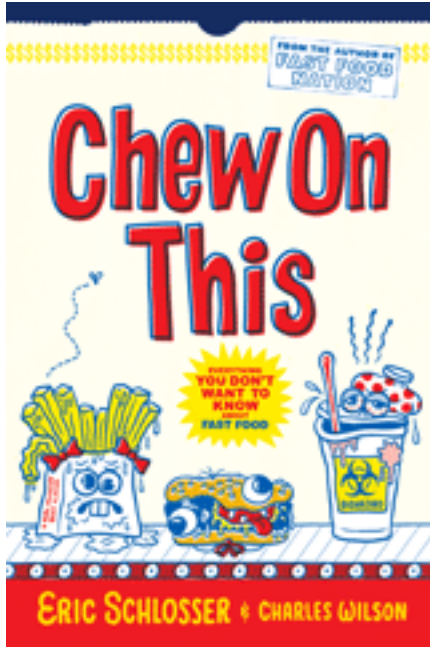


Press Release



Chew on This

by [Eric Schlosser](#) and [Charles Wilson](#)

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PUBLISHER URGES FAST FOOD GIANTS TO FOCUS ON FACTS, KIDS' HEALTH

Publisher Decries Swift Boat-Style Campaign Against Author Eric Schlosser

(New York, NY) — June 1, 2006 — Houghton Mifflin Vice President and Editor-in-Chief Eamon Dolan today denounced the fast food industry's efforts to discredit the author Eric Schlosser and his books *Fast Food Nation* and *Chew on This*.

"In the five years since we published *Fast Food Nation*, the facts in the book have never been effectively refuted by the fast food industry," said Dolan. "It has become required reading at universities throughout the United States, routinely assigned by professors in a wide variety of disciplines. Yet now, with the publication of *Chew on This*, which Eric co-authored with Charles Wilson, the industry has launched a Swift Boat-style campaign against Eric rather than focusing on ways to improve adolescent health. Clearly the industry believes that when you cannot refute the message, it is better to go after the messenger."

According to a report in the *Wall Street Journal* (April 12, 2006), McDonald's distributed a memo to franchisees in advance of the book's publication, alluding to plans to "discredit the message and the messenger." As also reported in the *Wall Street Journal* (May 18, 2006), groups including the Heartland Institute, the National Minority Health Month Foundation, the American Council on Science and Health, and the Center for Individual Freedom subsequently launched personal attacks against him. These organizations all have relationships with the conservative Washington lobbying firm the DCI Group, which counts McDonald's and Coca-Cola among its clients.

DCI Group specializes in what the *Washington Monthly* describes as "corporate-financed grass roots organizing" campaigns. Group principals have a long history of opposing public health initiatives, working on behalf of the tobacco industry, and relying on "front groups" that masquerade as independent and objective organizations. According to the *New York Times*, Chris LaCivita, a DCI associate, worked for Swift Boat Veterans for Truth as a media adviser. Timothy N. Hyde, a DCI founding partner, was the senior director of public issues at R. J. Reynolds from 1988 to 1997. Hyde oversaw all of RJR's PR campaigns. The *Associated Press* reported in June 2001 that Tom Synhorst, the chairman of DCI, "has been linked to South Carolina push polls in the 2000 Republican primary that attacked candidate John McCain as 'a cheat, a liar and a fraud.'"

The attacks against Schlosser have been similarly personal and designed to harm his reputation. In early May, DCI Group published an attack site against Schlosser that argued he "is a politically motivated activist who plays on people's fears." The Heartland Institute — which has denied the existence of global warming and argues on its Web site that "the public health community's campaign against smoking is based on junk science" — has accused Schlosser and Wilson of engaging in "Nazi" tactics. In an essay on the site, Jay Lehr, the institute's science director, wrote: "In the 1930s Adolph [*sic*] Hitler recognized that . . . he could indoctrinate Germany's youth in support of his antihuman Nazi movement." He goes on to claim that Schlosser and Wilson, by writing a book that educates children about the health and other implications of fast food, are making the same effort in their "drive to socialize" America. The Heartland Institute's attack on Schlosser and Wilson is linked to Tech Central Station's Health Roundtable Web site, which is sponsored by DCI Group.

