

BURGER CULTURES: MCDONALDIZATION  
AND DE-MCDONALDIZATION  
IN CROATIA AND THE U.S.

by

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ABSTRACT

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The primary goal of this thesis is to contribute to critical/ social theory through food theory by examining the interactions between local (i.e., internal food trends) and delocalization/globalization, which are external food trends in Croatia and the United States. I argue, the globalization process is visible in Croatian's adoption of processed foods and fast-food experiences, while the localization in the United States is observable in the re-creation of local, organic, and slower food practices. Subsets of Croatians are embarking on a path of monoculturalism, and conversely, subgroups in the United States are deconstructing and resisting the one common global food culture. I begin my thesis in the country where McDonaldization commenced, taking the reader through a journey of localization to globalization and back to local, examining both the positive and negative consequences of these societal changes. Then a historical synopsis of Croatia's turbulent political past provides rudimentary understanding of the once Socialist country's modest beginnings. Lastly, the de-McDonaldizing effects on America's irrational food system are discussed, as well as implications for both Croatia and the United States.

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## CHAPTER 1

### *APERITIF*

I begin my thesis with an item we are all very well acquainted—as American as apple pie, so to speak—the juicy, flame-grilled staple of a red-blooded American: the hamburger. The true origin of the hamburger is a matter of debate; some say the first beef burger, in the form we know so well—a patty sandwiched between two buns—was first served at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904 St. Louis (Bryson 1994), whereas others argue it was mid-nineteenth century when German immigrants first served the hamburg steak on a steamship (Jakle and Sculle 1999). Although origins may be in Hamburg, Germany, the burger homogenized American palates and is a symbol of American nationhood (Morris 1971). This thesis, however, is not a historical synopsis of the hamburger, although, some aspects may be relevant. Rather, it is a glimpse into the merging of two worlds: on one side of the Atlantic is a historically Socialist country that recently came to the dark side of Capitalism—a once war ravaged country—looking to modernize in every sense of the word. On the other side is an inherently capitalistic country, a place where Weber's theory of rationalization permeates from every institution that comprises the society, a country where a burgeoning number of individuals are beginning to recognize negative aspects of modernity and looking to de-construct parts of their life, most relevant for this project, a deconstruction of their dinner plate.

The primary goal of this thesis is to contribute to critical/ social theory through food theory by examining the interactions between local i.e., (internal food trends) and delocalization/ globalization, which are external food trends in Croatia and the United States. I argues, the globalization process is visible in Croatian's adoption of processed foods and fast-food experiences, while the localization in the United States is observable in the re-creation of local,

organic, and slower cultural food practices. In other words, subsets of Croatians are embarking on a path of monoculturalism, and conversely, subgroups in the United States are deconstructing and resisting the one common global food culture.

It is difficult to deny that modernization advances society. For example, modernity has afforded middle-class Americans' (i.e., individuals within the 30<sup>th</sup> to 70<sup>th</sup> income percentile) privileges previously reserved for those fortunate enough to belong to the upper-classes (e.g., upscale dining, automobiles, and international travel). Much of this advancement can be attributed to Henry Ford. He realized mass production lowers unit cost for manufactured goods, and consequently lowers the profit margins per capita, but, on a much larger scale, mass production increases profitability because more products are sold—in his case automobiles—at a reduced price. Thus, when the plethora of people, comprising the middle-class were able to afford a product once reserved for the upper-class, profits increase exponentially (Agger 2004). Alternatively, one of the quandaries of such progression can be observed in what Weber described as an increasingly rationalized society led by predictability, calculability, efficiency, and control.

Predictability is evident throughout the United States and the world. Predictability in the United States is observable in the routine and standardized tasks people must execute on a daily basis in their 9–5 occupation (e.g., a data entry clerk who enters the same ten numbers in variant orders throughout the day, or the fry cook who opens the same bag of frozen potatoes and then fries them using the same receptacle over and over again). In fact, most institutions throughout our society have similarly routinized responsibilities that employees must complete on a daily basis. In addition to predictability, calculability also saturates modern society. Calculability is the means of creating an entity (e.g., a hamburger) consisting entirely of measurements—for McDonald's that is a 1.6 ounce hamburger: 3.9 inches in diameter, a 3.5-inch bun, and .25 ounces of onion—devoid of quality (i.e., low meat grade and fat laden oil, Ritzer 1996). In addition to predictability and calculability, efficiency is visible throughout the



world as well. Efficiency is in the repetitive tasks different people must carry out in order to complete one single assignment at their job, in essence, critical thinking and ingenuity are discouraged (e.g., this is observable in the assembly-line employee whose job is to push a button every few seconds that caps a jar of peanut butter, while the next employee's job is to repeatedly press a button that adheres a label on the peanut butter jar). Finally, control is what allows predictability, efficiency, and calculability to dominate American society. Control inundates nearly every aspect of our lives. Control is evident, for example, in the tremendous amount of power corporate America has over the public's daily affairs, as well as governmental policies.

Extending Weber's rationalization theory, George Ritzer encompasses modern societies' increasing reliance on not only rationalization but also the principles that guide the fast-food industry and dominate more and more sectors of society—in Ritzer's terms, this process is called McDonaldization (Ritzer 1996). McDonaldization is widely recognized for the negative consequences its structure has on society—it does, however, have positive elements. For example, different classes of people—from lower-to-upper—are treated equally by fast-food employees and other McDonaldized institutions. A person can go from very hungry to very full in a matter of minutes, and in a society of instantaneity, necessities are easily and conveniently accessible (Ritzer 1996, unpublished work), but the negatives still abound. Negative consequences are seen in the increasingly high rates of obesity in America and worldwide, potentially stemming from a food system that is highly rationalized, or McDonaldized. Negative consequences are visible in the discouragement of creativity and individuality in people that are employed at McDonaldized institutions. One might even argue that McDonaldization is recognized for its negative effects on society because they far exceed the positive.

The McDonaldized structure is evident throughout the modern American food system. McDonaldization of the food system is observable in the farming practices that are intended to improve efficiency of meat production. Supposedly, the improvement is the overcrowded factory

farm where animals are forced to live in deplorable conditions; some cattle are even forced into cannibalism (Pollan 2006). The live animal, or product, is then 'efficiently' slaughtered on an assembly-line that frequently malfunctions, and thus, inhumanely kills the animal. Employees working in slaughterhouses have reported countless cases of pigs swimming in hot oil while their flesh is cooking—even though the animals were supposed to be humanely slaughtered. And there is a lot of room for malfunction in this 'finely-oiled machine' we call a slaughterhouse. Thirty-two thousand pigs are slaughtered every day to contribute to the 200 pounds of meat eaten by one American in any given year. And because Americans love to eat white meat, chickens are skillfully injected with tons of hormones, to the point that the unfortunate animals cannot even stand on their own by the time they reach slaughter age. These supposed rational systems clearly bring with them a succession of irrational consequences. Thus, the irrationality of rationality (Ritzer 1996) is evident in the invented efficiencies of factory farming practices.

McDonaldization is visible in other parts of the 'efficient' food system as well. For example, corporations purchase fear-induced stress hormone-saturated meat—animals, utilized as food, including poultry, cattle, sheep, and swine secrete adrenocortical hormones, which remain in the meat and are transmitted to humans (Foury, Devillers, Sanchez, Griffon, and Morméde 2005). Food manufacturers then strategically package this meat containing elevated levels of steroid hormones so all indications of a live animal vanish. The package that consumers purchase at their local supermarket chain—a \$500 billion-a-year industry—has effectively been removed from the reality of what was once a live animal; Americans are so far removed from the food they consume that they probably forget the red and pink lump of meat in that neatly packaged cellophane was once a living, breathing, intelligent creature forced to live in abhorrent conditions, and that possibly died inhumanely. And to add some food for thought: if rats can show empathy (Bartal, Decety, Mason 2011), imagine the emotional faculties of an animal with much higher cognitive and emotional capacity (e.g., cows or sows). Food marketers know this is an uncomfortable truth and go to considerable effort so we, the consumer, do not

have to think about it—spending \$33 billion every year—to remove us emotionally and intellectually from the food we consume (Spurlock 2005); this is a long-standing practice assisting in the promotion and sale of food-like substances (e.g., Go-gurt and Gushers, Pollan 2006), rather than in the promotion of healthy, wholesome foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables).

McDonaldization is also viewable in the calculability utilized in fast-food restaurants' precise preparation of foods—down to the ounce measurement of pickles and onions that garnish our fat-laden hamburgers—a routinized and standardized way of serving the customer, which increases corporate profits (and the public's waist line). McDonaldization may also be observed in the conveyor-like system of efficiency that we call the drive-thru (Ritzer 1996). Thus, when all of the abovementioned is taken together, McDonaldization saturates every facet of the 'consumer-driven' food system that feeds us and our children at least three times a day. McDonaldization, as you will see, does not only govern the American food system, but it also permeates throughout the very institutions that comprise our society, and increasingly, the institutions that form the rest of our world.

There is hope in sight. Occupy Wall Street is not the only 99 percent fed-up. A countermovement is ensuing in the United States—a movement steering us away from the McDonaldized food culture, and toward a less rationalized system—similar to the revolutions against pesticides and white foods in the 1960s. This transformation is not only visible in theory, it has manifested into action. Rebellion is observable in the consistently increasing popularity of farmers markets, increasing sales of organic fruits and vegetables, grass-fed, free-range farm animals, and in the rapid construction of slower fast-food restaurants that are being built all over the country—restaurants like In-N-Out Burger. This shift in consumption is taking place amongst middle- and upper-middle class Americans, following the move from Fordism to post-Fordism. Paradoxically, the lower- and working-classes are eating processed foods at an all time high, as these foods are subsidized by the government (e.g., chips, boxed macaroni and cheese, and sugary sodas) and lower-classes have less access to supermarkets that actually carry lean

meats and fresh produce. Lower- and working-class Americans are also buying fast-food at an ever-increasing rate, in part, due to the long-standing misconception that eating at a fast-food restaurant gets you a large quantity of food for a low price. Accordingly, based on these variations and similarities between and amongst different class locations (working, middle, upper-middle, and upper) we can explore the varying levels of adherence to McDonaldization in the United States.

Alternatively, four-thousand miles away in the Eastern European countries, another movement is occurring. Countries such as Croatia are just beginning to McDonaldize. The end of communism in the late 1990s has left a vast and open land of opportunity for McDonald's and other corporations to take over and rationalize. Croatia is a country that is 'behind' the United States in modernization (Agger 2004) and vulnerable to a McDonaldizing system. (Discussed further in chapter four).

A once indigenous food culture may be in the beginning stages of McDonaldization, similar to the rationalization Americans first experienced in the Fordist economy. The homogeneity of McDonald's food, and the predictable experience when dining at McDonald's, I argue, may be one reason Croatian's are consuming fast-food in increasing quantities. That is, the unpredictability of the 1990s conflicts may have left Croats craving predictability and willing to accept standardization in their food and dining-out experience to fill this void.

The primary objective of this thesis is to analyze the McDonaldizing facets of Croatia with the de-McDonaldizing features simultaneously occurring in the United States. I begin in the country where McDonaldization commenced, taking the reader through a journey of localization to globalization and back to local, examining both the positive and negative consequences of these societal changes. Then a historical synopsis of Croatia's turbulent political past provides rudimentary understanding of the once Socialist country's modest beginnings. Allowing the reader to appreciate the modernization and McDonaldization transpiring in Croatia today, and to understand the ramifications these shifts have on a food culture dating back hundreds-of-years.

Lastly, the de-McDonaldizing effects on America's irrational food system are discussed, as well as implications for both Croatia and the United States.

## CHAPTER 2

### FIRST COURSE: UNITED STATES MCDONALDIZED: MCDONALD'S TAKEOVER

At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States underwent a series of transformative political changes, and a dramatic expansion of capitalism transpired. The industrial system replaced the factory farm, salaried labor replaced the family market, and production was moved outside the home. It was during this period that the standardization of American food culture began to unfold. With the growing amount of time men and women spent at work, convenience became more important than what was purchased, or how it was prepared and served for family meals. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that the price of fruits and vegetables actually rose 120 percent between 1985 and 2000, while the price of processed foods packed with sodium and sugar (i.e., junk food) only went up, on average, 50 percent or less (Spurlock 2005). Food marketers recognized that consumer's consumption patterns were shifting. The emphasis on expediency in foods became even more convenient when fast and frozen foods were combined in the 1950s by Swanson, who introduced TV dinners; entire pre-cooked meals that only needed to be reheated in the oven. It was during this period of immediacy, society grew increasingly involved in acquiring what Marcuse called "false needs" (quoted in Agger 2004). People began to buy everything from suburban homes to the mandatory two cars required to park in their freshly-painted garage. It was in this consumeristic society that the latest retailing modes (drive-ins) began serving hamburgers and other items to customers in their automobile. In other words, the increasingly dormant population did not even have to stand-up to order, purchase, and eat their fast-food meal. Thus, the emphasis on mechanization in the American food industry commenced. Mechanization, standardization, and routinization are characteristic of modernity. These features seamlessly seeped past the assembly-line into Americans' dietary practices and

lifestyle. The shifting dietary practices most Americans experienced during this time have a foundation in the societal changes of the era. Strengthened capitalism of the post-World War II period became visible in the mass production and consumption of everything from televisions to refrigerators (Agger 2004), and this change was indicative of the consumeristic values people began to hold. Families convened around the television rather than the dinner table, and were more likely to consume take-out, fast-food, or frozen dinners (Raley 2006), than they were to prepare home-cooked meals from scratch. Americans also developed the tendency to eat too fast, often while preoccupied (e.g., watching TV). Evidence suggests that when eating while distracted people tend to consume more calories and digest less effectively (Harding 2012). This transformed society caused individuals to ‘accelerate’ all parts of their life (e.g., increased speed in the workplace); most relevant, for this project, however, is the accelerated food, or the more widely used term—fast-food.

