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**Introduction**

America is one of the wealthiest and most innovative nations in the world, but its population is also the most obese and out of touch with how their food is produced. With an always on-the-go lifestyle, Americans typically opt for quick and convenient fast food options that are comprised mainly of saturated fats, refined carbohydrates, sodium, and sugar (Earth 2010). Given the energy density of fast food and the option to “biggie size” pretty much anything, it is no surprise that regular fast food consumption is linked to obesity and other diet related health problems. With nearly two out of every three adult Americans overweight or obese, and today’s youngest generation of children estimated to be the first to live a shorter life than their parents because of diet-related health problems (Revolution 2010), it is necessary to critically examine Americans’ relationship to food and the American fast food culture.

In addition to the health problems associated with fast food consumption, food produced to be sold in fast food restaurants contributes to environmental degradation (Horrigan 2002) and the perpetuation of social injustices (Vandana 1991). Yet, between 1970 and 2001 consumer fast food purchases experienced a 1,733 percent increase, from $6 billion spent on fast food in 1970 to $110 billion in 2001 (Scholosser 2002). Fast food has become so integrated into American society that about a quarter of the American population eats fast food every day, McDonald’s golden arches are more recognizable than the Christian cross, and fast food restaurants employ the largest number of minimum wage workers (Scholosser 2002).
Assuming consumers know fast food is bad for their health, one may suspect that there are underlying reasons motivating consumers to consistently eat fast food despite the negative consequences of a fast food diet. This research aims to uncover those underlying motivations by using a grounded theory research method and laddering interview technique to explore the relationship between Americans’ fast food habits and their core values. The remainder of the paper is organized into eight sections. The first section explains the connection between fast food and industrial agriculture; as well as the health, social, and environmental problems associated with fast food consumption and industrial food production. The second section discusses the impact of culture on the formation of food habits. The remaining six sections outline the research method, analysis and results, tentative conclusions, societal implications, limitations, and concluding remarks.

The Link between Fast Food & Industrial Agriculture

In order to understand the influence that the fast food industry exerts over both food consumption and production, it is necessary to establish the connection between the fast food industry and industrial agriculture. Today’s fast food empire can trace its roots back to the humble beginnings of hot dog carts and hamburger stands that popped up along the roads of Southern California in the late 1930s and early 1940s. These roadside food stands, and the larger drive-up restaurants that followed, were started by hardworking self-made entrepreneurs that were looking for their piece of the American pie (Schlosser 2002). Around the same time that food served fast and
eating out became popular, business and agricultural leaders were recommending that farmers employ industrial principles- timeliness of operations, large-scale production sites, mechanization, standardization of product, specialization, speed of throughput, and the routinization of the workforce- to food production (Fitzgerald 2003). Fast food and industrial agriculture therefore coevolved, and when fast food restaurants were looking for quicker and cheaper ways to prepare and serve food, industrial agriculture was there to provide the inputs and technological innovations that would allow fast food restaurants to continually serve food faster and cheaper. See Appendix A for definitions of fast food and industrial agriculture.

Industrial agriculture may have enabled fast food restaurants to evolve into global fast food franchises that serve a double cheeseburger for just $1.00; but industrial agriculture is as dependent on fast food restaurants as fast food restaurants are dependent on industrial agriculture. McDonald’s is now the largest purchaser of beef, pork and potatoes, and the second largest purchaser of chicken in the United States, giving it significant purchasing power (Schlosser 2002). This purchasing power, according to Eric Schlosser, resulted in fundamental changes in how cattle are raised, processed, and slaughtered. “Fast food chains,” Schlosser asserts, “now stand atop a huge food-industrial complex that has gained control of American agriculture (Schlosser 2002).” The problem with this is that fast food restaurants and industrial food producers put profits ahead of consumer health, farmers’ well-being, workers’ rights, and the environment (Inc. 2009). The following subsections discuss problems
associated with fast food and industrial agriculture that if left unaddressed will have substantial adverse health, social, and environmental consequences.

**Fast Food and Expanding Waste Lines**

Given the energy density of fast food and the option to “biggie size” pretty much anything, it is no surprise that regular fast food consumption is linked to obesity and other health problems. Today, four of the top ten causes of death in the US - coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and cancer - have well-established links to diet (Pollan 2008). Obesity, after smoking, is the number one cause of cancer, and is linked to 70 percent of heart disease cases. Additionally, 80 percent of type II diabetes diagnoses are related to being overweight (CDC 2006). See Appendix A for definitions of overweight and obese reported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

In 2009, 68 percent of Americans were diagnosed as overweight or obese (CDC 2010), accounting for nearly 10 percent, or $147 billion, of U.S. health care spending annually (CDC 2009). This, however, has not always been the case. Based on data from Figure 1 the percentage increase of overweight and obese Americans from 1976-80 to 1999-00 was roughly 36 percent.
The greatest increase occurred in the obese group, with the number of obese Americans doubling between 1976-80 and 1999-00. Obesity rates have also increased among children. In 2007-08 an estimated 17 percent of children and adolescents age 2-19 years were obese. Being overweight or obese as a child significantly increases the chances of being obese as an adult. One study found that 80 percent of overweight children ages 10-15 were obese by age 25 (CDC, Childhood Overweight and Obese 2010).

The increasing number of overweight and obese Americans may be attributed to a variety of factors, which together resulted in increased consumption of unhealthy foods, overeating, and physical inactivity. Those factors include changing family structures, cheaper and more accessible fast and processed food, larger food portions, fast food advertising, and lifestyle changes.
Changing Family Structure and Increased Reliance on Fast Food

Before 1970, most American women were not employed outside the home. However, since then more women have enrolled in college and entered the workforce, altering the traditional family structure (Fieldhouse 1986). With an increasing number of women holding full time jobs, the number of meals prepared at home and eaten as a family declined. Correspondingly, the number of meals eaten individually and outside the home increased (Fieldhouse 1986). In 2005, it was estimated that the average American ate out at least once a day (Farner 2005). Additionally, because set meal times have declined, daily snacking has increased significantly. Sociologists that study eating habits have found that in addition to the three main meals of the day- breakfast, lunch, and dinner- constant snacking and sipping takes place all day long (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006).

Increased Availability and Affordability of Fast Food

With more meals eaten outside the home the nutritional quality of food consumed declined. A study by researchers from Children's Hospital Boston, the Agricultural Research Service of the USDA, and Harvard School of Public Health found that children who ate fast food consumed more total and saturated fat, more total carbohydrates and added sugars, less dietary fiber, and more calories per gram of solid food than children who did not eat fast food (Andrews 2004). Thirty percent of the children surveyed ate fast food at least once a day, and on average consumed 187 more calories than children that did not consume fast food. These additional calories
could lead to an estimated six pounds in weight gain a year. Furthermore, the typical fast food meal has a high glycemic index, which refers to the rise in blood glucose after consumption of foods high in refined starch and added sugars. Studies suggest that foods high on the glycemic index actually increase hunger and thus food consumption over the course of a day. Foods low on the glycemic index—fruits, whole grains, and non-starchy vegetables—have higher amounts of fiber and complex carbohydrates and fewer calories. These foods are found to promote a feeling of fullness, which may protect against overeating (Andrews 2004).

Foods low on the glycemic index; however, are often more expensive than foods high on the glycemic index, largely due to government policy. Processed foods sold in fast food restaurants and grocery stores are less expensive than fresh produce and whole grains because the US government heavily subsidizes the production of corn and soybeans, which are the main building blocks for processed food. Corn and soybeans are subsidized in the form of cheap chemical fertilizers and pesticides, but also through government policy which drives down the price of the two commodities at the expense of farmers. Today the cost of producing a bushel of corn is double what it can be sold for on the market (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006).

So, against economic logic why do farmers continue to produce excessive amounts of corn and soybeans? Government policy implemented by Earl Butz— the head of the Department of Agriculture during the Nixon Administration—replaced New Deal agricultural policies that supported farmers through price supports with a new system of direct payments to farmers. This system encouraged farmers to produce
corn and soybeans regardless of the market price because the government would make up the difference (or at least some of the difference) and store the surplus of corn. Butz also encouraged farmers to “get big or get out,” because he believed big farms were more productive. As a result, mega-farms formed and forced small family farms out of business. These mega-farms began mass-producing crops and livestock, providing the raw materials from which cheap processed foods were developed (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006).

Today, the average American indirectly consumes one ton of corn a year in the form of processed foods and grain-fed meats. By breaking corn and soybeans down into their chemical components, food processors are able to reassemble the chemical components into a variety of industrially produced cheap substitutes for real foods (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006). Margarine (which is one molecule away from being plastic) was developed as a cheap butter substitute, fruit juice drinks (that contain no real fruit juice) like tang to replace real fruit drinks, Cheeze Whiz as a cheese substitute, and Cool Whip to replace whipped cream. These industrially developed processed foods are low in nutritional value; but are cheap to produce because of government subsidies, are profitable for food processors, and are heavily marketed to consumers. Consequently, the most nutritious and freshest foods are more expensive than processed food, which is what most fast food is. Figure 2 shows federal subsidies for food production vs. federal daily nutrition recommendations for a healthy diet.
As shown in the figure, federal food subsidies are incongruent with nutrition recommendations. Vegetables and fruits, which are essential for a healthy diet, receive less than one percent of federal food subsidies. Meat and dairy, however, receive 73.80 percent of government food subsidies. By heavily subsidizing meat and dairy products the government is supporting the production of foods that contribute to increasing rates of obesity and chronic diseases (PCRM 2007).

*Increased Portion Sizes*

Another factor contributing to increased obesity and diet-related diseases in the US is increased portion sizes. Twenty years ago a fast food cheeseburger had an average 333 calories. Today the average fast food cheeseburger has 590 calories.
(Health 2004). Table 1 shows the average number of calories in foods 20 years ago compared to the same foods today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Calories 1983-4</th>
<th>Calories 2003-4</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Slices Pepperoni Pizza</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>+350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Cesar Salad</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>+400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagel</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>+210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Stir Fry</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>+430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate Chip Cookie</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>+220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese Cake</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>+380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popcorn</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>+360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueberry Muffin</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>+310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soda</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>+165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Fries</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>+400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey Sandwich</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>+500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Institute of Health Portion Distortion Interactive Quiz

As evidenced in the chart portion sizes have increased substantially since the 1980s. Twenty years ago the average french fry was 2.4 ounces with 210 calories. Today it is 6.9 ounces with 610 calories. The average sized soda twenty years ago was 6.5 ounces with 85 calories. Today it is 20 ounces with 250 calories. One explanation for increased portion sizes is the food industry’s¹ strategy to increase revenues by getting consumers to buy and eat more food. Challenged by the conundrum of “the fixed stomach,” the food industry developed products and menu items to appeal to the American fixation with size and quantity. For example, researchers found that consumers were embarrassed to purchase two or three orders of french fries in one sitting because it appeared overindulgent and was socially frowned upon. However, if they could purchase one large order of french fries they would. And so the option to

¹ The term “food industry” refers to the complex system that is responsible for researching, financing, regulating, producing, processing, manufacturing, distributing, and retailing the majority of food consumed globally (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006).
“Biggie Size” was born and standard menu sizes increased (Pollan, In Defense of Food 2008).

Child Targeted and Misleading Food Advertisements

In addition to marketing large portion sizes at an affordable price, the fast food industry aggressively targets children with multi-million dollar advertising campaigns. Partly due to these advertising campaigns, fast food consumption among children has increased fivefold since 1970, with an estimated one-third of children ages 4 - 19 now eating fast food every day (Andrews 2004).

Furthermore, fast food advertisements are often misleading with regards to the nutritional qualities of products. For example, to appeal to consumers seeking healthier options McDonald’s revamped their menu to include salads and wraps, and then marketed them as healthy options. These fast food options, however, can pack a surprising number of calories. Their Asian salad with crispy (fried) chicken and regular dressing is 580 calories and provides over half the recommended daily fat intake (Affairs 2008).

Additionally, with the development of nutritionism- the ideology that the nutritional value of food can be measured by the value of its individual components- the food industry began marketing foods that as a whole are unhealthy, as healthy products because they have some valuable nutrients. For example, Kellogg’s advertises Fruit Loops ® as a good source of fiber (Kellogg's, Fiber and Your Kids’ Health 2010). However, the number one ingredient in Fruit Loops ® is sugar
(Kellogg's, Kellogg's® Froot Loops® cereal 2010), suggesting that it is not actually a nutritionally-balanced breakfast option.

*Increased Sedentary Lifestyles*

Lifestyle changes also contributed to weight gain. For example, American jobs are more sedentary and less physically demanding than in the past, decreasing daily physical activity. Additionally, American dependence on automobiles has increased with urban sprawl, decreasing the amount of daily walking and biking (Fieldhouse 1986). These lifestyle changes combined with increased fast food consumption have led to an increasingly inactive and unhealthy society.

