

FAST FOOD FRENZY:

**An Examination of the Industry's Success
and its Toll on America**

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PREFACE

I have always dreaded speaking in public, no matter who my audience was. When I chose to write my final paper on the fast food industry for my American Character class, the preparation for my presentation sparked enthusiasm that I had never experienced. When the day came for me to present my findings to the class, I could not wait to do so and was even disappointed that I was unable to go first. I was very much emotionally involved during my presentation and decided at that moment that I had finally found something I was passionate about. Since I had only touched the surface of the fast food industry at that point, I decided to take my enthusiasm for the topic to a thesis project.

I used mainly books and movies to do my research for this thesis. Internet resources and fast food restaurant menus were helpful as well. I discovered that the fast food industry is *far* more complicated than just being processed, unhealthy food; it affects so much more than just people's physical health. On the other hand, I *have* become slightly less critical of the industry and have a better comprehension of *why* people like it so much. I realized that I am in the iron cage and should act more on what I believe is right. If I could just present my findings to family and friends and convince them to not eat fast food, I would feel as if I have made a tiny difference. I do not think fast food will ever go away. I have hope, however, that the food will become healthier and the industry more ethical. I believe that this is possible and will do what I can to make it so. I will be an advocate.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an in-depth study of America's fast food industry. It explores changes in the American lifestyle that result from fast food and weighs the conveniences and consequences of that life. Fast food history reveals an extensive climb to the success and popularity presently attached to it. The industry is so powerful that it is a widely-held idea that American food *is* fast food. There are innumerable conveniences that fast food offers and various rationalizations for its appeal. Nevertheless, the consequences refute all of those conveniences and more. There are grave risks associated with the industry for consumers, employees, and society of which many are ignorant. The key to fighting the industry lies in education and awareness. People *are* slowly moving away from fast food and toward healthier living. Hopefully, advocacy against fast food will make people attentive of the consequences and empower them to make better choices.

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To Jan, it is because of your class that I became so involved with the fast food industry in the first place. Your praise and comments just from that project enabled me to run with the idea and turn it into a much more in-depth examination. I knew that, with you as my reader, I would really produce my best work and that you would get it out of me within all of the drafts. I am now also *extremely* wary of using the word “the” when I write because of you. From the awareness of that word alone, my drafts tightened so much!

To Heather, thank you so much for George Ritzer’s books and meeting with me before I left Michigan. You have made me a much better writer by showing me how much I would repeat myself and have also made me realize the importance of properly citing sources. The way you broke up my chapters into sections truly helped me become aware of the organization of the paper and I believe that my thesis is unquestionably stronger because of this.

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I. FAST FOOD'S EFFECTS ON THE AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

The American lifestyle is an inevitably multifaceted idea that is constantly changing in response to current events, economic issues, technological advances, nutrition, health concerns, and more. Marketing, for example, is especially influential in telling consumers how they should live, what they need, and what other styles of living will develop in the future. As businesses grow and marketing methods advance, the manner in which American people live adjusts accordingly and sets the path for more developments to fit the new way of life. The fast food industry has taken its place in history to contribute to the shifting American lifestyle. It has provided incredible conveniences for people and models of operation that were essential for other industries' advancements. Under more careful examination, however, one sees that the industry is ultimately quite harmful in the long term, and should be strictly regulated to make Americans less dependent on such food.

Food has always been a key signifier of what cultures value in life. The preparation, ingredients, and rituals that revolve around the process of consumption are all fundamental in the examination of any group of people because what people choose to eat can reveal where their priorities lie and what sort of lifestyle they have. The fast food industry has played and continues to play a pivotal role in the development of American life. Its innumerable features manifest through events, archetypes, individuals, and so on. Through its billions of prospective consumers, it has produced an extensive range of contrasting aspects that define the American character, such as healthy lifestyle vs.

convenience, ethical workplace vs. exploitation, and appropriate marketing vs. brainwashing. The fast food industry has gained a reputation for being convenient, inexpensive, and tasty. With these attributes, it has developed a worldwide fan base. Still, people are turning away from the industry as more attention is brought to the health risks and its manipulation of the market. Whether fast food continues as a mainstay, it has surely defined the American way of life and contributed to its constantly-changing culture.

The fast food industry has undoubtedly received universal attention throughout its history (which is evident from its success), and despite its negative connotations, it continues to thrive. Fast food has made the task of eating convenient for many Americans. Before the industry came to be, people were restricted in how they could satisfy their hunger because of the length of time required to cook and prepare a meal. People now have more convenient options because of the availability of fast food. Additionally, they can choose among a variety of cuisines, as fast food comes in the form of American, Italian, and Mexican dishes, to name a few. The fast food industry has provided ways for people to shorten the time required to make and consume meals while being especially ideal for those in automobiles. The food is tasty, inexpensive, and fast. This emphasis on speed fits perfectly into contemporary American life, which, due to societal and technological advances, has sped up the process by which everything is done. Fast food has contributed to this concept of a rapid lifestyle by making food readily available.

The ways that fast food is made so conveniently accessible are at the core of fast food's importance in America. The direct relationship between fast food and automobile industries, for instance, is an American trait. From the start, fast food restaurants had the new mode of transportation in mind when choosing their locations and designing their operations, placing themselves among main roads and along freeways so that they were easily visible. Restaurants' signs and advertisements are large, bright, and written to be absorbed without difficulty by people traveling at high speeds on the freeway. The drive-thru grants easy access to customers who prefer to keep their engines running. By making themselves so accessible for vehicles, people can integrate fast food into their daily lives with minimal effort. The practice of locating themselves along heavy-traffic roads and close to highway exits with visible signs and drive-thru windows is still essential to the industry's popularity today.

In addition to the convenience of location, fast food is tasty and cheap. The aroma of the food can be rather alluring, as a result of the flavor industry's work for processed food (Schlosser 124). The prices of menu items are often just as enticing and many restaurants have their own version of budget or value menus to make them even less expensive. The combination of deliciousness and inexpensiveness makes fast food available to people of virtually all levels of wealth. Its savoring flavors and affordability make it an American food in which people take pleasure.

It has become an American normality to provide quick services (such as one-hour photo centers and drive-through banking windows) and that has

consequently influenced the way many American businesses operate. The fast food industry has become a key model for the standardization of function and swiftness to which Americans are partial. Because restaurants have a constant demand for meat, for example, the meatpacking industries must consequently keep up with the pace of fast food. The popularity of fast food determines the success of the other industries involved.

The industry has notably influenced more than just related businesses, however. “McDonaldization,” a term coined by sociologist George Ritzer, is “the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world” (2004:1). The impact of McDonaldization is clear from the operation of the fast food industry, which “from uniformity of design, to extreme routinization of labour, to provision of standardized experiences as well as standardized products – has been replicated or adapted in other industries, significantly reshaping the American physical and social landscape” (Leidner 27). These adjustments are evident in the way an assortment of companies, such as financial institutions and pharmacies, function. Other industries have observed the success and appeal of the fast food industry and now advertise their speedy service while benefiting from the swift lifestyle of the Americans to which they cater. Through its own success, fast food has endorsed consumers’ idea of rapid service.

The fast food industry has become so admired by other businesses and appreciated by consumers that it was not enough to try a simple duplication of its methods and foods, as people publish their ideas of how to become part of the

industry's triumph. People have taken the success of the fast food industry and written about it in their own attempts to capitalize on its business. Books have been written that explain how to run a successful fast food franchise for individuals interested in having a small slice of fast food profit. There are also books that are meant to teach how to reproduce one's favorite fast food items. These sorts of writings embrace the industry and explain how to make the best of it.

Despite its appeal, the fast food industry has a significant list of faults. Studying these faults is crucial to achieve an overall understanding of fast food in America because they cut deeply into American ethics and morality. Employees work under less than ideal conditions that fail to demonstrate adequate appreciation of labor (concerning salary, benefits, and opportunities for advancement). Related industries (such as meat factories) are pressured to keep up with the demand of the fast food restaurants and enforce impractical and often dangerous standards for their workers. As it is partially responsible for the rise in obesity among Americans, fast food can cause excruciating damage to consumers' health and the overall condition of society. Regardless of how much time a person can gain by eating fast food, the after-effects that are not immediately visible can drastically reduce the lifespan of an individual (Schlosser 241). A great deal of information is available in the forms of books, advertisements, movies, and apparel, on the critical end of the fast food spectrum. Extensive research has been done by sociologists and researchers such as Eric Schlosser and Morgan Spurlock that provides the facts and dangers of fast food

and explains how the industry gives people short-term fulfillments that are so alluring that people are easily ignorant of or simply do not care about the more costly long-term consequences.

While the fast food industry has some notable characteristics that make it depraved, it has contributed immensely to the ways of American life, which is evident in people's approval. Its popularity and, for many, its essentiality have been reinforced by the American people. Indeed, the growth and history of the fast food industry coincide with development of the American, for good and bad. Still, it is beneficial that people begin to imagine life without a fast food restaurant on every corner. There are fast food conveniences that make the food appealing, but these pleasures do not outweigh the long-term damage done to everyone involved in the industry (this includes customers, employees, employers, and factories). Ultimately, the American society and, in fact, the world would be better off (mentally and physically) without fast food and should take measures to ensure such a future. Realistically, it may take many decades to fully remove fast food from American culture. The damage it has caused regarding health and education will never be undone, for it has left imprints on American life. Still, it would be more detrimental to remain ignorant of the industry's effects on society than to start acting now. Upon educating themselves on the matter, people can take action against the fast food industry. If enough people make the effort to gain knowledge about fast food's negative connotations, perhaps it will speed up the process of eliminating the industry altogether to make Americans a healthier people.

II. FAST FOOD IN THE MAKING – THE HISTORY

The concept of an eatery not linked to any other business emerged in America with the establishment of coffee houses in the late 1700s. Coffee houses were small shops that resulted from interest in English practices. By the end of the century, restaurants made their way to America. Jullien's Restarator opened in Boston in 1794 with a "service à la française" approach, which meant that customers were seated at a table with a shared meal before them. Restaurants began to sprout quickly throughout America following Jullien's Restarator. Initially, they maintained the standard approach of sharing food among customers; eventually, "service à la russe," the style in which people are served individual meals already put together, became popular and the norm. Dining establishments gained recognition for their intimate atmosphere between employees and customers. Owners and operators made sure to create a personal dining experience for their guests. In addition to the restaurants, which were primarily dinner restaurants, there were saloons that served as "another place where a light meal could be obtained, at least at noontime" (Jakle and Sculle 21).

Eugene Roussel is credited with beginning the soda fountain trend in 1839. This concept was the inspiration for people to serve food quickly and conveniently to customers. Many latched on to Roussel's idea and soon, stores throughout the United States were selling beverages to go. Along with these drinks, snack-like foods that mainly consisted of ice cream desserts were offered and proved to be popular among shoppers. But businesses realized that their profit on ice cream and other frozen desserts would plummet during colder times

of the year and made up for their anticipated deficits by adding foods such as sandwiches and soups that could still be categorized as quick and convenient.

Almost fifty years after the establishment of the soda fountain, the Exchange Buffet opened its doors to the public. On September 4, 1885, the first self service restaurant opened in New York City. It was the initial step toward the fast food restaurant of today. The cafeteria operated in the same way a factory assembly line would; “customers pushed trays along elongated counters, putting together their own meals as they moved along a cafeteria line” (Jakle and Sculle 32). Customers consisted primarily of males who ate standing up in the absence of tables and seats. The practice of catering solely to men was a popular one of the time, and it extended beyond the customers to the employees as well. The first of its kind, the Exchange Buffet became increasingly popular and was imitated with cafeteria variations throughout the country. Some variations of the Exchange Buffet targeted consumers and employees of certain ethnicities, put in tables and chairs to be more restaurant-based, and enhanced their degree of personal service. As a result of their success, cafeterias eventually led to the idea of the automat.

The first Automat restaurant was opened in Philadelphia by Joseph Horn and Frank Hardart in 1912. Automats were on the other end of the spectrum from diners. They were extremely impersonal institutions that consisted of food that was guarded by glass windows. Customers were given access to the food only when money was inserted into coin slots. This was the beginning of the vending

machine idea. People enjoyed the convenience of the structure; as a result of the food system's popularity, more Automats opened throughout the country.

Even with their popularity, Automats did not last. Because they had no regulations concerning the length of people's stays, people (customers and non-customers) began to monopolize tables and turn the eateries into places for social gatherings, discouraging new customers from entering (Ritzer 117). This lack of regulation was a primary contributor to the downfall of Automats. When the modern fast food industry came to be, it took the flaws of Automats and devised ways to limit how much time customers spend at a restaurant. With the introduction of fast food restaurants with drive-thrus, the cafeterias' and Automats' success dwindled and now only a few exist exclusively in other countries.

