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NEGOTIATION AND AUTONOMY IN A
FAST FOOD RESTAURANT

by

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Bachelor of Arts
State University of New York, Oswego
2000

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in Sociology
Department of Sociology
College of Liberal Arts

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 2002

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Thesis Approval
The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

May 8, 2002

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Entitled

Negotiation and Autonomy in a Fast Food Restaurant

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Sociology

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ABSTRACT

Negotiation and Autonomy in a
Fast Food Restaurant

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This study is an attempt to apply the negotiated order perspective to the analysis of
the lived experience of workers in two franchised fast food restaurants. Drawing
primarily on the work of Anselm Strauss (1978) and D.H.J. Morgan (1975), I have
examined data taken from auto-ethnographic and overt observation. I found that workers
in different negotiation contexts would use implicit and explicit negotiation to achieve
internal and external goals. Worker's negotiation strategies depended on the actor's
individual proclivities and their interpretation of the negotiation context. Issues subject to
negotiation included wages, the schedule, the amount of effort expended, and the
definition of deviance. Employees may occupy core or peripheral status within the
restaurant, and their status relates to what types of goals may be achieved within the
setting. Autonomy may become a bargaining piece in the ongoing negotiations, with
employees and franchisees often trading autonomy for wages or number of hours.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee Dr. Ronald Smith, Dr. Andrea Fontana, Dr. David Dickens, and Dr. Marta Meana for the time that they have invested in me. I am particularly grateful to my chair, Dr. Smith, whose guidance over the last two years will undoubtedly prove valuable beyond this simple project. I would also like to thank Dr. Fontana for the comments that he provided me during the last week of writing. I am indebted to my friends and colleagues whose intellectual and emotional supports have greatly helped me see this process to completion. I would especially like to thank Candice Seppa, Tina Wininger, Amy Walker, Bill Goldberg, Lisa Kopinski, Monique Diderich, and James Rutahindurwa. Lastly, I would like all of my former coworkers, employers, the crew at Anna’s, and most of all Fred.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The analytical line between process and structure divides sociologists. Decades of systematic social scientific inquiry have failed to elucidate the line between agency and structure. Structural functionalists have tended to focus on the deterministic affects of social structure, while ignoring human agency. Symbolic interactionists have been accused of placing too much emphasis on human agency and ignoring structural forces (Maines 1977; Strauss 1978). Because formal organizations are one nexus between micro and macro realities, they provide an optimal site to study the interplay between the individual and society (Hall 1999). This particular investigation will consider the agency of workers in fast food restaurants. If anyone is trapped in Max Weber’s “Iron Cage” of rationalization, it is the stereotypical image of the fast food worker, mindlessly pressing cash register buttons with pictures of sandwiches in place of numbers and mouthing scripts (“Would you like fries with that?”). The freedom or autonomy that can exist in this milieu may have implications for the notion of human freedom in other rationalized environments.

Ronald Smith has noted that functionalists focus on the structure of organizations, while other sociologists focus “on the organizational member and on the way that individual feelings impinge on organizational life” (1984:101). Like Smith, this study will approach organizational life from an actor’s perspective. By taking individual
motivations, rational and nonrational, alike into consideration we may improve our
understanding of individual freedom in organizations. The analysis will consider relevant
structural features, which include economic forces (i.e. the unemployment rate), cultural
norms and laws (i.e. racism and board of health regulations).

The lived experience of fast food workers will be analyzed from the negotiated order
perspective, first developed by Anselm Straus et al. (1963). The negotiated order
perspective, which draws on the assumptions of symbolic interactionism, offers a means
to understand the interaction between structure and agency. Although the negotiated
order perspective may be used to analyze social order at the micro and macro levels, its
practitioners have tended to study organizations (Maines 1977). Studies in negotiated
order demonstrate how social order is maintained through interaction. Oftentimes, the
perspective has been used to analyze how individual autonomy is created and preserved
in an organization (Maines 1977). This perspective, which can demonstrate the existence
and limitations of agency in a restrictive organization, has been ignored in the literature
concerning fast food workers.

In this study, I am exploring the lived experience of workers in franchised fast food
restaurants. Restaurant workers are defined as employees that receive a relatively low
hourly wage and whose primary tasks are customer service, food preparation, and
sanitation. For the purposes of this research, franchised fast food restaurants have the
following features. First, they are one of a chain or number of restaurants, operated by
different franchisees, offering similar menus and décor, which have been decided upon
by a single franchisor. Second, a franchisor has created a formally rational system for the
scientific management of the labor process, which reduces labor costs, as well as meal
cost and food preparation time. Third, to paraphrase a portion of Robert Emerson's definition of fast food, customers order from a counter or drive-through window (1979:53). The franchisor is the individual or group that creates and maintains the standards of operation for a given chain of restaurants. The franchisee(s) is the individual or individuals who operate(s) a franchised restaurant according to a rationalized plan. In my analysis, I will describe my observations from two, franchised fast food restaurants, that I will name Anna’s and Grinders.¹

Goals of the Study

In this study, auto-ethnographic and participant observational data is analyzed from the negotiated order perspective. In doing so, I have four main objectives. The first goal is to describe the processes of negotiation that occur in a fast food restaurant, and particularly the processes whereby workers attempt to achieve their personal ends. The negotiated order perspective is relatively undeveloped (Strauss 1978). This study will further improve the negotiated order perspective by reworking the existing sensitizing concepts and expanding the perspective to a new milieu. This research improves our understanding of highly restricted social orders with the negotiated order perspective. The second goal is to understand the nature of autonomy in a rationalized environment. How and under what circumstances will workers increase their autonomy? The third goal of the study is to expand the negotiated order perspective. The fourth aim of the study is to expand the substantive understanding of fast food restaurants. There are a number of ethnographic studies of fast food restaurants, however they tend to focus on restaurants

¹ The names of both restaurants and all individuals (except for my own) have been changed.
that have large highly differentiated crews. By examining fast food restaurants that have smaller and less complex crews I hope to offer a useful contrast to the existing research.

The first research question is “How do low-level fast food restaurant workers achieve their goals?” To understand how workers in an increasingly rationalized world are able to achieve their ends despite limited power, I describe the various types of individuals who influence the social order. Next, I provide a typology of possible issues that workers negotiate for in a fast food restaurant as well as an explanation of how the structural features of the environment impinged on the negotiations.

The second set of research questions involves an attempt to understand how the negotiated order perspective is used to understand highly rationalized workplaces. As the service sector of the North American economy continues to expand and become rationalized, it is increasingly important for scholars to understand the ramifications of these changes (Ritzer 1993). Although, the factory continues to be an important site of sociological inquiry, sociologists who are interested in understanding how workers are able to use their agency to create autonomous spaces in the face of scientific management should also look to the service sector of the economy. This study seeks to develop the negotiated order perspective to aid in that effort.

The third purpose of this research is to increase sociological understanding of individual autonomy in highly regulated settings. Fast food restaurants, like factories, are governed by a strict formal rationality that attempts to control workers through scientific management. Not surprisingly, the goals of employers often differ from the goals of fast food workers (Leidner 1993; Royle 2000). While a number of researchers have considered the nature of autonomy in fast food restaurants, none have applied the
negotiated order perspective to this endeavor (Garson 1988; Reiter 1991; Leidner 1993; Newman 1999; Royle 2000; Tannock 2001). Moreover, those who have used the negotiated order perspective have tended to analyze milieus that clearly demonstrate issues of negotiation (for instance Strauss et al. 1981; Hall and Hall 1982; Kleinman 1982; Levy 1982; Spencer 1993). These sociologists have focused heavily on professionals and how they achieve their shared and divergent goals through interaction.

In as much as these studies are helpful in demonstrating how social order is maintained through interaction, they collectively ignore social situations that are less readily amenable to the existing analytical tools of negotiated order. However, the negotiated order perspective is founded on the notion that “A social order—even the most repressive—without some forms of negotiation would be inconceivable” (Strauss 1978:ix). Therefore, the negotiated order perspective may be used to examine the most oppressive environments, so it is necessary to study how processes of negotiation affect the social order of settings that are rigidly defined.

Fast food restaurants present an appropriate challenge to a researcher who wants to understand how people may have limited freedom in seemingly restricted environments. Simply delineating autonomy, defined as “the absence of external constraint” is not the end goal of this research, rather; it is to understand how workers are able to achieve their own goals when they are at variance with those of management (Katz 1968:4). The degree to which workers are successful at achieving goals that are in conflict with managerial goals is dependent on their autonomy. Workers will be successful at achieving goals that are at variance with management to the extent to which they are not controlled by management. Conversely, when workers’ goals are in line with managerial
goals, or where their goals are dependent upon the achievement of managerial goals. workers may choose not to negotiate for autonomy.

The fourth objective of the research is to improve the already thorough sociological literature on fast food restaurants. The existing ethnographic studies of fast food restaurants and workers have focused on restaurants that are similar to McDonald's (Garson 1988; Reiter 1991; Leidner 1993; Newman 1999; Royle 2001; Tannock 2001). McDonald's, although highly recognized, is not the only form that fast food restaurants may take. Owing to differences in investment capital, menu, and volume of business, there are thousands of fast food restaurants that are organized differently from McDonald's and Burger King. These restaurants, while similar in terms of rationalization, differ in terms of crew size and differentiation or division of labor. There is a considerable diversity in franchised fast food restaurants. This diversity exists within and between different chains. Some restaurants are franchisees, while others are company owned. Some restaurants are highly differentiated and have large crews, while others have a simple division of labor and have very small crews (Eberts and Gisler 1989).

Although I am assuming that the social order of all fast food restaurants is based on implicit and explicit negotiation, I expect that negotiations will be much easier to observe at smaller, less highly differentiated franchised restaurants. The greater structural autonomy of franchisees and employees in less complex restaurants allows an observer to more readily understand the workplace interactions. Although, there are thousands fast food restaurants in the United States that meet this description, they are largely ignored in current discourse over fast food restaurants. This study will consider two franchisees that tend to have a more simplistic structure. The variable crew size and worker specialization
contributes to differences in the lived experience of fast food workers. This study will add to the existing literature, which does not account for these differences.

Study Overview

In chapter two, I will present a review of the scientific literature. The relevance of the processes of rationalization and scientific management to the study will be examined. Fast food restaurants are based on a scientific management of workers, where management seeks to control most workers' acts, consequently reducing their autonomy. Workers who attempt to achieve their goals often have to negotiate for increased autonomy to do so. Then I will explain the negotiated order perspective and how it may be used to examine fast food restaurants by discussing the perspective in relation to existing ethnographic literature. In chapter three, I will describe the methodology employed in the study. I discuss my decision to use auto-ethnographic and observational data and the selection of settings. Lastly, I consider the ethical issues that are pertinent to the study. In chapter four, the data will be presented and analyzed from the negotiated order perspective. First, the two franchises and the individuals who are involved in negotiations are described. Next, the aspects of negotiations in fast food restaurants are explained. Lastly, a typology of issues that may be negotiated for by workers is presented. In chapter five, the study is brought to a conclusion. I review the findings in the analysis chapter, assess the study's achievements, and discuss how we may generalize from the findings.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review ethnographic literature on fast food workers. I will present some of the findings of these researchers to show how issues of negotiation relate to fast food work. Before reviewing ethnographic literature, this chapter will review the work of Weber, Harry Braverman, and George Ritzer who theorize about the reduction of worker autonomy. While the ethnographers demonstrate the lived experience of workers, Weber, Ritzer, and Braverman place the experiences of workers within the context of rationalization. This chapter will show how the negotiated order perspective might better exhibit how workers are able to resist formal rational job designs as well as the limitations of worker agency.

Rationalization, Deskilling, and the

Fast Food Restaurant

Weber, writing at the turn of the century, explained how the western world was increasingly becoming rationalized. In the 1970s, Braverman argued that employers deskill jobs to further control and marginalize their employees. More recently, Ritzer has reasoned that the process of rationalization is continuing to dominate a globalized society and that rationalization is now exemplified by the rise of the fast food restaurant. All three theorists argue that the boundaries of human freedom or autonomy have been substantially restricted.
The Iron Cage of Formal Rationality

A sociological consideration of rationalized food service must begin with Weber whose ideal type of bureaucracy exemplifies how the Western world is increasingly becoming governed by formally rational social action. Weber feared that society would become trapped in an "Iron Cage" of rationality (1997:181). Generations of sociologists have been concerned with the accuracy of this grim prediction. Rationalization refers to the expansion of a particular type of rationality, namely formal rationality. George Ritzer explains Weber's use of the term:

*formal rationality* means that the search by people for the optimum means to a given end is shaped by rules, regulations, and larger social structures. Thus, individuals are not left to their own devices in searching for the best means of attaining a given objective. Rather, there exist rules, regulations, and structures that either predetermine or help them discover the optimum methods (emphasis in original) (1993:19).

Of course, the best means to a given end may not be the best means for everyone. Procedures that may be the best for some may not meet the goals of others. According to Weber, rationalization with its emphasis on calculability, technical understanding, and formal rules has increasingly come to rule social life. The emphasis on using scientific principles to order the economic world leads to a replacement of moral relations by market relations (Schroeder 1992:124). Rationalization has encouraged people to view each other in terms of their economic relation to one another not in terms of their common humanity as dictated to them by the increasingly disavowed religious institutions.

Rationalization, according to Weber, is taking place in all spheres of Western society. In the economic sphere, "rationalization involved the organization of commercial
practices by means of technical rules calculated to produce profits by the use of rational accounting methods" (Morrison 1995:218). Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills note:

Even so ‘inward’ and apparently subjective an area of experience as that of music lends itself to a sociological treatment under Weber’s concept of ‘rationalization.’ The fixation of clang patterns, by a more concise notation and the establishment of the well-tempered scales; ‘harmonious’ tonal music and the standardization of the quartet of woodwinds and string instruments as the core of the symphony orchestra (1946:51).

For Weber, the emergence of bureaucracy with its highly rationalized form of administration is the quintessential example of how social life has become rationalized. Weber constructed a picture of what an “ideal” bureaucracy would look like. The salient features of the bureaucracy include: a high division of labor, hierarchical structure, codified employee roles, impersonal and impartial social relations, and lastly, appointment and promotion is based on technical competence (1946:196-198). The results of bureaucratization are routinization, impersonality, and the general restriction of idiosyncratic behavior. In short, rationalization not only reduces individual autonomy; it destroys the creative agency of the individual actor.

Weber recognizes both positive and negative aspects of rationality. It is positive in that it allows for greater precision, objectivity, and calculability. The impersonality of bureaucracies allows them to operate “without regard for persons” (1946:215). Weber writes, “Bureaucratization offers above all the optimum possibility for carrying through the principle of specializing administrative functions according to purely objective considerations” (1946:215). Lastly, bureaucratic administration manipulates actions along “calculable rules.” Weber writes, “The peculiarity of modern culture, and

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specifically of its technical and economic basis, demands this very ‘calculability’ of results’ (1946:215).

Despite the benefits afforded by bureaucracy, Weber was very mindful of the downside of bureaucratization. For Weber, the bureaucracy exemplified the impending Iron Cage of rationality that may come to descend upon individuals in the modern world. He writes, “Once it is fully established, bureaucracy is among those social structures which are hardest to destroy” (1946:228). The permanency of the bureaucracy may be deleterious for those who are subsumed within its structure. Weber states:

The individual bureaucrat cannot squirm out of the apparatus in which he is harnessed. In contrast to the honorific or avocational ‘notable’ the professional bureaucrat is chained to his activity by his entire material and ideal existence. In the great majority of cases, he is only a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march” (1946:228).

Weber uses the “ideal type” of bureaucracy to illustrate how rationalization might reduce human agency. In the concluding paragraphs of the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber warns against a possible future where all aspects of life have become rationalized, a world where people’s roles are locked into an iron cage inhabited by “specialists without spirit, and sensualists with out heart” ([1930] 1997:182).

Scientific Management and the Degradation of Labor

Braverman, in Labor and Monopoly Capital, explains how capitalists have come to bring about the “division of labor in the workshop” which, occurs when job tasks are analyzed and dissected into small parts (1974:75). These parts are then assigned to different workers. The division of crafts, performed by skilled craftsmen into tasks
performed by many unskilled workers significantly reduces the cost of production. This division is only worthwhile however when production is high (1975). Consequently, skills are “destroyed” for most workers, while those “relatively few persons for whom special knowledge and training are reserved are freed so far as possible from the obligations of simple labor. In this way, a structure is given to all labor processes that at its extremes polarizes those whose time is infinitely valuable and those whose time is worth almost nothing” (Braverman 1974:82-83).

Braverman describes how scientific management has succeeded in bringing about this division of labor. Fredrick Taylor, the father of scientific management, was an innovator in managerial control, as he was the first to assert “as an absolute necessity for adequate management the dictation to the worker of the precise manner in which work is to be performed” (emphasis in original) (1975:90). Additionally, Taylor redefined the notion of ‘a fair day’s work’ to “all the work a worker can do without injury to his health, at a pace that can be sustained throughout a working lifetime” (Braverman 1974:97). Braverman summarizes Taylor’s thought:

So long as [workers] retain their grip on the labor process itself, they will thwart efforts to realize to the full the potential inherent in their labor power. To change this situation, control over the labor process must pass into the hands of management, not only in a formal sense but by the control and dictation of each step in the process, including its mode of performance (1975:100).

Scientific management is based on three principles. First, is the separation of the knowledge of how to perform a task from the act of performing a task (Braverman: 1974:113). Second, management should be in possession of the knowledge of the labor process; this knowledge should be transmitted to workers on a ‘need to know’ basis
(Braverman 1974). The third principle is “the use of this monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the labor process and its mode of execution” (Braverman 1974:119). Scientific management is the vehicle for the formal rational control of the capitalists.

Braverman provides a detailed discussion of the effects of Taylor’s scientific management. He writes, “The physical processes of production are now carried out more or less blindly, not only by the workers who perform them, but often by lower ranks of supervisory employees as well. The production units operate like a hand, watched, corrected, and controlled by a distant brain” (1974:125). Braverman is continuing the Marxian argument that capitalism serves to dehumanize and devalue workers, culturally and economically. He explains how workers who had previously developed their minds are slowly stripped of their intellectual faculties. Braverman reports:

the craft provided a daily link between science and work, since the craftsman was constantly called upon to use rudimentary scientific knowledge, mathematics, drawing, etc., in his practice. Such craftsmen were an important part of the scientific public of their time, and as a rule exhibited an interest in science and culture beyond that connected directly to their work (1974:135).

However, as scientific management denuded workers of their skill, they lost their desire for higher learning. Scientific management has destroyed the autonomy that they had previously possessed. Braverman relates the anger of one pundit sympathetic to the plight of workers during the Tayloristic revolution in the 1910s “the worker is no longer a craftsman in any sense, but is an animated tool of the management” (quoted in Braverman 1974:136). When the process of rationalization described by Weber was applied to the labor process as scientific management, the result was the devolution of the working class.
Weber, who died shortly before White Castle restaurants came to prominence in the 1920s (Jakle and Sculle 1999), never publicly wrote about the rationalization of food service. However, his elucidation of the process of rationalization in Western society clearly informs contemporary research on the subject. Seventy years after Weber’s death, and nearly two decades after Labor and Monopoly Capital, Ritzer, in his widely popular book, The McDonaldization of Society, claims that the process of rationalization is very much in full force, and that even the sphere of consumption has become rationalized. Ritzer asserts that while Weber viewed bureaucracy as the “paradigm case of rationality,” he thinks that this should be updated to McDonald’s (1993:18-19). He labeled the current rationalization of society McDonaldization, which is defined as “the process by which the principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world” (emphasis in original) (1993:1). Ritzer argues that McDonaldization is an “extension of the Weberian theory of rationalization” (1993:18). In using the term McDonaldization, Ritzer is not only referring to McDonald’s per se, but also any equivalent organization (i.e. Seven Eleven or Jiffy Lube) (1993:xiii). Ritzer outlines the rational dimensions of McDonald’s and similar organizations: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (1993).

Similar to Weber’s concept of an Iron Cage, Ritzer takes note of the negative aspects of rationalization for employees. Ritzer argues that McDonaldized organizations dehumanize customers and employees alike. He writes, “The fast food restaurant offers its employees a dehumanizing setting within which to work.” as “workers are asked to use only a minute proportion of all their skills and abilities” (1993:131). Fast food
restaurants are dehumanizing in that they “minimize contact among human beings” (1993:133). The relationship between customers and employees is “rushed” due to an emphasis on speed and “fleeting” due to high turnover rates (1993:133). Moreover, fast food restaurants are dehumanizing for employees, “Because employees remain on the job for only a few months, satisfying personal relationships among employees are unlikely to develop” (1993:134). Ritzer contends that fast food workers will be unable to improve their work conditions. He writes:

> One can predict that McDonald’s will not significantly alter its working conditions until it is unable to find a steady supply of new workers. Even then, it may simply move in the direction of eliminating human employees rather than humanizing the work. If this is the case, we can expect to see more automation and robotization in the fast-food restaurants of the future (1993:169).