The negative health effects of a fast food and processed food diet coupled with more sedentary lifestyles poses a significant threat to the health of the nation, but the negative consequences of fast food and its production do not stop there. Industrial agriculture has also introduced a number of negative health, social, and environmental consequences that are not factored into the cost of production, and are suggested to outweigh the benefits of producing food industrially (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006).

**The Negative Consequences of Industrial Agriculture**

In the past, one farm typically grew a variety of crops and raised horses, cows, chickens and hogs. Crops were rotated to preserve soil quality and manure from livestock was used to fertilize soil (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006). Farmers
relied on natural processes to grow and raise food. However, in 1947 a large World War II munitions plant in Muscle Shoals, Alabama switched from making war explosives to making chemical fertilizers. It was an easy transition because ammonium nitrate, the main ingredient used to make explosives, is also found to be a good source of nitrogen for plants.

The introduction of chemical fertilizers coupled with soaring corn prices in the 1950s encouraged farmers to plant more corn. In turn, the growing surplus of corn made it more economical to raise corn-fed livestock in factory farms because corn was cheap and abundant, farm space was finite, and cow manure was no longer needed to fertilize crops (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006). The result is what today we call a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO). CAFOs are typically used to raise cows, pigs, chickens and turkeys, but CAFOs have also been used to raise sheep, goats, rabbits, and various types of poultry (Table 2009).

Animals raised in CAFOs are packed into confined areas, where they stand in their own waste, are fed as much corn mixture as they can eat, and are pumped full of antibiotics to keep them from getting sick under unhealthy living conditions. This system of food production makes economic sense, but biologically and ecologically it is absurd. For example, chickens raised using the industrial model were genetically reengineered to grow twice as big in half the time that it took a typical chicken 100 years ago to grow. But, their heart and lungs often do not develop fast enough to support the rapid growth of their bodies and they can die from congestive heart failure. The birds that do survive may only be able take a few steps at a time because their legs
cannot support the abnormal weight of their bodies (Sanctuary 2009). For reasons like these CAFOs have been accused of treating animals inhumanely, but their production methods have also introduced a variety of new health, social, and environmental problems (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006).

*Industrial Agriculture Threatening Worker, Consumer, and Animal Health*

The sheer number of animals raised in CAFOs, and the speed at which they are processed, makes it difficult to maintain sanitary living conditions for the animals and working conditions for laborers. As a result, factory farming has introduced multiple pathogens into the food system, with over a dozen new foodborne illnesses discovered in the last twenty years (Scholosser 2002).

*E. coli* 0157:H7 is a foodborne pathogen that has been increasingly spread from factory farming. It is most commonly contracted by consuming undercooked ground beef contaminated by animal manure; but people may also contract it by drinking contaminated water, swimming in a contaminated lake, through contact with a contaminated person, or by eating other foods that have been contaminated by cattle manure.

The spread of *E. coli* 0157:H7 has increased because CAFOs raise animals in close vicinity to pools of manure and feed them a combination of cheap grain and livestock wastes. Restrictions were placed on feeding livestock wastes to animals after the outbreak of Mad Cow Disease, but current FDA regulations still permit dead horses, pigs and chickens to be mixed into cattle feed; and cattle remains to be mixed
into chicken feed (Scholosser 2002). Cattle, however, are herbivores and are not biologically designed to eat meat or grains. They are therefore being bred to tolerate a diet of grain and animal wastes, but a significant amount of antibiotics are required to keep them alive (Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma 2006).

The working conditions for laborers on factory farms are no better. The air workers breathe is often contaminated by harmful gases - hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, carbon dioxide, and methane- produced from decomposing manure that is stored in giant pits beneath where the animals are housed. Additionally, CAFOs have a high concentration of hazardous dust and other irritants known as endotoxins. Chronic exposure to endotoxins is associated with respiratory and cardiological problems. An estimated 70 percent of workers at CAFOs have acute bronchitis once a year and 25 percent experience chronic bronchitis (Table 2009). These workers, however, may have it better than meatpackers. The injury rates in slaughterhouses are three times higher than rates in a typical American factory, making meatpacking, which is often done by minorities, the most dangerous job in America (Scholosser 2002).

Farm laborers that work with chemical pesticides and fertilizers also face health problems. Chemical pesticides are designed to be toxic to living organisms, and as a result are usually toxic to humans as well. Farm laborers exposed to chemical pesticides risk developing a number of chronic health problems including neurological effects, cancer, reproductive and developmental toxicity, and endocrine disruption (NRDC 1998).
Industrial Agriculture & Environment Degradation

In addition to chemical pesticides and fertilizers harming human health, they are also harmful to the environment. The main contributor to the Dead Zone - a large region of water in the Gulf of Mexico that has very low oxygen levels and therefore cannot support aquatic life - is thought to be from nitrogen that runs off croplands into the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Nitrogen runoff is the result of excessive amounts of chemical fertilizers applied to crops. Not only does it pollute water supplies, but it can lead to less biodiversity on fertilized plots of land and its surrounding areas. Furthermore, the use of chemical pesticides on crops has resulted in a decline in bird and beneficial insect populations (Horrigan 2002).

Industrial agriculture increased food supplies and drove down the cost of food, but the problems it introduced are not factored into the cost of production. As a result, consumers do not pay the true cost of the food they buy at the grocery store or in a fast food restaurant. The costs that are not covered, like the cost of cleaning waterways contaminated by chemical fertilizers, then become a problem for society to address.

The fast food industry perpetuates many of these problems, as it exerts considerable influence over food production. Furthermore, fast food consumption contributes to a variety of health problems, placing an additional burden on society through the rising cost of health care. Given the health problems associated with eating fast food, and the negative consequences of industrial agriculture, why do Americans continue to consume excessive amounts of fast food? To better understand why fast food is such an integral part of American society it is necessary to look at
American food habits from a cultural perspective, as “diet is best understood within the context of culture (Kittler 2001).”

**Culture & Food**

Culture is broadly defined by Kittler and Sucher (2001) as “the values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices accepted by a community of individuals.” Culture is a learned experience, passed down from one generation to another, but it is also dynamic. The culture of one generation is never exactly the same as the culture of the generation that preceded it. While core values and traditions often remain a fundamental part of a culture, the ways in which they are applied to everyday life evolve over time (Fieldhouse 1986). For example, in the past, the cultural value “belongingness” was predominately satisfied through face-to-face communication with friends and family. Today, however, that value is increasingly met through technological communication via telephone conversations, text messages, emails, and online social networking sites.

Culture influences individuals’ perceptions about societal norms and appropriate modes of behavior, and is therefore recognized as a major determinate of a society’s food habits (Kittler 2001). While the immediate needs of food are biological, it is evident that foodways – which include how food is produced, what foods are eaten, how food is prepared, portion sizes, methods of eating, number of meals per day, time of eating, and how people eat – are shaped by a culture’s social, religious, economic, and political processes. As a result, food habits not only form because they are effective and practical given available resources, but also because they are
meaningful practices within a particular culture (Fieldhouse 1986). For example, even if they have the means to do otherwise, Thai people typically sit in a circle on the floor to eat their meals, sharing food out of bowls placed in the center of the circle. Why? It is a part of their culture.

While there are many cultural aspects that influence foodways, the overarching system that guides society, and in turn foodways, is a culture’s value system (Fieldhouse 1986). Values are principles and standards that are central to people’s lives and guide behavior (L. R. Kahle 1983). Values undoubtedly vary from person to person, but core values that are characteristic of the American population have been identified, and have remained relatively constant since the founding of this country (Fieldhouse 1986).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the effect cultural values have on American food habits - specifically fast food consumption. Kahle’s List of Values (LOV) is based on the work of Maslow (1954), Rokeach (1973), and Feather (1975), and consists of nine dominant American values. The LOV was developed with the goal of identifying values that have direct marketing applications, and that better predict consumer behavior (Solomon, 2004; Blackwell et al., 2001; Lindquist et al., 2003; T. J. Reynolds et al., 2001; L. R. Kahle et al., 1986). It is therefore appropriate to use the LOV in this research to classify Americans’ underlying motivations for eating fast food. The following contemporary American values were identified by Kahle (1983): a sense of belonging, warm relationships with others, a sense of accomplishment, self-fulfillment, being well-respected, self-respect, security, fun and
enjoyment in life, and excitement. The following section details the methods and procedure used in this study.

**Research Method**

A grounded theory research method and laddering interview technique was employed to explore the research question, “What underlying values motivate American consumers to buy fast food?” While it is suspected that there are underlying values motivating Americans’ excessive fast food consumption, there is currently no data from which to support that suspicion. Existing research on fast food consumption focuses on the immediate factors that influence what consumers eat – taste, convenience, price, nutrition, etc. – and fails to address the underlying motivations for why consumers value certain attributes of fast food and food in general. It is therefore most appropriate to use a grounded theory method because it allows the researcher to explore the research question without making a priori hypotheses. This is important for two reasons. (1) Given the lack of explanatory data on the latent motivations that induce Americans to eat fast food it would be difficult to project hypotheses about the American fast food phenomenon; and (2) because it is suspected that the motivations for fast food consumption are underlying, it is likely that there is a disconnect between why consumers say they eat fast food, and why they actually eat it. A grounded theory research method is therefore useful because it requires the researcher to immerse themselves in the phenomenon being studied in an attempt to understand the phenomenon as it is.
Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is the formation of theory from data obtained and analyzed using social research methods. In other words, grounded theory involves analysis of a social phenomenon, and the subsequent formation of a theory that is driven by patterns that emerge within the data (Glaser 1967). The process of developing a grounded theory is essentially the scientific method in reverse, where one begins by collecting and analyzing a data set, and then proposes hypotheses or theories based on the data. A critical strength of using a grounded theory approach is that the theories formed are based on the everyday realities of the subjects being studied. A grounded theory, therefore, fits at least one set of data perfectly (Coyne and Cowley 2006). The ability of grounded theory to accurately describe or predict another data set can then be strengthened by testing it across multiple cases. Durkheim’s sociological theory of the family is one example of a grounded theory that has endured for over a century. He developed his theory, which has since been tested across multiple cases, through comparative analysis of ethnographic data, history, law, and statistical data on family structures (Lamanna 2002).

The formation of a grounded theory involves comparative analysis of data that has been deconstructed, coded, and categorized. The goal of this process is to develop a theory “that explains the dominant process in the social area being investigated (Coyne and Cowley 2006).” Multiple techniques can be used to build a grounded theory. A laddering interview technique and means-end chain analysis was used in this study to uncover the underlying values that motivate Americans to buy fast food.
Laddering & Means-end Chain Analysis

Laddering and means-end chain analysis are techniques used to uncover important, and often subconscious, associations that consumers hold toward a product, service, or behavior. Laddering refers to the specific technique used to uncover relationships between the attributes of a product, service, or behavior; the perceived consequences of those attributes; and the personal values the consequences are expected to reinforce. Means-end chain analysis is the process used to interpret data collected through laddering (T. J. Reynolds 1988).

Laddering can be conducted through surveys or interviews. Interviews were conducted for this study because they allow the researcher to probe for more in-depth information than a survey. The interviews are one-on-one and consist of a series of directed probes characterized by the question, “Why is that important to you?” The directed probes help the researcher trace the connections a respondent makes between product attributes, consequences, and personal values. For example, laddering interviews were used in a salty-snack study to identify why consumers prefer certain snack foods. Consumers were presented with basic distinctions between snack chips and were asked to identify which they preferred. They were then continually asked to elaborate on why attributes or consequences that they cited as important were in fact important to them (T. J. Reynolds 1988). Ladders were constructed for each interview based on a set of summary codes developed through comparative analysis of the data. Figure 3 shows an example of a ladder from the salty-snack study.
The Industrial Eater

Figure 3: Example Ladder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>flavored chip</th>
<th>strong taste</th>
<th>eat less</th>
<th>don’t get fat</th>
<th>better figure</th>
<th>self-esteem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>(V)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ladder above shows the connections a participant makes between potato chip attributes (A), the perceived consequences (C) of those attributes, and the personal value (V) the participant expects the consequences to reinforce. In the example above, purchase and consumption of flavored potato chips reinforces the participant’s underlying value of self-esteem. Researchers in the salty-snack study therefore developed advertising campaigns for their flavored potato chips that appealed to consumers’ self-esteem and desire to be physically fit.

Once a set of summary codes are confirmed, and ladders are constructed for each interview, means-end chain analysis can begin. A means-end chain is a sequence of attributes, consequences, and values developed from the significant relations that emerge from the aggregate data. In other words, a means-end chain represents the respondents’ ladders in aggregate, where as a ladder refers to a sequence of attributes, consequences, and values from one respondent.