Referring to the McDonald's official press release regarding *Chew on This*, in which it claims to desire "objective and fair discussion" of issues related to fast food, Dolan called on McDonald's to demonstrate its commitment to that principle by halting its funding of DCI Group's Tech Central Station. "We're facing a serious threat to the health of our children, given the twin ills of obesity and diabetes. This is not a political issue, or a personal one. The fast food industry should see this as a challenge to be solved together rather than just another opportunity to engage in smear campaign tactics," said Dolan.

"*Chew on This* was published to inform kids about what they are eating, not to tell them what to eat," says Eden Edwards, the book's editor. "Schlosser and Wilson reveal what really goes into the food most American children consume by examining the entire supply chain, from the animals to the additives to how the workers are treated. They also explore the effects too much unhealthy food and drink can have on growing bodies."

Further resources on this story:

[Wall Street Journal](#)

[Salon.com](#)

[New York Times](#)

[Advertising Age](#)

[Capital Times](#) (Milwaukee WI)

[Los Angeles Times](#)

To see Eric Schlosser debate the McDonalds U.K. president, visit <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/newsnight/default.stm>

FAST FOOD INDUSTRY EMPLOYS SWIFT BOAT TACTICS TO DISCREDIT AUTHOR OF *FAST FOOD NATION* AND *CHEW ON THIS*

- A group sponsored by fast food companies and related trade groups has launched a campaign to smear the author Eric Schlosser, whose new book, *Chew on This*, examines the fast food industry's impact on children's health. (Mr. Schlosser is also the author of *Fast Food Nation*. A film based on the latter will be distributed nationally this fall.) The campaign, according to an internal McDonald's memo sent to franchisees and recently reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, is intended to "discredit the message and the messenger." McDonald's spokesman Walt Riker has since denied that the memo quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* exists. The reporter Richard Gibson, when contacted about this denial, stood behind his story.
- The main point of attack has been through third parties, many of which have long connections to the food and tobacco industries. Some of the attacks appear to have been coordinated by Washington lobbyists DCI Group and their Web arm, Tech Central Station (TCS), as well as other special interest groups. James Glassman, the head of Tech Central Station, is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Until recently he was a columnist for the *Washington Post*, which finally ended the relationship after concluding that Glassman's numerous other entanglements conflicted with his role as a journalist purporting to offer expert financial analysis.
- Tech Central Station is sponsored by a variety of corporations that also use DCI for public relations and lobbying initiatives, including McDonald's. Until recently it was reluctant to acknowledge the identity of its real publisher, the DCI Group.
- DCI and its partners have initiated a stealth campaign, similar to the Swift boat tactics employed by the right wing against Senator John Kerry in the 2004 presidential race (see below on their connection to the swift boat attacks), that puts forth biased individuals and groups masquerading as "independent" organizations, including: The Heartland Institute (funded by the tobacco industry, among others), the National Minority Health Month Foundation, and the American Council on Science and Health (funded by, among others, Burger King and the National Soft Drink Association).
- Tom Synhorst, the chairman of DCI, according to an *Associated Press* report in June 2001, "has been linked to South Carolina push polls in the 2000 Republican primary that attacked candidate John McCain as 'a cheat, a liar and a fraud.'" According to the *New York Times*, (August 25, 2004) Chris LaCivita, another DCI employee, worked for Swift Boats Veterans for Truth as a media adviser. Timothy N. Hyde, a DCI founding partner, was the senior director of public issues at R. J. Reynolds from 1988 to 1997. Hyde oversaw all of RJR's PR campaigns.

