When “What Tastes Right” Feels Wrong: Guilt, Shame, and Fast Food Consumption

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Abstract

Research shows that foods can provoke emotional responses, and in the consumption of high-calorie foods, guilt and shame are common reactions. However, little has been done to study reactions to fast food despite its widespread availability and consumption. Undergraduate college students were recruited to explore the role that trait body image guilt and shame plays in food choice (salad versus cheeseburger and fries) as well as how food choice plays a role in state guilt and shame post-consumption. People who ate fast food exhibited greater state guilt and shame than those who ate salad, and women who ate fast food showed significantly greater guilt than men who ate fast food. Men with higher trait body image guilt and shame were more likely to choose a salad, while women with higher trait body image guilt and shame were more likely to choose fast food. Implications for future gender and feeding research are discussed.
When “What Tastes Right” Feels Wrong: Guilt, Shame, and Fast Food Consumption

Obesity is a chronic problem in the United States. Over the last twenty years, obesity has grown to epidemic proportions, with over one-third of adult Americans, 72 million people, currently considered obese and at major risk for cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, and type 2 diabetes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). As obesity rates have risen, fast food restaurants have proliferated and spread to nearly every town across the nation. Certainly one cannot discount the effect fast food has had on the American diet. Fast-paced living has driven us to choose fast-paced food choices, but these detrimental food choices are also linked to high fat diets and high Body Mass Indices (Jeffery, Baxter, McGuire, & Linde, 2006).

Especially disturbing is fast food consumption among adolescents and young adults. One longitudinal study found that frequent fast food intake rose between 1999 and 2004 for both males (23.6% in 1999 to 30.2% in 2004) and females (18.9% in 1999 to 27.3% in 2004) (Bauer, Larson, Nelson, Story, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009). In this age group, men and women alike recognize the unwholesome characteristics of fast food (Mattsson & Helmersson, 2007), but more men than women report eating at fast food restaurants at least once weekly (Driskell, Meckna, & Scales, 2006). Men are more likely to consume everything they order instead of just eating until satiated, and they tend to ignore portion sizes of the meals they order; women, on the other hand, are more likely to order diet soda, consider healthier alternative options, and eat smaller portions (Driskell, et al., 2006).

Despite being cognizant of the unhealthy aspects of fast food, “billions and billions” still flock to McDonald’s arches. Most commonly, people report eating at fast food establishments because of limited time, tastiness of the food, social eating with family or friends, and inexpensiveness (Morse & Driskell, 2009). Men are more likely to report eating fast food
because of the small cost (Morse, et al., 2009), while women are more likely to report eating fast
food for social reasons (Driskell, et al., 2006).

As fast food consumption and obesity have skyrocketed, body ideals have shifted. From
just decades ago, female ideals of thinness have intensified to such a degree as to be nearly
unattainable, and to a lesser degree, masculine ideals have become more salient. These gendered
ideals have, of course, impacted body image. One meta-analysis of 222 studies of body image
over 50 years found that the strongest trend was an increasing number of women feeling
dissatisfied with their bodies (Feingold & Mazzella, 1998). This same study found that while
women have become dissatisfied, men have become more satisfied with their bodies and believe
themselves to be more attractive than women do. Muth and Cash (1997) proposed that body
image is composed of evaluation/affect and investment components. Studying both men and
women with a number of body image inventories, they found that women have much more
negative body image evaluations and place a stronger investment in their appearance than men
do. Differences in body image affect were most discrepant between men and women. They found
negative emotions and body weight to be a linear function in women, but a curvilinear function
in men. Women express more negative emotions as body weight increases; however, men
express negative emotions about being too skinny or too overweight (Muth, et al., 1997).

Other studies have looked at the interaction between gender role and body image,
suspecting that one’s degree of masculinity or femininity interacts with body image more so than
sex. In one study, Jackson, Sullivan, and Rostker (1988) found that gender role does play a role
in body image. They studied men and women, assessed their degree of masculinity and
femininity, and found that feminine women were more negative about their bodies than
androgynous women. Masculine women were most comfortable with their bodies. However,
gender role was not as significant a predictor of body image as biological sex. Another study by Gillen and Lefkowitz (2006) found partial support for femininity as a predictor of negative body image and masculinity as a predictor for positive body image, but, like the previously mentioned study, sex was a stronger predictor. Even factors such as espousing feminist and egalitarian ideologies do not reduce body image differences in men and women (Cash, Ancis, & Strachan, 1997).

