Group 16- Global reactions to McDonalds and Other Fast Food Chains

Introduction:

you guys we have to shorten our essays since the limit is 2500, we have right now a little over 3000

This entry is about 4000 words!! WAY over the word limit for a group of 5 (2500 words). Word limits matter—quantity does not equal quantity and you almost doubled the time needed to edit it.

First opened in San Bernadino, California by brothers Richard and Maurice McDonald in May of 1940, McDonald's has become the world's largest chain of hamburger fast food restaurants. McDonald's now has more than 31,000 locations worldwide and is still growing; everyone recognizes the "golden arches". In each new location, McDonald's has partially assimilated to the area's cultural norms in order to satisfy the many patrons they service daily. As cultures around the world are opening up their borders to American fast food chains, a fear of Americanization, possibly even enthocide, is arising, with the consequences of "McDonalization" seeming tragic to cultural identities for many citizens and observers. Parallel to this, the success of McDonalds reflects the support of many individuals and groups. Our group plans on finding both the pros and cons of McDonaldization as well as the reactions and adaptations found in various cultures.

McDonald's In Europe: Reactions and Behavior:

The following section focuses on the reactions of various European nations to McDonald's, alongside with examining any changes in behavior within the cultures.

Behavioral Changes in Reaction to McDonald's in the Netherlands

McDonald's has molded to the cultures it makes it's home and adheres to a decorum so that people are just as satisfied there as they would be at any other McDonald's. But there has to be a cultural affect on the global spread of McDonald's, a Western culture icon, and that is essentially what Pet er H. Stephenson (year?) shows in his excerpt, “Going to McDonalds in Leiden: Reflections on the Concept of Soil and Society in the Netherlands”, from the book Ethos: Vol. 17, No. 2. This is not in References Cited, which is where the bibliographic information should be.

Within Stephenson’s article he delves into the landscape and layout of the part of the Netherlands in which he is studying, Leiden. As he speaks of it, he talks of the cultural norms and all the other parts of the culture that make it distinctly its own such as how polite the people are and how most people there are very much into their religion (going to church every Sunday causing stores to open a bit later than usual). While walking around Leiden he stops for coffee but since it is Sunday, he has very few options and thus ventures off to McDonald’s.

While in McDonald's he mentions the lack of culture and general organization the McDonald's has that the town usually possess as he waits in line for coffee awkward wording . Unlike the quiet suburban town he's used to, he witnesses a complete frenzy of people looking for food and any speck of service they can find. There he moves up to the counter and writes his order as the worker gives him a staple fake greeting with a plastered on smile. This tone of this section is appropriate to a magazine or blog but not an anthropological analysis. Things progressively become unorganized, people are not keeping in queue and people are yelling throwing their order sheets in the air demanding they get what they want immediately. Stephen's spelling makes a comment that is held in a large amount of area's in Europe who have McDonald's, he says that the "Western McDonald's had gotten into Leiden and taken it's culture, it slightly injected the "rude American" culture into anyone who walked in. The people of Leiden did appear to be completely different as soon as they walked into McDonald's after coming off the streets of Leiden. At smaller mom-and-pop shops, they didn't rush the counter and holler for attention like they did at McDonald's. I can't tell where the quote ends, and the page number from the article should be given e.g. (Stephenson year:page)

What is evident in many places that have had McDonald's established in them is that there are mixed feelings. Some feel as if McDonald's only wipes out culture and does nothing to enhance the area it's in, even if McDonald's has shown (time and time again) that it will change to the culture it is now part of do you have other sources/examples to back this up? . The feeling most European's have is that McDonald's will bring nothing more than problems and the destruction of culture's cultures is plural here not possessive. They do not want the "rude American" culture to sully the people of their country so many oppose it. There have been some cases where McDonald's has been accepted irrevocably because of the surplus of work it would bring to the people. Nevertheless it is still a touchy topic to those trying to resist the Americanization/Westernization/McDonaldization of their cultures, towns, cities, countries, and peoples, not a particularly strong section. The article could have been summarized more succinctly and the broader conclusions drawn from it about Europe need support from other sources.
Until recently, Israel's political and economic sectors were so interconnected that the government was able to almost entirely control the market, limiting foreign influences and giving funds to industries and agricultural corporations that would ensure a continuation of the long-dwelling Israeli culture (Illouz and Nicholas 2003). With such control over the economy, there were little free market opportunities, limiting change. In the early 1980s though, Israel experienced a time of rapid inflation, leading to the 1985 Emergency Stabilization Plan. The Plan, which helped pull Israel out of economic troubles, also weakened the link between the political and economic sectors, opening the doors to foreign influences, including McDonalds (Illouz and Nicholas 2003).