- The Chicago-based Heartland Institute, which denies the existence of global warming and has said that "the public health community's campaign against smoking is based on junk science," has accused Schlosser and Wilson of engaging in "Nazi" tactics. In an essay on the site, Jay Lehr, the institute's science director, wrote: "In the 1930s Adolph [sic] Hitler recognized that . . . he could indoctrinate Germany's youth in support of his antihuman Nazi movement." He goes on to claim that Schlosser and Wilson, by writing a book that educates children about the health and other implications of fast food, are making the same effort in their "drive to socialize" America.
- Trade group representatives are posting negative comments about *Chew on This* on Amazon.com without revealing their affiliations, including Ruth Kava, the director of nutrition at the American Council on Science and Health and a frequent contributor to Tech Central Station.
- The DCI Group and the fast food industry have attempted to stop Mr. Schlosser from speaking at schools. Employees of the McDonald's Corporation visited Glen Ellyn Middle School and asked the principal to reconsider his invitation to Mr. Schlosser. In Chicago, the National Minority Health Month Foundation also opposed Mr. Schlosser's visits to local schools. The executive director, Gary Puckrein, was quoted in a local paper as saying: "He's really a proponent of a number of alternative lifestyles some parents would be uncomfortable with and likely to be the subject of discussion as he's presenting his new work." The National Minority Health Month Foundation issued a press release in March praising McDonald's nutrition labeling initiatives.

FAST FOOD AND CHILDREN

- One in four children and forty percent of all teens eat fast food daily.
- Twenty percent of all public high schools sell "branded fast foods."
- Ninety percent of kids eat at McDonald's at least once a month.
- Children see \$3 billion plus worth of fast food advertising every year.
- If a child is obese by the age of thirteen, there's more than a ninety percent chance that he or she will be overweight at thirty-five.
- A ten-year-old child diagnosed with type 2 diabetes can expect to lose seventeen or more years of his or her life.

About the Book

When the award-winning journalist Eric Schlosser's groundbreaking book *Fast Food Nation* was published for adults, many called for his insights and research to be shared with young readers. They are, after all, the fast-food industry's biggest consumers. In *Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food*, Schlosser, along with co-author Charles Wilson, presents the fast-food industry to preteens, focusing on the aspects that will interest them most — the nonconformist teen entrepreneurs who

founded the industry; the mistreatment of animals in slaughterhouses and employees in restaurants; the shocking effects too much fast food can have on growing bodies; and the impact of the industry on schools, communities, and the earth.

Kids love fast food. And the fast-food industry loves kids: it couldn't survive without them. In *Chew on This*, Schlosser and Wilson share with young readers the fascinating and sometimes frightening truth about what lurks behind those sesame seed buns. The book begins with a historical look at the beginnings of the fast-food industry, illustrating how its growth helped determine the urban and rural landscape of America and paved the way for the chain stores and malls of today. Young readers will get an intriguing bit of business history when they learn how high school dropouts and traveling salesmen started the restaurants they frequent. They'll see how the introduction of chain restaurants both benefits and harms small communities all over the country.

Stomachs will turn and tempers will flare as the authors shine a light on the grisly conditions in a chicken slaughterhouse, explain how market research firms study kids, and learn how those delicious fast-food smells are manufactured off a highway in New Jersey. The disgusting facts in *Chew on This* — and there are plenty of them — will surprise and scare readers. For example:

- A single fast-food hamburger may contain meat from hundreds, even thousands, of different cattle.
- Each can of soda contains more than ten teaspoons of sugar.
- A single animal infected with E. Coli O157:H7 can contaminate thirty-two thousand pounds of ground beef.
- Chickens in slaughterhouses are sometimes killed by being thrown against walls or stomped on.
- Leftover waste from a cattle slaughterhouse is sometimes added to chicken feed.
- Leftover waste from a chicken slaughterhouse is sometimes added to chicken feed, turning the doomed birds into cannibals.

"What we eat changes not only how we look on the outside but also how we look on the inside," writes Schlosser. To explain the point, the authors include a "tour" of human body parts with the renowned heart surgeon Mehmet Oz. Dr. Oz illustrates in graphic detail the difference between healthy and diseased body parts and explains what can happen to those who stick to a fast-food diet.

More than just a litany against the fast-food industry, *Chew on This* is explicit about why kids need to be informed. The authors profile real teens whose lives have been affected by the fast-food industry. They talk to an eighteen-year-old boy who decides to have gastric bypass surgery; a twelve-year-old girl in Alaska who launched a "Stop the Pop" campaign to remove soda machines from her school; a teenage boy who helped unionize the McDonald's franchise where he worked — the first to do so — only to see the restaurant close shortly after; and two sisters living on a traditional ranch.