Cafeterias and Automats maintained the distinctions between cultural foods among Americans that was set in place upon immigrants' arrival. In "Letters from an American Farmer," written in 1782, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur documented that immigrants from Europe intended to erase everything from their old lives upon moving to America as a result of their troubled pasts (Crèvecoeur 303). They took with them a number of their old ethnic prejudices and manners but also worked to create new traditions. Although everyone identified themselves as American, their diets generally consisted of foods from their home country. No true American food was established until the fast food industry emerged.

The process of identifying an American food began with the popularity of the hot dog in 1901; this concept fell apart with the meat scare and negative publicity of poor sanitation caused by Upton Sinclair's The Jungle, written in 1906. Despite its deceleration in popularity, the temporary hot dog craze successfully made way for Coca Cola to become America's national drink, as they were generally sold together. While the hot dog faded from the American diet, Coca Cola stayed. After the national drink was determined, White Castle popularized the hamburger and is acclaimed for "persuading the public that hamburgers were an acceptable mainstream food and then marketing them to the entire nation" (Hogan 21). As other fast food restaurants were established, the hamburger only increased in popularity. It was famous for being a cheap and convenient food; these traits attracted white and blue collar workers who were normally restricted by time, distance, and money from foods served in more expensive places (Jakle and Sculle 113). The burger "became widely popular at the very time Americans were severely divided along geographic, social, and ethnic lines" (Jakle and Sculle 99) and created what is now considered standard American food. This brought immigrants closer together and helped to soften the division among the ethnic groups, as they all embraced the American hamburger. Since then, Americans have reinforced the impression that the American meal consists of a hamburger and a cola beverage.

Fast food, regardless of the type, is considered an elemental part of American culture. The hamburger, however, gained fame for being America's food because of its rapid availability. Indeed, burgers stand for what exactly the

world thinks is fast food in America. Although fast food pizza restaurants and Mexican restaurants are successful, the hamburger trade stands as the ultimate symbol of American food, as demonstrated by its prominence in just the fast food industry alone. Mention of McDonald's proves this, as the fast food burger restaurant was chosen because of its global popularity for Morgan Spurlock's 2004 documentary Super Size Me about the health risks of fast food. Due to the intense competition among the countless fast food burger restaurants (also known as the "burger wars"), restaurants came and failed accordingly. As chains have tweaked and improvised their methods of operation to compete in the burger wars, entrepreneurs have developed and improved ways of speedier, but still customer-oriented, service. The other cuisines of the industry have naturally followed suit.

INDIVIDUAL CHAINS – FORTUNES AND FAULTS

Many people have tried their luck in the fast food industry and a large number of them have failed. Due to the extreme competition, it is tough for restaurants to convince people that their food is better than others'. Numerous and more pressing issues, such as economic conditions and marketing strategies, must be considered. Because some things are out of restaurants' control, it is vital that they make proper decisions regarding the things they *can* control. Regardless of success or failure, certain fast food chains are worth discussion because of their influence on the industry. They have helped pave the path to success with their own examples of what to do and what to avoid.

White Castle, a restaurant established in 1921 by Edgar Waldo Ingram and Walter Anderson, is credited not only with making hamburgers a staple American food but with being the first standard fast food restaurant to open. At the time, it faced the challenge of comforting people after the concerns of the meat-packing industry were voiced in Sinclair's novel. It succeeded in overcoming this health obstacle with suitable effort. The locations were built so that customers could see the process by which their orders were prepared. In order to promote cleanliness and sanitation, the restaurant's interiors (and sometimes exteriors) were painted white while the staff wore white. Ingram and Anderson were very careful with the way their business was operated. They started slowly, moving at a conservative and cautious pace. They opened more locations only when they had all funds available. This method of expansion was a result of thorough research and a complete understanding of the possible risks and failures. The owners proceeded only when they were sure of themselves and determined that they had a greater chance of success than failure. Furthermore, it was a smart technique financially because they were able to stay out of debt. The extra money was then awarded to the employees as deserved, which resulted in content workers. This manner of guarded operation resulted in a steady building of what was to become a very successful and profitable business, which other people and restaurants were naturally bound to imitate.

As late as White Castle's establishment, diners were still a dominantly male domain. White Castle understood that the food industry was losing profit by excluding a large chunk of society and focusing solely on male clientele; in order

to eliminate this problem, it “set out after the female market at a time when many women still regarded diners as alien, male-dominated places” (Jakle and Sculle 102). In addition to its expansion of clientele, the restaurant quickly developed a large fan base with its low prices and signature patties. It is still a part of the fast food industry today, which demonstrates that its place in “popular culture has much to do with its traditional business stance combined with its simple cuisine, an antidote to the perception of much of contemporary American life as needlessly complex and out-grown of human scale” (Jakle and Sculle 100).

The popularity of the hamburger made by White Castle brought intense competition from newly emerging businesses. Other burger restaurants sprouted nation-wide within just a few years of White Castle’s initial establishment. Each restaurant strived to distinguish itself from all of the others through variety in the menu, architectural appeal, catchy names, and so forth. Among all of the chain hamburger restaurants that have come out of the hamburger mania, the only one to match and exceed White Castle’s dominance in popularity and profit is McDonald’s. The thirty-year gap between one dominant chain and another indicates a lack of extraordinary success for virtually all other chains. While many of the chains are still in operation today alongside the legendary White Castle and McDonald’s restaurants, there are also many that were unfortunate in maintaining their business profit and have shut down. It is important to study not only the successful venues but the failed ones as well to gain an understanding of what practices businesses tried fruitlessly.

Burger Chef, which was started in 1958, is one of many burger chains whose mistakes were helpful to other businesses' improvement. If success were measured by the number of a chain's restaurants, then Burger Chef was quick to reach it. But Burger Chef realized that its number of restaurants was not a realistic technique of measuring success. The constant overturn of executives made for a rocky foundation as well as a distortion of interests (business vs. personal enhancement). Burger Chef was eventually sold to the Hardee's chain and faded out completely as a result of the change of ownership as all restaurants were replaced by Hardee's restaurants. Regardless of its downfall, the chain is and was recognized for its swift service of food due to its installment of automatic production line-style food processors (Jakle and Sculle 120). Burger Chef is proof that quantity ultimately means nothing without strategy.

Hardee's was founded in 1960 and has taken steps to ensure success since then. By being "the first fast-food company to sell its stock on the open market and to utilize modular buildings" (Jakle and Sculle 123), the restaurant chain allowed for quick advancement for the business and its entrepreneurs. When Hardee's merged with the burger chain Sandy's, it acquired not only more locations but the knowledge and skills of Jack Laughery, who was responsible for steering the company toward more profitable methods and creating a more structured method of operation. This combination made Hardee's serious competition for other chains. While White Castle was first in its attempts to attract women into its restaurants, Hardee's took it a step further and entertained the general belief that women were more concerned with their weight and

preferred lighter, healthier meals than men. Consequently, Hardee's instilled a revised menu and method of advertisement by providing menu items that specifically targeted men and women as separate markets. For instance, it created salads that were designed to lure in women on diets and big, meaty burgers designed to attract the attention of men. This practice of targeting men and women separately is still prominent in fast food today.

The Jack in the Box restaurant originated in 1950 in California. During its growing years, it sought to establish itself among the vehicle-operating consumers and was, therefore, primarily a drive-through fast food chain. Eventually it expanded as a sit-down eatery. Whichever way customers chose to order their food (inside or through the drive-through window), Jack in the Box relied on visual reiteration to attract its clients by presenting drivers with its logo for several hundred yards before actually reaching the restaurant. This was an effective psychological tactic that brought customers into the store and whose success attracted not only hungry passers by but other restaurant chains as well.

Jack in the Box tried desperately to compete with what was the chain to beat at the time: the McDonald's powerhouse. It expanded its menu beyond burgers, modified its architectural structure, opened more restaurants, and vamped up its advertising practices. It did whatever it could to increase profit. Unfortunately, it was also all in vain. The restaurant was threatened with an irreversible loss of profit as a result of trying to accomplish too much. Its widely-publicized outbreak of E. coli bacteria in 1993 brought even graver effects, as many infected consumers (mostly children) were sent to hospitals (Schlosser

199). The restaurant eventually managed to come out of its E. coli outbreak and endorse a clean, safe self-image. It was also able to overcome its snowballing problems once it realized that its larger-than-manageable attempts were destroying the company as it was forced to reevaluate what measures were bringing profit down. The company took huge steps back that were larger than the ones it had taken forward to reach its ambitions. Now, due to a more realistic approach to operation, Jack in the Box has recovered and has learned to strive for practical goals that can make it profitable but are still within reach.

Burger King, which also originated in the 1950s, is second behind McDonald's in the quantity of stores in America. It has effectively enhanced its business opportunities and has been noticeably successful in the process. For instance, by gaining the rights to two very productive inventions that boosted traffic and sales, it had an advantage over its competitors: it successfully created a signature burger, the Whopper, and stood apart from other burger joints because it broiled its meat instead of frying it. Owners David Edgerton and James McLamore made sure that across the nation, their Burger King franchises were replicas of the original. Concerning operation and management, uniformity was maintained among the various locations. Despite its success, Burger King has had its pitfalls. After the thorough teachings of Edgerton and McLamore were delivered to the franchisees, there was no official follow-up with the restaurants to ensure that proper procedures were being carried out once training was completed. This resulted in a lack of uniformity among locations and these inconsistencies among Burger King eateries made it more difficult for customers

to identify and become familiar with the chain. Burger King also lost profit when its advertising strategies focused on the “burger wars” and made claims about itself and its competition that it was unable to back up.

R. David Thomas, the founder of the Wendy’s restaurant, joined the food industry at an early age at Kentucky Fried Chicken. A desire to create his own business came during his time as a Kentucky Fried Chicken employee: he “became frustrated with the long hours and prospect that [Kentucky Friend Chicken’s] restaurants would never achieve his standards for cleanliness, product quality, and disciplined labor” (Jakle and Sculle 127). This led him to take measures to establish his own ideal restaurant: Wendy’s. Wendy’s incorporated a mixture of operations that made the business more profitable and popular than other competing restaurants. It was particularly popular among young adults, a reputation that had not been achieved by any other hamburger chain before then (Jakle and Sculle 128). This was done by marketing techniques that were geared toward youthful customers. Wendy’s encountered a decrease in profit in the 1980s when Thomas retired and those who took over tried to accomplish more than they could (echoing the problems of Jack-in-the-Box). In due course, it pulled through this decline and managed to recover from its losses in the 1990s.

McDonald’s is the most successful and popular fast food restaurant today and in all of fast food history. According to Jakle and Sculle, “At every level of culture, McDonald’s is an astounding American success, having captured much of the world’s imagination” (Jakle and Sculle 139). This statement pertains to American people as consumers and as business people; thus the chain is truly

playing a pivotal role in American culture. The chain was founded in San Bernardino, California in 1940 by brothers Dick and Mac McDonald and slowly sprouted franchises throughout the States. In 1955, businessman Ray Kroc joined the team with his own franchised McDonald's restaurants and, in 1961, bought the chain from the McDonald brothers. Kroc's success has been so great that he is considered the founder of McDonald's. Unfortunately, with great success has come intense resistance. Because it is the most globally known restaurant of the fast food industry with the most money and, therefore, the most power, McDonald's has had to deal with countless attacks. Because it is the biggest force in the industry, people use the restaurant to make their arguments against the entire fast food institution.

FAST FOOD VARIETIES

Eventually, other sorts of fast food restaurants were established. The menus of all of these businesses broadened so that fast food restaurants revolved not only around hamburgers and fries, but pizzas, hotdogs, and burritos. By providing customers a selection of ethnic foods from which to choose, the businesses reach a greater clientele and cover more bases of food preferences. Corporations have under their umbrellas various cuisine-special restaurants so that they still profit as long as a customer chooses one of their restaurants. Yum! Brands, for example, is the parent company of Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell; therefore, if a customer chooses Taco Bell over the other two, Yum! still wins.

The pizza chains are an important part of the examination of fast food history because of the delivery service they provide. Domino's Pizza is responsible for launching the service in 1965 when it began to cater to college students who lived near the restaurant's location in Ypsilanti, Michigan. With its delivery service, the chain's initial goal was to allow students to continue their studies without leaving their dorm rooms to pick up food. Because of this, it strategically opened chains near places where they assumed people would not want to leave their homes. Its locations were strictly delivery or carry-out and provided seats only for customers waiting for their orders. As pizza delivery became a popular feature of the fast food industry, the big companies such as Domino's and Pizza Hut began doing whatever they could to beat out the competition. In 1984, Domino's created its guarantee to have deliveries executed within thirty minutes no matter what, a marketing move that made ordering from Domino's error-proof for customers, as they counted on the guarantee to receive their orders within that timeframe. This ultimately presented a grave dilemma for the company as delivery drivers were pressured to meet deadlines and were, consequently, accused of being reckless. Domino's responded by eliminating the time guarantee and replacing it with a guarantee of pizza delivered hot and fresh. In a New York Times article from 1993, journalist Michael Janofsky explained, "Marketing experts contend...that canceling the guarantee may send consumers to other pizza delivery companies." Even without the thirty-minute guarantee, however, Domino's has proven to be a strong competitor amongst fast food pizza chains.