Means-end chains are constructed by creating a table that records the number of times each element leads to another element for each ladder. The significant relationships between elements are then mapped on a hierarchical value map (HVM). Relationships are considered significant if one element is linked to another element between three to five times for a sample of 50 to 60 individuals (T. J. Reynolds 1988). Figure 4 shows a hypothetical hierarchical value map for wine coolers.
The map above traces the connections consumers make between wine cooler attributes ("means") at the bottom of the figure, to their associated consequences, to the values ("ends") reinforced by the consequences at the top of the figure. A pathway traced from bottom to top represents one potential perceptual orientation, or one means-end chain (T. J. Reynolds 1988). This study used a laddering interview
technique and means-end chain analysis to develop a hierarchical value map for fast food. The following sections details the sample and procedure used for this study.

Sample & Data Collection

A total of 45 laddering interviews were conducted, of which 36 were usable. Nine interviews could not be used for one of three reasons. In some cases the respondent said they do not eat fast food. In other cases a core American value could not be derived from the responses given during the interview. For example, respondent 26 said the main reason she eats fast food is because it tastes good. When asked why taste is important she answered, “Because if something doesn’t taste good you are not going to want to eat it.” Further probing into why taste is important to her did not reveal underlying values that motivate her fast food consumption; she simply prefers the taste of fast food. Lastly, some interviews could not be used because it was obvious that the interviewer influenced the respondent’s answers. For example, in interview 27, the interviewer asked the respondent what she hoped to accomplish by participating in the Spanish Masters Program at OU. The researcher therefore predisposed the respondent to answer in a way that reflects a value of accomplishment. The total number of usable interviews in this study is consistent with previous laddering research that suggests it is best to conduct between 20 and 60 interviews (Gruber 2007).

Interviews took place in public areas of Ohio University’s campus and lasted approximately five minutes. Respondents were approached randomly in the Ohio
University library, outside Ohio University Baker Center, and on College Green; and were asked if they would be willing to participate in a short interview about food culture and their eating habits. The majority of people approached were willing to participate in the interview. The few people that declined to participate said that they did not have time because they had to get to class, work, or a meeting. Of the 36 analyzable interviews, 22 respondents were female and 14 respondents were male. All respondents were undergraduate or graduate students at Ohio University ranging in age from 18 to 36 years old.

The 45 interviews were conducted in four sets (14, 11, 10, and 10) over a one week period. Separating the interviews into four sections and administering them over a one week period allowed for ample reflection time to evaluate the interview process and revise the interview outline (Lincoln 1985). The time of day interviews were conducted was intentionally varied because it was believed that time of day would not have an effect on respondents answers. Interviews were therefore conducted during the late morning, afternoon, and early evening.

**Procedure**

Prior to data collection a pretest was conducted to evaluate the research method. The pretest consisted of unstructured laddering interviews with five Ohio University students about their fast food consumption habits. The preliminary results showed that a laddering interview technique was effective at uncovering the underlying values that motivate respondents to eat fast food.
Based on the pretest, an interview outline was developed to further explore the underlying motives for fast food consumption. Although an interview outline was used, the interviews were unscheduled. In other words, the interview outline was flexible so that the sequence of questions, the number of questions asked, and the wording of questions could vary based on respondents’ answers and the overall flow of the interview (Gorden 1987).

The interview outline began by asking respondents, “Do you eat fast food?” If they answered yes, they were asked to identify the main reasons why they eat fast food. The most common responses included speed, convenience, price, and taste. Next, respondents were asked to state which reason they identified was most important to them and why. The remainder of the interview consisted of a series of directed probes characterized by the question, “Why is that important to you?” Respondents were continually asked to explain why specified attributes and consequences were important to them to help the researcher identify the connections they make between fast food attributes, consequences, and values. At the end of the interviews demographic information including gender, age, and year in school was also collected. The initial interview outline can be found in Appendix B.

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2 For the purpose of this study fast food restaurants were defined as restaurant chains that serve food quickly in take-away packaging, source the majority of their ingredients from industrial food producers, and rely on pre-heated or pre-cooked ingredients. The list of fast food restaurants shown to respondents are fast food restaurants in Athens, Ohio, and may be found in the initial interview outline in Appendix B.
An interview example, using excerpts from respondent 23’s transcript, is outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2: Interview Example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer:</th>
<th>Do you eat fast food?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer:</th>
<th>What is the main reason that you eat fast food?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent:</td>
<td>Because it is quick</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer:</th>
<th>Why is it important to you that it’s quick?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent:</td>
<td>Because I don’t have a lot of time sometimes, and I don’t always like cooking, and it takes a lot of time, and I don’t want to do the dishes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer:</th>
<th>What other things are you doing with your time that necessitates the speed of fast food?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent:</td>
<td>Homework, classes and stuff, and different groups that I am in. I have a lot of meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer:</th>
<th>Why is it important to you to be involved in school and those groups?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent:</td>
<td>Because I want to be successful and I want to get a good job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on respondent 23’s interview responses, the underlying value classified as motivating her fast food consumption was “a sense of accomplishment.”

*The Revised Interview Outline*

During the interview process, detailed notes were kept to evaluate the interview outline. Two revisions were made to the interview outline based on the evaluations and reflections. First, for interviews 15 through 45, a questionnaire was added to the end of each interview that asked respondents to identify their first and second most important values from Kahle’s List of Values. The questionnaire was added to see if the respondents’ most important stated values (from the questionnaire) matched the underlying value found to motivate them to eat fast food based on their
interview responses. This was done to verify if the values found to motivate fast food consumption were in fact underlying values. If respondents’ stated values failed to match the value found to motivate them to eat fast food, based on their interview responses, it may be concluded that the values motivating their fast food consumption are subconscious, or underlying. A copy of the stated values questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

The second revision applied to interviews 36 through 45. Instead of beginning the interviews by asking respondents, “Do you eat fast food?” Respondents were first asked, “How often in a typical week do you eat out?” The following question was then, “When you eat out do you typically go to a sit-down restaurant or a quick service, fast food restaurant?” This revision was made to see if respondents were more willing to talk about eating fast food if the topic was eased into, rather than abruptly confronting respondents with the question, “Do you eat fast food?” The effectiveness of this revision will be discussed in the following section. The revised interview outline can be found in Appendix D.

**Analysis and Results**

The objective of the analysis process is to create a hierarchical value map that visually displays the connections respondents make between fast food attributes, the perceived consequences of those attributes, and the values reinforced by the consequences. To accomplish this, interviews were transcribed and cross-analyzed with the goal of identifying reoccurring attributes, consequences, and values (A/C/V).
for fast food consumption. Interviews were first transcribed and analyzed individually, noting the responses within each interview that related to a product attribute, consequence, or value. Key words and phrases relating to an attribute, consequence, or value are bolded on the interview transcriptions found in Appendix E.

Next, the data was cross-analyzed to identify common A/C/Vs for fast food consumption between the interviews. For example, many respondents cited “time” as being an important consequence of the fast food attributes speed and convenience. The respondents talked about time in relation to different circumstances such as more time for work, more time to study, more free time, and able to get work in on time. However, “time” was the common element drawn from each response and was therefore designated as a reoccurring consequence. It is necessary to group common responses together because if each response was individually considered a consequence, then it would be difficult to achieve replication across interviews, and few consequences would have a high enough frequency to appear on the hierarchical value map. Designated consequences should therefore be broad enough to achieve replication, where more than one respondent mentions one characteristic leading to another, but not so broad that important information is lost (T. J. Reynolds 1988).

Table 3 shows the fast food attributes, consequences, and values identified in this study. The characteristics under the attributes and consequences categories were identified based on a comparative analysis of interview responses. Detailed explanations of the characteristics in the consequences category can be found in
appendix F. The values listed are from Kahle’s List of Values and were used to classify interview responses that related to personal values.

Table 3: Fast Food A/C/V Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. More responsible</td>
<td>17. Self-respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Appearances / look good</td>
<td>18. Security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. More money</td>
<td>19. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Better future</td>
<td>20. Warm relationships with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ensure that the attributes, consequences, and values identified above accurately reflect the interviews, the data was reviewed and verified by a specialist on consumer behavior and grounded theory research methods.

After confirming the A/C/V list, a number was assigned to each characteristic so that individual ladders could be recorded in a numerical format. The number assigned to each characteristic appears next to the characteristic in Table 3. For example, the numerical ladder for respondent 1 is as follows: 1 – 7 – 9 – 10 – 12 – 14. Correspondingly, the non-numerical ladder for respondent 1 would be: fast and convenient – time – more responsible – appearances/look good – better future – sense of accomplishment. See Appendix G for a list of numerically recorded ladders for the 36 usable interviews.

It is helpful to record the ladders in a numerical format because the next step in the analysis process is to create a table that displays how many times one
characteristic directly and indirectly leads to another characteristic for each ladder (T. J. Reynolds 1988). A direct link between characteristics refers to two adjoining characteristics. An indirect link between characteristics refers to two characteristics that appear in the same ladder, but do not directly border one another. For example, in respondent 1’s ladder 1 – 7 – 9 – 10 – 12 – 14; 1 directly links to 7, 7 to 9, 9 to 10, 10 to 12, and 12 to 14. There are, however, multiple indirect links that may also be considered. For example, 1 to 9, 1 to 10, 1 to 12, 1 to 14, 7 to 10, 7 to 12, and so on.

The direct and indirect links between fast food characteristics are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Linkages between Fast Food Attributes, Consequences, and Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A/C/V</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Fast &amp; Convenient</td>
<td>25/3</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>0/16</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0/6</td>
<td>0/7</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>0/11</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Taste</td>
<td>2/0</td>
<td>2/0</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Price</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>1/0</td>
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<td>4 Fresh</td>
<td>0/1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Healthier</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>1/0</td>
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<td>6 Satisfy Craving</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>1/0</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Time</td>
<td>3/0</td>
<td>18/2</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0/7</td>
<td>0/1</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Less Effort</td>
<td>3/0</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>9 More Responsible</td>
<td>3/0</td>
<td>11/2</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>10 Appearances/look good</td>
<td>3/0</td>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>0/2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 More Money</td>
<td>3/0</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>1/0</td>
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<td>12 Better future</td>
<td>1/0</td>
<td>4/0</td>
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<td>13 Sense of Belonging</td>
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<td>14 Sense of Accomplishment</td>
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<td>15 Self-fulfillment</td>
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<td>16 Being well-respected</td>
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<td>17 Self-respect</td>
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<td>18 Security</td>
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<td>19 Fun, Enjoyment, and excitement in life</td>
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<td>20 Warm relationships with others</td>
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Table 4’s row numbers correspond to column numbers, thus row 5 and column 5 both represent the characteristic “Healthier.” Within the table, the number to the left of the forward slash is the number of direct links between two characteristics, and the number to the right of the forward slash is the number of indirect links between two characteristics. For example, the number of direct and indirect links between “More responsible (9)” and “Better future (12)” are 11 and 2 respectively. The value map for
fast food was developed by tracing the significant links between characteristics in Table 4. For this study, a relationship between two characteristics was considered significant if it had three or more direct and/or indirect links. The link between “More responsible (9)” and “Better future (12)” is therefore a significant link.

As previously stated, a value map is comprised of means-end chains, and visually displays the significant relationships between product attributes (“means”), the consequences associated with those attributes, and the values (“ends”) the consequences are expected to reinforce (T. J. Reynolds 1988). Value maps can be difficult to construct because the researcher must decide how to best display the significant relationships among motivators.

The fast food value map developed from the interview data was constructed by starting in row 1 of the table and following it across until the first column with a significant number of links with characteristic 1 was reached. The first significant relationship in row 1, “Fast and convenient,” is with column 7, “Time,” which has 25 direct links and 3 indirect links. Because column 7, “time,” is the first significant relationship one proceeds to row 7, “time,” and follows it across to the first column with a significant number of links. That is column 8, “Less effort,” with 3 direct links. One then proceeds to row 8, “Less effort,” and sees that the first significant column goes back to column 7, “time,” with 3 direct links. However, further analysis reveals that the next significant link with both “Time (7)” and “Less effort (8)” is “More Responsible (9).” Furthermore, there is also a significant link between “Fast and

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3 The significant cutoff point used in this study is consistent with previous laddering research that suggests a cutoff between three to five relations given a sample of 50 to 60 individuals (T. J. Reynolds 1988).
Convenient (1)” and “Less Effort (8).” Therefore, “Time (7)" and “Less effort (8)" were plotted parallel to each other on the fast food value map, preceded by “Fast and Convenient (1),” and followed by “More responsible (9).” The significant relations were traced until a final value was reached for the first means-end chain. The process was then repeated until all significant relations were mapped on the fast food value map. Figure 5 shows the fast food value map developed from the aggregate interview data.

