

Journal of Macromarketing

<http://jmk.sagepub.com>

Reviews

Thomas A. Klein

Journal of Macromarketing 2003; 23; 59

DOI: 10.1177/0276146703023001014

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://jmk.sagepub.com>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Journal of Macromarketing* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://jmk.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://jmk.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

to resurface after its regrettable submergence for more than three hundred pages—Lewin and Regine conclude by stressing the possibility of finding passion in our work and of connecting that passion to what we love: “Obviously, if you are reading this book, engaging your soul at work matters to you. Then take it seriously. . . . When we connect to our passion, then work becomes love” (p. 330).

REFERENCE

Lewin, Roger. 1999. *Complexity: Life at the edge of chaos*. 2d ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Morris B. Holbrook
Columbia University

FAST FOOD, FAST TRACK: IMMIGRANTS, BIG BUSINESS, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

Jennifer Parker Talwar
Boulder, CO: Westview, 2002

DOI: 10.1177/0276146703252606

In this book, Talwar, a sociologist-ethnographer, provides an engaging examination of the intersection of fast-food franchises and ethnic neighborhoods.

Centered in New York City, this research was conducted during four years from the vantage point of a counter clerk in seven restaurants in two hamburger chains located in three different neighborhoods dominated respectively by Chinese, Hispanic, and West Indian immigrants. Her report provides a substantial volume of statistical and other factual information and interpretive observation but is primarily relayed by quotations from coworkers interviewed during the course of the study.

The book is organized around nine principal themes that roughly follow the author’s work journey from store to store. These include a range of economic and cultural issues: “Searching for the American Dream,” wages and working conditions, and the anomalies and idiosyncrasies associated with a distinctly American institution staffed and patronized by first- and second-generation immigrants from vastly different cultural traditions.

Readers of this journal are familiar with the so-called McDonaldization phenomenon (cf. Ritzer 1993). Professor Talwar most probably carried this critical framework into her research, at least as a foundation for the questions she posed to her participants and the other data gathered. One presumes she expected to find that the insertion of mass feeding into a profoundly ethnic culture was leveling valued differences and represented a kind of domestic colonization. Her actual findings and conclusions are far more complex and ultimately at odds with this view.

To provide due regard for the ethnocentric perspective that would prefer insulation from the advances of global brands and corporations, some patterns emerging from Talwar’s study cannot escape criticism. Examples of managerial insensitivity to gender and cultural differences are numerous. In particular, control over the interactions between employees and customers is intense. Advancement opportunities are not abundant in these situations, and those who disdain the notion of a minimum-wage service job for adults will find some critical reinforcement for their view. And the menu, of course, is hardly an ethnic food lover’s feast.

On the other hand, these minimum-wage jobs provide substantially better pay than the subminimum wages to be found in indigenous restaurants, garment factories, and other service shops that constitute the realistic alternatives—plus health and other benefits unheard of in those establishments. While it is a bit early and probably far-fetched to see career ladders extending from serving hamburgers to investment banking or college teaching, the attitudes, skills, and habits instilled in these employees are at least prerequisites for taking advantage of such opportunities. Finally, there is ample evidence of a response to cultural differences in terms of both menu offerings and employee relations.

Summarizing what is a very interesting and readable account, the careful reader will question drawing sweeping generalizations from such a limited geographic, ethnic, and industrial database. There are many frictions reported here, not all resolved to the benefit of the least advantaged. Yet the author’s ultimate conclusion, that “we need to be . . . critical of theories that isolate ‘ethnic economies’” (p. 193) offers a useful counterbalance to those critics who see nothing redemptive in the ascendancy of the chain store economic culture.

REFERENCE

Ritzer, George. 1993. *The McDonaldization of society*. London: Pine Forge Press.

Thomas A. Klein
University of Toledo (emeritus)
and University of Notre Dame

NICKEL AND DIMED

Barbara Ehrenreich
New York: Henry Holt/Owl Books, 2001

DOI: 10.1177/0276146703252606

Subtitled “On (Not) Getting by in America,” this is the product of immersion journalism by an avowed social critic.

Ms. Ehrenreich’s thesis is that “Welfare to Work,” which transfers people from public support (typically including