Pizza Hut, the most successful fast food pizza restaurant, was founded in 1958 by Frank and Dan Carney. While the chain initially served as a dine-in restaurant, the success of the Domino's delivery or carry-out only service made Pizza Hut rethink its set-up. In 1986, Pizza Hut began delivering and now has locations that are strictly delivery or carry-out, following Domino's Pizza's lead. A key advantage that Pizza Hut has over other fast food pizza restaurants is the Personal Pan Pizza. With the introduction of its Personal Pan Pizza (an individual-sized pizza), Pizza Hut made pizza a fast food that could be eaten on an individual basis. This was especially appealing to customers with a craving for pizza on their lunch breaks. In conjunction with various menu items, the express locations (those that are delivery or carry-out only) have solidified business and secured Pizza Hut's spot as the reigning fast food pizza chain in the world.

RESTAURANT OPERATIONS

Fast food restaurants have devised ways to draw customers in quickly and get them out just as fast, partly due to the failure of the Automats that preceded them and partly because of societal and technological advancements (such as women in the workplace and drive-thru availability). They have been architecturally designed to attract people who are in the mind frame for something fast and who are traveling in vehicles. With this style, the restaurants profit from cutting labor costs and people gain convenience with the service. Additionally, restaurants have chosen their interiors carefully, to ensure that customers do not stay long. This is done by making colors clash, chairs uncomfortable, and so forth. This eliminates the problem that was faced by the Automats of people who

held up tables for too long. Furthermore, in concurrence with the rise of automobile popularity, there was a greater desire for restaurants that catered to the evolving society. People were keen on the idea of getting their food without exiting their cars and the industry did not hesitate to provide the drive-thru service. Many restaurants have two lanes for customers who opt to use the drive-thru to maximize productivity. By keeping labor costs down through the extensive use of the drive-thru and maintaining an inside atmosphere that provokes awkwardness, restaurants easily ensure that traffic is constantly moving.

When fast food restaurants first opened, owners seemed to be striving for the American dream. Most of the restaurants were privately owned small businesses; this made the establishments' profits more secure, and there were certainly no huge corporations that did everything for money. Now, there are more than 280,000 fast food restaurants in America alone. According to the authors of "Clustering of Fast-Food Restaurants Around Schools" from 2005, "over the past 3 decades, fast-food retail sales in the United States have soared 900%, from \$16.1 billion in 1975 to a projected \$153.1 billion in 2004." The business has only continued to grow. However, it is now struggling to maintain its domination. Because of the exposure of health risks associated with fast food, the industry must worry about people choosing to eat a more nutritional meal before stepping foot inside a fast food restaurant or pulling up to a drive-thru window. In response to the negative publicity, the fast food industry has modified its menus and advertising methods to conform to what customers want. Yet, this may not be enough.

III. THE POWERFUL APPEAL OF FAST FOOD

The fast food industry has become a phenomenon all across the globe and is hardly escapable in the modern world. It started with small eateries dispersed across the United States. In time, the restaurants grew more popular as they implemented advanced methods of production and operation, becoming a larger, more integral part of people's every-day lives. Restaurant advertisements are found in educational institutions, vacation magazines, the Olympic Games, in the media, and on highway signs, to name the most common places. The abundance of advertisements is proof that the industry has succeeded in reeling in consumers because to promote a product so intensely requires great revenue. Much of the earth's population knows what McDonald's is, whether individuals give the restaurant their business or not. In 2001 when Eric Schlosser was writing Fast Food Nation, McDonald's was responsible for opening an average of four restaurants *outside* the U.S. per day (229). It is impossible to pinpoint one particular aspect of the industry that is responsible for its success; because it is so complex, there is not one main thing that deserves credit for fast food's accomplishment. The appeal is multi-layered and demonstrative of the societal structure in both economic and cultural ways.

URGENCY and CONVENIENCE

Fast food has helped create a more rapid lifestyle (in comparison to the lifestyle preceding its introduction) among Americans. Time has become something of which people seem to not have enough. Alarm clocks were introduced in 1787 in America and put a technologically advanced regulation on

people's lives. More transportation options led to the speedup of life in the forms of trains and steamships at the beginning of the seventeenth century and fuel-driven automobiles in the early twentieth century. Vehicles gave people more free time as a result of the faster transportation they provided. However, instead of appreciating their newly acquired free time that could be spent with family or picking up new hobbies, people found more chores to do and errands to run. The extra time was filled with additional responsibilities that suddenly seemed to make people feel even more crunched for time. The introduction of fast food has done the same thing to the act of eating. As people are anxious to get meals quickly, they fail to appreciate each bite the way they might if they take more time.

Today, the pace of life has increased to one that would have probably been inconceivable to most people before the 1800s. The desire to complete tasks as quickly as possible has become an instrumental part of people's lives, from ordering fast food to paying for merchandise with the scan of a credit card; from making deposits and withdrawals outside of the bank to getting married in a drive-thru chapel. Parents have busy schedules that result in a large chunk of time spent driving between work, school, and home. Children are busy juggling schoolwork with innumerable extra-curricular activities that are offered. People are forced to keep up however they can. For those born into this speedier era, the only way of life they know is based on swiftly executing tasks in order to move on to the next.

The term “fast food” is self-explanatory concerning one of the industry’s key benefits to society. [McDonald’s is credited for encouraging acceptance of the word in American vocabulary as a result of its own advertising phrases (Jakle and Sculle 139)]. While matters such as transportation, chores, work, and extracurricular activities have encouraged a busy lifestyle, the industry has unquestionably taken advantage of the situation by catering to the needs of rushed individuals. People thrive on the swiftness of fast food service because it allows them to complete their orders within minutes rather than wait to be seated, served drinks, given several minutes to look over menus, wait for their orders to be cooked, and then finally to consume their meals. The industry “offers the best available way to get from being hungry to being full” (Ritzer 12). Fast food restaurants provide lobby areas complete with tables and benches on which to eat meals. Hence, people can receive their orders promptly and eat quickly. At many fast food locations, people are not even given the opportunity to leave the counter where their order is placed because their food is ready within seconds. It is not uncommon for another employee to place each ordered item on the tray beside the cashier’s register before the customer has paid. Speedy service is the foundation of “fast food” and a defining appeal of the industry.

FAMILY DYNAMICS

The fast food industry appeals to women for different reasons than to men. Family structures and dynamics have changed drastically over the twentieth century. Women have greater roles in the work force, leaving them less time in the homes, as a result of a demand of military jobs in the 1940s (Perl 73). From

the early 1900s to well into the century, women (more so white middle class than others) were commonly stay-at-home wives and mothers. They took care of household duties and prepared home-cooked meals on a regular basis. Eventually, women gained more access to employment opportunities so that it is now common for women to work outside the home just as much as their husbands (Schlosser 4). This has eliminated the presence of the readily-available-to-cook spouse. Depending on the complexity of the menu, dinner can take up to three hours to prepare and serve.

When parents come home from exhausting work days, they may just want to relax and spend time with their families instead of in the kitchen. Nevertheless, social structures have made it so that women are still expected to be the primary care-givers for their children. They still do most of the planning and preparation of meals despite forty-plus-hour work weeks (Hochschild and Machung 27). Furthermore, the divorce rate is high and there is an increase in single parenting, due to increases in childbirth outside of marriage. Consequently, there are a lot more single parents who do not have the advantage of another spouse's assistance in the preparation of meals. This is where fast food becomes convenient because it does away with spending most of the evening in the kitchen preparing dinner and offers single and busy parents more quality time with their children.

There are also many people who live alone. This could impose a necessity to eat the same food for more than one meal, depending on the size of the entrée. Because repetition in food and the thought of cooking every day for oneself are not so appealing, many people opt to eat out instead. For them, the difficulty with

cooking at home arises not from the challenge of cooking a meal but from the challenge of cooking for one person.

THE DRIVE-THRU

One way that the industry has become appealing to consumers is through its vehicular accessibility. Fast food restaurants began to cater to automobiles during the automotive boom by locating themselves conveniently alongside highways. They quickly expanded their catering to vehicles by introducing the drive-thru window. Because they can reduce the time they spend at the restaurant by doing business from their vehicles, customers who are pressed for time find great convenience in the drive-thru service. This is a pleasant alternative for those who would rather remain in their automobiles and listen to their choice of music than stand in line. Fast food restaurants have been architecturally designed to attract people who are traveling in vehicles and are in the mind frame for something fast. Thus, people find the service convenient while restaurants profit from cutting labor costs.

LESS KITCHEN TIME

Americans are always in search of ways to get things done quickly. There is a distinction between those people who are in a hurry and those who search for convenience merely because they do not want to cook. The characteristic of laziness is demonstrated not only in finding shortcuts but in avoiding activities that demand physical or mental work. Some could argue that the technological advances of American society are contributors to this lifestyle. For example, the invention of microwaves expands women's time to more easily attend school,

work for pay, and spend time with the family because they can quickly prepare meals. People who use microwaves cook and serve less well-rounded meals due to the abundant availability of processed foods for the microwave. The microwave, along with other devices that were created to make life easier, provides the chance to do more things. American people embrace anything that will make their lives easier and give them more opportunities to accomplish more.

The short cut to a quick meal is utilized by customers who would rather not make their own meals and who do things to make their lives easier. People have become accustomed to the fact that fast food restaurants are so easily accessible. It is not uncommon to see an assortment of chains within one mile of each other. This provides a variety of choices for the customer; one can get a burger, pizza, or taco, for instance, at a strip of fast food chains, allowing people time to do other things. People can simply drive down the street to fulfill their hunger needs. The customers who frequent fast food venues are used to relying on the fast food industry to provide meals. At some restaurants, family meals are included in the menu so that parents can easily pick them up on their way home from work. As a result of parents' preference not to cook, the exposure to fast food builds within the children who, in turn, become more susceptible to being frequent visitors later in life.

DELIVERY SERVICE

One major convenience in staying out of the kitchen for American people is delivery service. The popularizing of this feature resulted from Domino's Pizza's ambition to gain a fan base from a market that preferred to get food at

their doors. With delivery service, orders are placed by contacting the restaurant and providing information needed to complete the purchase (order, name, address, phone number, form of payment). This can be done in as little as two minutes. An estimated time of arrival is given to the customer and the food generally arrives at the doorstep within that timeframe. Certain places have promotions in which orders are free or a percentage is taken off the bill if the food is not received by the time promised. With these special offerings, waiting for the food to arrive is like a game for the customer, who watches the clock and is eager to get his or her food but perhaps also eager for the delivery person to be late in order to win the challenge and get a price reduction. This sort of campaigning is another way for restaurants to get business because customers will order and not be as disappointed, if their order takes longer than expected due to the discount they will receive.

Many factors can contribute to the decision to choose delivery over carry-out, such as if a customer has no mode of transportation, no babysitter, or must be at home for any other reason. Still, there are customers without such restrictions who opt for the delivery option. With delivery orders, it is assumed that the customer will pay gratuity to the delivery driver. The tip is usually more than the cost of the amount of gas used to pick up the food. For instance, the price of a large one-topping Stuffed Crust pizza, a single order of breadsticks, and a 2-liter bottle of soda from Pizza Hut including tax at 7.75% is \$21.52. If a customer has a car that drives twenty miles per gallon, gas is priced at \$4.00 per gallon, and the restaurant is 2.5 miles from home, the cost of gasoline to drive to and from Pizza

Hut would be \$1. The customer should allow at least ten minutes for the entire trip to be executed. Additionally, the customer must watch the time and momentarily stop whatever he or she is doing to go to the restaurant. If the customer chooses the delivery option rather than carry-out, then at a rate of fifteen percent of the total bill, he or she would tip the delivery driver \$3.23. This is \$2.23 more than the cost to choose carry-out; however, this option takes a lot less time out of the customer's schedule. In this case, people would rather pay more so they are not bothered with leaving the comfort of their homes to get their food than make the trip and save money on tipping. Under these circumstances, customers' time not just outside of the kitchen but outside of the restaurant is more valuable than money. This is no doubt another illustration of fast food's appeal. Some places have even incorporated order placing online. For example, one can go to Pizza Hut's website (www.pizzahut.com) and place the order without having to leave the home *or* pick up the phone. The site stores previously placed orders as well, making it easy for customers who tend to have repeat orders. The simple method of delivery removes almost all of the work it takes to acquire food: there is no food to prepare and no dishes to wash. People pay for this convenience. In collaboration with the online order placement service, the delivery service can be some people's dream come true.