Thompson (2003) states that guilt and shame are natural reactions to body image concerns. However, many people do not distinguish between these two deep, visceral emotions. In fact, researchers for years used the two interchangeably without a second thought. Early thinkers such as Freud discussed guilt and shame as an unconscious conflict of the superego. Anthropologists attempted to distinguish guilt and shame by defining guilt as an emotion of private regret and shame as an emotion of public exposure over an act (Gehm & Scherer, 1988). This “public versus private” differentiation was accepted until Helen Block Lewis (1971) changed the way we think of guilt and shame. She proposed that shame is directly about the self, and guilt is directly about an act in question. Because shame is a negative evaluation of the self, it tends to be more painful than guilt. Shame precipitates feelings of worthlessness, powerlessness, and exposure, and may be accompanied by wanting to disappear. Guilt, on the other hand, focuses on an act instead of the self. It causes feelings of regret and may prompt a reconciliation of the offending act. Studies of guilt and shame have largely supported Lewis’ definition of guilt and shame.

Like body image, research has shown that men and women differ in their guilt and shame emotions, especially in individualistic cultures (Silfver, 2007). In fact, women are more prone to shame and guilt, while men usually respond to wrongful acts with guilt rather than shame.
Others found that females are more prone to guilt and shame than men (Benetti-McQuoid & Bursik, 2005). The latter study also focused on gender role, guilt, and shame, finding that femininity in both men and women predisposed them to higher guilt and shame. Guilt and shame have been understood as interpersonal emotions, and consistent with gender socialization, women are taught the importance of social interaction and others’ emotions. Men may not experience guilt and shame as much because they have not been taught to focus on interpersonal relationships. When they do, the more likely emotion is guilt, as men tend to deflect wrongdoing from the self and focus on the act instead. Females feel shame more so than guilt because they tend to internalize when they do not live up to internal and external ideals.

As expected, guilt and shame also play a role in eating behaviors. While guilt and shame are normal emotions experienced by all people, excessive guilt and shame about body image and eating has been shown to be a factor in eating disorder symptomatology (Burney & Irwin, 2000; Bybee, Zigler, Berlin, & Merisca, 1996). Guilt and shame have also been found in people with normal eating patterns. One study of college women tracked food eaten, context of eating, and feelings associated with eating for one week, discovering that mild guilt is a routine feeling among this population (Steenhuis, 2008). The “guiltyest” foods included candy, ice cream, potato chips, nuts, cake, and cookies. Although fast food was consumed less frequently than the aforementioned foods, it induced guilt almost as often. Women also felt most guilty about eating at nontraditional meal times such as mid-afternoon and after-dinner snacking.

Macht, Gerer, and Ellgring (2003) investigated the role of emotions in eating low-, medium-, and high-calorie foods among normal-weight and overweight women. The researchers labeled foods such as a piece of carrot, a strawberry, and a small salmon roll “low-calorie,” a cube of cheese, a teaspoon of quark (low-fat cheese), and a small ham roll “medium-calorie,”
and a hazelnut, a piece of chocolate, and a slice of salami “high-calorie.” They found that negative emotions such as anger, fear, shame, and sadness were directly correlated with the caloric content of the food consumed. As energy content increased, happiness decreased, and the frequency of negative emotions increased; overweight women were also more likely to exhibit stronger negative emotion. Interestingly, these strong emotions were seen even though participants did not consume a whole meal, but only extremely small portions.

Another study looked at normal-weight women’s emotional responses to eating a chocolate bar or apple (Macht & Dettmer, 2006). Given chocolate bars, apples, and several sealed envelopes, female participants were instructed to open an envelope in the morning between 10:00 and 11:30 and in the afternoon between 4:00 and 5:30 over six consecutive days. The sealed envelope contained instructions to eat a chocolate bar, an apple, or nothing. They then recorded their emotions at 5 minutes, 30 minutes, 60 minutes, and 90 minutes after snacking. Both the chocolate and apple decreased hunger, but a greater elevation in mood was evident in women who consumed chocolate. This effect was pronounced even as much as 90 minutes post-consumption. However, in addition to positive emotions, women also experienced guilt about eating the chocolate that lasted just as long. Eating the apple provoked very little guilt. Other researchers have found that guilt about chocolate consumption is also found in children aged 11, 12, and 13, particularly among girls (Cartwright, Stritzke, Durkin, Houghton, Burke, & Beilin, 2007). Negative reactions are not just limited to eating, as some women express dissatisfaction over simply being exposed to high-calorie foods (Fett, Lattimore, Roefs, Geschwind, & Jansen, 2009).

