

‘The Strength of Weak Ties’ Then and Now, Show Me Your Kale-Face, R.I.P. to Labels ‘Millennial’ and ‘Gen Z,’ and More

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Oh, kale no!

When I (Evan) was a kid, about five or so, I loved Popeye—the cartoon sailor man with ridiculously large forearms and a passion for spinach. In a violation of unspoken kid law, I loved spinach too. My brother Max was around one at the time, and I convinced my mom he needed to get on the Popeye diet. My mom dutifully bought a jar of the green stuff. As the spoon-turned-airplane made its approach, my brother’s face contorted, it did not have permission to land. It was the only food my brother spit out as a baby.

Max would empathize with the participants of a recent study that explored the taste of leafy greens, albeit they were a bit younger. Recently, a team of scientists wondered how and whether fetuses near their due date, between 32 and 36 weeks, experience taste. To figure it out, they exposed fetuses to the flavor of either carrots or kale, via a pill taken by the mother. Then, they used an ultrasound to observe the real-time facial reactions of the fetuses.

Certain combinations of these facial movements were of particular interest—they combined to form a “cry-face” or a “laughter-face.” If you’ve ever eaten carrots or kale, you can probably guess which caused which. They found that fetuses exposed to kale made a “cry-face” more frequently than those exposed to carrots or to nothing, whereas those exposed to carrots were the most likely to make “laughter-face.”

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