Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Communication and Culture

Candidate Exemplar Case Studies: COMM4

Topic: Body Modification
Title 4: Fit for purpose; our bodies at work and play.
Issue: Lifestyle and body shape
My angle: Are our bodies being modified without our knowing it?

'...some blame the management some the employees
and everybody knows it's the Industrial Disease'
Dire Straits

Occupational disease: A morbid condition resulting from exposure to an agent during the usual performance of one's occupation.[1]

Each year over 2 million people suffer from ill health which they think is work-related …

Overall, in 2003/04 an estimated 2.2 million people were suffering from an illness which they believed was caused or made worse by their current or past work; around 600 thousand of these first became aware of the illness in the past 12 months. [2]

This is a Case Study of the ways in which our bodies are stressed and strained simply by being at work. Although our bodies are given to us by our parents, and there is a lot of social concern about the ways in which we distort our bodies for our own pleasure, or desire to impress, or simply to look more attractive (such as cosmetic surgery), what I want to explore is the fact that by middle age (40 years old and more) our bodies are suffering under tensions and strains put there by the conditions we work in.

Background – Personal

This was brought home to me by my mother who suffers from back problems as well as the beginnings of arthritis. She had always said that giving birth to children puts the female body under enormous stresses from which the body only partly recovers; the pelvis is extended, the stomach wall muscles are stretched beyond belief, and a lot of women lose their 'shape'. This is often followed by other kinds of bodily disorder, such as hysterectomies, (the removal of the womb) which can powerfully affect women's emotional, social and personal lives.

Background social context perspectives

A lot of feminists would argue that the kinds of jobs women have cause a wide variety of other physical stresses. A Marxist would suggest that the capitalist system uses women in low-paid jobs capitalising on the fact that their careers may be put on hold by child-rearing, and are therefore forced to take poorly paid work in order to fit in with school hours, etc. This may also be as a result of the patriarchal society where men see that they're alright, but don't pay much attention to women's work because it is 'women's work'. It is less significant, and has much lower status than men. These kinds of jobs have low skill levels, and are often very menial such as working as cleaners in

---

[1] *From: http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/ohsb0405.htm*

[2] *From: http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/ohsb0405.htm*

offices, or in Care Homes for the Aged, or as check-out cashiers in supermarkets or simple factory work in food-processing industries in the part of the world where I live. These low status jobs may well have a knock-on effect on mothers acting as low level role models for their children. As primary socialisers of their own children, they only pass on low expectations of what to be like.

Some examples of body stress brought on by work conditions.

My mother is a secretary although her title is now administrator! She works for a national body which organises events. She spends between 6 and 8 hours a day in an office chair, typing and answering the phone, occasionally running up a flight of stairs to give a message to someone. She also has to work the office photocopier as she prepares papers for the events and conferences that are being run. Her back pains started about 5 years ago. The specialist told her that our backs weren't meant to last 60 years, and that sitting on a chair meant that the muscles that hold the spine in shape get weaker and therefore the nerves that run through the spine become trapped and cause pain. My mother was quite active doing gardening and cycling and walking a couple of miles each day, but the situation in which she had to work gave her pain. She was the health and safety rep at work so she was very aware of the way desks should be organised to maximise health effects, such as the position of the computer screen and aids for typing so that people didn't get repetitive strain Injury (RSI); but she was unable to help herself. She could perhaps have asked for a more expensive office chair which would have held her back in a better position,

The point I want to make is that it would have cost the company money to take care of her properly, money which they would have been reluctant to spend. She said she never really thought of it as a problem and that she was lucky to have a nice chair, so she thought, but it wasn't enough to prevent her getting a bad back. This seems to me to totally unfair.

The wider case

I did some research on other people who suffer from body ailments as a result of their work; there are a vast number of examples which I won't list here, but all of them point to the idea that society, or the employers are to blame for not looking after their workers' health and, later in life, pain is a direct result of the way their work has treated them.