Despite the widespread availability of fast food and concern over its effects on the American diet, little has been done to study emotional reactions to fast food consumption.
Following previous research on reaction to high-calorie versus low-calorie foods and filling a gap in fast food and gender research, the present study investigates negative emotions such as guilt and shame in college-aged men and women who choose to eat either fast food or salad. Guilt and shame are strong emotions, and understanding the role they play in fast food consumption may lead to a greater understanding of why people continue to eat so poorly at ever alarming rates. In an effort to qualify data, an exploratory measure was also used for people who choose fast food: these participants were asked to provide reasons for why they react negatively to fast food consumption.

Research Questions

I. How do guilt and shame play a role in people’s emotions when they choose to consume fast food over a more healthful alternative?

II. Why do people react in such a way after consuming fast food?

Hypotheses

I. People who eat fast food instead of salad will show more guilt and shame.

II. Women who eat fast food will show more guilt and shame than men who eat fast food.

III. People with higher trait body image guilt and shame will avoid eating fast food.

Method

Participants

A total of 79 participants were recruited through the Marietta College participant pool, psychology courses, and word of mouth. Of these, 76 participants were required to participate for course credit, while 3 participants volunteered without a course credit requirement. All completed the study. While the original intent was to have an equivalent number of men and women, the gender skew of females within psychology courses hindered this effort; overall, 46
females and 33 males participated. All participants were of traditional college age (\(M = 19.20\) years old). Based on self-report, men had a mean Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25.01, and women had a mean BMI of 22.90. Before scheduling an appointment to participate, people were notified that having dietary restrictions (e.g. vegetarian or vegan diets, religious restrictions) would exclude them from participation. No participants indicated the presence of a current eating disorder.

**Materials**

Fast food and salad were available for each participant to choose. Due to their inexpensiveness, the fast food choice consisted of a McDonald’s McDouble (a double cheeseburger) and small fries. The salad was of comparable size and was composed of lettuce, carrots, tomatoes, and snap peas. All participants were given a 20-ounce bottle of water with their food selection. The Body Image Guilt and Shame Scale and State Shame and Guilt Scale were administered to each participant. Participants who chose fast food were also given a Fast Food Reaction Questionnaire.

**Procedure**

Participants made appointments to complete the study via an online scheduling website. All research timeslots occurred during lunchtime. Due to the course schedule at Marietta College, testing occurred either between 12:00-12:50 or 12:15-1:00 based on the day that each participant selected. When participants arrived, each was placed in a solitary cubicle and given the following items to complete:

1. An informed consent document. See Appendix A.
2. A demographic questionnaire. This survey was designed in such a way as to resemble a general health questionnaire. Many health questions were simply filler items, but this
survey collected basic demographic information and asked about the presence of a current eating disorder (an exclusionary criterion). See Appendix B.

3. Body Image Guilt and Shame Scale (Thompson, et al., 2003). This 15-item inventory contains scenarios (e.g. “Your partner expresses disappointment over your body.”) with possible outcomes. Each scenario is followed by four possible outcomes: one each for guilt, shame, externalization, and detachment. On a scale of 1-5, participants rate how likely they would be to react to each outcome presented. Only the guilt and shame outcomes are scored, and externalization and detachment outcomes are filler items. This scale determines general guilt and shame about body image. This scale has been tested for reliability (α = 0.88 for guilt and α = 0.90 for shame) and construct validity with the guilt and shame subscales of the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (r = 0.48 for guilt and r = 0.41 for shame) (Thompson, et al., 2003). See Appendix C.

Once each of these items was completed, participants were given a selection of fast food or salad for lunch. Participants were told when scheduling an appointment that lunch was provided due to the testing occupying their traditional lunch hour; they did not realize their choice of food was a variable in the study. The researcher gave each participant his/her choice of lunch and a bottle of water. After finishing eating, the following measures were administered:

1. State Shame and Guilt Scale (Marschall, Sanftner, & Tangney, 1994). This 15-item inventory contains statements (e.g. “I want to sink into the floor and disappear.”) and a 5-point Likert scale for each item. Participants are instructed to think about how they feel at the moment when completing each item. This inventory determines state shame and state guilt. Because some people have trouble distinguishing between the definitions of guilt and shame, this questionnaire improves on past surveys by removing the terms “guilt”
and “shame,” instead including words and phrases more easily understood, such as “regret” and “humiliated.” See Appendix D.

