's natural role to provide a stable, soothing home life for her husband and to confer an ethical education her children. Left to their own devices, men were easily given over to excess and decadence. The same emerging industrial economy that demanded sober, self-controlled employees to staff its factories and offices needed wives and mothers to exert a civilizing influence at home. In the absence of that civilizing influence, men would never learn to master their impulses and lead the kinds of sturdy, disciplined lives that would make them good employees in a new, industrial order.⁷

Though seemingly unrelated to the ice cream industry’s goal of self-promotion and growth, the advertisers’ appeal to women and the importance of their control over the household share a close link. In his work *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* that author Harvey Levenstein simply sums up the argument both

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Zeitz and the advertising industry. He stated that, “Since the mid-1920s advertisers had been mesmerized by the discovery that [the housewife] made the crucial decisions in allocating up to 90 percent of the household’s disposable income.”

While the middle-class women had maintained this role in her home for years, advertisers and home economists alike brought the importance of the responsibility to light.

It is in the recognition of this relation that advertisers effectively capitalize on their appeal to the female consumer. All of the selected advertisements address in some manner the product’s ability to enhance the female consumer’s control over her domain, whether it be through the health of children or her family’s social mobility.

Author Roland Marchand emphasizes the relationship between women and advertisers in his book Advertising the American Dream. Advertisers recognized the link between sales and how successfully an advertisement appealed to the base of women consumers. He also believed a link existed between the woman’s role as consumer and a desire to improve her family’s social status. Advertisers often targeted a housewife’s interest in emulation of a higher class, and then utilized this interest to attach a notion of aspiration to the product. Marchand writes, “For women, who constituted the huge bulk of consumers, the pursuit of modernity offered fulfillment only if it brought secure social status in reasonable proximity to an authentic social aristocracy.”

It is not necessarily the innovation of a home freezer or a novelty ice cream product that attracted the female consumer, but rather the developing interest in the attainment of status and social mobility. This theme spurred the continued development of the American Dream, and the

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The ice cream industry reflected the overall longing for economic and social prosperity that characterized the decade.

Ice cream gained attention and transformed into a popular food as advertisers tapped into the wide range of interests shared by female consumers during the decade. While there is no “average” American housewife, an analysis of advertisements of the 1920s reveals how advertisers and manufacturers marketed directly towards the commonly held aspirations, fears, and beliefs of the targeted middle-class wives and mothers. Publications created specifically for female readers provided advertisers and manufacturers with an automatic audience for the products they attempted to market directly to women. Levenstein expands on the development of magazines for women, as he writes, “The circulation of women’s magazines had climbed steadily in the 1920s, and, although the proportion of space they gave to household matters varied, all devoted considerable space to cooking. Before World War I, magazines such as Ladies’ Home Journal and Good Housekeeping had cleverly cultivated an upper-middle-class image in order to appeal to middle-class readership.”

These publications served as ideal advertising space for the typical, middle-class housewife. This thesis utilizes Good Housekeeping magazine, a good source for examining how advertisers exploited these emotions through advertisement, because the publication focused on home economics and could name women as its primary and majority audience.

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10 Levenstein, 32.
Figure 1. “Let the “Vacuumites” Freeze Your Ice Cream!” Good Housekeeping magazine. Volume 76, number 6. June 1923.
Advertisers believed promotional materials for accessory products played a key role in the ability of ice cream to become a food consumed on a large scale. In an advertisement that appeared in the June 1923 issue of *Good Housekeeping* magazine, the Auto Vacuum Ice Cream Freezer addressed many of the common concerns of the average housewife of the time. The advertisement depicts a mother with two children, a boy and a girl. Though the portrayal of a family surrounding the ice cream freezer presents ice cream and the freezer as goods that are family-friendly and enjoyed by all, an underlying marketing motive persists. This illustration emphasizes the ideal nuclear middle- and upper-class family. Marchand describes such a family in *Advertising the American Dream*. He writes, “The other reason for limiting the number of children […] was more attuned to social realities – or at least to the real attitudes of advertisers. To the upper-middle class, with its ideal of the smaller and more “democratic” family, a picture of a family with three or more children might suggest an absence of middle-class status.” The advertiser’s presentation of the family supports Marchand’s claim, especially if the company wants to target the middle-class female consumer concerned with social status.

The text of the advertisement exploits the desires of a housewife to ensure both the happiness of her children and her success and efficiency in domestic tasks. The advertisers implore the targeted mother to “Give the children their favorite dessert – ice cream – as often as they want it.” Advertisers wanted to appeal to housewives who are determined to achieve a happy and satisfied family, and who will likely provide their children with ice cream if they can be sure the product is wholesome and beneficial. In her book *Food is Love*, author Katherine J. Parkin explores the relationship between

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11 Marchand, 192.
domestic responsibilities and family satisfaction. She claims, “A woman shops for recognition of herself in her various roles and functions. It is this psychic charge which surrounds shopping with such a dense emotional atmosphere. In both cooking and shopping, advertisers expected women to deny their own preferences and indulge their families’ desires.”\textsuperscript{12} This advertisement exemplifies Parkin’s beliefs about meeting family’s desires, as the advertisers believe that the housewife will make the necessary purchase of ice cream to satisfy her children. The manufacturers believe ice cream has grown in popularity, even by 1923 and especially as a product to be consumed by children. They also reiterate the belief that ice cream is a delicious food, and as something pure and nutritious, should be consumed with regularity as opposed to other foods children may not enjoy.

The emphasis on the automatic capabilities of the machine attests to a housewife’s interest in efficiency and convenience. The text advises women to “Put the cranking energy into cookies” instead of spending time laboring over the process of homemade ice cream. Parkin continues to explore how advertisers treated the responsibilities of the middle-class class housewife. She writes, “Seeking to position their products as status symbols in that class struggle, advertisers kept a clear eye on salaries as a key determinant as to whom they wanted to attract. Indeed, many hoped that the loss of outside help would force middle-class women to turn to their products to facilitate housework. […] They wanted white middle- and upper-class women as consumers.”\textsuperscript{13}

According to Parkin, advertisers maintained a clear picture of to whom specifically they


\textsuperscript{13} Parkin, 13.
wanted to appeal. With the stress on the time-saving quality of the at-home no-crank freezer, this advertisement follows Parkin’s model, and targets mothers interested in spending more time with their children, and spending less time on tasks that confined her to the kitchen. Mothers not only save time, but are able to provide their children with more of the treats they desire.

Maxine Margolis, author of *Mothers and Such: Views of American Women and Why They Changed*, explored how advertisers tapped into the housewife’s concern over the maximization of her time in this decade. Margolis analyzes the advertisements, claiming that, “The seduction of this line of reasoning is remarkable: If women bought these products, advertisers and their allies in the media said, they would become better wives and mothers because they would spend less time on housework and more time with their families. Two messages came across loud and clear: women’s place was still in the home and time saved was certainly not meant to be spent in outside employment.”

According the Margolis, advertisers pushed their products so the middle-class woman can improve herself as a wife and mother – and only as a wife and mother. This advertisement exemplifies both Margolis’s claim as well as that of the advertisers: the main message to the viewer emphasized the saving of time on domestic tasks.

The advertisement boasts the sale of over a quarter million Auto Vacuum Freezers in use across the country. An inclusion of a statistic serves to confirm the popularity of ice cream, and its evolution to a household good. This ad attempts to promote the notion that ice cream is commonplace enough that children ask for it as their favorite dessert. A consumer may see the advertisement’s statistic, and feel as though she is behind the times.

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in considering the purchase of the freezer. The overall consumption of ice cream increased steadily from 1910 through the 1920s, and at time of this advertisement’s publication, consumption had more than doubled from 1910 to 2.77 gallons per capita in the country, as measured by the United States Department of Agriculture. The authors Turnbow and Raffeto attribute this increase to “Constant effort on the part of manufacturers to produce better ice cream, together with the education of the public [through advertising] in regard to this product and their increased confidence in it, has resulted in remarkable growth in the consumption of ice cream.” Though the relationship between consumption trends and the sales figure the advertisement is not clear, it is possible the growing support for the ice cream industry aided the popularity of home freezers, and ice cream overall.

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16 Turnbow and Rafetto, 6.
Figure 2. “Ice Cream for Health.” *Good Housekeeping* Magazine. Volume 82, number 6. June 1926.

An advertisement run by the Research Council of the Ice Cream Industry, originally printed in a June 1926 issue of *Good Housekeeping* magazine, provides both
images and text to appeal to the female customer’s desire to be the best housewife possible. The illustrations highlight the product, as well as two figures eating ice cream. First, the advertisement’s copy emphasizes the health benefits of the ice cream by providing a small anecdote in the first paragraph. The inclusion of anecdote would easily catch attention as she flipped through the magazine; instead of paging immediately past the advertisement, a reader would be more likely to stop and consider the text. It is in this text that the advertiser stresses the purity and wholesome quality of the product, and lists the primary ingredients as well as the modern manufacturing conditions.

Purity and wholesomeness were important preoccupations in the 20th century. In a 1905 work titled *The Household Guide or Domestic Cyclopedia*, the editors address the concerns of safe milk and dairy products at the beginning of the twentieth century. One passage notes, “One bottle of tainted milk may be fatal to an infant, and, though a mother, or nurse, may day after day watch with the most zealous care the preparation of the baby’s food […]. Great care should be taken in the selection of milk and its preservation, even after it has reached the house, until used. If there is the slightest suspicion that the milk is not fresh, or that it has been subjected to much jolting, it should be boiled at once, and then put in a refrigerator to be warmed for each bottle.” Even after the 1906 passage of the Pure Food and Drug, health and safety remained a concern for the mother consumer. This advertisement serves as an example of the anxiety that surrounded dairy products at this time as mentioned in the *Guide*, and the advertisers’ attempt to dispel any lingering apprehension. Though in large cities infant mortality due to unsanitary milk had

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reduced over 80% as a result of pasteurization and refrigeration,\textsuperscript{18} these key processes may not yet operate in more suburban and rural areas. In addressing the fears the average mother entertained about the welfare of her family in the 1920s, the ice cream industry draws in the female consumer.

