

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

**LABOR, CULTURE, AND CAPITAL
IN CORPORATE FAST FOOD RESTAURANT FRANCHISES:
GLOBAL AND LOCAL INTERACTIONS AMONG AN IMMIGRANT
WORKFORCE IN NEW YORK CITY**

BY

JENNIFER PARKER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1996

UMI Number: 9707140

**Copyright 1996 by
Parker, Jennifer Anne**

All rights reserved.

**UMI Microform 9707140
Copyright 1996, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

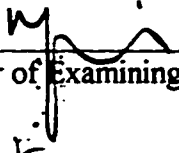
© 1996

JENNIFER PARKER

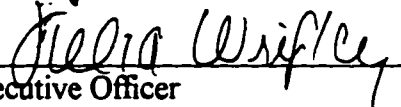
All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

9/26/96
Date


Chair of Examining Committee

9/27/96
Date


Executive Officer

Professor Sharon Zukin

Professor Cynthia Epstein

Professor Peter Kwong

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

LABOR, CULTURE, AND CAPITAL IN CORPORATE FAST FOOD RESTAURANT FRANCHISES: GLOBAL AND LOCAL INTERACTIONS AMONG AN IMMIGRANT WORKFORCE IN NEW YORK CITY

By

Jennifer Parker

Advisor: Professor Sharon Zukin

This dissertation is a qualitative study of labor and cultural processes in corporate fast food restaurant franchises in New York City. Immigrants from virtually every continent in the world, but mainly from the Third World, provide a growing labor supply to corporate fast food restaurants in New York City. I show how a multitude of factors including both structural and cultural demands of the industry and various features to do with this immigrant labor supply shape a workforce that is globally and culturally diverse. I examine seven restaurants in three different New York City areas: Chinatown Manhattan, Washington Heights, and Downtown Brooklyn, and show how the social stratification of a fast food workforce turns out to be geographically shaped and culturally defined according to local characteristics of these neighborhoods and districts. I find that recruitment and hiring practices linked to immigrant social networks work to reinforce and reproduce patterns of social stratification among a fast food workforce in New York City. But fast food restaurants tend to employ ethnically diverse workforces,

rather than homogenous groups of “co-ethnics.” This diversity is reinforced by social class diversity, where people from a range of family backgrounds, work experiences, and life chances come together in the fast food restaurant. Culture, ethnicity, and social class in the fast food restaurant, then, is seen in the context of a larger global and ethnic hierarchy among immigrants in New York’s labor market. I also show how the shifting technical and social organization of the fast food restaurant affects the way immigrants are organized in this industry. Most importantly, a growing emphasis on “service interaction” (which parallels the implementation of new technologies such as computerized registers) has affected cultural and gender divisions of labor, and cultured and gendered based opportunity in the restaurant. Further, I explore social relations within the workforce, showing how racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity shapes relations, perceptions, attitudes and biases among different groups new to New York’s labor market. I show how these relations shape culturally and ethnically based experiences as well as employment opportunities and chances for mobility among employees. I then broaden my focus to explore the role the fast food job plays in people’s lives and households, showing how low-wage fast food employment fits into employees’ life-long occupational trajectories, and, the extent to which employees and their families do or do not depend on fast food wages today, not only as a “first” job, but also as a “moonlighting” job, a second or third job, or, as a job of “last resort.”

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is a product of many ideas, support, assistance, guidance, and sources of information from numerous people. I take responsibility for the final form of this dissertation, but wish to recognize and thank all those who offered me their time, help, and encouragement without which this dissertation would not have been possible. I am indebted to the great many employees and other industry participants who shared their knowledge, experiences, and feelings with me. Colleagues and friends devoted time to reading early drafts and were crucial to the direction I took in this study especially Sangeetha Purushothaman who gave me intellectual guidance and friendship for many years. And also Dan Caplin, Paul Dana, Gina Guerrieri, Julia Nevarez, Matt Noyes, Bill McAllister, Julia Rothenberg, Youngmi Lim, Tom Burgess, Pamela Jenkins, and Irene Strum. Students in Bill Kornblum's dissertation seminar—including Judy Lilleston and Joan Liebmann-Smith—and others in Barbara Katz Rothman's dissertation seminar at the Graduate Center also helped me shape my initial approach in this study in important ways. Students and faculty in the Center for Social Change seminar at the New School for Social Research offered the kind of invaluable critique that I needed after my fieldwork. Charles Tilly, Ira Zolberg, Tom Gold, Eliana Jacobs, Lis Clemens, Guy Baldwin, Amel Salzman, Richard Ford, Peter Hoffman, Jeff Goodwin and others gave me extensive comments I referred to throughout the writing stage. Various professors, in classes or otherwise, offered suggestions for reworking ideas and material especially Maria Patricia Fernandez Kelly, Howard Botwinick, Stephen Steinberg, Bill Kornblum, Barbara Katz Rothman, Chris Tilly, Paul Attewell, Mauricio Font, Ron Hellman, and Peter Kwong. I thank Bill Hilton for his valuable social contacts in the industry and the many discussions that pushed me to rethink old ideas. And Hank Solomon for being a constant source of advice and support. Thanks also goes to many of my fellow students at the Graduate Center who helped shape my thinking in classes or in discussions or who I could always count on to be encouraging especially Danny Kessler, Gay Willis, Janet Baus, Steve Duncomb, George Dourdanis, Bonnie Oglensky, Rob Saute, Alex Vitali, and Betsy Wissinger. I am also grateful to Julia Wrigley for her support in the final stage, Judy Waldman for her help and advice regarding the final details of the manuscript, and, Kingsley Okantey for his research assistance. My committee members Cynthia Epstein, and Sharon Zukin, provided me a strong foundation of intellectual and moral support for which I am forever grateful. Cynthia Epstein provided me the initial encouragement to study the fast food industry during her course on workplace culture, brought to light the importance of looking outside the workplace for what is inside it, and for the following four years provided invaluable support in innumerable ways. Sharon Zukin has been my advisor for the past six years since I joined her on a research project on restaurants in NYC. And for six years she has extended herself well and far beyond what I ever thought a graduate student advisor, and teacher, would do. I am grateful beyond words for her unwavering confidence, intellectual guidance and spirit, and for always encouraging my work to be better. My family deserves much credit including my mother, my father, my sisters, Catherine, Elizabeth, and Emily Rose, and my brother, Michael for having been patient with my absences, and, for always trying to convey complete understanding about my seemingly endless graduate school endeavor. They were kind to never ask the typical question of relatives: "Aren't you done yet?" Instead, they took an active interest and helped me clarify many obscure ideas. Finally, I thank Atul Talwar for being my friend and everything else, a constant and invaluable source of intellectual and emotional support for the past two years.

Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 The Organization of Work	46
Chapter 3 Chinatown	121
Chapter 4 Washington Heights	175
Chapter 5 Downtown Brooklyn	225
Chapter 6 Downtown Brooklyn: Life, Work, and "Attitude"	269
Chapter 7 Occupational Mobility Among Fast Food Employees: Beyond the Fast Food Job?	301
Chapter 8 Conclusion	357
Bibliography	382

List of Tables and Charts

Tables

1.1	Poverty Rates, Household Incomes and Educational Attainment By Race in New York
1.2	New York City Food Workers and Supervisors
1.3	Weekly Wages of Selected Service-Related Manager Occupations in New York City
1.4	How Respondents (Both Managers and Crew Members) Got Their Jobs
2.1	Numbers of Food Franchises by Franchise Type
2.2	Cuisine and Company Size
2.3	Food Franchise Company Size and Market Shares
2.4	Ownership Types Among Restaurants Examines
2.5	Methods of management and control over service workers
2.6	Women's Participation in the Paid Labor Force: Rates from 1940 to 1990
2.7	Disparity of Earnings Across Fast Food Restaurant Industry Occupational Hierarchy
3.1	Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents, Chinatown McDonalds
3.2	Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents, Chinatown Burger King
4.1	Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents, Washington Heights McDonalds, 181st Street
4.2	Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents, Washington Heights Burger King, 181st Street
4.3	Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents, Washington Heights McDonalds, on border of East Inwood.

- 5.1 Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents, Downtown Brooklyn McDonalds, Downtown Brooklyn
- 5.2 Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents, Downtown Brooklyn, Burger King Chinatown
- 7.1 Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of Chinese Respondents
- 7.2 Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of West Indian Respondents
- 7.3 Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of South Asian Respondents
- 7.4 Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of Latino Immigrant Respondents
- 7.5 Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of Second Generation Latinos
- 7.6 Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of Black Americans
- 7.7 Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of Single Respondents of Immigrant/Ethnic Groups
- 7.8 Job Experience, and Age Started Working Among Respondents By Ethnic Group

Charts

- 2.1 Fast Food Restaurant Social Hierarchy
- 2.2 Corporate Ownership Structure and Corporate Links: Grand Metropolitan to New York City Burger King Restaurants

Chapter One

Introduction

New York City has been one of the largest immigrant receiving cities in the United States since the federal government's "new" immigration policy began in 1965 (Sassen, 1991; Portes, 1990). Since that time, new immigration has occurred in a restructuring economy where most job expansion is in low level service occupations. Restructuring is important in that it has given rise to new labor market conditions, work demands, labor criteria, and patterns shaping occupational mobility. An important difference from many old jobs, especially in low-level services and retail where the greatest job expansion is taking place, is an emphasis on working with people rather than working with "one's hands." The new jobs feature "teamwork," communication, and image, and the social and cultural features of employees are increasingly valued over manual and technical abilities. The corporate arm of the retail and "public contact" sectors makes up a large and growing portion of this sector. Sony Theaters, Starbucks Coffee, the Gap, the Wiz, and fast food restaurants help shape our vision of a city being created on image, service and consumerism. But do we ever think about how a low-wage labor force is interwoven into this urban consumer culture? And how immigrant workers are helping to shape it--and are shaping their lives around it?

Today, one of the fastest expanding industries in New York is the corporate fast food industry. Thousands of corporate fast food restaurants are dispersed all over New York City, including in "old" and "new" immigrant neighborhoods. Fast food restaurants

are a leading employer of low-wage workers.¹ In New York City they employ tens of thousands of people (New York State Department of Labor, 1990). Growing numbers of these employees are new immigrants from virtually every continent in the world, but mainly from the Third World. Fast food employees come from various countries in South and East Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa.

In this dissertation, I show how a multitude of factors to do with both structural and cultural demands of the industry and various features to do with the labor supply of new immigrants shape a global workforce and their experiences in this industry. I examine the social stratification of a fast food workforce that turns out to be geographically shaped and culturally defined according to local characteristics of New York's various different neighborhoods and districts. I find that recruitment and hiring practices linked to immigrant social networks work to reinforce and reproduce patterns of social stratification among a fast food workforce in New York City. I also show how the shifting technical and social organization of the fast food restaurant affects the way immigrants are organized in the industry.

Further, I explore social relations within the workforce, showing how racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity shapes relations, perceptions, attitudes and biases among different groups new to New York's labor market. I show how these relations shape culturally and ethnically based experiences as well as employment opportunities and chances for mobility among employees. I then broaden my focus to explore the role the

¹ In 1987, franchised restaurants employed 25 percent of all workers in the restaurant industry (See Card and Krueger, 1994).

fast food job plays in people's lives and households, showing how low-wage fast food employment fits into employees' life-long occupational trajectories. The fast food restaurant industry has been at the center of recent political debate concerning the level of the minimum wage and the declining standard of living among American families. At issue has been the long held assumption that fast food jobs are filled by young people and students making their first entry into the labor market to gain experience and pocket money. This dissertation challenges this assumption by examining the extent to which, and the ways in which people and families may or may not depend on minimum wage work, not only as a "first" job, but as a mid-life "moonlighting job, a second or third job, or, as a job of "last resort."

Research methods

This research on the New York City fast food industry is qualitatively oriented and includes participant observation and direct observation in restaurants and in the neighborhoods where they are located. I talked with more than 100 participants in the industry at every level of the hierarchy—from entry-level "crew members" to managers, owners and corporate-level staff. I also conducted more than 50 in-depth face-to-face interviews with New York City restaurant employees, managers, and owners.

I began my research in 1992 when I worked in a Burger King restaurant in New York City for three months to study workplace culture. I worked alongside Latin American, West Indian and South Asian immigrants as well as men and women of American-born racial minorities. Among them were high school and college students,

fathers and mothers; many worked two and three different jobs. I was struck by the central role social relations played in the work process--yet how they were ambiguously detached from any kind of conscious and centered organizational structure. During the three months I worked in the fast food restaurant, no employee was able to tell me who or how workplace policies had been established, who owned the restaurant, or why they were paid the amount they earned. On the other hand, they continually thought about other job opportunities and struggled to find meaning and status in the social relations and social environment they themselves created in the workplace. The ethnic, racial, cultural, and gender dynamics in the workplace were apparent from my first day on the job. One manager informed me that the "niggers" were lazy. Another manager told me that I looked feminine and "presentable" enough to be a cashier. There were specific jobs for women (on the front-line) and for men (heavy physical work like unloading trucks).

From 1992 through 1994, I extended my research to observe and talk with workers and managers in several restaurants located in numerous New York City neighborhoods--including Jackson Heights, a South Asian neighborhood in Queens; Washington Heights, a Dominican neighborhood in Manhattan; Chinatown in Manhattan; and the commercial districts of Times Square, the West Village, the Upper East Side and Wall Street. I focused on the two biggest companies--McDonalds and Burger King. Certain patterns and trends started to emerge. First, the fast food workforce was comprised of people of color who were predominantly new immigrants. They were mainly from the poorest countries in the Third World--from several Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean countries. Other large immigrant groups in New York--such as Italians,

Koreans, and Japanese--do not work in fast food restaurants. Secondly, the workforce was ethnically and globally diverse. Third, although both men and women worked as managers, and selected workers for various positions, jobs were similarly gendered in every restaurant. Fourth, most workers did not live in the areas where they worked. Finally, specific labor criteria in each restaurant were often particular to the social and cultural characteristics of the neighborhood and clientele it targeted and served.

In 1994 and 1995, I decided to focus on three neighborhoods and conducted an intensive study that included observations and in-depth, face-to-face interviews with restaurant participants. I aimed to examine and explain the patterns I had observed. But more, I aimed to explain how social relations and dynamics among a global workforce in each restaurant were linked to broader patterns. These neighborhoods included Chinatown in Manhattan--an old immigrant neighborhood and center of cultural tourism where I focused on a McDonalds and a Burger King restaurant. Secondly, Washington Heights--a neighborhood of "new" immigrants, largely consisting of a residential population of immigrants from the Dominican Republic, where I examined two McDonalds restaurants and a Burger King restaurant. And thirdly, Downtown Brooklyn--the site of one of New York's oldest municipal complexes and a popular shopping plaza among New York's Black populations, where I examined a McDonalds restaurant and a Burger King restaurant.

These neighborhoods were carefully selected on the basis of access to restaurant participants, they were largely immigrant neighborhoods but yet varied considerably, and both McDonalds and Burger King restaurants were located in each area. I focused on

these two companies because they are the biggest fast food companies in the U.S., and at the time they were expanding their number of restaurants in New York. The restaurants consist of similar work processes, produce similar products, and employ similar technologies. I did not focus on a single company because I did not intend for my study to be a company study, but rather, a potentially more generalizable industry study.

I interviewed 13 managers and 39 crew members who came from nearly 20 different countries. Seven were Chinese from Malaysia, Taiwan, and China. Eight were West Indian from Antigua, Guyana, and Jamaica. One West Indian was 2nd generation Antiguan but considered himself African-American. Three were South Asian from Bangladesh and India. 27 were Latino. Eighteen Latinos were from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Colombia, and Cuba. Nine were born in New York of parents from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Honduras. One was Russian. One was African from Togo. Four were African-American. And one was Italian-American. I conducted all the interviews (in either English or Spanish) during 1994 and 1995; each lasted between 45 minutes and three hours during one or two interview sessions.² To protect the privacy of these respondents their real names have not been used in this dissertation. My field research was supplemented by consulting a wide range of

² In Chinatown most interviews were conducted in English. One interview was conducted in Spanish with an employee (from Venezuela) who was only fluent in Spanish. The assistance of a translator was required for two interviews with Chinese immigrants who were learning English but were still not fluent in English. In Washington Heights most interviews were conducted in English. Four interviews were conducted in Spanish with employees who were only fluent in Spanish.

literature, media, cultural, and statistical sources particular to the industry.

Immigrant neighborhoods and corporate enterprise

My three research sites were in Chinatown, Washington Heights, and Downtown Brooklyn. *Manhattan's Chinatown* is an "old" immigrant neighborhood, formed several decades ago (Kwong, 1987). Other Chinatowns have evolved in the outer boroughs of New York City since 1965. But the old Chinatown remains a thriving area where new immigrants find homes, work, establish businesses, and, become entrepreneurs. Chinatown has been characterized in various ways. It is depicted as a dangerous, mysterious area filled with Chinese gangs, underground dealings, shootouts, and sweatshop exploitation. It is also depicted as a center of cultural tourism, shopping and exotic cuisine. Chinatown is located in the Southern end of Manhattan between Broadway shopping, City Hall and other cultural tourist zones such as "Little Italy" and SoHo art galleries. It is an area constantly throbbing with activity. Fish markets, produce stands, gift shops, street carts where one can buy pork dumplings and scallion pancakes for only 50 cents, and Chinese restaurants line the streets. Amidst overcrowded sidewalks the multiple languages and dialects of residents, shopkeepers, and visitors from all over the world can be heard.

Washington Heights is a "new" immigrant community which has received a steady stream of immigrants mainly from the Dominican Republic since 1965. Dominicans have been one of the largest recent group of immigrants to New York City (Pessar, 1987). Located in the northern tip of Manhattan above Harlem, Washington Heights remains a

relatively mixed community of Dominicans and a minority mix of other Spanish speaking immigrants and their successive generations. Unlike Chinatown, Washington Heights attracts few visitors. This is due to its long distance away from the center of the city, lack of cultural attractions, and depiction as a violent, drug ridden, and riot-prone area. Like most New York neighborhoods, its borders are socially and ethnically defined. An eastern border marks the divide between an old German Jewish residential area commonly called "the Jewish Alps" and the Dominican population. And in the new neighborhood "old" remnants of the past still remain. Greek owned pizza joints and diners, Irish beer pubs, and Jewish bakeries mixed with Dominican restaurants and bodegas are reminders to the new Dominican residents of their predecessors--"White ethnics" who built and resided in this area from the turn of the century (Katznelson, 1981).

Downtown Brooklyn is not considered an "ethnic" neighborhood and it is not a place tourists are attracted to. It is one of New York City's oldest commercial districts, located near the Brooklyn waterfront at the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge. It is only minutes away from Downtown Manhattan by car or subway. Municipal government buildings and court houses cover several blocks and constitute the core structures around which this area has been built. The municipal complex is surrounded by a middle class residential area, commercial streets, housing projects where poor American minorities live, and the Fulton Mall, a shopping street known for its popularity among New York's Black populations.

Though like the other two neighborhoods, Downtown Brooklyn has become predominantly an immigrant area. Like many of New York's commercial districts,

the area reflects vast racial, ethnic and social class diversity among pedestrians, workers, shoppers, street vendors, and shop owners. Middle Eastern bagel cart owners and Bangladeshi fruit vendors are on the busiest street corners. Spanish speaking immigrants prepare produce and flowers in front of Korean delis. Various shops and department stores, from Arab and South Asian owned gift shops to Macy's, Woolworths, and the Wiz, line the shopping streets. Old style diners, take-out delis owned by Greeks, and numerous other eateries owned by Afghans, Bangladeshis, Venezuelans, Salvadorans and Americans serve meals to the area's workers and shoppers.

Corporate fast food restaurants in these three neighborhoods stand side by side with "ethnic" restaurants, other old and new immigrant enterprises, and, various mainstream enterprises. They each employ a predominantly immigrant workforce. Yet, one wouldn't expect corporate fast food restaurants like McDonalds and Burger King to employ immigrants. Perhaps more than any other employer, fast food restaurants are perceived to be the quintessential employer of Americans, especially American youth (Bailey, 1985). On the other hand, fast food restaurants are, in many ways, characteristic of other enterprises that have traditionally employed immigrants: they are labor intensive, small in size, and mainly comprised of low-wage, non-union, contingent, and largely dead-end jobs (Waldinger, 1986). Fast food restaurants are also characteristic of traditional immigrant enterprises because increasing numbers of them in New York are owned by immigrants.