COMFORT IN FAMILIAR FOODS

With regards to many aspects of life, people find comfort in familiarity. Obviously, there are degrees of familiarity that warrant discussion. For example, a woman may decide to purchase shoes exclusively from a particular maker

because she knows that they will fit and she knows what to expect. Another example is a man who stays in a relationship when the love is already gone because he would rather be with a person he knows and with whom he is familiar than put himself back out in the dating world. While the former illustrates a positive effect of staying within the boundaries of what is familiar, the latter demonstrates how limiting oneself to what is familiar can hold a person back. The preference for and move away from what is familiar can be applied to many parts of life, and the fast food industry is no exception.

When people choose to expand their horizons and experience new foods, they can expose themselves to new ethnic cuisines not previously experienced, or, for example, take a smaller risk (but a risk nonetheless) by choosing a non-chain restaurant of a food type with which one is already familiar. By being receptive to other foods, one achieves an awareness and impression of the cultural practices of others through the way the food is chosen, prepared, and served. Perhaps for some, the experience of trying something new is worth the money and whatever other hardships may come from the food (if one's stomach is not prepared for such different cuisine, for instance). Still, the process of experimenting with new and unfamiliar territory is not always favored. Because everyone has his or her own preferences, there will be people who are absolutely comfortable *not* exposing themselves to new things. There are many who would rather not take the chance for a variety of personal reasons.

One fundamental aspect of fast food's appeal addresses the consumers just mentioned. The popularity of fast food chains demonstrates Americans' desire

for familiarity, and fast food delivers just that. Uniformity is an essential feature of fast food; it is one of the main certainties on which people depend. Because an Arby's Melt sandwich is designed to taste exactly the same at each Arby's restaurant across the nation, people can remain in their comfort zone and know exactly what they are going to get no matter where they are. They take little risk in ordering the same sandwich when going to a restaurant in California after visiting one in New York. Customers know what to expect when they order the same items on different sides of the country.

For the most part, "arriving in an unfamiliar city and finding a familiar food...is...quite comforting for travelers" (Hogan 55). A person can find solace in the fact that if he or she is traveling across the country, there is a good chance that a Taco Bell restaurant will be somewhere close to his or her final destination. More remarkably, because of the fast food industry's global expansion, Americans can even have this luxury of familiarity when they travel to other continents and may not have to travel a great distance to find an eatery that they recognize. It is comforting for people to be so far away from home and still see a little slice of America on the other side of the world. Americans know that if they travel to another continent and *try* to experience new cuisines, McDonald's will likely be available if their stomachs do not agree with their cultural exploration. An individual's ability to get familiar food can be rather comforting and the fast food industry has made itself conveniently accessible for those seeking that sort of comfort.

BIGGER IS BETTER

While most Americans can only dream of having what their idol celebrities have, many choose to flaunt what wealth they have by owning big things. This is evident by the society's interest in huge homes and oversized vehicles. In comparison to many parts of the world, America's fixation on great size is outstanding. While European countries purchase smaller vehicles with smaller engines, Americans yearn for the bigger vehicles with more power. Morgan Spurlock describes this fascination in terms of numbers: "In 2003, the auto industry spent \$18.2 billion telling us we needed a new car, more cars, bigger cars" (5). It has become an American idea of living large. Of course, the preference for bigger size is not only an attempt at establishing one's financial and emotional status. It can very well be for the convenience of individual situations. For instance, large families would obviously have an easier living situation with a larger house and vehicle than a more cramped lifestyle. Apart from the reason for the inclination, it is evident that Americans live comfortably in large cars, homes, roads, and cities.

Fast food portion sizes reflect this preference for largeness, which is demonstrated in a number of chain restaurants. Each place has its own special names for its meal sizes that reflect the overall theme of the restaurant. For instance, to order the largest meal at McDonald's, one would "supersize" the order; at Burger King, one would "king size" it. Although the calorie intake for the medium size meal is already more than plenty for that sitting, people are quick to go for the biggest sizes because they can get the most for their money

(Spurlock 17). In addition, some restaurants only offer reusable cups with the larger meals, prompting consumers to purchase more than they need. In an attempt to appeal to fast food goers who are *not* interested in eating healthy, Hardee's released the Monster Thickburger, which CNNMoney describes as consisting of "two 1/3-pound slabs of Angus beef, four strips of bacon, three slices of American cheese and some mayonnaise - - all on a buttered, toasted, sesame seed bun" in 2004. The burger was made to attract the American who loves bigness.

STRETCHING THE DOLLAR and STRIKING RICH

In addition to big things, American people welcome good deals: people look to how much they will get for their money and base decisions on monetary value (Bosshart 22). Fast food fits into this liking perfectly with its inexpensive items. To upgrade to a larger serving of fries and beverage can cost no more than fifty cents (Spurlock 79). While McDonald's sells one apple pie for ninety-eight cents, customers are far more likely to pay two more cents to get two. Because of the calorie count alone (McDonalds.com claims one apple pie has 250 calories), people have no need for a second pie, but the deal is so good that it is nearly impossible to pass up. Many restaurants have also incorporated value menus where items cost less than a dollar. This makes it easy for those on a budget to still feed their hungry stomachs with all of the additional conveniences of fast food. Fast food restaurants have also strategically placed themselves in low-income areas because they know that lower class people have limited choices with

their money flow (Spurlock 12). For people with low incomes, fast food is a way to treat oneself or one's family without having to spend a lot of money.

The industry has given people options of inexpensive food but also the hope of increasing their chances of winning spectacular prizes as well. In his 1616 "A Description of New England," John Smith documented that America was a place of potential and possibility, a place where abundance promoted individuality, which promoted the desire for wealth. America was envisioned as a new world in which one could go from nothing to something in a get-rich-quick situation (Smith 56). This principle of getting rich quick in America has survived up to the twenty-first century as consumers aspire to win easy money and prizes through fast food promotions. The industry has pushed the idea that the more often people go to restaurants during promotional games, the higher their chances become of being winners. A popular incentive used by some fast food chains to secure customers consists of peel-off lottery-style game pieces with certain purchases. This makes each visit to the restaurant like a game that is usually more rewarding than most people's experiences with the standard lottery system. With this style of fast food promotion, customers still get their food whether they win with the game pieces or not, whereas the majority of lottery players get no return for the money they spent on purchasing tickets. In 1992, sociologist Ester Reiter noted that game pieces "are enticements to all family members to leave the private kitchen and come to a public place for the family dinner" (82). Even if this is the image that chains try to promote, their ultimate purpose is to get people

to the restaurant again and again, a goal they accomplish by offering chances to win free food and dazzling prizes.

Most famously, McDonald's partnered up with Hasbro to create the McDonald's Monopoly game. Modeled on the actual Monopoly board game, customers are lured to make frequent visits to McDonald's restaurants in an attempt to collect all of the property of different avenues or railroads. In doing so, one could win as much as one million dollars. In the mean time, as customers strategize amongst themselves to acquire all three or four pieces needed to win the big prizes, they are often rewarded with "Instant Win" game pieces that offer free food. These pieces are coupons for a free hamburger, order of fries, soft drink, or other inexpensive item. They are all items that only make up one portion of the standard burger-fries-drink meal so that, upon collection of their prize, the customers will probably spend more money to make the free item a part of a complete meal. These "Instant Win" game pieces, therefore, ensure a possible return (if the free item is not redeemed during the same visit) and another probable food purchase.

With its extravagant prizes, including entertainment systems, vehicles, and trips, the McDonald's Monopoly game has achieved enormous popularity over the years and is an easy way to get people to the restaurants who want to get rich quick or win a grand prize. In reality, according to the Monopoly Official Rules website, the odds of getting an "Instant Win" game piece are one in six, while the odds of winning the million dollar prize in 2007 were one in 184,698,474. The chances of winning one of the most expensive prizes are comparable to winning

the lottery jackpot – close to zero. Even so, just as with the Gold Rush (but with less severe possible consequences) where people took risks to win big, people demonstrate hope and optimism in supporting the game and becoming winners.

CONCLUSION

The appeal of the fast food industry in American society is evident by the large number of restaurants and its domineering presence in schools and the media. Because of its appeal, the industry is deeply rooted in American culture. Despite the hazards of consuming fast food, people continue to frequent and support the industry's restaurants. Fast food's seemingly essential role in American society demonstrates that people are far more satisfied with what convenience they can gain than with the potential long-term effects that their short-term decisions make. With the success of the industry, Americans have minimized the practice of cooking and eating home-cooked meals and reinforced the idea that their primary concerns lie with having time to do as many tasks as time allows. This degree of weight that the industry holds varies throughout the different classes and categories of society. Fast food is seen as a life saver for stressed adults with very little time and as a reward for children who exhibit fine performance. Whatever the age or background of a person, his or her allure to the fast food restaurant is typically something that is shared by many others, something that the industry created by understanding what people want and making it readily available and at their disposal.

IV. MARKETING STRATEGIES

Businesses operate to make money. Through market research, they determine what people want and respond accordingly to people's desires. Businesses' goal is to make people believe that they need the company's product. For instance, because Americans like to have more time for other things (a characteristic that has already been deemed as part of the American lifestyle), fast food restaurants create travel-friendly packaging; because people are concerned with their diets, the industry markets foods as healthy. As customers become more satisfied with the conveniences that fast food provides them, the industry becomes more profitable. The emphasis on quick service and food is visible in advertising techniques as well. For example, as already mentioned, restaurants sometimes offer incentives such as coupons and discounts for customers to use their delivery service. In order to attract on-the-go customers, McDonald's restaurants of Southern California would execute a drive-thru special in which a customer would receive a coupon for a free Big Mac burger on the following visit if his or her food *and* change were not given within thirty seconds of pulling up to the drive-thru window. With additional pressure placed on employees to get orders together, customers could expect to get in and out with peace of mind or be rewarded with free food. People may not necessarily be in a hurry to get their food; nevertheless, with this sort of promotion, they can get free food or other sort of discount with special promotions that speed up service.

WRAPPING PAPER

Fast food was originally packaged so that customers could easily dispose of wrappers and cups once they finished their meals. A problem arose with the use of Styrofoam packaging when environmentalists argued against the non-biodegradable material in the 1990s. Following this complaint, restaurants switched to mainly paper and cardboard wrapping in order to fend off complaints and be acknowledged as environmentally friendly. Since this transition, much has changed so that sometimes the wrapping is only needed for sanitation purposes during the handling of food by employees and customers.

Menu items have been created to accommodate eating drivers and are advertised with their convenience as a major advantage. The food is mobile, which makes packaging unnecessary. For instance, Taco Bell's Crunchwrap Supreme, which is packaged on its own even without its cardboard container, is "grilled for maximum portability" and "good to go" (www.tacobell.com). By being grilled, the item keeps its shape and eliminates the problem of food spilling, napkin grabbing, and having to worry about the wrapper, allowing people to eat without a table. The fast food industry cannot ignore that they make more of their profit through the drive-thru than in the store; it will continue to cater to eating drivers and even encourage such behavior (despite the elevated risks of distraction) as long as there is profit.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

The industry is just one of many industries that have maneuvered their way into children's lives through various marketing schemes (McNeal 104).

Because parents are concerned with their children's grades given for academic achievement, the industry's presence and manipulations of schools are clouded by the aspiration to advance youth education. The techniques used by fast food restaurants to enter educational institutions are engaging because children are more inclined to learn and the rewards (coupons from restaurants) get kids and at least one parent or guardian into the restaurants. By encouraging children to be better students, restaurants benefit by bringing in the business of more than just the child.

For students who are not internally motivated to get the most out of their time spent in the classroom, teachers and parents must find other ways to engage children with the educational process. From the time children comprehend the idea of bargaining, parents try to bribe good behavior out of them. By doing what they are told (sitting still, being quiet, or paying attention, for example), children are often rewarded with extra play time, a new toy, or something else that might spark obedience (Jacobson 72). In the classroom, especially at the elementary level, teachers reward students with scratch-and-sniff stickers, extra recess time, snack breaks, and other sorts of bonuses. Elementary schools, which often rely on the donation of education funds by the fast food industry, reward students with coupons to fast food restaurants and expose the industry to children through educational instruments, such as book covers, that students will often see (Schlosser 52). Because of children's excessive exposure to fast food in schools, they may become so enveloped in the industry that they convince their parents that good behavior should be rewarded with fast food.

The industry gives children incentives to be model students by providing educators with reward certificates that include coupons for free kids' meals. These awards are given to students who get good grades, demonstrate good behavior, show improvement, have good attendance, and so on. For example, Pizza Hut created its BOOK IT! Program in 1985, described on the BOOK IT! Program website as one that encourages students from kindergarten to sixth grade (depending on the availability of the program at the school) to reach individualized monthly reading goals. The goals are set and monitored by teachers, who keep a chart that tracks progress for each student. Students who meet their goals are then rewarded with coupons for free individual Personal Pan Pizzas. This program motivates children to read and helps raise the literacy level for its members, something that is of high importance to any society. It also familiarizes all of its participants with the restaurant quite early in life.