The advertisement highlights how popular – and convenient – ice cream is at this time. Statements such as “So very easy to buy!” and “Sent to your neighborhood store where you can get it without the least bit of bother” abound. The reputation of ice cream has expanded; it is now a product that can be found in more towns, on more street corners in the country. According to the \textit{Report of the Proceedings of the Annual Convention}, the industry maintained at least nine distinct trade organizations and thirty-six states represented at the 1923 International Association of Ice Cream Manufacturers sponsored convention.\textsuperscript{19} Ice cream is no longer restricted to those that reside on farms, and does not need to be purchased from a specialty grocer if a consumer can produce the food within one’s home. The advertisement maintains that the housewife is now able to conveniently purchase a product for her family that is guaranteed to have healthful, satisfying, and safe ingredients.

Further down in the copy, the advertisement illustrates Parkin’s claims about a mother’s concern for health, as the text focuses on how ice cream is a product that not only tastes good, but is good for the consumer and her family. The largest text sums up the primary sentiment of the advertisement: “It is fortunate the food they love so well is

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
so good for them.” The advertisement directly addresses the relationship between mothers and an interest in health, and persuades women to feed their family a healthy and a wholesome product they will love.

The advertisement notes other benefits to ice cream beyond convenience or ingredient quality: this food appeals to girls, boys, and adults. Thus, it is a product that a housewife can feel comfortable serving to her family, because everyone enjoys ice cream, regardless of age or gender, as illustrated by the depiction of a child eating ice cream with an older adult. In her work, Parkin continues to investigate the use of health in food-related advertising. She states:

One of the most consistent food advertising messages directed to mothers concerned their children’s health. As early as 1896, the advertising trade journal *Printers’ Ink* announced, ‘The picture a healthy, pretty child rivets the attention of most people, especially women. This fact is now generally recognized by advertisers, and the use of a multitude of child-faces as eye attractors is the result.’ Health and strength themes pervaded messages that promised that children would love the taste and texture of particular foods. While the approaches copywriters took did vary over time, the target was inevitably a mother.20

The advertisement not only focuses on the healthy aspect of ice cream, but also concentrates on how ice cream allows a housewife to economize. The text asserts that, “Ice cream is economical. Few other desserts can be prepared at so small an expense. It is a universal dessert, all ages and all classes are fond of it.” This copy directly

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20 Parkin, 193.
demonstrated why female consumers of the time period contributed to ice cream’s rise of popularity, especially those whom are interested in purchasing a product that will not break her family’s budget. In her work *Building a Housewife’s Paradise: Gender, Politics, and Grocery Shopping in the Twentieth Century*, author Tracey Deutsch reveals the financial concerns of the housewife in the first decades of the century. She argues:

*Even middle-class women conveyed a sense of economic duress in discussing their food shopping. For instance, a series of letters in the* *Chicago Tribune* *between 1912 and 1913 described how families coped with the ‘high cost of living’ and focused on corners cut in food purchases. One writer explained that she had ‘solved the problem of living within their income’ through ‘marketing.’ All of her examples were drawn from careful planning of food purchases, often substituting her own labor for more processed goods – buying cheap cuts of meat and grinding them or doing her own baking, for instance.*

In order to promote consumption on a mass scale, the advertisers appealed to the female consumer’s financial concerns, which, according to Deutsch, topped the concerns of many women at this time. If the price is low enough that women feel as though they can purchase the product regularly, then she will likely make it a diet staple. Later advertisements explored in this thesis list retail prices starting at only five cents, to the purchase of a home freezer for one dollar. The advertisers attempted to make ice cream even more compelling, as they claimed the product was inexpensive, tasty, and good for

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her children; advertisers wanted to eliminate any deterrent to purchase with their statements. This kind of persuasive information would allow the product to gain a strong customer base, especially when a loyal and efficient housewife is the target customer.

The Things We Do

"You remember what I told you—that part of the story was true, but it was just an experiment."  

"You never did tell me how that was true, you know."  

"Well, I'll tell you now. We put it to the test. We found that the children who were told the story had a much better understanding of the concept. It was a way of teaching them the truth."

"And you think they were impressed by that?"

"They were impressed by it. They understood the story. They were able to grasp the concept."

"That's great! I'm glad you told me about it."

The Best Ice Cream for Growing Children

"Mother, who make their own ice cream and clean the house, are, in a way, their constant source of nourishment. They are the ones who make the ice cream, so it is perfect for growing children."

ACME Frozen, with their bright, colorful packages, are the leading brand in the market. ACME Frozen, with their bright, colorful packages, are the leading brand in the market. ACME Frozen, with their bright, colorful packages, are the leading brand in the market. ACME Frozen, with their bright, colorful packages, are the leading brand in the market.
A June 1927 advertisement for ACME Freezers focused on the desire of a mother to feed her children a quality and safe product, even from advertisers of an adjunct industry. This advertisement utilizes both text and images to sell an ACME brand freezer, which functioned as an ice cream maker as well as a storage unit for the finished product. According to the text, the ACME made it possible to freeze ice cream at home whenever one desired, without need for a larger, more expensive ice box or refrigerator. The most prominent text, designed to catch a viewer’s attention and highlight a key aspect of the advertisement, proclaims the freezer’s production of “The Best Ice Cream for Growing Children”.

*The Household Guide or Domestic Cyclopedia* provides insight into the contemporary beliefs surrounding nutrition and child development in the early twentieth century. Dr. B.G. Jefferis writes, “Growing children of both sexes need plenty of good brown bread, puddings of oat and Indian meal, potatoes in various digestible forms – not fried – and milk and light nourishing soups. Nor must these articles take the place of good roast meat. A child’s sense of hunger is a sharp reality and he soon becomes faint with it. Children grow more between twelve and seventeen than they do in all the years of life that follow.”

22 A consciousness of the importance children’s health developed in the early 1900s, as claimed by the authors of the popular *Guide*. In turn, advertisers recognized and used to this information to their benefit as the advertisement implies that

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22 Jefferis, Nichols, and Nichols, 224.
ice cream is a healthy, safe, and beneficial product for a mother to serve to her developing children.

Below, smaller text expands on this idea: “Mothers, who make their own ice cream amid cleanly home surroundings, and with the sanitary ACME freezer, are contributing in a really thoughtful way to their children’s health and body growth”. This appeals to the mother who remains concerned with – yet relatively unknowledgeable about – the advancement of her children, and reveals the female consumer’s concentration on this issue, as milk had only recently become safer to drink. Parkin elaborates even further on the issue of healthy child development. She asserts, “To persuade women of these ideals and of the value of their food products, advertisers used children’s health, education, and general well-being to make their arguments. The power of food to shape their children’s lives was a powerful, consistent message.”

A housewife and mother could comfortably exert her control over her child’s development, as child rearing comprised much of the expected domestic responsibility of the decade. The result of a healthy child’s progress was twofold: beyond her child’s success, what better way to display one’s domestic proficiency than to cultivate a healthy and satisfied family?

The printed material reveals a dedication to home economics and efficiency that characterized the 1920s. Text throughout the document includes key words such as “bright”, “all-metal”, “attractive”, and “beautiful”. This emphasis not only highlights the physical attributes of a product that housewives deem important, but they also imply the product is modern and convenient, just like the food it was designed to produce. ACME

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23 Parkin, 221.
markets the product to directly address a housewife’s interest in purchasing a quality and efficient product. Its text reads, “There is only one ACME. Avoid Imitations and Substitutes”. This copy demonstrates the manufacturer’s interest in marketing towards a consumer interested in owning a genuine product, designed to operate properly and last for an extended period of time, as well as a product that would ensure she is spending her family’s – and more importantly, husband’s – money in an economical and responsible manner. The small text of the advertisement reveals that a family can purchase a home freezer for as little as 60 cents. The company claims to offer a full refund guarantee, as well as coverage from the Good Housekeeping’s “Seal of Approval,” which implies an interest in a good value and investment in a durable product.

Though the advertisement is not explicitly for ice cream, it still aids as well as reveals details about the transformation of ice cream into a popular product consumed on a mass scale. The demand for a home freezer capable of creating ice cream thus sparked a need to advertise such a product; this may attest to the growing popularity of ice cream because the targeted female consumer was now interested in creating the product at home. Alternately, other industries may have recognized ice cream as a product that is increasing in reputation, and attempted to capitalize on this burgeoning success. The development of personal home ice cream freezer for the housewife may indicate that women are interested in re-creating the product at home, even without ownership of a large freezer, icebox, or refrigerator.

In his work American and his Food, author Richard Osborn Cummings examines the process and result of homemade ice cream as it changed over time. He writes, “In the early part of the [19\textsuperscript{th}] century making ice cream was a laborious task which involved
beating the cream with a spoon and then agitating the container by hand in an ice-and-salt mixture, but by the middle of the century the familiar form of mixer equipped with crank and paddles had appeared. In commenting on the mixer, the editor of Godey’s Lady’s Book stated that ice cream had become one of the necessities of life. A party without it would be like a breakfast without bread or a dinner without a roast.”

The making of ice cream at home provided homemakers with an opportunity to save money and time through the purchase of a machine that will pay for itself in time, as well as praise from her husband and family for a delicious, homemade product that, as found in Cummings’ work, had finally become a social necessity as early as the 19th century. By the mid-1920s, ice cream advertisers wanted to continue the tradition, and push ice cream as a necessary and expected food at social gatherings and in the home.

Finally, the text included at the bottom of the advertisement demonstrates a definite attempt to attract the eager housewife, as it claims, “Recipe folder free to every purchaser.” The inclusion of recipes appeals to a homemaker that wants to determine how to incorporate a newly popular product – ice cream – into her accomplished repertoire of meals her family loves. Parkin makes a significant claim about the combination of advertisements and recipes. She believes, “Food companies frequently advertised their products with recipes designed to please men […] The language in every aspect of the ads sought to remind women that they should be concerned with providing meals men would like.” While the advertisers do not clearly introduce men into text or images, the emphasis on the included recipe book reveals information about the wife’s expected

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25 Parkin, 145.
responsibility to prepare satisfying dishes for her family. If, according to the advertiser, the female consumer can use these advertised and included recipes to turn ice cream into a household staple, the product could become an item that every housewife must serve.