### 2.1 Drive thru's and Happy Meals

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the United States witnessed a drastic decrease in factory work, followed by an influx in service jobs, primarily in the fast-food industry. In 2000, for example, 80% of jobs in the service industry were in the restaurant sector, primarily fast-food (Civitello 2008). These service jobs require minimal creativity and/ or thought-provoking discussion, little-to-no skills, and offer low pay with no benefits. And as we ascend into a life of even faster capitalism, the service industry continues to thrive (Agger 2004). As previously mentioned, people have little time to prepare meals at home or do their own cooking, and thus, a demand for low-skilled workers such as fry cooks, clerks, and cashiers was created. In fact, about fifty cents of every dollar Americans expend on food is spent on dining outside of the home, predominantly fast-food, and typically drive-thru's—summing-up to more than \$110 billion in 2000 alone (Civitello 2008:356).

What's more, Individuals did not change their dietary habits or cravings during this period of ascendancy into fast-food consumption. People continued consuming the traditional

'meat and potatoes' diet of a red-blooded American—just in a faster version. Fast-food restaurants increasingly served fat laden food items, such as the 'all-American' pizza, hamburger, and hotdog, to their customers—foods filled with preservatives and high fructose corn syrup. In fact, one might say that fast-food is in America's DNA. To strengthen this argument with numbers—in 2000 alone, Americans consumed more than three billion pizzas (Spurlock 2005). And no longer satisfied with the typical fast-food offerings, consumers even began to demand ingenuity from fast-food restaurants. So in 2005, Domino's had the 'appetizing' idea to combine two of America's favorite foods—pizza and cheeseburgers—producing the Cheese burger pizza. The foods consumed at this time increasingly represented a nation filled with eaters whose dietary practices only benefitted the earnings of Dominos and other fast-food corporate CEO's. To put it in perspective, a large cheeseburger pizza boasts a whopping 3,040 calories. And what's worse than the unhealthy foods, despite what politicians and the government want you to believe, the demand for pizza delivery people and other jobs created by fast-food restaurants like Domino's and McDonald's have negative consequences for the society at large. Consequences we are still bearing the brunt of today; visible not only in our economic down-turn, but also in the large number of highly-educated people with little-to-no job prospects who may have no choice but to work in one of the few expanding industries—the service industry. Which begs the question: Are you still hungry for that Cheeseburger pizza?

Another change that transpired during this time, and is still occurring today, concerns the lower- and working-classes. More specifically, the lower- and working-classes that are no longer able to pay their bills after breaking their backs in the hard labor once required of low-paid employees—except, of course, in industries where hard labor is still necessary (e.g., manufacturing). Nowadays, the working poor are your local burger flipper, or the man cleaning that shiny, brightly-lit fast-food restaurant where you ate for lunch, or the woman at the drive-thru handing you the 'value' meal you just ordered for your daughter. These are the faces of the poor, people unable to make ends meet while working two jobs in the non-unionized service



industry. Worst of all, these negative consequences are not comprehensive. There are more depressing costs of these societal shifts—changes visible closer to your home.

The middle-classes of today are similar to those from earlier periods— little-to-no time to cook for themselves, so they eat out at meat-obsessed fast-food restaurants, and gain weight because the food is high in carbohydrates, fat, and sodium. Consequently, they become (even more) depressed when needing to fit into the must-have fashion trends advertisers tell us are essential for the season—like skinny jeans or leather miniskirts—so they go to their primary care physician and start popping the antidepressant medication he dutifully prescribes. In fact, Americans are popping pills at an all time high—antidepressant use in the United States has nearly tripled in the last ten years (Spurlock 2005).

Pills are not the only thing Americans are consuming in increasing quantities. Dining outside of the home is becoming a more and more common occurrence as well. Studies show that people who dine-out frequently carry around more body fat than those who eat at home, and people who eat out at restaurants typically consume more calories and fat (Harding 2012). The cyclical nature of America's decreasing income and increasing waistline is evident when you consider that the demand for service employees is related to the demanding careers of the middle-classes. The middle-class is comprised of people who do not have enough time to care for (or enjoy) the items they work so hard to acquire (e.g., hiring a maid to clean their new suburban home). And if that is not enough to convince you; America's McDonaldized waist line can be found in any government health report under the leading cause of preventable death—a direct consequence of the increasing rates of obesity caused by poor diets of fast-food hamburgers, and bad lifestyle choices with little-to-no physical activity.

With all the negative manifestations of McDonaldization, we Americans still love our burgers. In the United States people have a seemingly innate urge to find burger perfection. Not only because of the convenience these finger foods provide—one can practically be anywhere when he or she wolfs down a hamburger— but more for the foundation. The traditional staple of

the American diet: beef. There is a longstanding history of fondness for beef in America, similar to the deceleration of American cattle commercials, 'Beef. It's what's for dinner.' Our preference for cattle actually began in the nineteenth-century when beef became the dietary symbol of the Wild West, and representative of American consciousness (Jakle and Sculle 1999). It was not until the beginning of the twentieth-century that White Castle became the first corporation to create a friendly social space to sell their distinguished one-inch-square meat patties outside of the home (Hogan 1997). Although White Castle was the first company to mass produce and sell hamburgers, it is McDonald's that boasts of the billions served daily. And it is McDonald's—whether we like it or not—that is the global symbol of Americana.

## 2.2 McDonald's Unwrapped

In the history of McDonald's, one can observe the intricacies of the McDonaldization structure, and may begin to understand how a single company assumed global dominance. 1930s America was a time of frugality and great change, following the 1929 Stock Market Crash. It was in this economic down-turn that the McDonald's brothers began their first diner-style burger bar—complete with a walk-up window—on the now infamous Route 66 in San Bernardino, California. In 1948, however, the brothers decided to redesign their burger bar, which was a replicated version of other popular café's of the era. The McDonald's brothers planned to reopen with a new standardized and mechanized preparation and serving process. More specifically, the brothers used Frederick Taylor's scientific management model to transform their burger operation into an efficient profit-making machine.

Frederick Taylor is the genius behind the McDonald brother's initial success, and Ray Kroc's legendary position. Taylor utilized a science-based method; examining the most resourceful workers to find the best way to do a specific job, and employing the time and motion principles of physics. He studied the amount of time an individual spends on a particular task, and attempted to instate a more efficient method of performing that duty. He did this by breaking down the tasks into minute components. The purpose was to minimize the duration of time

spent on a single aspect of the operation, thus, maximizing efficiency and profit margins. Scientific management was utilized within McDonald's and other fast-food restaurants, for example, in determining the most efficient way to grill a hamburger. The McDonald's brothers used Taylor's scientific management paradigm to make other changes as well. They removed everything from the menu that required silverware, reduced the size of the burgers, and lowered prices, preparation of the food was divided into simple, standardized, repetitive tasks to be carried out by different employees, and, customers were to serve, and clean-up after themselves (Ashley, Hollows, Jones, and Taylor 2004).

These changes proved a success for the McDonald's burger operation. But as successful as the McDonald's brothers were in 1954 as sole owners of twelve franchised fast-food outlets, it was not until 1955, when Ray Kroc opened his first McDonald's restaurant, that the true potential for a hamburger bar began to be realized. Kroc was armed with Taylor's scientific management model and his self-taught entrepreneurial talents, which stemmed from his career as a mixer salesman. With his skillfulness, Kroc managed to open 200 outlets by 1960. It was in this same year that McDonald's became the standard model for all fast-food restaurants. It was not merely the rationalized model within McDonalds' standardized kitchen at the heart of all this success, or the mechanized operations that Kroc enforced in the workings of every restaurant. Kroc's visions went far beyond the hamburgers and french fries his restaurants produced. His standardized and mechanized business operations included the actual franchisees that owned and operated a McDonald's outlet. In fact, McDonald's headquarters enforced corporate standards on every level of operations. Corporate chose the restaurant site, sent franchisees to Hamburger University for proper training, and even controlled architectural features inside and outside the business (Jakle and Sculle 1999).

At the center of all McDonald's success, behind Ray Kroc, was the standardized, trademark product: a 1.6 ounce hamburger: 3.9 inches in diameter, a 3.5-inch bun, and .25 ounces of onion. All of this for the low, low price of only 15 cents—in the 1950s (Jakle and

Sculle 1999), and only 89 cents today. The hamburger itself became a focal point of American's fascination and reliance on technology and speed. Standardized preparation of this symbol of Americana, offered a mascot for the changing economic environment in the United States. When trends of dining-out shifted—as the economy went from industrial to service-based—McDonald's utilized this golden opportunity by erecting their golden arches and serving customers the symbol of America's changing values—McDonald's served the hamburger.

This symbol of modernization represented an emphasis on technology and speed not only in food, but in all facets of daily life. McDonald's hamburgers signified positive aspects of a changing lifestyle (e.g., advancements in technology), but also the problems that manifested. The high-fat, high-sodium burgers and other foods McDonald's serves, for example, causes individuals to gain weight at an alarming rate, however, this is not the only quandary. Americans' lives also began to move faster and faster while people consumed more and more fast-food. A faster lifestyle that transformed every facet of our lives, not just our diet (Agger 2004). Work schedules got longer and more mentally strenuous, leaving people less time to spend with their family and friends. Isolationism manifested in the growing number of white-collar jobs that led people to modify their leisure time into a more sedentary form. Individuals began living an unhealthy lifestyle, with little exercise and an increasing number of trips to McDonald's and other fast-food restaurants. And this was only the tip of the iceberg.

Obesity surpassed cigarette smoking as our nation's biggest public health concern in 2010. Excessive weight and obesity are closely linked to heart disease, various types of cancer, and diabetes. Additionally, statistics indicate the number of overweight and obese children in our country continues to increase. A significant portion of this epidemic can be blamed on the lifestyle issues mentioned before, as children are following their parent's model and consuming too little fresh fruits and vegetables, and too much processed foods that are high in calories and low in nutritional value. Televisions, computers, and smart phones have become the focus of daily activities (summing to a total of seven hours per day for the average teen). Social location

plays an important role as well. Obesity problems are becoming more of an issue for the lower- and working- classes whom feast on fast-food more frequently than those belonging to higher classes, due in part to the increasing number of single-parent households and the decrease of money needed to buy the more expensive wholesome foods. In fact, middle- and upper-classes are beginning to reject standardization in all forms—McDonald's being the epitome of this standardization.

## CHAPTER 3

### SECOND COURSE: CROATIA PRE-MCDONALDIZATION: SUPERSIZED BUT NOT FAST-FOOD

In *The McDonaldization of Society*, George Ritzer (1996) briefly discussed the McDonaldization of Eastern Europe; I take his observation a step further by expanding on this premise and examining the case of Croatia. The standardization of McDonald's food, and the predictable experience when dining at McDonald's, I argue, may be one reason Croatian's are consuming fast-food in increasing quantities. More specifically, the unpredictability of the 1990s conflicts may have left Croats craving certainty and willing to accept standardization in their food and dining-out experience to fill this void. To appreciate this argument we must first have rudimentary knowledge of the conflict and disintegration that occurred in the former Yugoslavia.

#### 3.1 Historical Background of Croatia

Formerly a part of Yugoslavia, Croatia has an intricate and complex history dating back to the seventh-century; however, our history lesson begins in the seventeenth-century. In the 1700s, Venetian powers attempted to accommodate Orthodox immigrants (Serbs) in a land where Catholicism was the only recognized faith. Initially, the small numbers of Serbian immigrants were pleased to oblige and convert to Catholicism. However, toward the end of the seventeenth-century, following triumphant wars by the Ottoman Empire, the area acquired a substantial Orthodox population, leading to a considerable increase in the once marginal religious population. Venetians and Viennese controlled the area, and thus, two different interests ruled. As a result, each power arrived at divergent solutions on how to assimilate the Serb Orthodox Church into their lawful guidelines. Although the Serb population eventually became legal subjects, following the establishment of the Orthodox Church in the Hungarian

territory, their standing as a separate community remained unresolved until the downfall of Venetian rule in 1797.

Skip ahead a few generations to 1918. The former Yugoslavia was known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. This greatly displeased the Italians, as they did not envision a separate Yugoslavia when the Treaty of London was signed in 1827. In an effort to resist the recognition of Yugoslavia as a separate country, the Italian foreign minister, Sidney Sonnino, along with Italian armed forces, attempted to impede the formation of Yugoslavia both diplomatically—by coastal economic blockades—and militarily—by sending troops beyond the cease fire line—in an effort to dissolve Yugoslavia before it could exist. There were three separate delegations in Paris at this time: Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian. Slovenes established exclusive, shared institutions, which allowed stronger organization of group identity (Cornell and Hartman 2007). The Serbian delegation, on the other hand, was large and inoperative, mainly because it was unnecessary to sustain efficient arms since Serbian (Yugoslav) officials constantly communicated with Belgrade whom delegated much of the power. In contrast to the Slovenes, Croats did not establish a separate office and largely resisted the Italians both diplomatically and militarily on their own—although the Croatian diplomats (Trumbic and Smodlaka) did manage to establish good relations with the American embassy.

The Serbs expected Slovenian and Croatian territory to be surrendered to the Italians; however, American President Thomas Woodrow Wilson negotiated on behalf of the Croats and suggested the territories in question be divided by ethnicity and language, which would also transfer to culture. Despite Italy's objections, the Adriatic Question was resolved in early June, 1919, as the British and French governments acknowledged the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The Treaty of Versailles was signed June 28, 1919, after which President Wilson left Paris, and the French initiated representation of Yugoslav interests (Magas 2007).