**Figure 5: Fast Food Value Map**

![Fast Food Value Map Diagram]

*The numbers display the direct / indirect links between motivators
*The blue arrows trace the path with the most significant relations

The fast food value map is read from left to right, with every traceable path representing one means-end chain. The most common answers respondents gave for eating fast food were fast, convenient, price, and taste. However, when asked which factor was most important respondents most commonly answered, “A combination of fast and convenient.” The only attribute (green) therefore found to be significant given the sample size and significance cutoff level was “Fast and convenient.” Tracing “Fast and convenient” through its associated consequences (yellow), the underlying
values (red) found to motivate respondents’ fast food purchases were security, self-fulfillment, a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of belonging.

The values were confirmed to be underlying, or subconscious, as only 16.7 percent of respondents’ most important stated values from the questionnaire actually matched the values found to motivate their fast food consumption based on their interview responses. In other words, the majority of respondents did not identify the values that actually influenced their behavior, which suggests that the values found to motivate fast food consumption are in fact underlying (Nisbett 1977).

It is also important to note that the majority of respondents were reluctant to admit to eating fast food. This reinforces the assumption that respondents know fast food is bad (in some way) because they feel a stigma attached to it. The interview outline was revised for interviews 36 – 45 in an attempt to create a friendlier atmosphere where respondents would not be hesitant to talk about eating fast food. When respondents were first asked how often they eat out, and then asked what type of restaurants they typically eat at (sit-down vs. fast food), they were more relaxed and willing to talk about their fast food consumption habits.

The means-end chain with the most significant relations, or the strongest path, is traced in blue on the value map and shown below in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Most Significant Means-end Chain**

```
Fast & convenient → Time → More responsible → Better future → Security
```

As shown in Figure 6, the value “Security” was found to be the strongest underlying motivator for fast food consumption. Based on the interview responses,
“Security” refers mainly to financial security and stability. Multiple respondents talked about the importance of getting an education and working hard to support themselves and their families. For example, respondent 45 explained that getting an education “means security and not having to worry about the future.” Being able to quickly pick up food from a fast food restaurant gives her more time to focus on her studies, which are important to her so that she can secure a stable job in the future and provide for her family.

Additionally, although it was not tested in this study, the value “Security” is suspected to motivate fast food consumption because respondents have pleasant remembrances of being rewarded with fast food as children. For generation Y, which respondents of this study are a part of, fast food was not likely an everyday meal when they were children, but rather a special occasion or treat. Respondents may therefore be nostalgic about their favorite childhood fast food restaurant, and as a result feel a sense of comfort and security when eating it. This idea is consistent with previous research, which found that emotional experiences during childhood largely shape consumer behavior later in life. For example, when Nestlé first introduced coffee into the Japanese market in the 1970s, it was not well-received by older generations that traditionally drank tea. Nestlé therefore introduced non-caffeinated coffee flavored desserts into the Japanese market, with children and adolescents as their target audience, to develop a positive connection to coffee that would last through adulthood. Nestlé now has a major foothold in the Japanese coffee market, which sells around half a billion pounds of coffee a year (Rapaille 2006). Fast food advertising campaigns
target children in a similar way, with the goal of emotionally imprinting fast food experiences on them at a young age to ensure consumption throughout their lives.

Respondents that purchase fast food because on a subconscious level it reinforces their value of “self-fulfillment,” talked about the desire to pursue a college degree because it felt natural to them. They eat fast food because it is fast and convenient, which gives them more time and energy to put towards pursuing their personal goals and aspirations. For example, when asked why it is important to him to go to college and study history, respondent 33 replied, “I entered college because it was what I was supposed to do, and I was originally majoring in journalism because it was what I was supposed to do according to a lot of people in my life, but I switched to history because it is what I want to do.” Respondent 33 appreciates the speed and convenience of fast food because it allows him to dedicate more time to studying history, which reinforces his value of self-fulfillment.

Respondents that value “a sense of accomplishment” purchase fast food because it gives them more time to achieve their academic and career goals. Multiple respondents talked about the importance of focusing on school and work because they have to meet certain requirements to accomplish their goals of graduating, getting a good job after college, or getting into graduate school. For example, when asked why it is important to her to go to class and get good grades, respondent 31 explained, “It is important because I want to get into grad school, and I need to have at least a 3.0 to get in so I can’t slack off.”
Respondents whose fast food consumption is motivated by their value of “a sense of belonging,” talked about belongingness with respect to cultural norms, social groups, and friends. For example, respondent 12 said that he eats fast food because if he is in a hurry and by himself, it is acceptable to eat alone at a fast food restaurant. He therefore feels a cultural belongingness because his behavior (eating alone) is socially accepted. Respondent 20 declared that he eats fast food because he is involved in a fraternity and does not have the time to cook because he is busy with fraternity obligations. Fast food therefore gives him more time to be involved in his fraternity, which reinforces his value of belongingness.

Although some respondents recognized the importance of eating a healthy diet, it came second to school, work, and social obligations. This type of mentality reoccurred throughout the interviews; confirming that the values security, self-fulfillment, a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of belonging take precedence over concerns for health, or the social and environmental injustices perpetuated by the fast food industry and industrial agriculture. The next question then follows, “What tentative conclusion can be drawn from the data and what implications do they have for society?”

**Tentative Conclusions**

The findings of this study indicate that respondents say they eat fast food because it is fast and convenient; but the real motivators behind their fast food purchasing habits are their values of security, self-fulfillment, a sense of
accomplishment, and a sense of belonging. Based on this exploratory research, the following propositions with both business and societal implications were drawn.

The first proposition applies to businesses and has implications for addressing the negative health, social, and environmental consequences associated with fast food consumption and industrial food production.

**Proposition 1**

To be widely accepted by American consumers as a meal option, fast food alternatives must reinforce the underlying values found to motivate American fast food consumption.

Values can shift over time; however, the core American values found to motivate American fast food consumption are the same values this country was founded upon and prospered from (Schlosser 2002). They are therefore unlikely to change anytime soon. Consequently, fast food alternatives developed to address the health, social, and environmental problems associated with fast food consumption and industrial agriculture will need to reinforce the underlying values found to motivate Americans to eat fast food in the first place.

There is skepticism that sustainably produced, healthy, and affordable food can be done on a large scale, but Chipotle Mexican Grill ® is one restaurant chain that succeeded in doing just that. Chipotle’s founders developed a profitable business model that enabled them to serve foods with unprocessed, seasonal, family-farmed, sustainable, nutritious, naturally raised, added hormone free, and organic ingredients
to consumers quickly, at an affordable price, and on a large scale (Chipotle, F.Y.I 2010).

As of December 1, 2009 there were 956 Chipotle restaurants in operation in 35 states throughout the United States, the District of Columbia, and Ontario (Chipotle, 2009 Annual Report 2009). The scale of its operations has enabled Chipotle to use its influence to promote environmentally sustainable and socially responsible food production methods and healthy eating habits. However, it has not had to sacrifice profits in the process. Chipotle has consistently beat financial analysts’ growth targets since it went public in 2006, and reported revenue of $1.5 billion last year (Collins 2010). The success of Chipotle proves that it is possible to offer consumers all over America fast “Food with Integrity”4 at an affordable price.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that depending on what one orders and how much one eats, caloric intake at a Chipotle can be just as high or higher than at a typical fast food restaurant. The bottom line, however, is that there is no mystery to what one is consuming when eating at a Chipotle. The ingredients are nutritious, produced humanely, and do not contain unfamiliar ingredients or additives. The task of portion control and consumption with regard to moderation therefore becomes the responsibility of the consumer.

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4 “Food with Integrity” is the Chipotle philosophy to continually strive to offer food that is better tasting, comes from better sources, is better for the environment, is better for the animals, and is better for farmers (Chipotle, F.Y.I 2010).
Proposition 2

*Americans are forward and backward thinking about their careers, but they are not forward or backward thinking about the food they eat.*

It is suspected that the average American can specify how the skills they learned from their first jobs prepared them for future jobs, as well as their future career plans; however, they would have difficulty explaining the process it takes to get a hamburger to their plate, or the long-term consequences of consuming too much red meat. When it comes to food it appears that Americans specialize in consumption and give very little thought to the production process or the long-term health effects of their diet. What is most puzzling about this is that a healthy diet is an important factor for intellectual development and performance. Yet, the respondents of this study did not link their food consumption behaviors to the current or future state of their health, their academic performance, or their career achievements. Additional research that investigates how Americans perceive their diet to impact their future health, intellectual development, and physical performance could yield valuable insights for addressing diet-related health problems and worker productivity.

**Societal Implications**

Over the past 40 years fast food has evolved into a defining characteristic of American [food] culture; with Americans now spending more money on fast food than on higher education, personal computers, computer software, and automobiles (Schlosser 2002). The trouble with the American fast food society, however, is that American food consumption habits and production methods have produced a variety
of health, social, and environmental problems. To better understand why Americans continue to eat excessive amounts of fast food despite the negative consequences, this study explored consumers’ underlying motivations for fast food consumption.

A grounded theory research method and laddering interview technique was used to probe beyond the initial attributes that induce consumers to buy fast food, and uncover the underlying values motivating American fast food consumption. The results showed that the speed and convenience of fast food is valuable to respondents because it gives them more time and energy to pursue endeavors that are important to them; and that reinforce their personal values of security, self-fulfillment, a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of belonging. Concerns about health, social, and environmental problems associated with fast food was therefore found to be secondary to the pursuit of the respondents’ values.

Contrary to typical methods of combating societal problems via education and information campaigns, this research proposes a different approach to address the negative consequences of a fast food society. Alternative approaches are necessary because the typical methods of correcting negative behaviors through cognitive means (i.e., telling consumers fast food is bad for them and why it is bad for them) is not working. Consumers know fast food is bad for them and continue to eat it. It is therefore necessary to try alternative approaches that take into account the underlying values that drive American fast food consumption.

Based on the results of this study, two propositions with social and business implications were proposed. First, to be accepted by the American public, fast food
alternatives must reinforce the values found to motivate fast food consumption. Second, it was found that respondents focus on food consumption, giving little thought to how food is produced, or how it will affect their future health. Additional research that investigates the disconnect Americans have between the food they eat, how it was produced, and their future health may hold implications for how to best address diet-related health problems and unsustainable food production methods.

The development of fast food alternatives, and additional research on consumers’ perceptions of foodways, are necessary to begin to correct the health, social, and environmental problems perpetuated by the fast food industry. There is skepticism that healthy and sustainably produced food can be achieved on a large scale in America, but as Michael Pollan asserted during an interview with Oprah, “…if we can figure out how to reengineer the chicken, we can figure out how to produce healthy, affordable, and sustainable food (Pollan, Real Food, Real Answers: 8 Questions with Michael Pollan 2010).”

**Limitations**

There are limitations to using a grounded theory research approach. First, the results are specific to the context from which the interpretations were generated, and are therefore tentative as they might not be perfectly transferable to another set of data. Consequently, it is necessary to repeat the study with different data sets to assess the transferability of the results (Hirschman 1986).
Second, to increase dependability of results future studies should utilize multiple interviewers. The use of multiple interviewers helps ensure that interpretations of the data are accurate because it reduces the likelihood that explanations of the phenomenon being studied are influenced by an individual researcher’s views and experiences (Hirschman 1986).

Lastly, the ability to probe deeply into the personal values of respondents was limited by the interview setting. It is therefore recommended that future interviews be done in a private setting where respondents would be more comfortable talking about their personal values.

**Conclusion**

In summary, a grounded theory approach to studying American fast food consumption revealed consumers view the speed and convenience of fast as a means to achieve their values of security, self-fulfillment, a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of belonging. The pursuit of those values was therefore found to be more important to consumers than concern for their personal health, or the social and environmental problems associated with fast food production. As a result, future initiatives that address the problems perpetuated by the American fast food society will need to recognized and account for the values that are most important to consumers, and that drive their purchasing and consumption behaviors.
References


Oliver, Jamie, interview by Oprah Winfrey. *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution* (March 26, 2009).


http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/factoryfarming/.

Appendix A:

Key Definitions
Appendix A: Key Definitions

1. **Fast Food** – Restaurant chains and franchises that serve food quickly in take-away packaging, sources the majority of their ingredients from industrial food producers, and relies on pre-heated or pre-cooked ingredients.¹

2. **Industrial Agriculture** – a form of modern agricultural production that refers to the industrialized production of livestock, poultry, fish, and crops. The methods of industrial agriculture are technologically based and rely heavily on mechanization, genetic technology and techniques for achieving economies of scale.²

3. **Factory Farming** – “a highly intensive method of rearing animals characterised by keeping large numbers of animals indoors in confined spaces and feeding them processed foods, with the use of drugs to control diseases.”³

4. **Overweight** - An adult who has a BMI between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight.⁴

5. **Obese** - An adult who has a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese.⁵
Endnotes


5 Ibid
Appendix B:

Initial Interview Outline
Appendix B: Initial Interview Outline

Read respondents the consent form:

You are being asked to participate in research to collect data for an Ohio University undergraduate thesis. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time. The oral interview is estimated to last between five and ten minutes and your participation in the interview implies consent to use the data for research purposes. The interviews will be audio recorded. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate and if you have any additional questions I would be happy to answer them before or after the interview. For your participation you will receive a coupon for a free drink at the Frontroom.

