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Eating in restaurants has become a part of society. It has become a culture as well that it has been taken as an act of socialization and interaction amongst groups of people — family, friends, workmates and significant others. With or without occasion, rendezvous at restaurants is an accepted behavior that is considered to be a normal practice in civilized societies.

To perform an effective sociological observation, I have chosen McDonalds as the subject of study. McDonalds is one of the largest fast food chains worldwide and one of the favorite hangouts of people across all ages, young and old. Their branches have thrived all these years because of the quality of food products they sell which have actually attracted various social groups regardless of the status and roles of individuals. Rich or people, whatever culture one has, many patronize McDonalds because of the efficient service they have delivered all throughout these years. McDonalds is hailed as one of the most popular institutions accepted in the world today.

I have chosen one of McDonald’s busiest branches in one of the biggest cities in the country. I went inside the premises of the restaurant at around 11: 30 in the morning thinking that it would be a peak hour in which customers will be swarming the place. I was right; there were many people — usually coming in groups of at least three. I sat in one corner pretending to be just hanging around and relaxing while passing the time away.

During the first 30 minutes, I noticed that most customers coming in belong to the white race — about 80% of them. Because they were driving practically either decent or luxurious cars, I assume that their social stratification was of the middle class at least. One theory that I also had was that maybe the McDonalds branch was close to their workplace and with the slim time they have for lunch break, they opted to take their meal there.

There were about 5 families at that time which brought along their kids ranging from ages 3 to 8 years. The place was quite noisy because of the kids playing in the kiddie corner with colorful toys and a small play area with slide and short tunnel made of plastic. The watchers, usually their parents, were quite alert as they look after their children playing. All the children spoke English so they easily communicated and played together. I realized then that language is an important factor to promote deeper understanding and acceptance between individuals despite of differences in ethnicity and culture. Playing among children is also a norm of society even between strangers who just met in random places like McDonalds.

As to some professionals who were taking their lunch, I noted that they were in a hurry. I thought that they might only have an hour to take their break and have to go back to work immediately. Some have brought along suitcases and laptops while grabbing bites of their hamburgers and French fries. I contemplated that working people mainly those who do executive tasks have generally unhealthy eating habits because they cannot choose what to eat properly and hardly have time to eat. I even wondered if they can chew and taste their food well. With their status in life, they have to meet a lot of demands in their work especially in meeting deadlines and requirements. It is indeed hard to maintain this kind of lifestyle since it entails much sacrifice.

The next 30 minutes at high noon was more active than the previous 30 minutes. More customers kept on pouring in — a mixture of different races, ethnicity and social stratification. This time, more families came bringing along their children — infants, toddlers, school children and adolescents ate their lunch. There were still professionals and executives who dropped by for lunch but they did not stay too long compared to the families. The former also ate small meals and based on their actions, their conversations were mostly work-related and dealing with business issues. At this time, there were many customers who opted for drive-thru. These people maybe do not have time to sit down and eat their lunch.

The service crew was the busiest too. None of them were free. They were all pre-occupied with taking orders and even if they were quite exhausted they have to maintain their service delivery measures by entertaining their customers politely and promptly at the same time. Carrying out orders speedily is one factor I admired with fast food chains. It’s such a wondrous thing how smooth they were able to provide the food requests despite the overlapping demands from each counter. This is probably one element which has made McDonalds a successful company. They have maintained this identity since time immemorial which is why more and more people utilize their services.

I also noticed that the upholding of excellent performance on the part of the service crew was due to the constant monitoring conducted by the manager. Instead of just staying inside the office, the manager roves around checking the efficiency of its team. I saw a bulletin board in one corner with the work performance levels of its staff. That was one instrument which led to the efficient services offered by McDonalds. The consistency and reliability have been maintained and improved regularly thus flaws can be corrected without causing huge losses.

During the last 30 minutes of my sociological observation, I noticed that fewer customers came as lunch period was over. Those who took late lunch meals included mostly professionals who were too busy to eat on time. However, they were still anxious and inattentive to what they were munching because they were still preoccupied with their jobs. This can be manifested by the way they look, their gestures and by the way they talk to their lunch mates.

I also took note of a lonely-looking black couple eating at the far end corner of the restaurant. They were eating hamburgers and drinking sodas. Judging by their physical make-up and outfits, one can assume that they belong to the lower class in society. They appeared downtrodden and overworked. They were wearing unruly clothes and their foot wears were quite old and damaged. They were tugging along with them huge bags which did not reveal what they contain.

At this time, the service crew were still busy but were more calm than the past 30 minutes. The manager was still monitoring them but with little caution and strictness. Some crew started cleaning the floors and placed them with “ Caution: Wet Floor” signs. The food chain was less noisy already and people can overhear each other talking. The security guard was less busy too.

The families that were left inside McDonalds was more comfortable than the earlier customers since their kids can play more freely without crowding with other kids. The social interaction with other kids was more peaceful and organized. Socialization was more facilitated and friendships were established quite easily. The guardians of the children playing also communicated and created casual friendships themselves. It was such a pretty sight. If only people from various races learn to communicate, peace can be achieved without trouble.

The 90-minute sociological observation at McDonalds was a very interesting experience. Even without talking with anyone inside the building, it seemed like I was able to interact with others through careful observation. Noticing the different lives that went inside and out of the restaurants was momentous and enriching. It is remarkable to note the various cultures, races and ethnicities that combined in such a short period of time. Further, it can be generalized that language, values and norms that make up one’s culture makes us unique from one another and establishes our respective identities and individualities.

Another significant observation was the social stratification of the customers who patronize McDonalds. It was a combination of upper class, middle class and lower class. Here, McDonalds served as an instrument in which to unite these contrasting classes without clashing with one another. It was one area which symbolizes unity and oneness even in the most commercial instances.

The customers at McDonalds during that 90-minute journey represent a big social organization composed of differing statuses, roles, groups and institutions as signified by the families and professionals, the well-off and not and the working crew who interacted inside the fast food for a while. The behaviors displayed exemplified our responsibilities and obligations as members of the bigger society. It showed that in order for harmony to materialize, people must co-exist no matter how different they are.

In conclusion, McDonalds should take pride that people across all walks of life have been supporting them all these years. This time-old fast food chain should value the fact that harmonious social interactions are made possible through them. Anyone should enjoy the beauty of observing people and happenings around them to appreciate the uniqueness of each.

Work Cited

“ Basic Sociological Concepts.” n. d. 27 April 2008.