Figure 4. Promotional advertisement for Bassetts Ice Cream. 1920s. Provided by the Bassett family. Published in Reading Terminal and Market: Philadelphia's Historic Gateway and Grand Convention Center by Carol M. Highsmith and James L. Holton

The ice cream industry’s complex targeting of the desires of women consumers continued throughout the decade. It is a simple advertisement, however, that reveals another aspect of the characterization of the female customer that aids in ice cream’s transition to popular food. A promotional advertisement for the Philadelphia-based company Bassetts Ice Cream introduces ice cream as a food whose consumption is driven in part by aspiration. In material dated from the mid-1920s, the advertisement utilizes a simple style, combining black text with a full-color illustration. Bassetts appears to be located in the heart of Philadelphia, according to their advertisement, and thus likely
perceived as more metropolitan and more fashionable. They attempted to translate an urban flair into the attitude of their product. The venue of this advertisement is different than one published in a magazine or newspaper; this likely was placed in the vicinity of the company’s location at 12th and Arch Streets. The minimal text may have a direct relation to the advertisement’s placement: perhaps Bassetts had a successful enough reputation that proclamations about the quality and taste of the product were unnecessary. Because this likely would have been “point-of-sale” advertisement as opposed to one that was run in a ladies’ publication, it may have been that the company’s target customers could easily walk to the vendor and try the product for themselves.

Parkin writes extensively on the relationship between aspiration, advertising, and food in her book. She notes, “Advertisers claimed that the food women bought was the determining factor in their family’s community identity. Advertisers have always strategized that by highlighting their products as high-end they could attract both wealthy consumers and the rest of the society who strove to emulate the rich and become wealthy themselves.” This advertisement exemplifies how advertisers utilized the influence of a desire for status on product consumption as detailed by Parkin almost entirely through the illustration of the stylish young woman.

In keeping with the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the advertisement, the advertisement depicts a fashionable young woman. She is dressed at the height of style for the middle of the decade, and her outfit appears to be expensive. The inclusion of such a well-dressed woman implies that the ice cream sold by the company is just as trendy. The female consumer who purchases this product could associate ice cream with

26 Parkin, 103.
an upper-class, chic young woman, as ice cream can be comfortably served in a variety of social situations. Parkin further develops the aspirational power of food. She remarks, “As historian Susan Mott argued in her history of envy, in the early twentieth century, ‘Bourgeois women were acutely aware of the social significance of possessions and were often convinced that they might elevate their status, and that of their household, by duplicating the spending habits of the wealthy women they envied.’ One might not be able to afford a maid, a tuxedo, or caviar, but advertisements promised that name-brand products available in the local market would enable all women to provide their families the same foods that the social elite supposedly ate.”27 Thus, following Parkin’s reasoning, if an average wife and mother purchase the advertised ice cream, then perhaps they could share a small part of the lifestyle lead by the depicted woman. Bassetts employed the advertising tactic in keeping with Parkin’s claimed psychology behind certain consumption behaviors of women at this time. Ice cream transforms into an aspirational, lifestyle-based product. If a middle-class housewife serves this product in her home, then she could consider her meal fancy by upper-class standards if she purchases a product like Bassetts. Ice cream thus appealed to the aspirations of the homemaker, but also functioned as an equalizer. If both upper class women and the average housewife served the same product, the social difference between them does not appear as wide.

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27 Parkin, 104.
**Play while the Ice Cream Freezes.**

Simply Put in the mixture
Then the ice. Put on the
Cover—and in less than
an hour Serve!

The Auto Vacuum Ice Cream Freezer enables you to make the most delicious ice cream and other frozen custards with hardly any trouble. When you invite friends in for Bridge, or Maid Jang, you want to surprise and please them by serving an unusual individual dessert. The Auto Vacuum helps you do this because with it, you can quickly prepare any one of the many tested recipes, originated especially by us for home use.

It's Play to make Ice Cream this way!

**SAVES ICE—LIGHT WEIGHT—NO CRANKING**

The Auto Vacuum requires about half the ice of an ordinary freezer and best of all you don not have to repack it. Once you have put in the cream mixture you can forget it; save for an occasional stirring. Only three parts—no cranking. It is light and trim, so that it can be used on the kitchen table like an ordinary baking dish. Finished in clear white enamel. Easily cleaned by washing in hot water.

**FOR PICNICS AND AUTO TRIPS**

Not only is the Auto Vacuum most convenient for household use but it is splendidly adapted for use on picnics, auto rides, and other outdoor occasions. It is so compact and light-weight that it takes up very little room. One packing keeps contents frozen for eight hours.

Give the family a real treat. Serve home-made ice cream often this summer. Make it the easy way in an Auto Vac. Four sizes—one, two, three and four quart. O. M. S. Department, Hardware and General Stores. Guaranteed for perfect service.

These delicious desserts are all made easily and inexpensively with an Auto Vacuum Freezer—Strawberry Mousse, Caramele Puff, Potatoe Pudding, Nectarine Pudding, Cantaloupe Sherbert, Coffee Frappe, Frozen Fruit Salad. And of course all the old-time favorites such as French Vanilla, Chocolate, Coffee Ice Cream and many others. You will find all these recipes in our wonderful new book—Frozen Dainties. Free copy of which will be sent on request.

Don't wait till mid-summer to enjoy these wholesome, nourishing delicacies. Investigate the Auto Vacuum and place your order for the right size. Now serve your family and especially the children these appetizing desserts all summer long.

*AUTO VACUUM FREEZER CO., INC.*
310 W. 48th St., New York, N. Y.

**Figure 5. “Play While the Ice Cream Freezes.” Good Housekeeping magazine. Volume 78, number 6. June 1924.**
Good Housekeeping magazine initially published the above advertisement for the Auto Vacuum Ice Cream Freezer in the issue for June 1924. Like other ads examined in this thesis, the promotional material combines both text and images in order to sell the product. The largest image in the right hand corner depicts a group of four women gathered around a table, partaking in a game of cards. This image directly relates to the largest line of text, which proclaims, “Play while the ice cream freezes!” While the text literally refers to the speed at which the freezer can produce ice cream, it also shows how the advertisers set their sights on the potential consumer’s dreams of social advancement and personal time. In this particular advertisement for home ice cream makers, advertisers addressed their target consumer’s interest in social activities and status.

The women wear a variety of outfits that would characterize a middle- or upper-class woman of the time period, with bobbed haircuts, hats, and other accessories. The viewer could assume that the four women identify with a similar social class, as they have enough free time to gather together and socialize instead of attending to other concerns, such as children or housework. Author Steven Lubar explored how advertisers directed their products towards the middle-class housewife’s personal interests in his essay “Men/Women/Production/Consumption,” found in His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology. He explains the advertising tactics and ideals of the decade as they note, “‘We must remember,’ wrote one advertiser, ‘that most American women lead rather monotonous and humdrum lives….Such women need romance. They crave glamour and color.’ Advertisers, in short, accepted the ideology of gender and shaped their advertisements to fit it. The second consumer revolution, like the first, was
gendered female.”

This advertisement epitomizes Lubar’s point: the outfits, accessories, and activities of the depicted women lend themselves to sophistication and glamour.

In *Food is Love*, Parkin continues to explore the class aspect of food consumption and advertising. She claims, “In addition to appeals to women about their vulnerabilities and efforts to ply them with false praise about their accomplishments and authority, advertisers also suggested that women were entitled to be a little bit selfish. Ads still laid out the expectation that women should be exclusively responsible for caring for the home, providing variety, and knowing good products. Some ads, however, also suggested that women should make time just for themselves.”

Most advertisements directed towards women in the 1920s emphasized importance of home economics and health; it appeared to be less common to appeal directly toward a women’s personal needs. This advertisement, however, demonstrates Parkin’s claim that advertisers occasionally focused on the personal lives of women. Card games and socialization without any depiction of children, pets, or husbands, or any representation of housework exemplify personal time for the housewife. The advertisement’s reference to the need for socialization or time for herself, which the Auto Vacuum Ice Cream Freezer could afford its consumer, also plays into a woman’s interest in social status, of the maintenance of a lifestyle that does not require constant cleaning or housework.

The text of the advertisement provides information about how the advertisers chose to market the appliance as a necessary kitchen tool. The advertisement describes the Auto Vacuum Ice Cream Freezer as “light and trim, so that it can be used on the kitchen table like an ordinary baking dish.” The manufacturers and advertisers claim that

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28 Lubar, 13.
29 Parkin, 59.
the freezer can become a regular household staple that is not too large or cumbersome; they believe it is something that is as necessary to a housewife’s kitchen as a baking dish or other cooking accessory. The popularity of appliances greatly increased leading up the 1920s, and, according to *His and Hers*, influenced advertisements throughout the decade. In his essay “Getting Housewives the Electric Message” author James C. Williams notes, “The industry’s male engineering and sales staffs initially took full responsibility for devising marketing strategies to introduce the new domestic electric technologies to consumers. […] They were more successful in promoting smaller tools, such as electric irons; householders accepted them readily because such tools followed, and clearly made easier, existing patterns of women’s work.”\(^{30}\) The goal of the advertisers and the text support Williams’ claims regarding why certain appliances gained popularity. This particular did not utilize electricity, but its claimed purpose and popularity can be examined in the context of other small appliances. Not only did the freezer simplify the labor-intensive churning process that homemade ice cream previously required, but the advertisement emphasized the size of the product that will appeal to the female consumer.

The focus on the female consumer contributed to the rise of ice cream as a food consumed in mass quantities throughout the country. Advertisers capitalized on the attitudes and beliefs of the average housewife, and pinpointed her desires and interests towards her family, social mobility, and her specific gender role for the time period. In her essay “From Ballots to Breadlines,” author Sarah Jane Deutsch further highlights how

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advertisers targeted housewives and their consumer role, especially through emotionally-charged claims, such as those pertaining to family. Deutsch writes, “Advertising reached new levels of psychological sophistication. Because women made most consumer decisions, advertisers took aim at them, giving housework a new, exalted meaning. Suddenly, washing clothes was not simply laundering, as it had always been, but an expression of love. […] By 1931, *American Home* could declare that ‘the careful housekeeper…will know that prime rib roast, like peach ice cream, is a wonderful stimulant to family loyalty.’”31 Regardless of the product, middle-class women could not escape the exploitation of advertisers, with claims that certain products were necessary—even vital—to the women’s success as housewives and mothers. This tactic proved to be successful, as the decision to appeal directly towards women through advertisements helped result in increased popularity for the industry throughout the decade. Because of this attention paid to women—or the primary consumer—the ice cream industry was able to develop a loyal customer base, and slowly introduce ice cream to the American people as a popular food consumed in mass quantities.