Interview Outline:

1. Questions:
   a. Do you eat fast food?
      
      | McDonald’s | Quiznos |
      | Burger King | Subway |
      | Taco Bell | Pita Pit |
      | Wendy’s | Jimmy John’s |
      | KFC | Avalanche Pizza |
      | Long John Silvers | Domino’s Pizza |
      | Sonic | DP Dough |
      | Dairy Queen | Hungry Howie’s |
      | Donato’s | Pizza Hut |
      | Little Cesar’s | Papa John’s |

   b. In a typical week how many times do you eat fast food?
   c. What are your favorite fast food restaurants?
   d. Are there any restaurant chains on the list that you do not consider to be fast food restaurants?
   e. What are three main reasons you decide to eat at one of these restaurants?
   f. So you said ____________, ____________ and ____________ (repeat back)
   g. Of those three reasons which is most important to you?
   h. Why is it important to you that ____________

2. Thank respondents for participating in the study, ask if they have any questions, give them a coffee coupon.
Appendix C:

Stated Values Questionnaire
Appendix C: Stated Values Questionnaire

Respondents 15-45 were asked to fill out the following questionnaire at the end of their interviews.

Stated Values Questionnaire

Circle  Male      Female
Circle  Freshman  Sophomore  Junior  Senior  Grad Student
Age ______

Please identify your first and second most important values from the list below. Place a 1 next to your most important value and a 2 next to your second most important value.

_____ Sense of belonging
_____ Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
_____ Warm relationships with others
_____ Self-fulfillment
_____ Being well-respected
_____ A sense of accomplishment
_____ Security
_____ Self-respect
Appendix D:

Revised Interview Outline
Appendix D: Revised Interview Outline

Read respondents the consent form:

You are being asked to participate in research to collect data for an Ohio University undergraduate thesis. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time. The oral interview is estimated to last between five and ten minutes and your participation in the interview implies consent to use the data for research purposes. The interviews will be audio recorded. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate and if you have any additional questions I would be happy to answer them before or after the interview. For your participation you will receive a coupon for a free drink at the Frontroom.

Interview Outline:

Some of these questions may seem very obvious; however, it is a formality that I ask them. There are no right or wrong answers, I am just interested in hearing what you have to say.

3. Possible Interview Questions:
   a. How often in a typical week do you eat out?
   b. When you eat out do you typically eat at a sit-down restaurant or a fast food/quick service restaurant?
   c. What are your favorite fast food restaurants?
   d. What are three main reasons you decide to eat at a fast food restaurant?
   e. So you said __________, ___________ and ____________ (repeat back)
   f. Of those three reasons which is most important to you?
   g. Why is it important to you that ____________

4. Thank respondents for participating in the study, ask if they have any questions, give them a coffee coupon.
Appendix E:

Transcribed Interviews
Appendix E: Transcribed Interviews

Below are the transcriptions for all 45 interviews. “M” refers to the interviewer and “R” refers to the respondent. Demographic information is included in parentheses as follows: length of interview (minutes: seconds), gender, current year in college, age. For interviews 15-45, the two values listed at the beginning of each interview are the stated values identified by each respondent as their number one and number two most important values.

Interview 1 (1:58, Female, 4, 21)

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Not really. Like on a car trip I’ll stop at McDonald’s.

M: If you were to look at this list of fast food chains around town would you say that you eat any of these?

R: Yeah, Yeah definitely I eat at Subway.

M: Do you normally think of them as fast food?

R: Some of them, but not really Subway or Pita Pit, but I guess it really is fast food.

M: And when you go eat at a Subway or Pita Pit what are the three main reasons why you do?

R: Quick and convenient mainly.

M: Why is it important to you that it is convenient?

R: Because if I have half an hour between meetings I need to have something that I can get quickly.

M: Okay, so you can get to your meetings on time then?

R: Yes.

M: Why do you think getting to the meeting is important

R: It’s a sign of respect to be on time I suppose, it’s my job, if I am late it doesn’t really look good.

M: Okay, well why is it important to look good and responsible for your job?

R: Well I never really thought about that question, for future jobs, for personal pride in what I do.
**Interview 2** (1:23, Female, 1, 18)

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Not usually.

M: How about, do you eat from any of the fast food restaurants on this list?

R: Yeah, Subway.

M: Well when you do eat Subway what are the three main reasons why you go there on a particular day.

R: Umm the *taste*.

M: So you would say more often than not taste is the most important factor.

R: Well taste and it’s not bad for you *health* wise

M: Why is it important to you that it is heathy

R: Well I guess right now my weight, and calories, and the *future*.

M: What do you mean in terms of future? Could you explain that a little more for me?

R: Well like high blood pressure, my family has a history of high blood pressure and I don’t want to get that.

M: So *health* is an important factor for you.

R: Yes.

**Interview 3** (2:16, Male, 2, 20)

M: You eat fast food?

R: Sometimes.

M: Out of the places on this list where do you most often eat.

R: Pita pit

M: When you do eat Pita Pit or fast food why do you go there?

R: Well with Pita Pit I think they have more variety and it’s different from everything else. Everything else is just burgers and fries.

M: Well what makes you go buy fast food vs. going to the dining hall or cooking?
R: Well it’s cheaper, but the quality of the food too, but mainly because it is cheaper.

M: Why is it important to you that it is cheaper?

R: Because I have no money

M: Why is it important to you that the quality of the food is good, or what necessarily do you mean by quality?

R: Well the quality of ingredients, because fast food places buy things more in bulk, and at pita pit you can see the ingredients in front of you I think it is more of a trust thing. You are able to tell that the ingredients are fresh is important.

Interview 4 (1:39, Female, 3, 21)

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: No

M: Do you eat from any of these on this list?

R: Jimmy John’s

M: When you eat there what are three of the main reasons why you do?

R: Because they serve turkey, and that’s probably the only thing I can eat, and good quality, good bread, fast service

M: Why is it important to you that the service is fast?

R: Because if I have some place to be the service is quick.

M: Why is it important to you that you be on time to where you have to go?

R: I feel like you are looking for something

M: If it’s not there its fine

R: If I have to get to class its important

M: Why is it important for you to go to class?

R: To learn

M: Why is it important for you to learn?

R: So that I can get a job, maybe go to graduate school, to graduate would be a good thing

M: Why is it important for you to graduate school?
R: Oh boy, wow, sure you are not a philosophy major? Okkk ummm so that I can provide for myself the way I want to live.

**Interview 5** (1:36, Male, 3, 21)

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yeah

M: How often in a typical week do you eat fast food?

R: Probably 3

M: What places do you eat from most often

R: Probably Taco John’s

M: When you do eat fast food what are the three main reasons why you decide to?

R: Because it is quick, cheap, and convenient

M: Which reason is most important to you

R: Being quick

M: Why is that important to you

R: You have classes you always have to go to, work on projects and that stuff, so just being fast

M: Why is it important to you to go to class

R: To get good grades to graduate eventually

M: Why is that important to you

R: Umm because I want to get a good job

M: What does getting a good job mean to you

R: Comfort I guess, know you actually have a job in an economy like this

M: Okay, so security then?

R: Yeah **security**

**Interview 6** (2:24, Female, Grad, 36)

M: Do you eat fast food?
R: Occasionally

M: Okay, about how many times a week, or month if that is more appropriate do you eat fast food?

R: Probably twice a month

M: Are there any restaurants on this list that would strike you as not being fast food?

R: No, I guess they would all be considered fast food

M: Okay, well when you do decide to eat fast food what are the three main reasons why you do?

R: Um, just time mainly, short on time, uhhh, I’ll be out driving around and I’ll be hungry, or I just don’t want to fix anything

M: So which would you say is the main factor of those three?

R: Time

M: An why is that an important factor for you?

R: Well with being a student, plus I am working, plus I have kids, I have less time to do that

M: Why is it important to you to get all those things done rather than fix something, or going to school

R: Typically the deadlines on any homework, or things for work, plus helping my kids with things that they need, just I guess ummm the other things are more of a priority than having a sit down meal

M: Why is it important to you to make those deadlines

R: Well, one for grades, then the deadlines are there for a reason and if I didn’t have the deadlines I would just keep procrastinating and putting them off

M: And why do you work hard to get those grades? What things are you working towards after that, why is that important for you?

R: Well, good grades allows me to graduate and get a better paying job, so just a better and easier life I guess

Interview 7 (1:18, Male, 3, 21)

M: Do you eat fast food
R: Yes

M: In a typical week how often do you eat it?

R: Probably three times a week, or well four times

M: And what places do you go to most often?

R: Burger King, Wendy’s, and Sonic

M: And when you go there what are the three main reasons why you decide to eat fast food?

R: Because they have a dollar menu

M: Okay, so cheap?

R: Yeah, it’s pretty much the only reason I go to those ones

M: And why is that important to you?

R: **Because I am a broke college student with no money**

M: Okay, and do you live in the dorms or out of the dorms?

R: Out of the dorms

M: Do you cook at all

R: No, not really, I actually have a dining hall meal plan still so I don’t have to spend any money on food hardly

**Interview 8 (2:33, Male, 1, 19)**

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: How often would you say that you eat it?

R: Maybe once or twice

M: And what fast food restaurants do you go to most often?

R: Probably Chipotle

M: Okay, well if that didn’t count as one, then on this list of places which do you go to?

R: Jimmy John’s
M: And when you do get fast food what are three of the main reasons why you do?
R: Its quick in and out, or if I am meeting friends there
M: So it being quick is important to you?
R: Yeah, getting in and out
M: Okay, well why is that important to you
R: I don’t know some days I just have a lot to do and just want to catch something between class, I cannot really sit down and eat something
M: And why is it important to you to make it to class?
R: Ohh you know so I am not the awkward guy walking in late or something like that, and to keep up with everything I guess
M: And why is that important to you to keep up with everything?
R: Umm, I guess it is just a lot from my military experience, it’s just something that has been hammered into me I guess, you always have to get there on time
M: And does that have any particular meaning to you or you just do it because it’s habit?
R: I am just used to doing it really
M: Okay and what might happen if you didn’t do it?
R: I would probably get lazy, after a while and just start to slope down hill
M: And would that be a bad thing or are you okay with that?
R: I would say that’s a bad thing for me
M: How come?
R: I am involved in a lot and just try not to fall behind
M: And why do you involve yourself in a lot of things?
R: I just like keeping busy, I like to do as much as I can and help where I can
M: Why is it important for you to keep busy? Is there any particular reason?
R: No it’s just how I have always been

Interview 9 (2:19, Female, 23)
M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Not very often, probably very rarely

M: Well if you do what restaurants on here are you more likely to eat from

R: Probably Pita Pit or Quiznos or Chipotle, which isn’t on there, but I dunno to me that is not really fast food it’s a little bit classier

M: Okay, well when you do decide to eat fast food what are some of the main reasons why you do?

R: Either because I don’t have time or because I really really want a specific thing that I can only get at a certain place

M: If you don’t have time why is it important to you that you get something quickly?

R: Because I am usually very hungry at the time and I don’t feel like taking the time that it would take to make food because I am just hungry and want food right away

M: What other things would you be doing that would induce you to get fast food?

R: Probably when I am at work late or didn’t get to eat at work, or I am just thinking about a certain food and want to eat it

M: Okay so work is a big reason why then?

R: Yeah, probably the only reason, pretty much all I do is work

M: Well why is it important to you that you work?

R: So that I can live, and eating would kind of come into that, having money for food and that

Interview 10 (2:06, Female, 3, 19)

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Not very often, no

M: When you do eat fast food what would you say are the main reasons why you do?

R: Usually because I don’t have time to go anywhere else and it is cheap

M: Okay so convenient and cheap then?

R: Yes
M: Out of those two factors which would you say is most important to you?

R: Probably cheap, but I usually go to ones that don’t have any trans fats in them

M: Okay, so a health value to it then?

R: Yes

M: Okay, and just so you know all of the place on this list, like Subway and Pita Pit are considered fast food for this study, but would you still get fast food if it was more expensive

R: I mean yeah I would go to it over other places

M: Okay, and so why would you say that it is important to you that it is convenient?

R: Well I go to school and work so I don’t always have time to go to the grocery store, I don’t always have time to make something so the quicker the better, because I mean I have more important things to do, but I mean I know I have to eat, but I have more important things to do then sit down and make a meal

M: Yes, I understand what you mean

R: Why is it important to you to work or go to class?

M: Well I need to work for money right now because I mean none of us have money right now, and I have to go to class because I have to graduate so I can make money, getting a grade in a class is more important to me than making a really drawn out meal

Interview 11 (2:11, Male, Grad, 25)

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: How often would you say you eat fast food?

R: Before or after I started my diet?