The regions that comprised Yugoslavia, including Croatia, were divided by geographical location and homogeneous in each respective region relevant to ethnicity, language, and culture, in essence isolating diversity. World War II further separated the Yugoslav ethnic groups, as the ruthless, bloody battles in Yugoslavia pitted comrade against comrade. The strain between Serbs and Croats reached a breaking point when the Germans occupied Yugoslavia. A large number of Croats aligned with the German soldiers in an effort to establish their independent Ustasha state, where they implemented a reign of terror and killed more than 300,000 Serbs (Smits 2010). In response to the subjugation, two notable resistance movements emerged: Serbian Chetniks, who aimed to establish 'a Greater Serbia', and the communist Partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito. The Chetniks fought with Communist Partisans, Serbs clashed with the Croatian Ustasha, and the Muslims joined both the Ustashes and the Partisans, turning warfare into fratricide (Neuffer 2002).

No one could ignore the destruction of a war where tens of thousands were displaced or killed. This led Tito to make the fateful decision to reassign history—he outlawed a dialogue of who was against whom, and proclaimed the Partisans war victors and the Ustasha, Nazis, and Chetniks defeated (Neuffer 2002). Tito's Yugoslavia was in shambles, between the abundance of individual hatreds and hundreds of regional disputes, Tito faced the daunting task of repairing a war-torn and un-united country. In an effort to preserve the diversity and unite the country of Yugoslavia, Tito chose to expunge ethnicity in favor of a nationalistic identity. He commanded that all citizens were to forget their ethnic history—people were no longer to identify based on ethnicity, from now on, all were simply Yugoslavs.

As the history of Yugoslavia is well documented, one can conclude that the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia demonstrates an integrative process of national identity construction that failed. Although many of the underpinnings required to integrate a nation were present, the economic recession and resurgent nationalist forces led people in Yugoslavia to "identify themselves as members of a multi-national state rather than as members of specific



nationality” (Sekulic, Hodson, Massey 1994:84). Nationalism is not simply a “political sentiment and movement” (Cornell and Hartmann 2007:37). Its claims are based on declarations of common cultural inheritance and past historical appeals. Additionally, not all nationalism is based on “preexisting ethnic ties” (Cornell and Hartmann 2007:37). Tito attempted to unify the citizens of Yugoslavia by creating a common nationalistic identity of ‘Yugoslavs’ in place of the ethnic identity developed in each region. What Tito failed to recognize, however, is that constructing a sense of peoplehood, cultural assimilation, and the ‘renaming’ process is complex (Horowitz 2000), and most people are not willing to sacrifice their identity.

After the Germans were defeated in World War II, Tito established the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as the “federation of equal nations,” led by a centralized government: the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Sekulic, Hodson, Massey 1994:86). During this time Yugoslavia was fairly peaceful. Tito’s regime addressed ethnic sentiments by averting the transference of emotional ethnic ties to future generations, and provided sanctioned assurance for the use of one’s language. This was accomplished, for example, by reducing the autonomy of the churches and bringing back the function of religion in the expression of ethnic identity (Seroka 1992). Tito also established the “ethnonation” of Bosnia for reasons of provincial political stability (Safran 2008:447). Tito and the regime expected that modernization would decrease the power of ethnic sentiments (Sekulic, Hodson, Massey 1994), and that Fordism would replace the once ethnically-based unification of Yugoslavia with a solidarity based on nationality and social stratification.

### 3.2 Capitalism Prevails

During the reign of Josip Broz Tito from 1943-1980, the Croatian government formulated various financial plans to boost the economy inspired by capitalism in the West; however, the 1990s conflicts in the Western Balkan’s region resulted in deindustrialization, high unemployment, political chaos, ethnic disintegration, and overall instability (Bartlett 2009). Preceding the 1990s war, the once Socialist Yugoslavia was, however, rather integrated into the

global economy, making the transition from a planned to market economy relatively seamless following a short period of stagnation. Following the end of the conflict in 1995, engagement with globalization transpired faster in Croatia than surrounding areas (e.g., Bosnia). Tourism became a primary source of internal earnings in 2000, and, after the banking crisis in 1998, a large portion of the financial sector was sold to Italy and Austria, providing revenue for the Croatian government (Bartlett 2009). In the Balkans today, many of the ethnic animosities that once saturated society seem to be nothing more than remnants of history. Modern buildings now line the streets, and global chains such as McDonalds are in the cities. In fact, some parts of the Balkan region are looking and feeling more and more like the rest of Europe.

Once a country experiences a reputation-damaging history (particularly one that occurred in front of the entire international community), the government has to decide how it will represent itself post-war. Rivera (2008) argues that for the Croatian government the solution involved a simple reframing of past events in an attempt to restructure the country as close to their Western European neighbors as possible. This was achieved by managing the country's primary export and means of communication with the international world—tourism. Changes in the mass marketed tourism branch of Croatia were marked by the government's efforts to align with Western European culture—a culture saturated with capitalistic notions of life.

Once the communistic model of Croatia was replaced with a capitalistic structure, the Eastern European region began the process of modernization to improve economic instability—McDonaldization of a once Socialist state commenced. The McDonaldization of Croatia is evident in the increasingly rationalized social institutions (e.g., tourism, agriculture and farming, retail, language, the judicial system, and higher education). The interest of this project, however, lies primarily in the complexities of another central issue: the palates of Croats. I argue changing taste preferences within Croatia might be an example of McDonaldization. However, we will focus not only on the changes that occurred within the once indigenously rich Croatian food culture, but we also give attention to relevant institutions transformed during the cultural

reframing process that followed the 1990s conflict. There is a great body of literature which suggests that food is used as a political symbol—predominantly in periods of great economic and social change (e.g., the Boston tea party in America). Croatia's shifting food culture may serve as another example of this phenomenon.

Kesić, Rajh, and Kesić (2008) examined food-related lifestyle segmentation based on survey research involving 902 Croatian consumers drawn from the five largest cities. The researchers suggested there are five food-related lifestyle segmentations: relaxed, traditionalists, modern, concerned nutritionists, and experimentalists. Utilizing individual methods of shopping, cooking techniques, importance placed on nutritional quality, consumption patterns, purchasing motives, and distinct sociodemographic features, researchers analyzed Croatian food behaviors and practices. The study showed 22% of the surveyed population belongs to the relaxed segment (i.e., not interested in buying, preparing, and serving food, little-to-no shopping in specialty stores, high use of ready-to-eat foods, and regularly dine-out). Average age range for this segment is 36-50 years. People belonging to this group are likely to have a high school education and earn a middle income. Twenty-four percent of those surveyed belong to the modern segment (i.e., spend little time buying, preparing, and cooking food, tend to gather product information in advance, spend as little time as possible shopping and preparing food, and tend to not modify their eating habits). Average age is 26-50 years, most have at least a college degree, and earn a higher than average income. Eighteen percent of the surveyed population encompasses the experimentalist segment, which arose from the globalization process (i.e., pay premium prices for ecological products and like to try new foods, cook simple meals from different cultures, enjoy trying new and foreign recipes, view shopping as a challenge to find innovative products, and take pleasure in preparing unusual meals). This segment is characterized by respondents who have a degree in higher education. Twenty-six percent of the sample belongs to the concerned nutritionist segment (i.e., vigilant in assessing the nutritional value of food purchased and consumed, frequently make shopping lists, and

consider themselves to be excellent cooks). This segment is characterized by younger consumers with a college education. Lowest in the sample is the traditionalist segment, which comprises only 10% of respondents. Traditionalists in this study are individuals who try to preserve traditional cooking methods. Respondents belonging to this category are older than average, likely to have a high school education, and earn a lower income.

Similar to the Croatian study, Trudeau, Kristal, Li, and Patterson (1998) found that in the United States being married, older, and having more years of education is also linked to a higher consumption of vegetables and differences in consumption patterns. To this end, Hur, Kim, and Park (2010) surveyed 518 women in the United States in an exploration of household consumer lifestyles. The researchers focused on women in the United States because they tend to be the primary food preparers in the home. Six lifestyle segments were found to exist in the American market group they surveyed (Wellbeing- oriented, Social- and dining-oriented, Family-oriented, Innovation- and action oriented, Price-conscious, and Convenience-oriented). Twenty-five percent belong to the Wellbeing- oriented category, which is comprised of environmentally conscious individuals who earn a high-income; people who are highly educated, health-conscious, and involved in social issues—this segment appears comparable to the concerned nutritionists group from the Croatian study, characterized by individuals who assess nutritional values. In addition, the Well-being oriented group is also similar to Croatian experimentalists who purchase organic products and experiment with cuisines. Ten percent belong to the Social- and dining-oriented segment, which is comprised of individuals who prefer eating out and are less sensitive to price—this group is similar to the relaxed segment in Croatia, who purchase and consume a lot of ready-made foods. Fifteen percent of those surveyed belong in the Family-oriented category. This segment is characterized by women devoted to the household, who work part-time (if at all), and prefer to cook at home— this group is comparable to the traditionalist segment in Croatia who try to uphold traditional cooking and dietary practices. Nineteen percent are categorized in the Innovation- and action oriented segment. Individuals in

this group have a strong need to make improvements and changes in their lives, they are interested in health and the environment, but also like to socialize and dine-out—this segment is similar to the modern segment in Croatia who spend as little time as possible buying and preparing meals. Eleven percent surveyed belongs to the Price-conscious group, who are highly sensitive to prices and prefer non-perishable to refrigerated foods—this group is also comparable to the traditionalist segment in Croatia, which is characterized by lower-earning segments of the population. Sixteen percent from the American survey are Convenience-oriented. These individuals value expediency and are partial to refrigerated foods—this segment is comparable to the modern segment in Croatia, as they also value time and spend as little time as possible buying, preparing, and cooking foods. In my opinion, these studies demonstrate the parallel within and across class differences in the globalizing Croatian food culture and the already globalized American food culture. These differences in both countries are based not only on sociodemographic characteristics but also on years of education and years of age, which are relevant to food-related lifestyle choices. The two studies suggest that the standardization and predictability in American dietary practices are also representative of some food behaviors and practices in Croatia.

### 3.3 Cuisine of the Regions

Croatian food culture is deeply entrenched in the cores of the individuals that walk the cobble stone streets, pebbled beaches, or wooded forests. Croatian cuisine is referred to as 'the cuisine of regions' due to its heterogeneity. Inhabitants of the Dalmatian region, for example, consume a lot of seafood and vegetables; in the region of Istria and Kvarner, people eat a mixture of inland and coastal cuisine such as fish, stews, and risotto dishes; the cuisines of Gorski Kotar and Lika, include boiled potatoes, pickled cabbage, dairy, and meats; Slavonia and Baranja cuisine is filled with plenty of carbohydrates: bread, pasta, potatoes, and meats; in the North West region, Croatians consume lots of breads, dairy, meats, and vegetables. More specifically, a typical Istrian meal is based on fish, seafood, small portions of meat, a mixture of

vegetables, legumes, and carbohydrates such as pasta and rice. Dalmatian cuisine is also rather light and low in calories—people tend to have a partiality to seafood and produce. Both Istrian and Dalmatian cuisine have many influences, including Greek, Roman, and Italian (Fox 1998).

The culinary traditions of the North West region of Zagreb, however, differ greatly from coastal and inland Croatia. In Zagreb, which is the capital of Croatia, food eaten is very typical Middle European. Characteristic for this area, is an intensive consumption of meat (pork or beef), usually roasted, or prepared as a goulash (Fox 2007). Traditional flavors and aromas coming from a Northern Croatian kitchen have an Austrian/ Hungarian essence. Mixed meat, potatoes drizzled with olive oil, and cabbage salads, serve as dietary staples of the traditional North Western Croatian consumer.

#### 3.4 A History of Mixed Meats and Minced Onions: the *Pljeskavica*

Armed with a basic understanding of Croatia's complex economic and food history we arrive back to the elusive hamburger. Allow me to describe a scenario involving a fictitious American who is visiting the Eastern European region for the first time—let's call him Paul. Paul is sightseeing and taking pictures of the elaborate cathedrals scattered throughout Croatia's long and winding streets. Paul gets hungry, and attempts to order something that he recognizes. He reads the descriptions and comes across *pljeskavica*, which is described as a hamburger. Paul vainly attempts to order the American version of a burger, which consists of an all beef patty topped with melting cheese, garnished with lettuce, pickles, tomatoes, onions, and perhaps mayonnaise and mustard. Paul is all too familiar with ordering a hamburger in the States, as he is a fast-food-frequenter. When ordering in the United States, for example, he is aware there may be slight variations in the way the burger is served or prepared, but the foundation is largely unaffected. The American burger is, however, vastly different from the Croatian version—the *pljeskavica*.

The word *pljeskavica* comes from *pljesak*, a Croatian word for cupping the hands, the movement used to press the burger into a thin circular shape. *Pljeskavica* is made from a ground mixture of mixed meat and chopped onion, pounded thin and grilled on both sides until light brown. The entire animal is used when cooking this mixed meat concoction. Formulas include beef, veal, lamb, and pork. Each butcher harbors secrets—like adding fat from around the beef kidneys, grinding in pork neck, or adding mineral water to lighten the mix (Moskin 2010). *Pljeskavica* is often grilled with onions and plopped gracelessly into a pillowy split pita, called *lipinja*, with layers of creamy house-made yogurt, sour cream, chopped salad, and spoonfuls of *ajvar*, a bright red relish of pepper, garlic, and eggplant. Now that we are familiar with the components of the *pljeskavica*, we arrive back to Paul. Paul just received his Balkan burger; and is initially taken aback with the unfamiliar meal in front of him, but is pleasantly surprised with his decision once he takes his first bite.