Even before McDonalds entered Israel in 1993, the company chose to consider the cultural differences of the country (Illouz and Nicholas 2003). Conferencing with Dr. Omri Padan, later appointed McDonald's Israel CEO, McDonald's decided that, due to the heterogeneity of Israel, an American based McDonald's headquarters would be unable to make appropriate decisions (Illouz and Nicholas 2003). Therefore, McDonald's established an Israeli headquarters and began to spread throughout Israel.

Since McDonald's has entered Israel, Israeli cuisine has encountered change, particularly with the famous dish of falafel. According to Ram, "McDonald’s presence, or rather the general McDonaldization of Israeli food habits, led to the falafel’s renaissance…available in two forms: gourmet and fast-food” (Ram 2004:13). Traditionally sold at street stands, the falafel can now be found at indoor, air-conditioned fast food chains, served in a variety of new flavors (Ram 2004). In addition, Ram notes the recent boom in nutrition concerns likely resulting from Americanization, leading to the new addition of a whole-wheat pita bread option and organic vegetable falafels. Though McDonald's has obviously affected Israeli food, Israeli diets have also played a part in forming the McDonalds' around them. In October 1995, the first Kosher McDonald's was opened, with 23 more Kosher branches as of October 2006 (McDonald's Israel). From 1969 to 1999, Israelis consumption of meat more than doubled, proving quite beneficial to McDonald's Israel, which today “has the distinction of being served the largest hamburger (120 grams) marketed by McDonald’s worldwide.” (Ram 2004:15) The popularity of the burger aligns with the idea of “popular culture”, in which people form their own cultures based on their own interests and values (Parker 1998:6). With this thinking, McDonald's has influenced Israeli culture, as well as all other cultures where the corporation has flourished, not by force, but rather by the citizens' choice.

Many Israelis though are more angered by the seeming lack of respect for national land marks, specifically the Golani Junction, a memorial and museum honoring all Golani soldiers lost in battle (Ram 2004). In December of 1994, McDonald's opened an outlet at Golani Junction, immediately causing outcry. The showy appearance of the McDonald's caused many to protest the new establishment. In response, McDonald's modified their original sign to a more modest one, placing the Golani site's icon over their own (Figure 2). In addition, McDonald's immediately chose to close the restaurant during memorial ceremonies and planted trees in front of the building as to shield visitors from direct eye contact with the restaurant (Azaryahu 1999). In this way, McDonald's conformed themselves to Israel. McDonald's has undoubtedly had an effect on the culture of Israel, but it is also clear that Israel has done it's part in making a McDonald's unique to it's own land.
McDonald’s In Asia: Viewpoints

This section is aimed to show exactly how countries in the east view McDonaldization and the influence it has over them.

Acceptance of McDonald’s in China

The McDonaldization of China has surprisingly led to China’s acceptance of it. Many people had found it to be homogenizing with its culture. There are some people who see McDonald’s as if it was part of their own cuisine, but there are those who see it as a foreign product. Still, the end results show that China has altered McDonald’s to meet its scientific specifications, at the same time having McDonald’s Americanize certain aspects of its culture. “Until recently the food has been indistinguishable from that served in Mobile, Alabama, or Moline, Illinois” (Bosco and Watson 1999).

When McDonald’s first opened in Beijing, China on January 8, 1975 China made sure to emphasis on nutritional value. This was to make sure that all the nutritional elements of a person’s necessary daily intake (fat, vitamins, protein, water, starch, sugar) were met. Its’ other main focuses was on quality, service, cleanliness and value; it had especially cleanliness. Sidewalks in front of the McDonald’s were always clean, keeping the cleanliness of the bathroom its main priority and even giving customers tours around the kitchen.

McDonald’s in China had made itself to be a family restaurant where generations of workers would be hired. Even McDonald’s well known icon, Ronald McDonald was transformed to “Uncle Ronald” and “Aunt McDonald”. During special occasions such as Chinese New Year McDonald’s “has added a Chinese new year happy meal for adults complete with red packaging and Chinese horoscope letters” (Guenette 2008).