I'm not going to look at clear cases of 'industrial disease' illness such as when miners get pneumoconiosis, or building workers get a serious injury. That kind of illness is obviously part of the job, one of the hazards that go with the kind of dangerous work that they know about from the beginning. What concerns me here is the secret way in which work harms people. What's more, I think that people think that they actually have comfortable jobs compared to other people, and therefore don't see the 'dangers'. It works a bit like ideology itself in that you can't see it because you're so deeply in it.

A lot of workers these days have recognised the dangers of sedentary occupations and directly address this by going to the gym before or after work, or jogging for health at weekends. Society has become more aware of the dangers of ordinary work conditions. Often these are occupations that demand qualifications and, possibly, attract middle-

AQA

class white-collar workers who can be expected to be more educated about general health issues. They will be the office workers out running in their lunchtimes compensating for their indoor, chair-based jobs. It is harder for females to do this kind of compensation. They can attract the unwanted attention of bystanders who might jeer or make rude remarks and this can deter women from going out on their own, so they sometimes go in small groups of two to four. In the evenings women are again at risk if they are on their own, so you can often see them with a dog, walking or running. They feel rather exposed doing an outdoor activity, which I don't think men feel in the same way.

My focus is largely on females both middle class white collar, clerical workers (often secretaries or administrators) or working class women who are 'forced' by circumstances into accepting manual service work.

Carpal tunnel is a case where the nerves are trapped when they travel through the small bones of the hand and working in some conditions can cause this illness, which is now recognised by industrial claims solicitors, as well as others like deafness caused by working circumstances.

Teachers are a group of people whose work might not attract any attention in regard to industrial disease, but the hours teachers spend marking, usually bent over a pile of books or papers is clearly capable of causing back pains and other diseases of the spine, never mind eye-strain. My point is we accept all these elements as 'natural'. Arthritis is another illness which builds up over years. I know a dance teacher in her forties who has terrible arthritis in her knees which makes going up and down stairs agony. This illness is a direct result of her career as a dance and dance teacher, and yet somehow it has to be taken as a natural risk, not the responsibility of her employers.

Conclusion:

I'm not really blaming employers for inaction, although that be a valid claim, so much as trying to highlight the ways our bodies are modified by forces unknown to us, yet when one thinks about it, they are a consequence of our working conditions.

Many people would suggest that this kind of body modification is the responsibility of the person themselves. They have 'only themselves to blame' attitude. I'm not looking for someone to blame, simply want to point out that as individuals we live in a social context which exploits our bodies, whether it's by making us stand up, or sit down for 8 hours a day, forty hours a week.

The effect of this 'body modification' impacts on the social and family lives of everyone, whether it's a domestic difficulty (can't reach certain things in the kitchen because of arthritis, or emotional where a grandmother can't physically pick up her grandchildren.

People get a lot of their opinions and ideas about what an occupational illness is from the media, TV programmes, newspapers and magazines all present images or representations of illnesses. On the whole they assume it is the individual's responsibility, their DNA or body make-up, that dictates their illness. Only stress is

really seen as an illness caused by work. But so often there has to be a kind of 'breakdown' before stress is recognised for its disabling effect.

The importance of all this in terms of our culture is that people can often end up very deformed and accept that identity as a necessary part of being human, whereas it can be seen as a physical imposition made by society. Most importantly it seems to have a stronger impact on females rather than males. It's almost as if they expect it as part of their lot.

This is some information on work-related injuries from a government statistics web-site: *Over half of all cases of work-related illness are musculoskeletal disorders or stress …*

The most common types of work-related illness were musculoskeletal disorders – in particular those affecting the back and upper limbs – and stress and other types of mental illness. Both self-reporting surveys and surveillance by specialist doctors show each of these accounting for around a third of the total incidence.

Jobs with high risks for musculoskeletal disorders included typists and road workers …

The jobs carrying the highest risks of musculoskeletal disorders, according to reports from rheumatologists in 2002-04, were typists, metal plate workers, shipwrights and riveters, and road construction operatives, all with an annual average incidence rate approximately 15 times the average for all occupations. [3]

This is the kind of evidence produced by medical statistics but you notice that it applies mostly to manual heavy industry workers. They are clearly members of the working class who perhaps bear the brunt of our desires for better facilities in our daily lives. Marxists would argue that this is the Bourgeoisie oppressing the working class through their labour power. The employers do not pick up the bill for these injuries, where the human body is stretched to breaking point.