In, *The McDonaldization Thesis*, Ritzer (1998) includes a chapter titled, “McJobs: McDonaldization and Its Relationship to the Labor Process” where he explores the affect of rationalization on the labor process (1998:61). He paints an incredibly bleak picture of fast food employment. Ritzer decries the power of capitalists to control workers. Ritzer claims that McDonald’s has succeeded in controlling not only the actions of workers but also their diction (suggestive selling) and affectation (an emphasis on smiling). He writes, “McDonaldized jobs are tightly scripted: they are characterized by both routineized actions…and scripted interactions” (emphasis in original) (1998:63-64). According to Ritzer, corporations completely dominate workers who possess little to no autonomy. He relates, “Beyond the usual exploitation of being paid less than the value of what they produce, McDonald’s employees are often not guaranteed that they will work the number of hours they are supposed to on a given day. If business is slow, they may be sent home.
early in order that the employer can economize on labor cost" (1998:66). Additionally, McDonald’s successfully appropriates customers, who now perform tasks formally assigned to employees, such as busing one’s table, significantly reducing labor costs. Consequently, employees are more expendable and have even less room to resist their employers. Ritzer argues that franchisees, the owners of the individual restaurants, maintain very little autonomy. Despite the fact that they provide much of the capital for their restaurant, they exercise limited control over it. Ritzer writes, “The operators take much of the financial risk, while the franchise companies sit back and (often) rake in the profits. In addition, the franchise companies frequently have detailed rules, regulations, and even inspectors that they use to control the operators” (1998:68).

Currently workplace repression is facilitated by structural and cultural forces that augment managerial efforts to control workers. An example of structural control can be found in the drive-through window associated with the fast food restaurant... structures both what customers in their cars and employees in their booths can and cannot do. They can efficiently exchange money for food, but their positions (in a car and a booth) and the press of other cars in the queue make any kind of personal interaction virtually impossible (1998:62).

Moreover, individuals come to accept McDonaldization, subsequently destroying all resistance (1998:68). In fact, “workers and customers often both buy into McDonaldization and are actively involved in its creation” (1998:66). Workers who cannot conceive of an alternative to the reified state of affairs cannot be expected to reorder their environment.
Braverman, Ritzer, and Weber describe a world where the economic elite has successfully rationalized the world for their own benefit and to the detriment of low-level employees. Ritzer expands on Weber to show how fast food workers have very little autonomy or ability to gain more through negotiation. A number of ethnographers have examined the lived experience of fast food workers. Although these ethnographic presentations have considered issues of worker autonomy and negotiations, they have not done so from the negotiated order perspective. The next section will provide an overview of the negotiated order perspective and its relevance to the lived experience of fast food workers. It should be noted that there has been considerable literature analyzing the interaction processes among organizational members. Some classic studies include Karl Weick’s (1979) analysis of the sense making processes among actors (i.e. the “double interact”). Granovetter’s (1985) analysis of social networking as related to decision making (i.e. “embeddedness”). Lastly, Randall Stokes and John Hewitt’s (1976) study of role taking and adjustment to the behavior of others (i.e. “Alignment of Actions”). However, this research does not focus on the micro social psychological processes involved, but instead describes how workers act to satisfy their motivations, solely in the tradition of work from the negotiated order perspective.

The Negotiated Order Perspective

The negotiated order perspective is an attempt by interactionist sociologists to account for the relationship between structure and agency in social life, particularly in organizations. Gary Alan Fine (1996) lists the critical assumptions of the negotiated order perspective. The first is that social order is based on negotiation (1996:3). Social order results from the process of negotiation. Strauss writes, “Even dictators find it impossible
and inexpedient simply and always to order command, demand, threaten, manipulate, or use force; about some issues and activities they must persuade and negotiate” (1978:ix). Social order is not a priori; rather it is created through interaction. The second assumption is “specific negotiations are contingent on the structure of the organization and the field in which the organization operates” (1996:3-4). Power differentials affect negotiations in patterned ways. There are structural features such as laws, normative values, and economic forces, which affect negotiations. The third assumption is that negotiations are impermanent. They must be continually renewed (1996:3). Lastly, “structural changes in the organization require a revision of the negotiated order” (1996:3). In as much as negotiations are impermanent and affected by structural features, the social order will have to be renegotiated when structural features change.

Strauss defines negotiations as “one of the possible means of “getting things accomplished” when parties need to deal with each other to get those things done” (1978:2). He attempts to differentiate negotiations from “other modes of attaining desired ends—such as persuasion, education, appeal to authority, or the use of coercion or coercive threat” (1978:2). Strauss’ concept of negotiation is the quintessential example of a sensitizing concept (Blumer 1954) in that there is no clear and distinct definition of negotiation that can be made independent of context. Research from the negotiated order perspective has demonstrated that negotiations may take on a number of different forms depending on the situation (Morgan 1975; Strauss 1978). These modes may be used in different combinations in different situations.

Strauss identifies three main analytical dimensions in the negotiated order perspective. These dimensions include the negotiations, the structural context, and the
negotiation context. The first is a description of the negotiations. Strauss states, "Included in the descriptions will be the accompanying interactions, types of actors, their strategies and tactics" as well as "consequences" and "subprocesses of negotiation" (1978:98). This dimension includes the motivations of the social actors, how they go about gaining what they want, and how successful they are. Researchers analyzing a social setting from the negotiated order perspective must describe the types of negotiation that occur. A description of the negotiations should elucidate, what Strauss terms "the subprocesses of negotiation" that are exemplified by "tradeoffs, obtaining kickbacks, compromising toward the middle, paying off debts, and reaching negotiated agreements" (1978:237). The subprocesses are behaviors engaged in by actors who are negotiating with one another. The subprocesses of negotiation are not necessarily expressed through verbal communication. The term negotiation is a sensitizing concept. Therefore, negotiations may take forms that are not usually associated with the denotations of the word. For instance, negotiations may be explicit or implicit. At times, individuals explicitly work out an arrangement, while at other times the following pertains:

Negotiations may be very brief, made without any verbal exchange or obvious gestural manifestation; nevertheless, the parties may be perfectly aware of "what they are doing"—they may not call this negotiating bargaining, but they surely regard its product as some sort of worked-out agreement. Other negotiations may be so implicit that the respective parties may not be thoroughly aware that they have engaged in or completed a negotiated transaction. If the latter kind of agreement gets broken by one person, however, the other is sure to experience some feeling, whether surprise, disappointment, annoyance, anger, or even a sense of betrayal or exploitation, but possibly also relief or unexpected pleasure (Strauss 1978:224-225).
As will become clear below, the existence of implicit negotiations may exist in situations where explicit negotiation has seemingly been squashed.

The second dimension is the structural context. Strauss states "the structural context is that "within which" the negotiations take place, in the largest sense" (1978:98). Essentially, he is referring to the larger structural features that affect negotiations. Structural features may include the demography, economy, laws, cultural norms such as racism or sexism, infrastructure, and geography that influence the negotiation context. The negotiated order perspective does not assign deterministic qualities to the structural context. Strauss writes, "Structural context is larger, more encompassing than negotiation context, but the lines of impact can run either way. That is, changes in the former may impact on the latter, and vice versa" (emphasis in original) (1978:101).

The negotiation context is the analytical structure that houses the interaction. He provides a number of variables that relate to negotiation context such as the number of actors, the stakes of the negotiation, the relative power of the negotiators, the openness of negotiations, the number and clarity of negotiated issues, and the "options to avoiding or discontinuing negotiation" (1978:100). The negotiation context consists of what directly affects the negotiations. Strauss differentiates between structural and negotiation contexts. He claims "the structural context bears directly on the negotiation context, but the latter refers more specifically to the structural properties entering very directly as conditions into the course of the negotiation itself" (1978:99). In as much as the proceeding concepts are sensitizing concepts, researchers have added to the list proposed by Strauss. For example, Noreen Sugrue has argued that "emotions can and do become properties of negotiation contexts" (1982:280).
Emotions and Negotiation

Sugrue posits, "Each participant negotiates from a particular emotion standpoint. That is, while each may acknowledge that the emotion context is one of, say anger, one person may have intense feelings leading to that emotion, while the other may not have those feelings" (emphasis in original) (1982:281). Although "there can be a sharing of similar or parallel feelings, but not of identical feelings. The concept of emotion standpoint thus allows for the analysis of each person's perspective during negotiations that are directly influenced by emotion context" (1982:281). This revelation brings up two important points pertinent to the negotiated order perspective. The first is that negotiations contain rational as well as extrarational factors. This aspect distinguishes the negotiated order perspective from rational choice or exchange theory. Second, a researcher from the negotiated order perspective must carefully understand the position of the individual negotiators. There will never be one uniform perspective of "the workers" even when they engage in collective bargaining. In any social order, voluntary or involuntary, members come from slightly different perspectives. Therefore, it is imperative that researchers avoid conflating the perspectives of workers. An analysis from the negotiated order perspective should consider the "existential selves" (Smith 1984) of a given milieu.

Negotiated Order and Symbolic Interactionism

Negotiated order is one way that symbolic interactionists have attempted to understand social order (Maines 1977). As such, it is based on the same assumptions as symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionists seek to understand "the actual formation of conduct in social interaction and not to assume that social and cultural patterns by themselves explain conduct. In this task they emphasize meaning, arguing
that people act on the basis of meanings they construct in social interaction” (Hewitt 1994:25-26). Additionally, “symbolic interactionists view human beings not only as shaped by culture and society, but also as capable of shaping them... culture and society depend upon human actions constructed on the basis of meanings formed in everyday social interaction” (Hewitt 1994:26). The negotiated order perspective rests on these implicit assumptions.

Concepts such as negotiation, negotiation context, and structural contexts are examples of Herbert Blumer’s notion of sensitizing concepts (1954). Blumer writes, “Because of the varying nature of the concrete expression from instance to instance we have to rely, apparently, on general guides and not on fixed traits or modes of expression” (1954:149). Moreover, these “general guidelines” or “sensitizing concepts” are to be “tested, improved and refined” (Blumer 1954:149-150). Clearly influenced by Blumer, Strauss writes:

These properties of negotiation contexts are not logical constructs, but emerged from the examination of numerous instances of negotiation...whenever properties are salient in a given case involving negotiations; I bring them out in analyzing the specific negotiation context for that case. The chief consideration... is the relevance, not “logic,” in developing the specific typologies or analyses of context. One must judge for oneself the fit and relevance of these negotiation contexts to the specific cases of negotiation to which they are applied. Their various permutations and clustering constitute the explanations for the specific kinds of negotiators, interactions, tacit, strategies, subprocesses of negotiation, and consequences that will be discussed. Of course, it is expected that this list of useful properties of the negotiation context will be added to by other researchers as they do their own studies” (1978:100).

Strauss’ preceding discussion of how he intends to study negotiations mirrors Blumer’s notion of a “sensitizing concept” (1954).
As a variant of symbolic interaction, the negotiated order perspective is based in large part on the work of George Herbert Mead. David Maines explains Mead's influence on negotiated order, "among Mead's many contributions to sociological thought was the argument that human conduct cannot be properly understood unless the social organizational matrices in which conduct takes place are first understood" (1977:244). Maines also discusses the relevance of Mead's work on the interpretation of the past. He writes,

Mead argued that the past is not only continually being redefined in light of the present, but that it has a structuring effect on what is likely to occur in the present. He presents us with a dialectical view encompassing structure and process, determinacy and indeterminacy. It is that dialectical perspective that lies at the base of the negotiated order, and that appears in a number of studies informed by that perspective" (1975:244).

The negotiated order perspective adapts Mead's notion that structure and process must be viewed together.

Negotiated Order and Employee Autonomy

Maines reports, "issues pertaining to autonomy are central" in analyses conducted from the negotiated order perspective (1977:245). D. H. J. Morgan uses the negotiated order perspective to explain how workers are able to gain and maintain autonomy within their jobs (1975). Morgan uses Fredrick Katz's definition of autonomy "as the absence of external constraint" (1968:4). Katz argues, "workers have considerable autonomy within the confines of the organization. Even when work is prescribed in exact detail, the work role tends to be defined narrowly. This situation leaves a considerable portion of the workers life within the work organization undefined" (emphasis in original) (1968:47).

While Morgan accepts Katz's argument that factory workers have autonomy within the
organization he does not accept Katz’s structural functionalist portrayal of autonomy, which “accords the worker a relatively passive role in the organization, a willing object of managerial repressive tolerance” (1975:207). Morgan then discusses the negotiated order of the workplace. He asserts:

The concept of “negotiation” has arisen out of the realization that human behavior cannot readily be understood simply by reference back to a normative order or, in the case of organizational settings, to a set of rules... The social order of say, a workplace is not a once-and-for-all accomplishment brought about by either the ultimate threat of force, deprivation, or a postulated harmony of interests, but is something which is subject to continuous negotiation. (1975:209).

Morgan challenges Strauss’ notion of negotiation. Morgan uses the concept of negotiation as a “generalized metaphor for human conduct” (1975). Instead of only focusing on explicit negotiations, sociologists should recognize two levels of negotiation. The first is

An everyday covert implicit substratum of negotiation. The appropriateness of the use of the negotiation is determined by the problem under investigation and indeed, the negotiation between the investigator and his critical professional colleagues.” The second is “a more overt form of negotiation which is recognized as such by the participants (1975:211).

He maintains that negotiations do not take place amongst equals. Some actors have far more power than do others. Morgan asserts, “negotiation is not randomly distributed throughout an organization, but is patterned according to the particular set of statuses which form the structure of the organization” (1975:211). Morgan concludes that the negotiated order perspective may actually “draw our attention to those persons whom one has to take account of in this process of negotiation. Thus an emphasis on negotiation, far
from ignoring the unequal distribution of power in an organization, in fact draws our attention to the sources of that power, the uses to which it is put, and its limits” (1975:211-212). Morgan presents the limits of power. Despite power differentials, “this account shows that there are limits to the exercise of managerial or supervisory power. These limits are less in terms of formal rules and more in terms of their expectations of what the workers will stand for regarding practices that have now come to be taken as given” (1975:224). Additionally, Morgan (1975) explains that autonomy is not static, as Katz (1968) professes. Rather it is something that is continually worked out through negotiation. Morgan claims, “The two concepts stand in reciprocal relationship to each other for autonomy refers to those areas which are, for the time being free from the necessity of overt negotiation, while negotiation can be seen as being about the enlargement, maintenance, or diminution of existing sphere of autonomy” (1975:212).

The first area of negotiation, that Morgan analyzes, is the use of the radios in the factory. In the factory, legitimate radio use was defined by a number of important rules such as what programs could be played, and what the volume should be set at. These rules were neither clearly defined nor evenly enforced. The workers tended to use the radio as they pleased until management enforced the rules. We can see the atomization of the workers who did not comprise a uniform bargaining unit. Some workers liked to play music loudly, while others did not like the high volume pop music. Conflicts over the radios were crudely divided by age, with young women, who were the majority in the factory, playing pop music loudly, and a majority faction of older women who did not care much for loud pop music. Although the sympathies of management were with the older group, management had to respect the wishes of the younger group because “the
presence of a group of younger girls was felt to be necessary for some of the finer assembly work" (1975:215). Younger workers by virtue of their perceived worth to the factory were able to compensate for their numerical inferiority. Morgan states that they were able to bargain for greater use of the radios because "it was on the whole easier for management not to make an issue of this relatively minor problem and that it meant that something could be kept in reserve for bargaining over other more serious matters" (1975:216). Morgan contends that radio use represents "an area of autonomy in the workshop that was overt, that was of doubtful legitimacy, but which was generally tolerated. However this was not a stable once-and-for-all situation, but was the subject of occasional negotiation" (1975:216).

Morgan also examines the negotiation of time in the factory. In a factory, time is highly regulated. Unlike radio use, the rules regarding time are clearly delineated with time cards and bells. Workers, whose time was highly regulated, engaged in implicit negotiations with management over the use of time. For example, workers would try to reduce the number of hours that they had to work by stopping work early before breaks and the end of the day or by lingering over breaks before starting work. Workers would also take disguised breaks, for instance, chatting with a co-worker while going to the storeroom for supplies. Sometimes management would counter negotiate; for instance, the assistant supervisor would sometimes prevent workers from getting their coats early by standing near the cloakroom. Management was completely aware of how the workers would find ways to reduce their work time; some estimated that employees were able to "waste" an hour per day. Morgan (1975) contends that workers were able to continue this behavior because time wasting is a part of an ongoing negotiation with management.
Management did not stop the practices because they “liked to keep a bargaining counter in reserve for use on more strategic occasions” (1975:221). Some actors thought that the time wasting had become established slowly and incrementally. Additionally, some thought that the time wasting went unchallenged because it was not worth disturbing the relationship between workers and management. Morgan argues that management was not in complete control of the situation. He writes, “To say that management could use elements in the situation in the more overt processes of negotiation is not to say that it was fully able to choose whether to have these elements in the first place nor was it necessarily the case that workers responded to them in those terms” (1975:222). Morgan adds that negotiation takes place on an individual and group level. Not all workers “wasted” time equally. While single worker’s implicit negotiations may have been influenced by the implicit negotiations of others, they were conducted at an individual level (1975:223).

Fast food restaurants, like factories, are governed by a strict formal rationality that seeks, through Tayloristic means to make workers conform to practices that allow for the aims of management to come to fruition. The goals of management are not always commensurate with those of fast food workers (Leidner 1993). While a number of researchers have considered the nature of autonomy in fast food restaurants, none have applied the negotiated order perspective to this endeavor (Garson 1988; Reiter 1991; Leidner 1993; Newman 1999; Royle 2000; Tannock 2001). Moreover, those who have used the negotiated order perspective have tended to analyze settings that clearly demonstrate issues of negotiation. These researchers have focused heavily on skilled organizational members and how they seek to achieve their shared and divergent goals.
through interaction (for instance Strauss et al. 1963, 1981; Hall and Hall 1982; Kleinman 1982; Levy 1982; and Spencer 1993). In as much as these studies are helpful in demonstrating how social order is maintained through interaction, they collectively ignore social situations that are not readily amenable to the existing analytical tools of negotiated order. The perspective may be enriched by further study of settings that are rigidly defined.

Morgan's application of the negotiated order perspective to the study of factory workers is an important step in this effort. In his analysis, he argues that although behavior in the factory is rigidly constrained by rules, workers negotiate an agreement with management that allows both groups to achieve their goals, to some extent. From Morgan's study, we can surmise that when management in a highly rationalized work environment suppresses explicit negotiation, it merely takes on different forms (1975). Since explicit negotiations over some rules are not possible, workers engage in implicit negotiation, wherein, negotiation is unstated and occurs through nonverbal action.

Morgan's notion of implicit negotiation can be translated into other repressive milieus to understand how workers are able to create autonomy where it does not ostensibly exist. As previously mentioned, fast food restaurants present an appropriate challenge to a researcher, who wishes to understand how people may have limited freedom in seemingly restricted environments. As previously stated, demonstrating worker autonomy is not the end goal of this research, rather; it will be to understand how workers are able to achieve their own goals when they are at variance with those of management. The degree to which workers are successful at achieving goals that are in conflict with managerial goals is dependent on their degree of autonomy.
Current ethnographic research has tended to depict fast food workers as having neither autonomy nor the agency to attain autonomy (Garson 1988; Reiter 1991). While fast food workers certainly do not share the levels of autonomy enjoyed by lawyers, doctors, and architects, it is difficult to believe that millions of workers have been completely controlled by management in all settings. In keeping with the negotiated order perspective, I suspect that in different negotiation contexts fast food workers are variably capable of negotiating implicitly and explicitly for their ends.

Factors affecting the negotiation context might include: the size of the restaurant; whether the restaurant is franchised or company operated, the type of contract between the franchisee and the franchisor; the goals of the franchisee; the number of customers who patronize the restaurant; the location of the restaurant, the goals of the employees, how easily employees may be replaced; whether relations between employees and management are primary, secondary, or mixed and no doubt many others. Ethnographic research that is cognizant of the preceding factors (as well as others) that affect the negotiation context may be able to demonstrate how order is maintained in the restaurant with both parties achieving their goals to enough of an extent so as to make their relationship viable.

It should be noted that a number of sociologists have considered the topic of worker agency. Michael Burawoy (1979) found that employers do not exercise the degree of control of lower level employees reported by Braverman (1974). David Mechanic (1962) demonstrates how many low-level workers are able to wield considerable power. Randy Hodson (1991) contends that workers play an active role in the construction of their social environment. While these studies and others are related to this research, they will
not be given thorough treatment here for two reasons. First, they are not explicitly from the negotiated order perspective. Second, they are not dealing directly with fast food restaurants that are the focus of this study.

Fast Food Ethnographies

A number of journalists, sociologists, and anthropologists have done ethnographic research of routinized restaurants. This section will attempt to demonstrate how the negotiated order perspective could better inform the ethnographic study of fast food workers. Strauss suggests that researchers who are “interested in general theory of negotiation for its own sake” may analyze existing data (emphasis in original) (1978:245). Furthermore, “their elaborations and qualifications of a negotiation theory would proceed by further theoretical sampling of data from extant negotiation literature in many different substantive areas. This secondary analysis could greatly- and probably quickly- help to further a general theory” (1978:245). This section of the literature review seeks to achieve some of the preceding objectives. Although I will not be using the existing data to directly inform a burgeoning theory of negotiations, I will be using the existing data to argue that the negotiated order perspective may gain from an analysis of fast food restaurants.