2. Fast Food Reaction Questionnaire (only administered to participants who choose fast food). Culled from interviewing several college students \((n = 18)\) in a pilot study, the researcher determined reasons people react negatively after consuming fast food. A 12-item inventory was then constructed to examine how men and women respond differently to fast food consumption. This determines whether participants mainly dislike the potential weight gain, health detriments, physical effects, etc. See Appendix E.

Results

A total of 79 undergraduate students participated \((n = 33 \text{ males}, n = 46 \text{ females})\). None reported a current eating disorder. More men chose the fast food \((n = 27)\) over a salad \((n = 6)\), while women chose the fast food \((n = 24)\) and salad \((n = 22)\) almost equally. See Table 1. Because of the likelihood of covariance between gender and food choice on dependent variables and due to the disparity in the number of men who chose salad, Type I sums of squares were used in the following analyses of variance. An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis posited that people who chose fast food over a salad would show more guilt and shame post-consumption. A one-way analysis of variance was performed to determine differences in state guilt and state shame in participants who ate fast food versus those who ate salad, and, as expected, participants who chose fast food exhibited more guilt and shame overall than participants who chose a salad. Those who ate fast food \((n = 51)\) showed more state guilt \((M = 1.90, SD = .83)\) than participants \((n = 28)\) who ate a salad \((M = 1.32, SD = .67)\), indicating a main effect of food choice on state guilt, \(F(1) = 9.69, p = .003\). Those who ate fast
food also showed more state shame ($M = 1.58, SD = .82$) than those who ate a salad ($M = 1.20, SD = .65$), indicating a main effect of food choice on state shame, $F(1) = 4.41, p = .039$. See Figure 1.

**Hypothesis II**

The second hypothesis stated that women would show more guilt and shame than men after eating fast food. This hypothesis was partially supported. One-way analyses of variance were performed to determine main effects of gender on state guilt and state shame in those who ate fast food. Women who chose fast food showed significantly more state guilt ($M = 2.13, SD = 1.00$) than men who chose fast food ($M = 1.69, SD = .59$). Therefore, a main effect of gender on state guilt exists, $F(1) = 3.56, p = .045$. No main effect of gender on state shame was found; women who chose fast food showed similar levels of state shame as men who chose fast food.

**Hypothesis III**

The third hypothesis asserted that participants with higher trait body image guilt and shame entering the study would avoid choosing fast food. This hypothesis was also partially supported. Two-way analyses of variance were performed to determine the main effects and interactions of gender and food choice on trait body image guilt and trait body image shame. Overall, people who chose fast food and people who chose a salad did not differ on body image guilt; men and women also showed equivalent levels of body image guilt. However, an interaction of gender and food choice was found, $F(1) = 13.86, p < .001$. Men who chose fast food ($M = 2.87, SD = .64$) had lower levels of body image guilt than men who chose a salad ($M = 3.53, SD = .45$), while women who chose fast food ($M = 3.57, SD = .63$) had higher body image guilt than women who chose a salad ($M = 3.06, SE = .49$). See Figure 2.
In regards to body image shame, main effects were found for gender and food choice. Overall, people who chose fast food ($M = 2.87, SD = .85$) showed more body image shame than those who chose a salad ($M = 2.69, SD = .43$), $F(1) = 4.69, p = .033$. Men overall ($M = 2.54, SD = .64$) showed less body image shame than women ($M = 3.00, SD = .74$), $F(2) = 715.41, p < .001$. An interaction was also found, $F(1) = 6.33, p = .014$. Men who chose fast food had lower body image shame ($M = 2.49, SD = .68$) than men who chose salad ($M = 2.77, SD = .43$), while women who chose fast food ($M = 3.30, SD = .84$) had higher body image shame than women who chose salad ($M = 2.68, SD = .43$). See Figure 3.