### 3.5 Indigenous Foodie Background in Zagreb

*Pljeskavica* is only one example of the indigenous cuisine found in North Western Croatia. When entering a Croatians home a visitor can expect to be offered something to eat or drink almost immediately, as this practice is customary. Traditionally, in Northern Croatia, the main meal of the day is a home-cooked late lunch, and the food served has an Austrian or Hungarian essence, normally consisting of chicken- or beef-based broth soup, animal protein (often pork), potatoes, cabbage or mixed salad served with a vinegar and oil mixture, and bread (Fox 2007). The prepared meal is typically served family-style on the dining table. A traditional Croatian dinner might consist of leftovers from lunch, fruit, or cold meats such as prosciutto, cheeses, and bread. Women are the primary food preparers in a Croatian home, whereas men might cook for special occasions or prepare a food item that is a personal specialty (e.g., roasted pork—which is eaten in large quantities during the holidays). Alcohol is another item in abundance on special occasions and at friend or family gatherings—typically wine and plum brandy. The traditional Croatian meal is, however, beginning to modernize. Croatian dietary

practices are beginning to resemble those residing in the United States; rather, than the former Yugoslavia. Croatian eating patterns are globalizing.



## CHAPTER 4

### THIRD COURSE: CROATS ON BIG MACS

Croatia is rapidly becoming immersed into the global economy. A once indigenous food culture, I argue, may be in the beginning stages of McDonaldization, similar to the rationalization Americans first experienced in the Fordist economy of the 1950s-1960s eras. Urban Croatian streets are overcrowded with people awaiting buses and trains; barricades are erected attempting to hide busy construction sites; and the thriving American fast-food restaurants such as McDonald's are scattered throughout its cities. In fact, McDonald's had no sooner announced its first descent into the Balkan regions than international power brokers zeroed in on a major issue: Can the Big Mac make it against the Big *Pljeskavica*? If history is any guide, McDonald's will stick it out long enough to emerge the victor.

#### 4.1 McDonald's Gains Ground

In Zagreb, one does not have to travel far to get their hands on a Big Mac, as there are nine McDonald's in a 247.5 square mile area. Following the model of a modernizing country, Croatian eating habits are also beginning to globalize. Bécue-Bertuat et al. (2008) found that young Croat males have adopted a modern eating pattern, including fast-food, chips, cola, and other non-traditional products. Female Croats have also changed from their traditional roots: the majority of women surveyed report minimized intake of heavy traditional foods, such as pig fat and bacon. Additionally, Croats are snacking on savory products more frequently, the volume of canned food items such as lunch meats are increasing, and purchases of frozen food items are on the rise (Croatia Food and Drink Report 2010). These data are particularly significant because traditional Croatian cuisine is prepared with fresh ingredients.

To give you a better representation of the Croatian consumer here are some more facts to digest. Organic and genetically modified foods have made their way into Croatia. Croatian

consumers consider organically grown produce to be especially healthy, and of good quality and taste (Renko, Crcić-Stipcević, and Renko 2003). However, these ecological products are regarded as expensive and the average customer does not have extensive knowledge in this type of market. Family farm products are also highly regarded among Croatian consumers, as they consider the foods very healthy and of high quality, although customers are not very satisfied with the supply and availability of certain products (Radmana, Kovačića, and Markovinaa 2008). Additionally, Croatians display a high-level of non-acceptance toward genetically modified (GM) foods, which is in contrast to other developing countries and subgroups within the United States (Radmana 2005). In fact, the Croatian food culture as a whole is very different from the dietary roots found in other developed countries. For example, Americans tend to claim Italian, Mexican, and German foods as inherently Americana, without a real understanding of their origins (e.g., hotdogs and pizza), while Croatians have rich food traditions dating back hundreds-of-years.

#### 4.2 Health on Display

The overall prevalence of overweight in Croatia is 50-56% for the entire population, 22.8% of males are obese, and 19.4% of women (WHO Health Profile 2010). The prevalence of obesity among adults in Croatia has increased substantially between 2003 and 2008, as two-thirds of adults today are overweight and one in five are obese (Milanović, Ivanković, Uhernik, Fišter, Peternal, and Vuletić 2012). In 2008, Croatia was rated the 9<sup>th</sup> fattest country in the world. Noncommunicable diseases are the leading cause of mortality in Croatia. Cardiovascular disease is responsible for about 87% of all deaths in 2003, elevated from 1998 when 60% of Croatian's died from cardiovascular disease (WHO 2005). The increased prevalence of heart disease may stem from the globalizing shelves (and suppression of traditional products) in Croatian supermarkets, which are increasingly stocked with cheaper processed foods. Croatian's expanding waistline echoes the problem for most individuals in the United States: self-control is not enough. Eating is instinctive, even stronger than our sexual instinct, so we

store calories to endure the next period of starvation. However, most Croats (and Americans) live in an environment where food is not scarce, in fact, fast-food restaurants are easily found, as are supermarkets and gas stations stocked with packaged and processed foods. The fast and processed foods being served are also appetizing, inexpensive, convenient, and an individual can eat most of it with one hand. The problem is the food is also high in fat, sodium, and caloric value.

The weight gain and obesity problem in Croatia is driven by two trends: increases in calories consumed, and decrease in calories expended. Šatalić, Barić, and Keser (2007) evaluated over 600 university students in all five of the Croatia's universities. Researchers found 21.9% of males and 3.8% of females were overweight or obese. Additionally, investigators determined that for students, the importance of nutrition disappeared and convenience became exceedingly important when entering college. In a similar study, Barić, Šatalić, and Lukešić (2003) surveyed 2,075 Croatian university students and found fast-food was most often consumed by males, but males were also more likely to be exercising than females. A higher percentage of females (29.8%) smoked cigarettes compared to males (17.2%); alcohol consumption was high for both sexes: males (88.9%) and females (84.8%). Adult Croatian lifestyle characteristics also show higher than normal alcohol consumption among some segments of the population (Turek et al. 2001); there is also higher than average cigarette smoking in Croatia than in the United States (World Health Organization [WHO] Health Information Unit 2010), and a rudimentary fitness culture (Turek et al. 2001). In fact, physical activity in Croatia is mostly performed when running everyday errands, as most Croats walk, climb stairs, or scale hilly streets, particularly in rural areas. However, accessibility and availability of fitness centers—as well as people's willingness to engage in recreational activities—are lacking.

### 4.3 McDonald's Influence

The lack of a fitness culture and increase in fast-food consumption in Croatia may have been influenced by the rationalizing principles of the McDonald's corporation. Croats' globalizing palates have origins in fast-food restaurants such as McDonald's, which cater to an individual country's partialities toward certain flavors and repulsion to others. In fact, I argue, Western-style fast-food may be assisting in the weakening of Croatians' deep-rooted taste preferences for foods such as the traditional *pljeskavica*. And McDonald's is at the center. McDonald's is not only the leading fast-food restaurant in Croatia; they are also the leading fast-food chain around the globe. The company accomplished this feat by expanding food and technological offerings to fit a specific country's taste preferences and needs. In the food department, McDonald's offers foods that have similar molecular structure to the indigenous cuisine of the area. And to attract technologically savvy customers and tourists, McDonald's offers free Wi-Fi (Ritzer unpublished work). The fast-food giant achieves and maintains domination by adjusting offerings to fit not only the specific country they are marketing to, but also the particular region they are serving. An example of this can be seen in the Croatianized menu offerings in Northern Croatia. McDonald's adds items that represent traditional culture in order to lure customers and make locals feel at home. One can choose mixed meat for their hamburger, or may decide to have all beef—if they are feeling particularly American that day.

In Croatia, when stopping at a McDonald's, an individual may even enjoy a cigarette in the enclosed smoking section along with his or her premium McCafe coffee or Tuborg beer, instead of choosing to enter one of the hundreds of privately-owned café's along the Croatian streets. More and more Croat's are choosing to do just that, as they eat and hang out at McDonald's, even though the value meal is rather expensive by Croatian standards. The rate of exchange is 1 kuna for approximately 16.9 U.S. cents. So a 37 kuna value meal in Croatia is about \$6.29, which is a bit more expensive than a value meal in the States, particularly when

you compare gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (PPP, 2010 est.)—\$47,200 in the United States and \$17,400 in Croatia.

Despite the influx of McDonald's sales in Croatia many still believe that the long-standing traditions associated with regional Croatian cuisine will prevail over consumers' temporary curiosity in Western-style fast-food. One can only look to the rich cultural food history of Asia to find a caveat in this prediction. Today, Asia is McDonald's, and other rationalized industries, top selling market. In December 2010, McDonald's sales rose by 8.6% in Asian countries. And despite the weak European economy, fast-food hamburgers and french fries continue to remain in high demand. In November of 2011, McDonald's corporation showed a growth of 7.4% in Europe and the United States. Suggesting, despite the slowing economy, fast-food sales will remain unaffected in Croatia, the United States, and worldwide.

McDonald's undeniably dominates the fast-food market. It is the leading global fast-food retailer with over 32,000 restaurants in more than 100 countries worldwide. In Europe alone, over 6,700 restaurants operate in 39 countries (McDonaldsEurope.com). McDonald's might even prevent wars. Thomas Friedman observed in his book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, "no two countries that both had McDonald's have fought a war against each other since each got its McDonald's" (2000:248), suggesting that the fast-food giant is a sign of political and economic stability. Friedman might actually be on to something. Upon examining the history of Croatia, once McDonald's erected their golden arches in 1996, Croatia has remained a peaceful country. A lack of war in countries that have McDonald's might also be due to the corporation's impeccable marketing strategy—as they only build in developed or developing foreign countries. And build, they do. By 2010, there were sixteen McDonald's outlets in Croatia operating from corporate headquarters in Zagreb, and serving more than 20,000 guests per day in a country whose total population is only about 4.39 million. McDonald's expansion in Croatia is typical of other service firms, which enter the foreign marketplace with only a few locations and quickly develop into other geographic areas in the pursuit of customers. Not only is McDonald's the

most thriving competitor in the Croatian fast-food market, it is also the largest fast-food retailer throughout the rest of the world. And because McDonald's is credited with introducing the franchising concept in its respectable market, and considered the ultimate icon of American fast food abroad, McDonald's outlets were the primary restaurant of my research in Croatia.

With good reason too. Croatian McDonald's are beginning to follow the American fast-food model even closer than when they first opened in 1996. As of April, 2010 McDonald's transferred all sixteen restaurants in Croatia to a Developmental Licensee (DL) structure. The DL model is a form of franchising. The function of a franchise is to increase the standardization of operations that, in turn, will sustain long-lasting profits and benefit of all parties involved (i.e., the franchisee, customers, employees, suppliers, and above all, the McDonald's brand). Denis Hennequin, president of McDonald's Europe, said, "we believe that our business will be significantly enhanced by a strong local licensee in Croatia. Their track record of success, along with their proven local knowledge gives us real confidence they will continue to build our brand and business in the country" (McDonaldsEurope.com).

The fast-food restaurant is indeed an adaptable institution—some McDonald's outlets are beginning to serve healthier options following public demands for change. The success in McDonald's is the willingness to adapt to local tastes and taboos. However, the healthier menu options McDonald's offers are only available in the United States, Australia, and Israel. In countries such as Croatia, McDonald's continues to serve products that have been shown to directly cause health concerns. I *am* certain Mr. Hennequin is overjoyed to profit from the expanding McDonald's enterprise in Croatia, but as we have seen in the United States, his and McDonald's profits will have dire repercussions for the public (e.g., rising rates of obesity). Croatian's who consume these low-quality foods will grow increasingly addicted to the high-fat, high-sugar diet his company serves, and the nation's overall health will, in turn, suffer. And if you have any doubts of my assertions all you need to do is pop in Morgan Spurlock's documentary *Super Size Me*.

With all the negative effects McDonald's brings to foreign countries, the fast-food giant does have some positive influence as well. McDonald's not only led the way in applying North American fast-food technology to Croatian cuisine, it also globalized Croatian food by freeing it from its indigenous roots. American fast-food restaurants abroad facilitate a new space for socialization, particularly for women and children. In earlier decades, Croatia's socialist government did not encourage the use of restaurants as a social sphere in which to perform celebratory rituals. McDonald's, then, represents an exotic 'Other' attracting many young Croatian customers who want to explore an American place that represents an emerging tradition where new values, behavior patterns, and social relationships are being created (Yan 1997). Thus, there is a link between the development of fast-food consumption and changes in social structure, especially the emergence of new social groups; particularly among the regular frequenters of American fast-food restaurants in Croatia (i.e., urban Croat youth, children, and women of all ages). McDonald's provides an appropriate place for the once-ignored and now-valued consumers to dine—selling status to populations looking to experience Western trends. In the pre-existing restaurant system, a place for these subgroups did not exist—other than in the inferior role of dependent. Additionally, in direct opposition to the United States, wherein working in the fast-food industry is often the last choice of the most impoverished people; in Croatia, as well as many other European countries, food service is an admirable job that pays a living wage. McDonald's in Croatia not only provides employee's with a more comfortable existence than those working at McDonald's in the United States, but the website even claims to serve Croatia's the highest-quality ingredients in their foods. Stating that "the quality of the ingredients used by McDonald's to make our products, as well as the standard of production and service, is exceptionally high, and quality is the basis for our whole business"(McDonalds.hr). The message McDonald's is attempting to convey to Croatian consumers is when eating at a McDonald's restaurant one can expect not only a quality

experience in service but in the food as well—promising an event unlike any that I have *ever* experienced when eating at McDonald's in the United States or Croatia.

#### 4.1.3 McDonaldizing Institutions

The globalization occurring in Croatia today will take on a whole new meaning in 2013 when Croatia is projected to join the European Union (EU). Although Croatia's complex history is partially the reason membership to the EU has been a long and winding road, the capitalistic culture American's are well acquainted with in the United States, will transpire much faster, and on a much larger scale in Croatia, than experienced thus far. The contemporary capitalism of Croatia will be similar to other industrialized parts of Europe, and, of course, the United States. An urgency to shop the surplus of mass produced goods, both from the consumer and manufacturer, will dominate the once frugal society of Croats. As capitalism requires individuals not only to produce goods and services, but to consume them as well—at an exponential rate—in order for the capitalistic model to continue to thrive—particularly in today's slumping economy.