Immigrant owned corporate fast food restaurants, especially those located in immigrant neighborhoods, would seem to cast a different light on social science's usual

treatment of immigrant enterprise. On the one hand immigrant fast food owners--such as owners of Korean delis or Chinese restaurants--have an ethnic advantage. Using what Ivan Light (1972) refers to as "ethnic solidarism" or what Roger Waldinger (1986) refers to as "ethnic encapsulation," immigrant owners are able to draw on ethnic resources, including labor, cultural managers (those who share the same ethnic identity with their workforce), and political and financial support.

But unlike the independent immigrant enterprise fast food restaurants are connected to outside organizations and hierarchies of command, linking local restaurant sites to corporate headquarters. They are, thus, mainstream organizations and part of giant corporate America. Although a growing number of fast food restaurants are immigrant owned, many are not. Many are owned by large New York based corporations. Because these New York based corporations are endowed with large capital reserves, they carry significant advantages. And as part of giant global corporations, their modes of operation embody economies of scale, advanced technologies, and global corporate marketing campaigns that provide a significant economic advantage that independent immigrant owners lack (Elongo and Fried, 1992; Doust, 1984).

Bridging two labor markets:

"primary" and "secondary" jobs in the fast food restaurant industry

These features of corporate fast food restaurants have led Parcel and Sickmeier (1988) to reformulate dualistic theories of the labor market such as Doeringer and Piore's dual economy theory (1971) and Gordon's segmented labor market theory (1974).

Dualistic approaches have postulated a labor market divided between "core firms" and "periphery firms" to help us understand various social inequalities engendered by structural differences among kinds of employers--in terms of wages, conditions, and opportunities for advancement.

Core firms, or "monopoly firms" are large, employ large numbers of people, earn large profits, employ advanced technologies, and have a geographically unlimited consumer market. Jobs in core firms, usually called "primary jobs," consist of good wages, safe, clean, and stable working conditions, and opportunities for advancement. They disproportionately employ white men. Periphery firms are characteristic of the traditional immigrant enterprise. They are small, less profitable, are labor intensive, have lower levels of technology, and sell to a geographically limited consumer market. Jobs in periphery firms, usually called "secondary jobs" are low paying, low in status, often consist of poor work conditions, and are usually dead-end. Periphery workers are disproportionately women, minorities, immigrants and young. A dual labor market engenders workforce inequalities not only because of the structural imbalance between core and periphery firms, but also because there is little or no mobility between the two sectors.

Yet, as Parcel and Sickmeier point out, the corporate fast food industry is a case that embodies characteristics of both core and periphery firms. On the one hand, the fast food restaurant is a subsidiary of giant corporate America. On the other hand, many of the features of most fast food employment are characteristic of "secondary jobs."

According to Bennett Harrison (1994), we might view this seeming anomaly as

characteristic of modern corporate restructuring trends where the core/periphery dichotomy has become diffused among the biggest corporations today. The "brave new world of business organization" consists of decentralized economic activities where multinational corporations continue to be in control. The combination of centralized corporate resources and control and local-level operation and employer autonomy provides a "leaner," more flexible, and more efficient mode of production. This is important because it helps us to understand theoretically how the fast food restaurant may operate differently in terms of its employment and labor recruitment practices from other local independent enterprises in the immigrant neighborhood--although many of its local features appear similar.

Fast food jobs and labor recruitment

Recruitment practices are considerably different in the fast food restaurant from the traditional immigrant enterprise. "Flexible labor" is a key feature of the modern corporate organization; it is characterized by the employees' temporary status and flexible scheduling. Thus, fast food work is both contingent and temporary. Employees tend to be, and are encouraged to be, transient.

Secondly, as mainstream corporate organizations, fast food restaurants must employ documented immigrants who are legally eligible to work. Third, since profits are derived more from the sophisticated organizational structure--economies of scale,

technologies, etc.--than just a cheap and tightly controlled labor supply of "coethnics,"³ fast food restaurants can be more diverse in the kinds and range of employees they recruit and less dependent on cheap labor that requires direct ethnic control. Indeed, what is distinct about fast food restaurants as immigrant employers is that they tend to employ ethnically diverse workforces, rather than homogenous groups of "co-ethnics."

The structural features of fast food work--including temporary, low wage and mainstream jobs--also facilitate social class diversity, where people from a range of family backgrounds, work experiences, and life chances come together in the fast food restaurant. Reasons for working in the fast food restaurant often vary between and within different immigrant groups. But the various reasons for working in fast food jobs are primarily rooted in interlinking factors to do with social class background, opportunities in the labor market at large, perception of fast food work, and other activities one is

³ Labor costs in a fast food restaurant are extremely low. In some restaurants labor costs are less than 12 percent of total revenues (Management Memo, Meeting Summary, 1993). This is compared to independent unionized restaurants where 72 percent of revenues go to payroll and independent nonunion restaurants where 29 percent of revenues goes to payroll (See Miller, 1995). In New York City corporate fast food restaurants, most crew members are paid a starting rate of \$4.25 per hour (minimum wage). This is the lowest legal wage. The manager wage/salary varies substantially within and between restaurants and companies. Among my respondents (where I could obtain the information) the lowest manager wage (excluding middle level managers) was \$7.00 per hour for an assistant manager. The highest was \$40,000 plus a year. My argument here is that to be able to stay competitive, fast food employers are not as dependent on paying low wages as are independent ethnic employers to be able to stay competitive. While they do pay the lowest possible legal wage it is more a factor of intense labor competition in New York that drives the wage to its lowest possible level. Differences in wage rates across U.S. and international locations of fast food restaurants provides some evidence for this. Parts of Pennsylvania and Nebraska, for example, pay starting hourly rates of \$7-8.00. In Japan starting rates are the U.S. dollar equivalent of \$9.00. And in parts of Sweden the starting hourly rate is the U.S. equivalent of \$15-16.00. (These rates are for the McDonalds company.)

currently involved in such as attending high school or college.

Fast food work attracts workers from households that have depended on the informal economy--such as "Downtown" Chinese⁴ and Dominicans⁵--because it is a better alternative and a chance to join the mainstream economy. It attracts students from a range of family backgrounds because the employment is temporary and fit the fast food industry's historical image as a "youth" employer. These students are from virtually every immigrant group. Fast food also attracts professionals and those with technical skills who have been squeezed out of their own fields and who often join at the managerial level. These tend to be Asian, from both South and East Asia. And, it attracts those without any marketable skills or higher educational degrees from virtually every immigrant group because there are few other alternatives in today's labor market. Culture, ethnicity and social class in the fast food restaurant, then, can be seen in the context of a larger global and ethnic hierarchy among immigrants in New York's labor market.

Fast food restaurants draw on resources of labor from various ethnic, national, and social class groups. And, importantly, they are not dependent on local labor, nor labor from any one particular geographical area. No matter where fast food restaurants are located they tend to attract job seekers. They have become symbols of job opportunity in

⁴ "Downtown" Chinese are the poorer, working class and less socially mobile among the Chinese population. They are distinguished from the "Uptown" Chinese (Kwong, 1987). Some of my Chinese respondents lived in households with family members who worked off the books in Chinese restaurants or garment factories. But many were "Uptown" Chinese from professional backgrounds.

⁵ Several of my respondents lived in households with family members who worked off the books. These jobs included garment "homeworking," automobile repair, domestic help and child care.

America and it is no different in the immigrant neighborhood. Corporate fast food restaurants tend to receive more and a greater variety of applicants than other immigrant enterprises that draw on local and ethnically homogenous labor. An immigrant from the Dominican Republic living in Harlem, for example, would quite naturally inquire about a job in a McDonalds restaurant in Chinatown. But she would be unlikely to inquire about a job in an ethnic Chinese restaurant located next to it.

Partly because of the structural flexibility of labor recruitment, competition for fast food jobs today in New York is exceedingly high. In some areas, fast food job seekers outnumber openings by 14:1 (Newman, 1995). Thus, employers can be highly selective in their hiring practices. Importantly, most fast food employees do not reside where they work and many commute long distances while bypassing numerous other fast food restaurants.⁶ Respondents provided various reasons for this. As other studies have shown, employers "worry that locals will bring problems--for example, friends who badger them for free eats" (Newman, 1995). Yet, given the vast numbers of restaurants located in virtually every area of New York, workers may also be selective. Other studies have not considered workers geographical preferences (Newman, 1995). Workers prefer to work outside of their own neighborhoods because they want to avoid conflict with managers who may suspect them of giving away free food and friends. They also want to avoid peer pressure from friends or relatives who may ask them for free food. Further, workers prefer to commute to avoid local peer pressure rooted in a stigma surrounding

⁶ Many employees commute more than an hour to work each way. This is nearly double the average commuting time of 34 minutes (each way) among New Yorkers (See U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990)^c).

fast food jobs. Among New York City's youth population, fast food work is considered very low in social status.

The fast food industry in the New York City labor market

Immigrants in fast food jobs must also be considered as part of a broader category of an increasingly insecure New York City workforce. Despite job growth in the last few years, the city has experienced a net loss of over 200,000 jobs since 1989, in manufacturing industries including blue-collar, securities and finance.⁷ Job creation has been largely in low-level service and retail occupations--including fast food jobs. The New York State Department of Labor reported that in 1995 over 20 percent of New York City's eligible workforce had been unemployed for more than one year.

The transforming economy has resulted in a downward shift on the New York population at large. More people are turning to minimum wage jobs, as in fast food, to sustain livelihoods and families. According to fast food employers, those turning to fast food employment for the first time in recent years include displaced blue-collar workers, single mothers, and young people simply trying to make an independent living. Growing numbers of fast food workers are working full-time in these jobs. And, as I shall show in this study, for many, a fast food job is the second or third job they are currently holding.

⁷ The percentage of "involuntary part-time workers" rose from less than three percent to just under five percent from 1991-93. And the number of persons unemployed more than one year in New York City rose from about eight percent in 1991 to over 20 percent in 1993. The unemployment rate rose from under six percent in 1987 to nearly 12 percent in 1992. In 1993 it had dropped slightly, but was still over 10 percent (See New York State Department of Labor, (1994)^B).

These trends contribute to and help shape a highly competitive and volatile New York City job market. Jobs in fast food restaurants, in particular, have become more of a perceived job alternative among New Yorkers in recent years not only because they are expanding, but also because fast food jobs have high turnover rates and employers tend to continually hire new employees. Fast food jobs are among 10 occupations in New York City with the most openings every year (New York State Department of Labor, 1992). Fast food jobs are obtainable without job skills or a high school or college education, virtually anybody is eligible to apply. Most New Yorkers (more than 75 percent) do not have a college degree. And, according to the New York State Department of Labor, fast food jobs are one of only nine growth occupations in New York City that do not require more than a high school diploma. Four out of these nine growth occupations (including fast food jobs) are food related jobs.⁸

People of color--both immigrants and native New Yorkers--are disproportionately affected by the downshifting of the New York City economy.⁹ Demographically people of

⁸ The New York State Department of Labor lists nine growth occupations that do not require any post-secondary training or education. The other eight include: receptionist, cleaner and domestic (household), dining room and bartender helpers, cooks in a restaurant, cooks in an institution, home health aids, maids and housekeeping cleaners, and child care workers. Earnings differences are substantial across growth occupations according to their educational criteria. Among growth occupations that require a Bachelors degree or more the average weekly earnings are \$636. For those that require some Post-Secondary education or significant employment training the average weekly earnings are \$442. And for those that require a high school diploma or less the average weekly earnings are \$317 (See New York State Department of Labor (1994)^B).

⁹ In 1993, for example, the overall unemployment rate in New York City was around 12 percent. But for the White population it was only nine percent. Among the Black and Hispanic populations the unemployment rate was around 14 percent (See New York State Department of Labor (1994)^B).

color comprise a growing proportion of the New York City population due to ongoing white flight and a constant flow of immigrants from the Third World.¹⁰ Certain groups--especially blacks and even more so hispanics--are significantly disadvantaged in terms of occupational status, educational levels, income levels, and standards of living compared to New York City's white population. There are vast economic disparities among groups of color as well. Asian populations, for example, are significantly better off, on average, than black and hispanic populations (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990^C) (See Table 1.1).

Table 1.2 illustrates the racial and gender composition and stratification of New York City's lowest wage food related workforce (excluding occupations in restaurants that provide table service such as waiters, cooks and bartenders). Fast food occupations are only one of many occupations included in these broad categories listed by the Department of Census.¹¹

¹⁰ In 1990, Non-Hispanic whites were still the largest group in New York City comprising 47 percent of the population. Yet, between 1980 and 1990 their population declined by about five percent. (About 20 percent of the white population was foreign born.) All growth has been with minority groups. In 1990, Blacks comprised 25 percent of the population. (About 27 percent were foreign-born.) Hispanics comprise 21 percent of the population. (About 35 percent were foreign-born.) Asian and Pacific Islanders represented the fastest growing proportion of the population although they comprised only about eight percent of New York's population as a whole (About 80 percent were foreign-born.) (See U.S. Bureau of Census (1990)^B).

¹¹ Food worker is a category that includes census categories of "Food counter, fountain and related occupations," "kitchen workers, food preparation," and "miscellaneous food preparation occupations" (U.S. Bureau of Census (1990) 1990 EEO Files: Detailed Occupation, New York City. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce).

Table 1.1
Poverty Rates, Household Incomes and Educational Attainment By Race
in New York City, 1990

Group	Family poverty rates	Median Household Income	% with BA degree	Percent of total NYC workforce	Percent in top occupations
White (non-hispanic)	9.6	\$36,464	61.1	48	65.6
Black	25.3	23,820	12.4	21	15.2
Hispanic	33.2	20,402	8.2	16	8.2
Asian/pacific Islander	16.1	31,860	33.4	6.7	6.3

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990^c.

However, the table is helpful to view because the broad racial and ethnic diversity of the fast food workforce is reflected in this larger portrayal of the food industry. Moreover, it importantly depicts a racial hierarchical stratification in the food industry that reflects the larger demographic features shown in Table 1.1.

Hispanics--both men and women combined--for example, account for nearly half of all food workers. They also have the highest representation of food workers within their racial group--2.2 percent of all Hispanic men and .7 percent of all Hispanic women in the labor force are food workers. Yet, compared with Whites, Asians, and even Blacks, their representation in supervisory positions is far less than their representation at the bottom rungs of the hierarchy. While Asians have the second highest representation in food occupations within

Table 1.2
New York City Food Workers and Supervisors
(Includes Fast Food Occupations), 1990
Percentages by Race and Gender

Level		White		Black		Hispanic		Asian/ Pacific Islander	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Super visor	% of all supervisors	28.0	11.6	11.2	10.2	17.7	4.4	13.8	2.8
	% of overall labor force (by category)	.2	.08	.2	.13	.3	.01	.6	.15
Food Work er	% of all food workers	12.9	13.1	12.0	9.7	35.7	8.5	8.9	2.1
	% of overall labor force (by category)	.3	.4	.7	.5	2.2	.7	1.5	.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990^A.

their racial category, they are far more represented in supervisory than in non-supervisory positions. The White labor force as a whole has the lowest percentage of employees in low level food occupations (only .3 percent of men and .4 percent of women). Yet, whites--both men and women combined--account for nearly 40 percent of all supervisors.

The social and racial stratification within the food service industry should be viewed in the context of larger occupational inequalities in the labor market at large. Food service managers/supervisors are among the lowest paid managerial positions in New York--even though these earnings are considerably higher than the wages of entry-level employees such as food sales clerks, counter attendants, fast food workers and fast food

cooks who earn \$170-\$200 per week. Food service managers in New York City earn a weekly salary of \$387 to \$524. Fast food managers' salaries are significantly lower at \$252 to \$429 per week, or a median weekly salary of \$286. These earnings are lower than every other kind of manager, even managers of retail stores and gas stations (auto service stations) (See Table 1.3). They are considerably lower than the earnings of managerial and professional specialty occupations across New York City industries who earn a median average of \$552

Table 1.3

Weekly Wages of Selected Service-Related Manager Occupations in New York City

Manager Occupations	Median wage per week (\$)
Data Processing	\$946
Sales	808
Travel Agency	700
Customer Services	505
Barber or Beauty Shop	460
Auto Service Station	421
Warehouse	337
Retail Store	337
Fast Food Services	286

Source: New York State Department of Labor, 1994^A.

per week.¹²

Geographical and cultural stratification of the workforce: neighborhood integration

The fast food restaurant industry's demands for labor in New York City tend to be geographically and often culturally shaped in terms of a neighborhood clientele and other characteristics of the neighborhood. In general, fast food restaurants comprise a "public contact" industry. According to fast food managers among my respondents, they emphasize service interactions, employee image and presentation, and local integration in their neighborhoods. Thus, they reflect larger demographic changes in New York's

¹² Racial hierarchies in the labor market at large reinforce, amplify and in some cases reconfigure those that exist in the food industry. Nearly two-thirds (66 percent) of those in managerial and professional specialty occupations across all New York City industries are white. This category is important because it includes food service supervisory and manager positions but also every other manager and professional occupation in New York. Therefore, in general, it represents the highest rungs of the occupational hierarchy in terms of social status and wages. Because whites make up less than 50 percent of the New York City labor force then they are, as a whole, over-represented in the top occupations. Significantly, this is a much larger percentage than whites in food service supervisory positions in particular. Hispanics, however, are considerably less represented (less than nine percent) overall in the managerial and professional specialty occupation across New York City industries than they are in food service manager positions. Since they make up about 16 percent of New York's labor force they are considerably under represented in the top occupations. Their much higher representation in food supervisory positions suggests that when Hispanics are managers they tend to be concentrated in low wage industries like food service. Asians who are managers, like Hispanics, also seem to be more concentrated in low level industries like food service as their representation in the managerial/professional occupations across industries in New York is only about six percent--significantly lower than in food service. Significantly, Blacks are much more represented in managerial/professional occupations as a whole in New York City than in food service in particular. About 15 percent of all managers and professionals across industries in New York City are black--indicative of the polarization of the Black population at large (See U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990)^A).

populations and the shifting ethnic and racial boundaries of New York City's districts and neighborhoods. But, they also reflect the particular features of the local area, how the restaurant situates and defines itself in the local context, and, how a labor supply is made available, is shaped for, and adapts itself to local employment demands, opportunities and conditions.

The sociologists Cynthia Epstein (1989, 1990) and Arthur Stinchombe (1990) stress the way "neighborhoods, communities" and "cultural currents" affect the organization of work. As I will show later, when I present case studies of the three neighborhoods I studied, cultural and social labor criteria are often defined by what I call "cultural reinvention" and "cultural matching" in ethnic/immigrant neighborhoods. Sometimes, labor criteria simply respond to neighborhood cultural changes, the composition of the current employees and managers, and the social composition of job seekers.

A McDonalds restaurant in Chinatown, for example, developed an *explicit cultural marketing strategy* intended to target a local Chinese immigrant clientele--especially its second generation--as well as Chinatown's international tourists. Owned by a large corporation, it was able to invest nearly \$3 million in cultural renovations four years ago. These included aesthetic symbols and decor depicting the Chinese "letters" of the Chinese philosophy of life on the walls¹³ and the Chinese style arch (painted in red, which means good luck) looming over a three-floor high stairwell. It provided a menu in the Chinese

¹³ The four Chinese letters represent, according to a Chinatown McDonalds manager, "long life, happy marriage, lots of children, and lucky money."

language, and employed a workforce representative of the local population. Most--60-70 percent--of the employees are Chinese immigrants. The rest of the workforce is comprised of various other nationalities hired for their language skills to be able to communicate with an international tourist clientele (or perhaps more as a novelty)--including a Russian who commutes 90 minutes each way from "Little Russia" (or "Little Odessa") in Brighton Beach, the southern most point in Brooklyn;¹⁴ a French speaker from Togo, Africa; and Spanish speakers from various different national origins.

Ironically, a Burger King restaurant across the street from McDonalds more closely reflects the diversity of job seekers and cultural changes occurring *in this very area*. The ownership is not corporate. Rather, the owner is Vietnamese, one of the many new Vietnamese shopkeepers moving into the spatial fringes of Chinatown. The managers are ethnically diverse. The general manager is Colombian and claims that the "neighborhood has changed considerably...we are in Chinatown but this is really 'Little Vietnam.' It is not Chinese anymore. All these shops are owned by Vietnamese and also Korean." The other managers are Puerto Rican, Chinese and Jamaican. The workforce is comprised of various Latino immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Central America. Chinese immigrants make up a small percentage of the workforce. South Asians, from Bangladesh and India are also a small minority of the workforce. American minorities also work here but are vastly outnumbered by immigrants. Importantly, all employees in this restaurant speak English--the only language

¹⁴ Brighton Beach--also known as "Little Russia" and "Little Odessa" has become the largest community of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the world. In 1987 it had more than 25,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union (See Orleck, 1987).

required for employment.¹⁵

The cultural strategy in Washington Heights is simply one of *cultural matching between employees and clientele*. There are no cultural symbols in decor, but the area is predominately Latino and Spanish speaking. There are few visitors from out of the neighborhood. Fast food restaurants, however, are geographically and culturally stratified within Washington Heights according to the degree to which Spanish or English is required to service clientele. This varies among the three restaurants I examined in this area.