**Reasons for Guilt and Shame**

As an exploratory measure, participants who chose fast food were asked to indicate reasons why they felt bad about eating fast food, as well as how strongly each reason applied to them. The most strongly rated reasons for why people felt bad about eating fast food were as follows: because it is bad for one’s health ($M = 6.41, SD = 2.15$), because one is spending money ($M = 5.98, SD = 2.62$), because one feels greasy afterward ($M = 5.61, SD = 2.32$), and because of potential weight gain ($M = 5.40, SD = 2.42$). See Table 2. Men and women significantly differed on their responses to two items. Women felt bad for eating fast food because they felt tired ($M = 4.54, SD = 2.59$) more than men ($M = 3.19, SD = 1.80$), $t(40.40) = -2.15, p = .038$. Women ($M = 5.17, SD = 2.79$) more so than men ($M = 3.52, SD = 2.58$) reported feeling bad for eating fast food because they felt as if they had to work out more afterward, $t(49) = -2.19, p = .033$. A trend was found for women ($M = 5.21, SD = 2.93$) feeling fat after eating fast food more than men ($M = 3.74, SD = 2.25$), $t(42.91) = -1.99, p = .053$.

**Discussion**
As expected, people who ate fast food exhibited higher state guilt and state shame than those who chose to eat salad, and women who ate fast food showed more state guilt than men who ate the same. This falls in line with previous research that suggests women are more prone to guilt than men (Benetti-McQuoid, et al., 2005). However, no difference in state shame was found in men and women who ate fast food. This finding was surprising, as past studies have indicated that shame is more common and strongly experienced in women (Ferguson, et al., 1997). Speculatively, this might be due to the fact that college men and women are particularly at risk for higher body dissatisfaction (Crocker, Luhtanen, & Cooper, 2003), which may have caused participants to evaluate the self negatively in light of their food selection. For this reason, college-aged men and women may not differ drastically on levels of shame experienced after eating fast food.

The results of the third hypothesis presented the most interesting finding of all. Men who chose to eat salad had higher trait body image guilt and trait body image shame than men who chose to eat fast food, while women who chose to eat fast food had higher trait body image guilt and trait body image shame than women who chose to eat salad. This suggests that men who have negative feelings about their bodies make more healthful food choices to mitigate such uncomfortable emotions about their bodies. Women with more negativity about their bodies, on the other hand, exhibit a “splurging” attitude. Macht and Dettmer (2006) found that foods such as chocolate can elicit both feelings of positivity and guilt, so women may be choosing high calorie “comfort foods” as a way to inflate short-term affect, even though such foods may provoke guilt and shame at the same time.

The exploratory measure sought to investigate the reasons men and women felt bad about consuming fast food. The strongest reported reasons were (in descending order): being bad for
one’s health, spending money, feeling greasy, and potential weight gain. This indicates that participants find fast food’s physical effects most saliently negative. Feeling bad about spending money may just be limited to the college sample, as college students are not known for having large expendable incomes. Women and men differed in their ratings of two items; women reported stronger ratings about feeling tired and having to work out after eating fast food. This suggests that women, more than men, are more likely to react to eating fast food either through succumbing to feelings of laziness, or, conversely, through negating their intake with exercise.

The present study has contributed to the extremely limited literature associated with emotional reactions to fast food. Still, many more research questions are left unanswered. Future studies could investigate whether people experience varying levels of guilt and shame with different fast food menu items; for example, do people experience lower levels of guilt and shame with chicken or fish as compared to beef? Also, with the proliferation of more healthful options available at fast food restaurants nationwide, does choosing a salad or fruit diminish negative affect associated with choosing a fattier option at the same time? While it seems an almost comical picture, many of us can recall ourselves or another person ordering a diet soda to accompany an unhealthful meal. Future research might investigate the potential role that diet drinks play in mitigating guilt and shame with eating fast food. Studies of guilt and shame in solo versus group eating are also needed, and investigating the reasons people choose or justify choosing fast food would be valuable.

With obesity rates ever high, the present study may have implications for changing poor diets. As previously discussed, guilt is a negative emotion directed towards an act of wrongdoing, and the provoked discomfort may prompt a reconciliation of the act. Hence, the negative experience of guilt may be harnessed into motivation for better diets in the future. On
the other hand, guilt and shame may also enhance restricted eating and, in extreme cases, may be implicated in the development of eating disorders. Timmerman (2006) identified restaurants as high-risk environments for increased calorie and fat intake in both bingers and restrictors, so more in-depth research into the specific sources of guilt and shame in fast food consumption could yield valuable insight into curbing unhealthful eating as well as treating disordered eating associated with fast food.