Dmitrovic, Vida, and Reardon (2009) demonstrated that, in the past, Croatian consumers evaluated domestic-made products more favorably than foreign-made products. However, Anić (2010) questioned whether this trend remained. Thus, he examined consumer surveys to find whether Croatians still preferred to purchase food items from domestic retailers, or whether foreign food retailers were beginning to be accepted. He found 28% of consumers do prefer domestic retailers, 17% prefer foreign retailers, and the majority of consumers (55%) are indifferent. These data suggest that the globalizing effects on consumer behaviors are already transpiring in Croatian's lives today. Marketers will probably amp-up the use of psychological techniques to convince people they *need* the latest antioxidant-rich food-like products and supplements, as well as the trendiest plasma television set, and latest designer hang bag in order to escape the increasing isolation of their McDonaldizing community.



And this change is occurring throughout the Western Balkan's. Northern Croatia is a rich cultural region whose people are experiencing change in their everyday life. Individuals are both resisting and accommodating the conflicting structures of modernity and tradition. A tradition still upheld is the sense of community—Croatians know their neighbors. And I do not mean simply to exchange pleasantries. They actually know each other's names, interests, and occupations. Croats even continue to barter with their neighbors. For example, say retired shoemaker lives next door; it is completely normal to ask him to fix a heel that broke off your shoe on the way to work that morning. And for his generosity you might make him a cake. This sense of community, however, is not exactly a breeding ground for capitalism. For example, consider the shoemaker neighbor. Anybody that can have their old shoe fixed for little-to-no cost is less likely to purchase a new pair of shoes. This traditional, idealistic, 1950s utopian community of America's idealized past will soon be a manifestation of Croatians' past life. Croats will remember their old neighbor who would trade a jug of wine or cake to fix their shoe. They'll remember as they sip on a Turkish coffee they just bought from Starbucks on the way to their 9–5 job.

In Croatian's daily lives, there is an internal and external negotiation involving two cultures. Intercultural communication in Croatia is evident when one observes an urban center, for example Zagreb. Croatian's identities are no longer only being shaped from within the local culture, but they are also being shaped from indirect phenomena. At Zagreb's center one can find a global-local experience of primary cultural elements: McDonald's restaurants being traced back to America, *Manzoku* restaurant traced back to Japan, *Žirafa* traced back to Mexico, and *Asia* traced back to China. Consequently, the multicultural space is intertwined with the local Croatian experience. Individuals living in Croatia must then negotiate for themselves global and local elements that manifest everyday in their globalizing lives. If Croatia's changing culture was examined thoroughly, we may see the alienation and uniformity of a capitalistic society emerge. An example is visible in the shifting occupational structure in Croatia. After the Socialist state

fell, people left their factory jobs and began working in privatized institutions—from banks to insurance companies— and opening small businesses. This move, however, is leading to the isolation most Americans are all too well acquainted. The alienation Americans felt for decades, brought on by the shift from an industrial to service-based economy is beginning to emerge in Croatia. Croats' lives are speeding up, and this “acceleration” requires faster families (Agger 2004) and faster food.

McDonaldization in Croatia must be considered in respect to the geographic location in which the changes are occurring. In rural Croatia, for example, villagers, as urban-dwelling Croats refer to them, are not experiencing the same changes urban Croats are. Rural Croats are decades behind modernity and McDonaldization. These individuals still lead a very simple life. They grow their own food, barter with neighbors as a form of shopping, and allow their dinner to graze on their farmland until it reaches slaughtering weight. This slower way of living does not benefit those seeking to profit from the McDonaldizing society. Croatian government officials are trying to impede villagers' slowed rural lifestyle by enacting laws to end traditional practices. For example, if a person living in the Croatian countryside wants to raise and slaughter their own food they have to follow strict regulations in order to do so; and, if they are found to disobey any rules, they will be fined and the entire farm may be terminated.

The hardships of rural life in Croatia do not stop there. Grgić, Žimbek, Tratnik, Markovina, and Juračak (2010) surveyed 914 rural dwellers in all twenty Croatian counties and found 20% of respondents were unsatisfied with their current living conditions and intended to leave. Dissatisfaction with rural life in Croatia, according to the study, is largely due to the destitution of rural life: lack of employment opportunities, inadequate career choices, and lower incomes—compared to those living in the city. Needless to say, these individuals are rarely, if ever, dealing with McDonaldizing institutions. And depending on your perspective of a rationalizing culture, this may be a positive or negative reality for rural Croatians.

The McDonaldizing institutions altering urban Croatia's taste buds are not only visible in the increasing consumption of McDonald's and other fast-food restaurants, but are also observable in the rationalizing agricultural and farming system. During the Socialist period, prior to the war, Croatia was quite capable of handling the citizen's food needs, due to a well developed manufacturing and service sector, particularly in respect to tourism. Croatia is a land thriving with valuable natural resources—quality soils, large water resources, vast forests, and rich costal lands—which, enable agriculture, fishery, forestry, and, of course, tourism (Franić and Kumrić 2006). However, because of Croatia's accession into the European Union (EU) and the enacted Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), farmers are seeing a decrease in production value. Cabbage grown on a farm two miles down the road in Northern Croatia is more expensive than cabbage harvested half-way around the world, which is then sold at local supermarkets, wherein fossil fuels must be burned in order to transport the produce to a Croatian dinner table before the cabbage head rots. The main supermarket chains are shifting from local production to large food manufacturing firms, which can provide quality products consistently throughout the year. In other words, McDonaldization is taking much-needed capital from a poor, local farmer's pocket, and placing it into the hands of a Bentley-driving, two-home-owning corporate CEO's bank account. Although these changing agricultural policies may help Croatia become more competitive in the unindustrialized market, it is costing local farmers much-needed revenue.

Farming practices are also being McDonaldized in a concerted effort to remain competitive and comply with changing European standards. Croatian pig production systems are an example of this modernization. Wellbrock, Antunovic, Oosting, and Bock (2010) examined traditional farming activities in Croatia where 75% of family farmers owned 1-5 sows, and 85% owned 10 or less. In 2005, the Croatian government developed the Pig Production Development Program regulating that 250 new pig farms are to be built, each with an average capacity of 150 sows. Additionally, small production farms must either modernize their farming

practices into an intensive farming model or close. In effect, the sound and humane farming practices that allow pigs to graze freely will be terminated, and efficiency will trump morality—similar to the factory farming practices in the United States. This emphasis on efficiency defies logic and is not progressive in nature, as research shows that health risks increase substantially when consuming meat that is produced in a factory farming operation versus free-range animals that are allowed to live in a more natural environment (Nierenberg 2003).

To grasp the McDonaldizing culture in Croatia, consider the Croatian supermarket system. In the first half of the 1990s, Croatia's retail markets were dominated by socially owned enterprise (SOE) chains—comprised of small private stores and farmer's markets. In the second-half of the 1990s, supermarkets appeared on the market scene and expanded at a reasonable pace. In 2000, a fundamental change emerged with foreign direct investment (FDI) in retail, resulting in a rapid race of investments by various chains. The result is astonishing: the share of supermarkets in food retail went from only 25% at the end of 2000 to 51% only two years later in 2002. For comparison, the share in Poland is 40%, France, 70%, and the United States, 80%. Thus, Croatia experienced the same retail transformation in 5 years that France and the United States experienced in 50 (Reardon, Vrabec, Karakas, Fritsch 2003). Suggesting Croatia may McDonaldize more rapidly than the United States (and other capitalistic countries).

Even the Croatian language is not safe from the globalization process. Bosnar-Valković, Blažević, and Gjuran-Coha (2008) discovered Americanization of the Croatian language is occurring. This trend is particularly evident in newly accepted language manners, adolescence and teenage communications, advertisements, and political campaigns. In the second half of the nineteenth-century, Americanisms began to influence Croatian language in both technical and scientific terminology, as Croats borrowed from the English language when a Croatian term was not yet created for a particular item. Today, the loss of diversity and increased homogenization in the Croatian language is influenced by the indirect contact Croat's have with mass media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, books, the Internet, television, and films).

An example is visible in the language mannerisms of Croatian youth. Adolescents and teenagers are using the expletive “oops!” instead of the Croatian passé form “*opa*.” Also common is use of the American exclamation “Wow!” expressing admiration or astonishment. In addition, if someone pays you a compliment and says, “You’re looking great today!” the answer for an American and now Croatian will be “Thank you!” instead of the old-fashioned “Oh, it’s just a new dress, the rest is all old stuff.” It can also happen that a staff member tells a Croatian customer to have “a nice weekend” on Friday afternoon. An individual may also be asked when shopping “How are you today?” without the retail employee having a real interest in your circumstance (typical American etiquette). Today, a common greeting among youth is “*(H)ej!*” reminding one of the American greeting “Hi.” Additionally, the Croatian form “*U`ivajte!*” frequently used among the younger generation is the translation of “Enjoy (yourself),” which is in replacement of “*Prijatno!*” the outdated form originating from Serbian. Examples of the English influence are also found in phrases (e.g., *Ona je uvijek trendovski fancy sku`irana*; She’s always in a trendy fancy outfit), *Moram nai neki job*; I must find some job), *Ovo je tako boring*; that is so boring). Sometimes even complete sentences are spoken in English (e.g., “Where are you going”, “I’m sleepy.”, “See you, don’t wanna be you.”, “Don’t worry, be happy”). These examples serve as an illustration of the Americanization of the Croatian language stemming from McDonaldization. The younger generation is influencing the change, suggesting this is not simply a rejection of Serbo-Croatian language following the 1990s conflict; rather, an integration of the modernizing society. Linguists are particularly concerned of these changes because other minority languages throughout the world are in imminent danger of becoming extinct. In fact, only 600 of the 6,000 minority languages worldwide are safe.

Slogans are an international language. Consider the Americanisms in McDonald’s advertisements. McDonald’s success in Croatia might be based in the Americanization of menu items. When viewing a McDonald’s menu one would find the offerings are in English and have American-sounding Croatian names. For example, a McWrap tortilja consists of fried chicken

pieces, lettuce, tomatoes, and bell peppers wrapped in a tortilla. The word McWrap is familiar to most Americans. In the United States, McWrap is the American word used to describe a snack wrap sold at McDonald's. The problem lies in the other word—*tortilja*. This word is a recent addition to the Croatian language. It is an American word derived from the Spanish language and spelled using Croatian linguistic rules. Another Americanism on the Croatian McDonald's menu is the item Mozzarella štapčići, which are fried mozzarella sticks. A visiting American in Croatia would be able to recognize mozzarella, as it is the Italian term for a specific white cheese; however, *štapčići* in Croatian actually means drum sticks. So a Croatian would read mozzarella *štapčići* as mozzarella drumsticks, which is obviously different from the English term mozzarella sticks or cheese sticks that McDonald's attempted to convey in the product name. Not every menu item has an American-sounding name though—some are actually Croatian (e.g., *sladoledna torta*). The Americanization of the Croatian language is, however, evident in the American-sounding food items on a McDonald's menu—particularly in the product names that are recent additions to the Croatian language—suggesting a globalizing influence on language.

Reorganization of the Croatian judicial system is another example of a McDonaldizing society. Efforts by the Croatian government to improve efficiency, public accessibility, and speed of court proceedings are in response to the modernization of Croatia. These reforms are, however, met with opposition from people whose interests are best served in the midst of Croatia's judicial stalemate. An example is visible in the widespread legal delays concerning human rights violations, and a lack of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), stemming from the 1990s conflicts. There are definitive steps being taken, nonetheless. The most notable changes that reflect McDonaldization within the judicial system, and larger society, are visible in the Croatian government's attempt to improve training methods and aptitude at the Judicial Academy (i.e., standardization), the amendment of ancient legislation, and modernizing land registries. Additionally, steps are being taken by the

government to integrate minority ethnic groups (largely Roma gypsies) in schools and to increase minority representation in the State body. Croatian Police forces are also undergoing massive reforms in both training procedures and in the development of a transparent human resource management system monitoring corruption and organized crime within the police force.

McDonaldization is visible in Croatia's higher educational system as well. Europe failed to utilize all its competitive potentials in the world market of knowledge due to language barriers, and the enclosed nature of its educational systems. In effect, in 2001, Croatia and all countries within the European Union (EU), signed the Bologna Declaration, which intended to reform both tertiary education and research into a more modernized and globalized structure. More specifically, expertise levels were modified, as well as the process students must complete in order to become a degreed individual. The new system unifies resources, allowing Europe to compete with other powerhouses in educational standards: the United States, Australia, and Asia. In fact, the new credit system echoes a rationalized American school structure, as students are under an easily identifiable and comparable academic system wherein the individuals must complete uniformed requirements before they are allowed to advance to the next level: a two study cycle. Consequently, when students reach the necessary prerequisites (e.g., undergraduate or graduate degree), they are afforded the privilege to move on to the next cycle.

The convergence of local Croatian customs with the common global culture permeates throughout the once Socialist country. Consider the McDonaldizing institutions within the rich heritage of Croatia. From the indigenous roots of the *pljeskavica* to the increased consumption of the Big Mac, Croatia is McDonaldizing. From the modernizing judicial system to the rationalizing Higher Educational structure, Croatia is McDonaldizing. The increasingly globalized societies of westernized and developing countries are converging on the Eastern European region. Croatian's are just now embarking on their journey of McDonaldization. A society

dominated by standardization, in contrast, is moving away from rationality and toward a slower existence.