Barbara Garson

Barbara Garson’s (1988) publication, *The Electronic Sweatshop*, provides a journalistic account of how “a combination of twentieth-century technology and nineteenth-century scientific management is turning the Office of the Future into the factory of the past” (1988:10). She argues that employers have appropriated modern technology to thoroughly reduce worker autonomy. She claims that the centralization of
control stems from a desire to reduce costs and an “irrational prejudice against people” (1988:13). Garson interviews a number of workers including fast food workers, social workers, and stockbrokers. Her presentation of fast food work is of particular interest here.

Garson provides the contents of her interviews with two former crew persons, one current crew person, and a recently resigned manager of a corporate owned McDonald’s in New York City. The general theme of the chapter is that McDonald’s has introduced computerized systems that have eliminated any self-determination that may be exercised by crew workers and management alike. Automated buzzers tell an employee when it is okay to pull a fillet o’ fish out of the fryer, a bell beeps when it is time to flip the burgers, the condiment guns are calibrated for Big Macs and cheeseburgers, and a computer program predicts how many employees will be needed for a given shift. One interviewee left after only one day because the managers would not give her the schedule that she desired. Another employee, who cannot afford the luxury of quitting, is frequently chastised for voiding the register without the assistance of a manager. In short, a computerized formal rationality has eradicated any sense of freedom or creativity. The jobs have been deskilled to the point where the most competent crew person can be replaced in a matter of minutes. Even a highly capable manager admits, “Basically, I can’t be any more creative than a crew person. I can’t take any more initiative then the person on the register” (1988:35).

From her interviews, Garson concludes, McDonald’s has successfully rationalized its operations. She laments:

By combining twentieth-century computer technology with nineteenth-century time and motion studies, the
McDonald’s corporation has broken the jobs of griddleman, waitress, cashier, and even manager down into small, simple, small steps. Historically these have been service jobs involving a lot of flexibility and personal flare. But the corporation has systematically extracted the decision-making elements from filling french fry boxes or scheduling staff. They’ve siphoned the know-how from the employees into the programs. They relentlessly weed out all variables that might make it necessary to make a decision at the store level, whether on pickles or on cleaning procedures. (1988:37)

Restaurant workers that formally contained a great deal of autonomy have become gears in a Weberian wheel.

Given these same data, a researcher coming from the negotiated order perspective might ask if the structural context (such as unemployment rate, the type of fast food restaurant) might affect the negotiation context. In other words, can we really assume that this is the situation that all fast food workers find themselves in or is this one restaurant somewhat anomalous? Could it be that structural change, also the result of negotiation (Denzin 1977a, 1978) could alter the negotiation context such that workers (who cared to) might be able to negotiate for increased autonomy?

Ester Reiter

Ester Reiter’s ethnography, Making Fast Food, explores the lived experience of fast workers in a Burger King restaurant in suburban Toronto. Reiter, like Garson (1988), explains how fast food work has been deskilled (1991). For instance, “the cashier inside the store does not need to know how to make change to operate the register” (1991:84).

In addition, Reiter relates that interactions are scripted (1991:84). Reiter provides detailed descriptions of the restaurant, the promotional hierarchy, worker profile, training, and work tasks.
She explains the motivations for employment at Burger King. The reasons are that it fits the schedule of workers (particularly students and mothers), it is among the only jobs available to unskilled workers, and the location of the restaurant is convenient for some employees. Reiter identifies scheduling to be of the highest concern for employees. The first step to discovering how workers attain their goals is to find out what those goals are. Reiter succeeds in this, but does not really explain how workers go about obtaining the schedule they desire.

Reiter relates that Burger King rotated its managers in the stores that it owned. She writes, "The director explained that they didn't want the managers to become "stale." This was not very clear to me. Perhaps, I thought, managers who got to know their subordinates well would be less likely to stick closely to Burger King rules" (1991:104). Reiter provides an example of a manager who disliked Burger King's attempt to save profits by cutting crewmember hours. Burger King is attempting to prevent the conflation of primary and secondary relationships. Like Weber's ideal type bureaucracy, Burger King believes that it is in their best interests to prevent informality between workers and managers. Moreover, Burger King makes substantial claims on its employees. She writes, employees "are asked to place their responsibilities to Burger King above everything else in their lives: school, family, friends." (1991:107). Burger King, operating according to the logic of scientific management, seeks to squeeze as much as it can from its employees. Reiter concludes, "just as Taylor considered that workers were 'soldiering' if they worked at less than their physiological maximum, so Burger King considers that it is entitled to the physiological maximum from its minimum wage employees" (1991:120).
Burger King seeks to increase profitability through a formally rational routinization of labor. Reiter, like Ritzer (1993) and Garson (1988) discusses the importance of computers in rationalizing food service. Burger King uses computers to track inventory and productivity. Computers are also used to decide the most efficient use of labor. Technology is used to control (or limit the autonomy of) workers. Reiter provides an interesting example of the negotiated interaction between workers and management by revealing how routinization fails to squash all variance. She writes, this tightly organized system is not completely predictable...Even in a very controlled situation, there are good days and bad days, good managers and bad managers” (1991:123). Reiter explains:

There is a consensual aspect in translating labour power into labour; workers cooperation is needed, even if it is just at the level of showing up on time. However, the kind of political power that can be exercised by a worker with scarce, not easily obtainable skills... is quite a bit greater than that of a worker who can be instantly replaced by another if she of he doesn’t smile enough (1991:129).

Essentially, there is more to a fast food restaurant than the Weberian formal rational plan. No matter what rules are created by upper level management, operations have to be enforced by managers and followed by employees.

Reiter delineates Burger King’s strategies for controlling its labor force. In addition to scientific management, Burger King uses psychology to influence employees (1991:133). For instance, management has appropriated Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs” and Herzberg’s “satisfiers and disatisfiers” to conclude that emotional encouragement can satisfy workers, in place of improved wages, hours, and working conditions (1991:135). Reiter concludes that management attempts to extract as much as they can from employees before they resign. She writes, “Burger King efforts to martial loyalty are
focused on creating the kind of morale that will keep work intense and productivity high. The attempts to ensure long-term commitment are minimal" (1991:139). Workers are given miniscule raises and poor opportunities for advancement. Reiter explains that promotion at Burger King is problematic in that “A production leader’s working conditions... are actually worse than those for crew, and they achieve little monetary gain” (1991:139). Instead, management chooses to use inexpensive methods such as social activities, competitions, and managerial encouragement to extract as much effort as possible from employees. In addition, the restaurant is designed to allow waiting customers to view the employees. Workers are thus pressured to work faster (1991). The previous manipulations could be labeled management’s negotiations. A researcher from the negotiated order perspective would note that management is attempting to implicitly negotiate for their ends with motivational items instead of offering higher wages.

Reiter considers the role of worker agency. She relates that she was surprised to find that the management at Burger King had far more power over their employees than she imagined. She writes:

I assumed... that in a fast food restaurant there were bound to be forms of cooperation between workers and some mediating power that workers would have over management directives... I looked and looked by never found this active participation in determining the labour process... Workers at Burger King do not have even a limited arena in which they can delude themselves into thinking of the labour process as a game in which they participate via commonly agreed-upon rules. Control of the game and setting the rules of playing are the prerogative of Burger King alone. If one does not choose to play by Burger King's rules, one must leave the game entirely (1991:141).
Workers identified favored and distasteful job tasks. Reiter does not report how workers vie for preferred tasks. Rather, she seems to imply that workers are simply assigned to assorted tasks by a multitude of managers. Workers are pressured to work hard regardless of how many customers are in the restaurant. Workers did not challenge (overtly or covertly) managerial authority. She does, however, offer some examples of worker resistance. For instance, one worker circumvented a $2.50 limit on free employee food by ringing herself up for one item and taking a more expensive one. Another worker walked off after continually being denied a brake (1991). Reiter claims that workers' only response to unfavorable conditions was to leave. Quitting is the only individual action that she recognizes. Reiter presents unionization as the only possible means by which workers may successfully negotiate for their goals (1991).

Reiter indicates that Burger King has more or less eradicated worker autonomy. She concludes, "there is little personal space at Burger King. The 'working knowledge' or 'tacit skills' Burger King workers bring to their jobs give them little room to maneuver in the moderating management directives. Even physical needs such as drinking water or using the washroom are regulated" (1991:165). Workers have no autonomy and there is nothing they can do to negotiate for more autonomy "their individual protests, which usually take the form of "voting with their feet", however, do not change management prerogatives in the organization of the workplace" (1991:165). She does not allow for the possibility that given some structural changes workers could negotiate for increased autonomy.
Robin Leidner

Robin Leidner's (1993) ethnography, *Fast Food, Fast Talk*, focuses on the routinization of service work. She presents interview and participant observation data from a company owned McDonald's restaurant and an Insurance company. Leidner's work is of particular interest because her data relate to processes of negotiation in rationalized food service establishments. Leidner argues that employee-employer relationships are not intrinsically antagonistic. Moreover, the relationships are not static, but change with different situations. Both insights support the negotiated order perspective. Rather than focusing only on the relationship between management and workers, Leidner posits that the examination of interactive service work (including fast food) must include the three-way relationship between workers, management, and customers. She writes, "All three parties are trying to arrange the interactions to their own advantage, whether they want to maximize speed, convenience, pleasantness, efficiency, customization of service, degree of exertion, or any other outcome they feel to be beneficial" (1993:3-4). The implication is that when the interests of management and workers coincide they may cooperate to see that their own interests are met. In another situation, workers and customers may form a temporary alliance against the restaurant owners. Alliances shift with the situation. We may observe situations where it is in the "self-defined" best interest of workers to comply with routinization (Leidner 1993:135). However, in other situations, workers may, successfully resist routinization through negotiation and build autonomous spaces for themselves. Leidner finds evidence of worker agency. She writes, "Analysis of routinization is too often cut short by the assumption that management has the capacity to impose routines unilaterally, an
assumption that historical research on routinization has proven untenable” (1993:127).

Although, not coming from the negotiated order perspective, she demonstrates how the social order of the restaurant is continually recreated through strategic interaction that involves patterned negotiations that are affected by structure.

In some instances, routinization can be beneficial to employees. She claims, “workers expressed relatively little dissatisfaction with the extreme routinization…” as some workers “felt that their interactions with customers were more than mechanical and that they were able to express their personalities on the job (1993:134). Other workers, in contrast, appreciated the routine precisely because it did not require that they treat exchanges with customers as full-fledged personal interactions” (1993:134-135). As would be necessary in an analysis from the negotiated order perspective she is identifying individual worker goals and how they attain them.

Leidner also demonstrates worker resistance to the aspects of formal rationality that they found particularly offensive. For instance, “Workers disobeyed the rule about suggestive selling whenever they could get away with it” (1993:140). Her analysis can be translated into the negotiated order terminology. She provides data that indicate implicit negotiation between managers, workers, and customers concerning suggestive selling. It was in management’s best interest for workers to suggest additional products; this practice annoyed many customers. Employees “were more likely to resolve this dilemma in the customers’ favor, because management had not created any incentives that brought the workers interests into line with their own” (1993:140). The divergent interests of customers and management affected the social order of the restaurant. Management wants workers to engage in suggestive selling and negotiates for this by asking workers
to do so. When workers engage in suggestive selling customers often become annoyed, they negotiate against this annoyance by acting disparagingly toward employees. Employees are caught between customers and management. In this case, the customers’ implicit negotiation action (acting annoyed) is more compelling than management’s negotiation (continually requesting but not sanctioning employees) many employees reorder their environment by refusing to engage in suggestive selling. Per the negotiated order perspective, this arrangement is not permanent. Managers could renegotiate, by offering employees rewards or sanctions that may (but not necessarily) convince workers to engage in the practice of suggestive selling. This situation is very similar to what Morgan (1975) described, except for the fact that I have superimposed negotiated order terminology on Leidner’s account of this instance of negotiation.

Leidner, like Reiter, identifies scheduling as an issue of central importance to McDonald’s employees. She reports considerable variation in the number of hours desired by workers. Although, some workers were content with few hours, others who desired more hours “were expected to compete for them, proving themselves deserving through conscientious job performance. In practice, a core group of about twenty steady workers was sure to get its preferred hours, but cutting back an employee’s hours was a standard way the managers showed their displeasure over poor performance or attitude” (1991:62). She also reports that management may seek to lengthen or shorten individual shifts depending on the number of customers at a given time. Workers tended to be successful in obtaining a schedule that fit their needs. “For example, workers who played on a high school team could cut down their hours during the sports season, and workers who needed to take a particular day off could usually arrange it if they gave sufficient
notice’’ (1993:64). Although she does not analyze the process by which workers are able
to negotiate for desired schedules, she does identify a possible site of negotiation. In a
process that will be described in chapter four, workers will move from the periphery to
the “core” to increase their position in negotiations. Despite the fact that Leidner’s
ethnography does not mention negotiated order, she does show how the social order of
the restaurant is continually created through structured interaction as the negotiated order
perspective posits it.

Katherine Newman

Katherine Newman’s (1999), *No Shame in My Game*, examines impoverished fast
food employees in Harlem. Although the focus of the work is much wider than
interactions within restaurants, she does present data that is relevant to workplace
negotiations. For instance, she explains how the high unemployment rate in Harlem
serves to depress job wages (1999:63). From the negotiated order perspective one might
conclude that the structural context of the restaurant, in this case the unemployment rate,
impinges on the negotiation context by reducing the power of employees in negotiations
over wages. Newman also describes the process by which prospective employees
negotiate for a position. She explains how employees seeking employment must carefully
present themselves and use social net works. Newman also relates that managers cannot
accomplish their goals by simply resting on their power to dismiss disobedient
employees. She explains:

Ninety percent of Fernando’s job involves coaxing his
workforce to abide by the dozens of rules the firm imposes
over the preparation of food. There are regulations covering
virtually every move a worker makes in the production
process. While he has the authority to discipline workers,
who fail to cooperate, he has discovered what most
manages come to know in time: a willing workforce is much easier to supervise. And as Fernando points out, you cannot keep a constant watch on everybody (1999:179).

This "coaxing" may also be described as Fernando’s negotiation with his employees to encourage workers to follow the regulations that have been set by the corporation.

Tony Royle

Tony Royle (2000), in *Working for McDonald’s in Europe*, presents data on fast food work. Royle analyzes the relationship between workers and managers in Europe, with particular attention given to Germany and Great Britain. He considers how workers individually and collectively seek to achieve their personal aims. Royle’s data indicate that the negotiated order perspective may be used to study fast food restaurants.

Royle found that there were a number of motivations for employment at McDonald’s. Economic marginalization drives many foreign-born and minority workers to McDonald’s in search of employment. Workers that have failed out of college or an apprenticeship may come to McDonald’s for a second chance at a managerial career. There are “coasters” whose employment at McDonald’s allows them to ‘tread water’ while they decide what they want to do with their life. These workers may be uninterested in climbing the corporate ladder. There are workers who have no previous experience or who only want part-time employment (Royle 2000). Workers that approach the metaphorical bargaining table at McDonald’s for the above reasons may have little in the way of resources to negotiate for increased autonomy. By considering the individual motivations of employees, as well as their reasons for choosing to work and continuing to work at a given restaurant we can begin to understand how workers go about negotiating
for their ends. We may be able to delineate the limits of negotiation. As well as why workers may not attempt to negotiate for some goals.

Royle explains how workers may resist managerial directives by creating “short cuts” or sabotaging the food. In contrast to the image of the completely controlled worker presented by Garson (1988), Royle asserts that workers often ignore orders that are not in their interest. He writes, “Although there are rules and tight procedures for everything and managers usually working alongside closely monitor the work, workers do sometimes find shortcuts…” (2000:60). He relates that these short cuts tend to occur when the restaurant is busy and the formally rational plan will not be effective. These mavericks were labeled ‘cowboys’ in one UK restaurant. Royle quotes a floor manager, “yeah, some of the lads, the ‘cowboys’ have figured out how to save time on cleaning, missing out some of the steps but getting the same results. Or, sometimes, they make more burgers than are required by the shift leader on the wrap and call station, so that they get a short break” (2000:60). Some workers engaged in acts of sabotage, such as allowing sweat or “nasal fluid” to enter the food, serving food that had fallen on the floor, and making food with purposely unwashed hands. Additionally, the food may not be prepared according to specifications. He claims that managers sometimes assume what Gouldner called an “indulgency pattern” where managers “turn a blind eye” to deviant behavior “providing that customer demand is met” (2000:60). Although he is not using these terms, this account represents a negotiation of the social order. First, management establishes a formal rational plan of action. Second, workers adjust this plan to better fit their own needs being careful to meet the more important goals of the organization. Third, management accepts these changes. This negotiation is not final, workers could try
for too much, go over the line, so to speak, and at which point management might react by decreasing autonomy.

In addition to examining the individual negotiations between workers and management, Royle also considers group negotiations. While collective bargaining has been virtually nonexistent in North America for legal and cultural reasons, European nations tend to be more culturally and legally supportive of unions. These structural differences allow for greater space for negotiation than is found in the United States. In other words, the structural context (in this case laws and norms) affects the negotiation context. When McDonald’s first entered the European market, they resisted unionization (Royle 2000). For the most, part unions have been unable to muster a desired level of influence. However, European workers have had more success in terms of collective action than their North American counterparts. Royle explains how a combination of cultural values, economic forces, laws, and individual motivations has allowed workers to engage in collective bargaining (Royle 2000). Additionally, unions exert a limited amount of influence on McDonald’s they have been able to reorder their environment so that collective bargaining or negotiation is possibility (Royle 2000). Royle relates that unions have improved the pay where they have existed (2000:171). His data show that collective bargaining and legal regulations are more efficacious means of achieving the goals of fast food workers than individual negotiations.

Negotiations between unequal parties are not likely to yield equitable results. The negotiated order perspective does not argue that fast food restaurants are unable to exploit workers. Rather, negotiated order demonstrates how organizational interactions are not unidirectional. It is significant that employees continue to lose the battle. The social order
continually arises from interaction and management must continue to see that its goals are met. The negotiated order perspective argues that rationalistic oppression is a process of keeping the worker down. In this difficult undertaking, one might expect that in different negotiation contexts, particularly ones where management has fewer resources, (as may be the case in smaller franchises) workers might be more able to negotiate for autonomy. Using the negotiated order perspective to understand fast food restaurants does not mean that workers will necessarily achieve their goals. Even though Royle is not coming from a negotiated order perspective he presents data that suggest that the negotiated order perspective may be a useful way to understand how workers may use their agency to reorder their environment to their own benefit.

Stuart Tannock

Stuart Tannock (2001) in, *Youth at Work*, examined the implications of unionization in two industries that employ large numbers of young workers, fast food restaurants and grocery stores. His data on a unionized Canadian fast food restaurant he names “Fry House” are relevant to this study. Tannock’s research is interesting from a negotiated order perspective in that he is concerned with how age, culture, and related structural issues serve to weaken young workers in negotiations. Moreover, Tannock explains how unionized workers are more able to achieve their goals than are non-unionized workers (2001).

Tannock contributes to an understanding of the negotiated order of a fast food restaurant by noting the substantial differences between workplace environments. Tannock explains, “The working communities found in the different outlets are not solely the creation of workers; they are the result of interactions among workers, managers,
corporate employers, and local environments— as well as the union local that represents these workers” (2001:71). He argues that working environments emerge through negotiations. Workers may exert some influence over the labor process through negotiation. For example, in some instances, workers will band together to pressure a disliked manager to leave (2001:75).

Tannock supports the negotiated order perspective when he concludes:

Sociologists conventionally describe the fast-food industry using the framework of routinization. Researchers point to routinization, along with close managerial supervision and the indoctrination of workers into global corporate cultures, as the key element of management control in the fast-food workplace. The example of Glenwood suggests that patterns of control and worker-manager relations may be more complicated (2001:82).

As we will find in the chapters that follow, employers are not able to simply control the labor process.

Tannock summarizes the advantages of unionization at one union. He writes, “Higher starting wages, guaranteed raises, employer-provided benefits, and just-cause job protection from arbitrary discipline and termination constitute the basic union advantage for young Glenwood Fry House workers” (2001:158). Unionization is not an automatic panacea; rather its usefulness is borne out in negotiations. Tannock claims, “These contrasts in the benefits of unionism for young stopgap workers in Box Hill and Glenwood are not accidental. Local C has made an explicit commitment to minimizing differences between junior and senior and younger and older workers in the Fry House bargaining unit” (2001:160). Tannock’s research demonstrates the possible affects of unionization on the negotiation context of a fast food restaurant.
Greta Paules

Greta Paules (1991), an anthropologist, produced an ethnographic account of waitresses at a chain restaurant located on an interstate highway in New Jersey. As her title, *Dishing it Out: Power and Resistance among Waitresses in a New Jersey Restaurant*, indicates she is presenting “a study of women who are neither organized nor upwardly mobile yet actively and effectively strive to protect and enhance their position at work” (1991:1). Paules begins *Dishing it Out* with a description of the field. She discusses the geographic location of the chain restaurant she labels “Route”, on an interstate highway in an area “undergoing rapid residential and commercial development” (1991:2). This constitutes an important aspect of the negotiation context of the restaurant. Her ethnography is not from the negotiated order perspective, however it is very similar to what might come from this perspective. For example, Paules asserts:

the Route waitress is not passive. She is engaged in ongoing efforts to shield herself from the emotional and financial hazards of her occupation and advance her work interests. Her strategies of action include... methods of manipulating management to ensure her grievances and demands will be heeded; and techniques for controlling the movement of customers thought the restaurant to maximize her tip income (1991:10).