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Part II: How Ice Cream Advertisements Used Children in Marketing in the 1920s

In the ice cream industry’s attempts to market their product as a popular food to be enjoyed universally, the advertisers and manufactures depicted children in advertisements. The advertisers used children in promotional materials to attract men, women, and children themselves as consumers, enlisting similar tactics used to attract the housewife through publications such as *Good Housekeeping*. These advertisements not only aided the industry in its mission to increase its economic standing and cultural presence, as well as popularity, but also reveals how advertisers dealt with the changing notions of childhood that developed throughout the decade. As childhood evolved as a concept dedicated the health, care, and, most importantly, the happiness of the child arose as a primary concern for families and advertisers alike.

As advertising grew in popularity in the first few decades of the twentieth century, advertiser and industries constantly searched for the most innovative ways to attract the attention of new customers. Advertisers sought different angles to tap into unexplored interests and desires of the potential consumer. In her essay titled, “Children as Consumers: Advertising and Marketing,” author Sandra L. Calvert elaborates on the goals of advertising in this decade. She writes, “During the 1920s, U.S. advertising leaders began to see that a consumer society would create larger markets for the surplus fruits of mass production. Aware that people might not buy enough goods fast enough on their own, advertisers adopted a strategy of exploiting consumers’ feelings of inadequacy and sought to market products as a means of alleviating consumers’ negative self-
image." As the previous chapter demonstrated, advertisers made use of a variety of tactics to appeal to the concerns of the female consumer, including an emphasis on aspiration, frugality, and health.

The ice cream industry only built upon these concerns with the introduction of children into print advertisements. Author Katherine J. Parkin explains in Food is Love how advertising targeted this bond between child and mother, and how it influenced consumption. She writes, “Advertisers played an important role in persuading Americans of the critical function mothers undertook in feeding their children. The expectation that mothers exclusively should nourish their children into adulthood continued almost unchallenged through to the end of the century. Rarely did copywriters include fathers in their appeals to choose foods that would nurture children.” In a sense, advertisers aimed to exploit the relationship between parents – especially mothers – and their children, as new notions of childhood developed in the decade.

Advertisers for a wide spread of products, including ice cream, took advantage of the current attitudes towards children and parenting that characterized the 1920s. In his work Advertising the American Dream, Roland Marchand explains how changes in child psychology affected the tone and goals of advertisers, despite the field appearing to have little in common with consumer appeals. However, Marchand argues that, “A score of other advertisers fashioned popular theories of child guidance into a cogent merchandising strategy. Child psychology was riding a wave of popularity as a


behavioral science. As new appliances lessened the time required for other domestic tasks, doctors, dieticians, psychologists, and other “authorities” explained to women new standards of child nurture.” Marchand claims that advertisers utilized contemporary beliefs in science, psychology, and marketing, as well as attitudes of the day to attract a customer, especially when those customers find their children involved. As the novel concept of childhood and what was best for child development solidified, advertisers took advantage of this new facet of parenting in order to sell a product.

The changing notions of childhood that blossomed in the early twentieth century found its roots in both sociology and the Progressive reform movement. Economic changes, such as the solidification of a middle class, also guided the development of these new attitudes. The desires and happiness of the child became a primary concern for middle class parents, and especially mothers, of the decade. In the book *Childhood and Child Welfare in the Progressive Era: A Brief History with Documents*, editor James Marten explored the new social and cultural environment that allowed the concept of childhood to flourish. It was in this environment that advertisers recognized the introduction of a new market, and capitalized the new consumption-based bonds between parent and child. Marten explains, “Swedish sociologist Ellen Key declared that the twentieth century would be the ‘Century of the Child,’ an era of understanding and compassion. She […] encouraged parents, especially mothers, to take a more active interest in their children; and argued that better parenting and schooling would not only lead to better lives for children, but would also solve long-standing social problems and

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create a better world.” Reformers, parents, and advertisers alike accepted this new attitude towards children, though with different outcomes. Families forged new relationships with their kids, while advertisers discovered a lucrative market; both of which would maintain a presence in American culture well into the twenty-first century.

The development of this new attitude towards childhood worked cohesively with the economic and social interests of the rising middle-class housewife and family in this time period. A focus on a child’s needs may not be limited to class, but the emphasis on a child’s delight, especially through the purchase of products solely to achieve happiness, was not feasible for the working classes or impoverished Americans of the 1920s. Marten further expands on this concept of childhood’s class bias, as he states, “The comfort, safety, and security that the expanding middle class was able to provide for its children and that had come to be associated with a ‘normal’ childhood were almost impossible to achieve for working-class families, especially in American cities. In other words, many Progressive child welfare programs were inspired by living standards that the middle class had come to expect and that working-class and most immigrant families could hardly dream of.” The importance of comfort and safety, as well as heath, were aspects of the middle-class childhood that the ice cream industry emphasized heavily. The advertisers wanted to assure the consumer that the product was perfect for their children and family, and would only promote the ideals encouraged and expected by this notion of childhood.

36 Marten, 6.
Though products created especially for children and teenagers maintain a strong economic presence today, this was not the case as advertising grew in popularity at the onset of the twentieth century. Advertisers and manufacturers began to place images of children in print media, though not to appeal explicitly to the children themselves. The use of the child demonstrate a deeper understanding of the distribution of consumer power within a family – and in the 1920s, the child did not yet consume in his own right. In his essay “The Other ‘Child Study’: Figuring Children as Consumers in Market Research, 1910s-1990s,” sociologist Daniel Thomas Cook outlined how advertisers exploited the images of children in order reach their parents. According to Cook:

The child stands for something other than itself – for “the family” and, in particular, for the purchasing power of the family. It provides the strong link in the chain from familial affection to commerce. Nonlaboring children represented an insignificant source of sales as direct customers in the 1910s and 1920s. Nevertheless, middle-class childhood congealed sentimental value that, by the magic of market calculus, could be translated into economic exchange value with relative ease.\(^{37}\)

Through its use of children in advertisements, the ice cream industry exemplified both Marchand and Cook’s claims in order to appeal to consumers and increase sales.

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Figure 6. “A Real Treat for the Kiddies.” Published in *The Evening Public Ledger*, March 3, 1920. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
In the summer of 1920, two separate newspapers across the country included the above ice cream advertisements bearing identical images of children. *The Evening Herald*, which operated out of Albuquerque, New Mexico, originally published the promotional material for the New Mexico Candy Kitchen (figure 7) on June 4, 1920. The *Evening Public Ledger*, a daily Philadelphia-based periodical, published the advertisement (figure 6) for the ice cream of the Supplee-Wills-Jones Milk Company several months prior, in March of 1920. Both advertisements combine both the similar image as well as text, as had come to be expected for the typical print advertisement of the decade. The audience for the products cannot be explicitly determined, as the advertisements were found in daily city newspapers, as opposed to a publication with a
gender-specific audience, such as *Good Housekeeping*. Therefore, the audience could be men or women – whether parents or not – as well as children. Without any overt appeal to children, it is likely that advertisers directed these particular images towards parents.

The image employed by both advertisements relies heavily on the use of children, and the visible excitement about the product. The serving of ice cream in the image appears to be extremely large. While this could simply be a matter of perspective, it is likely the advertisers chose to portray such a large dish for two reasons. First, they want to imply that a generous serving of ice cream is necessary to satisfy the appetite of the four children included in the advertisement, as all four appear delighted as the prospect of consumption. Thus, the advertisers present a product that appeals to the tastes of all children; there are no picky eaters, and certainly do not display any child with a disappointed expression. Secondly, advertisers and the industry portray a product whose quantity and popularity is never ending, and especially in the eyes of child, whether it be the children depicted by advertisers, or those children who viewed the ad at home. The onset of the decade found the industry on the cusp of major success, with hopes that ice cream would gain a permanent spot in the American consumer landscape.

The advertisements depict a group of four children gathered around the aforementioned serving of ice cream. At least two girls are present, as well as an older boy and a preschool-aged child. Both girls wear dresses that appear to be in keeping with middle-class standards of the time, while the viewer cannot discern the boys’ clothing. In the previous chapter, Marchand claimed the depiction of two children to be the most beneficial in the advertising industry, but these particular advertisements can be construed as a child’s social gathering, as no adults are present. The absence of adults in
the ad, likely a conscious decision by advertisers, reinforced the idea that ice cream was a versatile product, and in this case functioned as a treat designated just for children.

The text of both advertisements focus on the satisfaction of children in order to appeal to the family’s primary consumer. Advertisers both created and reinforced the parenting norms of the decade. They suggested that it was no longer enough for a mother to be concerned solely with the health of her child, but rather she must now dedicate her actions to her child’s happiness. Marchand details how the advertising industry played a role in both parenting and children’s consumption, as advertisements placed a critical eye on both in order to boost sales. He argues:

Advertising parables […] did not simply mirror contemporary society. They promulgated a particularly indulgent version of current theories of child guidance and diffused it to a wide audience. And these tableaux provided the constant repetition that gave the new ideas the authority of omnipresence. Although women were probably most influenced by their own upbringing in their style of child care, still the advertisements enabled them to experience vicariously the failures and guilt feelings of mothers who ignored the new ways.38

The advertisement for the New Mexico Candy Kitchen neatly serves as an example to Marchand’s claims. The advertiser recommends the purchase of their product as to “How to Make the Kiddies Happy,” then further implores the consumer to “Drop in on your way home to take along some Ice Cream for them. They will appreciate your thoughtfulness.” This advertisement places mention of the child’s appreciation side-by-

38 Marchand, 232.
side with the concern for the child’s health, and directs the consumer on how to purchase the product.

Figure 8. “Mothers Know.” Published in the *Bemidji Daily Pioneer*, February 16, 1920. Bemidji, Minnesota.