One of the areas I have also found interesting is the incidence of mental illness as a result of occupational choice, especially stress and depression.

… while protective service, healthcare and education occupations are most at risk for mental ill health, and protective services also for violence at work.

Consultant psychiatrists reported NCOs and other ranks in UK armed forces and medical practitioners as the occupations with the highest incidence rate of work-related mental ill health in 2002-04, both with rates over 15 times the overall average. [4]

These are white collar occupations where the issue of mental health and illness would cover a massive range of illnesses, but this is not really within the scope of 'Body Modification'.

Michel Foucault[5] thought that society as a whole treated its citizens as though they were prisoners. Society tries to exercise its control and power over its inmates, and therefore,

---

[3] *http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/*

[4] *http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/*

like in prisons, treats them to a regime of physical abuses (a bit like Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo) but in the real world we never see these 'punishment and tortures as such. We just think they are the normal conditions of work.

Members of the public hold lay or cultural models about illness/disease and this is known to be related to a variety of illness related behaviours (e.g., medication adherence, GP visits). However, this approach has not been applied to occupational illness: it is not known to what extent people see work as a cause of particular illnesses and how these illnesses are viewed.

I think the above quotation is useful because it shows that people do not recognise that work itself is a cause of their body incapacity.

This links in with some research done by Elaine Scarry.

Scarry said that physical pain leads to destruction and the unmaking of the human world, whereas human creation at the opposite end of the spectrum leads to the making of the world.[6] She also said that 'For the person in pain, there is no reality besides pain; if it hurts, it must be real.'[7]

This links in very well with my ideas. The points to be made are that pain matters so much that when you are in pain it blots out the rest of the world, reality, and you become totally absorbed by your own body. She sees pain as a negative of all that is human. She wrote a lot about the effects of war, and the idea that when one side causes pain to the other side, it's because they cannot imagine what the other people are feeling. This failure of imagination, or empathy, is what happens when we make the enemy seem like 'things' or numbers, rather than people. I feel that this supports my ideas about work conditions causing pain to their employees because they don't know what it's like to be in their position. It is a classic Marxist position, backed up by the feminist position that the pain is done by men to women in the workplace.

Word Count: 2401 including the quotations but not footnotes

---

[5] *Foucault: "What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act on the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it…Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies."*
http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=wDfrpmSueg8C&pg=PA68&lpg=PA68&dq=Foucault

[6] *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Scarry*

[7] *Scarry: I once wrote an essay called The Difficulty of Imagining Other People, in which I argued that the ease with which we injure people directly corresponds with the difficulty we have imagining them and their feelings. In political and moral life you must be aware of the pain of people whom you may never see.*
The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World

Topic: Celebrity

Title: Star Stories: celebrities and fictions

The narrative trajectory of celebrity: 'build them up, knock them down'.

My angle: Who's controlling who? Case studies of Madonna, Britney Spears and Paul Gascoigne.

In this case study I am going to look at the lives and media treatment of three slightly different kinds of celebrity from two different fields, music and football, to see how their lives and status as celebrities are similar and different. Basically Madonna is the celebrity who seems to control most of the treatment that the media comes out with. Britney Spears has had a series of ups and downs in her life which the media have been quick to write stories about, but she is now having some control of her celebrity image. Paul Gascoigne, or Gazza, is the one who is most of a victim, because he doesn't seem to have had any control over what the media say, and seems to have suffered the most of all three. What is interesting here is that Gazza is the male who a feminist would most probably say has the most power in society, and a white male, as a post-colonialist would say that black males are also in the position of being more powerless than white males. A Marxist would straight away look at the class from which a celebrity comes, and would say about all three of these stars that they are clearly from working class backgrounds, two from America and one from England.