Chew on This addresses some of the most serious issues affecting our society, and its strong, fact-based narrative style, startling statistics, and eye-opening photographs will keep readers turning the pages. The average American child views forty thousand television commercials per year, almost half of which promote junk food. There are

roughly nine million overweight or obese children in America and there's no reason to think that this number is shrinking. Corporations will continue to exploit workers, underpay farmers, and manipulate consumers unless they are forced to stop. Educators, parents, and health professionals have an important role in educating and helping young people make healthy decisions about the food they eat.

Change can only come about when young people themselves decide to think twice before they order a fast-food hamburger, fries, and a soda. *Chew on This* shows them that they can change the world by changing what they eat.

About the Authors

Eric Schlosser has been a correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly* since 1996. His work has also appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Nation*, and *The New Yorker*. He has received a National Magazine Award and a Sidney Hillman Foundation Award for reporting. In 1998 Schlosser wrote an investigative piece on the fast food industry for *Rolling Stone*. What began as a two-part article for the magazine turned into a groundbreaking book: *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2001). The book helped change the way Americans think about what they eat. *Fast Food Nation* was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than two years, as well as on bestseller lists in Canada, Great Britain, and Japan. It has been translated into more than twenty languages.

Schlosser's second book, *Reefer Madness: Sex, Drugs, and Cheap Labor in the American Black Market* (2003), explored the nation's growing underground economy. It also became a *New York Times* bestseller. In 2003 Schlosser's first play, *Americans*, was produced at the Arcola Theatre in London.

Hoping to counter the enormous amount of fast food marketing aimed at children, Schlosser decided to write a book that would help young people understand where their food comes from, how it's made, how it affects society, and how it can harm their health. Written with Charles Wilson, *Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food* became a *New York Times* bestseller in the spring of 2006. Later that year, Fox Searchlight Pictures released a major motion picture based on *Fast Food Nation*, directed by Richard Linklater and cowritten by Schlosser. "It's a mirror and a portrait," the *New York Times* said of the film, "as necessary and nourishing as your next meal." Schlosser is currently at work on a book about America's prison system.

Praise for *Fast Food Nation*

"*Fast Food Nation* is the kind of book that you hope young people will read because it demonstrates far better than any social studies class the need for government regulation, the unchecked power of multinational corporations, and the importance of our everyday decisions." — *USA Today*

"A fine piece of muckraking, alarming without being alarmist." — *New York Times Book Review*

"His eye is sharp, his profiles thoughtful but spare. This is John McPhee behind the counter." — *Washington Post*

Praise for *Reefer Madness*

"In the finest tradition of all-American muckraking . . . Riveting . . . admirably thorough reporting and a refreshingly clear, no-nonsense style. . . . A lucid, humane voice like Schlosser's gives hope and inspiration." — *Washington Post*

"A provocative polemic . . . Schlosser's exhaustive reporting is reminiscent of social realist literature. Journalism schools should make him required reading." — *Business Week*

"Let us now praise Eric Schlosser's *Reefer Madness*. . . . Schlosser balances fact, anecdote, and history with a graceful hand. . . . His ideas are catchier than most heroic couplets." — *San Francisco Chronicle*

Praise for *Americans*

"A wonderful, powerful play of enormous dignity and beauty." — Arthur Miller

"This is a rare thing: a big political play that seizes the crucial political arguments of our time and runs with them . . . Only the comatose will fail to be provoked and stimulated; this is a political triple espresso." — *Independent on Sunday*

"An intelligent, sophisticated effort . . . a thoughtful, gripping, and, yes, prescient piece." — *The Times* (London)

Praise for *Chew on This*:

"*Chew on This* shows us how to transform our children's lives so they can improve the health of a nation." — Dr. Mehmet Oz

"*Chew on This* is an unusually lively, accessible book filled with eye-opening material, much of which will be news not only to kids but to adults." — *Los Angeles Times*

"Schlosser and Wilson leave readers with a powerful suggestion that 'the solution starts with you.'" — *Publishers Weekly*

"*Chew on This* should be circulated widely among America's youth." — *San Francisco Chronicle*

Charles Wilson grew up in West Virginia and has written articles for numerous publications such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Economist*. He has worked at the *New York Times Magazine* and *The New Yorker*. His writing has often explored broader social issues through the lens of personal stories. As a young man, he helped round up beef cattle on horseback at his uncle's ranch. This is his first book.