In addition to crafting an appeal to parents and children, ice cream advertisements provide insight into the relationships between mother and child, and utilized these attitudes to promote the product. Published by the *Bemidji Daily Pioneer* in 1920, the
advertisement for Koors Ice Cream Supreme includes several lines of copy and a larger illustration. The text for the advertisement is relatively similar to other advertisements throughout the decade. The advertisers and the company claim that, “Ice cream is just the thing for children – its so much better for them than pastries and sweets.” As discussed in the previous chapter, advertisers knew it was crucial to appeal to middle-class women – and to their expected role and responsibility within the household. Advertisers aimed for any mention of the combination of health and children to appeal directly to the mother as consumer.

Marchand details the specific responsibilities the child required of a mother in the 1920s. He makes several claims regarding the natural behavior of children as portrayed by the advertising industry, and explored how that affected the concerns middle-class mothers and housewives held throughout the decade. He writes, “Children would inevitably choose the wrong diet or acquire undesirable habits if left to themselves. Children naturally rejected certain foods that were best for them and resisted certain good habits because they found them bothersome and restrictive. Mothers bore a responsibility to protect each child’s health and mold its character in defiance of the child’s natural neglect or abhorrence of essential food and habits.”

The health of her children remained the paramount area of interest for a mother, which advertisers recognized and promoted. If an advertiser can market ice cream as a product that is good for children, and backed up with the guarantee that “Mothers Know,” then ideally, according to advertisers, the consumer would view the food as a beneficial part of her child’s diet.

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39 Marchand, 230.
The Koors Ice Cream Supreme advertisement also targets the attitudes towards gender roles in childhood. In the illustration for the company portrays a woman and a young girl, who is likely her daughter. The advertisement captures the woman in the midst of addressing the child, while the girl raises a serving of ice cream in return. In the 1920s, parents chose to consciously raise children with distinct roles, traits, and qualities in mind based on gender. According to Parkin, the advertising industry carefully interspersed suggestions about gender roles throughout their media. In Food is Love, she believes that beyond explicit references to domestic responsibilities: “The other way in which advertisers assumed girls’ inevitable involvement in the kitchen was the placement of girls engaged in cooking and in studying foods’ qualities.”40 This advertisement exemplifies Parkin’s assertion, especially as the two female figures appear to be placed in a domestic setting of either a kitchen, counter, or table. The woman appears to be slicing a brick of ice cream into smaller servings, likely for her family or friends. Placing the child in the similar setting, and performing a domestic task such as assisting with a meal, falls under Parkin’s argument, and thus shapes the gender expectations of the decade.

40 Parkin, 205.
In this 1921 advertisement for Langdon’s Sanitary Ice Cream, this advertisement’s use of children in both text and image appeals to the middle-class mother. This media was originally published in the *Bemidji Daily Pioneer*, which reported on both local and national news. The top half of the advertisement contains an illustration of a maid or housekeeper serving two women what appears to be dishes of
cake and ice cream. The two seated women are dressed in the fashion of the times, with large hats and accessories. The décor of the occupied room also attests to a middle- or upper-class family: the room boasts a large glass lamp or chandelier, as well as an elegant grandfather clock, and a framed photograph or piece of art on the wall. The furniture looks equally as expensive; it appears to be upholstered in a dark fabric or leather material. The presence of a maid clearly indicates the social status of the women and child in the advertisement.

In addition to the two women, the advertisement depicts a young boy at the edge of the illustration. He is dressed nicely, in clothing typical for a middle- or upper-class background, in a rumpled collared shirt and askew vest, with a hat in hand. The advertisers use the images of the child and the women to represent the ideal consumer and the stereotypical male child of that social class for the time period.

The text of the advertisement directly describes the positive effects of the consumption of ice cream upon the health of a child. Advertisers designed this description to appeal directly to the mother of the 1920s concerned about the well being of her son or daughter. The copy claims, “All children love the delicious goodness of ice cream. And it’s mighty good for them: builds health and strength, puts roses into wan cheeks, and makes the kiddies sturdy and robust, because it contains a large percentage of ‘Vitamines,’ the wonderful substance that is the enemy of disease and ailment.” At the onset of the decade, mothers still feared for the mortality of younger children. Advertisers recognized this fear as many children still died in infancy, even in the twentieth century, but also capitalized on the middle-class’s trendy interest in vitamins. Levenstein provides insight into the introduction of vitamins into the consumer’s consciousness. He writes:
On the surface, the rapidity with which interest in vitamins overtook the middle class during the 1920s might seem rather curious. After all, the specific diseases which they cured, the so-called dietary-deficiency diseases, were not exactly rampant, certain not among the classes who became vitamin conscious. […] But middle-class concern over vitamins and minerals really had little to do with deficiency diseases per se. Rather, what struck home were indications that the newly discovered substances affected health, longevity, and growth.41

Though ice cream had not been consumed or purchased solely for the health benefits the treat provided, the new scientific developments in the nutritional value of foods at the time period provided advertisers with more information with which to target the consumer. The industry’s advertisements’ new emphasis on vitamins and ingredients may have even provided a level of justification of purchase to the consumer who bought ice cream sparingly in the past. In *The Ice Cream Textbook*, authors Turnbow and Rafetto elaborate on the industry’s attitudes and promotion of sugar in ice cream. They write, “Sugar, meaning cane or beet sugar, when rationally eaten, is one of the best foods for supplying energy to the human body. In fact, sugar has the highest net energy value of all carbohydrates.”42 Though sugar may have been typically recognized as nutritionally void, the ice cream industry continued to shed a positive light on the ingredients that comprised the product.

The concept of putting roses into wan cheeks invokes the image of the ideal American child, similar to the child who represented Good Humor. Likely aware that ice

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41 Levenstein, 149.
42 Turnbow and Rafetto, 9.
cream was traditionally consumed as treat rather than a cure for physical ailments, advertisers branded as ice cream as healthy and nutritious. This could perhaps be due to the advertisers’ desire to lend credibility to the product, or they simply latched onto the contemporary concerns of the time period in order to best target the ideal consumer. Parkin sees beyond the advertisers’ claims of health, and believes that the female was concerned with more than simply her child’s physical wellbeing. She argues that, “While advertisers emphasized women’s concern for their children’s physical and mental needs, they also strove to ensure that mothers cared about their children’s happiness. Ads suggested that meals had the potential to warm children’s hearts, as well as their stomachs.”

The boy lends the advertisement its main text that establishes a child’s desire for the product – and ultimately attracts the parent as a consumer. The text states the child’s concern: “I Hope Mom Won’t Forget Me!” as he caught a glimpse of the two women enjoying the frozen treat. At this time period, the depicted middle- or upper-class child was not yet a customer in his own right, and thus would not have made the purchase of ice cream on his own. Cook explores the relationship between the middle-class child and a family’s consumption in “The Other ‘Child Study.’” He contends, “Not only do the candy counter and toy shop have obvious direct appeal to children […] ‘but the tie that holds them to older persons – their parents – is the deepest of all affections; and the man who buys things because of some direct or indirect pleasure or benefit which the purchase will cause his children, is legion.’” Cook’s argument can be applied directly to this particular advertisement. The child desires ice cream, but, without any means of the

43 Parkin, 202.
44 Cook, 492.
procuring the product, the appeal falls upon the parent. The advertisers hope that mother’s interest in a display of affection will lead to a purchase of ice cream.

Figure 10. “Good Humor.” Point-of-sale advertisement for the Good Humor company, via the National Archives. Mid-1920s. Original location unknown.
A mid-1920s advertisement for the Good Humor company demonstrates how advertisers in the ice cream industry utilized images of children to appeal directly towards parents, as opposed to the children themselves. This advertisement, used at a point-of-sale for the ice cream company, depicts a young girl holding two different types of “ice cream suckers” in her hands. The girl appears to be seven or eight years old. She wears a pink top, and, with a large smile, appears to be enjoying her ice cream immensely. The text of the slogan of the company appears on a white banner below the child’s hands. “In A Good Humor” simultaneously plays off of the company’s name and refers to the girl’s behavior and attitude.

In Advertising the American Dream, Marchand outlines the specific type of child that advertisers choose to portray in their promotional material. In his discussion, Marchand notes, “Except when the selling message specifically dictated otherwise, children were healthy, fastidiously groomed and attired, and impeccable in behavior.”\(^{45}\) The advertisement illustrates Marchand’s statement, as the depicted girl is obviously joyful at the prospect of eating an ice cream novelty – and a Good Humor product nonetheless. The use of a happy child in a good mood only emphasizes the positive qualities of a product; thus, the advertisers claim a parent will have a satisfied and pleased child if he or she purchases a Good Humor ice cream sucker.

Beyond her expression, the physical appearance of the girl appeals towards the parent as a consumer. With her blond hair, blue eyes, and healthy, rosy cheeks, the image represents the ideal American child in this era. Parkin expounds upon the advertisers’ claims of positive physical benefits in the form of healthy children. In attempts to reach

\(^{45}\) Marchand, 191.
out to the parent in this decade, she believes, “Most food advertisers chose more
traditional tactics. Some featured drawings of idealized children who glowed with good
health and asked readers to compare them to their own children. Promoting the positive
physical outcomes for children who ate their foods, advertisers used […] nameless clean-
faced, tow-headed cherubs who exuded vitality to affirm their claims.” The Good
Humor child embodies Parkin’s argument; the advertisers portrayed a child clearly fully
of health and happiness. The ice cream industry targeted the parents’ concern over both
the physical and mental state of their children in order to push a product that, according
to the advertiser, could alleviate these worries and result in thriving children, though ice
cream itself did not function as a specific health food. The inclusion of a child in the
advertisement allowed advertisers and the Good Humor company to create an outlet to
appeal explicitly to the parent, who maintained the middle-class family’s purchasing
power in this time period.