What I also hope to show is how their life stories seem to go up and down as when a BBC article about Gazza said, '*The 31-year-old once scaled the heights of sporting glory - but those days now seem just a distant memory.* '[1] He is also thought by some writers to be a kind of hero but with deep seated personality weaknesses as in this quote: '*The story of his rise and fall has already been told in Ian Hamilton's brilliant book, Gazza Agonistes[2], in which the author asks, "Perhaps this hero was never really meant to be heroic? Maybe there was something in his personality that ran counter to the fantasies his soccer gifts induced? Was Gazza actually 'ill-fated'?*"[3] So what we have is an incredibly talented footballer, probably one of the best players England ever had, but who couldn't stand the pressures put on him by fans and the media, and having an unstable personality. So his celebrity wasn't just because he was good, but because he was 'bad' as well with lots of incidents scandalising

---

[1] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sport/football/191706.stm

[2] The word **Agonistes**, found as an epithet following a person's name, means "the struggler" or "the combatant." It is most often an allusion to John Milton's 1671 verse tragedy *Samson Agonistes*, which recounts the end of Samson's life, when he is a blind captive of the Philistines, described as being "[e]yeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves."

[3] http://pitchinvasion.net/blog/2008/02/21/gazza-the-clown-prince/

the general public, such as his drinking, and rude comments, which were reported in the press, which created a good story for the press.

But there is also another side to this. The press were part of the pressure he was under, and they would follow him around waiting for him to do something outrageous, all of which must have distracted him from his football career and training.

There is another angle to this as well. The public loved reading all this stuff about how brilliant and how terrible he was! In a way that's why the press stalked him – they knew what the public wanted and enjoyed. I hope to look at that issue to try to explain why anybody would want that to happen to a great player. This is quite a regular thing now although it had also happened in the past to George Best and Diego Maradona of Argentina who were brilliant on the field, absolutely outstanding in fact, but were a bit unreliable off the pitch! Which made them real targets for the media. Then you have the whole story of children who are unbelievably talented, but where they have grown up in very working class families and backgrounds, they don't seem able to cope with all the pressures that are piled on them. These people are sometimes referred to as 'Working Class Heroes'. And this is part of what makes them celebrities, as I shall be explaining. This also applies to Madonna and Britney Spears incidentally.

So Gazza was a talented player who became a celebrity partly out of his talent, but also because he was cannon-fodder for the press. He had no control over what was happening to him, and has ended up as a very sad figure after his treatment and wrecked, abusive marriage and everything.

Britney Spears was also a working class girl from a working class background but who had a lot of talent from an early age – actually for gymnastics and dancing before singing. Then she was on a famous American TV show, The Mickey Mouse Club ,which gave her a lot of publicity, and then in her teens she made records and videos with some fairly raunchy shots which was considered a bit of a scandal at the time, as though she was pandering to paedophilia a bit. This shocking element was picked up quickly by the media in the same way as Gazza. She lived in the spotlight which was all publicity and she quickly became one of America's biggest celebrities. Actually she's only 27 now although it seems that she's been around for years! Her first album 'Baby one more time' sold 14 million records and helped make her eighth best selling female star in the USA. It was an album described as 'schlock' and 'fluff' being firmly in the popular culture tradition of meaningless and what the Frankfurt School, would call 'standardised and formulaic'. By her third album she was writing some of her own material, but her relationships were a bit of a mess, breaking off with Justin Timberlake and picking up with one of Limp Bizkit's singers. She became a bit more notorious when was on an MTV awards show and kissed Madonna very controversially! She also got married in Las Vegas, which lasted 56 hours! After having her first child she was caught driving with her baby on her lap in the front seat with no seat belt, which also caused a storm. She also attacked paparazzi with an umbrella who had been following her.

Her biggest mis-deeds occurred in 2008 when she lost control of her life, her children, a failed marriage, and had to do into re-hab. She was struggling with drugs and alcohol and

her own personality which seemed to be breaking up. She was also accused of being a bad mother, and had her head shaved to shock the public, as well as for her own personal reasons. Although her parents and family were her biggest supporters and protected her as best they could, it all went out of her control, just like Gazza.