A Conversation with Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson

Kids love fast food. Why did you write a book for them about its history and harmful consequences?

An editor came up with the idea not long after the 2002 paperback publication of *Fast Food Nation* [Eric's best-selling exposé of the fast-food industry, written for adults]. We were drawn to the challenge of recasting the material for a younger readership. It seemed that the people who needed this information most didn't have a way to get it directly. We decided to write a book for young people that wouldn't be condescending, preachy, or hectoring. We hope that *Chew on This* respects the intelligence of its readers and challenges kids to think for themselves.

The fast-food industry spends billions of dollars every year marketing unhealthy food to children. We felt that kids needed to hear the other side of the story. The eating habits that a person develops as a child are difficult to break later. And if a child is obese by the age of thirteen, he or she is likely to remain obese for life. The nutritional education of American children shouldn't be left to the fast food, junk food, and soda companies.

It's easy to take the fast-food industry for granted. It seems like fast-food restaurants are everywhere and have always been with us. The book tries to show that the growth of this industry wasn't inevitable. It was promoted by government subsidies, deceptive marketing, and individual choices. It can be changed through a different set of choices. We want to help kids think critically about the world around them and believe that a better world is still possible. Although *Chew on This* is full of disturbing and depressing information, it is grounded in a fundamental optimism.

You include a lot of historical information on the industry.

Chew on This traces the rise of the fast-food industry and its effects on how we work, how we eat, and how we live. It's a book both for and about young people. It begins in 1885 with a fifteen-year-old boy at a Wisconsin fair who invents the hamburger — and it winds up at the recent opening of a Burger King in Baghdad. The book traces the careers of the men who created fast food and describes how Walt Disney and Ray Kroc, the founder of the McDonald's Corporation, changed how products were marketed to children. It describes how the fast-food culture has transformed the American landscape, making cities and towns look the same, with the same chain restaurants and stores. It explores how the labor policies of the fast-food chains have affected the lives of teenage workers. It takes readers behind the scenes at a flavor factory, where the taste of fast food is manufactured, at a huge industrial French fry factory, at the poultry and beef slaughterhouses that supply the meat for burgers and chicken nuggets. It describes the efforts of the fast food and soda companies to target children in schools. And it looks at the impact that fast-food consumption has had on the health of America's children, telling the story of a young man in suburban Chicago and his struggles with obesity.

The book also offers grounds for hope. It introduces young people who are resisting the fast-food giants. It suggests that the future will bring a whole new attitude toward the production and distribution of food, encouraging sustainable agriculture and healthier diets. The goal of the book isn't to indoctrinate children with any single point of view. Our

aim is to make kids think about what they're eating, where it comes from, and the consequences of every bite.

Did you approach the research for *Chew on This* in a different way than that for *Fast Food Nation*?

The research process for *Chew on This* was much the same: a mix of firsthand reporting and a lot of digging through archival and published sources. The fast-food industry is now global in scope, and we hoped to capture a sense of that in the book. *Chew on This* required a great deal of original research and investigative trips to Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey, West Virginia, Alaska, Great Britain, and Singapore. The only real difference between the books is emphasis. For this book, we focused on how the industry affects the lives of young people. It wasn't hard to find good stories. The real difficulty was deciding which ones to tell. Just about every teen in America has some connection to fast food, for better or worse.

Fast food, in addition to tasting good, is cheap and easily accessible for almost everyone in America. Fresh produce and meats can be expensive and hard to find, making this an economic as well as a health issue. Is it realistically possible for everyone to eat fresh, healthy food?

One of the main points of the book is that fast food isn't cheap at all, once you add up all the social and health costs. Those French fries and shakes may seem inexpensive when you buy them. But if you add the cost of the dialysis when you develop diabetes from eating too much fast food, it's a pretty high price to pay. At the moment, the U.S. government heavily subsidizes the production of unhealthy foods while providing little direct support to ranchers and farmers who are producing the kind of healthy foods we should be eating. The poor are feeling the worst effects of these misguided policies. The food that they can most easily afford, in the long run, will damage their health. We need government policies that support the right kind of foods. And people need to realize that it's worth spending a little more money on what they eat. Americans now spend a smaller proportion of their income on food than any other society in history. There could hardly be a more important purchase, and, as with everything else, you get what you pay for.