Limitations

One must be cautious in generalizing these findings to the population at large due to the nature of the participating sample; college students are particularly at risk for body dissatisfaction (Crocker, et al., 2003). Also, while every attempt was made to mimic an actual fast food meal, the eating environment in a solitary cubicle was not similar to what one would normally encounter in everyday life.

Due to the study being completed on a small college campus, the nature of the study may have been discussed among students, and those particularly sensitive about body image may have chosen not to participate. One specific participant voiced that she was uncomfortable by some questions on the Body Image Guilt and Shame Scale and indicated that she would tell her friends to avoid the study. However, based on feedback from other participants, this sentiment was not shared by the sample as a whole.
References


Table 1

*Number of Participants in Each Condition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fast Food</th>
<th>Salad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

*Reasons Participants Who Ate Fast Food Reported Feeling “Bad” About Eating It*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad for health</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending money</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling greasy</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential weight gain</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling fat</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needing to work out</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling too full</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others tell you not to</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling unmotivated</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling tired</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others will see you</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling ill</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All responses were on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree).
Figure Captions

*Figure 1.* Post-consumption levels of state guilt and state shame in participants who ate fast food and salad.

*Figure 2.* The interaction of gender and food choice on body image guilt in male and female participants.

*Figure 3.* The interaction of gender and food choice on body image shame in male and female participants.
Figure 1.
Figure 2.
Figure 3.
The purpose of this research is to investigate college students’ health behaviors and emotions.

During this one-time research session, you will be given a choice of lunch and asked to complete a health questionnaire. You will also be asked to complete a variety of other surveys asking about your emotions regarding health choices.

This study poses no foreseeable risks to you. You will be in the study today for about 30-45 minutes. You will receive 1 research credit for your participation.

Your privacy will be protected by the researcher throughout the study. All information you supply will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. Only the researcher listed at the top of this form will have access to this information.

If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

This study has been approved by the Marietta College Human Subjects Committee. If you have any questions or concerns about research subjects’ rights, please contact Sam Crowther, Marietta College Human Subjects Committee Chair (email: sam.crowther@marietta.edu). If you have any questions about this research project, contact Philip Lemaster (email: pcl001@marietta.edu).

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS CONSENT FORM AND ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH BY SIGNING MY NAME BELOW.

________________________________________________________  _____________________
Participant’s Signature                                      Date

________________________________________________________
Participant’s Name (PLEASE PRINT)

________________________________________________________
Participant’s Email Address
Appendix B
Demographic Questionnaire

ID #________

_____ Male  _____ Female

How old are you? _______

What class are you in?

_____ Freshman  _____ Sophomore  _____ Junior  _____ Senior  _____ Grad Student

How much do you weigh? __________ pounds

How tall are you? _____ feet _____ inches

How many alcoholic drinks do you have per week?

_____ 0  _____ 1-3  _____ 4-6  _____ 7-9  _____ 10+

Do you smoke cigarettes?

_____ Yes  _____ No

If yes, how many cigarettes do you smoke per day?

_____ cigarettes per day

Have you ever been diagnosed with an eating disorder?

_____ Yes  _____ No

If yes, do you currently have an eating disorder?

_____ Yes  _____ No

If yes, what eating disorder?

_____ Anorexia nervosa  _____ Bulimia nervosa  _____ Other

How healthy would you consider yourself?

Not healthy at all

1 - - - - - - 2 - - - - - - 3 - - - - - - 4 - - - - - - 5 - - - - - - 6 - - - - - - 7

Very healthy
Appendix C
Body Image Guilt and Shame Scale (BIGSS)

Below are several situations that people are likely to encounter in day-to-day life, followed by several common reactions to these situations. As you read each scenario, try to imagine yourself in that situation. Then indicate how likely you would be to react in each of the ways described. Please rate all responses because you may feel or react in more than one way to the same situation, or you may react in different ways at different times.

1. You and a friend decide to do some form of physical activity together each weekday, but after the first few days you make excuses not to go.

(A) You would think, “I’m totally undisciplined.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-----------2----------3--------4--------5</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

(B) You would think, “There were too many other things that distracted my attention.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-----------2----------3--------4--------5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(C) You would think, “I’ll make up for it next week.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-----------2----------3--------4--------5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(D) You wouldn’t think about it as terribly important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-----------2----------3--------4--------5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Your partner expresses disappointment over your body.