It is not uncommon for junior and high schools to serve fast food items in their facilities. Because the supply of the food is limited, students who want fast food for lunch may not always get it. The presence of fast food in schools is very profitable for the businesses. The food is usually more desirable for children than sandwiches made from home because of the artificial flavoring. Snacks fill the vending machines and are mostly packed in calories and sugar content. Even sodas and other sugar-filled beverages are readily available for students yearning to quench their thirst. The fast food industry has invaded educational institutions across the country. The places that are supposed to teach children to be

knowledgeable and intellectual individuals are actually helping to mold youth into young fast food customers by enabling advertisements throughout the schools.

FREQUENT VISITORS

There are people who rely on fast food restaurants for their breakfasts, lunches, or dinners at least once a week (Spurlock 48). Many of these people have been patrons of the restaurant since childhood. This is representative of both their steadfast loyalty to the companies and the success of the businesses' advertising practices dating back decades to when the customers were children. From as early as toddler years, children can recognize brands and labels of a variety of products, from restaurants to store names, even before they know their own name (Schlosser 43). Businesses have taken this fact seriously; they realize that the younger a person is when he or she develops a liking to their products, the more likely the person will remain a consumer in future years. Hence, it is not uncommon for corporations to have departments solely dedicated to the study of children. They examine everything that can be even minutely relevant to determining what children like; this information is gathered through the examination of what children read, draw, discuss, and dream. Companies rely on children's memories to "lead to a lifetime of purchases [with] 'cradle-to-grave' advertising strategies" (Schlosser 43). The departments responsible for advertising determine the most successful ways of exposing their products to children, examine what is most appealing to them, and proceed with marketing strategies accordingly.

An array of techniques has been devised for companies to acquire knowledge of what influences children. With the appeal of cartoon mascots and bright colors, it is not surprising that children quickly develop fast food favorites. Restaurants create their own characters to make children feel welcome. For instance, McDonald's created Ronald McDonald and his gang of characters (which includes members such as a talking burger and pear-shaped purple being). Burger King created its more realistic ensemble to reach out to children, taking what appears to be a more culturally-aware approach with the creation of its characters, the Kids Club Gang, to lure children into the restaurant. Members have diverse ethnic backgrounds and a broad range of interests so that all children can find characters to whom they relate. In reality, this is merely another way to manipulate consumers and make more money through savvy marketing practices. It is an effective tactic, for the Burger King Kids Club alone has "increased the sales of children's meals as much as 300 percent" (Schlosser 45).

To expand their reach to children, restaurants have also made playgrounds, indoor and outdoor, a part of their locations. These structures allow children to play before, during, or after eating their kids' meals while also giving parents a partial break. The implementation of kids' meals reaches out to a children's market. The enclosure of toys that often correspond with the latest popular children's television shows or movies enhances this allure as well. Introduction of the McDonald's Happy Meal encouraged children to enjoy trips to fast food restaurants. The goal "was to get the kids engaged through pictures, puzzles, games, and other things to play with during their stay. Eventually, they began

using toys” (Schor 60). By making toys special editions that were only available for a limited time and encouraging children to collect the whole sets of themed toys before they ran out, restaurants raised their security of more business in the immediate future.

Parents have the option of hosting their children’s birthday parties at various fast food locations, an easy choice for those who prefer to leave the cooking and, at times, entertainment to the restaurant. Furthermore, many places do not require a fee to use their facility and some offer group discounts, leaving only the setup of decorations in the hands of customers. All of the things done to target youth through advertisements of toys and relationships with cartoons creates a foundation for customer loyalty. The children’s market is extremely important to the success of fast food restaurants, and everything is done to ensure a strong following.

However, the industry cannot rely on its clubs and toys to keep children yearning for restaurant visits once they get older. For a smooth transition from children’s meals to adult-sized combo meals, restaurants have introduced meals sized between the kid meals and adult meals. McDonald’s and Burger King, respectively, have created the Mighty Kids and Big Kids meals for middle-aged children. Names of the meals were chosen to appeal to this sensitive age group, and the meals are made to feed children who have gotten too old for the regular sized children’s portions but want only a bit more food. The packaging still reflects that of the kids’ meals but in a more mature manner. This makes the young customers feel older but still youthful.

The development of taste preferences stems from childhood as well. According to studies, “kids who help out in the kitchen are much more willing to try stuff they’d normally turn up their noses at” (Spurlock 228). Hence, children who grow up on vegetables generally will remain vegetable consumers throughout their adult lives. Likewise, children fed fast food will probably carry their preferences (as a result of taste and marketing) into adulthood. McDonald’s has even created names for its frequent visitors. Consumers who visit a restaurant once a week are labeled “heavy users”; those who go three or more times per week are called “super heavy users” (Super Size Me). Fast food chains attract fans who become lifetime supporters through their reliance on children’s taste development. If the restaurants can create fans out of children by giving them tasty food, toys, and positive memories of childhood, then that is less work the industry has to do to entice those consumers when they become adults. Additionally, “the flavors of childhood foods seem to leave an indelible mark, and adults often return to them” (Schlosser 123). As foods spark pleasant memories, people are more likely to revisit the places at which the food is served.

In 2005, McDonald’s restaurants in Southern California created a promotion that targeted users of cellular phone text messaging. At the time, it was meant primarily for young adults, those who were mostly involved with using the text feature. The promotion, which was advertised on busses and billboards, stated that by texting a coupon code to a specific number, one would receive an electronic coupon that could be redeemed for a free McFlurry dessert at any participating McDonald’s location (www.promomagazine.com). In addition to

reaching out to youth through text messages, McDonald's made the coupons accessible through the internet. Providing alternate ways to acquire the coupon provided more business for the restaurants.

People are lured in by the advertisements that attract them most. Businesses do the best they can to create catchy and creative jingles and slogans that people will carry with them and repeat for others to hear. In this manner, people become walking advertisements for the products whether they realize it or not. At the very least, they impress thoughts of the products into the minds of those around them. By endorsing its products with such force and efficiency, the industry maintains its presence virtually everywhere. People are exposed to the food with such great intensity that it can be difficult for hungry passers-by to refuse. By bombarding children with exposure and continuing it into their adult lives, the fast food industry has easily secured accessibility to people's minds at an early age.

HEALTH-CONSCIOUS PEOPLE

It is easy to blame fast food restaurants for the obesity rates among Americans. In response to these accusations and as an attempt to keep and acquire the more health-conscious customers, restaurants have introduced their own items that promote healthful eating. Salads have been added to menus. Foods are advertised as having lower calorie-content, less fat, or reduced sodium. Restaurants sell their own bottled water as an alternative to soda. McDonald's has even created its adult version of the Happy Meal with professional fitness trainer Bob Greene. As explained by USA Today in 2003, the "Go Active meal

[includes] a salad, an exercise booklet and a pedometer meant to encourage walking.” These changes to the menu are all part of an attempt to comfort consumers by convincing them that the industry has people’s health and dietary interests at heart.

STAR INFLUENCE

Restaurants have turned to key people for their advertisements in a clever marketing move. For example, Subway used a common person that most people could imagine as being in their lives (in other words, not someone of profoundly good looks or celebrity status). In 2000, the restaurant began to advertise Jared Fogel as an average adult who lost more than two hundred pounds on a diet consisting of mainly Subway sandwiches. Because Jared is just a “regular guy,” people feel they can relate to him. As a result, they are more likely to believe that his achievements are possible for them as well because his average qualities and lifestyle probably do not provide him with personal trainers and dieticians, which might be more readily at a celebrity’s disposal. Ironically, he has become a celebrity of sorts because of his exposure.

Although the industry depends on people’s idolization of popular actors, athletes, musical artists, and other entertainers to sell its products, it leans toward athletes. Because sports are important in American culture, consumers are attracted to advertisements that feature their favorite athletes and tend to believe in what their idols sell. The use of athletes in particular merits discussion because athletes are the image of a healthy, ideal body. In order to achieve and maintain such top shape, the exercises they perform and the foods they consume are likely

chosen with the guidance of professionals (such as personal trainers and nutritionists) that are not so easily available to the general public. When people favor certain athletes, they tend to be supportive of whatever the athletes do. If Michael Jordan, a retired athlete whom the official NBA website calls “the greatest basketball player of all time,” promotes the savory tastes of McDonald’s burgers, then people who like Michael Jordan are more open to trying them. This is not necessarily because they believe that it is healthy but because they like the person selling the product to them.

Advertisements featuring athletes can be especially effective. After all, athletes are athletes and celebrities because of the condition of their bodies. Musical artists and actors are used as well to promote products. They often lend their voices for catchy jingles. Although they do not carry the same influence of physical health as athletes, they are still effective in attracting business. In combination with all of the advertising of healthy foods, fast food restaurants are striving to establish an image of providing diet-friendly items. All of the measures taken by the industry assure customers that fast food is convenient, familiar, and fairly priced while still being healthy.

CONCLUSION

Many factors must be considered when discussing the reasons for the industry’s achievement and each component is distinctly elemental to understanding what fast food is today and how it functions. The conveniences of fast food exist in and are at times responsible for various societal issues, such as the operation of educational systems and the production of marketing. For

instance, the fast food industry has contributed to the funding for schools to provide books and computers for students. The industry's aid in the community cannot be ignored, for it plays a pivotal role in determining how and why the society operates the way it does. To return to the example of schools, this demonstrates that there is lack of funds from the government for supplies; this suggests that educational institutions are not at the top of the American government's priorities or taxpayers' dollars. In order to gain a complete comprehension of the fast food industry's success, one must acknowledge that its appeal to the masses and its contributions to societal improvement are important and deserving of recognition for their successes, regardless of any faults that may exist.

V. THE INDUSTRY'S SETBACKS

As has already been established, people find phenomenal convenience in fast food restaurants. It is not a surprise that the industry is as successful as it is. Despite all of the appeals and benefits that it provides for communities, however, it is still attacked by a variety of groups for causing what they claim is an extensive range of problems in American society. Fast food restaurants are condemned for their food, advertising practices, and targeting of the youth market. Regardless of the conveniences it offers to customers, the industry has certainly contributed to problems not just in the American scope but the global lens as well. Still, some people are so emotionally committed to the fast food industry that they ignore its faults (Ritzer 187). As long as this commitment remains constant, any problems will persist.

HEALTH AND FAMILY

Although fast food is regarded as a leading contributor to the increase of obesity (Spurlock 19), many more factors contribute to the development of the condition in human beings. It must be understood that obesity is not only caused by poor behavioral habits, as people generally believe. The condition can be a result of other varying factors such as family history, personal metabolism, and individual genetic structure. However, for many people with obesity, none of these inescapable causes can be labeled primary. Ultimately, obesity arises when the body consumes more calories than it expends to maintain a healthy lifestyle. To counteract the condition's effects, people can engage in physical activity and watch what they eat by maintaining a healthy diet (one that excludes processed

foods). More than sixty percent of American people (which is almost one hundred million) get no form of exercise; the same number of adults in America is also at an unhealthy weight (Schlosser 240). Obesity is also directly related to many other illnesses, as it can drastically increase the risk of developing other potentially grave conditions. This list includes dangers such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, diabetes, heart disease, and osteoarthritis. Due to the rising number of people with such health problems, the government must spend money on treatment (rather than prevention) and focus on the short-term effects of healing instead of the long-term effects this has on the economy.

With regards to the consequences of fast food, obesity is one of the most publicly discussed concerns of Americans. As previously mentioned, the fast food industry is not fully to blame for the high rate of obesity; nevertheless, it is an easy and convenient target for those seeking to place blame because it is not healthy. After all, one in four Americans visits a fast food restaurant each day (Super Size Me). Because of the availability of fast food, it can be hard to drive past restaurants in time of hunger. Because people of various ethnic groups and ages eat fast food and the industry does not feed one specific group of people, everyone who eats it is susceptible to the disease. Obesity is a condition that does not discriminate, as it “cut[s] across class, race, ethnicity and gender” (Spurlock 11).

According to the 2005 KidsHealth article “Overweight and Obesity,” the rate of overweight children has more than doubled since the 1970s, with “10% of 2- to 5-year-olds and more than 15% of children between the ages of 6 and 19” at

unhealthy weights. Regarding their role in the rise of childhood obesity, “McDonald’s and its advertisers say their product should be part of a healthy, balanced diet. But with an actual marketing goal of twenty visits per customer per month, company actions speak louder than words” (Schor 129). Restaurants’ aims are not to keep their customers healthy but to ensure people immediate satisfaction so that they will come back and the industry can profit.