Some folks might see the fast-food industry as an example of the success of capitalism.

In many ways the fast-food industry represents a perversion of free market capitalism. The major chains wield extraordinary power not only over the distribution and production of food, but also over the food and labor policy of the U. S. government. That's not what Adam Smith had in mind. The behavior of the industry and its suppliers brings to mind that of the nineteenth-century trusts, which controlled the American economy with an iron fist, setting prices, breaking unions, and ruthlessly eliminating independent businesses.

Are you vegetarians? Do you eat fast food?

Charles is a lifelong vegetarian. But he has tremendous respect for independent ranchers. His uncle used to own a ranch, and whenever Charles visited, he'd help round up the cattle on horseback. Eric still eats meat. His favorite meal is a cheeseburger, fries, and

chocolate shake. He won't buy food, however, from any of the major fast-food chains. He simply doesn't want to give them any money. And for the same reason, he won't buy meat produced by the large meatpacking firms.

Fast-food restaurants are opening at a rapid pace around the world. There are protests, but there are also customers. Do you see this trend continuing? Why or why not?

Time will tell if the industry can continue to expand overseas. The major fast-food chains have run out of places to open new restaurants in the United States. The market has been pretty well saturated. And so this massive overseas expansion — which seems like a sign of the industry's strength and popularity — is actually a symptom of some underlying weaknesses. It's much more expensive to enter new countries than to open new restaurants close to home. The industry's growth seems to have run out of steam in Europe. China now offers the best hope of success. McDonald's is aggressively targeting children and teenagers there. But China is beginning to have its own obesity epidemic. It remains to be seen whether China will blindly follow our example when it comes to food, or learn from our mistakes.

Want to make a difference? You can!

Has *Chew on This* inspired you to make some changes in the food you purchase and eat? Here are some suggestions on where to start!

Start your own "Stop the Pop" campaign to remove soda machines from your school.

- Start a petition to give to your principal.
- Did you know there is the equivalent of ten teaspoons of sugar in a single twelve-ounce can of soda? Research the effects too much sugar can have on your health, both in the short term and the long term. Make posters showing these effects and hang them in the hallways.
- Try to stack twenty-two four-pound bags of sugar on top of one another — that's how much sugar the average American teenage boy consumes from soda every year.

Want fresh vegetables in your cafeteria?

- Invite the person in charge of purchasing food for your school to your classroom. Ask questions about what they buy, and why. Ask whether they have the power to buy from local farmers and dairies. Do they have just one supplier? Or many?
- Take a field trip to your own school cafeteria and see how food is made behind the scenes. Talk to the cafeteria workers about their jobs — do they make food from scratch or does much of their work involve reheating frozen foods? Do they decide what to serve? Are they involved when the school gives health classes?
- Grow your own! Talk to your teacher about starting a school garden, or apply for a

grant to get you started — visit www.kidsgardening.com to find out how.

Worried you are eating too much junk food?

- Take some cookbooks out of the library and whip up some healthy meals with your parents. Find a recipe that uses a food you've never eaten before.
- Visit a farmers' market. Visit www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm to find one in your area.
- When you go to fast-food restaurants with friends, order a salad instead of a burger.
- Drink water instead of soda at meals and after school.
- Bring a healthy lunch and snacks to school instead of purchasing food in the cafeteria.
- Compete with your friends! Count the number of foods in your lunch that haven't been processed. Each unprocessed food gets one point.

Upset by how animals and workers are treated at meatpacking plants?

- As a class assignment, write letters to your congressperson or senator explaining what you learned in *Chew on This* and why you think workers and animals deserve better. Give some suggestions on ways to improve things. They will listen! To find your local representatives' contact information, visit www.congress.org.

Support your locally owned restaurants!

- Work with your teacher to invite local restaurant owners and fast-food franchise owners to your class. Ask them where they purchase their ingredients, and ask about their employee salaries and benefits. After they leave, discuss which restaurants you and your classmates feel comfortable supporting.