The decision to utilize children in advertisements allowed family relationships to
play out when it came to the female consumer’s identity as a mother. As previously
discussed in this thesis, women maintained the household budget and completed the
majority of the family’s transactions. The middle-class housewife’s role as a mother
gained importance to advertisers in regards to purchasing power as motivated by
children, which advertisements relied on heavily. In The Commodification of Childhood:
The Children’s Clothing Industry and the Rise of the Child Consumer, author Daniel
Thomas Cook explored how the advertising industry viewed mothers in the context of
their children’s consumption. He believes, “‘The mother’ stood as a ubiquitous figure,

46 Parkin, 194.
both textually and visually, in consumer advertisements in *Parents* and elsewhere. Overseeing and arbitrating her children’s consumption, this mother simultaneously monitored their growth and healthy adjustment to the world."47 Advertisers and all types of industries relied on the mother to respond to both her child’s needs but also his wants that would define the family’s consumption. Mothers purchased products on behalf of their children, and thus advertisers eventually found it beneficial to target all family members in the 1920s. The growth of children’s purchasing power through mothers proved to be especially key to the ice cream industry, where the manufacturers promoted a frivolous product that served little functional purpose beyond sheer satisfaction. Yet, According to advertisers, the middle-class mother who operated under the new concept of childhood, would certainly purchase a Good Humor sucker to please her children.

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The Supplee-Wills-Jones Sealtest Milk Company employed the images of children in their promotional pamphlet published in the mid-1920s. The colorful advertisement depicts two children: an older boy and a younger girl stand side-by-side on the edge of the image. They wear unremarkable clothing typical for a middle-class child of the era. Their outfits do not appear to be especially expensive or fancy, and the
advertisers dressed the children in a manner to emphasize their youth. The advertisement places the children on a dark hill, overlooking pink mountains and large, fluffy white clouds; the colorful landscape fully captivates the attention the children, and their expressions are not visible. The text of the advertisement simply states “Mountains of Pink and White and Brown,” alluding to three distinct ice cream flavors, specifically strawberry, vanilla, and chocolate. The advertiser thus chose to picture the children as present in an other-worldly fantasy setting. An inclusion of tiny figures skiing and dancing atop the ice cream mountains only exaggerates this sentiment.

An essay by author Leonard Peake titled “Advertising to the Grown-up of To-Morrow” provides insight into the creative aspect of the use of children in advertising in 1919. In his article originally published in the advertising trade journal Printers’ Ink, Peake notes, “It is as much the way these special advertisements are illustrated as their variation from the conventional in text that makes them attractive. Artists are secured who specialize in fairy-book drawings, and there is a quaintness and charm that must attract children. Quite the most important part of the procedure seems to be to make them look as much unlike advertising as possible.”48 This advertisement for the Supplee-Wills-Jones Sealtest Milk Company fully exemplifies Peake’s claims regarding advertising directly towards children. The inclusion of these elves and the entire whimsical nature of the advertisement appeals to a child’s imagination, as Peake suggested advertisers attempted to do. The scene looks as though it has been lifted directly from the pages of a children’s book, especially when combined with the text of the advertisement.

Though advertisers and industries did not yet fully view children as consumers with their own disposable income, advertisers began to recognize the benefit in crafting their advertisements to appeal to children. In her essay titled, “Advertising, Mass Merchandising, and Children’s Consumer Culture,” author Lisa Jacobson outlines the history of how companies recognized the value of children in advertising appeals, even without their own funds to purchase products. She notes, “Marketing directly to children has much deeper historical roots. As early as the 1890s, businesses envisioned advertising as a means to build children’s brand awareness and shape their future adult buying habits. By the 1910s and 1920s, advertisers and retailers had made an even bigger conceptual leap. They increasingly saw children not only as the shoppers of tomorrow but also as the shoppers of today who could grease the wheels of parental spending.”\textsuperscript{49} In a span of only thirty years, advertisers changed the way they viewed children and their relationship to family consumption, likely in part of the evolving perceptions of childhood.

Even by 1919, Peake asserts that, “Quite a number of large national advertisers believe in creating special advertisements for this class, and go to great lengths to put the very essence of childhood into them.”\textsuperscript{50} The selected advertisement epitomizes Peake’s belief, as it appears to have made the childhood imagination its first priority with the use of color and fantasy. The depicted children are so enraptured at the sight of an ice cream landscape that the girl drops her doll in favor of the scene before her eyes. The advertisers want consumers to believe that ice cream is not just a product, but something that children can fantasize about and fully enjoy. Because of the company’s incorporation


\textsuperscript{50} Peake, 80.
of fantasy, children can now beg their parents for ice cream as they typically do for new toys, books, and games.

Though advertisers and children would not fully embrace the child’s power as a consumer class of its own right, the ice cream industry recognized the value in creating child-specific advertisements to reach the adult. Author Daniel Thomas Cook explored this relationship even further in his essay, as he writes:

> It is rule-of-thumb knowledge about the kinds of beings children were in 1915 and what their position was in relation to parents and to the family’s purse strings. Seeing and treating the child as a person, as a customer, and, importantly, as a person when a customer wins the child’s good will and, sellers hope, that of their parents, all of which potentially translates into exchange value.  

This ice cream advertisement exemplifies Cook’s argument, as the illustration certainly focuses solely on the child and their interests, which may in turn cause the parent to purchase the product.

Throughout the 1920s, advertisers and companies within the ice cream industry utilized children, both in image and in relation to consumerism, to promote their product. Children appeared in advertisements in different ways: with mothers, in groups, or alone, and advertisers derived different uses from their presence throughout the decade. Some companies promoted the taste and nutrition through an idealized depiction of a child, while others created storybook illustrations to capture children’s imagination – and their parents’ wallets. Other inclusions of children allowed advertisers to emphasize new

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51 Cook, 493.
parenting tactics, and identify faults and fears the typical middle-class mother possessed regarding her children’s habits and happiness.

In his book *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children’s Culture* historian Gary Gross sums up the value of children to the advertising industry through the creation of consumer culture for children. In his work he claims:

Their desires were natural and good, and thus it was natural for parents to want to give them delight in the magic of modern commercial goods. No longer seen as either ‘mouths to feed’ or ‘assets’ to train and exploit, children gave parents pleasure through the ‘sacrifice’ of parental largesse. This was a particular form of vicarious consumption – adults enjoyed spending through spending on their offspring. It was surely a morally acceptable materialism because it was focused on the dependent and remained within the confines of innocence. Buying toys and providing a comfortable house with a play set in the back yard was good; by contrast, spending money on Scotch in a nightclub or on the latest fashion to display oneself at a party was suspect. The look of the child, of either happiness or disappointment, weighed heavily on the new consumer. 

The advertisements of the ice cream industry exemplifies Cross’s summation of the importance of children to consumption and advertising. Advertisers and members of the ice cream industry attracted customers through utilization of the role middle-class children possessed in their families, and exploited the ways in which parents treated their children, and chose to combine their relationship with consumption. The application of

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different angles surrounding children and childhood allowed the ice cream industry to specifically target consumers, as well as prepare the industry for the next generation of customers. In addition to contributing to the growth of the industry, the ice cream advertisements simultaneously reflected and promoted attitudes towards childhood that characterized the decade.
Part III: A Modern Product for a Modern Consumer, 1920 – 1925

Popular images that characterize the 1920s in a variety of ways often focus on the postwar prosperity or the radical lifestyle of flappers. Regardless of whether the emphasis highlighted gender roles or the economy, nearly all aspects of life in the 1920s came to illustrate modernity. This decade fostered the growth of the ice cream as the industry presented the product as the embodiment of modern innovation, technology, and consumption. The advertisements for ice cream revealed information about the characterization of the decade, the attitudes of the consumers of the decade, and how the growing consumer culture perceived new technological advancements. As the industry grew over the decade, ice cream completed its democratization as it evolved into a modern good. Consumers no longer encountered limitations in their ice cream preferences; now the industry offered a variety of novelties, forms, and flavors, from brand names to small, local purveyors, at different prices. Aided by mass production, commercialization, and industrialization, advertisers made ice cream into a modern food available to all consumers, but especially the contemporary American with a desire for innovation and choice.

Historically, the 1920s provided an ideal environment for the development of a class of consumers driven by an interest in modernity and change. In the years following the completion of World War I, the country as a whole witnessed transformations to society, including the economy and consumption. In his book *The Mirror Makers*, author and historian Stephen R. Fox details the societal and cultural changes Americans experienced in the 1920s, and the impact these changes had on advertising. He explains, “The first national experience with total war had cracked society open, leaving broken
certitudes and discarded patterns. [...] Just approaching maturity, the advertising industry stood ready with fresh patterns. New products – not merely new version of familiar items – changed American life, down to its most intimate details, with a speed and totality that left observers groping for precedents.”

The creation of the attitudes of this decade through the social and economic changes allowed for the ideal setting in which advertisers could market a modern product such as ice cream. Both advertisers and manufacturers effectively recognized and targeted the interests of the growing consumer class during this time period in order to insert ice cream into the modern cultural landscape.

In addition to appealing to the modern lifestyles of the target consumers through advertisements, the ice cream industry demonstrated the decade’s technological innovations. Advertising the American Dream’s Roland Marchand especially noticed the relationship between industrial innovation and advertising of the modern product. He claims, “Presiding over the immense, impersonal marketplace that marked America’s emergence as the world’s most modern society, advertisers worked to further the processes of efficiency, specialization, and rationalization.”

According to Marchand’s argument, advertisers bore much – if not all – of the responsibility for how the public consumers perceived a product. The industrialization and advances made in the fields of refrigeration, cold storage, and packaging encouraged the nationwide sale and distribution of ice cream as a commercialized product. The advertisers of the ice cream industry exerted their power, and took advantage of the technological advancements in

53 Fox, 79.
production and refrigeration to present ice cream as a modern food to appeal to a modern consumer.

The ice cream industry and its advertisements maintained a strong relationship with modernity. The production of the food was modern in its own right, as the industry effectively pioneered and utilized technologies to make the product accessible to thousands across the country, especially with the introduction of the ice cream novelty. The rise of the Popsicle and other similar products earned ice cream recognition as a true convenience food: desserts on sticks could be carried to any location. In the development of convenience foods came the recognition of leisure. Consumers could travel with ice cream to any location and the consumption of ice cream was arguably leisure in itself, as ice cream was not necessary to any diet at that time, despite the industry’s claims. Leisure and increased purchasing power of urban, middle-class Americans hallmarked the lifestyle of the 1920s. Joshua Zeitz, author of Flapper, notes this shift in attitude as a result of a growing consumption culture. He writes, “The message was simple: To be a success in the modern world, it was essential to have fun. To have fun, you have to buy something.” Advertisers for the ice cream industry tapped into all of the desires of the modern consumer, and hoped for an increase in sales of their new modern food.