It is also interesting, that some workers are in a better position to negotiate for ends than others are. She writes, “all waitresses are not equally skilled or aggressive in defending their interests. Full-time workers are more prone to rebuke impatient or impolite customers, more fearless in reproaching management, and more adept at manipulating the tipping system” (1991:11). Although, Paules’ ethnography is dealing with waitresses in a ‘sit down’ restaurant and not fast food, her subjects have a great deal in common with fast food workers. Paules’ ethnography focuses on low-level food servers in a formally

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rational chain of restaurants. Fast food workers, although structurally less autonomous and less skilled face similar issues in a similar environment. Both types of workers may attempt to renegotiate a formally rational food service establishment.

In a chapter entitled, "Sources of Autonomy," she delineates the reasons why routinization has been limited at Route. She lists inadequate training, the tipping system, a chaotic environment, high managerial turnover, labor shortages, and the manager's role as fill-in man as sources of autonomy for waitresses. For example:

Employees also exploit the manager's vulnerability as fill-in man directly, to increase their control and resist interference in their work lives. Between managers and senior employees, and especially experienced waitresses, virtually all negotiation takes the form of an ultimatum: management must comply with the employee's demands or redress her grievance, or she will leave. So often does a cook threaten to walk off the line or a waitress threaten to walk off the floor, that the act has acquired an almost ritual consistency. In the following instance, a waitress who was angered that a co-waitress was staying late and potentially "tapping into" her money, ensured that she would be favorably "seated," despite the extra person on the floor, by threatening to walk out.

I said, "Innes, I'm in [station] one and two. If one and two is not filled at all times from now until three, I'm getting my coat, my pocketbook, and I'm leaving." And one and two was filled, and I made ninety-five dollars (emphasis in original) (quoted in Paules 1991:91).

Here, we see how waitresses are able to take advantage of structural features (labor pressures, diminished managerial authority) to change the social order to their individual advantage. Waitresses are able to interpret their situation and militate for increased autonomy accordingly.

In a chapter entitled, "Up a Crooked Ladder," Paules builds on her argument that diminished managerial prestige and the ability of waitresses to achieve their ends have
led to a situation where waitresses often eschew the concept of vertical mobility. Waitresses see themselves as being in a better position than managers, and consequently do not seek out promotions to management. The implication here is that waitresses are able to decide for themselves what their course of action should be. Instead of accepting the corporation's notion of promotion through loyal service, these waitresses are able to act in a way that allows them to achieve their ends (Paules 1991).

Paules concludes the ethnography by restating her main point that waitresses are capable of negotiating the routinized restaurant. Waitresses are able to autonomously reach their own ends because of their adaptation to structural conditions such as tipping system, the shortage of labor and supplies and the diminished authority of management. These workers are actively exploiting structural features in order to gain autonomy. Without personal agency, these waitresses would not be able to reorder their social order through negotiation. Structure will not create autonomy on its own; workers in highly rationalized environments must take advantage of it if they are to affect their social order. Paules is not explicitly using the negotiated order perspective, yet her work demonstrates how negotiated order may be used to understand a rationalized food service environment.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate how the negotiated order perspective could be used to inform ethnographic research on fast food workers. Weber, Braverman, and Ritzer have theorized that rationalization and scientific management have reduced the freedom of employees. One group arguably most constrained by these processes has been fast food workers. Ethnographic research by Garson (1988); Reiter (1991); Leidner
(1993); Newman (1998); Royle (2000); Tannock (2001) has augmented the theoretical work on rationalization.

Ethnographies of routinized restaurants present a multitude of data that is relevant to this study. Paules (1991) and Royle (2000) show how structural features affected workers' negotiations for increased autonomy. Leidner (1993) and Reiter (1991) considered how workers negotiated for autonomy. Individually, they differ somewhat on how much autonomy workers have; however, all agree that autonomy is severely limited. However, these ethnographies, excluding Paules (1991), focus on one type of restaurant, namely McDonald's or similarly designed restaurants. They do not adequately consider the differentiation of the fast food industry. Ethnographic research that analyzes fast food restaurants from the negotiated order perspective may come to find a great deal of diversity in the lived experience of fast food restaurants. Research that makes use of participant observation data in different negotiation contexts may find differences between. An ethnography written from the negotiated order perspective that takes the individual actor's rational and extrarational motivations and actions into account will be able to demonstrate not only how social order is maintained through processes of interaction, but also how individuals are free within rationalized environments.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

There are a number of means of collecting empirical data. A researcher must choose
his or her methodology by examining the research questions, theoretical guidance, and
the available resources (i.e. time, money, and skills). Fortunately, researchers in the
planning stages of a descriptive study usually have a wealth of past research to guide
their project. This descriptive study is no exception. There are a number of existing
studies of fast food restaurants as well as analyses from the negotiated order perspective.
These studies guided my research design. Most studies of negotiated order and of fast
food restaurants have used qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodologies are used
to examine a large number of features of a few cases (Ragin 1994). Qualitative methods
measure data that is expressed as words and include, field work and observations,
interviews, qualitative content analysis, and historical analysis (Neuman 2000). After
considering the existing literature, the particular resources that were available, as well as
my biographical relationship to the subject matter, I chose to collect data through a
combination of auto-ethnographic and observational means.

Negotiated Order, Fast Food, and
Qualitative Methodology

The overriding purpose of this study is to demonstrate how fast food restaurants
exemplify the maintenance of social order through processes of negotiation. Additionally,
by using the negotiated order perspective to analyze the employee-employee and employee-employer interactions at a fast food restaurant we may understand how and under what structural conditions the employees in fast food restaurants may attain their personal goals. Although this is the first study to analyze fast food restaurants using the negotiated order perspective, there have been several studies from the negotiated order perspective and ethnographies of fast food restaurants.

The analysis of the negotiated order of any milieu requires research methodologies that collect in-depth or rich data. To analyze a milieu from the negotiated order perspective researchers must obtain descriptions of individuals’ motivations, actions, and interpretations. Additionally, a researcher must be aware of structural data such as laws, cultural norms, and power. Lastly, the researcher should trace the negotiations over time. Qualitative methodology is appropriate to the study of negotiations in a fast food restaurant for a number of reasons. First, qualitative methodology allows a researcher to analyze the full complexity of a setting (Gubrium and Holstein 1997). Second, Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein assert, “Qualitative research also is distinguished by a commitment to studying social life in process, as it unfolds” (1991:12). Thirdly, qualitative research attempts to reach subjective meanings (Gubrium and Holstein 1997). For these reasons, researchers working from the negotiated order perspective employ qualitative studies of a small number of cases. Participant observation was used by Strauss et al. to study psychiatric hospitals (1963, 1981). Likewise, Tim Faupel and Charles Faupel (1987) used fieldwork to analyze an Introduction to Sociology classroom. Judith Levy (1982) who studied the interaction between Hospice and medical organizations used in-depth interviews and some observations. Raymond Lee (1980)
employed a historical analysis of documents and journalistic accounts to study ethnic relations in Malaysia. Lawrence Busch (1982) used historical analysis to study the negotiations over agricultural research. Researchers may combine a number of methods such as observations and interviews. For instance, Albert Meehan (1992) analyzed data drawn from fieldwork, interviews, and an analysis of calls made to the police, in his study of the negotiated order of policing.

A number of social scientific studies of fast food restaurants have used qualitative data. Royle’s (2000) cross-cultural study of European McDonald’s restaurants made use of participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews, with the bulk of his data coming from interviews. Reiter (1991) explains that after some difficulty gaining entrée she worked without pay at a Burger King restaurant in Ontario for a year. Leidner (1993) used a combination of observations and structured interviews. Tannock’s (2001) data come from observations of two union halls and the public spaces of restaurants and grocery stores and unstructured interviews with workers and union representatives. Newman (1998) oversaw a team of researchers who collected data through participant observation, interviews, and diaries. Regardless of their specific focus, these descriptive or exploratory studies have largely sought to demonstrate the actual working experience of fast food employees, the meanings that this work has, and how the lives of workers may be improved. Qualitative methods were used to obtain details that are often left untouched by quantitative research (Ragin 1994).

Goals of the Study

This study is an attempt to contribute to existing theory (Ragin 1994). The negotiated order perspective conceived of by Strauss is not a fully developed theory (1978). Strauss
delineates a number of possible ways in which researchers may contribute to a theory of negotiation. He writes:

there are those who while doing substantive research find also they can contribute to a general theory of negotiation. ... they might elaborate sections of the paradigm that are sparse or underdeveloped-as by working through the implications of an additional negotiation contextual property, by following out in more detail a property already noted by me or any other theorist, by focusing intensively on different subprocesses and types of negotiation interaction, or by treating the same ones more elaborately. Another conventional and entirely necessary possibility is to qualify the formulated theory, since some of its parts are inadequate or inaccurate. (1978:244).

The negotiated order perspective has been used to analyze a number of different milieus. With the exception of Morgan (1975), few studies from the negotiated order perspective analyze highly rationalized social orders. This research attempts to contribute to the negotiated order perspective by demonstrating how social order is maintained through negotiation between actors who have relatively little autonomy. Moreover, this study seeks add to the negotiated order perspective by collecting data that will inform the existing sensitizing concepts (such as implicit negotiations or structural context). A second, related objective is to describe the negotiations that employees engage in to attain their ends. A third objective is to better understand the concept of autonomy as it relates to the rationalized work place. A fourth objective of the study is to the substantive understanding of labor in fast food restaurants. While there have been a number of ethnographies of fast food restaurants, the diversity of employee experience in fast food restaurants has not been fully presented. McDonald's and Burger King and similarly structured restaurants account for the majority of fast food ethnographies. These restaurants tend to have a highly differentiated or specialized labor process. However,
there are thousands of fast food restaurants that are less differentiated. Likewise, corporations operate some fast food restaurants while others are operated by individual franchisees. There is considerable diversity for capital required for the purchase and operation of a fast food restaurant. I believe that these variables may have an important impact on the lived experience of workers.

Choosing a Data Collection Method

Studies of negotiated order require the richly detailed data that are generated by qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and participant observation. For a host of reasons, I choose to collect my data through observations. Based on Morgan’s (1975) study of the negotiated order of a factory, I conjectured that the negotiations that would occur in a fast food restaurant would tend to be implicit rather than formally articulated. Observing the negotiations that might occur in a highly rationalized environment would necessitate careful analysis. Workers may not be entirely cognizant of the negotiations that are occurring. Moreover, in order to understand the process of implicit negotiations I would have to observe how workers interacted with each other and with management. Observational data would allow me to understand what is important to workers and for what they would and could negotiate. Reiter explains the advantages of fieldwork over interviews, “Sometimes answers do not jibe with what people actually do or think when they are in a situation. For example, one worker I knew would insist on how much she loved her job at Burger King, but when I saw her at work, she always looked bored and unhappy” (1991:76). She also relates, “involvement in the situation allows researchers the opportunity to learn something they didn’t know before” (1991:76). By taking observations, I was in a position to record what occurred in the setting.
Data Collection

Danny Jorgensen writes, “selection of a setting is interrelated with problem being studied” (1989:40). The objectives of this study and theoretical concerns guided my selection of setting. Grinders and Anna’s were selected, in part, through purposive sampling, which is used “when a researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation” (Neuman 2000:198). I wanted my observations to come from restaurants with reasonably small, undifferentiated crews, which were owned by individual franchisees. Firstly, this type of fast food restaurant has not been adequately studied. Additionally, I believed that the processes of negotiation would be easier to observe and document in a simple organization, than in a more complex one. Although, I infer that the social order of complex restaurants is maintained through negotiation, it will be easier to document the processes of negotiation in complex restaurants once more simplistic restaurants have been studied.

Convenience and feasibility also played a decisive factor in the selection of sites. As Jorgensen explains, “the selection of a setting for participant observation... is contingent on (1) whether or not you can obtain access to the setting, (2) the range of possible participant roles you might assume, and (3) whether or not this role (or roles) will provide sufficient access to phenomena of interest” (1989:41). My biography led me to two franchises. Over a period of a number of years, I have been employed by four different Grinders franchisees. I have spent over six thousand hours working at six different restaurants in very different environments. During my career at Grinders, I was a sociology student. I was always interested in trying to gain a scientific understanding of my personal experiences. I kept a daily journal of my experiences during my most recent
tenure, where I was employed full time for a little under a month, in the summer of 2001. I placed entries in it at the end of each shift. This journal provides the bulk of my data from Grinders. Given my deep immersion into the world of Grinders I have access to data that may otherwise be unobtainable. This deep immersion is important because, the ability to reach the hidden details of implicit negotiations is crucial to the success of the study. Norm Denzin explains how a researcher may achieve this goal, “Because the covert act is so difficult to penetrate, I have advocated the use of introspective-investigator accounts of the self in process. Such accounts provide the basic source of data on the covert features of the public act” (1978:15).

As an insider, I have been able to understand processes of negotiation that may have remained hidden to an outsider. My decision to is not unorthodox. Jorgensen writes, “the researcher already may be a participant before deciding formally to conduct research in the setting” (1989:41). Additionally, David Hayano relates “some auto-ethnographers worked at various jobs before or even during their careers as professional social scientists, and later analyzed their experiences” (1979:100).

Observing a second franchise deepened my perspective and increased the generalizability of the study. Obtaining access to a particular milieu can be very problematic. A number of researchers who have studied fast food restaurants have reported difficulty in gaining entrée (Leidner 1993; Reiter 1991; Royle 2000). Fortunately, I am acquainted with a franchisee who allowed me to be a semi-employee at his fast food restaurant named Anna’s. Fred allowed me to perform job tasks such as cleaning and some food preparation. I observed Anna’s on twelve different occasions for

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over eighty hours, in the fall of 2001. The employees knew that I was conducting research, so I was able to ask them questions.

Ethnographers usually do not have the ability to state with any degree of statistical accuracy their confidence in the generalizability of their sample. Denzin explains.

The naturalistic observer seldom can specify with precise detail the universe of interactive relationships he wishes to generalize to. He takes several approaches to the problem. He may... locate himself in a situation where the joint act occurs and argue that his sample is drawn from the behaviors of all people who pass through this situation...” (1978:19).

The two restaurants represent a venue where one is able to observe what may occur in a fast food restaurant. While, I maintain that there is a tremendous diversity in the lived experience of fast food employees, there are limits on that diversity. Franchised fast food restaurants are based on a rationalized plan. A single restaurant in a franchise will share a similar labor process, similar structuring of hierarchy, and similar equipment with all other restaurants within the franchise. In as much as every Grinders restaurant where I have been employed is distinct in some ways there are many commonalities. For instance, franchisees instruct their employees to slice the rolls in the same way. Most employees wear roughly equivalent uniforms within the franchise. Each restaurant owned the same brand of tomato slicer. By definition, there are important similarities in fast food restaurants of the same chain. Consequently, most franchised fast food restaurants will share some common experiences. In addition to arguing that all fast food restaurants (regardless of chain) share some common features, it is important to note the “theoretically relevant features” of the restaurants that I observed (Denzin 1978b:19). For instance, the restaurants that I observed are located in large cities, they are owned by a
husband and wife; they have relatively small crews (under twenty employees). Relevant theoretical features are identified throughout the analysis.

Difficulties and Limitations

Each type of methodology carries with it certain intrinsic limitations. Autoethnography and participant observation are no exception. There is some debate over the degree to which qualitative social scientists should be aware of how their personal biography impinges on their interpretations (Gubrium and Holstein 1997). My biographical relationship to the subject is significant. Whatever biases arose from the closeness of biography to the setting at Grinders should be offset by my distance from the setting at Anna’s. Conversely, whatever relevant data I was unable to uncover at Anna’s due to my outsider status was corrected by my insider status at Grinders. In short, by using two types of observational data I surmise that the problems associated with either type of observation will be offset. Moreover, it should be noted that this work is not an exercise in praxis. I did not begin with the intention of improving the lives of workers. This study is simply a negotiated order analysis of simple fast food restaurants. Therefore, feelings of sympathy or camaraderie will have little influence on my findings or conclusions.

There is also some difficulty in the actual recording of observations at fast food restaurants (Reiter 1991; Royle 2000). It is often difficult to take notes in hectic environments. I corrected for this problem by recording my observations shortly after leaving the field. While I cannot attest to the absolute veracity of quotations and descriptions, in each case they are very close to what actually occurred, any distortions are most likely insignificant.
Ethical Issues

There are a number of ethical issues that arise when observing human subjects. These non-mutually exclusive issues include, the need to protect subjects from legal, physical, and emotional harm; the need to preserve the anonymity or confidentiality of the subjects; to obtain informed consent; and to not misrepresent oneself in the field (Neuman 2000). These ethical issues are based on not causing harm to the people who provide scientists with data. The non-controversial nature of this study and the concerted effort to maintain confidentiality have protected my subjects from any reasonable possibility of harm. Observations were taken at Anna’s after receiving approval from the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board on October 31, 2001. After submitting my request to observe Anna’s I submitted a revision to my original protocol requesting permission to analyze my biographical data. Many identifying characteristics have been altered or suppressed. For instance, the names of the restaurant, employees, and franchisees have been changed. It is sincerely believed that none of the data presented here are of a seriously controversial or damaging nature. In many parts, the data relate to my own personal experience as an employee at a fast food restaurant. As mentioned above, working at Grinders is a substantial aspect of my biography. Criticisms of a privileged ethnographer obtaining data from a marginalized group are not relevant here.
CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEGOTIATED
ORDER OF A FAST FOOD
RESTAURANT

In this chapter, I will apply the negotiated order perspective to fast food restaurants. While the social order of the fast food industry is subject to negotiation at many levels and amongst a myriad of different actors, this analysis will focus on the negotiations between coworkers and franchisees. I will begin by introducing the site of the negotiation, including the general features of each restaurant and the specific actors. The chapter will then move to discuss the cast of a typical fast food restaurant and what their individual motivations and strategies may be. Next, the essential aspects of negotiations will be considered including strategies, the negotiation context, structural context, and temporal aspects. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the specific issues that were negotiated in the restaurants. The issues are separated into two types, external (including wages, scheduling, and security) and internal (including job task assignment and the definition of deviance). While the point of view of the franchisees will be taken into account, this analysis focuses on the perspective of individual workers.

A Tale of Two Franchises

This research is largely based on my personal experiences and observations at two nationally franchised fast food restaurants. Both franchises are less uniform than McDonald’s (Jackle and Sculle 1999). In both locations the franchisor seemed to exercise
less control than what Royle described at McDonald's (2000). Grinders specializes in long sandwiches, commonly referred to as submarines, heroes, hoagies, or in this case grinders. Anna's specializes in ice cream, but also presents a menu of hamburgers, hotdogs, fried chicken, and french fries. Both Grinders and Anna's are less differentiated than the McDonald's or Burger King restaurants that have been studied by other researchers (Reiter 1991; Leidner 1993; Royle 2000). The relatively simple division of labor allows for a more clear portrayal of the negotiation of social order. Although these restaurants are less complex than some fast food franchises, they still operate according to a uniformly rational model. By outlining the salient features of the structural and negotiation contexts, we can achieve a sense of how the social order of the fast food restaurant is achieved through cooperation amidst competition. The following will describe the setting, and the cast, of each location. Afterwards, I will present a more general description of the types of actors, their motivations, abilities, and their position vis-à-vis other actors.

Grinders

The location where much of my auto-ethnographic data is based is a mature restaurant in a commercial center of a large northeastern city. The restaurant is located in a freestanding building within walking distance of a number of hotels, businesses, and other entities with a high number of employees. Located in a dense commercial location it did not have a drive through window. The restaurant was usually busy between 11:00 AM and 2:30 PM on weekdays. After lunch (about 2:30 PM) and weekends were relatively slow. However, conventioneers at the nearby hotels would sporadically supplement the restaurants business.
At Grinders, customers ordered from an employee who would fix the sandwich or salad. All of the materials for sandwich construction were located in front of the employee. Who would prepare the order and either receive payment or pass the wrapped item to the person at the register. There are three principle job tasks: food preparation (such as slicing vegetables, mixing tuna fish and mayonnaise, etc.), cleaning, and customer service (constructing sandwiches, and operating the cash register). During busy periods there would be four or five workers continually taking customer orders while another employee or more likely James (the franchisee) or Kiran (James’ wife and the manager) stayed on the cash register. The workers labored under confined conditions. Frequently, there were too many or too few well-trained employees working during the busy periods. Whenever the crew was short staffed, the employees who were present would attempt to compensate for their missing compatriots. Whenever too many people were working at one time, it would be difficult for the employees to maneuver around each other. During busy lunches, the line of customers would stretch to the entrance. Employees would struggle to prepare food items around their coworkers and to isolate the voice of their individual customer from the cacophony of voices. When James was present, he would usually operate the cash register; otherwise, Kiran would receive payment. When business was slow, the same employee who filled the customer’s order would take money from the customer.