But Britney Spears also managed to get her life and her appeal back under her own control, with the help of a lot of people. In fact her last album, Circus, sold hugely and she is clearly back in favour with her audience. In fact she was the subject of a long documentary in which she explained about how her life was difficult being followed all the time and having no privacy, she could scarcely go out, but it was also interesting in that she allowed the documentary to take place (or possibly set the whole thing up herself through her PR people)so that she could give her own spin (the truth?) on the stories. Apparently she is the most searched for word on Yahoo for the past four years! She was also ranked as the world's most powerful celebrity in Forbes magazine for 2002.

Barbara Ellen of <u>The Observer</u> reported: "*Spears is famously one of the 'oldest' teenagers pop has ever produced, almost middle aged in terms of focus and determination. Many 19-year-olds haven't even started working by that age, whereas Britney, a former Mouseketeer, was that most unusual and volatile of American phenomena — a child with a full-time career. While other little girls were putting posters on their walls, Britney was wanting to be the poster on the wall. Whereas other children develop at their own pace, Britney was developing at a pace set by the ferociously competitive American entertainment industry*".[4] The point made at the end is that Britney was the victim of the American entertainment industry – she was made to go at somebody else's pace and she suffered a lot because of that, but I am also saying that, unlike Gazza, she has got some control over her career and family now. But that is the price of celebrity, and of course, the money that goes with it.

In the 2002 book *Madonnastyle* by Carol Clerk, Spears is quoted saying: "*I have been a huge fan of Madonna since I was a little girl. I would really, really like to be a legend like Madonna … Her choreography definitely opened the door for girls to go in there and do their own thing*".[5]

This links me to my third celebrity, Madonna, who could be said to have had total control over her relationships with the media.

Her appearance begins to generate as much media interest as her music. Girls start to copy her look, dressing in cropped lace tops revealing underwear and fingerless lace gloves, footless tights, bangles, pearls and beads, a drawn-on beauty spot, rags in hair and a crucifix. The press refer to them as "wannabes".[6] And this is 1984 at the same time as the album 'Like A Virgin' came out, which was probably her first massive hit.

This quote leads me to my main point about Madonna and the other celebrities. When people wear the same clothes and accessories at a celebrity, it's as if people want to be

---

[4] Taken from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britney_Spears
[5] Taken from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britney_Spears
[6] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1400097/The-child-who-became-a-star.html

'like', or be that celebrity. This is called identification, which some writers see as the chief link between celebrities and the public. In some way we feel that we are reaching up to a better version of ourselves, a version that is attractive, wealthy and powerful and seems to have unlimited freedom to do what they want – very unlike our own 'ordinary' lives. In a way it's a sort of 'put down' that we try to be something we cannot. But then again, a lot celebrity treatment has shown recently that we CAN be 'famous' without necessarily having any special talent – which was clearly signalled by Jade Goody and her 'celebrity' following her Big Brother appearances.

Another thing is that when celebrities hit a bad patch and get hell from the media (like Britney and Gazza), well, that's a bit more 'real' like our own lives - full of problems and worries. It makes celebrities 'ordinary', and then up they do again into the stratosphere propelled by public fascination.

Madonna is famous for the way she changed her image every couple of years to keep producing something, and somebody new, from her Marilyn Monroe look to her English Lady style. In the book 'Celebrity and Power', P.David Marshall writes 'Differentiation and innovation to create distinction are fundamental parts of commodity production.' And that how Madonna sells herself by changing into something new to keep interest alive so that her fans can consume something new and keep the money rolling in. He also said 'They transform and transfigure themselves' becoming an enigma which is a sort of mysterious puzzle. 'They play with identity' is another phrase which is Post-modernism, really, in that as in Goffman you can lost of different persona while still being yourself.

In a chapter called 'Devouring Madonna', Ellis Cashmore explains how Madonna did a kind of deal with the media by offering them all the details of her private life for public consumption in return for which she got full media coverage. Here, she was being in control. It paid off because she sold more records than any other female in history (250 million plus) and made an incredible a mount of money ($600 million).