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The above advertisement for the Good Humor Company has been analyzed in this thesis for its use of and appeal to children in order to promote the product. But, the advertisement can also provide information about the rising modernity and innovation that the ice cream industry began to embody with its technological advancements. The advertisement boasted that Good Humor created a product that was “The New Clean Convenient Way to Eat Ice Cream.” This statement tapped into not only the decade’s
emphasis on convenience, but also the interest in purchasing a product deemed fun and new. In her work *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing*, Pamela Walker Laird elaborates upon the relationship between advertising and novelty. She asserts that, “Advertising truly became the business of material progress: it helped create desire for the new and improved, even as it made the very existence of the ‘new’ financially possible. Moreover, advertisements provided a public forum for presenting progress, in word and image, according to the visions and interests of their creators.” If following Laird’s argument, then the emphasis on the “newness” of Good Humor ice cream suckers in print advertisements may have played an equally important role in transforming ice cream into a modern product as the technology did.

In his essay “The Frozen Sucker War” for the National Archives *Prologue* magazine, author Jefferson M. Moak explored the introduction of ice cream novelties into the industry’s repertoire. He claims, “The early part of the 20th century was a time when new ideas about ice cream and other confections were popping up, and advances in refrigeration allowed manufacturers to experiment with different shapes and flavors. The ice cream cone, the ice cream bar, the chocolate-coated ice cream on a stick, the ice cream cup—all were developed during the first quarter of the 20th century.” In keeping with Moak’s essay, the presence of an “ice cream sucker” or an individual rectangle of ice cream frozen to a stick helped define ice cream as a modern food and industry. The

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American consumer of the 1920s desire more from his or her ice cream, and, as Moak asserts, companies like Good Humor recognized and exploited this appetite.

By the mid-1920s, manufacturers and producers successfully developed the freezing methods necessary to create and store such a product in ice cream parlors, grocery stores, and ice cream trucks. The individual treats came in single-servings, and in flavors such as a vanilla with chocolate coating or fruit flavors, as depicted in Good Humor’s point-of-sale material. In her book, *Sugar: A Bittersweet History*, author Elizabeth Abbott discussed the importance of new freezing tactics to the popularity of ice cream. She writes, “These [new] freezers democratized ice cream, making it universally available. The more ice cream that was produced, the greater the demand for sugar. […] By then [mid-19th century], improved technology made ice cream cheap enough for the middle classes to enjoy regularly.”

Ice cream became a modern food in part of because of its achievement of democratization, as well as its advancements in production by the mid-1920s. As a result of the technological changes mentioned by Abbott, middle-class families no longer had only the option to purchase a large brick of ice cream: rather, the consumer purchased smaller quantities designed to attract any preference.

Because of the option to buy individual portions in the form of a bar or sucker, the ice cream industry successfully handled the issue of in-home refrigeration. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, personal refrigerators proved to be a rarity, even with the increase in electricity in urban homes through the 1920s and 1930s. Many families relied on ice and ice boxes to store their food, and even these primitive

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appliances were found to be unreliable and often not cold enough.\textsuperscript{59} In the book titled \textit{Fresh: A Perishable History}, author Susanne Freidberg details the introduction of modern refrigeration into the lives of the middle- and upper-class Americans, and how it affected the housewife’s consumption. She writes, “Already by the end of the 1920s, however, the refrigerator stood out among appliances. It was part of a larger system that connected people and places in new ways, and by doing so it transformed what it meant to be a food consumer.”\textsuperscript{60} The creation of refrigeration in the home naturally changed how a family consumed, and their relationship to food industries. However, this evolution in refrigeration did not take off until the end of the decade, and thus, the ice cream industry continued to find success in the popularity of its single-serving sized products.

\textsuperscript{60} Freidberg, 45.
Advertisers capitalized on the creation of the Popsicle, for both its contribution to the development of name brands as well as its embodiment as a modern and convenient frozen treat. This above point-of-sale advertisement, currently housed in the National Archives, combined text, imagery, and color in the promotion of the product. A narrow orange border encircles the rectangular image, sharing its color – and likely, flavor – with the illustration of the Popsicle. The letters of the brand name intertwine with the stick of the frozen treat; advertisers likely tried to reinforce the connection between the fledgling company’s name and its new product. The tiny text declared the product to be a “frozen lolly-pop,” in case any consumer may be unfamiliar with the pop. The larger text below proclaimed the Popsicle to be “A drink on a stick,” which advertisers likely included to promote the treat’s convenience. Thus, the advertisers assumed the pop would share the same refreshing benefits of a soda or other beverage, but in a neater, more accessible package, without any possibility of a spill. The icicles that adorned the brand’s name
served to reaffirm the frozen and refreshing nature of the product. Additionally, the advertisers may have recognized the company’s history of cold treats, as they chose to include the colors of red, white, and blue within the advertisement’s illustration. These colors also may have served for the company to establish itself as a American-made product.

The concept of the Popsicle was unheard of prior to the 1920s, when the ice cream industry experienced a boom in the invention of novelties such as Popsicles, the previously mentioned Good Humor ice cream suckers, and Eskimo Pies. In “The Frozen Sucker War,” archivist Jefferson M. Moak explains the background and instant success upon the introduction of the Popsicle to the American population. He recounts, “This company introduced the product to concessionaires at amusement parks and beaches in April or May of 1923. The Popsicle achieved immediate success, and in one day, one stand at Coney Island sold as many as 8,000 Popsicles. A new Popsicle Corporation of the United States was founded in 1924. It purchased the operating rights […] and reported sales of 6.5 million Popsicles that year.”

61 The popularity of the Popsicle, as detailed by Moak, revealed information about consumer attitudes toward dessert products, brand names, and convenience foods as a whole, even though Popsicle was not specifically a dairy product. Popsicle was not alone in popularity in the early twentieth century. In Milk, author Deborah Valenze further details the creation of other ice cream novelties. She writes, “Other innovations soon joined the North American competition: the I-Scream Bar, coated with chocolate, appeared in 1919, the Good Humor Bar reached the market in 1920, and ice cream sold in Dixie Cups (“the sound of it was patriotic,

61 Moak, 1.
musical, snappy, clean, and modern […] were a success by 1923.”62 The selection of novelties provided an unprecedented variety in cold treats throughout the decade.

The following mass-production of the Popsicle and other novelties would not have been possible without advancements in the freezing and refrigeration capabilities of the frozen treat industry. In his dissertation titled *Industrialization of Food Processing in the United States, 1860-1960*, author Mark W. Wilde explored the attitudes towards new freezing methods and cold storage in the early decades of the twentieth centuries. He writes, “During the 1920s, interest in quick-freezing techniques mounted, as did freezing activity in general. A good deal of this enthusiasm is owed to cold storage programs initiated during World War One. Clad in patriotism, cold storage gained respectability as a method of food preservation.”63 The advancements in freezing and refrigeration were key in the construction of ice cream as a modern food, and one consumed nationally.

The achievements in pasteurization and refrigeration as outlined in T.R. Pirtle’s *History of the Dairy Industry* also utilized boosted the milk and ice cream industries. Though pasteurization began in the very end of the 19th century, it became more popular and had a major impact on the milk supply by the first decades of the 20th century. Pirtle writes, “These things insure the public against the purchase of milk and cream in the large cities that is anything but safe for human consumption.”64 These new accomplishments in the sanitation and standardization of these industries created a

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64 Pirtle, 90.
conducive environment for ice cream consumption to flourish. Pirtle continues on in this sentiment, as he notes, “These [advancements], as can readily be seen, would be absolutely impossible without the aid of modern machinery at every turn of the road.” Not only did modern machinery prove to be key for the production of new novelty products, but was instrumental in the crucial first steps of ice cream production through a focus on the quality and safety of ingredients.

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65 Pirtle, 91.
A 1921 advertisement for another Philadelphia-based company revealed the complex relationship between the ice cream industry and the definitions of modernity. This advertisement combines texts and pictures to implore the consumer to purchase ice cream from Abbotts Ice Cream and Alderney Dairies, Inc. In his work *Advertising the American Dream*, author Roland Marchand explores the different connotations of
modernity. While advertisers and historians alike typically use the term “modern” in the sense of innovate and new, Marchand claims that, “‘Modern’ also means ‘characteristic of the present time, or time not long past.’” Thus, an interpretation of this print advertisement in the context he describes revealed ice cream as a modern product: as a contemporary food that revealed the current attitudes and beliefs. The advertisers tapped into the present concern about the cleanliness and commercialization of the product, with the advertisement’s text, “Spotlessly clean and modern ice cream plant.” In light of the new technology and manufacturing processes, the company assured its consumers that Abbotts Ice cream still adhered to strict sanitation standards. The adjectives found in the text attest to the advertisers’ desire to appeal to what consumers in the 1920s valued, and what qualities they may have looked for when considering the purchase of a product.

But other portions of the text in the advertisement for Abbotts fit neatly in the more popular concept of modernity. In regards to the manufacturing and packaging of the food, the copy of the advertisement claimed the ice cream was, “Packed and sealed into pint and quart cartons, directly from the freezer, untouched by hand.” Through the copy, advertisers wanted to appeal directly to the new interests in industrialization and innovation that characterized the postwar American lifestyle. In the book titled *Edsels, Luckies & Frigidaires*, author Robert Atwan explores the introduction of packaging in a food’s ascension to popularity. Atwan notes:

> As industrial engineers learned to mass-produce containers, advertising agents learned the promotional value of the brand-name package. The idea of the convenient, sanitary “package” – can, bottle, jar, or box – was a

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66 Marchand, 9.
marketing development that would in time totally transform selling strategies by providing that raw goods could be profitably turned into readily identifiable, standardized products.\(^\text{67}\)

The claims made by Abbotts and the advertisers – as well as those made by the ice cream industry as a whole – exemplify Atwan’s argument. This advertisement not only emphasized sanitation and packaging, but the new technology utilized by the ice cream industry transformed milk, a raw good with a past history of un?popularity, in the standardized, modern product of ice cream. The increasing instances of standardization can be gleaned from the text of the advertisement. The notion of a product “untouched by hand” only completes the shift of ice cream from the farm stand to the factory, and indicated the industrialization American consumers and their industries experienced in this decade. Finally, the advertisement for Abbotts illustrated another facet of Atwan’s claim. The text of the advertisement reminded consumers “Abbotts [was] the only ice cream in Philadelphia sold in this new, convenient way.” In the emphasis on the exclusivity of Abbotts’ manufacturing, the company began develop itself a brand, that would be, as Atwan explained, readily identifiable. Abbotts represented the growth of ice cream into a modern food, as the company endeavored to create a brand out of new technology and standardization.