A McDonalds, owned by a local corporation, is located only a few blocks from an ethnic border dividing an old Jewish and the Dominican populations. Being close to this border it attracts a significant number of English speaking clientele, unlike the other fast food restaurants in Washington Heights further away from this border. Fluency in the English language is a prerequisite in this restaurant, especially for working on the "front-line," while Spanish is a prerequisite in other Washington Heights restaurants. Because of this, this restaurant has had a 10 year long immigrant chain of Antiguan workers commuting from the Bronx. Antiguans--who speak English from birth--comprise about 15 percent of the workforce, the rest of whom are largely bilingual Latinos.

Another restaurant in Washington Heights, a Burger King owned by the

¹⁵ There are two exceptions, however. An employee from Venezuela did not speak English. Neither did an older woman employee from China. She obtained her job because her children came into the restaurant and "begged" the manager to hire her. Both of these employees are assigned to the most undesirable work in the restaurant--cleaning the dining room, lounge and bathrooms and other auxiliary tasks.

Woolworths Corporation, is a few blocks further away from the ethnic border than McDonalds. It employs only Latinos from various different national origins. But while this restaurant stresses Spanish more than English, it favors bilingual employees because of a few English speaking clients. In these restaurants most employees are bilingual speakers of Spanish and English. The general manager at Burger King, however, is an immigrant from India and the only employee who does not speak Spanish.¹⁶ He relies on his bilingual assistant managers to act as liaisons between clientele, the community, and his workforce. And partly because he does not speak Spanish, he favors bilingual Latino employees to be able to communicate with them better.

Ethnic diversity in this restaurant is a product of the larger global and ethnic hierarchy among immigrants in New York. Indian immigrants, for example, comprise one of the most highly educated immigrant groups in New York and in the United States. As a group, they have one of the highest proportions of individuals working in professional or managerial positions. Among various other fast food restaurants I examined, including in Downtown Brooklyn, highly educated Indian immigrants from professional family backgrounds joined fast food restaurants because they obtained jobs as managers. In this case in Washington Heights, the Indian manager oversees a Latino workforce, many of whom are Dominican. Yet, Dominicans are among the least educated immigrant groups, and indeed, usually join fast food jobs at the entry level due to lack of marketable skills for

¹⁶ He was assisted in obtaining his job through a social/ethnic contact in the corporate bureaucracy.

higher level positions within the industry or in the labor market at large.¹⁷

The third restaurant, a McDonalds, is located deep in the heart of the Dominican community, bordering East Inwood--an area also largely populated by immigrants from the Dominican Republic. This restaurant is owned by a Cuban immigrant family and is the only restaurant in Washington Heights where Spanish is the only language spoken and where a large number of employees only speak Spanish. It is also the only restaurant in Washington Heights where those who don't speak English are promoted into managerial positions.

The two restaurants I examined in Downtown Brooklyn are most similar to the Burger King in Chinatown. Employment practices reflect the diversity of job seekers and cultural changes occurring in this area. There are no explicit cultural criteria such as foreign language matching. Though it is an area frequented by immigrants, there is no one particular cultural identity. English is the common language and the language requirement for being hired in the fast food restaurants. Thus, these restaurants attract English speakers and especially growing numbers of West Indian immigrants from the Caribbean and South American countries. A fast food workforce in Downtown Brooklyn combines

¹⁷ In 1990, 76 percent of Asian Indian immigrants 25 years and over in New York City had a high school degree, 57 percent had some college experience and 40 percent had a bachelors degree (See U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990)^B, Table, 49). 30 percent of all Asian Indians in the labor force in New York City were in managerial or professional specialty occupations (See U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990)^B, Table, 50). In contrast, in 1990, only 39 percent of immigrants from the Dominican Republic had completed high school and only six percent had a college degree (See U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990)^B, Table 52). And only 10 percent of Dominicans in the New York City labor force were in managerial or professional specialty occupations. (See U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990)^B, Table 50). For further breakdown of Latino immigrant educational characteristics see Bean, Chapa, Berg and Sowards (1994).

West Indian, and Latino immigrants as well as a declining proportion of American minorities. Managers are also diverse here and include highly educated South Asian immigrants who join fast food at the managerial level and Latinos and West Indians who, more often, rise up from the crew member ranks.

Social contacts and linkages within a global workforce

Geographical and cultural stratification is reinforced by social contacts and linkages within immigrant communities that help recent immigrants find jobs in this industry. More than half of my respondents were assisted by someone they knew in obtaining their fast food job. As Roger Waldinger (1986) or Alejandro Portes (1985) would remind us, immigrants have always maneuvered through the labor market through people they know. Sociologists have called this "network recruitment" (See Table 1.4).

Table 1.4
How Respondents Got Their Jobs (Both Managers and Crew Members)
 (Each respondent may be represented in more than one category)

Social/ethnic contact		Technical skills or experience		Cultural capital		Excessive persistence		Formal process of inquiry	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
35	67	1	2	24	46	3	6	16	31

Source: Interviews.

But today, in New York, these linkages are often cross-national--especially when various national groups are concentrated together in residential neighborhoods. Social

linkages are important especially when they are used to obtain information about job openings that are located outside of one's neighborhood. West Indian immigrants who reside in a single Caribbean neighborhood in Brooklyn are from various countries including Jamaica, Barbados and Guyana (Kasinitz, 1992). As a group they dominate in a McDonalds restaurant in Downtown Brooklyn. Spanish speaking Latinos from as far away as the Dominican Republic and Venezuela often live in the same neighborhoods and share information about jobs. Chinese immigrants from Taiwan, China, Hong Kong and Malaysia settle together in "old" and new Chinatowns and their shared networks have helped facilitate their cross-national entrance into their new source of employment in Manhattan Chinatown fast food restaurants.¹⁸

Particular cultural demands of the industry, such as matching the language or cultural identity of the area the restaurant is located in, partly facilitates the bringing together of these cross-national groups in one global space. Thomas Bailey and Roger Waldinger (1989) may refer to this kind of practice as "an exclusionary bias" that brings certain groups together and excludes others." Yet, often there are various immigrant linkages in the same restaurant. The contingency of fast food work rarely facilitates a single immigrant group attaining a monopoly niche by outstaying another group. Rather, different immigrant chains and groups tend to coexist in the same restaurant. Employers--who claim to prefer workforce diversity--encourage various immigrant niches and chains that seem to work well together. This confirms the highly visible and universal marketing

¹⁸ Other areas of Chinese concentration in New York City include the Southern part of Brooklyn and the Jackson Heights, Flushing, and Elmhurst sections of Queens (See Wong, 1987).

and advertising campaigns that promote a multi-ethnic/racial workforce "team"--now commonplace among the giant corporate retailers including Benetton, Banana Republic, the Gap, and the Wiz.

Employers promote immigrant chains by requesting current employees to recommend friends and relatives. They also promote managers from various immigrant groups who then have the power to "hire and promote their own." In this way, management teams tend to be ethnically diverse. They perpetuate diversity by reproducing themselves. This is important because the fast food workforce is highly transient--either one moves up or moves out. While many employees remain in entry-level positions for more than a year or two, most don't. Those who don't usually leave within a few months.

The Antiguan chain from the Bronx to McDonalds, for example, has coexisted with Latino chains into this same restaurant for more than a decade. During this decade at least one Antiguan has always been a manager. At Burger King in Chinatown, the general manager from Colombia claims that managers tend to "hire their own." His assistants--a Puerto Rican, Chinese and Jamaican--do reflect the composition of the workforce. Even at the Chinatown McDonalds, a West Indian and Latino join three Chinese managers. Most employees, regardless of ethnicity, claimed to have been assisted in getting their jobs through siblings, cousins, or friends who were employees or managers at the time they applied.

Shifting modes of production: cultural and social organization of the workforce

Shifting modes of production affect the way immigrants are organized in this industry. In my second chapter I examine the fast food restaurant organization, including the larger corporate structure in which the restaurant is situated. The type of ownership significantly affects the local restaurant organization in terms of technology, employer practices, job ladders, and local marketing strategies. Many organizational features could be found in all the restaurants. One of the most important features of restaurants is a "front"/"back" division of labor with different labor criteria for each. Jobs in the front entail what Arlie Hochschild (1983) would refer to as "public contact" or what Robin Leidner (1993) refers to as "service interaction" with customers. Jobs in the back entail preparation of food. The "front"/"back" division in New York fast food restaurants is, for the most part, gendered. According to several New York City fast food managers and owners, women, by "nature" or by "socialization" are more attentive than men to the most important features of service: appearance, behavior, and manners of communication among employees (what Everett Hughs (1994) refers to as "auxiliary characteristics"), reactions of clientele, and restaurant ambiance. They are better able to perform "emotion work." According to these same managers and owners, women are also "harder workers," more malleable, and driven by greater financial need, e.g., as single mothers.. The gendered service role affects hierarchical divisions as well. Women in most fast food restaurants are often preferred for managerial positions because of belief in these same gendered social and structural features.

Several studies on "doing gender" among restaurant servers show how the service

role builds on traditional female roles as an expression of femininity (Hall, 1990; Hearn and Stoll, 1975). Other studies emphasize women's concentration in low-level service occupations as a product of larger societal gender inequalities which reinforce women's docility in these roles (Standing, 1988). Elaine Hall (1990) has gone further to suggest that "doing gender" is a reflection of the way gender meanings are embedded in the restaurant organization and occupational activities.

In the fast food restaurants I examine how gendered meanings attached to the service role are shaped, created, and even controlled by managers through various means including through attempts to measure the service performance. But I also show how the gendered meaning of the service role is linked to the restaurant organization and neighborhood characteristics. In what managers considered to be "shady" or dangerous areas, for example, the gendered value of front-line service roles was reversed during evening hours. The qualities of men—including physical size, strength and aggressiveness—were valued on the front-line in order to control unruly, harassing, and potentially threatening customers. On the other hand, women are considered more “emotionally flexible.” They are better able to change their emotional style of managing and handling customers in accordance with the restaurant’s changing demands.

The gender division of labor is affected by cultural divisions as well. Restaurant work, in general, is gendered work for some immigrant groups. Antiguan men, for example, do not typically work in restaurants. Recent Antiguan male immigrants are concentrated in construction trades. Virtually all Antiguan fast food workers in New York, then, are women. And, South Asian women, by and large, do not work in

restaurants. Most South Asian fast food workers, then, are men. While it is likely that transnational cultural influences on gender roles in the fast food workplace in New York will eventually break down, it is less likely that the gender division in the fast food restaurant itself will break down. Traditional gender roles, as I will show, are reproduced and reinforced locally in New York City's fast food restaurants.

Advancing technologies, computerization, and communication systems

Advancing technologies, computerization and altered communication systems have worked to alter aspects of the work process, social relations and cultural labor criteria for the workforce as whole. But technological innovation is not necessarily a simple rationalizing process causing labor displacement, work simplification and deskilling as George Ritzer (1993) has emphasized or that Braverman (1974) envisioned 20 years ago. Rather, work in many restaurants in New York has been re-defined and re-shaped as different skills and social divisions have been emphasized.

Most importantly, fast food technologies which have made the production of food speedier and more efficient have resulted in a greater emphasis on "front-line" service in many restaurants, and, in some cases, the creation of more jobs such as dining room hosts and neighborhood marketers. Labor criteria, consequently, stress personal qualities of employees. Attitude, appearance, and personality have become more important than technical skills or experience in many fast food restaurants (Applebome, 1995). And in the immigrant neighborhood, there is also an emphasis on "cultural capital" such as ethnic affinity and speaking the language of the local, targeted clientele.

One of the most important technological developments in the fast food restaurant is the computerized register. This has altered the mode of communication between the front and the back of the restaurant and has significantly affected worker relations. Old technology--which still exists in some New York City restaurants--consists of an audio system where food orders are announced by cashiers through a microphone. Or, simply, communication between front and back workers occurs face to face. This system, being vocal, requires a common language between front and back workers. The new system, on the other hand, transmits the orders to computer screens in the back of the restaurant via a set of simple written symbols (letter codes), and has diminished the need for a common language between front and back workers.

These different technologies affect the kinds of people who can work together and the ways in which they work together. People from different immigrant workforces who do not necessarily have a common cultural identity or language can more easily coexist in the restaurant that has implemented new technology. But this often results in a new cultural division of labor in the restaurant. For example, "front-line" work demands a common language with clientele, yet it doesn't require a common language between "front" and "back" workers.

Culture, communication, and technology, then, are interlinked. They combine to form divisions of labor based on pre-existing cultural features of employees. Technological and social shifts in the work process facilitate the bringing together of culturally and globally diverse groups of employees as much as the focus on service places greater emphasis on particular cultural criteria, especially for "front-line" work.

The social diversity of the global workforce: redefining race

The racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in New York's global or international labor market, or the "globalization of race" as Howard Winant (1994) calls it, is important because it embodies developing relations, perceptions, attitudes and biases among different groups that are relatively new to New York's labor market. Significantly, it points to *social processes* that shape culturally and ethnically based experiences as well as employment opportunities and chances for mobility. Corporate fast food restaurants comprised of such vast diversity are ideal sites to examine these changes.

Particularly important is the fact that, by and large, employees in the fast food restaurant industry in New York are a workforce of color. The majority of immigrants are from the Third World and American-born workers are members of racial minorities. White people seldom work in this industry except in predominately white residential areas in New York's outer boroughs and occasionally as managers. Thus, social relations are constituted between and among various different groups of people of color.

Explicit cultural differences were noted by managers as well as workers in this study. "Race" as a category was often broken down and reconfigured by employers who confronted conflicts, differences or solidarities between and within racial groups. A growing body of social science research on employment practices among low-wage employers in U.S. cities shows that employers quite explicitly generalize about race and ethnic differences in the quality of their workforces, which shapes the formation of hierarchies of ethnic and racial preferences. But these generalizations are often shown to be inextricably linked to other factors including social class and national origins of

employees (Kirshenman and Neckerman, 1991; Kirschenman, Moss, and Tilly, 1995; Moss and Tilly, 1996; Kasinitz, 1996). Other studies also address the growing complexity of racial categories as new immigrants join the labor market. As Nancy Foner (1987) says, "Race and ethnicity [in New York] are closely intertwined, with a sense of ethnic distinctiveness nurtured by racial exclusion."

This study focuses on the social processes in the restaurant that lead to particular racial and ethnic based perceptions and/or conflicts that help to form new racial and ethnic categories. Managers and workers were often forthright about particular negative and positive traits of different groups. Racial distinctions were most common and explicit. Yet ethnic, cultural and class distinctions and perceptions are formed both within and among different racial groups. These distinctions typically reflect larger cultural and societal perceptions, but they also reflect the social dynamics of the restaurant workplace.

Among my respondents, for example, there were at least three categories of "Africans"--West Indians, Africans, and African-Americans. When two or more of these three groups worked together--especially African-Americans and foreign-born blacks--there was commonly conflict between them. A Colombian manager, for example, claimed that Jamaican employees complained that African-Americans give them a bad name as they were constantly shirking on the job. African-Americans complained that they were discriminated against and foreigners always got jobs quicker than they did.

Ethnic and cultural distinctions within racial categories were most explicit among Blacks. But such distinctions were also prevalent within Latino and Asian groups. Perceptions, biases, and actions toward or against particular groups are important because

they affect employees' experiences and attitudes about employment and therefore their length of stay on the job and pursuit of manager positions. They also affect employment practices. Due to the temporary nature of employment, managers are constantly selecting new employees and either retaining or discontinuing ethnic and immigrant groups.

I examine social processes that often lead to the "fizzling out" of American minorities in the fast food workplace. These processes reflect hiring biases, antagonistic social relations in the workplace, and job disillusionment among employees dependent on minimum wage employment. Blau and Duncan (1967) three decades ago found "severe discrimination [against African-Americans]....at every step in the process toward achieving occupational success." Stephen Steinberg (1996 and 1981) has maintained that prejudice against national minorities has been and still is pervasive today in spite of theories that suggest that class may supersede race as a focus of discrimination (Wilson, 1978). The fast food restaurant provides an example of the social processes that help to explain such views and how prejudice and discrimination against Americans of racial minorities develop among a global workforce of color.

The social dynamics that occur in New York's fast food restaurants vary locally from restaurant to restaurant and neighborhood to neighborhood. They affect employment practices, job opportunities, and careers of particular groups. A global workforce creates new social dynamics based on cultural categories of race and ethnicity.

Youth employment and "attitude"

But what we see in the form of social processes in the fast food restaurant in New

York City may reflect and help account for what is commonly and recently considered an "American" or "urban" crisis to do with exceedingly high and growing unemployment rates among inner city American minorities, especially male youth. Paul Osterman (1994) wrote that in 1993, only 50 percent of young black men, and 59 percent of Latino men, between the ages of 16 and 24 who were not in school had jobs. Is this problem rooted in cultural factors to do with social values and work ethics? Or, is it rooted in structural factors specific to labor market conditions, educational and career opportunities? Too much "attitude" has become a popular criticism of inner city youth, suggesting that young people don't want to work for low wages and are more attracted to "street life," the drug scene, and crime.

By examining social relations in the fast food restaurant I suggest ways in which "attitude" may be shaped through the experience of working, and not solely by external or cultural factors such as a "poor work ethic." To the contrary I show how poor inner city youth often reflect the neoconservative values emergent since the Reagan era including family values, "honest work," and individual responsibility (Vidich, 1987). But I show how holding a job and "honest work" do not necessarily carry intrinsic social value in this society. I have found in this study that minimum wage jobs like fast food jobs are often held in contempt by peers, customers, and society at large. Moreover, their low wages and unstable schedules do not provide the objective means for fulfilling these social values.

Understanding the limits of mobility

It is common to read about the avenues of opportunity the fast food restaurant provides for those who stick it out first at the bottom rungs and hold fast to their dreams of climbing the hierarchy. The Wall Street Journal on August 23, 1995 (p.A1), for example, wrote about Phil Hagans, an African-American McDonalds owner of four restaurants in Houston who started out as a burger flipper. He "settles behind the wheel of his gray Mercedes sedan, flips on his cellular phone and drives past the ramshackle houses of his old neighborhood...a role model for black teenagers." The New York Times on March 27, 1994 (p.23) wrote about Sally Allen, the daughter of factory workers in Georgia who began as a burger flipper to help support her children and later became a franchise owner in Kerville, Texas. And it wrote about Mark Ishaya on July 4, 1995 (p.L45) who went from being a child laborer in a Lebanese oil filter factory to a McDonalds manager in Chicago. According to Parcel and Sickmeier, "A major avenue to higher management involves upward mobility through the ranks of operating a store or stores" (Parcel and Sickmeier, 1988:42). Is this really true? And, if it is, to what extent?

The seventh chapter of this manuscript focuses on job opportunity and the social structures that facilitate or impede hierarchical mobility in the restaurant. I explore the limitations to mobility in the industry to do with structural constraints within the restaurant, and, the social, physical, and, professional pressures that make it difficult for those who rise in the hierarchy to remain in the industry. Those who do become managers today tend to be women, young people, and immigrants with valued cultural capital. But, by and large, they are also those who have not found better alternatives in New York's

labor market. Or, they become managers as temporary expedients while they are earning a college degree to pursue another career.

I show how becoming a franchise owner is not an opportunity for the average person who joins the industry as a crew member, or even as a manager. It requires an enormous amount of financial capital, not work experience. As I will show in this study, a combination of rare capital resources (such as winning the lottery for one NYC owner), tremendous and long-term personal sacrifice in savings from work outside the fast food system, and--in the case of one long-term African-American owner--being the beneficiary of Civil Rights legislation that led to business loans and grants given to minorities in 1970s, are some of the ways those from modest backgrounds become franchise owners.

One of the first McDonald's franchise licenses sold in New York City provides a good example of how someone from humble beginnings eventually became a McDonald's owner. This McDonald's owner was an African American, born in South Carolina to a family of sharecroppers. He migrated to New York with his family in the 1950s at the age of 16. He had begun working at the age of eight in South Carolina as a shoeshine boy, striving to be a "successful businessman." He planned at a very early age to become a restaurant owner. At 16 in New York he worked in various odd and low wage jobs and continued working in them while he attended college to study law enforcement. He worked with the police force for over two decades, also working another full-time job, and supporting a family. He was able to save part of the income from his second job, planning to invest it upon retirement from the police force. Racial strife in Harlem during the 1960s led to Civil Rights legislation, some of which was

intended to encourage Black entrepreneurship and youth employment in the area. As a result of this legislation he received a government grant and business loan.