He quotes Britney Spears, actually, as saying 'Madonna was the first female pop star to take control of every aspect of her career and to take responsibility for creating her image, no matter how much flak she might get'. So by making herself into a commodity she was able to keep control of her life. So it would be fair to say that Britney is now recognising this factor in her career and doing what Madonna did.

Unfortunately Gazza is no where near operating so well. He is very much a ruin of the man that thrilled and amused football fans for so long.

Word Count: 2093 not including footnotes

AQA

Bibliography:

Marshall, P. David, *Celebrity and Power* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004)ISBN: 0816627258

Cashmore, Ellis, *Celebrity/Culture*, (Routledge, 2006) ISBN0415373115

Webography:

Britney Spears - official web site and blog

Britney Spears - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/apr/18/celebrity-marina-hyde-piers-morgan

Gazza, the Clown Prince | Pitch Invasion

Gazza's friends: the new yobbocracy - News - The Independent

Paul Gascoigne - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sport/football/191706.stm

Return of the working-class hero | spiked

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-1107242/Surviving-Gazza--He-looked-fragile-vulnerable--just-like-cheap-shot.html

Topic: Cinema-going

Title 2: Picture palace or flea-pit. Explore the meanings overtly and covertly communicated by the places in which we watch films.

Issue: The role of the foyer in cinema experiences

My angle: What are cinema foyers for?

The word 'foyer' comes from the French for 'fireside' which itself came from the Latin 'focus' – the hearth[1]. When one thinks of the meaning as used in Cinemas, one can see what they're trying to do, but rarely does the foyer in a cinema feel 'homely'!

In this Case Study I shall be examining the 'meanings' of the foyer in cinemas, examining their role, function and purpose, and the way they communicate semiotically. I hope to explore some of the ideology of Foyers as to the deeper messages they have for cinema-goers.

We need firstly to think about the social context of cinema going to understand the position that foyers have in relation to the experience of cinema-going. Cinema –going is usually a very social experience; it is a night out, often with other people, sometimes in a romantic way as when on a date, or in purely social terms when a group of friends go together to catch the latest block-buster. Its appeal is very much the idea of an enhanced film experience rather than vegging-out at home with a DVD. Travel is often involved in some sense, by whatever means, which means that cinema-goers are definitely putting themselves out to go and see a film. They know they are going to sit in an audience, with a large visual screen, surround sound, and comfortable seats. It is an enriched film experience.

Where does the foyer come into all this? It is the second element of the public face of the cinema: firstly there is the exterior of the cinema in all its varied glory (from the newly designed exterior to the dowdy facades of old picture-houses), then through the doors – but NOT yet into the cinema's dark space[2]. There is an intermediary space. Its function is to provide the spectator with tickets obviously, and there are a number of cinemas where that's all one does! You walk up to a little booth, exchange money for tickets, which you then pass on to an attendant who lets you into the cinema viewing space. Cinemas are Theatres (showing films is called 'theatrical distribution' in the trade), which once might have been considered associated with high culture plays, but cinemas took over that role at a cheaper and more accessible level, so there are still some of the trappings of the theatres of old. The attendant probably would have shown you to your seat in the old days! And sold you ice-creams during the break, according to my dad!

---

[1] http://www.chambersharrap.co.uk/chambers
[2] 'Leaving the cinema is often a bit of a let-down. Cinema foyers are usually pretty glam, but they always let you out through the fire exit and straight into a public convenience. It's a deliberate ploy by the management to say, 'That was Hollywood, this is Swindon.'
http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2001/mar/10/weekend.guybrowning

What is important to understand is that foyers are a gateway to paradise; they are a transition space from the real world to the world of fantasy (the auditorium); they have a function as in buying tickets, meeting up with your group, etc, but their real meaning lies in their role as a space which you pass though, a kind of air-lock between worlds.

How do cinemas use this space? They have usually developed a world within a world; the foyer is usually a place for merchandising film products such as postcards, A3 posters for bedroom walls, large promotional displays for heavily marketed films, which can include large cardboard displays of characters and slogans as well as large central video consoles showing constant trailers. So it is a central marketing device for film producers and distributors.