Sizes of menu items in America are a factor in the obesity issue as well. They have catapulted noticeably from their original sizes; “during the late 1950s the typical soft drink order at a fast food restaurant contained about eight ounces of soda; today a ‘Child’ order of Coke at McDonald’s is twelve ounces” (Schlosser 241). The proportions of value meals in fast food restaurants provide far more calories than are necessary for one meal. The largest sizes are so ridiculously enormous that many people cannot finish their drinks. While they get more food at a reasonable monetary price, the more serious cost is their health. The regular-sized meal is already more than enough caloric intake for one meal; to add more fries and soda to it simply makes the unhealthy food even more unhealthy.

With value meals, there are options to increase the size of one's fries and drinks for as little as thirty-nine cents and no more than fifty. The appeal of larger-sized meals is the price. People are intrigued by the fact that they can receive more fries and more soda at a low cost and are brainwashed into believing that they get a bargain by purchasing the larger meal size. Because they fail to effectively weigh the benefits and consequences of their decision, they purchase

the excess *because* the price is so cheap and it appears to be such a great deal. This creates larger waistlines and recurring visits to fast food restaurants to satisfy hunger. People are bombarded with fast food chains side-by-side, on both sides of the street; advertisements for the restaurants are everywhere. With their windows plastered with special prices, eateries lure customers in with the value of their dollar.

In comparison to the rest of the world, the portions of food servings in America are noticeably larger (Super Size Me). This is evident for those who travel from America to another country or vice versa. There is a clear difference for Americans who expect greater meal portions and get smaller sizes and for Europeans who are accustomed to more delicate portions and get what they consider abundance in fries and drink (Super Size Me). This significant difference in size is apparent with the obesity rise in America. America's fast food portions encourage overconsumption, which in turn can lead to an unhealthy weight.

ADVERTISING PRACTICES

Advertisements made by fast food restaurants promote an image of happiness with friends and families spending time together. People believe (or want to believe) that they will be happy when they purchase the food because the actors appear content. There are no overweight people in fast food ads; actors are in shape and smiling. The partnership between McDonald's and Disneyland has reinforced this image: "now you can buy a Happy Meal at the Happiest Place on

Earth” (Schlosser 49). Thus, many people ignore the increasing attention put on health and continue to support the industry by visiting the restaurants.

As has already been mentioned, one appeal of the industry is its incorporation of menu items that target people concerned with their health. Through this approach of clever marketing, people can still get their fast food *and* eat healthy – or so they believe. Even this tactic has its problems. The supposedly healthy salads of McDonald’s, for example, all contain sugar (Super Size Me). Morgan Spurlock conducted food tests to determine whether various McDonald’s fast food items actually matched up with what was posted on the McDonald’s website of menu nutrition facts: everything in the lab was in fact more unhealthy than they were stated to be on the website; for example, an order of medium fries, which is 350 calories, according to the McDonald’s website, was actually 430 calories (Spurlock 275). Because most consumers do not care to investigate the nutritional facts or make any genuine attempt to know how their food is made, sales carry on as people continue to eat fast food.

One issue with fast food advertisements in schools is that they counteract parents’ control of exposure. Marketers know that “students are as close to a captive audience as advertisers are ever likely to get” (Schor 85) and jump at the chance to be present in schools. When the reward certificates that teachers give out have detachable coupons for fast food restaurants, the recipients of those awards will likely want to redeem their prize. The reward certificates train children to think of fast food as a treat for good behavior and are tools to make children visit the restaurants (with their families, ideally) more often. The more

children are exposed to fast food in this manner, the more they will expect to go to the restaurants for behaving well. Consequently, parents who work to shield their children from fast food must work extra hard to explain why it is truly not a healthy reward for having perfect attendance or reaching any other sort of educational accomplishment.

To succeed in cradle-to-the-grave marketing, businesses must establish an awareness of the product in children; kids must become interested; and companies must make children believe that the restaurants will always provide satisfying results for the rest of their lives (Schor 95). Because there are so many other pressing issues for parents to worry about, such as drugs and alcohol, it is easy to overlook what appears to be less dangerous (fast food) and focus on those other matters. This is consequential for children because if fast food is advertised at school and on television and their parents say nothing to combat the industry's influence, children will be swayed far more easily into the fast food world. Even if parents eat healthy meals and encourage good eating habits three times a day with their children for a year, this only adds up to 1,095 conversations; this is no match for the 10,000 advertisements of unhealthy foods to which the average American child is exposed in one year (Super Size Me). Still, when people attack the industry and blame it for its hazardous effects, the industry's claim that parents are ultimately responsible "is powerful because it possesses an essential truth" (Schor 184).

RESTAURANTS

HIRING METHODS

The fast food industry was created to make profit by providing people with inexpensive food quickly. To keep prices appealing to customers, restaurants must keep labor costs at a minimum. This is done through standardization in every aspect of how restaurants are operated and allows for a most efficient method of hiring mainly part-time workers who get minimum wage. By making everything so standardized, employees are easily replaceable and can be easily terminated. This is evident in the industry's employment history "with turnover as high as 300 percent per year for some chains. Employees confront arbitrary shifts, long hours, and drudgery work, and most workers consider fast-food employment to be only temporary" (Jakle 107). Routine is so essential to fast food in its management staff, its hourly associates, its menus, and even its customers because it makes everything easy and everyone disposable.

To provide familiarity of food, there must be strict regulation on how the restaurants operate; however, the work of the employees is mind-numbing because of its repetitiveness (Ritzer 86). Regardless of the effects on the workers, this method of operation is crucial to the industry's success. Because every aspect of how a restaurant functions is defined in the rules of management, "the need to retain any individual worker is greatly reduced by the ease with which he or she can be replaced" (Schlosser 70). The jobs are so simple in the sense that most can follow the directions and operate the machinery. The machines have been

designed to be as fool-proof as possible so that there is practically no possibility of error; indeed, “the assembly line is...a nonhuman technology that permits maximum control over workers” (Ritzer 34). This is why no experience is necessary for employment and why it is virtually not an issue for companies to continuously have to hire new workers. There is no deficit of potential fast food employees. This creates job insecurity for current employees and, therefore, more instability among the economy’s lowest chain of workers.

The fast food industry has taken advantage of the large pool of inexperienced job seekers by establishing itself as a place where inexperienced and uneducated individuals can seek employment. Fifteen and sixteen-year old high school students are more likely to encounter difficulty when entering the work force than older job seekers because their resumes are often empty while many employers require experience. Almost invariably, these teenagers have no professional experience because they are just approaching the age of employment eligibility and cannot be expected to have any prior exposure to labor, especially any of official status. Work experience programs are offered in high schools that give students unofficial experience in a variety of trades (such as restaurants and auto shops). Even with side jobs or student work programs, their choices of employment are rather limited.

In addition to the young, the pool of uneducated job seekers generally consists of immigrants: “jobs in the mainstream or general economy are largely unavailable to many...immigrants because they lack legal work status, mainstream skills, social connections, fluency in English, and education” (Talwar

6). The industry, aware of immigrants' limitations, uses them as leverage for cheap labor. People who have no more than a middle school or high school education are susceptible to similar employment obstacles. Those adults who are held back by their lack of education can earn money by performing relatively simple duties. If interest is shown in advancement, managers must train them in the needed skills. Even with promotions, however, the pay is not great. Workers have very limited options for what they can do without experience or education. This allows the industry to practice low wage distribution among such employees because workers have minimal leverage with which they can negotiate.

The hiring practices of the fast food industry differ from those of other industries. Regardless of the category into which people fall, a lack of skills and education is definitely seen by most employers as a setback. The inability of applicants to produce ideal work experience is an issue for many companies because they would be hiring blindly without any history of a candidate's past. If the work produced upon employment of such an applicant is less than satisfactory, money will have been wasted and time lost. This is the reason companies often hire experienced personnel only. It may seem that the fast food industry has stepped up to provide jobs for struggling employment seekers and is responsible for making income available to those in need. Whether employees use these jobs as a step into the labor world or as a transition into a different job, it might appear that they owe gratitude to fast food restaurants for giving them the opportunity of employment. Upon closer examination, however, it is evident that the industry is in fact manipulative and exploitative of their low wage laborers.

SCHEDULING

Exploitation of fast food workers takes many forms. At some restaurants, there is significant inconsistency with workers' schedules. Although employees are given their schedules in advance, they are sometimes expected to work more or less and are given a hard time when they do not comply (Schlosser 74). Flexibility is already an expectation because of business hours. However, a problem arises when flexibility is demanded and there is no regard for employees' personal lives. By making workers clock in or out earlier or later than their scheduled shifts or by making them clock out during their shifts depending on the speed of traffic in a restaurant, "the workers rather than the employer bear the costs of uncertain demand, and workers' arrangements for transportation, child care, social activities, or other responsibilities can be upset without compensation" (Leidner 22). This is unfair to workers on many levels as it allows managers to take advantage of employees, manipulate their labor costs, and make more profit.

EXPENDABLE EMPLOYMENT

To make operations so simple, the industry has simplified its methods of training. It is not uncommon that many "training manuals" are written at elementary school reading levels and contribute to the ideal elimination of training altogether. Not only does this make for easily replaceable employees but for a smaller opportunity for workers to learn any truly advanced labor skills because they perform tasks not far from the basics. Thus, workers can get stuck in their positions with little opportunity for pay increase. Furthermore, customers

have been trained to perform many of their own meal-handling tasks. This includes the filling and capping of their beverages, getting their appropriate utensils and condiments, and disposing of their trash. By relying more on customers to take part in labor, restaurants provide fewer tasks for which employees are responsible; the more minimal employees' duties are, the less pay they can receive.

The industry can afford to pay the lowest wages possible to its employees because jobs are so easily filled. With each possibility of minimum wage increase, the industry has fought to keep it down, while regularly rewarding its executives with three-figure bonuses. Fast food restaurants have been caught in unfair labor practices that were intended to cut labor costs (Schlosser 73). (The more successful managers are at cutting their stores' costs, the more considerable are their raises). These tactics of unfair treatment in the fast food employment world make working for the industry not as appealing as perhaps originally perceived by entry-level workers and certainly not as beneficial if employees are being exploited.

UNION FORMATION DIFFICULTIES

Despite low wages, high school students, immigrants, and uneducated workers are not likely to organize unions for a selection of reasons: they are often young (early twenties or younger) and have no knowledge of union organization; they are hired not by the actual fast food chains but franchises; employment is usually part-time, which results in difficulty getting workers together; and attempts at unionizing are usually thwarted by strong, organized, experienced,

well-funded opposition (Leidner 16). Furthermore, because it is not uncommon for fast food restaurants to be workers' first jobs and the workers often do not see their employment as a future career, employees are more likely to resign than voice discontent with their working conditions to anyone who might make a change (Schlosser 83). This may also be due to the common assumption that fast food work is undesirable and, so, the substandard level of treatment that they encounter is ordinary.

EFFECTS OF LABOR PRACTICES ON COMPANIES

In addition to these issues, unhappy employees who are not valued do not have their employers' best profitable interests at heart and are far less likely to be loyal to and proud of their company. This means that there is a higher tendency for people to act out against their employers in numerous ways. At the most basic level, this could simply be the disrespect and disregard of company procedures, policies, and operations. One can be wasteful with supplies because he or she does not care to help save money for the business. One can be lazy and non-productive in his or her tasks.

Another concern with the high turnover rate of employees is linked to the level of crimes against restaurants. Prosecutable crimes such as stealing money or merchandise can be telling signs of disgruntled employees who truly have no appreciation or respect for their employers. Eric Schlosser explains the findings of a National Food Service Security Council survey from 1999: "About half of all restaurant workers engaged in some form of cash or property theft" (Schlosser 84). At the extreme end of this are workers who rob their employers and use their

combination of dissatisfaction with the restaurant and knowledge of restaurant operations to drive their actions. Fast food restaurants are already easy targets for robberies: they are oftentimes conveniently located near major roads and freeways (quick getaways); most transactions involve money (they have a lot of cash on hand); and they are generally not protected with bullet-resistant glass (criminals have easier access to the registers). With all of these factors, an employee's frustration can be enough for one to commit an inside job.

Although the fast food industry is credited with providing jobs for the inexperienced and uneducated, there are also many issues for which the industry's "generosity" of jobs is condemned. The jobs are not wholly beneficial to society and are criticized by sociologists for causing more harm than good. The industry preys on the inexperienced and uneducated to maximize its profit but does so in such an underhanded approach that it is exploitative. As long as there is fast food, however, these jobs will exist in all their glories and disgraces. In the meantime, perhaps more publicity and awareness of the problems will result in more government intervention to assure fair employment practices.