M: Well, just on a typical week for you

R: Oh boy, probably, six or seven times a week

M: Okay, and what are the three main reasons you eat fast food?

R: Time number one, number two it tastes good, and can’t think of anything else, saves time is the main thing

M: Why is it important to you that it saves time?
R: Because I am a graduate student and time is something that we don’t have a lot of, and I am just lazy sometimes

M: I understand, well why is it important to you that you get your course work done for graduate school

R: I want to get a career, a nice job, something I wouldn’t mind doing

M: Okay, so a getting a nice job is important to you

R: Yeah

M: Well could you explain a little bit to me about what you consider a nice job for you?

R: Nice job, nice government job, good benefits, 9 to 5, don’t have to work more than 40 hours ideally, you know something of a managerial role where you have a little more responsibility.

Interview 12 (2:13, Male, 1, 19)

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: How often in a week would you say you eat fast food?

R: Once

M: And when you do eat fast food what are the main reasons why you choose to?

R: It is inexpensive and it usually only happens when I realize I am in the mood for fast food

M: So price is an important factor for you then?

R: Yes, if the food were to cost more I would not buy it

M: Okay, do any of these on the list strike you as not being fast food, and which do you eat at most often?

R: None of them strike me as not being fast food, and I eat at Quizno’s most often

M: And you go there because it is cheap and because you are in the mood for Quizno’s then?

R: Yep

M: Okay, why is price so important to you then?
R: Because as a relatively stingy guy, if I am going to eat I am going to make it myself or eat at a dining hall, if I am going to go out to eat it will be an even with friends, in which case we will not go to fast food, and if I am just going to eat food out by myself I am not going to want to spend $10 plus on a meal

Interview 13 (1:53, Male, 4, 22)

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: How many times in a typically week would you say you eat fast food?

R: Well I have chipotle pretty often, so I would say probably about five times a week

M: Okay, well what if you weren’t counting Chipotle, do you eat anywhere else from this list, and if so how often?

R: Umm probably about three times a week

M: Okay and when you do get fast food what are the reasons why?

R: convenience is a major factor, I like the taste, I think it tastes good, and the price

M: Okay, out of those three what would you say is most important for you?

R: Convenience

M: And why is that important to you?

R: Because I don’t particularly like to cook food, I am not very good at it, and I don’t do it that often so it is just easier to go get a meal and eat it real quickly and then that is just not a factor anymore

M: If you already had the food prepared in your house would you rather eat at home or would you still go get fast food?

R: I would rather eat at home

M: Why is that?

R: Because I don’t have a car here so I would have to walk to go get something, but umm, I definitely like to eat in my own home, usually when I get fast food I bring it back to eat at home
Interview 14 (1:43, Male, 4, 21)

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Sometimes

M: How often in a typical week would you say you eat fast food?

R: No more than three times

M: And when you do decide to eat it what are the three main reasons why you decide to?

R: I don’t have to cook it, I am walking bye and it smells good, and it’s cheaper than going out to eat at a nice restaurant

M: Okay, so convenience, taste, and price then?

R: Yeah

M: okay, out of those three factors is there one that is more important than the others?

R: Convenience

M: And why is that important to you?

R: Umm, I don’t know, I cook meals a lot and it is nice to have a break because it takes forever and I don’t have to clean up

M: What else would you be doing differently with your time

R: Nothing

M: Nothing, okay

R: I mean being lazy, I just don’t want to cook

M: Okay, well why is price important to you?

R: I spend a lot of money, and I am really bad with money

M: So you spend a lot of money on other things?

R: Yeah, if I can cut down what I spend on food then I won’t go broke as fast

M: Okay, so in comparison would you say other things are higher on your priority list

R: Yeah I suppose so
Interviewee 15 (2:19, Male, 2, 20)

1. Being well-respected
2. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life

M: Do you eat fast food?
R: Never

M: Okay, well do you eat from any of the places on this list?
R: Quizno’s, Subway, Jimmy John’s, those are the only three I have had in the last three months probably

M: Okay, well when you do eat at one of these what are two or three main reasons why you eat there
R: Usually I don’t have time and I want something that is somewhat healthy
M: Well why is it important to you that it’s quick?
R: Because I am on the run and in between classes
M: Okay, so to get to class on time?
R: Yeah
M: Why is it important to you that you get to class on time?
R: Well I guess the professor expects you to be there on time
M: Okay, while why are going to classes in the first place?
R: Because we pay a lot of money to go to the class
M: And what do you hope to do with your classes
R: Well I am studying to be an accountant and that is going to be my profession and I want to learn for my profession
M: And why did you want to be an accountant? Why is that profession important to you?
R: Umm well I guess it’s just what I was good at and accounting 101 is hard for a lot of people and I found it really easy
M: Okay, so having a career then is important for you
R: Yeah
M: And why is your career important

R: While I hope to make a lot of money, and I guess a job is important for me because my parents stress it more than anything, my parents feel it’s important so I guess it kind of rubbed off on me

Interview 16 (2:19, Female, 3, 19)

1. Self-fulfillment
2. Warm relationships with others

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Sometimes

M: And when you do eat fast food what are some of the main reasons that you decide to get it at that point

R: I’m craving it, a place where I usually go has a food item that I like, usually I am craving that, taste is a big reason, it is just another place I go to eat

M: So taste is important to you?

R: Yeah

M: And why do you find taste important when you are choosing food?

R: I dunno, I guess I just want to satisfy my craving, listen to what my body is telling me, like umm I guess my body would know if I am more in the mood for carbs or protein so that I can choose where I want to go

M: How often do you eat fast food?

R: Not often, maybe once or twice a month

M: And for you it’s about taste

R: Yes

M: And I like to eat local here, there are many more choices, but if I am at home I can get Wendy’s
Interview 17 (2:11, Male, 4, 25)

1. Security
2. Self-respect

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: About how many times a week do you eat fast food

R: Probably about five times a week

M: And what are the main reasons why you do eat fast food when you do?

R: Because it is just something quick and it’s usually on the way to something else

M: Okay, so quick and convenient then?

R: Yeah

M: And why is it important to you that it’s quick and convenient?

R: Because I don’t want to be hungry when I am off doing something else, but then there is not usually enough time to prepare something else ahead of time

M: So what kinds of other things are you usually doing with your time?

R: Just going to classes and doing homework

M: Okay, and what do you study?

R: Chemistry

M: And why is studying chemistry important to you?

R: It interests me

M: Okay, and what do you hope to do with your degree?

R: Be some type of lab technician

M: Is that something you have always wanted to do, or what excites you about that?

R: It’s just something that relates to science and other things that I like

M: Okay, so why is it important to you to go to school and then get a job
R: mainly because the things that I do want to do, a college education is required or it is the best way to go about getting the job

M: And why do you want to get a job?

R: It helps to go through life, to live life and to support my hobbies like reading

Interview 18 (0:54, Male, 4, 22)

1. Self-fulfillment
2. Warm relationships with others

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Not if I don’t have to

M: Well when you do have to what are the main reasons why you eat it?

R: If I am stuck in an airport somewhere or with other people and there is no other choice

M: Are there any places on this list that you wouldn’t consider to be fast food

R: Nope I would say that is all fast food

Interview 19 (2:32, Female, 2, 19)

1. Self-respect
2. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: I try not to because usually when I eat it I kind of get sick, so probably once a month at most

M: How about somewhere like Quizno’s, Subway, Jimmy John’s, Pita Pit do you eat at those places more often?

R: Oh yes I would, I love Pita Pit

M: Me too, and when you do go there what are some of the main reasons why you do?

R: Usually when I am stressed out, or am studying, or when I haven’t eaten in a while because I live in a sorority house and sometimes the dinner plan isn’t on time

M: So in a hurry then?

R: Yeah in a hurry, just on the go
M: Okay so then because it’s **convenient**?

R: Yes

M: Okay, well why is it important to you that it’s convenient?

R: **Well I mean it’s always nice, and actually it’s very good food, and I like good food, and it’s cheaper which is always a good thing**

M: Well where are you usually on the run to that you need to are grab something quickly

R: Probably at **class, or the library, or just going to visit a friend** and I haven’t eaten yet

M: Well what is your major?

R: I am a middle childhood education major

M: And why is it important to you to study and go to class

R: Well I mean my field is going to be education so **I should probably get a good education**

M: Right, I understand, and have you always wanted to be a teacher, or why is that something that you have chosen?

R: I actually wanted to be a sports broadcaster at first and that didn’t work out, but I also always wanted to be a teacher too

M: And why is that something that has been important to you?

R: My grandma was a teacher, my aunt and my cousin and they have always said I would be a good one and I see how much they love it and **I thought I could do that and enjoy it**

**Interview 20** (2:53, Male, 1, 19)

1. Self-fulfillment
2. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life

M: Do you eat from any of the fast food restaurants on this list?

R: Yes ma’am I sure do

M: How many times in a week would you say you do?

R: I would actually probably say once every two weeks

M: And when you do eat fast food what are some of the main reasons why you do?
R: cheap, convenient, usually while just doing the drunken stumble home

M: Well out of those two, cheap and convenient, which is most important to you

R: Convenient

M: Okay, and why is that important to you?

R: It’s just like I can’t back to my dorm in time and I am really hungry

M: Okay, and what else do you have going on with your time?

R: Well usually, the number one place that I eat at is Wendy’s because it is between my dorm and my fraternal home so if I am going for chapter or something and I haven’t eaten yet I usually go pick something up and go

M: Okay, so you are in a fraternity

R: Yes ma’am

M: And why did you decide to join a fraternity

R: I don’t know really, I came to school and I said I don’t want to be a frat guy but I hung out with these guys for a few quarters before I joined and they seemed pretty cool and then mid last quarter I decided to join

M: So is it just more of a fun thing for you or are there other reasons you like being in it also?

R: well it looks good on an application

M: And why is that important?

R: Well I am in pre-med and if you can find alum to shake your hand and help you find a job then there it is

Interview 21 (2:02, Female, 4, ?)

1. Being well-respected
2. A sense of accomplishment

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: How often do you eat it?

R: Probably like once a week
M: And when you do get fast food what are some of the main reasons why?

R: It’s cheap and it’s easy to get to and it’s fast

M: Okay so between cheap and convenient/fast which is most important to you?

R: Probably **cheap**

M: Okay and why is that most important to you?

R: Well I am an undergrad and **I don’t have a lot of money to spend on food**, I would like to go somewhere else to eat, but the dollar menu always saves the day

M: I understand that, so if you did have more money, would you spend it on food or would you use it differently?

R: **I would eat somewhere differently**

M: And, back to the **convenient** factor, why is it important to you that it’s convenient?

R: Because I have a **schedule** and **classes** and may only have an hour in between and I have to go somewhere where they already have the food ready

M: Okay, and what do you study?

R: I am double majoring in psychology and biology

M: Why is important to you to study, to go to class, to go to college?

R: Well to go to college obviously **to get a career started** and you have to go to class to get that degree

M: And why is it important to you to have a career?

R: So that I am not on the street or in my parents’ house when I am thirty

**Interview 22** (1:22, Male, 4, 21)

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. A sense of accomplishment

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: how often would you say you eat it?

R: maybe once a week
M: Okay, and when you do get it what are two or three of the main reasons why you do?
R: If I am out of groceries or if I am hung over and lazy
M: okay, so convenience then?
R: Yeah
M: Well why is it important to you that it’s convenient?
R: Because then it’s not hard I guess, I don’t have to cook at home
M: Well what other thing would you be doing with your time
R: Running errands or doing homework or going out with friends
M: Why are those things important to you?
R: Because it’s more fun and entertaining then making food at home (interesting we don’t associate eating together, or making food together as a fun event)

Interview 23 (1:08, Female, 2, 19)

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. Being well-respected

M: Do you eat fast food
R: Yes
M: When you do eat fast food what are two or three main reasons why you do
R: Because it’s quick and I don’t have to cook and because I like the taste of it
M: Why is it important to you that it’s quick?
R: Because I don’t have a lot of time sometimes and I don’t always like cooking and it takes a lot of time and I don’t want to do the dishes
M: Right, well you said you don’t usually have the time, what kind of other things are you usually doing with your time?
R: Homework and classes and stuff and different groups that I am in I have a lot of meetings
M: Okay, so you are involved in a lot then?
R: yes
M: Why is it important to you to be involved in school and those groups?

R: Because I want to be successful and I want to get a good job and getting involved in stuff you know you find friends that you can hang out with

**Interview 24** (1:20, Female, 2, 19)

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. Being well-respected

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Rarely

M: When you do eat fast food what are the main reasons why?

R: **Taste**, it’s got that fatty substance, you know deep fried or whatever

M: And is taste the most important factor for you then?

R: Yeah

M: Why is taste important for you?