The crew was ethnically and racially diverse; it consisted of two franchisees, three core employees, and a fluid stock of periphery, less dependable characters. A core member may be defined as one who is capable of performing most of the routine tasks and has worked for a relatively long amount of time. An indication of core status might
be if an employee is asked to help train new employees. The core members included two twenty-year old Puerto Rican college students named Juanita and Maria; an eighteen-year old high school student of mixed racial background named Shawn; an Indian thirty something named James who owned the restaurant and his wife Kiran who managed the restaurant. Shawn, Maria, and Juanita were able to do almost all of the tasks that were required to run the restaurant. Due to their centrality, they held a distinct position in negotiations. The restaurant would be far less profitable for James and Kiran were it not for the presence of the core workers. Moreover, the core workers relieved Kiran and James of a great deal of the worry over the mundane details of restaurant management. An essential feature of core employee status is that core employees effectively exercise authority over peripheral employees in the absence of the franchisee. However, for all their competence, this particular restaurant simply could not function effectively on the labors of the core figures alone. A constantly changing pool of periphery employees contributed to the restaurant. During my month long tenure (including me) four people resigned, (one of whom Kiran claims that she was about to fire), and one was fired (the worker claimed that she was about to resign). In the same time period four people were hired. The periphery employees could be divided into two groups, the competent, and the incompetent. Of course, this is a sliding scale; employees can be relatively useful or useless (some employees were so incompetent that they became a physical obstacle) to their co-workers. A competent peripheral employee may be peripheral due to part-time status or having only been employed for a brief period of time (three employees at Grinders fit this description). An incompetent peripheral employee is simply one who for whatever reason is of little usefulness to coworkers or management. An actor's status as a
core or periphery worker has an important affect on the workers position in the ongoing negotiations.

A crew may change over time. According to one core employee, James had originally run the restaurant with enthusiasm, but over the years, he came to be less and less concerned with the daily operation of this location. Perhaps, his other Grinder restaurant was a distraction or maybe he was slowly burning out. Whatever the cause, James did not present himself as someone who identified with his franchise. I never witnessed even a hint of the corporate ideology that has been reported by other ethnographers (Reiter 1991). There was some concern that he might sell the restaurant. The Grinders restaurant was well worn. I presume the equipment was purchased when James first bought the restaurant was fairly beaten up. The walk in freezer appeared to be in constant danger of failure. The food disposal broke down periodically. The schedule was often posted a few days late or not at all. We were usually out of some menu items. James’ lack of enthusiasm was of central importance to the negotiations. The employees who sought to negotiate implicitly or explicitly for there own benefit from their own position interpreted his position. The core employees tended to be somewhat extroverted and seemed to feel quite comfortable in expressing their concerns. In fact, the extroverted behavior extended into other spheres of behavior that had nothing to do with jockeying for preferable job tasks or scheduling. Shawn would loudly announce the arrival of his birthday or his displeasure with a given shift. Maria and Shawn might have a conversation about their home lives. As the employees felt comfortable expressing themselves, they often made their motivations known as easily as any other aspect of their life that they felt sharing with the group. This ease with their surroundings influenced the pursuit of their interests.
Anna’s

The Anna’s restaurant is located on the corner of an intersection in a freestanding building complete with a sizable parking lot and drive through window. The restaurant has a large dining area, an area for the preparation of desert food that is within customer’s view and a grill and deep fryer in the kitchen. Additionally, there is a break room and storage area. The restaurant is located near a residential area in a large city. Anna’s business is largely comprised of the families in the surrounding residential area. Given the restaurant’s heavy emphasis on traditional summertime desserts, the weather is an important component of the structural context of the social order. The volume of business or rather the franchisee’s interpretation of the volume of business is directly related to the terms of negotiation. The observations were made during the off-season. The crew had already been reduced to Fred, the franchisee; his wife, Cary; two core employees, Sandra and Dianne; and two part-time workers named John and Mike.

While Grinders seemed to be a portrait of constant strife and fluidity, Anna’s was far more static. The schedule did not change substantially from week to week. The crew was stable; there was no turnover during my observations. Fred, who unlike James, was not divided between two locations was able to devote his full attention to the maintenance of the restaurant. His near constant presence significantly reduced the autonomy of the employees. Sandra and Dianne were so overwhelmingly competent that they did not have any difficulty serving the customers according to the established routine. The literature on routinized labor tends to focus on large operations that have a highly differentiated labor force. This restaurant, which during the busy season may become highly differentiated, was operating with a reduced crew. During the occasional busy period, a
single employee may have to perform the work of two or three employees. This was possible because the franchisee and the workers had honed their skills to the point where they could seamlessly work with each other. As with any fast food restaurant, the labor process at Anna’s is highly routinized. There is a very specific procedure for each menu item. Large parties would arrive; one worker would take the order while the other would prepare it. One worker would go to the kitchen to grill or fry the dinner foods while the other would prepare the dessert items. The worker who finished first would package the food. The clockwork operations stood in stark contrast to the near chaos of Grinders.

The Cast

Individuals have their own motivations for entering the restaurant. These motivations may be similar or disparate. Likewise, actors may be in conflict or in allegiance with each another. Confusing the situation is that the same two individuals who are working together for one end may be conflict over another. Two employees who are cooperating to close the restaurant on time may be in conflict over who will receive a certain day off. The individuals are existential selves, each with their own motivations that may include rational and extra-rational desires. These desires may shift and change with the situation. A number of structural factors such as regulations, the weather, the economy, and cultural values affect the milieu. The motivations, emotions, and social skills of the actors as well as their interpretation of the structural factors influence the negotiation context. The franchisee and the employees form the core of the social order. In addition to the franchisee and the employees, there is an endless succession of competitors, property owners, suppliers, regulatory agents, customers, and the franchisee and its representatives, who each make their presence felt as they bargain for their interests.
The Franchisee

The franchisee stands at the center of negotiations in the social order of the fast food restaurant. The franchisee must interact, directly or indirectly, with regulatory agencies, property owners, competitors, customers, employees, and the franchisor. If the franchisee is to be successful then all of the proceeding actors (with the exception of the competition) must be satisfied. Ultimately, all decisions and all actions are her or his responsibility and she or he retains immediate authority over what transpires. Corporate mandates can be ignored, irate customers can be refused service, insubordinate employees can be dismissed, and the board of health can be ignored. However, if a franchisee wants to keep her or his franchise, retain customers, maintain a crew, and avoid legal sanction, the franchisee must pacify all of the relevant actors. In the unstable environment of the restaurant, customers and employees must feel that they are receiving enough from the interaction for them to remain in the interaction. The restaurant depends on some actors individually (such as the franchisor or the board of health) or collectively (in the case of customers or employees).

In order to achieve her or his goals, a franchisee must interpret the demands of the people with whom she interacts. Myriad questions confront franchisees. What will a particular health inspector allow? How trustworthy are the employees? How competent are they to run the restaurant without supervision? How closely should the company line on prices, formulas, and decor be followed? How much will customers pay for a small order of french fries? How long will they wait for a milk shake? How much meat do they expect on their submarine sandwich? As the franchisee interprets the various demands
and predicts the most probable, actions of the individuals in question, the franchisee must then attempt to minimally satisfy all parties concerned.

The Employees

Collectively, the employees are an integral component of the restaurant. With the possible exception of restaurants that have very few customers, a franchisee cannot exist without help. The franchisee must interpret what employees will and will not do. A franchisee cannot make claims on employees that are out of line with the majority of their expectations. Individually, however, a single employee may be utterly replaceable. Given the virtual absence of unions in fast food restaurants in the United States, fast food employees are an atomized group. Fast food employees are just as likely to be in conflict with each other as they are to be in conflict with management. The interchangeability, which ostensibly weakens fast food workers, might also increase their power. In as much as they can be replaced easily, frequently, they may replace one fast food job with another. Since the job offers an employee little in the way of formal training or recognized skills, a worker who has been successful in obtaining one fast food job can usually expect to be capable of gaining another. The significance of this fact is that depending on the structural context (the unemployment rate, or the number of low skill jobs) a franchisee may have to compete with other employers. If a franchisee consistently offers his employees less in the way of wages or scheduling flexibility than do other employers in the immediate surroundings, the franchisee may find her or his restaurant suffering from a shortage of labor. Conversely, if there are few options for alternative employment, an employer may be able to make greater claims on his or her employees.
Like franchisees, fast food employees must assess the structural and the negotiation context if he or she is to be triumphant. Employees interpret the franchisee's desires, his or her value to the franchisee, the various biases and proclivities of the employer, and what can and cannot be negotiated with the franchisee. A franchisee that does not allow employees to use the telephone may allow them to have visitors. A core employee may be allowed to use the telephone while a peripheral employee may not.

As mentioned above, employees negotiate vertically (with management) and horizontally (with co-workers). There are a number of issues where co-workers will be in direct or indirect involvement with each other. For instance, in some restaurants, co-workers may have to negotiate the assignment of job tasks. Workers may be left to decide who will prepare vegetables, wait on customers, or clean the toilets. Scheduling issues, in terms of who gets to work when and who gets the most hours may bring workers into direct conflict or cooperation. Co-worker negotiation is exemplified by the common practices of "switching schedules" or having another worker "cover" for one who wishes to take a given day off. The agreement to do this is invariably worked out through some form of explicit or implicit negotiation. For instance, many years ago, one August evening, some friends of mine came in to visit me while I was working. They were going to see a movie in a nearby theatre. It was the end of the summer; I was tired of working, and anticipating the arrival of a substantial student loan check. In short, I really wanted to "blow off" work and go to the movie. I could not afford to simply quit, nor would I walk out on an employer who I personally liked. I was there with two co-workers, one who was scheduled to work until 11:00 PM; the other was due to leave five minutes ago. Neither had been trained to close the restaurant. That was my job. I could not trust the
one scheduled to work until 11:00 PM to manage the restaurant alone. My only hope was to convince the worker who was about to leave to cover the shift for me. I asked him if he would like to increase his hours. He informed me that he would not. I offered to pay him ten dollars on top of the extra three hours wages that he would earn while I was at the movie. Deal. This is a simple example of explicit co-worker negotiation. Notice that the features of the negotiation context such as the role of emotions and personal ties (not wanting to cause harm to my employer) trust (not trusting to leave my co-worker alone). Structural features (the presence of financial aid) also impinged on the negotiation context.

Successful employees are able to read the structural context and discern how it might affect the negotiation context. An employee who knows that there are a number of other similar jobs in the immediate vicinity may be able to claim more for herself than an employee working in an area plagued with a dearth of similar jobs. An employee must also be able to interpret the negotiation context. For instance, the emotions that are a part of any social environment may affect the negotiations at any given time. An employee who is in search of a raise or increased hours must interpret the optimal time to initiate negotiations with the franchisee.

The Significant Extras

In addition to the employees and employers, there are a number of other actors who take their part in the ongoing negotiations of the social order. Customers, franchisors, competitors, and regulatory agents (health inspectors) each pursuing different interests enter the negotiations. They are considered extras here because on any given day they may not actually negotiate directly or individually with either the franchisor or the
employees. First, there are the customers. Without enough customers, a restaurant will not be economically viable. While the customers, as a whole, drastically influence the social order, an individual customer has relatively little affect on the ongoing negotiations. If a single customer does not agree with the price a hamburger, the quality of the patty, or the length of wait, that single customer may negotiate 'with his feet' and never be missed. However, customers will have to be reckoned with if they all take a similar stance to an action by a franchisee or franchisor. Customers form a negotiating block in the ongoing incremental negotiations. In order to meet their goals, the franchisee and the franchisor attempt to interpret and meet the customer's expectations. Their recognition of customer demands significantly influences the negotiations. Issues that can and cannot be bargained for often depend on what employers' believe customers expect.

The health inspector affects the social order. On a typical day, the health inspector is unlikely to be directly involved with the restaurant. However, this official's judgement may have dire consequences for the franchisee and employees alike. If the health inspector finds regulations being ignored, the inspector may sanction the franchisee. This is a threat that Fred and Kiran, two franchisees thousands of miles apart, took very seriously. It can be assumed that most restaurateurs feel an ethical obligation to maintain sanitary conditions, but the government, in the person of the health inspector decides precisely what the standards will be. A single franchisee has little power in relation to the health inspector. I witnessed little in the way of negotiation between health inspectors and franchisees. The franchisees had nothing to offer health inspectors save their compliance to the impersonal social order. The impersonal social order that is enforced by the health inspector is itself a matter of explicit negotiation. Much like the governmental regulations
of the liquor industry, at some level, the laws that regulate restaurants, (or the laws that regulate the regulators) must be negotiated (Denzin 1977, 1978a). For instance, lobbyists working on behalf of the restaurant industry may influence the social order.

Like the health inspector, the franchisor sets the terms of the specific interaction. Many franchisees seek to ensure a level of uniformity by having periodic inspections of the franchisee. Interactions between franchisees and franchisors are highly variable. In some instances, franchisors maintain a great deal of control over franchisees; in other cases franchisees operate with relative autonomy. The terms of the interaction are set at the time of the contract signing. Potential franchisees have the option of selecting from a large pool of franchisees in order to find the arrangement that best suits his or her desires. The two franchisees under consideration here maintained a relatively high degree of autonomy from the franchisor. The corporation periodically inspected both restaurants, but these inspections did not seem to carry the weight of the health inspections. While the authority of the health inspector clearly weighed on the minds of Kiran and Fred neither franchisee expressed concern for the views of the franchisor. This lack of concern may partially be explained by the fact that many of the interests of the franchisee and the franchisor coincide. Both franchisee and franchisor want sales to be high. In addition to the name and the product, the franchisee purchased the formula for operation, it is only logical that the franchisee makes use of that formula, and with negligible exception they did. However, there are instances when the motives of franchisor’s and franchisees are in conflict (Royle 2000; Schlosser 2001).
Aspects of Negotiations

To examine the issues that may be negotiated in a franchised fast food restaurant, we must understand some of the essential features of negotiation. First, negotiations occur between actors who are attempting to satisfy varying desires. Each actor comes to the negotiations with different motivations. Actors with similar goals may attempt to achieve their goals through different means. We must be mindful of the negotiation context that surrounds the interactions. Unlike rational choice models of negotiation, this analysis is mindful of the role that emotions play in influencing the unfolding negotiations. Likewise, we cannot lose our awareness of the structural context that contains the negotiation context. Finally, the negotiated order perspective maintains that the negotiations over social order are never final, rather social order is fluid and must be continually renegotiated with changes in the structural and negotiation contexts, as well as when actor’s motivations change or when different individuals enter a milieu (Strauss 1978).

The Structural and Negotiation Contexts

The structural context of negotiations refers to the structural features that affect negotiations (Strauss 1978). Structure does not strictly determine the outcome of negotiations. However, an actor’s interpretation of the social structural, coupled with the actor’s interpretation of the other actor’s interpretation of the social structure yields a great influence on the negotiations. The structural context of a restaurant includes but is certainly not limited to the size of the restaurant, the volume of business, the weather, cultural beliefs (racism, consumerism, sexism, etc.), the presence of competitors, the laws, the formal organization of restaurant, and so forth. In order to consider the
negotiations of any milieu we must understand how actors interpret the relevant structural features. The negotiation context refers to all things that directly affect the negotiation of a social order (Strauss 1978). The negotiation context includes the structural features and the individuals' motivations, values, strategies, and emotions.

Emotions

Emotions play a large role in the ongoing negotiations. Employees and franchisees often work at a frantic pace, for long hours, in tight quarters near hot fryers, grills, and ovens. In restaurants that are not highly differentiated (like Grinders and Anna's) the labor process may combine the repetition of an assembly line, with the degradation and exasperation of customer service work, and the sometimes-nauseating characteristics of janitorial work. One can imagine how a fast food restaurant might become an emotionally charged environment. Two employees may find that they would like to fill the same niche in the ecosystem. A worker's compensation dispute can boil beneath the façade of an ostensibly harmonious worker-employee relationship. As the actors cooperate and compete with each other, intense feelings of admiration, loyalty, and resentment may develop. These emotions are a continually varying element that must be interpreted and adjusted to if the actors are to cooperate with each other. Emotional issues have a drastic effect on how people interact with each other. There are times to negotiate and there are times to avoid interaction. For instance, Shawn, a day after an argument about the schedule with James was incredibly reluctant to make work-related suggestions to his employer. Conversely, Shawn wisely pressed James for a raise while the four of us were celebrating the most profitable day of the year. A symbiotic maintenance of the social order requires sensitivity to the emotions of one's fellow members in an emotionally
charged environment. Affecting the emotional context is the conflation of primary and secondary relationships.

In many ways, fast food restaurants are the epitome of the process of rationalization described by Weber. These restaurants have deskilled the labor process to a point where employees are said to have become interchangeable (Reiter 1991). Impersonality is one of the defining marks of rationalization in general and fast food restaurants in particular. However, impersonality is not a factor at all fast food restaurants. Despite rationalization, high turnover rates, comparatively low pay, competition and atomization, market relations have not completely erased moral relations. Both employees (usually core employees) and the franchisee often come to share a history and an interpersonal understanding that defies the popular notion that impersonal relations mark fast food employment. Some workers become friends. A franchisee might come to empathize with long-term employees. Workers do not necessarily allow their feelings of camaraderie or intimacy to occlude their personal desires. To the contrary I have yet to see a conflation of primary and secondary relationships result in either a worker or an employee seriously departing from their own position simply because they may "like" or "care for" another person in the restaurant. One of the features of negotiations in a simple franchised fast food restaurant is that individuals often pursue their own personal interests in a contentious or competitive fashion, with people they intimately understand. There are a number of different strategies that actors' may employ in their negotiations.

Strategies of Negotiation

Two individuals who are in structurally similar positions may attempt to achieve widely divergent goals. One employee may wish to increase his autonomy to improve his
individual working conditions. Another may be primarily motivated to earn as much money as possible. The specific strategies of the employees and the franchisee depend on their individual interpretations of the negotiation context. David Altheide explains,

The crucial element in negotiating order, however, is the essential relationship between an actor's situational definition and the social world within which it emerges. The context does not automatically direct or lead actors to one course of action rather than to another; there always is more than one possible course of action (emphasis in original 1988:343).

If an actor is going to be successful in getting what he or she wants from the social order, he or she may calculate his or her actions. Franchisees and employees interpret the negotiation context. Sometimes actors will articulate their desires and what they are willing to give in return. Other times, actors will choose to engage in implicit negotiations. The decision depends, in part, on the personal proclivities of the individual. Some people prefer explicit negotiations, while others choose to negotiate implicitly through action. The next section will examine some strategies that franchisees employ in their negotiations with their employees. Employee strategies will be considered in the section describing the typology of negotiated issues.

Franchisee Strategies for Negotiating with Employees

A single franchisee, operating one or two restaurants may not have access to the human resource specialists. While the Burger Kings and McDonald's of the industry can invest a great deal of resources to placate employees, this task takes on a different meaning for individual franchisees. Reiter describes how Burger King uses an industrial psychology to encourage their employees to work hard for little pay (1991). Eric
Schlosser reports that McDonald’s uses transactional analysis to motivate employees without offering material rewards. Schlosser relates, “that managers are trained in a technique called “stroking,” wherein managers give “deliberate praise, and recognition that many teenagers don’t get at home. Stroking can make a worker feel that his or her contribution is sincerely valued. And it’s much less expensive than raising wages or paying overtime” (2001:74). Depending on the individual proclivities of the franchisee can use a sort of layman’s human relations theory of management may be used to smooth over the effects of the scientific management on the psyches of employees.

Both Fred and James are willing to negotiate with increase the wages of core employees that they wish to retain. Fred offered overtime to his core employees and I witnessed James give an hourly raise to a core employee. Unlike some of the managers at some corporate fast food restaurants, the franchisees at Anna’s and Grinders maintain enough autonomy from the franchisor to decide how and if they want to negotiate with industrial psychology or human relations theory to supplement the scientific management intrinsic to the fast food restaurant. This decision depends largely on the franchisee. I never witnessed Fred attempt to use any technique that resembled stroking. James, however, did not appear to share Fred’s candor. This is not to say that James is dishonest, but rather, James (who is rumored to have a BA in psychology) is willing to use the emotionality of the negotiation context to his advantage.