(A) You would attribute your partner’s disapproval to wrong priorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-----------2----------3--------4--------5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(B) You would wonder, “Why?” since you are happy with your physique.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-----------2----------3--------4--------5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(C) You would attribute your partner’s disapproval to your failure to keep trim.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-----------2----------3--------4--------5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(D) You would feel diminished in your image of yourself.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

3. Someone makes a negative comment about some aspect of your physique.

(A) You would feel so badly that you wouldn’t be able to focus on anything else that day.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(B) You would think, “I must commit myself to regular exercise and watch what I eat.”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(C) You would think the person was insensitive and didn’t realize what she or he was saying.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(D) You wouldn’t be troubled since people say negative things for all kinds of reasons.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

4. You go to the gym and everybody seems to have a better looking body than you.

(A) You wouldn’t care because your body is not an important aspect of your self-worth.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(B) You would think, “I should have stuck to my exercise program.”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(C) You would feel so awful that you want to hide.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely
(D) You would think, “They don’t lead busy lives, so they are able to exercise regularly.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Not likely Very likely

5. Your partner asks you to lose weight.

(A) You would feel worthless and undervalues.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Not likely Very likely

(B) You would decide to do something about your weight.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Not likely Very likely

(C) You would tell your partner that she or he should accept you for who you are.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Not likely Very likely

(D) You would tell your partner that she or he is not perfect either.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Not likely Very likely

6. You sit down in a self-serve restaurant and notice that you have much more food on your plate than everyone else at your table.

(A) You would say to yourself that you are hungrier than they are.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Not likely Very likely

(B) You would decide not to eat all the food on your plate.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Not likely Very likely

(C) You would feel bad and think that everybody is looking at you and your food.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Not likely Very likely
(D) You wouldn’t be worried and wouldn’t give it a second thought.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

7. You are at the beach and everyone else looks so slim and toned compared to you.

(A) You would think, “I need to get back to my healthy lifestyle plan.”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(B) You would think, “There will always be people who look better than I do.”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(C) You would feel totally inadequate and stay covered up.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(D) You wouldn’t care. How your body looks is not the most important thing in your life.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

8. You have just eaten a big lunch, but as your pass the corner store, you buy a chocolate bar and eat it.

(A) You would say to yourself, “Tonight I will go for a long walk or run to make up for it.”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(B) You would say to yourself, “I just felt like having something sweet.”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(C) You would feel disgusted by your lack of self-control.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely
(D) You would say to yourself, “Who cares?”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

9. At a family reunion, a relative says to you, “You look like you’ve put on some weight.”
(A) You would feel embarrassed and belittled.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(B) You would think, “She or he didn’t intend to be insensitive.”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(C) You would think, “That person never liked me!”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(D) You would think that you deserved the comment and decide to lose some weight.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

10. While you are with a group of friends, you all make fun of an absent friend’s body.
(A) You would think, “It was a joke; it’s harmless.”

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(B) You would feel immature and insensitive.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(C) You would decide that you had to go along with it at the time.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely

(D) You would promise yourself not to do it again.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not likely Very likely
11. While looking at some models on a swimsuit calendar, your partner makes negative comparisons in relation to your body.

(A) You would regret that you put off exercising this week.

1-2-3-4-5
Not likely Very likely

(B) You would think your partner is too concerned about external beauty.

1-2-3-4-5
Not likely Very likely

(C) You wouldn’t be bothered by the calendar images; they are just pictures.

1-2-3-4-5
Not likely Very likely

(D) You would feel inadequate because you know you don’t compare favorably.

1-2-3-4-5
Not likely Very likely

12. You are trying on clothes in a store and the assistant says loudly, “You may need to go up a larger size!”

(A) You would feel as though you want the group to open up and swallow you.

1-2-3-4-5
Not likely Very likely

(B) You would think, “I won’t buy these clothes until I can fit into them.”

1-2-3-4-5
Not likely Very likely

(C) You would regard the comment as unimportant.

1-2-3-4-5
Not likely Very likely

(D) You would think, “The assistant is probably having a bad day.”

1-2-3-4-5
Not likely Very likely
13. You are watching a television show with a friend and notice that all the actors have perfect bodies.