According to this owner, the McDonalds Company during this time had decided to "test market" its franchises in the inner city. They wanted to target the Black community for the first time in their history, and explore methods of doing business in crime-ridden areas, including developing methods of restaurant security. Being African-American, having had a career in the field of law enforcement, and living in New York City, he was an ideal candidate for the McDonald's corporation. Moreover, he had been able to gather capital together from grants, loans, and personal savings. He was granted a franchise license in 1972 but was not given a choice as to the restaurant's location. The restaurant was built in Harlem even though he requested a location in Brooklyn where he lived. In this way corporate fast food franchise development has always been linked to issues of race, culture, place and ownership opportunity in New York City.

Mobility beyond the fast food restaurant

Most fast food employees eventually leave the industry. If most employees don't remain in the fast food industry, then, where do they go? As long ago as 1927, Sorokin pointed out the importance in examining both "horizontal" and "vertical" mobility. Nowhere is this more important today than in the low-wage service sector where jobs are expanding and yet little work has been done to examine occupational mobility. With its "temporary" and "entry-level" jobs, fast food employment is assumed to offer a route to something better. Entry-level employment further implies that a market

value is attached to job experience.

My research shows that this is not always the case. Low-wage service sector work experience itself is largely irrelevant to advancing in either the same or another sphere in the labor market. Many employees had several years of work experience—including fast food experience—prior to starting at the entry-level wage in their current fast food jobs. And I found little indication that employees' current fast food job experience led to better wages or occupational status beyond the restaurant or particular job they worked in. Without further education or training beyond high school it is rare to move on to a better job outside of the industry, to move out of the low wage sector. While some of my respondents—such as West Indians-- were planning to study law and medicine, many others were caught in what one manager described as "a cycle that never ends"—continued dependence on the low-wage service economy. The latter were most likely to be Latino immigrants and American minorities. Ethnic and immigrant group differences in regard to future mobility were rooted in various interrelated factors to do with household support structures and family environments, class, and educational attainments and goals.

In this way I emphasize the ways in which *structures* of socioeconomic inequality are linked to patterns of occupational mobility. The degree of this interdependency seems to vary slightly among different ethnic and immigrant groups. Identifying the various social factors that help to shape this relationship moves us away from a purely cultural explanation to explain social group differences, and directs greater attention to structural inequalities. Whether these inequalities are rooted in socioeconomic background, opportunity for higher education, or occupational disparities in terms of wages and job

security, they affect living standards and chances for a better life.

Outline of manuscript

This manuscript proceeds first with an examination of the organization of the fast food restaurant in Chapter Two. I ask What is the relationship between the local McDonalds and Burger King restaurants and their corporate structures, including their links to corporate headquarters? We have long assumed that standardization of corporate chains, especially those connected to giant corporate America, implies a rigid system of top-down control from headquarters to the restaurant (Ritzer, 1993). I ask to what extent do standardized policies affect practices that shape the social organization of the restaurant? To what extent do they affect hiring and recruitment practices, opportunity structures, and employee management systems?

As an organization that combines both manual work in the preparing of food, and "service interaction" in the service of clientele, how are the many different work tasks divided and sorted among a diverse workforce? How have technologies and computerization affected the technical and social organization of work? Especially with a shift in emphasis toward service aspects in the restaurant it is important to examine how precisely the service role is defined and how cultural and gender components shape the product of service? These questions provide a structural grounding for understanding the social formations in the restaurant that have given rise to a diverse workforce in terms of race, ethnicity, national origin, social class, gender and age that is geographically and culturally stratified in New York City.

The case study chapters--Chapters Three, Four, and Five, examine the neighborhood variations among fast food restaurants in respect to these various dynamics. What are the various ways in which McDonalds and Burger King restaurants integrate and market themselves in the community? How do we account for these various ways of local operation in terms of ownership structure, corporate policies, the kinds of technologies that are used, available labor supplies, and characteristics of the neighborhood? How much autonomy do managers exercise in terms of hiring, recruitment, and providing opportunities for advancement for their workforces? How are job opportunity and social divisions of labor affected by the social relations--including relationships of power--among diverse workforces and employers?

Among globally diverse workforces comprised of people of color, an important question arises: How do cultural categories of "race" become redefined and reconstructed in the restaurant based on features of ethnicity, social class background, and national origin? And in what way does this "redefinition" result in the formation of a hierarchy of hiring preferences among a growing supply of fast food labor in New York City? Inter-ethnic distinctions among workers are often made on the basis of differences in "attitude" and work values. In Chapters 5 and 6, where I focus on Downtown Brooklyn, I ask how such differences shape employment opportunity and experiences between immigrants and American-born employees of racial minorities.

In Chapter Seven, "Occupational Mobility Among Fast Food Employees: Beyond the Fast Food Job?" I question the extent to which the industry offers opportunities for advancement. I also question the degree to which the fast food job functions as an "entry-

level" job in the labor market at large, or, as simply one low-wage job among many for those stuck at the bottom rungs of the service economy (the "cycle that never ends").

Who moves on to better jobs and careers, and, who doesn't? What are the factors that shape opportunity for upward mobility in today's labor market? How much do individuals and families depend on fast food jobs and wages (and other minimum wage jobs) as a major source of livelihood today? What are the implications? I conclude this manuscript with some suggestions for further research, and a discussion about current policy initiatives including the recent minimum wage legislation.

Chapter Two

The Organization of Work

Introduction

This chapter examines the organization of work in the corporate fast food restaurant. I focus on the work process in the fast food restaurant but show how the restaurant organization and its employees are affected by various factors external to the workplace including features of the corporate structure and characteristics of the neighborhood or district in which it is located. A main contention of this chapter is that the fast food organization exercises a considerable degree of autonomy and flexibility on the local level. This may run contrary to a common belief that the corporate structure maintains a rigid system of top-down control to ensure application of universal standards (Ritzer, 1993). Another contention is that new efficiency technologies that have been implemented in the last several years have served, in various ways, to enhance flexibility in the organization rather than increase rigidity (Walsh, 1993). As the labor process becomes more technologically efficient and automated (especially in the production of food) management in many New York City restaurants has increasingly emphasized "subjective" and "personal" aspects of service, aesthetic performance, restaurant ambiance, cleanliness, presentation, and neighborhood marketing.

These aspects are shaped locally, often as part of a strategy to integrate the restaurant into a particular neighborhood or to target a certain kind of clientele. They require local decision making. And in New York City's immigrant neighborhoods, they

often require ethnic and cultural knowledge among those who create and implement strategies. For example, a newly renovated McDonalds in Chinatown, Manhattan, hired a Taiwanese manager who speaks three different Chinese dialects as part of their strategy to target the local Chinese speaking population. This restaurant has also implemented the latest technologies in the production of food. What is important here is that technology in this case has not necessarily reduced work or the numbers of employees in the restaurant. Rather, it has facilitated a shift in emphasis from the *back* of the restaurant to the *front* of the restaurant; from the production of food to the serving of food and the servicing of clientele. As the back of the restaurant becomes more capital-intensive and less labor-intensive (in respect to the total output of production), the front of the restaurant becomes more labor-intensive with increasing emphasis on service interactions. Some restaurants have added new jobs such as dining room host and home-delivery service. In so doing, they've re-defined work and reconfigured employee and management criteria. The Chinatown restaurant, while not fully representative of the majority of fast food restaurants today, is important because it is indicative of new trends that are becoming increasingly common, especially in competitive and constantly changing consumer markets such as many of New York City's districts and neighborhoods.

Corporate restructuring has occurred at the same time. Yet, it has occurred differently in McDonalds and Burger King. Burger King, intent on downsizing its "corporate employee" staff has centralized its regional operations with the use of computer technology. In 1994, Burger King eliminated its regional offices, laid off 25 percent of its corporate employees, and replaced the regional offices with home-based staff fully

equipped with computers, faxes, modems and voice mail. These corporate staff single-handedly float around their designated regions to visit and monitor restaurants. Rather than being accountable to regional offices, they report directly to central headquarters via computer. McDonalds, on the other hand, has maintained its regional office structure in the belief that personal and local support structures are beneficial to its emphasis on community integration. In both cases it is important that corporate strategy has not necessarily involved reducing labor in the restaurant.¹

What this may imply is that in a "public contact" industry--where the public face of the organization is its lowest paid workers--labor cost saving strategies are focused on reducing middle-level corporate jobs (as in the case of Burger King) and/or increasing output, adding and redefining jobs at the bottom of the wage hierarchy. In other words, instead of reducing the number of lowest paid workers to achieve the same output, the aim is to maintain or increase the number of these workers in order to achieve a greater output per worker. Fast food technology for the restaurant is not applied to replace labor. Rather, it is applied in a way that enables production to both increase and become more efficient so that wages become less and less a percentage of total restaurant expenditures.

It can be looked at in another way: if technology is advanced to a point where a worker can make five hamburgers in virtually the same time it takes to make one hamburger then technology has increased one employee's potential productivity five-fold.

¹ It is also interesting to compare this to a popular form of fast food in New York in the 1950s where food was served through vending machines and did not require human labor. This was based on Horn and Harder Automat prior to the 1950s which was popular for a long time.

But whether one hamburger or five hamburgers are ordered at any one time this single employee is still equally necessary. And as long as wages do not increase substantially (at least not at the same pace as technological advancements) then it doesn't make sense to decrease the number of workers. And, as a result, more "front-line" managers, are required to supervise the workforce.

What economists often call "flexible" labor reinforces measures to ensure maximum productivity. "Flexible" labor often refers to the use of employees' time "on the clock" in accordance to the immediate need in the restaurant to service customers. In other words, employees work and are paid only when they can fulfill a productive function. "Flexible" labor also refers to "team work"--a new and highly used management term that emphasizes employee cooperation, interchangeability, and replaceability in the assignment and performing of tasks.

The rationale for producing more, however, depends on growth in consumption--either increasing numbers of consumers or the same customers consuming more. Encouraging consumption is the underlying reason for management's increasing emphasis on aspects of service, aesthetic production, restaurant presentation and aggressive marketing tactics. Management lingo refers to "100 percent customer satisfaction," where service aspects are now considered the main source of profit and the primary focus of management. Service is considered a product in itself. In a managers' memorandum it was stated that "'SERVICE' is the most important thing you 'sell.' Service is your invisible product. Good service adds value to the purchase and service is what ultimately brings your customer back." In New York City's ethnic neighborhoods cultural elements help

shape the restaurant service and ambiance. If a "Chinese" McDonalds brings in more clientele because it is Chinese and in so doing five hamburgers are sold instead of one, then everything that has gone into creating a Chinese ambiance--service by Chinese employees, communication and menu in Chinese, Chinese decor--forms an objective basis for increased sales and revenues.

Gender also plays an important role in "interactive service work." According to several New York City fast food managers and owners I interviewed, women, by "nature" or by "socialization" are more attentive than men to the most important features of service: appearance, behavior, and manners of communication among employees, reactions of clientele, and restaurant ambiance. According to these same managers and owners, women are also "harder workers," more malleable, and driven by greater financial need.

These gender dynamics have resulted in increasing management opportunity for women. They have also resulted in a "front"/"back" division of labor among crew members where women are considered better able to perform "emotional labor"; better able to interact with clientele at the "service counter" and more malleable when management must exercise more subtle (or "psychological") forms of control on the "front" line than in the "back" kitchen. (Direct forms of control are not possible on the front-line because of the presence of customers.) Work on the front-line is also often sexualized. "Women" are sometimes considered better than men at attracting clientele into (and back to) the restaurant.

Still, fast food employment is mainly considered youth work rather than gendered

work. In the effort to uphold a traditional youth image, the youngest employees are usually given the service jobs that most involve public contact--service counter positions and dining room hosts. And the oldest employees are commonly assigned auxiliary and undesirable jobs such as cleaning, mopping and taking out garbage. According to managers, the youngest employees are also usually the most malleable. The valued characteristics of both women and youth often result in the youngest women working the "front-line."

Here we can begin to understand how the production of food, service and cultural aspects of the restaurant presentation and ambiance, marketing strategies, and technological developments are reshaping the fast food restaurant organization. Emphasis is on maximum productivity which involves the most advanced technologies, "flexible" labor, and a large consumer base. Yet it also involves local level integration, a responsiveness to local and often cultural particularities of New York City's numerous and diverse districts and neighborhoods.

Social, technical, and spatial divisions of labor are often ethnically, racially and culturally based. "Social" and "cultural" capital affect people's ability to get a job, what jobs they do, and where they work. Combined with social class background and "economic" capital, "social" and "cultural" capital also affect one's opportunities and professional mobility in the industry. And as the industry increasingly emphasizes service (as well as cultural) aspects, gender--along with age--plays an important role in how the work is divided, and who is given access to internal job ladders.

So far, I have sketched the general principles underlying the organization of work

and the social formations that arise from it. From this point, we should be asking, What is the precise nature of work in the restaurant? What do people actually do? How is the work arranged and divided? How does technology, including computerization, affect the work?

Especially with a shift in emphasis toward service aspects in the restaurant it is important to understand how service is shaped. How do cultural components help shape the product of service? By answering these questions we can begin to understand the social formations that have evolved in the organization of work in terms of class, race, ethnicity, gender and age. I will start out first by examining elements of the corporate structure that bear relevance to the functioning of the restaurant.

Corporate Structure and Restaurant Ownership

The corporate structures that comprise McDonalds and Burger King restaurants are some of the largest and seemingly most complex organizations in the world. They have led sociologists, such as Parcel and Sickmeier (1988) to question traditional labor market theories that neatly distinguish between "primary" and "secondary" markets. As we know, the vast majority of jobs in the fast food industry are low-wage, non-union, contingent, temporary, with few fringe benefits. They are the kinds of jobs economists have traditionally called "secondary" jobs. On the other hand, they are part of giant corporate America comprised of numerous characteristics we have associated with "core firms" or "primary" markets. These include being large in size, generating large sales, selling to international markets, accruing large profits, and employing advanced

technology. These corporate features, according to economists such as David Gordon and Richard Edwards (1979), have been linked to core firms ability to provide "good" jobs in terms of pay, fringe benefits, security, and opportunities for career advancement within the firm.

Parcel and Sickmeier, in their examination of the McDonalds Corporation, confirm a finding of Bluestone, Hanna, Kuhn, and Moore in a 1981 study of retail selling in New England: "that firms with core characteristics often organize work using the secondary labor market model." More recently, Bennett Harrison (1994) has described this practice as a broad global trend in corporate reorganization as a response to falling profit levels, and international competition. Paul Osterman, according to Harrison, claims it is an attempt to "externalize the employment relation." "Rather than continuing to rely on internal scale economies and a long-term commitment to preserve stable employment relations within the organization...the largest firms seek to reduce costs by retaining an in-house set of core activities, while contracting out other work, either to low-cost or to more specialized external subcontractors and suppliers." Harrison says that we must look at corporate reorganization today as entailing "geographically extensive networks" that are "flexibly" shaped around "centralized" corporate units and decentralized operations. "What we are seeing is evidence of how *production* may be decentralized, while power, finance, distribution, and control remain concentrated among the big firms" (Harrison, 1994:20).

Contingency theories of organizational structure have long cited how environmental factors, such as competition, affect the organization's structure. In highly

competitive, changing, and uncertain markets, decentralization of decision making in respect to the local operation makes for increased efficiency (Walsh, 1993; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Galbraith, 1973). Especially today, as John Walsh (1993) in a study of the transformation of supermarkets claims, firms "must become increasingly responsive to changes in consumer preferences, technologies of production, and innovations by competitors."

The fast food restaurant industry--by its very nature as a food service business--has always been a decentralized system that has relied on external suppliers, and has franchised out most of its restaurants to local owners. Decentralization in the form of the "franchise system," is not a new development in this industry.² But its vast expansion in the past 40 years and the fact that many fast food companies have joined the ranks of the world's largest corporate conglomerates, indicates the economic viability and power of a decentralized organizational structure.

Vance Fried and B. Elongo (1994) reported an enormous growth in franchising in the United States. Franchising sales of goods and services, they reported, were estimated at \$758 billion in 1992. Sales volume of the restaurant franchise sector accounted for a quarter of these total sales (\$200,964,739) (Emerson, 1990). The retailing segment comprised 87 percent of total revenue of the franchise sector and the total number of

² The management literature defines "franchising" as an "organizational form in which a parent company grants an individual or company the right or privilege to do business in a prescribed manner over a certain period of time in a specified place in return for royalties or payment of a fee. The parent company is termed as a franchisor; the receiver of the privilege the franchisee; and the right, or privilege, the franchise. The outlet or operational establishment where the franchise operation is conducted is called the franchise unit or franchise" (Elongo and Fried, 1994; Hisrich and Peters, 1989).

franchised units in the United States were more than half a million (542,000) (Elongo and Fried, 1992). In 1992, fast food franchise units comprised 145,000 units in the United States and included 2,215 different companies (See Table 2.1). Fast food far exceeded other franchise restaurant forms including cafeterias, dinner houses, family restaurants, and table cloth restaurants. These fast food companies also have the greatest number of establishments; each company is, on average, comprised of 66 fast food restaurants. And franchise eateries and companies that specialize in a hamburger type menu outnumber every other franchise cuisine type (See Table 2.2).

Table 2.1
Numbers of Food Franchises by Franchise Type

Type	Number of Units	Number of Companies	Number of Units Per Company
Fast food	145,842	2214	66
Family	47831	1268	38
Food services	22584	188	120
Dinner house	8290	555	15
Cafeteria	4486	123	37
Table cloth	1305	290	5
In-store feeder	1152	43	27
TOTAL	231490	4681	49

Source: Emerson, 1990.

What is significant is that there is a strong correlation between the size of the company (in terms of number of number of units) and the amount of market shares it has.

Table 2.3 shows that the smallest companies, ie. those with only three establishments or less have only about one percent of the market. Those with more than 200 units control over 70 percent of the market. In other words, it appears that the franchise system is comprised of smaller numbers of large companies, rather than larger numbers of smaller companies.

This should not be surprising. We are all aware of the few chain restaurants--including McDonalds and Burger King--we seem to find in virtually every niche and cranny in the United States, and, increasingly around the globe. But while these companies are geographically dispersed around the globe, their headquarters offices are

Table 2.2
Cuisine and Company Size

Cuisine Type	Number of Units	Number of Companies
Hamburger	49,407	646
Pizza	45,172	430
Chicken	32,236	336
Sandwich	22,294	433
Ice Cream	14,807	144
Taco	9,978	191
Donuts	6,114	59
Yogurt	4,284	61
Hotdogs	2,547	80
Cookies	2,423	36
Barbeque Chicken	478	44

Source: Emerson, 1990.

Table 2.3
Food Franchise Company Size and Market Shares

Number of Units	Market Share
3	1
4-10	5
11-50	12
51-200	12
201+	71

Source: Emerson, 1990.

concentrated in or around the biggest cities in the United States. More than half of all headquarters offices are concentrated in regions around five cities. Nearly 500 (492) are located in or around Los Angeles. 260 are located in or around Dallas. 220 are located in or around New York City. 215 are located in or around Miami. And, 204 are located in or around Chicago (Emerson, 1990).

Such a centralization of food franchise headquarters simply supports findings by other social science researchers that the geographical dispersion of production and service activities corresponds with a centralization or "recentralization" of capital control functions in "regions," "suburban landscapes," or "global cities" (Zukin, 1991; Sassen, 1991). In other words, it is not just that capital is centralized among the "big firms," but that the headquarters of big firms are also spatially centralized. Thus, a combination of factors including economies of scale, concentration of capital, and the centralization of control functions contribute to the growth of the single largest companies, such as

McDonalds and Burger King. The continual geographical and financial expansion of these companies depends on increasing links to other local and global corporations and companies--such as Burger King's relationship with Disney World,³ ever more complex regional and hierarchial office structures, and, greater numbers of suppliers of raw products. In turn, their expansion significantly shapes the growth of certain forms of cultural cuisine over others.

McDonalds is U.S. owned, with corporate headquarters in Oakbrook, Illinois. McDonalds is the worlds largest food service organization. The first McDonalds restaurant was opened in San Bernadino, California in 1948. McDonalds founder, Ray Kroc, acquired the franchising rights from the original owners in 1954, and in 1955 Kroc opened the first franchise restaurant in Des Plaines, Illinois (Moody's, 1990). *Burger King* is owned by the British-based Grand Metropolitan which also owns the Pillsbury corporation. Grand Metropolitan headquarters is located in London. Burger King headquarters is in Miami, Florida. Burger King was founded in 1954 and was acquired by Pillsbury Corporation in 1967. In 1972, it became the Burger King Corporation. And in 1988, Grand Metropolitan acquired the Pillsbury Company as well as its subsidiaries.