It is also where food and confectionery is sold either as before the film snacks or during the film snacks; at which point I would like to comment on the fact that it is really the most inappropriate use of food space that one can imagine[3]! Never mind the noise and mess!

It obviously a simple sales and profit motivated activity, but we must look at what is being offered and why. There is clearly a myth that one eats popcorn and/or a range of other American inspired food (nachos and hot-dogs) and/or sweets. Obviously one is going to be 'stuck' in the auditorium for between 90 and 180 minutes during which time people will feel peckish, but there are lots of other situations where it is perfectly legitimate to not eat at all. Indeed, for the evening shows which start at 8.00 p.m. or later it could be safely assumed that audiences may have already eaten a decent supper. It could be thought that it has been deliberately promoted to be an essential element of the cinema experience – it lifts simply film-watching into a better social, evening out experience. It emphasises the social nature of the experience, where all seats have a hole cut in the arm rests to put your popcorn and Coca-Cola often for sharing. But then having just listed the kinds of items that are available it is evident that something else is happening in terms of the meaning of the experience. It is all American style products, and some of the biggest American brand names like

---

[3] 'Obviously another problem with the cinema is the other people. The ones who sit quietly are bad enough (after all, what might they be doing there in the dark?) but the ones who make a noise, either inhaling popcorn and/or pick'n'mix or, worse, chattering on their mobiles, drive me demented.' *The Guardian*: Gareth MacLaean Blog: http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/garethmcleanblog/2008/nov/14/cinema-television-gareth-mclean

Coca-Cola[4]. Just before the film comes on at my local Multiplex a screen advertisement says 'There's just enough time to grab a Coke'.

Film-going has traditionally been regarded as a glamorous experience with associations with Hollywood to the fore. It is as though the food and drink products are in fact marketing more than just the brands – it's the American way of life. Some would call this American cultural imperialism by which American companies who already own the studio and distribution process get their friends along to sell them the great American idea – that for a couple of hours on a Saturday evening (or whenever) we can feel pseudo-American. It often seems to me to be a tatty reminder of what America stands for with pink or yellow neon Hollywood signs overlying a star-shape to remind us of the significance of stars in Cinema appeal. Baskin & Robbins ice-cream or confectionary signed as 'Pick& Mix' , MacDonalds burgers and KFC food represent the worst aspect of this marketing and their targets tend to be working class audiences who like that sort of food. It is an American lifestyle that is being associated with the Cinema experience.

This is a much larger topic than 'cinema-going' in that it is part of a process also referred to as Americanisation or MacDonaldisation – the attempt to make the world American, not by military means but by cultural means. It craftily gets in ideas – and that is ideology. We begin to think that it

is 'natural' to think films – think America.[5] Ritzer said there were four dimensions to the idea of 'fast food'– efficiency (speed of action, not quality), culpability (quantity rather than taste), predictability (standardised, uniform product) and control. When you think of the way audiences are shuffled through queues by uniformed attendants (faceless) badged and branded, then it is evident that what he is referring to applies to cinemas as well as fast-food restaurants.

---

[4] *Cocacolonization* (alternatively *coca-colonization*) is a term that refers to globalization or cultural colonization. It is a portmanteau of the name of the multinational soft drink maker Coca-Cola and the word *colonization*. The term is used to imply either:

- the importation of Western (particularly American) goods or
- an invasion by Western and especially American cultural values that threatens the local culture.[1]

It is possible to use the term benignly. It has been used pejoratively to liken globalization to Westernization or Americanization. (*Wikipedia*)

[5] **McDonaldization** (or **McDonaldisation**) is a term used by sociologist George Ritzer in his book *The McDonaldization of Society* (1995). He describes it as the process by which a society takes on the characteristics of a fast-food restaurant. McDonaldization is a reconceptualization of rationalization, or moving from traditional to rational modes of thought, and scientific management. Where Max Weber used the model of the bureaucracy to represent the direction of this changing society, Ritzer sees the fast-food restaurant as having become a more representative contemporary paradigm (Ritzer, 2004:553). From Wikipedia.