(A) You would say to your friend, “They have money for a personal trainer.”
   1---------2---------3---------4---------5
   Not likely                Very likely

(B) You would tell your friend that you’ve decided to stop eating junk food from now on.
   1---------2---------3---------4---------5
   Not likely                Very likely

(C) You would tell your friend how very depressed you feel after seeing all of those perfect bodies.
   1---------2---------3---------4---------5
   Not likely                Very likely

(D) You would laugh with your friend about how unrealistic the show is.
   1---------2---------3---------4---------5
   Not likely                Very likely

14. Halfway through a celebration dinner, you realize you feel very full and that you have eaten far too much.

(A) You would feel very bad that you have no self-control.
   1---------2---------3---------4---------5
   Not likely                Very likely

(B) You would decide not to eat any of the desserts that are in front of you.
   1---------2---------3---------4---------5
   Not likely                Very likely

(C) You would be philosophical and say to yourself that it is a celebration.
   1---------2---------3---------4---------5
   Not likely                Very likely

(D) You would think, “What’s done is done.”
   1---------2---------3---------4---------5
   Not likely                Very likely
15. You find that your clothes from last summer are very tight around your waist.

(A) You would think, “Well, it’s time to buy some new clothes anyway.”

1---------2---------3---------4---------5
Not likely Very likely

(B) You would feel undisciplined and overweight.

1---------2---------3---------4---------5
Not likely Very likely

(C) You would go out and buy a 6-month membership to a gym.

1---------2---------3---------4---------5
Not likely Very likely

(D) You would think, “I’ve been very busy over the last year with no time to exercise.”

1---------2---------3---------4---------5
Not likely Very likely
Appendix D
State Shame and Guilt Scale

The following are some statements that may or may not describe how you are feeling *right now*. Please rate each statement using the 5-point scale below. Remember to rate each statement based on how you are feeling *right at this moment*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not feeling this way at all</th>
<th>Feeling this way somewhat</th>
<th>Feeling this way very strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel good about myself.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I want to sink into the floor and disappear.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel remorse, regret.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel worthwhile, valuable.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel small.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel tension about something I have done.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel capable, useful.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel like I am a bad person.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I cannot stop thinking about something bad I have done.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I feel proud.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I feel humiliated, disgraced.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I feel like apologizing, confessing.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I feel pleased about something I have done.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel worthless, powerless.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I feel bad about something I have done.</td>
<td>1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E
Fast Food Reaction Questionnaire

Please answer each of the following statements on the following scale. A rating of 1 indicates you strongly disagree with the statement, and a rating of 9 indicates you strongly agree with the statement.

1. I feel bad about eating fast food because of potential weight gain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7 - - - 8 - - - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. I feel bad about eating fast food because I know it’s bad for my health.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7 - - - 8 - - - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. I feel bad about eating fast food because I’m spending money.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7 - - - 8 - - - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. I feel bad about eating fast food because I’ve been told not to eat it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7 - - - 8 - - - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. I feel bad about eating fast food because I will have to work out more than I usually do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7 - - - 8 - - - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. I feel bad about eating fast food because I feel too full afterward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7 - - - 8 - - - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. I feel bad about eating fast food because I feel unmotivated afterward.

Strongly  Disagree  Strongly  Agree
1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5 - - - - 6 - - - - 7 - - - - 8 - - - - 9

8. I feel bad about eating fast food because I feel tired afterward.

Strongly  Disagree  Strongly  Agree
1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5 - - - - 6 - - - - 7 - - - - 8 - - - - 9

9. I feel bad about eating fast food because other people see me eating something unhealthy.

Strongly  Disagree  Strongly  Agree
1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5 - - - - 6 - - - - 7 - - - - 8 - - - - 9

10. I feel bad about eating fast food because I feel greasy afterward.

Strongly  Disagree  Strongly  Agree
1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5 - - - - 6 - - - - 7 - - - - 8 - - - - 9

11. I feel bad about eating fast food because I feel physically ill afterward.

Strongly  Disagree  Strongly  Agree
1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5 - - - - 6 - - - - 7 - - - - 8 - - - - 9

12. I feel bad about eating fast food because I feel fat afterward.

Strongly  Disagree  Strongly  Agree
1 - - - - 2 - - - - 3 - - - - 4 - - - - 5 - - - - 6 - - - - 7 - - - - 8 - - - - 9