The following situations exemplify how James maintained the social order, in part by knowing when to mollify an angry employee. Saturdays at Grinders are supposed to be easy days. This expectation is a part of the negotiation context. This section of the city is very quiet on the weekends. Kiran and James react to the structural context by reducing
the number of crew over the weekend. One Saturday I was scheduled to work from open
to close with Juanita and Maria. It was supposed to be an easy day. I expected to have
two highly competent co-workers to help me serve few customers. Unfortunately, there
was a convention and my highly competent co-workers were sick and at home. The
conventioneers, stationed in a hotel near the restaurant had few culinary options over the
weekend when many restaurants were closed. At 11:00 AM, I called James and Kiran
requesting help. James claimed that he would be at the restaurant at 11:30 AM. The
conventioneers continued to enter the restaurant. I processed the customers successfully,
but the restaurant looked as if I had been playing with hand grenades. Discarded wax
paper covered the floor. The dining area needed to be bused. The sink was overflowing
with dishes. James and Kiran kept failing to show up. My anger deepened steadily. By
12:30 PM, James and Kiran finally appeared. Kiran immediately set to work. James
assessed the situation. Unfortunately, the rush had subsided, making it seem as though I
had exaggerated the number of customers that I had served. He did not chide me for not
working hard enough or for being sloppy. Instead, he decided to maintain the social order
by stating, “You did well for your first time alone.” He then read the register tape and
realized that I had been busy. James interpreted the situation, realized that I might be
somewhat angry about having had to work so hard without assistance. He modified his
original statement. “You did tremendous!” His articulated recognition worked to diffuse
my frustration. By interpreting the negotiation context, he preserved the social order by
encouraging me to remain at the restaurant.

Another example of a franchisee being mindful of the emotions in the negotiation
context occurred when James wanted to alter the established work schedule. I had been
working for ten days in a row with out a day off. While this would not seem out of the ordinary in some negotiation contexts, at this Grinders restaurant, a feature of the negotiation context was that employees expected to receive regular time off. I was greatly looking forward to next four days. It was Thursday and I was not scheduled to work Friday, Saturday, or Tuesday. The negotiation context had changed in that some workers were continually calling off. James interpreted the change in the negotiation context and decided that he needed to increase the hours of another worker to make up for the potentially truant workers. James decided that I should work some extra shifts. I too had interpreted not just the absence of workers in the negotiation context, but also that James might ask me to sacrifice my time off. my excitement dissolved into trepidation as the shift wore on. James interpreted my emotional state when he approached me toward the end of my shift.

James: Tomorrow you get a day off. You deserve it. What, is it your first in...

Eric: Three weeks.

James: Five years.

[Restrained chuckles all around]

He then proceeded to tell me that I would have to work on Saturday and for a half shift on Tuesday. I could have protested. However, I did not want to be fired. Moreover, it was exceedingly difficult to argue with a boss who was demonstrably sympathetic to my plight. Lastly, emotionally, it was easier to accept an easy Saturday shift because I was relieved about not being asked to work for an eleventh day in a row. James was successful in negotiating for his desires, in that he was able to fix the deficiency in the schedule, without having an employee resign (an ever-present danger). James was
successful, in part because he correctly read the emotional elements of the negotiation context and compensated for this in his negotiation strategy. This interaction, as we will see later, represents a negotiation in that I could very well have refused. Later I will relate a similar instance where the employee decided not to accept an undesired shift.

The Temporal Aspects of Negotiation

The analysis of the negotiated order of fast food restaurants is based on the notion that social order is continually negotiated. Issues that have been negotiated at one time will most likely be renegotiated as the structural and negotiation contexts change. A change in the unemployment rate, the actors, the laws, cultural beliefs, emotions and so forth may present an opportunity or call for a renegotiation of specific issues. Since social order is created through interaction, the social order may change with each set of negotiations. Employees who collaborate at one time may not cooperate in the future. A tense employee-employer relationship may improve. Likewise, an amiable employee-employer relationship may sour over time. Negotiations are usually conducted in the shadow of previous negotiations. For instance, the employees at Grinders warned me about the dangers of being too flexible in terms of scheduling. One day after I had agreed to come in off of the schedule one employee warned, “Now that you covered, he’ll always expect you to...[it will be like] you need the day off, see Eric...” Oftentimes issues are negotiated periodically, with the conclusion of the negotiation holding until the next time the issue comes up. For example, an employee may explicitly negotiate for a higher wage. The negotiations presented below will illustrate how the social order changes with the ongoing negotiations.
The Negotiations

Within the social order of the restaurant there are innumerable points that must be compromised upon, from the schedule to the assignment of job tasks to the definition of deviance. This section will focus on employee-employer and employee-employee negotiations. There are two main types of issues that may be negotiated, those that are external (i.e. wages and the schedule) and those that are internal (i.e. job task assignment). This section will examine what issues are negotiated for and what strategy employees use to achieve their goals. Additionally, I will consider the nature of autonomy and how it relates to negotiations in highly regulated environments.

External Issues

Under the heading of external issues, I will include all issues that constitute the economic rationale for obtaining a job, most notably, the wages, opportunity for advancement, security, and the schedule. These issues must be worked out but do not directly relate to the actual working conditions. The external issues are directly connected to the ‘outside’ non-work lives of employees. The external issues are among the most critical of an employee’s life such as: whether or not an employee can move out of her or his house; is able to schedule time for college classes, another job, or a social life; or if he or she will lose sleep because he or she is afraid of being laid off. These negotiations may be particularly contentious because they have the gravest stakes for both employee and franchisee.
Worker Autonomy and Negotiations Over External Issues

Autonomy refers to the freedom from employer control (Katz 1964). Autonomy may take the form of control over issues such as the schedule or job task assignment. The notion of autonomy relates to negotiations over external issues, in that workers who seek to negotiate for increased wages, security, and hours, do so by explicitly or tacitly sacrificing their personal autonomy. In some cases, the workers who have the most autonomy are those who do not wish to earn more than minimum wage or work a full (forty-hour or more) schedule. If an employee wishes to move from the periphery to the core, she or he may have to sacrifice some personal freedom. An employee who wants as many hours as possible may have to make some sacrifices in personal autonomy such as being willing to work weekends or closing shifts. This same employee may also have to be willing and able to satisfy the franchisee’s expectations. For example, the day after Shawn received a raise, he was called upon to forfeit his scheduled day off to cover for co-workers who had failed to show up. Conversely, employees who wish to receive very little in the way of take home pay, advancement, and security can commonly maintain a high level of autonomy. If the negotiation context includes a labor shortage, a worker who cares little about external issues may demand quite a lot in terms of autonomy (not working weekends, not performing certain job tasks like cleaning the toilets). An employer may concede some control to prevent the employee from leaving. However, that same employee may be ‘let go’ when the negotiation context changes. Some employees assess their personal situations and decide how much autonomy they should
give up in order to have their material needs met. An employee who is dependent on his or her position may be less willing to press for autonomy.

Wages

One of the most salient issues to be negotiated in any work environment is the employee wage rate. There is no escaping the fact that fast food labor is considered to be among the least skilled jobs in the United States. Due to the low value placed on fast food labor, workers have considerably depressed wages (Ritzer 1998). The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in 2000 the mean hourly wage for fast food cooks was $6.78 per hour and the mean wage for “Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food” was $6.84 (http://www.bls.gov/oes/2000/oes_35Fo.htm). To some extent, the economic viability of fast food restaurants is predicated on the ability of restaurants to reduce labor costs. The economic pressure to pay employees as little as possible constitutes an important aspect of the negotiation context. Employees do exercise some agency over their wages. Although, there may be limits to what a franchisee is willing to spend, the specific hourly wage of each employee is subject to implicit and explicit negotiation.

Implicit or indirect negotiation tended to be continual and imprecise (for more than one issue at once). An employee could broker for increased wages by simply presenting himself as a “good employee” that is to say a more competent, dependable, and trustworthy employee. By not (openly) engaging in deviant activities, by agreeing to substitute for truant coworkers, optimally performing job tasks and so forth an employee may place herself in a position to command a pay increase without explicit negotiation. For instance, when I was hired, I was informed that my initial wages was $6.00 per hour.
and that if I was competent I could expect a pay raise. As it turned out, I was able to utilize my considerable Grinders experience at this location, to such an extent that I soon became recognized as a relatively useful employee and coworker. At the end of the first week, James informed me that I would be receiving a raise of $0.75 per hour. I had not asked for a raise. However, by satisfactorily performing my duties, I successfully (and unintentionally) bargained for a pay increase.

At this point, the reader might legitimately ask: How does this constitute implicit negotiation? Common sense would predict that competent employees are better paid than are incompetent employees. However, we must remember that in fast food restaurants (as in any number of work environments) workers choose to be ‘good’ employees. To understand an employee’s decision to become competent we must consider the existential position of the individual actor. First, the decision to become a competent employee is not necessarily the same as the decision to retain one’s position. In some (but by no means all) negotiation contexts, the labor pressures are such that even a relatively incompetent or ‘poor’ employee may enjoy a surprisingly high degree of job security. I observed some employees who seemed to interpret the structural forces operating on the restaurant, and decided that since they had little desire to garner a small increase in hourly pay, they would rather ‘slack off’. Therefore, if a worker may be able to remain employed without being a ‘model’ employee, workers who do attempt to meet what they believe to be the franchisee’s expectations are making a choice to do so. I am not making the argument that anyone can work well in fast food restaurants. Quite the contrary, despite the highly rationalized labor process, becoming a model fast food employee is very much an accomplishment. If a worker is to become a core or even a competent
periphery member of the organization, he or she must make the decision to do so. The attempt to move from the periphery to the core requires an individual to interpret the environment and the means necessary to achieve this goal. The industrious employee must learn how to perform the various job tasks successfully and to get along with the others, particularly the franchisee. This goal may be ‘easier said than done’ so to speak, as not everyone is successful. For the purposes of understanding how the social order of a franchised fast food restaurant is subject to negotiation, we can interpret the actions of the competent employee as one who is implicitly negotiating for increased wages by choosing to be competent.

Negotiations over wages may also take place on an explicit level. Not all employees who wish to receive an increase in their wages are willing to wait to be rewarded for their silent efforts. Some employees, particularly those who see themselves as having achieved a certain importance or core status within the restaurant may feel more comfortable making their wishes known. The ultimate decision-maker is the franchisee. In the non-unionized and non-contractual fast food restaurant disagreements are often reduced to a ‘take it or leave it’ situation. The employer will interpret the situation as he wishes regardless of the structural context, and may choose to set the wages regardless of the structural context. The decision not to negotiate is itself an act of negotiation. Correspondingly, the employee must then decide whether to stay or to leave, which is also an act of negotiation.

A franchisee may decide that it is in her or his best interest to ‘work with’ an employee who requests a pay raise. On a certain holiday, Grinders is traditionally busy and is subsequently open later than usual. The predictably increased business is a part of
the structural context. None of the core crewmembers wanted to work on this particularly
difficult evening. The individual motivations of the workers form an aspect of the
negotiation context. James was not willing to give all of them the night off. Although,
James was able to import one worker from another store, he still needed one more
worker. The unlucky candidate was Shawn, who parlayed his anger at being forced to
work when Maria and Juanita did not into a higher wage. After we finally finished
closing the restaurant at about midnight, James and Kiran took Shawn and I to dinner.
Shortly after our orders were taken, Shawn announced; “I need a raise!” He mentioned
that his pay should be eight dollars per hour. It came up that Juanita and Maria, who have
been with the restaurant longer, earn $8.00 per hour. Shawn related that the other core
members had received the holiday off last year (the fact that he had to work this holiday
two years in a row seemed to contribute to his resentment). Eventually, James relented to
Shawn’s request. In some negotiation contexts, an assertive employee may succeed in
bargaining for increased pay. This fact is demonstrated by Shawn, who was able to
steadily negotiate for wage increases until he was earning as much as employees who
were his senior in the restaurant. Although structural issues influence how much
employees can expect to earn, the actual pay may be subject to individual negotiations of
an atomized work force and the franchisee.

Promotion

As with other industries, an offer of a raise in wages may come with an increase in
responsibility. A franchisee may decide that if higher wages are to be paid, the increase in
outlay should come with a decrease in direct supervisory work for the franchisee.
Contrary to the common sense expectation that an employee will accept an opportunity
for promotion, in a fast food restaurant the desirability of such advancement is far from guaranteed. One slow evening, Juanita explained to me that promotion was not a part of her plans at Grinders.

"I wouldn't be a manager."

"Why wouldn't you be a manager Juanita?"

"Cause I had to do it full time, I wanted to do it part-time cause I wanted to go to school."

Juanita went on to relate that other managers experienced a significant reduction in personal autonomy. She rejected an offer of promotion because she feared that it would be difficult to keep up her studies if she accepted the encroachment on personal autonomy that comes with management. We can see that the terms of promotion are the subject of negotiation. Although the prospect of increased pay was attractive, she was not at the restaurant for wages alone. For her, autonomy (particularly her control of the schedule) was a stronger motivation for working at Grinders than the wages. This finding is not surprising considering the relatively low expectations employees may have of how much they can actually earn at a fast food restaurant. Juanita was not the only employee at Grinders to reject a promotion. One evening Shawn mentioned,

"After you left, when we went to [dinner], he [James] laid on me this offer to be manager at Placid Hills [James' second location]."

"Why didn't you take it?"

"I'm not desperate yet. When I've got an apartment, I might want the ten an hour."

Shawn, who still lived at home, was not sure that he needed the commitment of full time management. However, he would not rule out the possibility of accepting a
managerial position. If his personal circumstances changed, he may wish to take the promotion. Again, we see that the personal motivations of the actors impinge upon the social order of the restaurant. Moreover, one might infer that James has placed a limit on how much an employee may earn without taking on a significant increase responsibility. Of course, James’ offer comes because of his interpretation of Shawn as a competent and trustworthy employee. James has interpreted his fiscal situation to be healthy enough to delegate authority in exchange for increased labor expenditures. More likely than not, the promotional offer was an expression of his personal desire to decrease the personal strain of owning two restaurants.

Security

In addition to negotiating for wage increases, the security of an employee’s position may be subject to negotiation. Security refers to a state of being insulated from the fluctuations of the market place. This may take the form of security from being laid off or security from drastic cuts in scheduled hours. The structural context of some restaurants includes a variable amount of business throughout the year. For instance, some areas may depend on the business of seasonal travelers or tourists; some areas become inhospitable during the winter, and some restaurants specialize in items that have seasonal appeal. For whatever reason some franchisees may find that it is in their best interest to close down completely or drastically reduce the number of employees during a slower season. Presumably, most employees know of the impending labor cuts. Employees may be forced to implicitly negotiate for a position of security or be laid off or have their hours reduced. Those employees who only need the job for a brief time (like those who do not need a wage increase) may opt to retain a periphery role, sparing themselves what they
may consider undue effort or strain. Other employees may decide that it is in their best interest to retain their position and their current schedule. Employees who wish to earn a measure of stability must decide to become as competent and trustworthy as possible. The obvious reason for this is that, all things being equal, the franchisee will retain the most competent employees during the periodic slowdowns in business. During transitional periods, there can be an erratic flow of business. Workers who have been lulled to complacency will find that they are suddenly very busy. This transition can be difficult and requires a high level of competence. When a franchisee contracts her or his labor force, it follows that the crew may find itself shorthanded. In order to avoid losing customers, the shorthanded crew must perform especially well. The issue of security is likely to be negotiated implicitly, as workers who wish to remain on the staff and or have their hours remain in tact will implicitly negotiate by demonstrating a high level of competence. The negotiations over the issue of security during slow times of the year may be affected by the emotions present in the negotiation context. When the negotiation context includes a conflation of primary and secondary relationships between workers and management, it may aid the cause of an employee who wishes to negotiate for increased job security. Despite the supposedly formal and impersonal relations that exist in rationalized environments, members of the restaurant may over time relate to each other on a personal basis. This is not to say that workers and employees become friends in any traditional sense of the word, but there may very well be a movement from market to moral relations. While it is doubtful that the individual actors in a restaurant ever lose sight of their personal interests, the conflation of primary and secondary relations may influence negotiations. For instance, it will be more difficult an employer to lay off an
employee that he or she has come to know, than an employee who is less well known. In other words, a franchisee is more likely to attempt to “take care” of a long time employee than one with whom he or she has little emotional connection. I observed this tendency both through out my personal career at Grinders and at Anna’s.

The Schedule

Perhaps one of the most salient issues to be negotiated in a fast food restaurant is the schedule. The possible flexibility of scheduling is attractive to those with outside commitments such as single mothers and students (Reiter 1991). Given the relatively low-level of prestige, training, and money that can be derived from fast food employment an adequate schedule may be a particularly salient issue. Two major themes circulate around the issue of scheduling. The first is the ability of an employee to work around other aspects of their life such as extracurricular activities, a second job, parental responsibilities, and education. The second theme is the ability of workers to gain enough hours in order to be satisfied with one’s income. The following testimonies, presented by Ivan Chamer and Bryna Shore Fraser (1984), exemplify the ability of some fast food employees to obtain acceptable work schedules. One respondent related:

I found my grades dropping because I was working 4 or 5 hours every school night and 8 or 9 hours on Saturday. I talked to my manager and we decided that it would be best for me to only work 4 hours during the school week, then more on the weekends. Many of my working friends have told me how fortunate I am to have such an understanding manager and suitable hours. This has been my experience working for both the company and a franchise (Chamer and Fraser 1984: 138-139).

However, some workers are not so successful. One respondent offered this statement:

I need more hours and more money with three children. They will give the people that don’t want to work more

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hours and the ones that want to work won't get any. Something needs to be done or said (Charner and Fraser 1984:129).

Some fast food workers are far more successful at obtaining schedules that they find acceptable than others. Charner and Fraser, in a survey of over 4600 workers related:

a higher proportion of employees who have worked more than two years are satisfied with the way they are scheduled than are employees who have worked for a shorter length of time. Sixty percent of those who have worked more than two years are satisfied compared to 53 percent and 44 percent for those employees who have worked 13-24 months and one year or less respectively (1984:48).

We may conjecture that the longer an employee remains at a single restaurant, the stronger her or his bargaining position may become. Perhaps, as a worker remains at a single location, he or she becomes more indispensable, trusted, and well regarded by the person that sets the schedule. Additionally, we might conjecture that employers attempt to negotiate for a stable workforce by providing competitive schedules.

Employees are not likely to obtain a desired schedule without implicit or explicit negotiation. In the negotiated order of the fast food restaurant, workers do not necessarily form a collective entity against management. An atomized labor force is just as likely to be in competition with itself as it is to be in conflict with employers. Conflicts over which employees get a schedule that is favorable to them is one area where we can see employees in competition over an issue that is of diminished importance to the manager. If the schedule is filled with capable workers, who gets which days off is not of likely to be of primary importance to most managers or franchisees. However, who receives what day off can be of great importance to the employees. Employees who are in a better negotiating position will most likely have more control of the schedule. The ability to
control one’s schedule is an important area of autonomy and may be a major reason why some workers remain at a restaurant. This is evidenced by Juanita who asserted:

You can write your own schedule, that’s why I’m still here. You see him [the franchisee James] ask me what days I’m available.

Not everyone is in the same bargaining position when it comes to the hashing out who will work when. Juanita explains:

Shawn doesn’t understand that we get to write our own schedule because we’ve been here longer. He’s still in high school. We’re [her and Maria] are in college. Paul realizes we’ve got to study.

The schedule was an essential issue at Grinders. James was at the center of scheduling conflicts. About a week after the conflict over holiday scheduling, another scheduling controversy arose as Shawn was scheduled to work on a Saturday, after he had requested to not work weekends. In the past week, Shawn had worked a holiday that he had requested to have off, and the following day he sacrificed his day off to cover for three truant co-workers. Being told to work on Saturday was more than Shawn would stand. He believed that he was being taken advantage of because of his willingness to be versatile. Shawn confronted James. Shawn refused to work Saturday. James replied by telling Shawn that he would let him go if he did not work on Saturday. Shawn, aware of his value to the restaurant and believing that James was “bluffing,” refused to back down. At this point, it seemed as though both men had drawn a line in the sand and now pride and emotionality were eclipsing pure economic rationality. Presumably, Shawn resigning would not be in the best interest of either man. James, running his restaurant with a small and oftentimes unstable crew relied on Shawn, who despite being assertive is a very competent employee. Shawn, on the other hand, certainly would not benefit from losing
his job. The existing social order of the restaurant depended on a resolution to this conflict, yet neither party seemed willing to retreat.

Fortunately, Juanita, who had recently decided that she would like to purchase an automobile, entered the negotiations. In order to reach her goal she would have to work as many hours as possible. A few days before the stand off she began to badger James for more hours. When Juanita saw that James had offered Shawn an ultimatum, and realizing that Shawn would be fired before he or James would acquiesce, she intervened by offering to work on Saturday. In this situation, the entrance of a third party into the negotiations, allowed both actors to attain their goals without either having to ‘back down’. Both James and Shawn maintained their pride without permanently sacrificing their business relationship. It should be noted that Juanita was not operating on purely selfish motivations. She did not want to see Shawn fired needlessly. The next day, when she and I were working alone together (the day that she was covering for Shawn), she asserted “I saved Shawn from getting fired.” When I contended that she was happy to obtain his hours, she vehemently denied the charge. While I personally do not believe that her offer to work Shawn’s shift and her desire to earn money to purchase an automobile are completely independent of each other, I do believe that she had acted with concern for Shawn.