Both organizations consist of thousands of individual restaurants around the globe, employ hundreds of thousands of people, and earn hundreds of millions in profits per year. They obtain most of their revenues through initial franchise fees, royalty fees, rent of the

³ Burger King maintains a strong relationship with Walt Disney, which is also based in Miami. This relationship helps Burger King promotional campaigns. For example, Burger King's "tie-in" to Disney's movie Pocahontas resulted in a Kids' Meals sales increase by 70 percent (See Grand Metropolitan, 1995).

restaurant establishment and property, sale or leasing of equipment, sale of supplies and raw materials, sale of franchise products, and, sale of "territorial rights" (Elongo and Fried, 1992; Woll, 1968-1969).

There are more than 15,000 McDonalds restaurants in nearly 80 different countries (McDonald's, 1994). Based on these figures McDonalds could employ close to one million people world-wide. In 1994, there were nearly 9,744 McDonalds restaurants in the United States, a growth of more than 3,000 restaurants since 1984 when there were 6,595 McDonalds restaurants in the United States (McDonalds, 1994). In the New York Metropolitan region there are about 450 McDonalds restaurants (WNYR, 1994). McDonalds system wide sales nearly tripled in a ten year span from \$10 billion in 1984 to nearly \$26 billion in 1994. Average sales per restaurant opened at least one year were nearly \$2 million in 1994--\$32,000 more than in 1993. In 1994, McDonalds earned profits exceeding \$1.2 billion, had over \$2.2 billion in operating income, and, had an asset base reaching \$13.6 billion (Forbes, 1995).

Burger King is the second largest hamburger chain in the world with over 8,000 restaurants in 56 countries. Burger King employs nearly 300,000 people across the globe (Moody's, 1994). In 1994, there were about 6,800 Burger King restaurants in the United States, nearly double the number there were in 1984--3,526 restaurants (Grand Metropolitan, 1995; Pillsbury Corporation, 1989). Burger King reported system-wide sales at 5.3 billion pounds, about double reported system-wide sales in 1987--about \$5 billion. In 1994, Burger King had an operating profit of 196 million pounds. Grand Metropolitan's operating profit (before taxes) was 912 million pounds.

It is important to examine the corporate structures of the big fast food companies because they help shape relationships of power among and within the various and differing restaurant organizations. On the local level they affect such things as levels of investment capital, marketing strategies, the kinds of technologies that are employed, and opportunity structures.

What is perhaps least understood about the fast food industry is how each individual restaurant is connected to these larger corporate affiliates. Part of the reason for this lies in the fact that it is not usually something that is made explicit to the public--especially if a restaurant is not a sole proprietorship. (Restaurant owners commonly like to promote their restaurant as a small scale operation--owned and operated by local people.) Another reason is because the ownership and corporate arrangements are multifarious; they vary from restaurant to restaurant and among companies (Hadfield, 1991). Finally, ownership is unclear because corporate relationships are constantly being reshaped. Restaurants that are sole proprietorships in New York City, for example, are increasingly being taken over by large companies or corporations. Moreover, corporate relationships are affected by computerization. The way the restaurant and parent corporation communicate and conduct monitoring helps shape the entire hierarchical organizational structure.

Forms of ownership

There are two basic forms of ownership of McDonalds and Burger King restaurants: 1) the parent corporations of McDonalds and Burger King retain ownership

of individual restaurants or, 2) the parent corporations franchise their restaurants to a franchisee. Franchisees operate 85 percent of all Burger King restaurants (Moody's, 1990) and 80 percent of all McDonalds restaurants (McDonalds, 1994). Franchising involves mainly two different forms of ownership of the restaurants. The parent corporation may franchise to small scale entrepreneurs--ie. sole proprietorships or partnerships. Or, the parent corporation may franchise to other already established companies or corporations. Commonly, a second corporation or company owns several different restaurants in a given locality. Second corporation or company ownership is becoming more common in New York City where large corporations like Twenty First Century Restaurant Corporation and Woolworths are buying franchises directly and also taking over sole proprietorships or partnerships. Particularly important is that there is very little connection *between* different fast food restaurants, even those that belong to the same parent corporation, unless they have the same local owner.

Among the restaurants I examined four are owned by small scale proprietorships. Among these, one is a sole proprietorship. This is a Burger King restaurant. The owner does not own any other restaurants. Three of these--all McDonalds--are partnerships (or family owned). The owners of these McDonalds restaurants each own between one and three additional stores. Three of the restaurants I examined are owned by large corporations which own nine to 26 other restaurants. Two are McDonalds restaurants and one is a Burger King restaurant (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4
Ownership Types Among Restaurants Examined

PARENT CORPORATION	FRANCHISE	
	CORPORATE/COMPANY	SOLE PROP./FAMILY
MCDONALDS	1	3
BURGER KING	2	1

Source: Respondent interviews.

The distinction among types of ownership is important because it often determines the amount of resources--including investment capital--available to individual restaurants. A corporation (rather than a sole proprietorship) has a greater capacity to invest in the newest technologies, restaurant decor and design, and increased seating capacity. (It would also have a greater capacity to increase employee wages.) For example, a corporation like Twenty First Century, or Woolworths, would have a competitive edge over a neighboring fast food restaurant owned by a small scale entrepreneur. Twenty First Century and Woolworths are better able to invest in new technologies and innovative marketing strategies while the small scale entrepreneur does not have large capital reserves to invest. This observation has been confirmed by other studies in the food and retail sector at large. John Walsh, in writing about the increasing need for supermarkets to adapt to "environmental uncertainty" or changing consumer demand in a competitive environment, claimed that firm size plays an important role in the ability to adapt. "Large firms", he claimed "are more likely to have the resources to introduce innovations in a tight market" (Walsh, 1992:16). The type of ownership then (including ownership *size*)

shapes relationships of power between and among fast food owners.

The Woolworths Corporation, is one of the top 100 retail companies in New York City in terms of sales, earning nearly \$200 million in sales per year.⁴ Burger King is part of the "Food Service Division" of the Woolworths Corporation, only one of 43 divisions that comprise Woolworths, including the Woolworth's discount stores. Woolworths owns 26 Burger King restaurants, including 12 in New York City.⁵ (See Chart 2.1 for a general idea of the relationship between a Burger King restaurant franchise--owned by Woolworths--and how it is linked to Burger King Corporation and Grand Metropolitan. Burger King, for example, is only one among other corporations owned by Grand Metropolitan. These other companies, such as IDV, own various trademarks such as Smirnoff and J&B. And Woolworths, which is not owned by Grand Metropolitan, is the franchisee of 26 Burger Kings.)

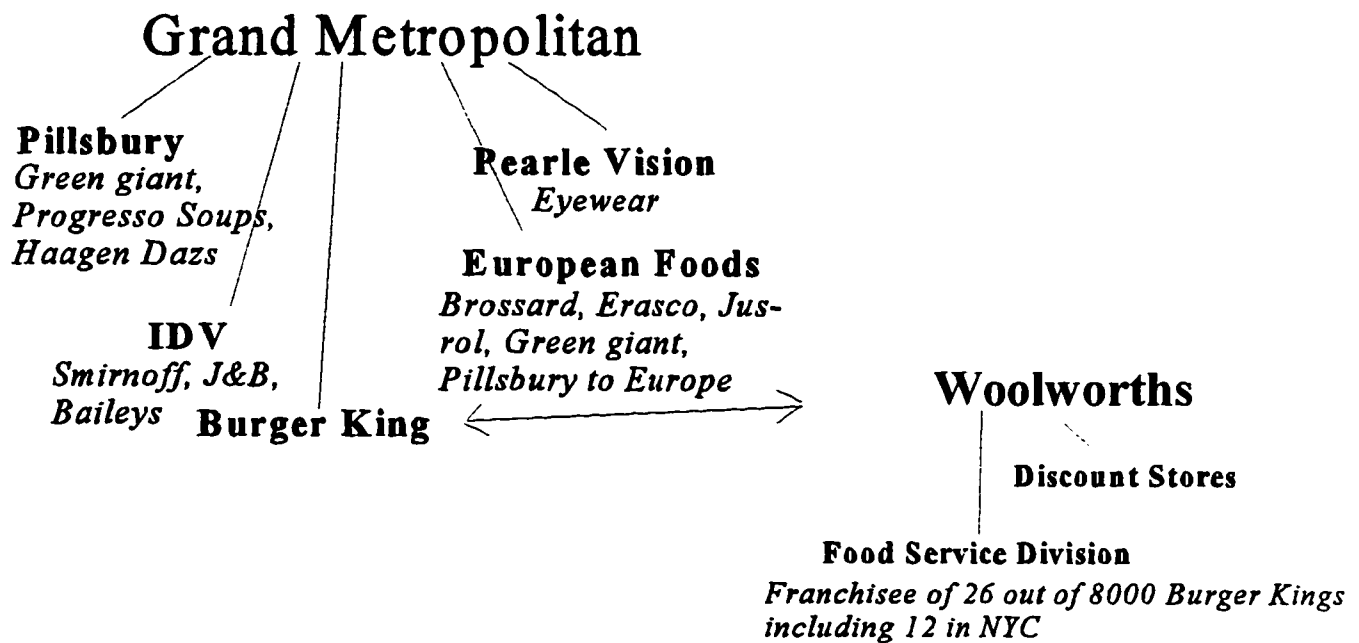
Another example of large local and corporate ownership is discussed in the case study chapter on Chinatown, Manhattan. Twenty First Century owns a McDonalds on Canal Street while a small scale immigrant Vietnamese businessman owns a Burger King restaurant across the street. While Twenty First Century owns 18 other McDonalds restaurants as well as other businesses, the Vietnamese entrepreneur only owns a small "Gucci" and souvenir shop nearby. The capital advantage of Twenty First Century over

⁴ The Woolworths Corporation owns 625 franchise units in total and in 1992 earned \$178,800,000 in total sales (See *Handbook of Restaurant Franchises*, 1993).

⁵ Interview with staff director of Woolworths Corporation, June 1996. This is further discussed in Chapter 4 where I examine one Burger King restaurant in Washington Heights that is owned by Woolworths.

Chart 2.1

Corporate Ownership Structure and Corporate Links Grand Metropolitan to NYC Burger King Restaurants



the Vietnamese businessman has resulted in highly unequal restaurant innovations, marketing techniques, and employee wages, salaries, benefits (especially differences among managers) and opportunities for job advancement.

Irrespective of the type of ownership, each restaurant is required to adhere to certain universal standards established by their respective corporate headquarters and trademark. One of the most important characteristics of McDonalds and Burger King is their emphasis on global standardization. Further, each restaurant is required to purchase its products from the parent company's designated suppliers and adhere to the standard procedures regarding product production, assembly, and packaging.⁶ What these universal standards refer to, and how they are monitored and enforced, differs between the parent corporations.

McDonalds ownership structure

McDonalds headquarters maintains greater personal or face to face contact with its franchisees than Burger King. McDonalds has offices located in different regions which act as intermediaries between the individual restaurants (and their corporate or single owners) in the region and parent corporate headquarters. McDonalds corporate employees operate out of these offices, providing support, resources, information, etc. to individual restaurant owners of their designated jurisdiction. The central office for the

⁶ Most franchises (across all industries) are expected to purchase at least 50 percent of their supplies from the parent company, called a "tie-in arrangement" (See Elongo and Fried, 1992; and see Hunt and Levin, 1975). According to McDonalds restaurant owners I interviewed, McDonalds owners are required to purchase all of their supplies and raw materials from suppliers designated by the parent company.

New York region is located in Valley Stream, Long Island.

The corporate franchisees typically maintain central offices in New York City. For example, Twenty First Century's main office is located in midtown Manhattan. There is a great deal of coordination between the Long Island office and the Twenty First Century office in respect to the operation of each restaurant. Twenty First Century corporate staff and on-site managers attend district-level meetings held by the Long Island office.

Personnel from the Long Island office often visit individual McDonalds restaurants owned by Twenty First Century to take part in restaurant employee staff meetings, assist in creating and implementing new strategies, and ensure that McDonalds universal standards are being carried out.

The existence of regional McDonalds offices implies a kind of decentralized corporate structure. Regional offices--better equipped than Oakbrook headquarters with knowledge and expertise in the local market--encourage and support regional variations in marketing, product variation, restaurant design and decor, and employee management systems. The renovations that have occurred at the Chinatown McDonalds is a good example of this. While the renovations were financed by Twenty First Century, the creation of the design was assisted and regulated by the McDonalds Long Island office.

McDonalds headquarters requires that owners be on-site managers or what McDonalds refers to as "owner-operators." McDonalds also encourages the owner-operators to become active members in the community where the restaurant is located in order to facilitate community integration. This includes attending community functions, sitting on school boards and business improvement committees, setting up scholarship

programs for neighborhood youth and joining recreational sports leagues with their employees. With a larger corporate franchise the general manager takes on many of the responsibilities of the owner-operator and becomes the active participant in the community.

Standardization and flexibility, here, go hand in hand. McDonalds enforces compliance with basic standards pertaining to quality of product, service and cleanliness of its restaurants--the "QSC" or Quality, Service and Cleanliness. The important point is that adherence to these standards often requires that individual restaurants market and present themselves in varying ways according to their targeted clientele and location. Local control has come with an emphasis on regional integration and the flexibility to vary its products, service and restaurant presentation according to local and neighborhood characteristics. In this way the McDonalds corporate structure is flexible; local innovations can be implemented and supported by the corporate organization in a way that is in compliance with universal standards. Further, local innovations can be closely monitored and controlled.

Burger King ownership structure

Burger King has a more centralized system than McDonalds due to a "re-engineering" of its corporate structure during 1994. Burger King closed its regional offices and cut its regionally based corporate staff by 25 percent. Burger King now furnishes its regional "corporate employees" with home offices. Corporate employees are provided with computers (laptops), fax-lines, modems, voice-mail, and e-mail by Burger

King headquarters. New York City is included in Burger King's "Northeast region" which covers states from Maine to Virginia.

In this region there are 71 corporate employees based at home. The corporate employee responsible for the New York region lives and works in Long Island. He monitors those Burger King restaurants in New York City which are not owned by the parent company. His main responsibility is to act as a liaison between the franchisor and the franchisee. In this case where large second corporations are the franchisee, then the corporate employee deals directly with the on-site general manager of the Burger King restaurant.

Corporate employees are linked to headquarters via "support staff" who are based in the Miami headquarters office. Communication between corporate employees and support staff is mainly through computers. Support staff provide corporate employees with corporate issued mailings, marketing agendas and various print-outs concerning daily Burger King operations. There is also a hierarchy among corporate employees which determines administrative responsibilities beyond regional monitoring. Administrative duties may include such things as the coordination of a regional meeting among corporate employees that takes place one or two times a year. Five-hundred people currently work at corporate headquarters in Miami. They make up the various divisions which include real estate, public relations, accounting, marketing, operation standards for franchises and customer complaints. Unlike McDonalds, Burger King does not require owners to be on-site managers. This often means that the owner is not connected with the community culture, social and business life. Greater centralization of information and support systems

by Burger King may mean having less flexibility and autonomy on the local level to implement and control regional variation by the corporate structure.

Who owns a Burger King restaurant however is an important factor in how the restaurant functions in a particular place or neighborhood. As I have stated, the bigger the owner is the more resources it has to invest locally. With a large resource base it is often able to invest in local innovations even without the national and regional corporate support structure that is in place by the McDonalds corporation. In this sense, type of ownership--as well as corporate affiliation--is an important factor when considering the capacity to implement changes and integrate into the community. In fact, a corporate owned Burger King may well be in a better position to implement local level changes than a McDonalds sole proprietorship. In this sense, flexibility is not only determined by the kind of emphasis established by corporate headquarters but also the amount of resources available to each individual restaurant.

The Fast Food Restaurant and the Labor Process

"Millions or billions of hamburgers sold" and "Fast, friendly service" are common themes we have come to identify with the fast food restaurant. Indeed, the corporate fast food restaurant can be viewed as a combination factory--where cheap, perishable food goods are mass produced and a retail outlet--where the goods are bought and sold. It also includes a dining room where the goods are consumed. But in the fast food restaurant, unlike a factory, the coordination of production is [primarily] accomplished "by, with, and through the people who work in the restaurant." It depends on "harmonious human

relations" (Whyte, 1977).

Operating the restaurant requires numerous employees to work a wide assortment of jobs which are spatially and functionally organized into "stations." The main distinction in work is between what Robin Liedner (1993) calls "interactive service work" and food preparation. This distinction, according to social researchers who have examined the fast food labor process, has come to be known as a spatial distinction between the "front" of the restaurant--which includes the service counter and dining room--and the "back" kitchen where the food is prepared (Ritzer, 1993; Liedner, 1993; Reiter, 1991; Garson, 1977).⁷

The technical division of labor and the "front"

The "front" of the fast food restaurant generally consists of two different stations: counter service, and dining room staffing. Counter-service employees perform light physical work such as handling food, pouring beverages, and operating a register. More importantly they are the liaison between customers and back employees in the communication of food orders.

Most registers in fast food restaurants today are computerized and relatively simple to operate (Garson, 1977; Liedner, 1993). Like in every other kind of national

⁷ At some Burger Kings there are nine different stations all together (between front and back.) These include: drink, steamer/boiler, fries/onion rings, specialty, sandwich prep, counter service, dining room, and drive-through. (In the restaurants I examined none have a drive-through.) Back stations include: steamer/boiler, fries/onion rings, specialty, and sandwich prep. In some McDonalds there are five different stations. These include: counter service, fry station, the bin (where the food is put), the grill area and the lobby. In other McDonalds there are more than five stations.

chain in retail trade, computerized registers increase the productivity of the cashier, "almost doubling the number of customers" each cashier can handle (Braverman, 1974). The new registers found in increasing numbers of fast food restaurants do not require skills associated with counting or calculations. The register has a key for each menu item identified with the item's initials. A cashier selects the appropriate keys when a customer is giving an order and the order is automatically communicated to computer monitors in the "back" kitchen. The register automatically computes the price of the order and the change owed to the customer after the cashier enters the total amount of money given to her by the customer (Leidner, 1993; Ritzer, 1993). An older system, still in existence in some New York restaurants, computes the price and change but doesn't automatically communicate the order to the back. Rather, cashiers announce food orders over a microphone attached to the register, or face-to-face.

There are two different counter-service systems prevalent in New York City McDonalds and Burger King restaurants: the "multi-convention" system--used only in Burger King restaurants--and the "hospitality system"--used in all McDonalds and some Burger King restaurants. The kind of system affects divisions of labor at the service counter, the kind of work each counter employee performs, and the extent to which counter employees communicate with customers.

The *multi-convention* system is similar to a cafeteria model. The counter is divided into two areas: half of the counter consists of cash registers and the other half is where customers pick up their food orders. Usually there are only two registers. Customers form a single line, place their orders at the available register, they receive a

receipt for their order, and then they move down the counter where they wait to pick up their order from other counter service employees. These other counter-service employees gather the food orders from the "chute" and prepare beverages from soda dispensers and coffee and hot water makers located either directly behind or on the side of the service-counter. They then place the entire order on a tray that is handed to the customer.⁸

The *hospitality* system consists of a line of registers covering the whole service counter. Customers line up behind each register rather than forming a single line. The main difference between the multi-convention and hospitality systems is that in the former there is a division of labor at the counter between cashiers and those who service the food orders and in the latter there is only one position--cashier--who both takes and services the food orders. Further, the hospitality system emphasizes direct customer contact to a greater degree; each cashier spends more time with each customer.

The service product

Customer contact is important in this industry. It is the part of the labor process most focused on by management today. The way "front-line" employees interact with customers--including the way they present and display themselves--is considered an important part of what managers call the "service product." This focus is not exclusive to the fast food industry. Since the early 1980s, service management literature in the U.S.

⁸ In some Burger King restaurants the soda dispensers and coffee and hot water maker are located in the lobby. In these restaurants counter service employees simply give customers the appropriate beverage cups and customers serve the beverages themselves.

has deemed "quality of service" the "top management issue" (Albrecht and Zemke, 1985; Czepiel, Solomon, and Surprenant, 1985). The cover story of Fortune magazine in June, 1990, showed that top service companies stressed above everything else personal service, "the kind that is delivered by live bodies behind the sales counter, a human voice at the other end of the telephone, real folks in the tellers' cages at the bank" (Sellers, 1990).