THE FACTORIES

The ill-treatment of fast food industry employees does not stop at restaurant doors: it also seeps into factories. Fast food restaurants are highly involved in the operation of animal factories because of their dependence on such institutions. Because the fast food industry goes through its food stock at a rapid pace, the factories have been pressured to step up to the same standards of swiftness. Factories produce orders quickly and efficiently by any means

necessary. By changing their methods of operation, ranches and slaughterhouses keep up with the rate of supply and demand. However, this comes with a serious cost and is consequential for everyone involved. Methods such as feeding animals growth hormones have been devised to speed up the maturing process of the animals, thus allowing for more food to be processed more quickly than nature intends (Schlosser 142). This is a problem as it can disrupt the hormone balance of animals and threaten the health of those who eat such chemically induced livestock. The conditions in the factories are far less than ideal for employees and make for potentially deadly atmospheres. The combination of chemically-enhanced animals and overworked employees can result in mistakes that can be dangerous to consumers' health.

EMPLOYEE CONCERNS

Like many fast food restaurants, many factories thrive on cheap, illegal labor and take advantage of those in the U.S. with very limited options who are struggling to survive (Talwar 19). Because their jobs are not secure, workers have little say in what is demanded of them and do what they can to keep their positions. They are expected to work long hours without complaint and deal with corruption and abuse among the ranks. This is particularly true for females, who sometimes use their sexuality to secure their jobs or are sexually violated with little to no means of fighting back (Schlosser 176). Due to feeling overwhelmed with their work and the stress that it causes, many workers resort to illegal drugs such as methamphetamine to ease their minds and give them more energy in hopes of working more efficiently in the factories (Schlosser 174). This often

becomes a habit, and sometimes an addiction. Because of the monotonous motions, workers emulate robots and are often subject to injuries that result from repetitive actions (such as carpal tunnel syndrome). Those who develop injuries of any sort are often eventually replaced after factories make working conditions so unbearable that they voluntarily resign (Schlosser 175).

It has been determined that employment in the meatpacking industry “is the most dangerous job in the United States... Every year more than one-quarter of the meatpacking workers in this country – roughly forty thousand men and women – suffer an injury or a work-related illness that requires medical attention beyond first aid” (Schlosser 172). The machines with which employees work in the factories are powerful and built to have fatal effects on animals of various sizes. All of the equipment is handled on assembly so the delay of one person can significantly impact the results of another’s work and efficiency.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Workers often become numb to the repetitive actions and have difficulty focusing on their tasks. As a result, they are more susceptible to making mistakes that can greatly harm not only themselves but the animals whose lives are in their hands and their peers who work beside them. For instance, when the worker who is trained to sever the carotid artery of cattle misses, the cattle suffers from the accidental, inhumane wound until the worker manages to do it correctly. Although the cattle’s life is ultimately ended, it suffers unnecessary pain as a result of an employee’s mistake. Unfortunately, these errors are not rare because

of the demands of the job. Animals often suffer even in what should be quick and painless death due to the demands pressed upon workers.

Generally, there is no concern for the lives of animals before they enter factories. They are there to become fast food as quickly as possible and serve no other purpose. With this sole intention, fair treatment is not a top priority, and the animals are treated not as living creatures but as objects to be bred and killed. Animals are fed and injected with steroids for the sole purpose of fattening them up and sending them to slaughterhouses. This is detrimental to the animals' already-shortened lives because "they grow so fast that the heart and lungs are not developed and the results are congestive heart failure and tremendous death losses" (Volpe 55). The short life span allows for more room for animals to be slaughtered and more meat to be sent to restaurants. At many slaughterhouses, "the animals are crowded so closely together it looks like a sea of cattle...that goes on for acres" (Schlosser 150). Factories that house chickens provide artificial sunlight to trick hens into laying more eggs. Because of the unnatural environment in which they are forced to live, chickens often go insane and become aggressive in their distress. Factories have devised methods to prevent violence among animals, such as the cutting of beaks ("The Meatrix II ½"), but to end one form of violence is to impose another. Like cattle, chickens are also packed alive tightly in the factories, partially to prevent trampling (Volpe 54).

While workers assembled in factory lines are supposed to give animals the quickest and least painful deaths possible, workers outside the factory walls do not always extend this expected sympathy toward animals before they are

marched off to their deaths. In 2004, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) engaged in an undercover, recorded observation of the proceedings of a Kentucky Fried Chicken factory in Moorefield, West Virginia. This slaughterhouse was chosen because it had been given an annual award for its high standards. Instead of seeing humane treatment of the animals, PETA witnessed the opposite: “workers were caught on video stomping birds, kicking them, and slamming them against floors and walls. Workers ripped the animals’ beaks off, twisted their heads off, spat tobacco into their eyes and mouths, spray-painted their faces, and squeezed their bodies so hard that the birds expelled feces” (Volpe 8). The lack of concern for animals’ well-being is evident through the indecent treatment they receive from factories *and* from workers.

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

While one of the major conveniences of fast food is its easily disposable wrappings and utensils, the industry has been attacked for its methods of packaging because of excessive waste and damage to the environment. The original packaging used by restaurants (such as those made of Styrofoam materials) was harmful because it was not biodegradable. Environmentalists were concerned with “the disposable Styrofoam and plastic containers [that] add to the already overwhelming mountain of garbage that cities increasingly have difficulties coping with” (Reiter 168). Activists have criticized chains for not recycling and for using excessive packaging for their products. Companies have responded to these complaints by altering their bags, wrappers, and boxes. Now, packaging is more environmentally friendly in the sense that paper is

biodegradable. Still, it is ultimately harmful because the industry needs so much paper for packaging that forests are constantly being cut down.

To make room for more factories that provide food for restaurants, natural settings are being overtaken. Forest and jungle animals are pushed out and forced to find homes elsewhere that are not necessarily suitable for their survival needs and potentially endanger their lives. This practice of carelessness poses a threat of breaking the food chain that binds everyone and everything together. Because of the necessity to make food familiar at every fast food restaurant, a great deal of chemicals and waste is produced through the process (Ritzer 17), and enormous amounts of chemicals have spilled into the food supply of humans and animals. These detrimental effects are enormously consequential, for while the industry continuously turns to nature for packaging materials, nature itself slowly diminishes.

The success of the fast food industry relies on the ability to produce food and send it to restaurants as quickly as possible. To meet this demand, immense cattle ranches and factories thrive throughout the country. But demolition of the natural setting to make room for these ranches and factories is proving to be a danger to animals and natural habitats. More attention is now being brought to the destruction of rainforests, savannahs, and so on, as environmentalists hope to prevent further losses.

VI. PRESENT AND FUTURE STANDS

While posting a sign outside restaurants that reads “WARNING! Sociologists have found that habitual use of McDonaldized systems is hazardous to your physical and psychological well-being and to society as a whole” (Ritzer 235) might provoke thought among people entering the restaurant, this method of deterrence has already proven to be ineffective with smokers, who encounter and disregard similar warning labels on cigarette boxes that are even more gripping. The ways that people can voice their rejection of fast food are innumerable. Some act against the industry as individuals with their own private decisions. Others have created powerful organizations and invest time and money to fight the industry. Regardless of the approach one chooses to take against fast food, whether on a small scale or a great one, the combined efforts of enough people can perhaps be enough to weaken the industry’s domination and make it less consequential to people’s health.

ANTI-FAST FOOD PRODUCTS

People are openly attacking the industry through products that criticize fast food. This is an effective way to voice one’s opinions without saying a word. Apparel works as walking advertisement and can be seen by many people in a variety of public places, such as schools, amusement parks, clubs, and bars. The mere sight of a good advertisement, with or without words, can spark thoughts and engage serious contemplation. Threadless, a website that sells a variety of attire, sells a shirt with what appears to be a picture of a hotdog, drink, and fries but is actually a bun with a red stick of dynamite, a cup with a gun sticking out,

and a grenade filled with fries. Cafe Press, another site, sells fast food parody products. For example, Burger King's logo has been altered to say "Killer King" between the hamburger buns while the McDonald's "I'm lovin' it" slogan has been changed to "I'm hatin' it" with a red circle and slash through the restaurant's famously-known golden arches. This form of defiance against the industry is ideal for individuals who do not necessarily have the means to take big monetary stands (such as donations to organizations) against the industry because it gives them the opportunity to do so in a less costly manner.

Another method of exposing the faults of fast food requires much more research and examination. Oftentimes, money is involved, as well as a number of people who take part in the project. The end result can be an informed and educational book or a movie production that has the potential to reach a wide audience. Books, particularly, can provide readers with a lot more information because they tend to provide an abundance of evidence. Both forms of information have promoted the image of the fast food industry in a bad light. In 2002, Eric Schlosser explored the fast food business in his book Fast Food Nation and received intense criticism from those who profited from the industry. His book is a collection of facts and details that graphically introduce and explain the dangers of the industry. His style of writing makes for a leisurely reading and is interesting and appealing to the average citizen. Schlosser has also co-written Chew On This with Charles Wilson, a book that targets young readers and encourages them to think twice before visiting fast food restaurants. This is strategic in educating children of the importance of healthy eating and the

negative effects of fast food eating. The authors write with humor to reveal their research and Schlosser still captivate his audiences, regardless of their age. In collaboration with Richard Linklater, Schlosser recently turned Fast Food Nation into a film that depicts the vicious problems people must endure in the fast food world. Despite the same title of the book, the 2006 movie is a different approach to revealing fast food's dangers. It is a fictional story that revolves around a particular group of individuals directly linked to the industry. The characters represent different levels of importance in the hierarchy, from the easily replaceable workers to the big bosses. The film exposes the environmental and social consequences of which the majority of its viewers are not aware.

The 2002 animation *The Meatrix I*, written and produced by Sustainable Table and Free Range Studios, was followed by *The Meatrix II: Revolting* and *The Meatrix II ½*. These short films also contribute to an understanding of how the fast food industry is run and what happens in the factories on which their businesses depend. The cartoon characters lead viewers through the methods by which meat is obtained and unveil the consequences of mass-producing animals. The films are a parody of *The Matrix* as they explain in the same manner as the box office hit how ignorance can blind people to understanding the reality of the world in which they live. This lesson is an important element in the fight against the industry because it opens people's eyes to what goes on beyond what information is readily available.

Conceivably one of the most well-known mainstream fast food critiques comes from filmmaker Morgan Spurlock and his film *Super Size Me*. Spurlock's

film concentrated on the health issue of fast food and brought attention to America's school system and advertising practices, demonstrating that the problem with obesity in America is far more complex than the restaurants themselves. For the film, Spurlock documented himself eating food exclusively from McDonald's restaurants for thirty days. He was an ideal candidate for this experiment because of his overall healthy state at the beginning of the project. Despite the urging of three health specialists to discontinue the project because of the health risks that he was bringing upon himself, Spurlock pushed through the thirty-day period to complete his study, determined to show people how destructive fast food can be to the human body. As he continued with the project, his health drastically plummeted as he seemed to become addicted to the food. Even after giving his body a thorough detoxification, he has significantly raised his chances of acquiring a number of health problems as a result of his thirty-day diet. The documentary is wildly popular and encourages people to truly consider their choices of consumption while exposing the fast food industry for its faults. Although his experiment dealt primarily with McDonald's food, the knowledge of fast food's danger can be applied to all similar businesses – all fast food restaurants.

SCHOOLS

The presence of fast food companies (through advertisements and the food itself) in schools is being attacked by sociologists and parents. Even if parents raise their children on strict diets at home, the exposure to fast food away from home is practically inevitable (Super Size Me). It is difficult to counteract such

strong advertising when children are bombarded by the industry. Fortunately, some schools have begun to make changes to food services in an attempt to rid cafeterias and vending machines of sugary foods. Parents and faculty strive to provide children with healthy diet choices in order to curb the youths' exposure to less ideal food. One noticeable example that has gained attention is the Appleton Central Alternative High School in Wisconsin. At this educational institution, which is home to students with behavioral problems and reputations for acting out, junk food has been removed from the cafeteria and replaced by freshly prepared meals and bottled water. This change, which is sponsored by Natural Ovens of Manitowoc, Wisconsin (Natural Ovens), is responsible for children's increased focus and the drop in truancy and behavioral problems (Super Size Me). Teachers have noticed this dramatic shift in behavior and attention and attribute it as a direct result of the children's eating habits.

Of course, unhealthy food not only stimulates poor behavior; it is more distinctly a factor in physical health problems. The degree of obesity in American children has resulted in a nation-wide attempt to get children on a healthier diet. People fight to keep fast food away from schools, aware of the restaurants' potentially dangerous effects on children. Companies have been "prohibited near schools, churches, and hospitals" (Jakle and Sculle 160) in an effort to clean towns. Americans are now greatly concerned with being considered the world's fattest nation, especially for the sake of the children, and are striving to shed that negative image.

COMMUNITY OPPOSITION

In America, the fast food industry is encountering opposition from communities as well as lawmakers. Upon learning that fast food restaurants have plans to open, neighborhood communities across the country (and even the world) have made public displays of resistance, forcing the restaurants to rethink their plans. Molly Hennessy-Fiske wrote in 2008 for the Los Angeles Times that Los Angeles has placed a ban on fast food restaurants as an attempt to lessen the chance of people eating fast food and to encourage them to pick up healthier eating habits. Although these bans have been accused of taking away the right of people to make choices for themselves, they have started an ultimately beneficial pattern of promoting healthy eating.