This incident reveals a number of aspects of the negotiation of social order in a fast food restaurant. First, there is often a conflation of primary and secondary social roles. Co-workers and employers all have a formal, economic basis for their interaction. Ostensibly, actors in a highly routinized or McDonaldized setting would have impersonal economically defined relations with each other (Ritzer 1993:1998). Although the basis
for the relationships among crewmembers is certainly economically defined, non-economically rational feelings of camaraderie tend to arise. These non-economically rational feelings affect the negotiation context. People will have more than their own personal goals in mind when they interact. Juanita’s willingness to cover Shawn’s Saturday shift, (a day she usually did not like working) was most likely influenced by her desire to earn more money and her desire to see Shawn remain employed at the restaurant. Within a given setting, the motivations of individual workers can rarely be reduced to a single motivation. Nor can social relationships be sharply defined, even in an environment that has been subject to strict routinization.

Temporal Limits of Negotiations

Over External Issues

The interaction of the actors is influenced by a confluence of dynamic motivations. As the desires of individual actors change, like when Juanita decided that she wanted to earn enough money to buy a car, these individuals may seek to renegotiate the social order to reach their new goals. The social order must be renegotiated in response to changes in the negotiation context. This phenomenon occurs in fast food restaurants as the structural forces, like the economy or the weather may affect the volume of the business of the restaurant, thus changing the negotiation context. This is clearly exemplified when a given shift is far slower than anticipated by management. One slow evening at Anna’s, Sandra decided that her presence would not be missed and that she would like to go home. However, she did not want to offend Fred. On the other hand, Fred, who earnestly maintained that he would have not have asked anyone to leave, did not mind reducing his labor costs. Neither Sandra nor Fred wanted to offend the other,
but the negotiation context had changed, and they subsequently could benefit from a renegotiation of the schedule. By gingerly approaching the subject, they worked out an agreement that was mutually beneficial. In doing so, they were careful to take the role of the other to avoid damaging their relationship.

Internal Issues

There is more to be negotiated than external issues. The working conditions are of tremendous importance to employees and franchisees alike. There is more to any job than its potential for income, and this is especially true in fast food restaurants where a routinization of the labor process has depressed wages. Everything from job task assignment to choice of radio station to the definition of deviance must be worked out and compromised upon. Fast food restaurants are designed with the intention of controlling workers in the minutest detail. Much like Paules' waitresses, fast food employees may, depending on the negotiation context and their motivations actively resist managerial control (1991). This is not to say that workers always are successful or that they always attempt to expand their autonomy. Nonetheless, sometimes through a process of implicit or explicit negotiation, workers may increase their autonomy, and subsequently gain control of their working conditions. This section will be divided into three parts. One section will consider the general working conditions of the restaurant, which involves any legitimate issue that may be negotiated in the restaurant. Another section will consider the negotiations over the definition of deviance. First, we will examine how autonomy relates to negotiations over internal issues.
Worker Autonomy and Negotiation

Over Internal Issues

The rationalized labor process requires the tight control of employees. There is a correct way of doing things. Management at Grinders and Anna’s did not attempt to achieve the totality of control that has been reported by other ethnographers (Garson 1988, Reiter 1991, Leidner 1993). Neither James nor Fred are particularly interested in single handedly doing what requires several managers, assistant managers, and crew trainers at larger more highly differentiated restaurants. James and Fred did not seek to control laborers arbitrarily. Both Franchisees were willing to be lax on a number of issues. Their largest concern was that the customers were satisfied. Neither franchisee required his employees to wear an elaborate uniform. There were no nametags or work issue pants. Workers at Grinders and Anna’s were not expected to engage in the highly unpopular practice of “suggestive selling” (Leidner 1993:139).

Employees will usually have to increase their autonomy to make the job conditions fit their desires. At a Grinders restaurant where I was employed before my time with James, my employer seemed happy to allow me to use the telephone or do my school work during slow periods. I presume that his reasoning was, in part, to encourage me to remain at the restaurant, and because it was cheaper to allow these indulgences than it was to pay a higher wage. Many times employee gains in autonomy seem to come at the expense of material gains. Employers may compensate for the low wages by allowing favored workers increased freedom. The degree to which workers are free is an important component of the social order of the restaurant. Worker autonomy is always subject to negotiation and as will be seen later is connected to negotiations over the job conditions.
Issues such as the definition of deviance, which workers will perform what tasks, and which radio stations can be played, are all aspects of the job conditions that are directly related to how free workers are from employer control.

General Conditions

On any given day, innumerable issues may be the subjects of implicit or explicit negotiation. These issues may be relatively benign such as who will take their break first or something far more controversial such as whom will clean the toilet. While these issues do not directly affect an employee outside of the restaurant, they take on a great deal of significance within the milieu. As with the external issues, negotiations over the general working conditions may lead some employees to come into conflict with each other or with the franchisee. Conversely, negotiations over other issues may be cooperative.

The Radio

One issue of potential significance is the choice of radio station. Working in a fast food restaurant may provide few opportunities for enjoyable stimuli. The work can be hectic, the hours long, and the public unforgiving. One area that may greatly improve working conditions is the radio. Use of the radio is one of the issues of negotiation identified by Morgan in his study of the negotiated order of the factory (1975). When I was first hired at a certain Grinders restaurant (years before working for James) there were specific rules governing which radio stations were acceptable and which were unacceptable. Unfortunately for me, the radio station that I had grown accustomed to at a previous Grinders owned by a different franchisee was specifically off limits at this location. I was a recent addition in an industry that is renowned for its high turnover rate.
I was a periphery member of the crew and subsequently my negotiating position was relatively weak. I suffered through a winter of dance pop. However, a few months later, I had proven myself a reliable employee and some of the other core members had left the restaurant. My bargaining position had improved vastly, because my leaving would have caused hardship to the manager who controlled the radio (if I resigned this manager would have been forced to cover my night shift until a replacement could be found and trained). One day, I asked the manager, who had been upholding the ban on my favorite station, if I could change the radio station. We worked out an arrangement where I could listen to whatever station I wanted to after he had left for the day. This is significant in that it shows that a non-managerial employee may be able to increase his autonomy in the restaurant in a highly regulated system.

The radio was not a divisive issue at Anna’s largely because the actors cooperated with each other. Fred set the guidelines of what was and what not acceptable. For instance, hard rock was not an acceptable option during the day. Employees negotiated within the parameters set by Fred. I asked Dianne, “Who decides the radio station?” She replied:

Fred’s wife. When she goes we work it out. I don’t want rap or heavy metal. I don’t mind the more contemporary stuff if they don’t mind my playing oldies once in a while.

The employees were able to negotiate with each other within guidelines established by Fred and Cary. I witnessed a very even give and take. During my observations, I listened to oldies, country, and contemporary adult. At Anna’s the choice of radio station was an example of how employees and franchisees may explicitly negotiate an element of their shared existence.
Effort

Given the popular portrayal of the fast food restaurant, one might imagine that workers are locked into Chaplinesque world of timers, buzzers, industrial sized spatulas and savagely effective deep fryers. Reiter uses the Charlie Chaplin film, *Modern Times*, as an analogy to fast food work, concluding, “thanks to employment standards legislation, most workers can stop their work to have lunch, in almost every other way, Chaplin’s vision of a highly controlled workplace has been realized” (1991:111). However, the popular image of the fast food restaurant that is portrayed by Reiter (1991) neglects the long periods of downtime in many restaurants and the difficulty those employers sometimes have in fully extracting the labor power from recalcitrant employees. According to the Tayloristic logic of business management, the worker should be as productive as possible. That means that every paid moment of a worker’s day should in some way be spent in service to the restaurant (Braverman 1974; Reiter 1991). No doubt countless fast food workers have come across a manager or a franchisee who has uttered the words “If there’s time to lean there’s time to clean.” In my experiences and observations, it is difficult for management to implement this maxim. With the possible exception of a severely depressed economy, an employer will have a great deal of trouble attempting to be a ‘slave driver’ of workers who are being paid minimum wage. Employees ‘slack off’ when there are no customers. Workers who are slacking off may eat, smoke, read, or speak with each other. Many workers reject managerial attempts to make every second productive. One former co-worker responded to the “time to lean” dictum with one of his own, “Minimum wage means minimum effort.” Some franchisees may feel that because they are offering comparatively low-
levels of remuneration, they cannot ethically or consistently (that is without losing employees) extract a maximum expenditure sustained effort on the part of employees.

Fred, who once was a manager in a large highly Taylorized firm, said that he enjoyed the autonomy of being an employer, because he had the ability to let up on his employees, a luxury that he did not have as a manager. As the owner, he had the choice to not to push his workers every second of their shift, as long as the customers were attended to. Fred explained:

They can goof off a little bit, but when people come in, they have to be taken care of. People have this image of fast food. They don't want to wait.

A factor of the negotiation context is that Fred’s emotional and ethical distaste for working his workers too hard. He spent a great deal of time at his restaurant, which reduced the autonomy of his employees significantly. The employees at Anna’s did not have the option of remaining idle for long stretches of time, even if there were no customers. When the restaurant slowed down, Fred would have the employees clean the restaurant.

Employees are also interested in the effort expended by their co-workers. Ethnographers have observed how what might be termed ‘peer pressure’ is used to encourage workers to perform effectively. Leidner (1993) writes, “it seemed to me that most workers did conceive of the work as a team effort and were loath to be seen by their peers as making extra work for other people by not doing their share (p. 77). As may easily be imagined, the workload at a restaurant is largely uncontrolled by employees. If one employee is not effective, the other employees are expected to ‘pick up the slack’ so to speak. Harmed employees may levy sanctions in the form of jokes or complaints or
even retaliatory slacking. At Grinders, a few employees (Juanita, Shawn, and I) would rotate as the primary closers (often the most senior closer would be in charge of the closing procedure). The two workers who closed the restaurant had a set amount of tasks to complete before they could leave. If an employee working in the afternoon failed to work effectively, the lack of effort would have repercussions for those who had to close after the offending worker had left. A worker who continually leaves his or her coworkers in a bad position may find that they return the favor when it is her or his turn to close the restaurant. One evening, I was scheduled to close and Shawn was scheduled to leave a few hours before closing, Shawn related that he was working hard for me because I had worked hard for him the previous day. One could speculate that if I had not worked well for him he would be less inclined to work well for me. Employees at Grinders continually negotiate an agreement to work competently, in part so that no one will be purposely left with an inordinate amount of work to do.

Visitors

One issue that may arise during periods of “down time” is if workers are allowed to accept personal visitors. One may assume that the worker is placed in a deeply regimented environment where there is little time for social interaction amongst crewmembers, much less between a crewmember and his or her family and friends. First, we have to consider the motivations of the employees. With some exceptions, the crewmembers at Grinders did not seem to want to be interested in receiving visitors. So receiving visitors was not an issue.

At Anna’s, Sandra would occasionally receive visits from family members. Typically, they would chat for a few minutes and then she would return to work. Sometimes she
would intermittently wait on customers. Fred allowed her to receive visitors in part because she had proven herself a valuable employee. Moreover, the brief visits did not interfere with her ability to perform her job tasks. By continually demonstrating her competence, Sandra implicitly negotiated for the right to have visitors, thus increasing her autonomy. Although this is a relatively small issue, the fact that Sandra was able to receive visitors reveals how workers, in some negotiation contexts, may be able to increase their autonomy, should they want to.

**Job Task Assignment**

In fast food restaurants with a high division of labor all of the tasks such as food preparation, cleaning, and serving have been broken down to the point where a number of workers can perform highly specific tasks. At this type of restaurant, a manager will assign crewmembers to various tasks. Reiter describes this type of arrangement in some detail (1991). Although the potential for this degree of rationalization exists at both Grinders and Anna’s, as a rule, neither restaurant employed enough workers to operate in that manner. On occasion, Kiran and Fred would assign job tasks. However, the franchisees rarely assigned jobs, and when they did it was usually on a slow day where workers would have difficulty deciding what (if anything) to do without direction. More often, employees were left to decide amongst themselves who would do which jobs. Workers were not directed in large part, because with the exception of neophyte employees, everyone knew what needed to be done. Employees would negotiate implicitly and explicitly for various tasks. Many employees had preferences for some job tasks and an aversion to others. An employee might implicitly negotiate for a task by simply beginning the task. In these circumstances, core members had an advantage.
because they possessed the cultural knowledge of when was the optimum time to begin a task. At Grinders, Shawn and Maria would frequently begin work on food preparation as soon as the lunch rush tapered off. They were able to use their experience to implicitly claim desired job tasks. Periphery members who had not obtained the specific cultural capital to challenge the claims of the core members had little choice but to find an alternative task. Workers who dislike a certain task may claim the unwanted task as 'off limits.' For example, one afternoon Maria announced, "My name is Mar-i-a and I don't clean bathrooms." Maria was a core member of the crew and could decide not to perform some job tasks, because she was able to perform other tasks competently. In order to get through the day more smoothly, employees who were not officially managers may assign tasks to peripheral crewmembers. For instance, the first time we closed Grinders together, Shawn who was very adept at closing the restaurant told me what tasks to do and when to do them. I accepted his authority as legitimate despite the absence of a formal managerial title, because it was to our mutual benefit to close the restaurant as efficiently as possible. At Anna's, Sandra and Diane, who had spent a great deal of time working together, would alternate job tasks. As customers came in one would make desserts and the other would make lunch items. One would go to the drive through window and the other would go the register. They had learned how to negotiate the social order by simply reacting to each other.

Unacceptable and Acceptable Deviance

Fast food restaurants are based on Taylor's scientific management, which strictly delineates what constitutes proper workplace behavior. Ideally, the franchisor is not simply selling a name and national advertising; rather it is selling an entire formula for a
business. The logic of the franchise is that a web of semi-independent entrepreneurs each operates their restaurants according to similar principles. Many customers are attracted to the predictability offered by franchised restaurants (Ritzer 1993). Therefore, in theory, franchises have one correct way of doing things. However, there are situations when employees and even franchisees may find it in their best individual interests to deviate from the plan. In doing so, they must renegotiate the meaning of deviance. Consequently, a new definition of deviance may emerge. When negotiations are unsuccessful, the social order is damaged, often with an employee’s tenure being terminated.

Deviance may take on a number of different forms. There is acceptable deviance and unacceptable deviance. Acceptable deviance includes all behaviors that deviate from the official way of doing things but are not considered deviant in the actual practice of everyday life. Unacceptable deviance includes all behaviors that deviate from the workplace norms. Unacceptable deviance includes actions that, if discovered, would require sanctioning (usually dismissal or resignation). The ongoing negotiations over deviance generally involve whether a behavior is defined as acceptable deviance or unacceptable deviance. There are different types of deviance. There is procedural deviance when the franchisee or the crewmembers perform a given job task in a way that differs from the written proscription. There is deviance from the established workplace norms. These behaviors would include giving food away, or not showing up for a scheduled shift. This section will focus on negotiations over which behavior is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Behaviors that are unacceptable beyond the pale of negotiation (such as giving away food) need not be considered here.
The franchisor, the franchisee, regulatory agencies, employees, and customers each have an interest in the definition of deviance. While many actors play a role in defining deviance the franchisee and the employees are the ones who must act with or against the existing norms. The franchisee was often placed in a position of having to enforce regulations that were not of his or her making but could be damaging if ignored by the crewmembers. The franchisee must also tailor the general regulations to the specific location. Some rules may or may not be appropriate to the specific situation. The franchisee must attempt to communicate the definition of deviance to the crewmembers. In general, the franchisee is the one who sanctions the employees. The sanctions generally include reduced hours, reduced autonomy, or termination of employment. The franchisee’s ability to dismiss employees gives him or her the right to define what constitutes deviant behavior. Employees are not powerless in their negotiations. Employees can interpret their situation and choose to follow a deviant practice if, they believe they will not be discovered, that they are not worried about being terminated, or that the negotiation context is such that it would be unwise for the franchisee to sanction them for a given act. Their actions may take the form of implicit negotiations if they choose to act in a deviant manner despite the fact that they will most likely be discovered.

In actually having to follow the rules, franchisees and employees may choose to accept or attempt to renegotiate the imposed order. Depending on their motivations, the franchisee and the crewmembers may or may not be brought into conflict or cooperation over whether or not a given practice is deviant. Oftentimes both the franchisee and employees have little difficulty following the rules that have been set for them without deviation. At Grinders, the franchisor has devised a formula for making sandwiches. For
the franchisor to impose a different policy or for an employee to experiment with radically different bread slicing techniques, would constitute deviant behavior. Neither the franchisee nor the employees had any reason to reject the rules about bread slicing. As Leidner reported, routinization is not intrinsically problematic (1993).

However, there were a number of official rules that are inconvenient to either the franchisee or the crewmembers. When the original rules do not benefit the franchisee, he or she may decide not to transmit these rules to her or his employees. The franchisee may decide to work out the rules on an individual basis, keeping one set of rules for some employees and a different set of rules for others. At Grinders, there is a specific formula for preparing all of the menu items. The rules prescribe the number of tomatoes on a large sandwich, the width of the green peppers, and the order that items should be placed on the sandwich. Usually, the rules are a helpful guide. Sometimes, however, the rules are an unnecessary hindrance. For example, the manual proclaims that when making seafood salad, the employee should measure the amount of mayonnaise to be mixed with the seafood salad. Kiran and James would train the periphery employees to prepare the salad according to the written instructions. Measuring the mayonnaise seemed an unnecessary waste of time to most of the people that have performed the chore more than once. After I had been shown how to measure the mayonnaise, I noticed that none of the core members bothered to follow this norm. When it was my turn to make the salad, I followed the norm that was specific to the restaurant and measured the mayonnaise by eye. Kiran saw me and began to reprimand me.

Kiran: You are supposed to measure the mayonnaise

Eric: I've been doing it like this for years. Jesus, I mess up the wraps and now I can't do anything right.
Kiran: No its just... we all measure by eye I forgot you have the most experience.

I explicitly negotiated for a redefinition of what was considered deviant. I cited my previous experience as being the basis for my claim that the practice of forgoing the measurement of the mayonnaise should be acceptably deviant. I then proceeded to add too much mayonnaise to the salad.

The negotiation context may allow workers an opportunity to redefine what forms of deviance are acceptable and what are prohibited. In most workplaces repeatedly calling in sick or failing to show up for a scheduled shift, even with an excuse, would be unacceptable. Not working when scheduled is a form of deviance that may easily lead to dismissal. At Grinders, some workers seemed to interpret the high turnover rate at the restaurant as providing an opportunity for them to avoid unwanted shifts without having sanctions imposed on them. Not appearing for a scheduled shift may be an implicit method of negotiating for a day off. Sometimes ignoring the schedule is a more effective means of avoiding an unwanted shift than explicitly negotiating for a schedule change. Not showing up for a shift was a common occurrence. Of the twenty shifts that I worked at Grinders, there were eight instances of workers not appearing for shifts that they were scheduled to work. This is not to say that every time that a person failed to show up it there was no ‘valid’ excuse. However, it was widely speculated that some of the absences were illegitimate. One frustrated crewmember exclaimed to the franchisee, “You don’t have enough people. They know you ain’t going to fire them, so they don’t show up.”

The fact that James did not fire the employees that were suspected of illegitimately calling off from work supports the employee’s claims. The employees who failed to show up had implicitly acted to push for the acceptability of a deviant behavior that could be
defined as unacceptable. James, in passing, mentioned that he would eventually fire the worst offender. I suspect that he would redefine the act of failing to show up for a shift as unacceptable only after the negotiation context changes in such a way that would allow him to remove certain employees without damaging his other interests.

The definition of deviance was a far less volatile topic at Anna’s. Workers seemed to have little motivation to redefine the behaviors or practices that are labeled as deviant by the franchisee. Months upon months of ongoing negotiations had led to a stable definition of acceptable and unacceptable practices. Fred was by no means a ‘slave driver’ and he did not create rules arbitrarily. So long as the customers’ needs were met and the restaurant’s equipment was treated properly, Fred was not interested in enforcing the rules simply for the sake of exercising authority. Likewise, the employees were largely unconcerned with redefining deviance. Anna’s did provide one example of the negotiation over deviance. Years ago, Fred did not allow employees to chew gum while they worked. This policy was a source of consternation amongst gum chewing employees. They implicitly negotiated for a redefinition of deviance by taking it upon themselves to chew gum in a manner that would not disgust customers. Eventually, Fred conceded the right to chew gum, so long as it was done in a tasteful manner. Fred did not want the sight of lip smacking, gum chewing employees to offend customers. However, he did not have any desire to needlessly deny his employees something that might improve their working conditions. When his core employees demonstrated that they could avoid violating the spirit of his policy despite deviating from the letter of the rules, Fred accepted the implicit negotiation, providing that the employees continued to act with respect to the customers.
Conclusion

Through an analysis of observations of two franchises, we may conclude that the social order of a restaurant is achieved, in part, through implicit and explicit negotiation. After describing Anna's and Grinders, I presented a generalized description of the cast of actors in a fast food restaurant, and their relationship to the negotiation context. While franchisees have a great deal of power in negotiations, they also depend on the other actors. Although, fast food jobs are designed to make employees interchangeable, core employees may find that they can cancel negotiations more easily than their employer can. In other words, in some contexts, core employees may have an easier time replacing their employers than their employer would have replacing them. Employees may exploit this feature of the negotiation context to their benefit.

