

## Commodity Fetishism in a McDonaldized College System

According to a collection of data, colleges in the United States bring in over 700 billion dollars every year. For reference, 700 billion dollars stacked would be 3,000 feet high; which is equivalent to the empire state building if you stack roughly three of them on top of each other. 700 billion dollars could give meals to 2.8 trillion and could house around 8.75 million people. 700 billion dollars is a lot of money that is often not thought about by many Americans as a whole. These facts are not often taken into account because college is a system that is McDonaldized by the US. College has created a certain standard, predictability and control within our society. Whether or not an individual should attend college is not usually questioned, it is just something most people do because they think it's what they're "supposed" to do after high school. This ties to the idea that commodity fetishism drives the societal norms affiliated with the ideas of college.

Commodity fetishism is a concept mainly developed by philosopher Karl Marx. Marx explains commodity fetishism as the relationships between people and consumption. The glorification of different goods and the power they possess over people within society. Ultimately, it is the relationships between people and how they are affected by the structure of society/the economy. It is the idea that capitalist society determines their "good" based on the market in which they have created. The experiences of consuming obfuscates the social relations that produce the thing to be consumed. Commodity fetishism is McDonaldization's dream.

McDonaldization, although started off as a beloved fast food restaurant chain concept, is now a much more complex and developed idea. It is the control of different organizations that

create a structure within society. McDonaldization practices this control, predictability and standard within society as mentioned earlier. So how does this all tie into the US college system?

The US college system is a furtherment of education and study of job interests in a controlled environment. College offers a specific curriculum for a variety of majors and minors, with a standard timeline of completion and room for error. College serves its purpose in creating intelligent successful scholars that go on to the professional world. However, there are also hundreds of students who drop out, change their majors, repeat classes, etc. Both scenarios benefit the producer in this situation. On one hand the university becomes more respectable and desired as the more students graduate and go on to high quality jobs, the better the reputation of the university. While on the other hand they are benefiting financially; the longer it takes for a student to decide what they may or may not want to do, the more classes the individual has to take, resulting in more money being spent.

Students all around the world are constantly being challenged by the rigor and dedication it takes to make it as a college student. Commodity fetishism drives almost all people to enroll in college and embark on this journey because society has made the false interpretation that without college you can not live a happy, successful life. These misconceptions lead hundreds of people to enter a world of displeasure and debt. In North Carolina alone over 55% of students graduate with student debt loans; they then go on to work the job their education bought, however society is the one benefiting the most again. The student is employed, but they are simply working to pay off the education that got them there. It typically takes 5-20 years for an individual to climb themselves out of this debt. They become a slave to the system. This vicious cycle is produced

by the calculated function of McDonaldization, accompanied by the influence of commodity fetishism.

McDonaldization has turned into a powerful force which has been adapted by all different businesses, people, organizations, etc. Commodity fetishism has played an equal role in allowing it to be as successful as it is in the world of college students. Many people will do anything to climb the social ladder and some just simply want to fit in. Although this system can be viewed as corrupt it has also helped to keep society organized and structured. The boundaries created by these two concepts have created a certain level of efficiency in society; with room for growth, job opportunities, and overall advancements in society. We live in a world where most things have two sides to it, this being one of them.

Ultimately, McDonaldization and commodity fetishism make an unstoppable team in their production of results and appeal to consumers. People all over the world fall victim to these systems, all experiencing it in their own ways. McDonaldization and commodity fetishism have been efficient thus far in gaining the control they so desire.