Ever since McDonald’s began becoming a huge influence on Chinese culture parts of its customs have changed to turn out to be more Americanized. Between 1992-1993 “customers in Beijing usually left their rubbish on the table...main reason for this kind of behavior was that people regarded McDonald's as a formal restaurant where they had paid full service ” (Yan 2001); most likely a common assumption amongst the people of Beijing. By 1994 “about fifth of the customers began carrying their own trays to the trash; they began doing this after watching what the foreigners’ did-felt more civilized” (Yan 2001). The actions of the customers changed after seeing how the foreigners would clean up.

Probably one of the most influential factors of McDonald’s on China is the celebration of birthdays, for Chinese people traditionally don’t celebrate birthdays. But now “McDonald’s has become the number one location to have children’s birthday parties” (Guenette 2008). Also between a server and customer both are seen as equals as both are remained standing during the ordering process. Still, the idea of standing in line was seen as something foreign to the Chinese.

In many ways the McDonaldization of China has been a benefit for the Chinese people as they have become more united with American traditional customs. For some people, their main reasons for even going to McDonald’s isn’t even for the food, but instead to experience American culture. “The Big Mac doesn’t taste great; but the experience of eating in this place makes me feel good. Sometimes I even imagine that I am sitting in a restaurant in NYC or Paris” (Yan 2001). Through America’s culture new forms of dining as well as new patterns of behavior have become more acceptable. Many see McDonald’s as a good eating environment with good service and frankly many Chinese are proud to be eating foreign fast food. According to Bosco, when he took Hong Kong students to Taiwan for two weeks, a group of them decided to eat at McDonald’s...after eating Taiwanese food for ten days, they wanted to have some food that reminded them of home. As surprising as it is to learn that China has accepted McDonald’s to the point where they see it as part of their food’s culture shows McDonald’s success in globalization.
Acceptance of McDonald's in India

Although much of the world has been undergoing a "westernization" in terms of the food industry for several decades, one country in which such growth has been relatively stagnant, until recently, has been India. The first McDonald's did not open in India until 1996 – far later than the introduction of the western food market to other Asian countries. Much of this can be attributed to the cultural distinctiveness of India: most Indians prefer eating home-cooked meals, and there exists, in many areas of India, a food taboo prohibiting practicing Hindus from consuming products containing meat. Therefore, in order for McDonald's and other "western" fast food restaurants to flourish in India, these restaurants needed to make as many adaptations to accommodate the Indian market as the Indian market had to make to accommodate the western market. As India continues to evolve economically and culturally, so too does its acceptance of the western food industry.

India's growing food economy is paralleled by many of its fellow Asian countries. For much of its history, India's food came from domestic sources. However, lack of a strong processing industry is causing the country to shift to an importing philosophy, as are a number of other factors, including the growing income of India's citizens and population growth and urbanization (Dash, 2005). In much of Asia, this westernized urbanization brings a desire for alternative food sources, and the financial convenience of imported fast foods suggests that many would embrace a food market containing McDonald's and other fast food chains. It would therefore be beneficial for both the rich (who would seek to fulfill economic goals) and the poor (whose financial limitations necessitate procuring alternative sources of food) to have a food industry including urbanized foods such as McDonald's (Drakakis-Smith, 1991). However, according to Dash (2005), the people of India who have welcomed McDonald's have included only people of higher classes, because these are the classes that have extra money to spend on food and entertainment – a stark contrast from the food industries of fellow Asian countries. Rather than condemning McDonald's as just another institution that does not belong, however, many in India see it as an attractive, if not always affordable, luxury. And because Indian McDonald's have area-specific menus (including "Maharaja Macs and McVeggie Burgers) that expand and adapt to meet the varying dietary habits of India, more people are willing to embrace it as an acceptable option.
Unfortunately, however, as India’s food market continues to become more westernized, the problems associated with the western food market become more prevalent. One of the largest criticisms of American food culture involve its connections to health problems such as obesity and heart related issues, and as India continues to develop into a “McDonald’s” nation, these problems can be seen there as well (Pingali and Khwaja, 2004). While malnutrition in India is rapidly decreasing as a result of a more westernized market, its rate of obesity and other food related health problems are increasing – particularly in urban areas (Pingali and Khwaja, 2004). In order for India’s fast food market to continue to grow, therefore, it will need to implement healthier options without altering the changes it has made thus far, which have proven to be successful. For progress to continue, Indian McDonald’s must listen to what the people want while acting in their best interests. If this done carefully, McDonald’s will continue to grow positively in India as well as around the rest of the non-western world.