There are two types of negotiation (both external and conditions) that are subject to the processes of negotiation. Actors choose how to negotiate based on their interpretation of the situation and their own proclivities. Depending on their strategy, skills and relative power, employees may be able to achieve their goals. For instance, for the external issue of wages, employees may negotiate implicitly by attempting to become a core member of the restaurant or explicitly by stating he or she would like to receive. An actor may choose to use both methods in tandem. Actors will interpret the negotiation context and act accordingly. For instance, when Shawn avoided negotiation because of a previous argument or when James placated me after I had worked alone during a difficult shift.

Considering the highly rationalized design of franchised fast food restaurants, the nature of deviance is quite interesting. The different types of actors have potentially disparate interpretations of the social norms. The high priority placed on 'correct' rational
action, as well as the different positions of actors, results in a continuous negotiation over
the definition of deviance. There are two types of deviant actions, acceptable and
unacceptable. When actors are able to agree that a certain behavior while technically
deviant is not harmful; it will be considered acceptably deviant. For instance, at Grinders,
employees mixed salads without actually measuring the mayonnaise as prescribed in the
Grinders operations manual. The definition of some acts depends on the negotiation
context. For example, oftentimes employees who fail to show up for a shift are
terminated. At Grinders, the negotiation context was such that employees who failed to
appear for scheduled shifts were not sanctioned. Through implicit negotiation (not
coming to a scheduled shift), employees changed the definition of deviance, and what
was formerly unacceptable became marginally acceptable. Of course, once the
negotiation context changes again (i.e. when labor pressures become less intense) not
appearing for scheduled shifts will again become an unacceptable act. In the next chapter,
I will summarize the findings and consider the implications for future research.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

An analysis of data from two fast food restaurants supports the negotiated order perspective’s assumptions that all social order is dependent upon some form of negotiation and those negotiations are influenced by social structure. Contrary to popular portrayal, fast food workers are not always incapable of meeting their ends. Despite scientific management, the dearth of employment options, and the myriad of other structural features that systematically weaken individuals in low-level food service work, there are conditions wherein workers, may choose to increase their autonomy. Although fast food restaurants can be viewed as the “paradigm case of the rationalization process” (Ritzer 1993:18) workers are not simply passive tools of a corporation’s formalized plan of action. Fast food employees are active agents. However, their ability to reach their goals is influenced by the subjective interpretation of the structural forces that impinge on the milieu. While actors often had opposed interests, their ability to reach their respective goals usually required some cooperation with the other actors. The social order of the restaurant depends on the ability of the organizational members to agree to work with each other. The notion that social order is continually achieved was demonstrated in the analysis.

The two franchises were analyzed using the conceptual devices of the negotiated order perspective. The salient features of the structural and negotiation context were
elucidated. Negotiations did not occur in a vacuum. The structural forces that affected the workers' attempts to reach their aims included the economy, the unemployment rate, the number of similar jobs, the weather, the legal order, and so forth. The negotiation context included such features as motivations, personal skills, and emotions.

The preceding analysis provided an outline of the issues that are negotiated in a fast food restaurant. Although the outline may not be comprehensive, most possible topics of negotiation could be subsumed in the rubric of external issues (i.e. wages, promotion, and scheduling) as well as internal issues (i.e. job task assignment, the definition of deviance, and sundry daily concerns). The process by which these issues were worked out at two franchises has already been considered. The data drawn from observations and personal experience are highly specific to the setting. However, the processes of negotiation that were observed in the restaurants have implications for the sociological understanding of fast food restaurants, the nature of autonomy in regulated environments, the negotiated order perspective, and the interplay between structure and individual agency.

Fast Food Restaurants

Using the negotiated order perspective yields an improvement in our understanding of fast food restaurants. The ethnographies of fast food restaurants provide a sort of natural experiment, wherein we may begin to speculate about how different structural conditions may lead to differences in the lived experiences of workers. This study demonstrates a number of features of fast food restaurants. The findings include the need for a typology of fast food restaurants, the differences between core and periphery employees, a typology of negotiated issues, and the limits of autonomy in fast food restaurants.
More than McDonald’s

Ethnographies and journalistic accounts of fast food restaurants have focused on McDonald’s or similarly designed franchises. There is a pronounced tendency to conflate McDonald’s restaurants with the entire fast food industry. There is diversity amongst the fast food restaurants that use scientific management to control the labor process. Fast food restaurants that are unlike McDonald’s restaurants are not simply deviations from a statistical mean. There are thousands of franchised fast food restaurants that are significantly less differentiated than McDonald’s, offer different menu items, are fewer in number, and have different franchising arrangements, (Eberts and Gisler 1989; Jakle and Sculle 1999; Schlosser 2001). Even though McDonald’s and similar restaurants have received the bulk of the attention in ethnographic and journalistic accounts of fast food restaurants, there are many workers that are in similar (pay, prestige) positions who have significantly different lived experiences at their respective jobs. The creation of a typology of franchised fast food restaurants exceeds the scope of this study. However, the data presented here point to the diversity of structure in fast food restaurants.

This variety of structural conditions may allow for drastic differences in the lived experiences of workers. A comparison of this study with ethnographic accounts of McDonald’s and Burger King might lead us to the following speculations (Reiter 1991; Leidner 1993; Royle 2000). A relatively simple division of labor may allow workers to deal more directly with their employer. The fewer the levels of management the easier it may be for workers to negotiate with their employer directly rather than a manager or assistant manager. A franchisee has far more autonomy than a manager does. A franchisee has the authority to change the work environment while a manager has a
prescribed authority. However, a franchisee may also have a greater personal stake in the given negotiation than a manager will. The outcome of employee-management negotiations is partially influenced by the division of labor and the depth of the hierarchy. However, this influence is not likely to be uniform.

Issues to be Negotiated

Additionally, this study adds to the existing studies of negotiated order in rationalized environments by creating a typology of issues that are subject to negotiation in the workplace. Issues that are subject to negotiation are of two general types. The first type of issue includes all external issues that are directly related to an employee’s non-work life. External issues include but may not be confined to remuneration, scheduling, promotion, and job security. The second general type of issues to be negotiated are internal issues that affect an employee during the working day, such as the definition of deviance or the control of the labor process. Any researcher analyzing a rationalized workplace with the negotiated order perspective may employ this typology.

Core and Periphery Employees

In a highly rationalized environment, workers who share similar formal positions will have different places in the organization. This study further elucidates an observation by Leidner (1993) that core employees will have different experiences than other workers. There are two general types of employees. Some fast food employees form the core of the work crew while others lie along the periphery. There is often a difference between core and periphery employees in terms of differential ends and means. The data show a patterned relationship between an employee’s status (core or periphery) and what they may hope to achieve for themselves. Core employees will have a slightly different set of
possible goals than periphery employees, as well as a different repertoire of possible means to attain those goals. One’s status as a core or periphery employee is hardly static. An individual may find that one status may work for a specific set of goals, but a change in status may be required if the worker’s goals should change. A worker who wants to work part-time and would like to minimize his or her responsibility may find that a high autonomy periphery status and the expectations that go with that are adequate for his needs. However, if that same worker finds that she or he needs to increase his earnings due to a change in his personal circumstances (such as tuition or new lodgings) she or he may negotiate for a wage raise by actively becoming a core member of the group. The terms core and periphery are neither clear nor distinct. They relate to a relative status within the group as opposed to a formally defined position. A person may be more or less core or periphery to the group. There is a fluid continuum between core and periphery. An employee may move from the periphery to the core and back again. A core employee may move even closer to the core. Either type of employee can leave suddenly, however a periphery employee will be far more likely to leave than will a core employee.

The Unstable Nature of Fast Food Employment

The restaurants that were observed were marked by their relative instability. Unskilled fast food employees are easily replaced and therefore less powerful (Reiter 1991). Fast food work exemplifies the deskilling of the labor force (Ritzer 1998). In as much as fast food labor has been deskilled so that workers have become replaceable, there are now such a multitude of fast food restaurants, each offering a similar lack of security, benefits, training, prestige, and wages that employers have become as replaceable as their deskilled employees. Instability is a structural component even in the

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most harmonious restaurant. Reiter relates that disgruntled employees may often choose
to “vote with their feet” (1991:155). The ease with which franchisees may be replaced
may play a role in franchisees being as attentive as possible to ‘reasonable’ employee
demands. As Fred explained, “If someone wants a day off I just give it to him. Otherwise,
he could be at Burger King next week.” Although franchisees hold ultimate authority
over how much autonomy their employees have or who will remain employed at the
restaurant they must make some concessions to their employees are to be retained. The
absence of a contract and the relative ease with which employees and employers may end
the relationship play a large role in workplace negotiations. As Strauss notes, “options to
avoiding or discontinuing negotiation” are an important variable in the negotiation
context (emphasis in original) (1978:100). Employees or employers in fast food
restaurants may be more or less willing to make concessions during a conflict over a
specific issue depending on their interpretation of the ease with which the other could be
replaced. Some structural conditions may allow workers to have far more power than
usually ascribed to them in literature.

Autonomy in Regulated Environments

Differences in structure may have implications for our understanding of scientific
management. Scientific management seeks to control workers thus reducing their
autonomy. Reiter has described how McDonald’s has succeeded in applying Taylorism to
the restaurant (1991). The high degree of regulation required by scientific management
cannot be accomplished without a significant outlay of resources. The computers and
other labor saving devices require investments of capital that is assumedly not available
to all potential franchisees. Some restaurant owners make far less use of technology and
laborers than do others. Within the rubric of fast food, there are a number of restaurateurs who employ scientific management, but not to the degree to which McDonald’s has been able to do so. Grinders and Ana’s represent two such restaurants. Both employ scientific management to bring about a formally rational plan of action. However, neither have the resources to coerce workers to act as closely to the model, as McDonald’s. The absence of capital investment in scientific management presents a structural contribution to the ability of employees to increase their personal autonomy. To the extent, that employers fail to deskill laborers, employers must depend on the abilities of their employees (Braverman 1974). Although, Anna’s and Grinders have a formally rational way of performing most tasks, workers in both restaurants are under less of a structural obligation to follow the prescriptions exactly. In other words, an absence of capital investment in differentiation and technology can increase potential autonomy. This finding would partially explain why the employees at Grinders and Anna’s possessed more autonomy than did employees at the restaurants studied by Garson (1988) and Reiter (1991). Workers who seek to increase their autonomy do so through a process of negotiation. Franchisees do not simply grant autonomy because they do not have the means to control workers. They often make demands that are similar to their counter parts in capital-intensive restaurants. However, franchisees at less structurally differentiated restaurants will be more likely to concede autonomy to workers that implicitly or explicitly push for greater autonomy. Of course, the degree of autonomy afforded to individual laborers is subject to continual processes of negotiation.

The data suggest that autonomy may become a bargaining piece in employee-employer negotiations. Workers may seek to exploit structural features such as a labor
shortage or high turnover by negotiating for increased autonomy. Workers, who are not interested in a minimal wage increase, might try to avoid undesired job tasks (i.e. I don’t clean toilets”) or controlling their availability (i.e. refusing to work weekends or evenings). However, if this worker wishes to earn more money, either through promotion or increased hours, the worker may negotiate for this end by sacrificing autonomy. An employee who was previously unwilling to work nights or weekends may find himself closing the restaurant on a Saturday night. Likewise, employers may concede increases in autonomy once employees have reached the limits of what he or she will pay in wages. Fast food restaurants are based on paying employees low wages. Oftentimes, workers will leave their position when they are able to earn higher wages elsewhere (Charner and Fraser 1984). Employers may find that certain employees are more valuable than what he or she can afford to spend. An employer may negotiate to retain an employee by offering increased autonomy in place of higher wages. For instance, an employer may allow a core employee to set his or her schedule, avoid unwanted job tasks, choose the radio station, receive visitors, or use the telephone. An employee may accept an increase in autonomy in place of an increase in wages. In short, we may observe an exchange of autonomy for financial compensation in the fast food restaurants.

Negotiations of Social Order

The findings of this study go beyond conclusions about fast food restaurants. The data support and add to the negotiated order perspective, consequently, leading to a better understanding of social order and how it is achieved through interaction. The data allow us to come closer to an understanding of the interplay between agency and social structure as well as rationalization and autonomy.
As stated previously, the assumptions of the negotiated order perspective are that social order depends on negotiation, social structure influences negotiations, negotiations must be continually renewed in response to structural changes, and negotiations are impermanent (Fine 1996:3-4). The data support these assumptions. In the highly unstable world of the fast food restaurant employees may resign or be terminated with little advance notice. It is not unusual for, both the employee and employer to be capable of replacing the other. However, all things being equal it is frequently easier to continue a business relationship than to find a new job or train a new employee respectively. Therefore, employees and employers have incentive to maintain the relationship; in spite of the conflict that is an intrinsic component of their relationship. Employees and employers cooperate with each other through the process of negotiation. This cooperation is not created in a vacuum. The second assumption of the negotiated order perspective is that structural features influence negotiations. The data show that the negotiations between different parties in a fast food restaurant are far from equal. Employers are far more powerful than are their employees. Although, employers depend on their employees, the ability of the employer to dismiss employees and set the terms of employment stacks the proverbial cards firmly in favor of the house. The power that employers wield is dependent upon structural variables that are subject to change. The third and fourth assumptions of the negotiated order perspective are supported by the observation that as the structural context of the restaurant changes the social order must be renegotiated. A change in the unemployment rate, the number of similar restaurants in the area, the building of a new road, demographic shifts, and so on may influence the power that workers and franchisees possess relative to each other. For example, in this
study, factors that led to an increase in the number of customers often necessitated a renegotiation of the social order. The holiday that caused a drastic increase in business resulted in a number of negotiations of the social order at Grinders.

This study supports many of the conclusions of Morgan who applied the negotiated order perspective to the analysis of a factory (1975). Unlike many studies of negotiated order, Morgan examined a highly regulated setting. He found that negotiation is present even in organizations where some actors have little power in relation to others. Morgan argues that negotiation may be either implicit or explicit (1975). This study expands upon Morgan’s research by applying many of his findings to the analysis of fast food restaurants. Fast food restaurants, like factories, are subject to the process of rationalization, which has systematically reduced the power and autonomy of lower level workers. As in Morgan’s factory, particular issues may be negotiated implicitly or explicitly (1975). This study supports Morgan’s observation that even the most formally rational organizations rely on negotiation to accomplish social order. From this research, we cannot go so far as to claim that all social orders are maintained through negotiation. For instance, the findings of this research may not be applicable to “sweat shops,” or internment camps. Although Erving Goffman’s, *Asylums*, certainly points to the possibility that processes of negotiation contribute to the maintenance of even the most repressive social orders (1961). We might speculate that in any organization where persons in power depend on the cooperation of subordinates (particularly subordinates who may for one reason or another be capable of choosing to leave the organization) the social order will be maintained, in part, through processes of negotiation.
The Imprecise Nature of Implicit Negotiation

This study adds to Morgan’s research in a number of ways. In highly controlled environments, low-level workers may engage in implicit negotiations when explicit negotiation is unfeasible. Morgan treats implicit negotiation as if it is conducted for specific aims such as control of time. While some forms of implicit negotiation may be conducted for specific issues, many times, implicit negotiations include actions that place persons in a position to demand different sets of issues. For instance, the employee who actively moves from a periphery to core status within the restaurant may be implicitly negotiating for a set of issues (i.e. increased pay or increased authority). From this finding, we may surmise that negotiations may occur in various stages. The imprecise implicit type of negotiation is typified by an employee who actively attempts to move from the periphery to the core, can be interpreted as a base level interpretation that places an actor in a position that allows her or him to make more precise negotiations. The employee who succeeds in becoming a core employee is in a better position to negotiate for increased wages or greater influence over the schedule. The movement from periphery to core status is an act of negotiation, as it requires the individual to provide certain bargaining pieces (i.e. effort and responsibility) in exchange for an intersubjectively held understanding that a person is a part of the core of the group.

Status and Autonomy in Negotiations

An employee’s level of autonomy and status (as a periphery or core member) will influence which aims the employee can hope to reach. Status and autonomy are two variable axes that an employee may wish to alter in order to reach different sets of goals.
The imprecise negotiation process can be illustrated by imaging the lived experience of two hypothetical employees.

Employee A begins her career at the restaurant as a periphery member with low autonomy. She exercises little influence issues that are negotiated because neither the crew nor the franchisee has come to depend on her. Employee A, in an effort to earn more money, does not push for greater autonomy (control of the schedule or job task assignment) rather she negotiates for increased wages and hours by working hard and efficaciously. After Employee A has attained what she interprets as the limits of her wages, she may use her core status to negotiate for increased autonomy. She may place limitations on her scheduling availability or what job tasks she will perform. The franchisee accepts these demands because he is not willing to pay her a higher wage, but he does not want her to resign.

Employee B has an opposite experience in the negotiations. Like Employee A, Employee B begins as a peripheral member with little autonomy. He is more interested in maintaining a balance between his personal life and his work life. As he becomes a core member, he negotiates for increased autonomy by placing limitations on which shifts he will accept. Because, he would be difficult to replace, the franchisee often accepts his scheduling limitations. However, should Employee B decide that he would like to increase his income; he may sacrifice his autonomy by decreasing his limitations on availability in exchange for more hours per week. Of course, these examples are oversimplifications. They are used to demonstrate the interplay between employee status and autonomy in the negotiated order of a fast food restaurant.
Individual Agency and Social Structure

The negotiated order perspective can allow us to obtain a greater understanding of the relationship between individual agency and social structure. The data support the notion that social structure does not have a uniform affect on actors (Sugrue 1982; Altheide 1988). Rational individuals interpret their social environment before they choose to act. Two individuals may view the same job market quite differently. Of course, the interpretation of reality is not subject to purely rational processes. One’s interpretation of reality will undoubtedly be affected by one’s emotions or values. Additionally, we may conclude that social structure is impermanent. The structure must be continually renegotiated. cooperation is achieved through a process of continual negotiation, individual motivations change, actors come, and go, and the definition of deviance is reworked. Social structure arises from interaction. Moreover, I have found that while the social structure will place limits on one’s agency, individuals are still capable of maneuvering through the structure. Some individuals are able to exploit their own abilities to manipulate the social structure to their personal advantage, while other, less efficacious individuals will fail to achieve their desires.¹

Lastly, this study allows us to come to a greater understanding of how the process of rationalization or as Ritzer (1993) has put it McDonaldization plays out in the lives of individuals. The act of calculating a single best way of performing a specific task significantly reduces the autonomy of workers (Weber [1930] 1997; Braverman 1974; Ritzer 1998). This study does not dispute the fact that the process of rationalization has steadily decreased the autonomy of employees. However, at a micro level, a formally

¹ Demographic characteristics such as race, gender, and age will affect on the negotiation context. However, the nature and extent of these variables exceeds the scope of this study.
rational plan may take on a different significance in the lives of individuals. By using the negotiated order perspective to examine specific formally rational workplaces, we may find that rationalization is not uniformly problematic for workers. In some instances, individual autonomy is far from ideal. Given the choice between autonomy and security, many workers will sacrifice autonomy. The freedom from control of the labor process may not benefit an employee who wants to expend as little energy as possible when at work (Leidner 1993). The employer who is less interested in controlling the labor process may be creating more work for employees who have to compensate for the lack of routinization with their own effort. The process of having to interpret a single best way to negotiate a chaotic situation may be allow for greater autonomy and greater dissatisfaction on the part of the worker. However, there are times when an employee may want to increase his or her autonomy. The ability to receive visitors, choose the radio station, decide when to take a break, set one’s schedule, eschew certain job tasks, or any of the other issues that may be negotiated in a restaurant will depend on the existential actor. By using the negotiated order perspective that accounts for contextual factors, we may come to understand how individuals negotiate for their existentially held motivations. We may come to see how and when workers may strive to increase their autonomy, likewise we may discern situations where freedom is problematic.

Future Research

Future studies of negotiated order or fast food research may move in a number of directions from here. This study did not examine highly differentiated fast food restaurants. Will workers have an easier time negotiating with managers or the owner? Will the increase in differentiation completely reduce worker autonomy by narrowing job
tasks thus further controlling the labor process? Does an increase crew size reduce the ability of management to supervise workers, thereby creating a structural potential for increased autonomy? The increase in structural complexity will certainly alter the negotiation context, yet without empirical data we may only speculate as to how.² Likewise, future researchers of the negotiated order perspective may focus on franchisees and their web of negotiations with their employees, property owners, suppliers, regulators, franchisor, and customers. Moreover, taking direction from Denzin’s analysis of the liquor industry one could study the various levels of society where the social order of the fast food restaurants is maintained through negotiation (1977, 1978a). For negotiated order theorists, the data point to the importance of examining highly regulated milieus. Future studies of the disenfranchised may illustrate how individuals with little power achieve or fail to achieve their goals (prison inmates, welfare recipients, or sales clerks) through negotiation. These studies may improve the negotiated order perspective by adding to analytical concepts and strengthening existing sensitizing concepts such as implicit negotiation. Additional studies of the negotiated order perspective may incrementally develop a theory of negotiations, which, in turn, may allow sociologists to better understand the interplay between agency and structure.

² The data presented by Reiter (1991), Leidner (1993), and Royle (2001) when compared with this study would lead us to believe that an increase in the division of labor reduces the autonomy of workers. However, we could be far more certain with an analysis of highly specialized restaurants from the negotiated order perspective.

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