## CHAPTER 5

### FOURTH COURSE: DALLAS DE-MCDONALDIZING: SLOW FOODIES

Amongst all this standardization we may ask ourselves, “What isn’t McDonaldized?” (Ritzer 1996:15). Within the United States, I argue, a lot is de-McDonaldizing. And, I argue, many people *are* resisting McDonaldization within our rationalized structure. A progression toward slowness is transpiring. Able people are beginning to stand outside of themselves, evaluate the capitalistic structure entwined in their food system, and choose an alternative—slower-food. Claude Lévi-Strauss argued in *The Culinary Triangle* that roasting is on the side of nature and boiling on the side of culture, “literally, because boiling requires the use of a receptacle, a culture object; and boiling demands a mediation of the relation between food and fire which is absent in roasting” (as quoted in *Food and Culture* 2008:37). Similarly, I argue, slow-food is on the side of nature, and fast-food on the side of culture. Slow-food opposes the faster life and fast-food restaurants associated with this consumeristic lifestyle. The slow-food movement is achieving this by preserving and advertising distinctive regional foods, and by emphasizing fresh, local produce and meats. Fast-food, on the other hand, is a cultural institution that values quantity over quality (Ritzer 1996). Emphasis on quantity has led to adverse effects on quality. Although one cannot deny, that slow food has little to offer people belonging to lower- and working-class families in our sluggish economy. Even so, faster lifestyles—based in the increasingly capitalistic society we live—are imposed on consumers by the fast-food industry and other McDonaldized institutions.

#### 5.1 Slower Food

Slow-food is a movement founded by Carlos Petrini. Petrini is well known for the infamous McDonald’s incident in 1986 Rome, where he and a small group of activists waged an opposition campaign against the construction of a McDonald’s restaurant near the Spanish

Steps. The Slow Food movement began in Europe in response to increased concerns that the rationalizing European society restructured people's identity. Petrini and the slow-food movement he founded, functions to preserve traditional dietary and farming practices, and essentially, resist the hedonistic culture of mass consumption that is fast-food (Petrini 2005). Slow food is against the homogenization of culture and taste—which fast-food symbolizes. Petrini believes fast-food is a sign of the more negative effects of modern market rationalities on cultural differences—a world in which speed, as well as placeness, is the essence of the era (Casey 1997). Slow-food objects to the standardization of taste that permeates in the United States' post-Fordist society. The slow movement made its way across the Atlantic as the commodification of American food culture began to trouble self-described foodies who felt in danger of losing their identity to cultural convergence.

Communication between cultures is on the rise, which has both positive and negative consequences. The positive aspects are in the learning process we embark on; learning not only in relation to others, but about ourselves as well. We discover how others talk and behave, which may be completely dissimilar from the way we do things. This process opens one's life to a richer and deeper understanding of the world. However, this increasingly accelerated and globalized structure might also cause trepidation for local traditions and rich diversity, and might conjure fears that the local will eventually disappear as the global comes to dominate more and more societies.

As such, as easily as one can find uniformity in America, one can observe diversity as well. Ritzer (1996) suggests that among certain subgroups of the population, regional and ethnic foods are disappearing in America—he argues, when traveling, one finds the same processed foods in Arkansas and New York (e.g., Hamburger Helper and boxed Macaroni and cheese: p. 95). However, I argue, if one delves a little deeper, a clear distinction is observable in the divergent foods consumed by individuals belonging to different social classes, and living in diverse geographic locations. For example, when visiting a home in New Orleans, Cajun cuisine

such as seafood gumbo is probably served more frequently than in Greenville, Ohio. If you visit a farm house in rural Ohio you will probably find plates filled with fresh eggs lay that day, and chicken breast cooked from a bird that was slaughtered hours prior. Of course, this observation is dependent on many complex social factors, but differences do exist at dinner tables around the country, and these distinctions saturate our society.

The distinct dietary practices I follow might shed light on how some subsets of the population within the United States are deconstructing their once McDonaldized eating structure. I grew up in the South, eating primarily home-cooked meals; however, I ate fast-food just as regularly as the next kid. I grew up in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex where red meat is an integral feature to daily meals. Dinner regularly consisted of chicken, beef, or pork, cheesy casserole prepared with Campbell's canned soups, canned vegetables with tons of garlic powder and butter, some form of carbohydrates: rolls, bread, rice, or pasta, and a huge glass of 2% cow's milk. Not exactly a nutritionist's dream, but the food was prepared with love—and a lot of salt, pepper, and butter. My parents' manner of preparing the meals for us was still very different from the way their parents prepared meals for them when they were children. The spices and oils used by my grandparents were modeled after their parents before them, whom cooked with lard, sweet cream butter, and used whole milk instead of 2%. An improvement is obvious in what you found on my dinner plate versus what was served to my parents when they were children. Progress is sometimes visible from one generation to the next in nutritional standards; however, these advancements are still vastly different from the foods I eat today.

When I was young, my parents would take my siblings and me to McDonald's after school, or for our birthdays. We loved the Happy Meals because the food was tasty, we got a toy, and were able to play on the playground: what more could a kid want? As I got older, we went to McDonald's when my parents did not have time to prepare a meal before my dance lessons, or my sister's soccer practice, or my brother's football games. We went to Taco Bueno and took burritos and tacos to my grandmother's house to surprise her for lunch as often as

possible. Sometimes we would go to a fast-food restaurant simply because we craved the food. Fast-food and I, we were friends. I loved the Big Mac meal from McDonald's. When I was 14 years-old, I could eat the entire value meal with a large french fry and large soda, all by myself. My brother, 16 years-old at the time, would get his own Big Mac meal and we would polish off the hamburger, fries, and soda in the car as my mother drove us to the next activity. We could wolf our food down in a matter of minutes, if needed. Today, me and fast-food, we are not so close. Now, I am conscious of the poor food quality that McDonald's actually serves in that brightly colored cellophane. A Big Mac Combo has 1,140 calories—almost an entire day's worth of caloric intake—in one meal!

A surplus of calories came from another addiction I should mention. As many American children and adults are, when I was younger, I was a full-blown addict, and soda was my drug of choice. I drank at least three cans a day as a youngster. My favorite was Dr. Pepper. And one 12-ounce can contains ten teaspoons of sugar. No wonder I always had so much energy and then suddenly felt exhausted after the sugar-high disappeared! I, unfortunately, am not alone in this craving for sugar. The consumption of sugary and high fructose beverages has skyrocketed: soda is currently the single most significant source of calories in a typical American diet. When all those empty calories are consumed in a half-hearted attempt to hydrate our body, consider how many calories the average American consumes throughout an entire day when trying to feed *and* hydrate their body—1,877 for the average woman and 2,618 for the average man—an excess of nearly 300 hundred calories a day for women and over 400 for men. To put that in perspective, an extra ten calories per day translates to the addition of one extra pound of fat a year (Spurlock 2005). That is a lot of excessive weight!

My days as a fast-food-loving, soda-addicted American are gone. I have made life-altering changes in my diet and lifestyle since that time. Tofu, seitan, quinoa, couscous, evaporated cane juice, agave nectar, earth balance, and organic produce are staples in mine and my husband's diet as vegetarians. I can only speak from personal experience, but the

adjustments I have made in both my diet and lifestyle, did not happen overnight or without a lot of work. I was 100 percent addicted, as I mentioned, to fast-food and soda, and to top it off, I was not physically active; certainly not at the 9–5 desk job I worked—or when I got home from work, for that matter. I am not atypical in this either. The number of Americans whose occupation requires physically taxing labor continues to steadily decline (Frum 2012). Even jobs that require physical labor—construction, for example—are much less demanding than they used to be, as technology now performs the manual labors that used to consume human energy. We Americans also spend more time on our rear driving to work, to the local fast-food restaurants, and even to the gym—we are in our cars almost two times more than in the 1970s. We spend approximately 26 hours per week watching television or surfing the Internet. In theory though, Americans could offset these sedentary lifestyle choices by increasing the amount of time spent at the gym or in recreational exercise; however, only roughly 20% of us actually do. It is becoming more and more understandable why the commitment to make a lifestyle change is no small project, but changes are on the horizon. They involve not only the reinvention of our modes of eating, but also our modes of leisure and entertainment.

### 5.2 Organized: Locally Grown and Raised

The organic movement is one of these changes. Organics is the fastest growing food segment in the country, increasing 20% annually (Kenner 2008). The organic movement originated at the same time fast-food sales reached an all time high. Sectors of the population—primarily middle- and upper-class—began to show concern for the environment and where the shiny, perfectly-shaped, fruits and vegetables they purchased in the supermarket actually originated. Lower- and working-classes, however, have fewer options when it comes to eating de-McDonaldized. For lower-class Americans, fast-food restaurants are typically regarded as family restaurants, and also as a source to consume large quantities of food at seemingly low prices. Just as there are varying levels of income among different classes, there are also varying degrees of adherence to McDonaldization. Some of us have lost the art of savoring the

culinary experience. We can eat an entire meal and not taste one single bite of it. To counter this reality, individuals with means to do so, began embracing the culinary experience.

In the United States, this shift is exemplified in the foodeisim of local, fresh organic cuisine respected and served by Alice Waters in her restaurant Chez Panisse in Berkley. Waters, the Vice President of Slow Food International, and founder of the Edible School Yard—a project dedicated to teaching children sustainable, environmentally-friendly agriculture—has facilitated the development of a community filled with local farmers and ranchers committed to sustainable agriculture. At Alice Waters' restaurant, emphasizing local ingredients has led to an entirely new method of cooking—known as California cuisine—and her style of cooking has helped Chez Panisse maintain its position on the world's top 50 restaurant listing for several years. In the world—not in the country, world! That means even against Spanish restaurants, which have some of the most influential chefs around the globe utilizing molecular gastronomy—the chemistry and physics behind the preparation of any dish—cooking up foods that have to be seen to be believed. For example, in one appetizer dish resembling stone rocks, a Spanish chef actually places a real rock in the bowl to trick customers—an interesting play on the art of cooking and serving. Another example is in Spanish chefs' use of liquid nitrogen, which instantly flash-freezes ice cream, or in their use of fake caviar derived from sodium alginate and calcium. The secret of Chez Painisse's success, however, is really no secret at all. Its success lies in Waters' resolve to prepare and serve only the highest-quality produce and meat available. Consequently, slow-food is not only visible from the nutritional stand point; it is discernible in the taste as well.

### 5.3 De-McDonaldization in the Flesh

#### 5.3.1 Burrowing from McDonaldization: In-N-Out Burger

Slow-food has also made its way into the Deep South, into the heart of Texas: Dallas. A town that is consistently on the "Fattest City in America" list, filling out the top five at number four in 2010 (forbes.com). The city where the state fair serves anything fried—from bubble gum

to Twinkies. In fact, in Texas alone, it is estimated that by 2040, annual health care costs related to obesity will exceed \$39 billion. The state government is so concerned it implemented the Nutrition, Physical Activity & Obesity Prevention Program in November of 2011; this legislation supports state government's efforts to promote healthier choices and more physical activity for children. The state and federal government is not the only decision-making body shifting either. A change is visible in Texans' lifestyle and food habits. People in Texas are buying locally-grown produce, seeking grass-fed cattle, and flocking to In-N-Out Burger. You may ask yourself, "Did I just read that correctly." Yes! You did. In-N-Out Burger is a less traditional fast-food, less-assembly-like, California burger chain with a cult-like following. In-N-Out is a West coast institution, not exactly locally, home-grown cuisine by foodie standards; after all, it is still fast-food within our fundamentally McDonaldized structure, but it *is* pre-modern-within-modern, as the menu has not changed since 1948—when it was founded—and ingredients are fresh, never frozen or microwaved. In-N-Out Burger is essentially a slow-food movement within fast-food.

Ritzer (unpublished work) observed that the relatively small fast-food chain, In-N-Out Burger, is less McDonaldized than other major fast-food restaurants such as McDonald's. In his evaluation, Ritzer appears to disagree with Stacy Perman's (2009) assessment that In-N-Out is "the antithesis of McDonald's." Perman argues because the burger joint has remained a privately owned company and has not ventured into the international market—along with many other related arguments— that it is then the epitome of de-McDonaldization (Perman 2009, as quoted in Ritzer unpublished work). Ritzer goes on to describe certain characteristics of In-N-Out's operation that are, in his view, led by efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (e.g., limited menu offerings, drive-thru, and low-price-large quantity foods). He argues that the operational strategy behind In-N-Out's success is a McDonaldized model, therefore, making it a McDonaldized institution. Contrasting this argument, Ritzer also describes how In-N-Out is de-

McDonaldized in other ways (e.g., use of fresh beef and potatoes, lettuce leafed by hand, and less reliance on non-human technologies).

Based on my examination of In-N-Out Burger, I would suggest that it functions as a far less McDonaldized structure than other fast-food restaurants proliferating in American society. For example, the less standardized practices, found in the so-called secret menu offers customers greater freedom than the value menu at McDonald's. Additionally, In-N-Out's autonomous business strategies (e.g., non-franchised model and employee benefits) allow employees more liberties than other fast-food restaurants, which provide their workers minimum wage and little-to-no benefits. Lastly, the emphasis on quality of the foods served, and the service provided by more contented employees, supports the observation that this is a fast-food restaurant vastly different from the leading McDonaldized fast-food chains. I believe In-N-Out Burger is far less McDonaldized than Ritzer suggests. I tend to side with Perman that it is indeed the opposite of McDonald's.

In-N-Out Burger first opened its doors in Baldwin Park, California, and has since established 258 burger chains all over the United States. Founded by Harry Snyder and his wife Esther in 1948, the burger joint is still family-owned; the sole grandchild of the Snyder's, Lynsi Martinez, is currently president of the \$450 million a year company. In-N-Out saw a big change when the original founder, Harry, died in 1976 and his son's Rich and Guy Snyder took over. One might say that the Snyder brothers are the Ray Kroc of In-N-Out. Spanning across the last twenty years, the burger joint has experienced rapid expansion; from the 18 restaurants Harry managed and owned before he died, to 90 restaurants in 1993 when Rich died. The expansion continued under Guy Snyder, as the chain went from 93 to 140 locations in the six years he was president before he died of an overdose. Following the death of original inheritors, Richie and Guy, their mother, Esther, took back control of the burger chain until she died in 2006. Currently, the company is run by former vice president of operations, Mark Taylor, while the



sole grandchild and heir, will gain exclusive control of In-N-Out operations upon reaching an appropriate age.