R: **Well taste is somewhat important, it’s mostly about nutrition, I mean if I know what is going into something I can at least imagine that I taste it, like if someone tells me that this is a deep fried tomato I will imagine that it tastes acidy and deep fried and what not, so I guess taste is important to me because of ingredients and its nutrition**

M: So do you think with fast food you know the ingredients that are going into it, do you have a good idea of what you are getting when you order something?

R: **No, I just know that it’s bad and that it tastes good for that moment**

**Interview 25** (1:18, Male, 1, 18)

1. Being well-respected
2. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: **Not really**

M: What are some of the reasons why you don’t eat fast food then?

R: I guess just because it’s unhealthy really
M: Do you consider Quizno’s, Subway, Pita Pit or Jimmy John’s to be fast food?

R: I guess that is not really as much fast food because you can order something that is pretty healthy as opposed to like Wendy’s or McDonald’s

M: So you associate fast food more with the health factor then?

R: Yeah

M: Okay, so do you go to some of those other, healthier places?

R: Yeah I would say I do

M: When you do go to one of those, what are some of the main reasons why you decide to eat there?

R: I think it tastes better

M: So would you say that taste is the most important factor for you when you are deciding where to eat?

R: Yeah it’s probably a combination of taste and whether or not it’s healthy

M: And why is taste important to you?

R: I guess it makes me feel good, it makes me happy, satisfying I guess

**Interview 26 (1:29, Female, 2, 20)**

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. Self-fulfillment

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Sometimes

M: And when you do eat fast food, and when I say fast food it includes Subway, PitaPit, Jimmy John’s what are two or three of the main reasons why you do?

R: Because it has fat and fat tastes good, and because I get sick of the dining hall food, and I don’t like to eat in the dining hall on Saturdays, so I go out to eat, and also just when I am with friends the cultural thing to do is go out and eat
M: Okay so do you typically go to a fast food place with friends or to more of a sit down restaurant?

R: Yeah typically fast food or like China King

M: So then am I hearing correctly that taste is the most important factor for you when picking a food place?

R: Yes

M: Okay, and why is taste important to you?

R: Um because if something doesn’t taste good you are not going to want to eat it

Interview 27 (2:03, Female, Grad, 22)

1. Self-respect
2. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Occasionally

M: And when you do eat fast food what are two of the main reasons why you do?

R: Mostly because I don’t feel like cooking or if it’s too late in the evening and I just want to get something quick

M: Okay so convenient then?

R: Yeah

M: Why is it important to you that it’s convenient?

R: Just because it is, well umm I am usually really busy, I am a TA and I am also in ResLife, so am always in my office and away from my apartment most of the time, so unless I remember to take something out of the freezer, but I don’t eat fast food to often though, I am usually pretty good about planning my meals.

M: Why is it important to you to be involved in so many things?
R: I like to stay busy, and I need my job to pay for school

M: What’s your major

R: I am in the Spanish master’s program

M: Well what made you want to get involved in that, or what do you hope to accomplish with it?

R: Well I have been studying Spanish since the sixth grade and it felt natural to be a Spanish major, and I did my undergrad here and Spanish was the only major that really stuck, so I thought hey maybe there is something there, so ultimately I would like to work for the government, in an embassy or something doing translations and interpretations

Can’t use this last part because I asked what she hoped to accomplish which predisposes her towards the accomplishment value.

Interview 28 (1:37, Male, 3, 21)

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. Self-fulfillment

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: When you do what are two of the main reasons why you decide to?

R: It’s quick and convenient

M: Why is it important to you that it’s convenient?

R: Laziness mainly, not wanting to make food

M: Okay, are there other things that you are usually doing with your time that you aren’t able to, or you just don’t feel like cooking?

R: Sometimes I just don’t feel like cooking, or being at the library for a while studying

M: Okay, and what is your major?
R: Exercise physiology

M: What made you want to study at college and exercise physiology?

R: I have just always been interested in how the body works and exercise as well

M: And why is it important to you that you go to college and that you are studying this major?

R: Umm, most of the jobs I have looked into doing you have to major in this, and a college degree always helps with future jobs

M: Why is it important to you that you not just get a job, but a job in exercise physiology?

R: Because it would be working in the area that I enjoy working in

Interview 29 (1:18, Female, 2, 20)

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. A sense of accomplishment

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Not often

M: Do you consider a Quizno’s, Subway, or PitaPit to be fast food?

R: In some ways, I mean it depends on what you get, I mean it is food fast, but you can get healthier things

M: Okay, so would you say you would eat there more often than your typical fast food like McDonald’s

R: Yeah
M: And when you do go for fast food, fast service, what are the main reasons why you do

R: Short on time, and just want to get in and get out rather than just sit down somewhere where it takes a while to get served
M: Right, I understand, and what kind of other things are you doing with your time that necessitates the *convenience*?

R: A lot of it is *school and work*, it’s so time consuming, you focus less on eating, and you should focus on eating healthy but sometimes *that just comes last*

M: Right, and what are you studying?

R: Education

M: And why is it important to you to go to school and to study?

R: Well I am working at a retirement home back home right now and I just see that if I were to have to work there the rest of my life I would rather get an education and do something that I love rather than something that I hate the rest of my life

**Interview 30** (0:43, Male, 4, 22)

1. Self-respect
2. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: No

M: Why don’t you eat fast food

R: It’s not good for you I guess, I dunno

M: Okay, and do you consider a Quizno’s or Subway or PitaPit to be fast food? Or a different type of fast food?

R: Ummm I try to stay away from greasy food you could say

M: Well then would you say that you eat at those places then?
R: I would eat it but not on a regular basis

M: So would you say that *health* is an important factor for you then?

R: Absolutely
M: And why is that an important factor for you?

R: I like taking care of my body I guess

**Interview 31** (1:29, Female, 4, 22)

1. Warm relationships with others
2. Self-respect

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Occasionally

M: When you do then what are two main reasons why you do?

R: Usually just because I am in a hurry or don’t have groceries

M: Okay, so because it’s **convenient**?

R: Yeah

M: Why is it important to you that it’s convenient?

R: It is important that it is convenient because I have **limited time**, if I don’t have time to go get groceries and then come home and make food

M: I understand, what kind of other things are more pressing for your time?

R: Umm well like I take between **18 and 20 credit hours** per quarter and those things are usually what I have to do and **that’s more important**

M: And why is that important to you to do?

R: Because I need to **graduate**, because I need to get **good grades** so I need to go to class and do the work that is required of me

M: I understand that, and what do you hope to have with that after? Why is it important to get good grades to go to class
R: Well I need to get good grades because my parents pay for my school and if I don’t they will stop, and it is important because I want to get into grad school, and I need to have at least a 3.0 to get in so I can’t slack off

Interview 32 (1:17, Female, 3, 20)

1. Warm relationships with others
2. A sense of accomplishment

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: When you do what are one or two of the main reasons why you do?

R: Because it is convenient on Court St. and I don’t have time, pretty much the only reason

M: And what other things are you doing with your time that kind of necessitates that?

R: Well it’s that really inconvenient you only have 45 minutes between your classes and it’s not really convenient to go to the dining hall where you might be able to get something a little less fattening

M: Okay, and what’s your major?

R: Social work and women’s studies

M: And why is it important to you to go to school, to get an education?

R: So I can get a job some day

M: And what do you hope to have with that job, what does that mean to you, why is that important to you?

R: Well I guess everyone needs to have a job, and also I guess everyone wants to think that they are doing something to help the world around them, or affect the world in some way
Interview 33 (1:30, Male, 4, ?)

1. Self-fulfillment
2. Warm relationships with others

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: And what are the main reasons why you do?

R: It’s cheap and it’s fast and it’s just easy to get

M: Okay, so cheap and convenient then?

R: Yes

M: Out of those two which is most important to you?

R: Cheap

M: And why is that important to you?

R: Because I am poor, although the convenience is a very close second there, they go hand in hand

M: Okay, well if it wasn’t cheap would you still buy fast food?

R: No

M: Okay, so why is it important to you that it’s convenient?

R: Just the quickness of it, I can grab it on my way to class or in between classes if I don’t have a long break

M: Okay and what do you study?
R: History

M: Why is it important to you to go to college and to study history?
R: Umm, well college, I entered college because it was what I was supposed to do, and I was originally majoring in journalism because it was what I was supposed to do according to a lot of people in my life, but I switched to history because it is what I want to do.

M: And is there anything you hope to do specifically with it after?

R: I want to teach

Interview 34 (3:14, Female, 3, 21)

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. Self-respect

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yeah sometimes

M: Okay and when you do eat fast food, and by that I include a Subway, PitaPit, Quizno’s, what are one or two of main reasons why you do?

R: I get a craving and I have to have it

M: So the taste?

R: Yeah, pretty much

M: Would you say when you are looking to eat something taste is the most important factor for you

R: Umm yeah, probably important, you have to like it

M: So that is the main reason why you eat fast food then, or because it is handy or need to grab something on the go, but mainly because it tastes good, I don’t really eat it often

R: Okay so how often in a week, or a month if that is more appropriate would you say you eat fast food?
M: Umm, maybe like max three times a month

R: Alright, how would you say you view food, yourself, just in general, is there a particular way you relate to it?
M: Ummm, I just, that’s a hard question, I guess I just view it as, I dunno

R: Like your connection to it, maybe some of your memories about how food was approached with your family, how you approach it here

M: I mean here I just kind of eat as I feel like it I guess, I don’t know if that is the answer, but I come from a big family, so you know every time there is a get together there is a lot of food and we are all about it, you know we are a big Italian family, and there is a lot of us and anytime we go to visit there is always a ton of food and everyone is just eating an eating and eating

R: I understand that, I have a big family too

M: I mean it comes important I guess in my life because the way I was raised it was all about food, so like when I have friends over I am like while let’s make snacks, you know let’s eat and drink you know, so I guess it’s kind of important, I mean I always have food close by, like right now I have yogurt and a granola bar and a 100 calorie pack in my backpack even though I only have class for like 3 hours, just in case you know I don’t want to be hungry, so I dunno, I think it is important definitely

Interview 35 (3:43, Female, 3, ?)

1. Self-respect
2. Warm relationships with others

M: Do you eat fast food?

R: Yes

M: When you do what are one or two of the main reasons why you decide to?

R: Convenience definitely, I dunno and sometimes I just really want some McDonald’s fries

M: And why is it important to you that it’s convenient?

R: Because sometimes I just need something fast that is close because I have a class or a meeting and I won’t have time for a sit down meal or to make a salad, and fast food is a lot easier to just wrap back up and take with you if you are running late somewhere
M: I understand that, well, why is it important to you to go to school and to be involved in a lot of things like you are?

R: Well, in terms of going to school you can’t really do much right now with a high school diploma, and it’s getting to the point where you can’t really do much with a bachelor’s, and so going to school for me has always been expected because I was intelligent enough and always really focused, but really necessary now. And when it comes to being involved I have always enjoyed community service and being around people and so that is a good way for me to meet people and to give back, I know that is kind of cliché, but to give back because I have been helped a lot. My biggest thing is tutoring, like over the summer I have a job and am always tutoring kids that are under the reading and math level for their grade because I have had a lot of help and I know that sometimes you just need that extra motivation, or for someone to tell you that you can do this, even when you are having trouble, I just think it is really important.

M: And what is your major again?

R: Psychology and pre-physical therapy

M: Okay, and do you see a marriage between the things you talked about and what you want to do in the future, and what do you want to do after this and why is that important to you?

R: Well I definitely plan on having a family, and that has always been a big thing for me and I think that is because my family has always had a lot of conflict and we are not really close, and I have a big family but I don’t know many of them for a variety of reasons, so I always just wanted to create that family that I wanted, to give my kids things that I didn’t have and to have that bond that I didn’t see with my parents who are divorced now, you know, it has just been kind of unstable in terms of seeing that family life.

M: And how do you see your education now playing into that?

R: Definitely my education will help support my family because we always had a lot of trouble with money with my dad only having an associate’s degree, and my mom has a bachelor’s degree but she got really sick so she can’t work anymore, and so by going to school and getting a good job that will not only help by supporting my children and giving them those opportunities that I didn’t have, but also to not have to worry so much, to not have to have so much conflict in terms of how are we going to make it which sometimes makes people but heads and blame one another and it just gets really complicated, and I know money doesn’t solve everything, but it helps.
Interview 36 (4:20, Female, 4, 22)

1. Warm relationships with others
2. A sense of accomplishment

M: How often in a typical week would you say you eat out?

R: Probably just like once or twice

M: And when you do what kind of places are you usually eating at?

R: Well my favorites are Jimmy John’s, Big Mama’s, and I guess Wendy’s

M: Okay so more or less fast food, fast service then?

R: Yes

M: With fast food what are two or three of the most important reasons, or just one, why you eat there

R: Well I love the taste of Jimmy John’s, it’s just something that always keeps me coming back, and I know I will enjoy it for the price, so yeah it has to taste good and be reasonably priced, and quick food because I don’t have a lot of time

M: What kind of qualities or attributes do you feel make something taste good?