At the very onset of the decade, the *Evening Public Ledger* published this advertisement for the Supplee-Wills-Jones Milk Company. The company, which remained a Philadelphia staple for the remainder of the decade, utilized a variety of other advertising tactics, as seen in previous chapters. This advertisement, however, focuses...
primarily on modernity. Similar to the promotional material for Abbotts, this print advertisement explores the different facets of modernity. Illustrations surround the text in this large print advertisement, while the top image depicts a large – but modern – farm, complete with rolling hills, forests, and a herd of cows. Most likely, the advertisers chose to include this image as a reference to the traditional and historical foundation of the ice cream industry, as they combined the consumer’s nostalgia with a desire for modernity.

In Advertising the American Dream, Roland Marchand explains the use of nostalgia in advertisements for a so-called “modern” product. He writes, “In the 1920s and 1930s, as in several previous eras, the attitudes, fashions, modes of artistic expression, and fads in popular psychology that were ‘characteristic of the present’ were as likely to contradict the process of economic and industrial modernization as to reinforce it.”68 The inclusion of an illustration of bucolic farm juxtaposed with text that proclaimed modern manufacturing facilities exemplifies the paradox Marchand proposes. Though the text, which promised, “The better flavor is there every day because of the uniform, standard, sanitary methods of production,” highlights the industrialization of modern ice cream in the 1920s, the mental connection to the farm was unavoidable to the consumer. As suggested by Marchand, the Supplee Company and its advertisers took advantage of the consumer’s possible desire to turn away from what was modern – and even exploited this nostalgia.

To historian Katherine J. Parkin, nostalgia maintained a strong presence in advertisements supposedly targeted towards the modern consumer in the early twentieth century. In Food is Love, she writes, “Advertisers wanted consumers to believe that their

68 Marchand, 9.
food products had the ability to create connections and continuity between the perceived constancy of the past and the chaos of the present.\textsuperscript{69} This especially held true as consumers in the postwar era dealt with enormous social and economic changes throughout the decade. This interest in nostalgia as described by Parkin is seen further in the advertisement’s text. The copy stated that Supplee ice cream was “A product that has behind it a long-established prestige for quality and character.” In the point of view of the advertiser, the emphasis on tradition deemed the product reliable, but also demonstrated how the industry has grown along with the consumer.

The advertisers utilized the three smaller images on the right hand side of the advertisement to demonstrate how ice cream fit into the modern American lifestyle. Development of a thriving consumer culture became one of the most notable changes of the 1920s. In his book \textit{Flapper}, author Joshua Zeitz explains the fledgling role of leisure, and how it affected the purchases made at this time. He believes:

\begin{quote}
Instead, many Americans began to define themselves not through their jobs, but by turning to other outlets like leisure and consumption. This required the creation of a new ethics, one that legitimated rather than scorned the pursuit of pleasure. […] But in order to \textit{sell} these items, they needed to persuade a nation raised on the values of thrift and self-denial to complete a 180-degree turn and embrace the principles of pleasure and self-fulfillment.\textsuperscript{70}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{69} Katherine J. Parkin, \textit{Food is Love} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 44.

\textsuperscript{70} Zeitz, 66.
This newfound emphasis on leisure, as explained by Zeitz, can be seen in the lower two images of the advertisement. The middle image depicts a large Supplee delivery truck, which advertisers used to imply that a trip to the store to purchase the product is no longer even necessary. A loyal customer of Supplee, according to the advertisement, may need to spend less time on tasks like shopping, and more time on leisure. The lower image took a different twist on leisure, as the text described the illustration as, “One of the shops right around the corner.” The inclusion of this image argued that a trip to the storefront in Philadelphia could become a treat in order to purchase ice cream for one’s family. An opening of an urban shop also reinforced the advertisers’ desire to promote ice cream as a modern food as opposed to a local or handmade product. Ice cream is not only produced in a mechanical, factory environment (seen in the first small image of the freezing room), but now it was no longer restricted to the farm. Overall, this advertisement promoted a modern food produced in brand new industrialized settings, with a specific, modern consumer in mind.
With the introduction of novelties such as popsicles and ice cream suckers came other innovations in the ice cream field. An advertisement that hailed from American Fork, Utah, gave mention of the Eskimo Pie as early as 1922. The advertisement,
produced by the Mutual Creamery Company, relied solely on text to deliver the specifics of this innovative new product to the potential consumer. In his essay “The Frozen Sucker War,” Moak explored the beginnings of novelties such as the Eskimo Pie. He writes, “One retailer declared "although nobody knew it until it happened, it seems that everybody in these United States was waiting for someone to come along and invent a bar of ice cream coated with sweet chocolate." The body of this text revealed information in terms of how, according to the advertiser, the ice cream industry began to reach new levels in popularity, as described by Moak, through the distribution of this novelty. The advertisement only further exemplifies Moak’s claims about the consumer’s anticipation of a novelty like this: at the bottom of the advertisement, the company neatly summed up this notion in their claim that, “Everybody, Everywhere, Will Know and Eat Eskimo Pie.”

In continuation, the advertiser then chose to address ice cream dealers directly. In a clear attempt of production promotion to increase distribution and sales, the advertisement claimed, “Eskimo Pies are being sold by thousands in every city in the United States. Eskimo Pie is now a national dish.” This advertisement presents the Eskimo Pie as a modern product in two ways. First, according to the advertisement, this product provided the final push to truly making ice cream a universal dessert loved by all. It was not uncommon to claim that ice cream captured the desire of men, women, and children, but this particular advertisement targeted the invention of the novelty as the tipping point, enjoyed everywhere across the country. In an article published in a 1929 edition of *The New York Times*, author Eunice Fuller Barnard declares ice cream a

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71 Moak, 1.
transformed product. She writes, “As for ice cream, it has lost its character as the aristocrat of American desserts, to be eaten especially on Sundays and holidays, and has become a day-in and day-out staple.”72 The advertisers asserted that not only could a consumer ask for the product by name, but also they could ask for the product by name in any city in the nation, regardless of social status or time of year. The advertisers painted ice cream and its assorted novelties as a modern food.

Secondly, the Eskimo Pie represented a modern product, as claimed by its advertisers, because of its required technological innovation. Ice cream had maintained a presence as a frozen dessert even prior to the turn of the twentieth century, but the Eskimo Pie exemplified the effects of an invention upon an industry. In Edsels, Luckies & Frigidaires, Atwan explains the technological shift of the 1920s that lent itself to both invention and innovation. He believes:

One way to view the changes in America’s economy, culture, and social relations is through the history of inventions. And the advertisements for these inventions reveal how ingenuity and enterprise helped assemble a loosely confederated republic into an enormously powerful industrial democracy. These ads document the historic shift in the late nineteenth century from individual attempts to improve methods of production to corporate preoccupation with product technology. […] By the end of the

first few decades of the twentieth century, mass production itself had become one of the principal causes of invention.\textsuperscript{73} The Eskimo Pie itself as well as its advertisements, embodies the argument set forth by Atwan. The novelty’s creation drew from all aspects of modernity in the decade, from mass-production and refrigeration, to brand licensing and nationwide distribution. The advertisement above simultaneously promoted the Eskimo Pie, while revealing how the industry changed and appealed to modernity throughout the 1920s.

According to the advertisements and advertisers associated with the ice cream industry presented the product and its related novelties as a modern food that meshed seamlessly into the lifestyle and attitude of the consumer of the 1920s. After World War I, the economy and culture shifted drastically, which primed consumers to hone in on and purchase modern goods. As a result of the rise of mass-production, industrialization, and an overall commercialization that fostered competition and the development of brand names, ice cream began to find a place in the cultural consumer landscape. Certainly, the creation of an environment predisposed towards consumption proved to be financially beneficial for a variety of industries. But ice cream and its advertisers relentlessly promoted the dessert as modern, from its emphasis on technology and production, to its appeals towards a family interested in leisure and convenience. Because advertisers capitalized on the contemporary consumers’ desire to attain the novel and new, ice cream and its newly modernized industry and reputation, began to flourish.

\textsuperscript{73} Atwan, 113.
Conclusion

The ice cream industry’s print advertisements from the 1920s presented complex appeals in order to increase the sales and popularity of the industry. The main responsibility of “average” housewife of the time period centered upon the maintenance of the home, family, and household budget. Thus, the industry targeted the middle-class female consumer, and honed in on her desires, beliefs and concerns, for both herself and her family. The inclusion of children in print advertisements gave the industry the ability to market ice cream as product enjoy by all – even children – all while appealing to the parents’ wallets through imagery. Though children did not yet harness consumer purchasing power of their own, the industry began to recognize kids as customers of the future. Finally, the advertisers of the industry recognized the market created by the social and cultural upheaval of the middle-class consumer in the postwar decade. Ice cream became an ideal modern product, boosted by mass production, new technology, and a growing reputation as a convenience food, comfortable in any setting. The democratization of the product finally reached its peak by the 1920s, as its variety in price, packaging, and flavor invited all customers regardless of socioeconomic status. Aspects of the appeals utilized by the advertisers behind the ice cream industry crafted a spot for the product in the cultural and consumer landscape of American which the food maintained into the twenty-first century.
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Images

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Figure 14. Abbotts Ice Cream. Advertisement. *Evening Public Ledger*


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ACADEMIC VITA of Lydia Hawthorne Scott

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Master of Urban Planning candidate, Harvard University, May 2014
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Dean’s List, 2008 – 2012
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