The key to In-N-Out's success is in its "keep it simple" principle. There are only four items offered on the menu: a Hamburger, Cheeseburger, Double-Double, and French fries. Customers can also choose from three different milkshakes (i.e., chocolate, vanilla, or strawberry), or select a fountain drink with their burger. The competitive advantage of a small number of product offerings is in the lesser amount of inventory needed, both in parts inventory and finished goods inventory (Zhao, Chiang, and Chiang 2009). However, it is possible for a long-time patron (or a person with the Internet) to learn *and* order off the Secret Menu. The not-so-secret menu is lengthier than traditional menu offerings. You can order a beef patty cooked in mustard (known as animal style), or cheese fries instead of regular salted fries, or even a veggie burger. The extended secret menu allows customers the autonomy to order custom burgers and fries—something one does not have the privilege of doing at McDonald's.

The beef you will find in your In-N-Out hamburger comes from the company's own patty making facility. The meat inspection and grinding takes place in-house. The garnish on your burger, and the potato that becomes your french fry, is delivered directly from the farm to the distribution center and prepared in-house, so there is no lengthy transport from half-way around the globe. In fact, a minimum of one day's travel is the longest distance you will find any In-N-Out outlet from the nearest distribution center. In-N-Out's french fries are even healthier than other fast-food restaurants, as they are fried in 100% non-hydrogenated cottonseed oil, and are free of trans fats. Other restaurants typically fry their potatoes in oil that is full of trans fats, which makes these fries an automatic code red, meaning hit the brakes! The food is never frozen, microwaved, or warmed under an artificial heating lamp. Now, it might sound like I am a spokesperson for In-N-Out burger, but in all reality, there is a huge difference between the nutritional values of a de-McDonaldized institution versus a McDonaldized.

McDonald's is in the top three *worst* traditional fast-food restaurants, as they serve trans fats disguised as a Happy Meal, whereas In-N-Out Burger is in the top two *best* traditional fast-food restaurants that do not serve trans fats to consumers (Aldana 2007). In other words, McDonald's serves unhealthier foods and In-N-Out Burger serves a healthier version of the classic burgers and fries. An example of this can be seen in the variant nutritional values of each fast-food restaurant's food guide. If you order a large french fry from In-N-Out, for example, you would consume 0 grams of trans fat. If eating the exact same size product at McDonald's, you ingest 8 grams—the recommended amount of trans fat per day is zero! In 2002, McDonald's actually pledged to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, trans fats in their cooking oil—oil that is used to fry the french fries, chicken nuggets, apple pies, and more. But, in 2003, McDonald's quietly withdrew this effort. They even lost a lawsuit related to the issue, and instead of making the requested changes, they paid \$7 million to the American Heart Association—now, McDonald's profits are in excesses of \$4 billion annually, so the judgment against them was nothing more than a slap on the wrist. What is worse, McDonald's fries foods in trans fat-free oils in Australia, Denmark, and Israel—so why are Americans still given the harmful oil? One reason might be that certain subsets of the American population continue to buy and consume these fatty foods.

I want to also make a note in regards to nutrition; when comparing In-N-Out's nutritional values to McDonald's hamburger and fries, *some* of In-N-Out's food actually has more fat, calories, and saturated fat than McDonald's. However, as many dieticians will tell you—it matters more where the fats and calories are derived than what the numbers are. For example, a four-piece serving of Chicken McNuggets, at first glance does not seem too forbidding: 190 calories, 12 grams of carbohydrates, and 12 grams of fat. But consider that more than half of those calories (56%) are from fat—and protein accounts for a mere four percent (Collier Cool 2012). Also, add 360 milligrams of sodium and trans fat-filled oils the chicken is fried in, and the healthful image begins to fade. My hope in detailing these variations

is that the consumer might be able to more readily detect a McDonaldized institution from a de-McDonaldized, and make a better decision when purchasing and consuming fast-food, as well as other goods and services.

In-N-Out is not only de-McDonaldizing the food within the fast-food industry, but they are also de-McDonaldizing the business practices of a fast-food institution. For example, employees at In-N-Out Burger earn significantly more than the state and federally mandated minimum wages, which are standard at other fast-food restaurants. Even the cash register at In-N-Out provides employees with more autonomy than McDonald's registers provide their staff. Workers at In-N-Out are given the freedom to enter food items that may or may not be on the standard menu. For example, say I wanted a grilled cheese with no bun, wrapped in lettuce—no problem, I would not even get an awkward glance. Try ordering a burger without a bun or beef patty at McDonald's and you will be laughed out of the restaurant. McDonald's cash registers actually use a pictured menu system, where employees only have to press the image of a Big Mac—an assurance that the accident-prone human does not charge the customer incorrectly—that is, until McDonald's can employ robots. Alas, until that day has come, the company will continue to standardize every procedure—from the service process to the preparation of the food—so there is less ability for 'ignorant' human employees to interfere with the money-making machine that is McDonald's.

Back to the refreshingly de-McDonaldized structure of In-N-Out Burger. In-N-Out recently opened a location on 7<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Fort Worth. Since my husband and I are vegetarians, I was initially concerned that we would not be able to find anything to eat on the minimalistic menu of In-N-Out's simplicity, but we went to check it out anyway. I was armed with my 'underground' knowledge of the secret menu. I *am* basing my thesis on this slower-fast-food restaurant, so I should probably try it, right? I know, I know you are probably thinking, "How has she been talking about all this In-N-Out business without having even tried it!" You are right. So, here is the play-by-play of my first, In-N-Out veggie burger. Cue anticipatory music.

After parking in the overcrowded area, directly next to the empty parking lot of Wendy's, we ventured indoors. Immediately, I was taken aback by the cleanliness of the crowded restaurant, which is definitely atypical in the fast-food restaurant industry. It was brightly lit, similar to McDonald's, nothing reconstructed here; the tile flooring was almost identical to McDonald's, again nothing different there; but, the differences abound once we reach the register. The young Hispanic woman greets us with a huge smile and an enthusiastic hello—nothing like the bored-to-death stare of a teenage employee behind the McDonald's register. I try to order like-a-pro. I use all the Internet knowledge I had just acquired in the parking lot, and order a veggie burger—cut in half, with no onions or tomatoes, french fries—well done with no salt, and a milkshake. The cashier was more than happy to oblige my convoluted order—comparing to the typical 1, 2, 3 ordering of a hamburger, cheeseburger, or 2x2 meal. After paying, we were given an order number and receipt. We found two diner-style seats staring out the window, directly in front of the drive-thru. And drive through people did. The cars just kept coming. Cars full of people drove in and placed their order with a standing-employee who had a headset and order pad waiting for cars.

As we waited for our food to cook, that's right, it is actually made-to-order—I noticed how diligent the employees were. All nine employees, dressed in their 1950s diner-style uniform complete with a hat, were actually working and interacting with each other, and with the customers. When one set of people would get up after finishing their meal, an employee would quickly come over to clean the table for the next patrons, which was, of course, very different from other fast-food restaurants where you are lucky to find napkins to clean the table off yourself before sitting down to eat. Now, for the moment we have all been waiting for—the food. When our number was called a pleasant employee handed the red tray full of food to my husband. When he brought it to our seats, I was instantaneously overwhelmed by the pleasant odor of freshly cooked potatoes. The food was hot and served just as requested. The french fries tasted fresh and of high-quality. The veggie burger, which was a grilled cheese with lettuce

and spread—something similar to Thousand Island dressing—was also very good. The flavor of the bun and cheese were definitely one of superiority to other fast-food chains that I have tried. The mantra of In-N-Out is *Quality you can Taste*, and now I can tell you from personal experience, taste it you can!

### 5.3.2 Chipotle Mexican Grill

To prove their flexibility and adapt to the slow-food movement transpiring in the United States, McDonald's branched out beyond salads, in the fresher, healthier model of a fast-food restaurant, known as Chipotle. Founder Steve Ells opened the first Chipotle in Denver, Colorado after borrowing \$85,000 from his father. It was, however, McDonald's initial investment that was the driving force allowing Chipotle to rapidly expand and become a U.S.-based initial public stock offering or IPO in 2006. Chipotle mirrors In-N-Out's food and business practices more than it does its investor. The simplistic menu of Chipotle is similar to In-N-Out, as there are only five items: burritos, fajita burrito, burrito bowls, tacos, and salads. Additionally, the food is prepared in a healthier manner than in other fast-food restaurants. This is observable in the nutritional guide, as the product with the most calories on Chipotle's menu (i.e., chips) actually has fewer calories than the healthiest product offering of other fast-food restaurants. Preparation of Chipotle's food is primarily done within the individual restaurants, and their outlets do not have freezers, microwave ovens, or can openers. Chipotle's stated mission is *Food with Integrity*, similar to In-N-Out's, *Quality you can Taste*. Chipotle also followed another dominating force in the food industry: Whole Foods. Whole Foods gives certain products a back story or historical synopsis. The idea is to provide the consumer with a better understanding of where the product originated (and to humanize the corporation). Signage in Chipotle's restaurants, and images on the company's website, depict pigs and cows grazing on open fields and lying on green pastures with an iconic red barn in the background. Suggesting to customers that the meat consumed is "naturally raised," which is free-range, vegetarian-fed, non-hormone injected, and humanely slaughtered. A stark contrast from the factory farming practices of

McDonald's and other fast-food restaurants whose primary objective is profit, not animal welfare.

Chipotle's website and some food packaging describes factory farming practices' adverse effects on the environment and animals; however, they fail to mention that the exact agricultural and farming they resist are the practices utilized by their initial investor—McDonald's corporation. Begging the question, does Chipotle truly stand for the practices they advocate? Although McDonald's has fully divested from Chipotle, they did make a sizeable profit—their initial investment was only \$360 million, and they left with \$1.5 billion. I am not discounting the operational practices Chipotle has chosen (e.g., fresher ingredients and free-range livestock in their products), but consumers are largely unaware of the entire back story behind their growing success.

### 5.3.3 Panera Bread

De-McDonaldization is also found in café-style bakeries and quick service restaurants such as Panera Bread. The wholesome freshly baked goods, hearty soups, and made-to-order salads and sandwiches served at this eatery emulate a slower model in fast-food service. Au Bon Pain Company purchased the St. Louis Bread Company—or what is called Panera Bread in the rest of the United States and Canada—from founders Ken Rosenthal, Louis Kane, and Ronald Shaich in 1993. Currently the 1,453 Panera Bread chains are owned by Compass Group North America. You may be asking yourself, “How is a restaurant owned by the largest contracted foodservice company in the world de-McDonaldized?” Panera Bread did replace all partially hydrogenated oils in 2007, and is completely trans fat-free. Upon reviewing the nutritional guide, one will notice the abundance of low-fat, low-calorie, low-carbohydrate options. In fact, the worst items on the menu are the creamy soups, cheesy pastries, saucy sandwiches, and desserts—all items one would expect to be less than optimal for a healthy diet. Health Magazine conducted a study and found that Panera Bread was North America's healthiest fast casual restaurant in 2008 (Minkin and Reaud 2009). The company must be doing something

right in the taste and quality department because people are responding with their wallets—in 2008, revenues exceeded \$1.30 billion. Panera Bread also treats their employees with the same kindness they show their customers, as they provide managers with a multi-year bonus program based on a percentage of the bakery-outlets they manage and operate.

#### 5.3.4 Veganism and Vegetarianism

Another de-McDonaldized movement is visible in the veganism and vegetarianism that is becoming more and more popular across the country—from resource groups, to menu offerings—the corporate world and American population are taking notice of this shift.

Vegetarians eat a largely plant-based diet avoiding meat, fish, and animal-derived additives.

There are many variations of a vegetarian diet, for example, lacto-vegetarians consume dairy products. Vegans, on the other hand, do not eat or use any animal products. The vegetarian/vegan movement is not just against the consumption of animal carcass and flesh; it also

concerns a total lifestyle transformation—a transformation that can shrink your waistline.

Evidence can be found in research conducted by the American Cancer society. The research institution conducted a survey spanning over a ten-year period with nearly 80,000 participants who were all trying to lose weight. The study showed that participants who ate meat three times or more a week gained significantly more weight than those who avoided meat and consumed more vegetables (Freedman and Barnouin 2005). White meat consumption has also been

connected to colon cancer (Singh and Fraser 1998), and red meat linked to pancreatic cancer (Larsson and Wolk 2012). Some people are adopting this lifestyle not only to stay healthy, but

for animal welfare and environmental concerns as well. Factory farming practices not only confine animals to cages with little-to-no space to move, but slaughterhouse workers routinely admit to strangling, beating, scalding, and skinning fully conscious animals (Krizner 1998). The animals are not the only ones that suffer in factory farming operations; employees of the slaughterhouse are also regularly exploited and injured on the job. The planet Earth is even

paying the price—in the 1.4 billion tons of animal waste produced annually, and in the South American forests cleared to create pastures for cattle to graze (Lang 1998).

The vegan and vegetarian revolution is taking place in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Spiral Diner and Bakery offers an all-vegan, all-organic menu serving two locations in Dallas and Fort Worth. The menu offerings include everything from Chik'n-less salad to Sketti and Meatballs. Mellow Mushroom is another restaurant offering alternatives for vegans and vegetarians in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. They offer vegan-friendly pizzas and sandwiches. Hot Damn Tamale serves vegetarian tamales, Pei Wei offers vegetarian Asian dishes, and Bombay Grill has many vegetarian Indian dishes. Some supermarkets—Central Market, Whole Foods, Sunflower Shoppe, and Sprouts, for example—are also catering to the vegetarian and vegan way of life by offering many veg-friendly products such as tofu, seitan, and soy bacon, as well as organic produce, juice bars, even natural cosmetics. Fort Worth also has their own Vegetarian Society—a non-profit organization whose goal is to educate people on the advantages of a vegetarian diet. These are just a few of the de-McDonaldizing eateries that permeate throughout the country, and may serve as a catalyst to the changing market.