Service has always been a part of the fast food restaurant but it has increasingly become emphasized partly because of greater competition from other restaurants. Greater emphasis on service recently is also due to the increasing use of sophisticated and efficient technologies and automation. With computerized registers, for example, the cashier position has become less of a technical position. Further, technologies and automation used in the production of food have made the process of food production easier which allows managers to focus more on the service aspects of the restaurant labor process. "It is not really a technical job" said a manager about fast food work in general. The decreasing technical nature of the job is partly reflected in changing job criteria. A manager with nine years of experience in McDonalds discussed the discontinuation of a math test with the implementation of computerized registers.

At one time when I first started they used to give you a math test. They discontinued that after a while. When I first started as a crew that is the way I started. I had to take a math test. The excuse was, in case we need you on the register, we need to know that you know how to count. But it tells you everything, the change and all. You don't have to be like, "oh, he gave me \$10, how much do I have to give back?" It tells you how much to give back. They discontinued that after a while...

Robin Leader wrote about the nature of the cashier position during her participant observation in a McDonalds restaurant:

There was no need to write the orders down, because the buttons lit up to indicate which products had been selected. Nor was there any need to remember prices, because the prices were programmed into the machines. Like most new cash registers, these added the tax automatically and told workers how much change customers were owed...In addition to doing much of the workers' thinking for them, the computerized registers made it possible for managers to monitor the crew members' work and the store's inventory very closely (1993:72).

The cashier, however, often finds herself caught between multiple job demands. While the front-line job has become less technical, she is still expected to maintain accuracy with orders and money exchange while providing expedient service. On top of this, she is expected to perform "emotion work" through a display of her personality.

Social Theory and the Selling of Self

With a shift in management emphasis from the technical labor process to the labor process in the "front" the greatest concern today is how to control, define and measure "service." "Service enhancement"--to develop front-line actions to make customers "glad they're at McDonalds" has become the main focus. "100 percent customer satisfaction," the primary aim, is continuously repeated in the restaurant by managers to reinforce it in the minds of the workers. "Front-line" employees, in their presentation and display of self, help shape and even constitute the abstract "service" that is bought and sold. "We have to sell the personalities, the courtesy, and the respect" said one manager.

Considerable effort has been put into grasping the abstract nature of the service product by service industries. In U.S. service industry literature in general, a distinction is made between the physical product and "human relationships" as products. An article in the Journal of Marketing (Bitner, et.al, 1990) suggests that the service encounter

frequently *is* the service from the customer's point of view. Similarly, in a fast food company memorandum distinctions are made between the physical product that is bought and sold and the intangible value derived from the physical product.

You don't buy circus tickets, you buy thrills.
You don't buy the paper, you buy the news.
You don't buy glasses, you buy vision.
You don't buy dinner, you buy sales and service.

Social science has been concerned with the "selling of self" or the *commodification* of self for several decades, dating back at least to German sociologists in the 1930s (Crozier, 1965). Kracauer (1930) and Dreyfuss (1933), referring to an emerging class of white collar workers in the western world, claimed that it wasn't only the capacity of work, but also the person itself that was treated as a *thing* by the capitalist system. The first American sociologist to study the selling of self, C. Wright Mills in the 1950s, was concerned with the condition of the white collar worker, or the "new Machiavellians" as he called them who practiced "their *personable* crafts for hire and for the profit of others" (Mills, 1953). Mills introduced the concept of *psychological* manipulation and exploitation of workers and was concerned with the way in which workers' personalities or authentic selves were affected. More than three decades later, Arlie Hochschild (1983) was the first to examine the selling of self in the modern corporate organization in her study of Delta airline flight attendants. Her work is important in that it identified a particular kind of service worker in modern society--the "public contact" worker, whose main job entailed interacting with clientele, performing "emotion work" and whose work roles were standardized and "commercialized" according to corporate defined and publicly propagated criteria.

This body of work that concerns the commodification of self stems from a critique of Karl Marx to do with Marx's neglect to consider not only how workers in advanced capitalist society are alienated from the products they produce, but that in the performance of "interactive service work" workers can also become alienated from themselves.

Alienation from self, according to Hochschild, or Mills, occurs because employers require workers to behave and present themselves according to corporate or standardized policies, rather than according to how workers feel like behaving and presenting themselves. The familiar "service with a smile" McDonalds slogan, for example, would mean that workers are required to smile, even if they do not feel like smiling, even if it contradicts how they really feel. Hochschild claimed that flight attendants often experienced a fusion between their private and public feelings, and, as a result, they often became confused about what constituted their real personalities (Hochschild, 1983). George Ritzer, in his study of McDonalds, went further than this by suggesting that standardized interactions among fast food workers could result in a complete loss of self in the performance of work, where work is so standardized that workers could just as well be replaced by robots (Ritzer, 1993).

Robin Liedner, however, in another study of McDonalds workers, has cautioned us against such an extreme view as that taken by Ritzer. The imposition of corporate culture is not necessarily pervasive, nor universal. While routinized interaction is often a constraint to the expression of the real self on the job, it can also provide a sense of security to workers who feel more comfortable maintaining a social distance from their customers. The standard line of communication prevents a customer from expecting more

personalized service where the real self would have to be expressed, and when workers do not necessarily desire expressing their real self on the job. While Ritzer assumes--in the Weberian or Marxian tradition--that real social meaning among workers is rooted in the work they do and the products they produce, Leidner--similar to Gramsci's depiction of Fordist workers--shows that workers sometimes use the meaninglessness of the work, or the routinization of the work, to protect their authentic selves.

Gramsci wrote that the gap between the "human content" of work and the labor of work does not necessarily lead to the "spiritual death of man." Rather, he wrote that "the brain of the worker, far from being mummified, reaches a state of complete freedom...the only thing that is completely mechanized is the physical gestures...even during his work he thinks more." Gramsci is referring to manual work on the Fordist assembly line, but Liedner's findings suggest that even "public contact" workers adapt to routinized work through range of responses, including "distancing themselves from the work role by willing 'emotional numbness'" (Leidner, 1993:14). Could it be that managers strategies of control partly reflect the fact that workers simply don't buy into the corporate ethos?

Managing and Controlling the Service Product

Workers' disengagement from their work could be considered both threatening to worker-manager relations as well as to maintaining a favorable and amiable impression by workers to the public. Cashiers are encouraged to involve at least a slight bit of their authentic selves in order to keep them mentally and emotionally active--both to appear human to the public, and, to keep a piece of the cashiers' authentic self tied to the identity

and presentation of the corporation. An employee's personality, attitude, mannerisms, appearance, physical attributes, and language skills are constantly evaluated and controlled by managers in the restaurants I examine, from hiring the right people to begin with, to using various tactics in the restaurant workplace.

In the case studies that follow, I examine these various employer strategies for controlling the "service product." When recruiting employees, I found that managers look for various subjective features to do with personality, appearance, energy level, and attitude. These features reflect work role demands. The role of the fast food front-line worker entails a high degree of emotional awareness about the customer and an ability to discern when and when not to express deference, or other emotional behavior. Employees are expected to be responsive to customers' questions and concerns, apologetic about grievances, show appreciation for compliments about the company, deflect personal insults with silence, and elevate the general mood of their customers. They are supposed to be emotionally involved--expected to report to work in a "good mood" and maintain that mood throughout the working shift. And, they are supposed to look good, be well groomed, and wear a clean, pressed uniform.

These kinds of work demands are not new to the fast food restaurant. As

C.Wright Mills wrote about the white collar worker nearly half a century ago,

They sell by the week or month their smiles and kindly gestures, and they must practice the prompt repression of resentment and aggression...traits as courtesy, helpfulness, and kindness, once intimate, are now part of the impersonal means of livelihood...For these intimate traits are of commercial relevance and required for the more efficient and profitable distribution of goods and services

What is particular to the modern fast food restaurant, perhaps, is the *ways* in which

and the *intensity* in which the service role is managed and controlled. The forms of managing and controlling the “service product” vary among restaurants, yet we can identify various approaches that are common in one or more New York City restaurants. These approaches are rooted in what is considered a more “humanistic” rather than an authoritarian, or “mechanical” approach. They build on a consumer oriented, “democratic,” and culturally tolerant culture (See Table 2.5). The shift from a more mechanical (or technical) to the “more human” is reflected in one restaurant in the way the periodic inspections are conducted--company inspections that ensure restaurants are complying with standardized procedures and policies. One manager said,

When I first started here (10 years ago), everything was very mechanical. Everything was about numbers. We had inspections here unannounced, twice per year. But I always noticed that when I was a crew that he came and checked all the equipment. But he never asked any workers any questions. He never asked any of the customers any questions. He just looked at everything we did. I felt like they didn't really need workers, they needed robots, literally. Over the past three or four years, they have gotten away from checking all the times and temperatures. They will check to make sure the food is cooked, the meat is cooked. But in their check-ups now, they almost never check the equipment. They will look to make sure the restaurant is clean, that it is sanitary. But they deal mostly with the workers. They will just sit and they will let the workers speak, possibly have a meeting, possibly have a rap session, and ask them, “When is the last time your manager spoke with you? When was your last pay increase? The last time anyone asked your opinion?” They will go in the lobby and speak to the customers. “Has anyone ever spoken to you? Any worker ever tried to make things personal among you and your service? Does anyone come in the lobby?” They have changed it completely. Before they had very rigid standards. You must have a customer do A,B,C, and D. Now they say “Do what it takes to make the customer happy.”

In one or more restaurants managers may “teach or motivate” service interaction skills to employees. Teaching consists of lectures, role plays, or watching company made videos. A restaurant may have a “team” approach to develop camaraderie among and between

workers and managers, and, an identity to the corporate, or, trademark name. “Team work” works to diffuse the power relationship between employees and managers in the sense that managers profess that “We aim for 100 percent customer satisfaction.”

“Crew empowerment” may be stressed which emphasizes workers “democratic” involvement in decision making, workers taking an active role in restaurant practices and worker “autonomy” in regard to how workers respond to each individual customer. The idea is to involve, and hence, empower crew members through "decision-making" on how to better satisfy customers and increase sales," to inspire company loyalty by making crew members see the "importance of their own contribution," and to provide tools to crew members that enable them to emotionally and psychologically deal with customers in accordance with company policy. A letter to regional headquarters from McDonalds said that "Our crew persons are all empowered to handle most customer complaints other than money or refund situations. All crew persons know what to do when we have a concern with spills, coupons, grill orders, incorrect orders, or smokers...They are all informed during their orientation of their one and only chance to impress the customer when there is a complaint." “Crew empowerment” helps to diffuse the issue of top-down standardized control over work performance.

Individual managers may develop personal ties to workers to enhance manager loyalty. They may hold counseling sessions for workers with problems, “hang out” with them socially, or give personal loans to those experiencing financial difficulties. Some restaurants organize social functions such as staff trips to amusement parks, company basketball teams, and employee involvement in community functions. Social functions

such as these are intended to build workers' loyalty to the company by shaping a personal identity attached to the company, as say, an employee who plays in a community basketball league for the McDonalds team. Honoring employees for good work performance such as displaying an "Employee of the Month" plaque on the dining room walls also encourages a worker's identity attached to the company identity. Daily or spontaneous activities also occur. Managers may whisper in a worker's ear something funny to make them laugh in front of a customer. They may hold incentive based games based on suggestive selling.

Finally, *customers* may be encouraged to take an active role in evaluating the service performance through customer contact cards or 1-800 phone lines. Hochschild (1983) similarly showed the same kind of strategy in the airline industry where passengers were solicited for filling out customer satisfaction cards. Arlie Hochschild (1983) referred to this kind of customer feedback practice as contributing to a "dual-boss" system; where passengers joined managers as overseers of the work process. In fast food, where technology and automation also significantly control the labor process (Edwards, 1979), there is what I call a "tri-boss" system. The use of such measures of control like customer feedback are *subtle methods of control*. Subtle methods are considered important in this industry because employees are constantly in the presence of customers and employees' enthusiasm, energy, and patience, is supposed to appear natural or organic.⁹

⁹ The fast food industry, like many other industry's that have "public contact" areas, have been developing management styles that are more personal and one-on-one (manager and employee) in contrast to the authoritarian kind of management that does not take into account an employee's feelings or reasons for conduct.

Table 2.5
Methods of Management and Control Over Service Workers

Management Approach	Concept and Implication
Teamwork	Emphasizes service to customers as a <i>team</i> . “We aim for 100 percent satisfaction” is the company logo. Diffuses employee-manager disparities in power.
Crew Empowerment	Emphasizes “democratic” approach where employees are given a say in decision making within defined sphere of issues such as how to respond to particular customers. Diffuses the concept of standardization and top down control by making workers <i>feel</i> like they are an important part of the “whole” of the organization.
Teaching	Service interaction skills are taught through manager lectures, role plays, or company issued videos.
Personal relationships	Managers hold counseling sessions for “troubled” employees, “hang-out” socially, or give out personal loans to those with financial problems. Builds and induces personal loyalty.
Community/social activities	The company sponsors employee trips to amusement parks or sports events, enters community sports leagues where employees play on the company team, and employees become involved in community events. This helps shape a company identity among employees.
Company awards	Employees are honored and publically recognized for good work performance through such things as “Employee of the month” plaque on the dining room walls. This also helps build a company identity among employees.
Daily or spontaneous activities	Managers have own ways of encouraging workers to laugh or smile such as whispering jokes in employees’ ears, or holding contests where employees earn bonuses for suggestive selling.
Tri-boss system	Crew members must respond to three forms of authority: managers, customers, and technical features of production including the pace of production, and technologies. Customers are encouraged to get involved in evaluating the service performance through “customer comment cards” or 1-800 phone lines.

Source of data: Interviews with respondents and participant observation.

Those restaurants that do solicit customer feedback often have their own methods for doing so. One restaurant among the restaurants I examined, for example, personally

solicits customers by asking them to write letters about their visits and encounters with employees. Letters come from institutions such as schools, the police department, and Immigrant Social Services. They also come from various individuals from C.E.O.s, international tourists and neighborhood people. It is interesting to note that among the letters collected by management in one restaurant, virtually all of them refer to aspects of the service rather than the food quality. One such letter enthusiastically states that an employee "gave me such fine courteous door service in a Park Avenue manner." Other letters refer to the service as "speedy," "polite," "friendly," and "concerned about my problem." The following is one such letter from a customer:

I am writing to applaud the efforts of one of your employees. My six year old cousin and I came into your restaurant. A young girl assisted us at the register. She was very patient with my young cousin as she made her selection. I had just left the beauty parlor, and she took the time to tell me I had hair all over my face and to compliment me on my haircut. She was very cheerful and helpful. With the war between fast food restaurants becoming more fierce. Quality service should be concentrated not only on your food products, but also on the customers you serve. This girl showed excellent customer service skills. She made the effort to be personable with the customers. As a frequent visitor of fast food restaurants, one becomes used to sullen faced, rude cashiers. This girl was a refreshing surprise. I regret I did not take her name down so she could be identified easily. Please let her know her efforts were appreciated.

This letter is from a C.E.O. of a large company.

I have visited your restaurant with my wife and kids. An employee helped us with our trays, drinks and napkins up three flights of stairs. She did this without having been asked with a delightful smile and personality. I am a C.E.O. of a large company, and realize customer service is paramount in being successful. This employee is a person who truly recognizes this and acts accordingly and has great attention to detail. Best wishes.

Neighborhood influences on the service role

The way in which front-line interaction is defined, shaped, and managed often

varies depending on external factors, such as what kind of neighborhood or district the restaurant is located in and the kinds of clientele it serves. In more impoverished New York City neighborhoods like Washington Heights or Downtown Brooklyn, managers often spend considerable time simply dealing with the harsh living conditions among both employees and clientele. Poor living conditions affect the performance of work.

Managers acknowledge that employees are often "depressed," and "pained." And in these neighborhoods employees often deal with a "rough" and "hostile" clientele. These factors make it difficult to create and maintain an upbeat ambiance.

Increased emphasis on service has led in other restaurants--especially McDonalds restaurants that serve a tourist or professional clientele rather than a more impoverished clientele--to the creation of other "front" positions in the dining room. There has always been a dining room attendant assigned to basic maintenance and cleaning tasks in all restaurants; wiping tables, depositing of food trays, washing windows, mopping the floor, and emptying waste receptacles. Dining room attendants have not traditionally made contact with customers except when contact was initiated by customers. But some dining rooms are now staffed with "hosts" who play an active and assertive role in "enhancing" the customer's dining experience; opening doors, assisting customers in carrying trays to tables, entertaining children including hosting birthday parties, refilling coffee cups, and ensuring that customers have the necessary amenities. Hosts also do a "suggestive sell" of some of the menu items, especially desserts, in order to increase restaurant sales.

The characterization of the host position at one restaurant I examine is a good example of the serious way in which management has come to equate service performance

with profits. Hosts are part of a "Customer Care" program in this restaurant, designed to increase sales and solicit customer feedback. The characterization of the host position shows how employees' aesthetic and personality features are crucial aspects of "service", so crucial that they need to be explicitly defined and measured. An "acceptable appearance," for example, is defined as "wears a proper uniform and latest promo. Conducts him/herself professionally." And "outstanding appearance" is defined as "Customizes crew room, front counter, store ambiance. Conducts him/herself professionally." And "acceptable creative personality" is defined as "Pleasant, smiles often, professional conduct." An "outstanding creative personality" is defined as "Positive attitude, smiles are a way of life, bubbly, walking, talking, interacting professionally." "Acceptable" regard toward "store policies" is considered "An example setter." An "outstanding" regard toward "store policies" means that they have "become second nature!" An "acceptable" level of "profitability" is defined as "Suggestive sells all the time, naturally." And an "outstanding" level of "profitability" is defined as "Has a set of goals and MEETS them" (Management memo, 1993).

The front-line and social criteria

How the "front-line" is managed is also shaped by the kinds of people who are hired to do the work. I show in the case studies that the subjective features considered important for the performance of the service role are often locally defined, often vary among managers, and, are sometimes associated with particular and whole groups of people according to race, ethnicity, national origin, etc. But there are also some patterns

that seem to have evolved on a more universal scale in fast food restaurants in New York City.

Even though fast food work is primarily considered "youth" work rather than gendered work, and even though there are no real status distinctions among the various station assignments, a gender division of labor, and often cultural division of labor, have evolved in the fast food restaurant.

Like other low-wage "interactive service" jobs, front jobs in fast food are considered women's work. But, it hasn't always been like this. What we know about the fast food industry in the 1950s and 1960s shows a workforce dominated by men. Ray Kroc, the originator of the McDonalds franchise system, wrote in his autobiography, Grinding it Out (1977), about his observation of the very first McDonalds owned by the McDonald brothers: "...all men, dressed in spiffy white shirts and trousers and white paper hats" (1977). John Love (1986), who wrote the first comprehensive study of the McDonalds Corporation (now sold in McDonalds restaurants gift shops!) asserted that the key to the industry at that time (prior to the 60s) was the "all male crew." Robin Leidner pointed out that Kroc initially decided not to hire young women to work behind the McDonald's counter because he claimed "they attracted the wrong kind of boys."

The growth of the fast food restaurant industry has paralleled the growing rate of women's participation in the paid labor market (Walsh, 1990; Lamphere, 1987; Kessler-Harris, 1980; Jenson, Hagen and Reddy, 1988; Boserup, 1970; Crompton and Sanderson, 1990; Fine, 1992; England, 1992; Epstein, 1988; Sassen, 1988). In 1950, less than one-third (31 percent) of all women in the United States worked outside the home. By 1989,

nearly two-thirds (57 percent) of all women worked outside the home (Walsh, 1990). (See Table 2.6).

Table 2.6
Women's Participation in the Paid Labor Force
Rates from 1940 to 1990

Year	Womens' Participation in the Paid Labor Force (percentage of women)
1940	27
1950	31
1960	38
1970	43
1980	52
1990 (1989)	57

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 and 1991;
and see Walsh, 1993.

The growth of the fast food industry can be viewed, in part, as a consequence of the increasing labor force participation of women. Women have less time to cook at home when they have jobs and careers. This creates a greater demand for food service, and, especially, convenience foods (Walsh, 1990). In turn, the industry takes advantage of a growing available low-wage labor supply of women¹⁰ (Standing, 1988; Price and Blair, 1989).

¹⁰ Price and Blair (1989) found there to be a greater gender gap in wages in "non-manual" or service oriented work than in manual work.

Today, in fast food restaurants, women, by socialization or by "nature" are considered better able to meet the various subjective criteria management demands. In various ways, the gendering of work is embedded in the restaurant organization and occupational criteria (Hall, 1990). Women are considered more "enthusiastic," more "patient," more attuned to the needs of clientele. By some managers they are considered "more meticulous" and "better speakers." Women are also considered harder workers either because they are in greater financial need, or, as one manager said, "so many women feel like they have to prove something and, they just tend to be awesome because of it."