Figure 4. A photograph of Gandhi "eating" a cheeseburger (advertisement in India). [Link to photo](http://www.shanghaiexpat.com/phpbbforum/shanghai-vs-new-york-life-expectancy-infant-mortality-t105455.html)

The Sizes of Food Portions both in America and abroad

All around the world, people have different eating habits that are considered to be part of their culture and it may affect the portion size of food that they eat. Over the past 30 years, the portion size of many foods and the prevalence of eating away from home have led to an increase in obesity rates. About 65% of Americans are classified as overweight or obese today (Ledikwe 2005). Portion sizes in fast food chains have increased two to five times larger than when first introduced (Young 2007). Eating large portion sizes of high calorie foods have impacted the current obesity rates to increase. The increase of food portion sizes and the obesity rate has caught the health authorities, like the New York City Health Department’s attention to call on fast-food chains to reduce the sizes of their menu items.

Fast foods can lead to obesity due to large portion sizes and high-energy density. Large portions of food provides more calories which is fattening, and the bigger the portion size, the more people consume. In 1998, the largest size soda at fast foods was 32 oz. and in 2002 it increased to 42 oz. However, they are currently back to 32 oz. French fries also had once increased up to 7.1 oz., but after the production of the movie Super-Size Me in 2004, McDonald’s eliminated its supersize option and reduced the sizes of its large and medium. Despite fast food chains reduction of their food portions sizes; it still remains larger than how it was when first produced. “Today’s largest portion weighs the hamburger meat is 500% larger, the soda is 457% larger, and lastly French fries have also become 250% larger than it was in 1955” (Young 2007:244).

Fast food chains have grown larger and have even expanded itself all around the world. Nationwide, fast foods in general are still unhealthy and contribute to weight gain and obesity, leading one’s risk of getting diabetes, and other illnesses. However, a fast- food meal is different worldwide. McDonald’s in the US contain about 100 calories more than the largest sizes offered in Sweden and the United Kingdom. Fast food portions in the United States are larger than European Countries. Especially in Netherlands, 30% higher consumption levels increased due to the increase of the size portions (Steenhuis 2009). In Israel, the portion sizes have increased by 25% and Isralie customers now have the distinction of being served the largest hamburger (120 grams) marketed by McDonald’s worldwide. (Uri Ram).

People all around the world have brought up the issues of how the increase of the food portions has impacted their health negatively. Especially people in the United States have brought up this issue to fight against increase obesity rates which will eventually lead the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to reduce the size of the portions, to clarify the serving sizes and nutrition information. Since each country has its own formats of policies that were established, countries around the world have different sizes of food portions due to different eating habits. Food portion sizes are still changing and new trends are developing. Therefore these changes should be monitored carefully so that the effects of food intake can be observed and studied to prevent anymore health issues.
Summary

It is clear that the McDonaldization of countries around the world has had impacts on culture, from changing diets to increasing demands of speedy food service. Falafel stands in Israel have moved toward indoor fast food chains to keep up with McDonalds, and the Chinese have picked up on American restaurant etiquette. Traditional Mom-and-Pop stores have encountered competition in many cultures. In addition, cultures around the world have experienced rapid increases in obesity as people rely more and more on fast food as a staple. In America, roughly 65% of the population is now classified as overweight or obese, with other nations following the same trend. The matter must not be looked at in only one dimension though. Where McDonald’s has become established, citizens have played a role in creating their own McDonald’s, preserving cultural values through protests and resistance of McDonald’s qualities contrary to local cultural values and beliefs. Resistance by Orthodox Jews led to kosher options in Israel, and Indian dietary habits, including a food taboo prohibiting practicing Hindus from consuming products containing meat, resulted in Maharaja Macs and McVeggie Burgers. In China, special happy meals are available for adults on the Chinese New Year, which include Chinese Horoscopes in the bright red packaging. Food portions vary around the world as McDonald’s has conformed to the eating habits of the specific target population. Additionally, although the term “McDonaldization” brings with it many negative connotations, McDonald’s has been celebrated for its speedy food and taste. In China, many accept McDonald’s as part of their own culture and find novelty in the restaurant and in Israel, many enjoy the grab-and-go nature of the establishment. Even in India, where McDonalds has been especially slow to grow, many acknowledge the fast food restaurant as a luxury. Whether one feels that the negative changes outweigh the positive, or vise versa, globalization is clearly merging cultures and changing traditional eating habits.

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