R: Well, I am not really to adventurous in my tastes. I don’t like to stray very far from the typical American meal of like Turkey, bread, lettuce, tomatoes, you know everything that comes on a custom sandwich is what I like, so it doesn’t need to be exquisite or new or exciting but just a familiar thing

M: Okay, and you mentioned price, which any college student can relate to, and convenience, so what kind of things are you doing with your time that necessitates that convenience

R: I mean I literally have one or two hours between going to class, work or just hanging out with my friends, so just being able to know that I can go in get my food, eat and still have time to get to wherever I am going is really important

M: And why is it important to you, you mentioned going to school, work, and hanging out with friends, what makes those kind of things important to you?

R: My activities, well it’s my set schedule and I am in my last quarter here at school so I am just trying not to mess up my grades or mess up anything I have going on with my work
because I don’t want to get fired 2 months before I graduate when I have been working there for 3 years, so it is just routine habits that I do

M: Okay, and why is your routine and grades and work important to you?

R: Umm, I mean basically I messed up a lot my freshman and sophomore year so I am trying to make my grades come up a little bit before I graduate to make myself more marketable for the job industry

M: What kind of things are important to you about having a job, aside from you know everyone has to have a job?

R: What’s important to me in a job?

M: Yeah, what is important for, why is that important to you?

R: I mean I work in dining services at the market and just having a decent amount of stock that the students can actually purchase what they want, like I remember when I lived in the dorms that is what I did, it is set up so that you spend your meals at the market, so I am just trying to make it convenient and healthy and the well being of the place to be as high up as I can because if it were me I would want someone to treat me that way

Interview 37 (1:51, Female, 4, 21)

1. Self-fulfillment
2. Warm relationships with others

M: How often do you eat out in a typical week?

R: Probably twice

M: And where do you usually eat when you do?

R: Usually once at a fast food place and another place will be a sit down with a friend

M: And when you eat at a fast food place what are two of the main reasons why you choose to eat there?

R: Fast and cheap

M: Okay well why is it important to you that it’s fast

R: Well normally if I am eating at a fast food place it’s because I don’t have time to go home and I am hungry and want food now and I don’t want to make it
M: Yeah I understand that. And what other things are you doing with your time to necessitate that speed and convenience?

R: Probably between classes, otherwise I would just go home because I am close by

M: Why is it important to you then to go to classes, to do your work, to get an education here?

R: Well for me personally I’m going to medical school so I needed to do well to get that ultimate goal of getting the grades I needed to get into med school, and you have to go to class to do that

M: Well why is it important to you to go to med school or be a doctor?

R: Umm, because I wanted to be in a profession that helps people but at the same time I would stay in an academic environment and do research, so it kind of offers all of the things that I really wanted to do: go to school, do research, and work with people and not be isolated in a lab.

Interview 38 (2:44, Female, 2, 20)

1. Fun, enjoyment and excitement in life
2. Self-respect

M: How often in a typical week would you say you eat out?

R: Maybe once

M: When you do where are you most often eating? What kind of places, like sit-down or quicker service faster food places?

R: Definitely like faster service, rarely a sit-down

M: Okay, when you do go to a fast food place, what are two of the main reasons why you do?

R: I like the food, like normally I will get the same thing, and it’s healthier than the dining halls, it’s hard to eat well in the dining halls

M: So would you say that taste and health are the main factors for you?

R: Yeah

M: Well what kind of things or qualities do you think make a meal or food taste good?
R: If it’s healthy, if its laden with grease it’s not good, even if it tastes good when I am eating it I know it’s not, if it’s fresh definitely, you can tell the difference between fresh food and stuff like that.

M: And what kind of places up town do you usually eat at?

R: I usually eat at PitaPit, and I get the same thing pretty much every time.

M: Okay, and why is it important to you to be healthy and eat well?

R: Well I mean our whole society is getting a little lackluster with everything, I mean I know I do sometimes but it’s important to eat well right now so that when you are older and less active you don’t turn into a fat blob that just sits around and watches T.V. all day, so it’s important to be healthy now to make your bones and your body strong for when you are older.

Interview 39 (1:52, Male, 1, 22)

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. A sense of accomplishment

M: How many times in a typical week would you say you eat out?

R: Probably four times a week.

M: Okay and when you do what kinds of places are you usually eating at, like a sit down vs. faster service/ fast food?

R: Usually like chipotle, or like a Mexican restaurant.

M: Okay, are there any other fast food places that you eat at?

R: Yeah I definitely eat fast food every once in a while, I mean I try to stay away from it but if it’s early morning and I am in a hurry and I just need to get some food I will go to Wendy’s or something, I don’t like doing it but I have to sometimes.

M: Would you say that the convenience factor is the main reason then?

R: Oh yeah definitely, convenience is the only reason.

M: Okay, and why is it important to you that it’s convenient?

R: Just so I can get some food in me because I would rather have junk food in me than no food.

M: Well what kind of things are you doing with your time that necessitates the convenience?
R: Well I have a lot of work, I have two jobs right now and school, and then I am on the men’s crew team so it just sometimes I don’t have enough time to go to the dining hall and make myself a sandwich or sit down and have a good meal, you know I just have to run to fast food and grab something unhealthy.

M: Well why is it important to you to be involved in so many things?

R: I just like to stay busy, if I am sitting around not doing anything I just feel sluggish and I don’t like the way I feel so I like to get out and enjoy the nice weather we have been having.

M: Okay, and why exactly is that important to you?

R: I dunno, I really couldn’t give you a good answer to that because my friends ask me the same thing all the time. They always tell me that I am just doing too much but I like being busy, I like having stuff to do, I like being involved. I just got out of the military and I promised myself I would just not do anything so I think that has a big influence on it too.

Interview 40 (1:18, Female, 1, 19)

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. Security

M: How often in a typical week would you say you eat out?

R: Do you mean like uptown or like…?

M: Just away from home

R: Like not in my dorm?

M: Yeah

R: In a week you said

M: Yes

R: Um like 4 or 5 times probably

M: Okay and when you do is it more of a sit-down place or a quick service?

R: Quick service

M: And why is it important to you that the service is quick?

R: So that you can like not waste your time and get where you need to go as fast as possible.
M: What other things are you doing with your time that necessitates the convenience?

R: If I am going to **class** or **work**

M: Okay, and why is it important to you to go to class, to work, to get an education, why is that important to you?

R: **So that I have a good career and to make money in the future and have a sustainable job**

**Interview 41** (4:04, Male, 2, 20)

1. A sense of accomplishment
2. Warm relationships with others

M: How often in a typical week do you eat out?

R: three, I mean I have a meal plan so I go to the dining hall

M: Not including the dining hall

R: Okay, three then

M: And when you do is it typically a sit down place or quicker service place?

R: Quicker service place like subway

M: And why is it important to you that it’s a fast food place

R: I dunno, I guess it’s not important that it is a fast food place but it’s just like why would I go sit down at Steven’s to get a meal by myself, I dunno

M: True, yeah it’s more acceptable to just grab something by yourself

R: Yeah

M: Okay well what are one or two of the most important attributes for you then of a fast food place

R: **Speed**, I am an impatient person and when I am hungry I am even more impatient

M: Okay well why is it important to you that it’s fast other than if you were really really hungry?

R: Umm I dunno like I never really thought about it, it’s just convenient, like right now I am going to go grab some food real quick at the dining hall and then go to my room and start **studying**
M: Okay so you have other things to do with your time like studying then?

R: Yeah

M: Well why is it important to you to study and get an education?

R: I dunno, I try not to think about that, but I guess because I need to get degrees, and get really smart, and get a good job, and raise a family and support that family

M: Okay and why is that important to you?

R: I don’t want to work in a fast food restaurant or a kitchen for the rest of my life, because I mean realistically I could probably drop out of school and find a job at home and live with my parents and live off that but I dunno

M: Okay well why do you care to be here then, why is it important to you to not end up like that?

R: I mean I like getting an education like learning for pleasure, like my dad went to college and that is just today’s world, you have to get an education to do anything, I mean even now you have to get your master’s not just your bachelor’s you know the world is changing

M: But is that important to you because it feels natural, because you want to provide for yourself in a certain way, because…

R: Yeah Yeah, that is exactly it I don’t want to be dependent on my parents for my whole life so this is what I have to do if I want to be on my own I guess

Interview 42 (1:24, Female, 2, 20)

1. Self-respect
2. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life

M: How often in a typical week would you say you eat out?

R: Not in the dining halls?

M: Not in the dining halls.

R: Once

M: Okay and when you eat out is it usually a sit down place or a quicker service place?

R: Quicker service

M: What are one or two qualities or attributes of fast food that are important to you, why you go there.
R: Because they are quick and lighter, I don’t like really heavy food

M: Well why is it important to you that it’s quick?

R: I am busy and I have a lot to do so I like to grab it on my way

M: What kinds of other things are you doing with your time?

R: School and hobbies, I dance so I have that, and friends

M: Well why is it important to you to get an education

R: Because I want to be a teacher and I have to to do that

M: Okay, why do you want to be a teacher

R: Because I have felt like since I was in first grade that I wanted to and I think it is something that I can do well and I have always wanted to

Interview 43 (1:36, Female, 2, 25)

1. Self-respect
2. Being well-respected

M: How often in a typical week would you say you eat out?

R: Twice

M: And when you do is it more of a sit down place or a fast food place, which includes a Jimmy John’s, Quizno’s, PitaPit

R: Fast food

M: What are one or two of the main reasons why you choose to eat there?

R: I get bored with the food I am eating I guess

M: Well since you said normally it is a fast food, are there reasons like taste, price, convenience that you choose to eat at the places you do?

R: Probably like price and taste

M: And between price and taste which is more important to you

R: It depends I guess if I have enough money at the time I will probably eat something that tastes better and is more expensive

M: Right which usually goes hand in hand
R: Yeah, money willing I would probably choose taste

M: Okay, and what kind of attributes or qualities do you think make a meal taste good?

R: Fresh, I like a lot of vegetables so if they taste fresh and crunchy

Interview 44 (1:17, Male, 1, 19)

1. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life
2. Sense of belonging

M: How often in a typical week would you say you eat out?

R: Like eat out other than a dining hall?

M: Yes

R: Probably maybe once or twice

M: Okay, and when you do is it normally at a sit down place or a quicker service fast food place?

R: Quick service

M: Okay, and what kind of attributes are important to you, why do you choose to eat at those places?

R: Probably health wise

M: Okay so what kind of places do you usually go to uptown

R: Usually subway or PitaPit, those are probably the only town places that I ever eat

M: Why is it important to you that it’s healthy?

R: From the standpoint that I have to keep this body good

M: Why is that important to you?

R: Got to get the babes and that is important to me because I like girls

Interview 45 (1:42, Female, 1, 19)

1. A sense of accomplishment
2. Fun, enjoyment, and excitement in life

M: How often in a typical week would you say you eat out?
R: Probably like once a week

M: And when you do are you normally going to a sit down place or more of a quick service fast food place?

R: Usually fast food, like Wendy’s or something uptown

M: When you do eat fast food what are two of the main reasons why you choose to?

R: Either I am bored of dining hall food or it’s just quick and convenient if I am up on Court Street and am hungry at the time

M: Well why is it important to you that it is quick and convenient?

R: Usually because my days are really busy so I usually don’t have time for a sit down meal, if I have time for that I will usually go to a dining hall because it takes more time, but it I am running from class to class it’s just easier to pop into the fast food and get out

M: Yeah I can relate to that. Why is important to you to go to school and classes

R: To get a degree and to graduate into a good job mainly

M: And why is it important to you to have a good job, or what does having a good job mean to you?

R: It means security, not having to worry about the future. I figure if I put in the time now then I won’t have to deal with all of the searching for a job frantically in the future, so it is just doing the best I can do now so I don’t have to worry about it in the future
Appendix F:

Characteristics of Fast Food Consequences
Appendix F: Characteristics of Fast Food Consequences

Listed below are detailed characteristics of the consequences respondents associated with the fast food attribute, “fast and convenient.”

Time (7)
- More time to study
- More time to work
- More free time
- Get to a certain location on time

Less effort (8)
- No cooking / clean-up required
- Laziness

More Responsible (9)
- Go to class / work
- Get good grades
- Graduate
- Keep busy
- Involvement in school, work, or other social activities

Appearances / Look Good (10)
- Job applications
- Being on time is a sign of respect
- Impress others
- Fit-in socially
- Acceptable to eat alone
- Please others, it is what is expected by others
- Social thing to do with friends
- Physical appearances (in relation to Subway and Pita Pit)

Better Future (12)
- Graduate with a degree
- Get a better job
Appendix G:

Numerically Formatted Ladders
Appendix G: Numerically Formatted Ladders

The table below shows the numerically formatted ladders for the 36 usable interviews.

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