Women are considered a more attractive force in the restaurant as well. According to one manager, consumer surveys have revealed that most customers would rather be served by a woman than a man. And there is a tendency to sexualize the position in some restaurants. "Pretty girls who attract the customers" are hired, said a Burger King employee. (This is quite a contrast to Kroc's idea that they attracted "the wrong kind of boys.") Another employee said that "cashiers think that all they have to do is stand there and look pretty while the rest of us work." The younger women are, the more malleable and "energetic" they are considered to be. Young women tend to work on the front-line. One manager said, "I have always believed that the younger they are the more bubbly they are, the nicer they tend to be, and the more pleasing they tend to be." In this way, the service role in the fast food restaurant builds on traditional female roles as an expression of femininity (Hall, 1990; Hearn and Stoll, 1975).

Moreover, women work on the front line partly because they are excluded from certain work required in the "back." Generally, women do not perform "heavy" work such

as unloading trucks, lifting stock and breaking down equipment. Men resist women doing it and women tend to accept this because it is considered some of the most undesirable work in the restaurant. As one manager said, "Usually we like to have men in the grill area because if we need a box of fries that is 39 pounds, it is hard to tell a woman 'go over there and get me a box of fries.'" Historically, women have resisted the gendering of masculine work but this resistance has revolved around the fact that much blue-collar manual work has been much higher paying, unionized, with benefits more than traditional female work (Stromberg and Harkess, 1978). Thus, women have proved their physical ability and moved into these jobs primarily for economic and social benefits. In fast food, on the other hand, all work has the same benefits, same pay, etc. which may account for women accepting, and even reinforcing, the gendering of heavy work in the fast food restaurant, especially when the "masculine work" is undesirable work.

Men also resist performing jobs in the front, a resistance that seems to be traditionally embedded in a perception of the food service cashier position as a woman's job. "They say 'I don't want to be a front cashier. It is a girl's job...' Where that came from? I don't know. I think it has just been that way" said a manager about male's perception of the cashier position. The kind of clientele, the kind of neighborhood, and the time of day also affect the gendering of work. Several managers who worked in areas that are considered "shady" or "dangerous" claimed that they preferred to have men work on the front line at night because at night the restaurants tend to receive a "rougher" clientele. As one female manager said,

Working at night because it is more rough--you have the rough crowd coming in. So you have to be a little more rougher than you usually are. Men are usually just

rough all together in the day or the night. That is the difference that I see. In the morning time when we work, we could be jolly and act all crazy. Because then we have all families and kids so we don't have any problems. But when it comes to the nighttime, you have to change your attitude.

During late night hours, then, the gendered value of front-line service roles is often reversed. The masculine qualities of men such as physical size, strength, and aggressiveness hold a greater value at night in order to control the rough clientele. But this doesn't necessarily mean that men always replace women in manager and front-line jobs at night in "dangerous" neighborhoods. Women often adapt by changing "attitude," by taking on what are considered masculine features such as aggressiveness. In this way, women are considered what I call "emotionally flexible" as they are better able to emotionally adapt to restaurant demands that often fluctuate according to neighborhood, kind of clientele, and time of the day.

Subjective features of appearance, attitude and personality are also *culturally* defined and shaped. In many of New York City's ethnic neighborhoods the restaurants' clientele, marketing strategies and ambiance often determine what kind of "cultural" capital is valued among "front" employees. The McDonalds restaurant in Chinatown deliberately markets and promotes itself as a "Chinese" restaurant in order to attract neighborhood Chinese and a tourist clientele. Chinese immigrants who speak a Chinese dialect have valued "cultural capital" in this restaurant in terms of appearance, personality and language skills. Other restaurants, the ones in Washington Heights, for example, value those who can effectively communicate with their Dominican and other Spanish speaking clientele. In some restaurants Spanish language skills are required to work on the front line.

Local marketing programs often create new jobs. Handing out coupons on the street has become an aggressive marketing tool by numerous fast food restaurants. In Chinatown, McDonalds crew members hand out coupons in Chinese language at factory gates. They also go door-to-door, canvassing Chinese residents' homes. Outreach in the workplaces and homes of neighborhood Chinese requires a degree of ethnic affinity among fast food employees and the kind of "cultural capital" Chinese immigrants possess. Home delivery service is another recent marketing tool used in New York City McDonalds, beginning in 1994. This work is considered a "station." Employees ride McDonalds red and yellow bicycles with McDonalds signs on wire baskets to deliver food throughout Manhattan anywhere below 100th Street. Home delivery, according to managers I interviewed, also requires cultural capital such as speaking the language of the local population.

The technical division of labor and the "back"

Stations in the back--generally between three and seven different stations--deal with food production and preparation. Here, food items are cooked, prepared and packaged to be presented to the public. Each station tends to involve between one and six food items. For example, at Burger King's "sandwich prep" station there are six different sandwiches each requiring different ingredients and different processes of assembly. Maintaining a clean, stocked, and well-ordered station is part of a station assignment. Aside from the stations there are various auxiliary tasks back employees are responsible for such as cleaning utensils, keeping the kitchen stocked with food items and amenities,

heavy work such as unloading stock from trucks and during restaurant "closing-hours," "breaking-down" equipment.

As in a factory, food items are mass produced in standardized fashion. As in a restaurant, however, the volume, content, and timing of production fluctuates; they depend upon the numbers of customers coming into the restaurant and the menu choices they make. Company policy requires that products be made only upon demand in order to ensure the "freshest" quality. According to company policy, products must be sold within 10 minutes of being made. If a product is made, but not sold within 10 minutes, the product is thrown out. In order to avoid waste and to adhere to standard policies food is produced only according to immediate demand. If there is a constant customer flow, managers will request a continuous rate of production, ie. workers will have a certain number of every item pre-prepared.

There are over 30 different menu items in McDonalds and Burger King restaurants. Generally, one crew member is responsible for putting together the numerous ingredients for each product in a precise order. When a store is busy often two crew members are assigned to the same station. The complexity of the work can be seen by looking at what it takes to make a single product. The preparation of a bacon-double cheeseburger at Burger King requires many different steps. These are:

1. Take burgers and bun and run through boiler.
2. Assemble them and put them in the steamer.
3. From above the counter pull out the "double cheeseburger" wrapper and lie it flat on the counter.

4. Pick up out of the steamer a bun with two burgers inside--called a "double."
5. Place the "double" on the wrapper in the middle where it is indicated.
6. Take the top bun off and place it top side down.
7. Place a single piece of cheese between both burgers.
8. Place a single piece of cheese on top of the two burgers.
9. Put three pieces of bacon horizontally on top of the cheese.
10. Put the top bun back on top.
11. Mark the sandwich wrapper with a crayon marker if there is something special requested by the customer.
12. Mark on the wrapper with the crayon marker the expiration time of the sandwich.
13. Put the sandwich in the microwave and push the appropriate button for the number of sandwiches that have been put in. (For a single sandwich press the button marked "1.")
14. When the microwave timer indicates the sandwich is done (it will beep) then take the sandwich out of the microwave.
15. "Chute it." (Put it in the appropriate rack that slides the sandwich to the front line.)
16. Erase the order from the computer screen by pressing the appropriate buttons.

As can be seen, this process combines the use of modern technologies with detailed manual labor. In many cases, technology and automation have simplified work. Like the most advanced french fry technology (the "Arch Fry system"), work has been greatly

reduced, almost eliminated, with nearly full-scale automation. An employee simply has to put the frozen fries in a container. Fries are automatically drawn from this container, put into the frying oil by increment amounts and according to a pre-established speed. They are then automatically taken out of the oil, dumped into the fry chute and put into packaging.

Working the "grill" at McDonalds has also been automated in some restaurants. "To learn to work the grill, it takes about 15 minutes. We used to cook on the grills, turning the meat, seasoning.... Now, we have "pop-o-matic" grills. You put the meat on, close the grill and it opens in 39 seconds. So everything is standardized. This job is a lot easier, when it comes to the technical standpoint" one manager said. Burger King's hamburger broiler simply requires placing burgers on a belt that carries the burgers at a pre-set speed under the broiler and out at its opposite end after being fully cooked. Deep frying (of fish fillets and chicken nuggets) is simplified with computerized timers that indicate by sound when the items are done. Braverman, in Labor and Monopoly Capital cited a New York Times article from 1973 about a woman who "applied for a job with the Stouffer's chain and was told that they didn't need any cooks, only 'thawer-outers'" (Braverman, 1974:371.)

But in the fast food restaurant, these simplified tasks are only parts of one "station" assignment. For example, working the grill (or broiler) is only part of step one in the preparation of a bacon double cheeseburger at Burger King. Thus, one aim behind simplification of each task is to enable crew members to produce more products in the same amount of time. Productivity increases the more products a crew member produces

in a given amount of time. It takes nearly the same amount of time for a single and experienced crew member to make one hamburger or two hamburgers. She is considered increasingly productive the more she makes at the same time.¹¹

Computer technology and the labor process

Computer technology has been an important development in the fast food restaurant, having just as much affect in the "back" as in the "front." Computers have affected employees' spatial mobility, social interaction, and cultural criteria. Computer monitors--where orders appear--are staged at every station (in restaurants with computerized registers). In the shift from the use of microphones, or face-to-face contact, to computers, the system has changed from an audio system to a visual system. With the

¹¹ It may take two minutes to make one hamburger. For one minute the beef patty is being automatically broiled and the bun is being automatically warmed. If the store is receiving a constant flow of customers then beef patties are usually being broiled at a constant pace--not according to particular customer orders. The crew member has to then assemble the hamburger by first placing the bottom part of the bun on the designated hamburger sheet of paper packaging (on the designated place on this paper). Next, the crew member places the burger on the part of the bun that is on the paper. The crew member picks up the container of ketchup and puts a swirl of ketchup on the patty. He then picks up the container of mustard and puts a swirl of mustard on the patty. He then picks up a slice of pickle and puts it in the center of the patty. The top part of the bun is then placed on top and the paper packaging is wrapped around the hamburger in the required way. It may take 15 seconds longer to make another hamburger at the same time. Or it may take 25 seconds longer to make two more hamburgers at the same time, or 30 seconds longer to make three more hamburgers at the same time. It takes less and less time for each additional hamburger. In total, it may take two minutes to make one hamburger and two minutes, 30 seconds to make four hamburgers. The reason for this is that the process to take each new step--such as putting the beef patties in the broiler, picking up the ketchup container, then picking up the mustard container--compared with the actual making and packaging of the burgers becomes a smaller proportion of time in the overall process with increasing numbers of hamburgers.

microphones, back crew members have to listen for orders and hence, be silent and attentive in order to hear the order. With computers, back crew members simply need to visually check the monitor so he is able to carry on a conversation, or socialize. A manager with experience in both systems commented that with the microphone system "when you are in the kitchen they ask you not to speak because you have to hear the customers orders on the mike. If you are talking to one another you might miss an order. In the other store you could do whatever you want because we had a screen. You could just read it."

Computers affect timing and spatial mobility in the back as well. Listening for orders means a back crew member has to be present when the order is given. With computers, crew members are spatially mobile since they don't have to be present at the time of the order and because the computer monitor saves the order until the crew member deletes it. Further, there is more spatial mobility because every order appears on every monitor at every station. Crew members can check any screen for an order at their station and crew members can notify co-workers of an order. This facilitates employee cooperation and eases the ability to perform extraneous tasks. For example, if a crew member is fetching stock in the basement, or washing equipment, a co-worker can inform him that he has an order up.

Language criteria have been altered with computers. The system has made it more possible for people who speak different languages to work with one another. It is easier

for a foreign speaker to read a computer monitor rather than listen for orders.¹²

This is partly due to timing--visual reading provides more time to figure out the order than the audio system.¹³ Further, computers have simplified, technically, the cashier position and with this has come a greater emphasis on customer interaction. "So in the front they encourage you to talk to the customers and joke with them" said an employee about the changes that have occurred with computers. Thus, computers have affected cultural divisions of labor in the restaurant whereby it is necessary for front-line workers to speak a common language with clientele. Yet, front and back workers need not speak a common language.

The social organization of the back and the anatomy of flexibility

As jobs become simplified in the preparation of food, the social organization becomes more complex with features of *cross training*, *interchangeability*, and *flexible task assignments*. The universal aim of both McDonalds and Burger King is for each employee to become proficient in every station and auxiliary task and, hence, interchangeable. The tendency is toward employee *homogenization* rather than *specialization*; to create the "all around" worker, rather than the specialist. This is made

¹² In a Washington Heights McDonalds where all of the employees and clientele speak Spanish, a manager hired a non-Spanish speaking person. He works in the back preparing food. In Downtown Brooklyn, a manager said that he has "four people who don't speak an ounce of English"--three Spanish and one Swedish. And "they are not in the service area."

¹³ What appears on the monitors in the back are abbreviated forms of the menu items that can be easily deciphered by someone literate in any language.

possible by maintaining a distinction between the *technical* division of labor ("stations" and jobs) and the *social* division of labor (employees' roles in the labor process).

This goal is first implemented through a process called "cross-training." Cross training refers to training workers on different stations. If a worker is first trained to make hamburgers and cheesburgers, he undergoes cross-training to be trained for another station such as "specialty" sandwiches. Cross-training, according to fast food managers, makes fast food work less mundane, more challenging, and more fulfilling. It requires workers to maintain mental concentration on their work by learning new parts of the restaurant production process for a period that could last several months (more time than the average tenure among crew members). Moreover, cross-training enhances the social value of workers in the organization. The more stations a worker is competent to work at, the greater value he/she is to the organization.

In the most ideal situation--when many of the employees are competent in several stations--the organization can be flexible in the assignment of jobs to employees. Upon "clocking in," for example, employees can be assigned to any number of stations. And, during the course of their time "on the clock" employees can be shifted to any other station depending on the particular and immediate need (according to customer demand for particular products), ie. to replace or assist a co-worker. The goal is *interchangeability* where all employees are competent to perform other stations in the restaurant.

The principle of the "all around" worker in the organization certainly contrasts with Durkheim's notion of the highly specialized worker, Braverman's "thawer-outer," or

even one of Frederick Taylor's pig iron subjects. But even though fast food restaurants seem to stress it, the principle of the all around worker rarely occurs in complete form (with all workers being competent to perform all stations) because turnover in fast food tends to be high. Employee turnover, it would seem, counters the organizational ideal for maximum employee interchangeability. The workforce at fast food restaurants typically consists of employees with a range of experience and proficiency levels.

Employee interchangeability and the hierarchy of skill

Even though fast food work is considered *unskilled* work, there is a hierarchy of skill levels among employees. The neoclassical concept of skill assumes that “skill,” or knowledge is obtained through education, training, or on-the-job experience (Becker, 1975). Although job “skill” can be viewed as a relative concept (rather than a neoclassical positivist concept) especially when we examine the relationship between emphasis on service aspects in the fast food organization and the increasing value of womanly features such as “personability” and “emotionally flexibility,” it is still instructive to use the neoclassical version in an attempt to measure the relationship between on-the-job training and experience and employee value (Attewell, 1990).

In this way we can view “skill” in the fast food restaurant as corresponding with the number of stations a worker can competently perform, a competence gained through on-the-job training and experience. Employee value, then, is partly associated with employees' *flexibility* to shift from station to station, or level of “interchangeability.” The level of proficiency and skill level as such, are gained through on-the-job training and

experience.

Training new employees is usually conducted by experienced crew members or "crew trainers." A repeated process of observation (when the crew member observes the crew trainer), trial attempt (when the crew member tries the process and is observed by the crew trainer) and practice is conducted in the restaurant workplace while the restaurant is in operation. (Initial training in most restaurants I examined also consists of watching a video in the employee lounge.) Respondents at the restaurants I examined widely varied in the amount of time it takes for an employee to be trained. Proficiency at a single station was considered to take between "15 minutes" and "two weeks."¹⁴ And proficiency in all stations was considered to take between "30 days" and "one-half year."

One manager claimed that

They should know everything within 30 days, 100 percent." Another manager said that "To learn every station, to work it well, it would take about three months all together. It is just that there is a lot of stuff to do. So it takes some time to absorb." A manager at another store also emphasized the extensive amount of learning required. "Everything you have to learn: french fry station, soda station, salad station, bun station, fillet station.... Its not easy job...how to clean, how to do the garbage, everything. A lot of stations...you have to learn how to load tins in the freezer...we have a big freezer. How to deal with delivery. When is the truck coming in. This manager claimed that learning time "depends on the person...If you learn fast...and if the person works full-time it takes one-half year."

Such variance among respondents in the time it takes to become proficient could be explained by differences among stores such as the degree to which the store emphasizes

¹⁴ One manager said that "when it comes to working the cash register, it will take you three straight hours, uninterrupted." A cashier (at this same store) said that it took "about a week." Yet, cashiers in this store are given a two week training period before they are given their own register. Two weeks is given for all stations in this store as one manager said: "with a trainee, we put you to work at one station only, and they have two weeks training process we give them in the store."

"cross-training", the kinds of technologies that have been implemented in the store, and how the store actually interprets "proficiency." It can also be explained by differences among individuals such as employee work experience, natural aptitude, and motivation for learning. In any case, the amount of time it takes to reach the organization ideal of complete interchangeability would also seem to challenge long held assumptions of fast food work being unskilled work.

It is worth noting that this does not necessarily contradict the assumption that fast food work is "unskilled" work. This assumption has been partly based on the minimal criteria needed to perform any function in the restaurant when one first begins the job. The technical division of labor is so highly specialized that anyone can perform any number of basic routine tasks without training. For example, a worker can be put to work placing frozen burgers on the Burger King grill without any training. But, it is not in the organization's long term interest to have a bunch of workers performing only parts of a station. On the other hand, it requires training and experience to be able to perform a whole station competently. Therefore, the fast food restaurant takes on unskilled workers, and, gradually, they become skilled. And workers are disposable only to the extent that they can be replaced by someone equal in skill level.

Becoming skilled, then, is actually a requirement. As one manager said, "After two weeks if they haven't learned anything, or they seem not to absorb, then we have to replace them." Because the restaurant tends to continually hire new employees, the restaurant is comprised of workers who range greatly in skill level. In this way, the fast food restaurant cannot afford to lose all of its workers at once and to hire a completely

new workforce. Newly opened stores tend to have already trained a workforce in another restaurant. A newly opened New York City Burger King, for example had spent four to eight weeks training both experienced and inexperienced fast food workers in another restaurant under the same ownership that had implemented similar technologies.

Interchangeability and employee homogenization is enhanced by social and aesthetic work criteria. These refer to various criteria all employees are expected to follow including back workers. In one restaurant where "team work" is emphasized, a manager said, "All crew persons are encouraged to step outside of their stations and view the restaurant as a whole...to see that each person is not a cog but a part of a much larger machine that is dependent on each other working as a team." Managers emphasize aesthetic criteria; how one works and how one looks while working. Cleanliness is stressed; employees are instructed to "sanitize" their hands regularly, maintain a clean station, and, when not busy, clean utensils, or mop the floor. All employees--not only "front" workers--are required to maintain a decent personal appearance; meaning being well-groomed and keeping a clean uniform.¹⁵ All crew members, for example, regardless of the work they do, wear the same uniform (although the uniform is gendered in some restaurants). This is important because even though front employees are those who engage in service interaction, back workers are still at least visible to the clientele. *Interchangeability* and *cross-training*, then, help shape demands for a *flexible* workforce that turns out to be hierarchically skilled. And various social and aesthetic criteria

¹⁵ Fast food restaurants strongly emphasize cleanliness and the appearances of their employees are supposed to reflect this emphasis.

demanded by all employees, and emphasis on the social division of labor rather than the technical division of labor help to reinforce at least the tendency toward worker homogenization.

A flexible labor supply

There are other features that comprise the anatomy of flexibility in the organization such as shaping and controlling a *ready and changing availability* of a labor supply while keeping labor costs at a minimum. "Flexibility" has become a kind of buzzword used by economists today to describe virtually any feature of the modern corporation that deviates from the rigidity of the mass manufacturing system most prevalent prior to the 1980s.¹⁶ In fast food, I view "flexibility" as integral to the organization's emphasis on keeping the costs of production at a minimum. Like any labor-intensive industry fast food restaurants tend to place a premium on minimizing labor costs. This in itself is nothing new to the retail industry. As Edward Kirkland noted about a letter F.W. Woolworth wrote to his store managers more than a century ago (in 1892): "We must have cheap help or we cannot sell cheap goods" (Kirkland, 1962; Braverman, 1974). What is more of a recent development is how fast food technologies and automation (that perform a portion of the work) are interwoven into the social structure to maintain human labor at the cheapest

¹⁶ Among some, like Piore and Sabel, "flexibility" is heralded as the answer to declining national productivity and the "wage squeeze" that is hurting the common American worker most. Corporations need to be able to compete in the international market which has spontaneous, unpredictable demands (See Piore and Sabel, 1984). But, for others, like Bluestone and Harrison, flexibility is more of a management strategy to create a more compliant and disposable workforce while it exercises maximum and international geographical mobility (See Bluestone and Harrison, 1988).

cost which includes being able to use labor only according to immediate need.¹⁷ What is new is the degree and intensity in which the fast food organization is able to do this, such as their use of computers for “clocking” in and out, and hence, being able to control labor costs so closely that they are concerned with unproductive minutes on “on the clock.”