#### 5.3.5 Food Trucks

One might be strapped to find anything more de-McDonaldized in Fort Worth than the Fort Worth Food Park that recently made its way into the cultural district of downtown. These mobile kitchens originated as chuck wagons used in the 1800s to feed hungry cattlemen in the West. Today, they are more known for their innovative style and high-quality foods served at a reasonable price. The Fort Worth Park's name is pretty self-explanatory—it is a designated area for local chefs to park food trucks and serve the customer gourmet foods in a non-traditional setting. Although people living in Dallas experienced the food truck phenomenon a bit earlier than those residing in Fort Worth, Texans from all over are joining this movement toward a de-McDonaldized lifestyle. Taking part in this change is as simple as buying and enjoying a wide range of high-quality dishes made with local ingredients at a low cost—for both meat eaters and



herbivores. Good Karma Kitchen is one of the choices for those wanting to support deconstruction. The company owned by two best friends, serves sustainable gourmet gluten-free vegetarian food products. The Munch Box is another truck in the park dedicated to bringing local produce and meat into the quality foods they prepare for customers. Other food trucks in the Fort Worth area that travel to various operating sites and visit the park include: the Weiner Man, Salsa Limon, Crazy Sisters, Butcher's Sons, Rollin' Diner and Grill, Jakes Hamburgers, and Yes! Taco.

#### 5.3.6 Food Co-ops

Another de-McDonaldized movement is visible in food co-ops. The Texan community spirit, for which we are famous, has turned into a profit for some and farm-fresh meat and local, organic produce for others. People such as Craig Keaton of Dallas have begun neighborhood-based food co-ops, where members pay annual fees to get their hands on delicious de-McDonaldized cuisine. The process of supporting local and sustainable products is effortless when using these food co-ops. An individual from your local community is paid to take orders, drive, and pick-up fresh produce and meat from local farmers. Then the consumer can serve their family and friend's wholesome foods with the good conscience of knowing where the products originated (and the length of the trip they took before arriving on their dinner plates).

#### 5.4 De-McDonaldizing Influence

Fast-food restaurants are beginning to take notice of this deconstruction. The increasing and alarming rates of obesity in the United States and worldwide prompted the assessment and evaluation of fast-foods. In reaction to these allegations, fast-food restaurants introduced fresh vegetables (and now fruits) on their menus in the form of 'designer' or 'premium' salads. In March of 2003, McDonald's launched competing salads—all of which have been extensively advertised in print and television promotions. Paradoxically, with the introduction and endorsement of their salads, fast-food restaurants have actually become leading advocates for fresh vegetable and fruit consumption (Lebesco and Naccarato

2008:153). The problem, however, is in the uniformity and standardization within the 'healthy options' (e.g., the premium salads McDonald's serves). These salads are just as saturated (if not more) with pesticides, high-fat, and high-sodium as is the Big Mac value meal. McDonald's motto is to "simply 'swap one menu favorite for another tasty choice' in order to proclaim 'I'm feeling better' and 'I'm lovin' it'" (Lebesco and Naccarato 2008:154), but these ideals do not hold true when you ask nutrition specialists studying the effects of fast-food on our health.

Nutritionists suggest consuming fast-food, even as little as once a week, can be harmful to an individual's overall health. Most experts suggest one should not eat *any* fast-food if they want to be healthy (Spurlock 2005). "The restaurant is a high-risk food environment," says Gayle Timmerman, Ph.D., a professor at The University of Texas at Austin who studies dietary patterns. "There is a good chance if you eat out frequently you are likely to gain weight over time" (Harding 2012). Still McDonald's assures us, "getting active is easier than you think"—especially when you purchase an adult happy meal, which contains a salad, bottled water, and a pedometer. Continually, advertisements promise us that 'making smart menu choices is a snap' and 'leading a healthy, happy life' is 'cool', 'smart', 'colorful', 'easy', 'fun', and 'user-friendly' (Lebesco and Naccarato 2008: 154); however, these lifestyle changes are not so easy when fast-food restaurants serve low quality food in increasingly large portion sizes.

So why is it that we are bombarded with advertisements suggesting that unhealthy fast-foods can be a part of a healthy diet, even though the true experts suggest otherwise? The primary reason is largely due to the increasing power of the food industry—an institution that is now too large and influential for the consumers good. In the 1970s, for example, the top five beef packers controlled a mere 25% of the market. Today, the top four in the packing industry control a whopping 80% of the entire market (Kenner 2008). Another example is observable in the sheer number of slaughterhouses nationwide: in the 1970s there were thousands, while today there are only thirteen. Additionally, the FDA conducted 50,000 food safety inspections in 1972. The numbers have since steadily declined. In 2006, the FDA conducted only 9,164.

Would you not expect the numbers to increase with the advancements in food-safety regulation? I would.

Even government policies serve the interests of the food industry. Former CEO's of the beef and farming industries are now *in* the government. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, for example, used to serve as Monsanto's attorney in the 1970s. In 1996, Monsanto controlled only 2% of the U.S. soybean market, but after Justice Thomas wrote legislation helping Monsanto enforce seed patents of Round-up Ready Soybeans, they now control 90% of the market in the United States. If that is not a conflict of interest, I don't know what is! This example is just one of the many that abound throughout the food industry. Remember when Oprah, one of the wealthiest and most powerful women in the world, spoke badly of beef? Texas beef ranchers sued her. Only after years of legal battles, and millions of dollars in council later, she finally won the suit. Oprah's trial is one of the few where a civilian actually triumphed against the food industry in court—maybe it has something to do with the billions she is worth. Still, to this day, Oprah will not speak poorly of beef in public. If the food companies can scare one of the most influential people in America, think of the control they have over farmers! And to this point, one does not have to search their imagination. It is well documented that Monsanto runs a mob-like operation of control over soybean farmers, just watch *Food, Inc.*

## CHAPTER 6

### *DIGESTIF*

Food and culture are inherently interconnected. A shift in one's dietary practices from a local indigenous cuisine to standardized, industrialized foods involves a proportionate and fundamental change in cultural identity (Visser 1999). Consequently, globalization and expansion of the industrial food production system creates a threat, not only to local food cultures, but also to one's socially-constructed identity (Manafa and Kwan 2007). As a result, the modern consumer is reduced to the position of a passive eater, an individual who possesses only a limited knowledge of the origins of his or her food history, significantly diminishing one's stake in the food system that sustains his or her existence. When eating mass marketed products, the foods are just nourishment for your body and not for your soul. By purchasing local produce, one separates from the anonymous, industrialized market and reconnects with their cultural history and identity. Local foods tell us our history, a story, to make it a little easier to understand who we are (other than passive consumers).

Non-human technologies erode traditional skills in food preparation—representing one's rich cultural identity. These technological advances, together with a break in traditional practices, create a greater demand for processed and packaged foods. Natural products no longer actually mean that they come from nature; rather, they are food-like substances transformed into edibility by artificial flavor enhancers and chemical additives used to increase shelf life. Characteristics of experience, taste, aroma, and texture one associates with a food item are lost in modern standardized food products that are devoid of origin, tradition, and, consequently, identity (Manafa and Kwan 2007).

The paradoxical journey from localization to globalization back to local is one of the primary themes of this project. Following comparisons of novel, non-traditional foods against

Croatia's fundamental dietary practices, food items are either incorporated or rejected into the mainstream culture. For example, even though fast-food has enjoyed relative success in Croatia, it is important to consider what Croats eat when they are not eating inexpensive food prepared and served quickly (i.e., fast-food). In other words, daily consumption of freshly-made bread, *ajvar*, and farm-fresh cheese (slow-food) is one of the backdrops to Northern Croatian's experimentation with diverse foods. Alternatively, if we consider American food culture, wherein fast-food is, at the very least, a weekly meal, one can begin to see the cultural context within which this type of food is consumed.

Food is the centerpiece of what Marx called "economic reproduction," which is crucial to the production and distribution process. Just as Marxists' have overlooked women's labor, including cooking and shopping, they also ignored what people consume—that is, at least until sixties revolutionaries put gastronomy on the agenda as a political topic, both with feminism (the personal is political) and the whole foods/ organic foods movement. The sixties was a decade of political, social, and technological turbulence in the United States and the world. Protests of the Vietnam War and the equal rights movement proliferated. It was a social revolution that changed both the course of humanity and historical food culture. History began to be written "from the bottom up" instead "from the top down" (Civitello 2008:335). Alice Waters came directly out of this transformative period, and started Chez Panisse at the time the sixties ended, in 1971. The post-sixties critique of food, bodies, and reproduction is the beginning point when critical theorists recognized that examination of food was a vital feature to the politics of the body. And it was during this time that theorists recognized societies were culturally converging, and forming a homogenous global culture.

As Theodore Levitt proposed in *The Globalization of the Markets* (1983) the powers of technology will cause societies to converge and form one accepted global culture. Levitt also suggested, "different cultural preferences, national tastes and standards, and business institutions are vestiges of the past... everywhere, everything gets more and more like

everything else as the world's preference structure is relentlessly homogenized" (1983:98-99). In essence, Levitt argued that cultural preferences will become standardized and every individual will become more and more similar in their wants, needs, and dreams. I argue the globalization Levitt projected is also evident in food preferences. It is true that the standardization in McDonald's food is not the exact same standardized product one can get in Croatia—an expansion strategy referred to as glocal, or "think globally and act locally." For example, one would not be able to order a McCountry in the United States as one could in Croatia. But I guarantee if a Croat orders a McCountry today and another McCountry next year—or even five years from now—that sandwich will taste the exact same at every juncture. This is the standardized structure I am referring to, the epitome of McDonald's success—and failure.

Critics may argue that the popularity of standardized fast-food in Croatia is a far leap from the supposition that an entire country is McDonaldizing. Critics might also suggest the economic growth and changing political institutions in Croatia is simply a sign of the times and not a manifestation of a McDonaldizing society. But one only needs to consider the decades of variant adherence to McDonaldization in America to recognize that McDonaldization is not absolute. The United States began its descent into rationalization when Henry Ford transformed automobile manufacturing, providing consumers with a low unit cost for manufactured goods. Drastic changes occurred in the American life in the nineteenth century. Devotion to McDonaldization in the United States has progressed from a high-degree of adherence in the industrialized system to the beginning stages of a deconstruction in a service-based economy. This is evidenced in the movement toward not only a slower food system, but a slower lifestyle as well.

The concept of "lifestyle" was originally used by Max Weber (Cockerham 2006) and later utilized in the marketing field for positioning and segmentation purposes, by William Lazer (1963). Kesić, Rajh, and Kesić (2008) utilized lifestyle segmentation and sociodemographic

information in their analysis of food-related lifestyle categorization in Croatia. The researchers found that 22% of those surveyed belonged to the relaxed segment, 10% traditionalist, 24% modern, 26% concerned nutritionists, and 18% experimentalists. Similarly, Hur, Kim, and Park (2010) examined American market segmentation and found 25% were Well-being oriented (comparable to concerned nutritionist and experimentalists), 10% Social- and dining-oriented (comparable to the relaxed segment), 15% Family-oriented (similar to traditionalists), 19% Innovation- and action- oriented (similar to the modern segment), 11% Price-conscious (also comparable to traditionalists), and 16% Convenience-oriented (also similar to the modern group). These data suggest that the United States and Croatia have comparable categories of food lifestyle-segmentation, and may be an indicator of Croatia McDonaldizing. Alas, Americans will continue to use food for comfort, weight loss, and immortality, attempting to recreate a de-McDonaldized lifestyle to follow. Lower- and working-class families will continue to eat the standardized foods that are affordable and will satisfy the hunger of their children. In contrast, however, subsets of able Americans will search for the organic farmers markets, eat locally grown and raised products, and dine-out at the least McDonaldized restaurants like In-N-Out Burger.

I argue, Croatians are in the beginning stages of the McDonaldizing structure some Americans are trying to convalesce—mainly in their waistline. Similar to the prolonged period Americans took to reach the point of dissension, most Croatians are—for now—accepting this lifestyle of increased McDonaldization. From the surrounding institutions that comprise the society they live, to their dinner plates, McDonaldization is visible. The question remains: Will Croats realize the detriments of McDonaldization and avoid the negative consequences of a McDonaldizing society or will they resist before the country reaches the same high rates of obesity and rationalization our society finds today? Although, the heterogeneity of regional food cultures in Croatia may ultimately serve as an impediment to McDonaldization primarily because Croatian dietary cultures are diverse from the beginning. This is in contrast to the giant

melting pot of the United States, where individuals tend to practice assimilationism to local food cultures. However, governmental intervention in Croatia is setting the country up to accommodate McDonaldization, in the modernization of farming practices and in the increased mass marketing of processed foods; whereas the American government under First Lady Michelle Obama is advocating for the deconstruction of our diets (e.g., replacing the Food Pyramid with the Nutritional Plate). To reduce obesity in both respective countries each will have to modify the way society is structured. It would require a high degree of reform—involving the de-modernization of cities, the de-rationalization of schools, and the de-McDonaldization of eating and entertainment.



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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Ashley Wendell Kranjac has enjoyed great teaching opportunities at the University of Texas at Arlington. These experiences have been crucial to her decision to pursue a career in academia. She learned that she loves teaching, not only as a complement to her love of research, but for the immediate satisfaction she gains from igniting students' interest and deepening their knowledge. She has enjoyed great opportunities in research as well. She was invited to present an original paper titled Feeding the Family: Gender Responsibilities in Croatia and the United States at the 2012 American Sociological Association's annual meeting. She was also invited to develop and present a professional workshop on Self and Social Identity at the 2011 American Sociological Association's annual meeting in Las Vegas, organized by Dr. Linda Rouse.