3

There are other spheres of influence where the USA has imposed its culture on other countries. Film is a fairly obvious one where, in fact, the French imposed a quota in American films being distributed in France because they feared losing their own film industry. In Britain there are constant outcries from the industry that British talent ends up working in the USA, rather than at home because of the lack of real funding for British film production. It's hardly surprising given our acceptance of Americanised culture in the film distribution and exhibition industry. Americans have done something very similar with Pop and Rock music, as well as children's TV shows like Sesame street which were used all over the world ostensibly to help children read and write but also to infiltrate American products and lifestyle into young minds to generate US lifestyle desires among all other cultures. The idea of 'Objects of Desire' can mean abstract commodities such as American lifestyles, and a consumerist attitude to everything.

The audiences themselves occupy space in foyers in interesting ways. To get tickets they re often steered through a succession of roped-off alleys, but then there are open spaces where people mill around waiting for their film to start. This is when they may be attracted by smells of food and popcorn and tempted into buying. Children are often a target. The big displays are often for films directed at children such as Madagascar, or Disney features[6]. The sweets on sale, twenty or thirty varieties (could drive a dentist to suicide!), are there for children to pester parents - a well-known sales strategy these days, when children have more spending money (directly and indirectly) than ever before.

The crowds (sometimes!) of people in a cinema foyer are managed by roped alleys or they stand. There is no seating in the foyer: the owners don't intend you to relax there – they need you to keep moving into the auditorium. There is little opportunity to drink alcohol – that might be too disruptive , although often cinemas are situated in a development complex that includes restaurants and bars, as well gym clubs.

Interestingly the nearest Arts cinema venues near me treat customers differently. There you are more likely to find a bar with coffee and snacks where the middle-classes will sit and discuss the French film they are going to, or have just watched. It can be observed from the pictures included

---

[6] The terms Disneyfication and CocaColonisation are generally used in a negative way, and they imply homogenization of consumption, merchandising, and emotional labor. They can be used more broadly to describe the processes of stripping a real place or event of its original character and repackaging it in a sanitized format. References to anything negative are removed, and the facts are watered down with the intent of making the subject more pleasant and easily grasped. In the case of places, this typically means replacing what has grown organically over time with an idealized and tourist-friendly veneer reminiscent of the "Main Street, U.S.A." attractions at Disney theme parks.

4

AQA

here how the sign system operates. One is being endlessly reminded of US culture, of the glitter of glamour.

The final use of the foyer is to usher the audience into the auditorium. In a multiplex set-up, that will usually mean you are invited to step though a narrow corridor into a corridor from which the actual cinemas can be accessed. They are intimate and private, separate spaces. The walls are lined with large scale posters for up and coming films, but the auditoria themselves are behind closed doors.

So the foyer has been an important place for the exchange of money and values, preparing the spectator for a intense and special reality or unreality – the film.

As noted by Guy Browning in the footnote above, the audience are often siphoned away from the cinema by less than glamorous exits. It is possible to get back to the foyer, but in the interests of 'efficiency', audiences are shown out the back door to allow the new audience in through from the front door.

Cinemas were often called 'picture palaces', and the foyer represents a key stage in the entrance or reception to the palace. Of course cinemas were also referred to as 'flea-pits', as their star began to wane in the early 1960s, but it also said something about the deliberate showing off as surface of glamour hiding a darkened and untrustworthy place, often associated with dodgy forms of sexual activity. The foyer as a complement to the façade of the cinema has a critical role in the spectators' experience of fantasy at the cinema.

A Post-modernist might enjoy the foyer as a transition from the simulacrum of the 'real world' to the simulacrum of an American world in the foyer, through to another simulacrum the film text itself. This is Disneyland gone mad! They might approve of the cheap copy or pastiche of Americana that exists in downtown Yeovil.

A Marxist would focus sharply on the money-making and exploitation involved, not least of the low-paid staff, and would be angry about the blatant cultural imperialism on show in the foyer where the world's most powerful capitalist country dominates the popular culture of its 'independent territories' like the UK.

There is finally no question that going to the cinema isn't simply a matter of going to watch a film.

Word count: 1978 inclusive.