Worldwide, people are fighting the fast food institution diligently. People have organized pickets to take place at fast food restaurants' openings. In Britain, the McLibel Support Campaign was started in 1990 to support Helen Steel and David Morris, two former London Greenpeace activists who were sued by McDonald's after handing out flyers explaining the negative aspects of the restaurant (Ritzer 225). Since then, a website, www.mcspotlight.org, has been created to provide information on the case and everything else anti-McDonald's. The site has been increasing in popularity and "receives donations and support from a wide range of groups and individuals: unionists, environmentalists, people concerned about animal welfare/rights, people concerned about diet and nutrition, present and former McDonald's employees, etc." (McLibel Support Campaign).

HEALTH AWARENESS

The industry ideal is to make people familiar with fast food at an early age to make lifetime consumers of them. But teachers and parents can educate children on the importance of eating correctly and the risks of poor dieting. If children grow up with a strong, healthy base of eating habits, they are more likely to be informed consumers and parents later in life. Due to the concern with people's health, more attention has been brought to the difficulty of obtaining nutrition guides for fast food products, which have often been hidden behind doors or buried under more "important" documents so that employees were unable to produce such guides to customers who requested them (Super Size Me). In response to these demands, restaurants have become more prepared to handle such a request. Under enormous pressure from the media and consumers, for example, McDonald's instituted nutrition information on the packaging of its products. This is not only a marketing technique to show customers that they have nothing to hide but a progression toward greater consumer awareness.

A movement that is gradually gaining momentum is the "Slow Food" movement. The Slow Food organization, which began in Italy, is now a world-wide association whose purpose is to reeducate people on their eating habits. Slow Food USA "seeks to create dramatic and lasting change in the food system" by promoting the production and consumption of food in the safest and healthiest manner. It is genuine in its efforts to make people aware of the consequences of poor diet and advocates a change by means of less processed and more natural foods. This is more beneficial to societies of the fast food world than products

such as diet pills and fitness equipment, things that could be created. People can join Slow Food U.S.A. for a membership fee of \$60 (which is distributed among supporting causes) and receive a one-year subscription to *Slow* (the group's international journal), invitations to Slow Food events, and discounts on material and merchandise from Slow Food (Slow Food USA). Although the organization is not yet widely known in America, it expects to achieve widespread support in time through events and word of mouth.

The Slow Food movement stresses the importance of awareness and strives to turn ignorant consumers into knowledgeable ones who, once they begin to absorb the information, can make their own educated decisions to turn away from fast and unhealthy foods and embrace food that is cooked fresh. In fact, the movement is similar to the actions of Appleton Central Alternative High School, but on a much larger level that focuses on awareness. As Appleton is proof of the difference between fast processed food and "slow" cooked food, Slow Food educates people beyond high school. It endorses smaller, more community-friendly businesses and those who produce food in the more traditional manners. Slow Food strives to build resistance to the unhealthy and overpowering industry of fast food by encouraging support for a society that is against the industry's globalization and the detrimental lifestyle it promotes. Although its primary concerns pertain to food, part of Slow Food's appeal is that it is universal in its message of returning to tradition (Ritzer 229).

For those who still want food fast at an affordable price, there is another solution. In-N-Out Burger, found in only California, Arizona, and Nevada,

emerged in 1948 as a fast food restaurant. It still exists today and has continuously outscored many fast food restaurants in customer preference surveys. People have repeatedly voted In-N-Out the best fast food restaurant throughout the three states in which the eatery resides. More impressively, according to *Restaurants and Institutions* in March 2000, “among the nation’s fast food hamburger chains, In-N-Out ranked first in food quality, value, service, atmosphere, and cleanliness” (Schlosser 260). The restaurant has beaten every other fast food restaurant (despite its existence in only three states) every year since then. What sets it apart from all other fast food restaurants is its food. Unlike other chains, in which mass production is the goal, In-N-Out’s food is made fresh. As Carleen Hawn of Fast Company writes in “The In-N-Out Burger,” “Produce...is delivered fresh every other day, then washed and cut by hand. The Snyder family, still running the show, has never allowed freezers, heat lamps, or microwaves, so every sandwich is truly made-to-order and served hot.” Just as when it opened, all that is served are burgers, fries, soda, and shakes. The survey of consumers and food critics suggests that fast food is best and worth the wait when it is made with care and when the business’ main motive is not profit, but satisfaction of its customers. It establishes a glimmer of hope that people still can tell the difference between fast food and good food fast.

IMPROVING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Often, fast food jobs are seen as temporary employment opportunities rather than lifelong careers. Sociologist Robin Leidner explained in 2002 that “the American values of individualism and meritocracy suggest that workers

should improve their lot by moving out of fast-food jobs rather than by improving the compensation and working conditions in these jobs” (27). Because their turnover rate among employees is high and predictable, restaurants are attempting to create a more family-oriented atmosphere to which hourly employees can feel they belong. After all, the happier a worker is, the more loyal he or she is likely to be to the company. This effort to maintain contentment among employees dates back to the early times of the industry’s establishment. Billy Ingram, one half of White Castle’s original partnership, understood the importance of taking care of one’s employees and is quoted as saying, “If a man is laboring under a problem, it is not possible for him to give a full measure of his time, his heart and his mind to the duties to which he is engaged in a business” (Hogan 38). Ingram introduced respectable health insurance benefits for his employees and made working at fast food restaurants, or at least White Castle, reputable work for the time.

A raise in wages for fast food workers is also a worthy investment for the overall achievement of a fast food restaurant. In addition to serving tasty, healthy food fast, In-N-Out Burger is credited with paying its employees well. While other fast food wages are close to minimum wage rates, In-N-Out has always paid its workers above average and, consequently, has more loyal employees and a smaller percentage of turnover rates than its competition (Schlosser 260). The restaurant already has a head start because its food is freshly prepared. Paying its employees decent wages results in a ripple effect, as satisfied workers care more about their job and, hence, contribute to the improvement of productivity. In-N-

Out demonstrates that wages are directly related to the performances of employees.

ANIMAL RIGHTS

People are taking a stand for the treatment of the animals that are at the core of fast food. The practice of killing animals for food is nothing out of the ordinary for the human race. An issue arises, however, when the treatment of animals prior to their involuntary sacrifice is questionable. Many of the industry's ranches and factories have had to face the wrath of animal rights activists who have determined that animal cruelty is a very common practice in the institution. As activists fight for humane treatment of the cows, chickens, and other animals that are viewed as merely commodities of the industry, they expose to people the hazards of fast food production. Such knowledge can be used to improve the situation. As documented by Daniel Zwerdling in "Cracking Down on Egg Suppliers" from American RadioWorks, organizations such as PETA have placed pressure on fast food giants and have succeeded in convincing companies to enforce the humane treatment of animals.

BOYCOTTING

Still, there are people who simply choose to not give the industry their business. While some are disgusted by the industry and its practices, others simply do not care and have no taste for the food. Regardless of people's choices to stay away from fast food, not eating at restaurants can be viewed as protest. After all, as expressed by Henry David Thoreau in 1849, "it is not a man's duty...to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous

wrong...but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and...not to give it practically his support” (Thoreau 842). While approximately sixty percent of Americans eat at fast food restaurants, roughly forty percent choose not to. The simple decision to not eat fast food is the quickest step in the fight against the industry; “a good boycott, a refusal to buy, can speak much louder than words” (Schlosser 269). With this in mind, if people cut fast food from their diets, the silent voice of the public may eventually be strong enough to change American dependence on fast food and perhaps even destroy the industry.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

There are plenty of other ways to satisfy one’s appetite other than fast food. Nevertheless, people continue to eat it and complain when their health begins to decline. Then they often blame the industry. In 2002, two obese teenagers blamed McDonald’s for their weight conditions and took the fast food giant to court (Super Size Me). There were mixed reactions to this case: critics blamed the plaintiffs and their parents while sympathizers blamed the restaurant. Although Judge Robert Sweet threw the *Pelman v. McDonald’s Corporation* suit out, he did bring attention to the lack of information flowing from the company to customers and put McDonald’s in the spotlight.

America has encountered a similar situation with the tobacco industry. Children are taught in school at a very early age about all sorts of drugs and harmful substances. At the same time, ice cream trucks offer candies that resemble cigarettes and, until 1997, R.J. Reynolds used a cartoon character, Joe Camel, for its tobacco advertising campaign (Los Angeles Times). Cigarettes are

a main part of drug education for good reason – they are one of the most harmful substances that can be legally obtained. Thus, manufacturers must put labels on their boxes warning of the deadly consequences to consumers' health. After all, according to the National Foundation for Cancer Research, lung cancer due to smoking is the leading cause of preventable death among Americans. Still, people smoke and sometimes blame the tobacco companies when they develop smoking-related illnesses.

Blaming a corporation for the damage its products cause is reflective of the American character. The fast food industry does what it can within the limitations of the government to maximize profit. Thus, its legal exposure on television, billboards, in educational institutions, and so on must be handled accordingly by people through willpower and/or disregard. It *is* an institution's responsibility to warn consumers of the dangers and risks of purchasing and consuming or using its products. If this is done thoroughly, then any undesired circumstances that arise from the misuse of their product are not their fault.

Consumers are not forced to purchase firearms, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, or eat at fast food restaurants. They choose to make these purchases. Each person is responsible for the decisions he or she makes and for knowing the potential consequences that may come from those choices. In the end, people are accountable for themselves and cannot justifiably blame those who are performing their job (which is to acquire the greatest market possible to make the most profit) for the products that consumers misuse. Although it might be difficult to resist the temptation of advertisements of savory burgers and

sandwiches, people must do so for their own good. The debate is divided by a fuzzy line. There is personal responsibility for one's health; there is also the responsibility of businesses to take care of their consumers.

CONCLUSION

Since its start in America, the fast food industry has become a universal phenomenon and demonstrated that it is one of the country's greatest contributions to the world. Obviously, this is a mixed legacy and the industry *does* encounter opposition. Nevertheless, the fast food business has achieved immense success. Its road to success has been both rewarding and taxing, as many tweaks have had to be made to adjust to changing times. The American lifestyle has embraced fast food and made it a vital part of American culture. Fast food's role in society reflects the country's economic drive, health values, and eating habits. Indeed, the idea that American food is fast food is widely accepted around the world and even among Americans. It overshadows many varieties of truly American food and gives, perhaps, a misleadingly narrow impression of the American life. Still, it is true that the industry has played a significant part in molding Americans' lifestyles. But that might change.

People fall into three categories of perception and action; these categories are demonstrated in the cage metaphor of the velvet, rubber, and iron cages. In the velvet cage, people are enamored with the whole concept: they eat fast food readily and willingly and indulge in instant gratification. In the rubber cage, people take advantage of the conveniences that fast food provides but also acknowledge that their choices come with disadvantages. In the iron cage, people

see no appeal and observe only threats to society (Ritzer 213). Since those in the velvet embrace the industry wholeheartedly, the inhabitants of the rubber and iron cages bear the responsibility of making any potential changes. It is not enough for them to simply be *aware* of fast food's dangers; action should be taken.

Things are already being done. Schools are slowly eliminating not just fast food but all unhealthy snacks; books written at the youth level explain the negative effects of the industry. There are also books for more advanced readers, movies, and other protests. In-N-Out is proof that fast food can be successful without being so unhealthy. By increasing attention to the damage the industry causes, people are forcing society to consider consequences and to take part in perhaps breaking the business down.

Still, more can be done, such as other remedies that require the support of entire communities rather than individuals (although individual responsibility and community action can definitely work together). Increased funding for education would help ensure that schools not have to depend so heavily on fast food and junk food companies to purchase school supplies. Fast food restaurants should not be allowed in places such as hospitals and schools, where people are already susceptible to its power of influence. More emphasis should be placed on understanding the industry from a health, social, and economic standpoint in schools. Health education for children should not only stress the benefits of eating healthy foods but also the dangers of eating poorly. The industry should also be discussed in economics classes with the idea of McDonaldization. If children understand why fast food restaurants play such a big role in their schools,

they will more likely grow to question the way government, taxes, and funding are all linked and why this is not ideal.

It is possible that growing opposition, which emphasizes the Slow Food movement, because of its move away from processed food, will change this culinary aspect of American culture and identity. Factories could possibly become safer workplaces if the intensity of jobs is lessened. Workers of the industry might not be so replaceable, but more like those of In-N-Out. Movement toward a healthy American lifestyle, although quite gradual, *is* happening. As small changes accumulate, they become part of a larger picture that should matriculate into not only mainstream news but the country's education system. One can only hope that a coming generation, educated about the relationship between fast food and good health, may choose the latter.

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