Employee interchangeability, then, depends not only on proficiency, but also on employee availability and flexible *scheduling* of work time. Most restaurants maintain a payroll that far exceeds the number of employees required to operate the restaurant. Having a large reserve of employees ensures that the restaurant will always be adequately staffed.

Managers spend considerable amounts of time strategically controlling and limiting the numbers and kinds of employees "on the clock" in accordance to production need. As Marx wrote: "The value of labor is completely destroyed if it is not sold every instant" (Marx, 1844:76). Controlling workers' paid time ranges from the making of a weekly schedule for all employees on payroll based on weekly sales projections to pulling crew members on and off the clock during their scheduled shift according to sudden fluctuations. This is facilitated by individually staggering employee shifts. (Employees usually being and end their workshifts individually, rather than as a group.)

An employee may be asked to take an extended break or to go home early if the restaurant slows down. Or, she may be asked to stay beyond her shift or skip a break if the restaurant unexpectedly becomes busier. She may even be asked not to start her

¹⁷ At some New York City McDonalds restaurants labor costs are less than 12 percent of all costs.

scheduled shift if the restaurant appears slow, or called at home to come in when not scheduled.¹⁸ Employees tend to dislike managers interference with their weekly schedule, especially concerning the extension of a shift. But this kind of practice is also nothing new to restaurant work. The unpredictable nature of the restaurant business has always resulted in employers attempts to make employees bend their schedules according to the restaurant's need. George Orwell vividly portrayed his own experiences when he worked in a hotel restaurant in Paris in the 1930s:

At half-past five I was suddenly awakened. A night watchman, sent from the hotel, was standing at my bedside. He stripped the clothes back and shook me roughly. "Get up!" he said. "*Tu t'es bien saoule la gueule, eh?* Well, never mind that, the hotel's a man short. You've got to work to-day." "Why should I work?" I protested. "This is my day off." "Day off, nothing! The work's got to be done. Get up!"

Of course, we can hardly imagine today a McDonalds or Burger King manager standing at the bedside of a crew member. But what does occur today isn't far off course. The near universal use of telephones today provides a much more efficient way to get employees out of bed when needed. As one fast food manager among my respondents said,

I have to call the employees up and make sure they are coming in...They can't hide from me. If they don't show up I am going to be on them. If they have to be here at 8:00, I am calling them at seven in the morning. I wake them up to make sure they are coming to work.

Managers' meeting memorandum is often explicit about controlling labor time.

¹⁸ McDonalds has developed various questions for employee interviews designed to measure motivational levels. A manager cited them for me: "What would you do if it is in the middle of a rush and it is time for you to go home? Would you stay or would you want to go home?" This manager said that "we want to know how motivated are they." Another question he cited was: "If it gets extremely busy and you haven't had a break would you get in a bad mood?" He added that "We have a lot of people who say. 'That is Okay. If you're busy, and you need me to stay, I will stay.'"

One such memorandum stated: "Managers must control. If the sales are lower than projected, managers must control accordingly. Managers who use more hours than projected must justify that with sales only. No overtime will be allowed." Such control is premised on the legal relationship between the employee and employer. What is important is that upon being hired employees do not enter into a contractual relationship with the employer. Employers are simply bound by the few legal codes established by the state that refer to the regular payment of at least minimum wage for working 40 hours or less in a week, overtime pay for more than 40 hours, hourly restrictions on minors, and workplace safety. Employees have no legal recourse to contest issues involving hours of employment or schedule changes. And managers often work around these legal codes to avoid complications with the law while ensuring the lowest labor costs. For example, employees tend to be hired legally, and on the books. Also, many restaurants avoid hiring minors due to legal restrictions in the number of hours they can work, when they can work and the jobs they can perform in the workplace. One manager said,

We only have 18 and up. Not because they don't apply. But because they can only work weekends. They only can work certain hours. On Fridays they only can work until 10:00 PM. Saturdays they can only work eight full hours and only until 10. Sundays they can only work until 7:00 PM. Sometimes when it gets extremely busy we forget about them but they hardly have any hours so we go over the limit. The last time we got a fine.

The way the weekly work schedule is made is also a strategy used by managers to enforce working on a flexible basis. The schedule is made according to managers' evaluations of employees work performance during the past week. It enables managers to control who works, when and for how many hours. Referring to the fact that many of his employees desired to be scheduled the maximum number of hours allowed during a

week (40 hours), one manager said that employees "are awarded that 40 hours a week, provided their performance, of course! That (performance) is a big issue." Further, managers avoid scheduling employees beyond 40 hours to avoid having to pay over-time rates.

Managers tend to justify their actions by referring to the kinds of people who work in fast food restaurants. In New York City, they claim, a substantial number tend to be young high school or college students attending classes (whose hours are also legally restricted if under the age of 18), the working poor who hold other jobs, or single mothers balancing child care with working. They are people with other schedules, restrictions, or responsibilities that fast food managers must work around. In other words, managers try to make it seem as if they are doing their employees' a favor by accommodating their busy schedules. On the other hand, when managers work around an employee's individual schedule or particular restrictions employees often consider it a job benefit. Several of my respondents, especially students, claimed that no other employer would be so flexible.

Employee turnover

Even though managers spend a lot of time recruiting and selecting the 'right' workers, and then invest considerable amount of time in training them in order to carry out the organizational ideal to have complete interchangeability, turnover rates in fast food restaurants continue to be high. They also seem to vary. Robin Leidner's research showed a national turnover average of 205 percent in 1985 in McDonalds restaurants.

High turnover rates are attributed to the fact that these jobs are part-time,

temporary, low-wage and dead-end and therefore, there is simply a lack of incentive to stay in these jobs. Turnover is also instigated by managers who tend to fire employees who "don't work out," do not learn the work at prior-established rates, or who are caught in actions against company policy such as stealing food, reporting late to work, or shirking on the job. A management meeting memorandum stated "It's time to get rid of unhelpful crews." Another stated "We will upgrade our crew productivities by turning over unproductive crews or give them less hours." In interviews one restaurant owner said that he hires one to two new people each week. A production leader claimed that people get fired every two weeks, sometimes more.

On the other hand, recent management literature has emphasized the importance of reducing turnover among employees. A 1994 management newsletter showed that turnover rates in some McDonalds restaurants were much lower at only 50 percent. One management newsletter reported that "We've worked hard at building a family feeling among the management and crew in the restaurant....and too few of us are doing everything within our power to reduce employee turnover."

Turnover rates vary among restaurants depending on various factors particular to the restaurant. But in New York, in general, employers claim that the rate of turnover has declined over the years, not because of heightened employee satisfaction, but rather because of a lack of other alternatives in New York's labor market. In other words, more people are staying longer because they can't find better jobs, or, because they need it as a second or "moonlighting" job to supplement their "real" job, and, in the case of immigrants,

because they secure immigrant workplace niches.¹⁹

Internal social hierarchies

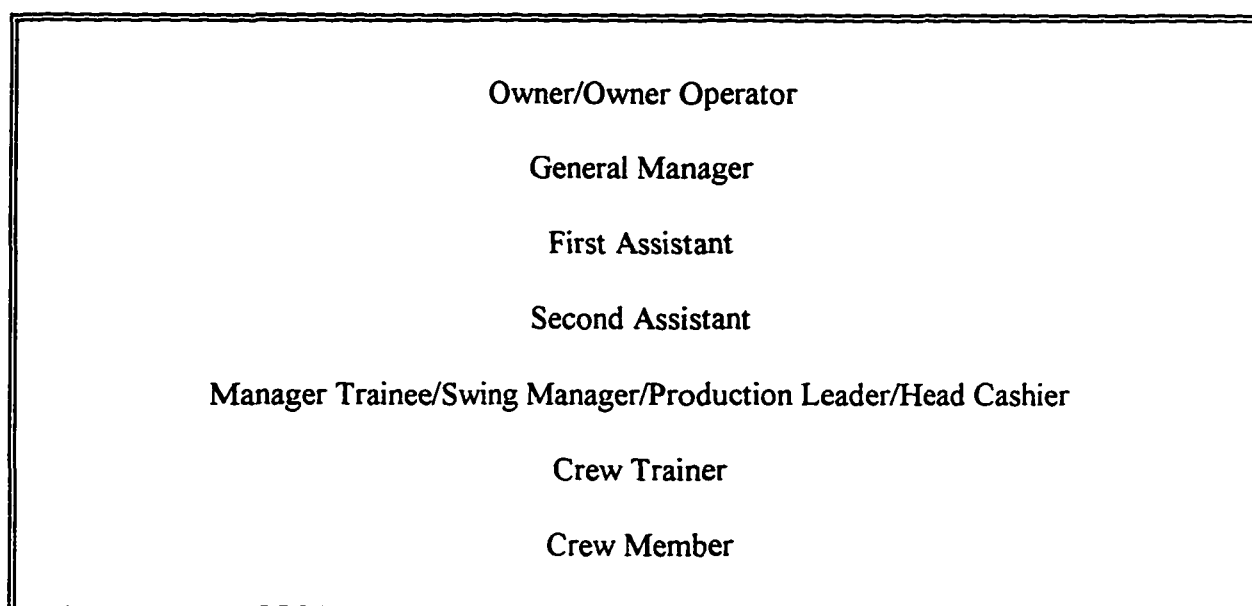
The internal social hierarchies of McDonalds and Burger King are wide ranging and greatly disparate. In both McDonalds and Burger King restaurants there are about eight different positions from entry-level crew member to general manager or owner operator (see Chart 2.2). There are slight differences between McDonalds and Burger King and there also tend to be slight differences among restaurants. What tends to differ are the numbers in each position at each restaurant. While internal job ladders appear rather accessible in these restaurants, the low ratio of managers to crew members (usually about 1:10), combined with lower turnover rates among managers than among crew members,²⁰ make managerial positions difficult to obtain. Numerous low paid middle-level positions--between crew members and salaried managers--help to create the illusion of good opportunity. David Gordon (1996) claims that this kind of layering of managers is widespread, and indicative of corporate restructuring trends. Gordon cites Robert

¹⁹ Several managers I interviewed said that about half (and even more in some cases) of their workforces were full-time, more permanent and more experienced while the other half is part-time, more temporary, and tend to be more inexperienced. One manager said that about half his workforce stays more than a year or two and half of his workforce is temporary. Another manager said that most of his workforce has been with him for several years. Another said that the average tenure among all employees is one and a half years. Still, another said that "you will probably have 70 percent turnover (in a year). But the ones who stay past one year are pretty much here forever."

²⁰ Turnover rates among managers tend to be low, and lower the higher you go up the hierarchy. With decreasing opportunity in the New York City labor market at large, managers are even less likely to leave their position.

Tomasko who observes that "One way to reduce turnover or postpone disappointment is to add extra rungs to the ladder" (Gordon, 1996; Tomasko, 1987). These "extra rungs" tend to be what Gordon calls "front-line" managers, or those responsible for supervising the workers at the bottom rungs of the corporate structure. In the fast food restaurant industry "front-line" managers can be viewed as those who work within the restaurant.

Chart 2.2
Fast Food Restaurant Social Hierarchy



This view would seem to challenge the assumption of Parcel and Sickmeier, that the channels of upward mobility among the top fast food companies "begin at the store/unit level and proceed upwards to corporate headquarters" in the sense that most job opportunity appears to be at the level of the restaurant. While Parcel and Sickmeier distinguish jobs in the fast food restaurant between wage (or "secondary" jobs) at the

bottom of the hierarchy from salaried positions (or "primary jobs") at the top of the restaurant hierarchy, they claim that the existence of job ladders is a significant and positive feature (Parcel and Sickmeier, 1988).

In McDonalds (and Burger King), the entry-level position is that of crew member. Crew members in New York City are typically paid minimum wage or near minimum wage and are rarely provided with medical or other benefits. As a crew member one can become a crew trainer--one of the middle-level positions--and expect to be paid 25 or 50 cents more per hour. The main additional responsibilities a crew trainer has is the training or "cross-training" of newer crew members. In McDonalds a crew trainer can participate in the SIT program (Swing Managers in Training). Upon qualification, the crew trainer becomes certified to become a swing manager. The equivalent in Burger King is a production leader (in the back) and a head cashier (in the front). These positions are the nearest equivalent to a foreman in a factory--a kind of liaison between managers and crew members. And these positions account for the most numerous "manager" jobs in the restaurant.

When asked what is the main difference between a crew member and a Swing manager, a swing manager said,

A swing manager has more responsibility than a crew member. A crew member has to take care of customers. I will be behind them, making sure they do their job. I manage the floor. If I see someone doing something wrong I make sure I correct them that way they can get it right. I don't tell them in front of the crew. I pull them aside and let them know what they are doing wrong."

When I asked a production leader if being in between crew members and managers posed a conflict for him, he responded,

Hell, yah. It is like...I am basically friends with everyone. Everyone knows me

here. It is kind of stressful because sometimes I have to put my foot down and say look, I need you to do this. If they don't like it I can tell them to go home or I can request that they punch out. Or, for them to get written up. A few people I have requested that they get terminated and they did. It is kind of messed up when you are friends with someone and they try to use your friendship against you. When I try to look for some of my crew and the management don't like it and I have to cover for them. If the big boss comes in and the managers did something messed up they will be like, James, what happened. I be like what are you talking about? Oh, well, I am sorry, I made a mistake. I took off the equipment a little too early. To cover it up. So when I need it they will cover for me. Either way I am caught between a rock and a hard place. I am dead in the middle. I am not crew and I am not management. I just have a little more authority than they do and know a few more things than they do. But either way it is messed up.

To become a swing manager one has to study what crew members refer to as the "Big Book" or "the Bible"--the McDonalds operation manual--which often takes several months to review. There are three levels of swing manager: level three. Level two. And level one. In McDonalds the different levels refer to levels of responsibility. Level three is part-time availability with a set schedule without being allowed to run a shift alone. The pay is typically \$5.00 to 7.00 per hour. Level two is full-time "fixed availability" with a set schedule and may be allowed to run a mid-shift alone. The pay is typically \$5.50-7.50 per hour. Level I is full-time "open availability" with a flexible schedule and may run any shift alone. The pay is typically \$6.00 to 8.00 per hour. The pay for the equivalent positions in Burger King tend to be about the same.

After level one, a swing manager has the opportunity to go into the MIT program--Managers in Training. Upon qualification by passing the exam, the swing manager becomes a second assistant manager. As a second assistant manager one goes into the Basic Operations Course (BOC). Following the BOC is the Basic Management Course (BMC). And following the BMC is the Intermediate Operation Course (IOC). One then

becomes a first assistant manager, followed by associate manager. These courses are conducted in the McDonalds' New York regional office in Long Island. Associate managers then travel to Chicago to undergo two weeks of intensive training and instruction at Hamburger University after which they become candidates to become general managers. Where there are several restaurants under the same ownership there is usually a store supervisor above the general manager responsible for supervising more than one restaurant. Above the general manager and the store supervisor is the owner-operator(s).

Assistant managers are usually paid a salary by McDonalds. The lowest assistant salary among my respondents was \$15,000 a year. General managers made \$30-50,000 salary in McDonalds. Burger King managers had a wider range with assistant managers making as little as \$7.50 per hour to some making a claimed \$1,000 to \$10,000 per week. Salaried managers are typically provided with medical and various other benefits. Managers in one Burger King restaurant also benefitted from profit sharing schemes.

The disparity in income and benefits is not only among positions but within positions across restaurants. The following descriptions by two managers make this apparent. They are both equal in position--first assistant manager--but work at two different Burger King restaurants with different ownerships. The first is a Latina-American woman and the second is an African-American man. The first is owned by a sole proprietorship. The second by a large corporation.

- I make \$7.50 per hour. They pay you bi-weekly. The taxes kill you. And I am just hoping that Clinton actually goes through with it (new tax bill). I pray to God it happens fast. Because you feel so run down at times and you want to go to see a doctor and you can't afford it. A few months ago I

was feeling really run down and I wanted to see a doctor. She told me it was \$55. I paid. When I came out they charged me an extra \$25 for the urine. Then I got a bill from the lab \$110 for the blood samples. I was like 'Oh My God.' Then it turns out I had a stomach ulcer. \$81 for the medication. So I paid more than \$300 on that visit. And I am still paying it off. I can't afford it. I have been told I could apply for Medicaid but that is such a hassle. That is such a hassle. I have worked so many years. I have been working since I was 14. Always on the books.

- I needed vacation time, they gave it to me. I never had to ask for a raise. They give it to me. I mean I earned it. Everything I need. Benefits. Me and my family are covered. Medical and dental. I pay \$10 per week. I get a monthly bonus program right now. It probably brings in \$1000 extra every month. Just bonus on how much sales we do and how much we receive. If we receive \$40,000 more than we expected then I get a percentage of that. My weekly check and depending on how hard I work, I get \$1,000 dollars. It could be \$2,000 or 10,000.

Every restaurant (except one) I examined had this social hierarchical structure or something very similar to it. One Burger King restaurant had a non-hierarchical "management team."²¹ The number of salaried managers at each restaurant ranged from four to eight. This number depended on the size of the workforce and restaurant. Generally, the percentage of managers to the total workforce is about eight-ten percent. But there can be several swing managers and crew trainers that make up another 10-15 percent.

Particularly striking are the disparities in income across the hierarchical corporate structures, from entry-level crew member to the CEOs. Table 2.7 shows the range of

²¹ At this store there were five salaried managers in total and 60 crew members. One is the "manager" and the other four are "assistant managers." According to one of the assistant managers, they all started out together in this Burger King with extensive McDonalds management experience. They all knew how to do everything which eliminated the need to create a division of labor that would be hierarchically based.

organizations. According to these figures, the average McDonalds owner earns an annual take home pay of \$150,000 for each restaurant he/she owns. This is 17 times the earnings of a crew member who works full-time at minimum wage. An owner of three McDonalds restaurants earns about 50 times the earnings of this same crew member. And the Chairman of Grand Metropolitan who was paid the equivalent of \$1.5 million in 1995, earned 170 times what most Burger King crew members made in New York City (based on minimum wage and full-time year round employment).

Such disparity in income is indicative of trends among most giant corporations today where earnings disparities are growing. As Howard Botwinick writes in Persistent Inequalities, "...while real wages declined and working people scrambled to make ends meet, the incomes of the top one percent of the population rose by a stunning 74 percent, and the salaries of corporate CEO's grew by 19 percent (Botwinick, 1993, p.6; Mishel and Frankel, 1991). Yet, the disparities in the corporate fast food restaurant industry appear even more extreme than they are in the average major corporation. Botwinick cites a Business Week report that showed that the average CEO of a major U.S. corporation made 85 times more than the pay of a typical factory worker in the U.S. in 1990 (Botwinick, 1993, p.6; Business Week, May 6, 1991). What is important, and consistent with Gordon's findings, is that the earnings disparities between non-supervisory (or crew members) and on-site, restaurant level managers (or "front-line managers") is not nearly so extreme as those between crew members and owners and CEOs. The highest salary

Table 2.7

**Disparity of Earnings Across Fast Food Restaurant
Industry Occupational Hierarchy**

Position	Range of annual earnings based on full-time employment
Crew member	\$8,840 to 10,546
Crew trainer	\$9,360 to 10,920
Swing manager/production leader/head cashier	\$9,880 to 16,640
Second Assistant	\$14,560 (w/out benefits) to 15,000 (w/benefits)
First Assistant	\$15,600 (w/out benefits) to 40,000 (w/benefits)
General Manager	\$20,000 (w/out benefits) to \$40,000 (w/benefits)
Store Supervisor	\$25,000 (w/benefits) to \$100,000+ (w/benefits)
Owner Operator	\$150,000 (owner of one restaurant) to 2,850,000 (owner of 19 restaurants). Take home on average for <u>each</u> restaurant (based on McDonalds figures) is \$150,000.
Corporate Executives	The Chairman of Grand Metropolitan was paid 907,000 pounds (equivalent to about \$1.5 million) for sitting on the board in 1995. (McDonalds does not include CEO pay in its annual report.)

Source of data: Interviews with respondents and corporate memos and reports.

among general managers I was able to obtain the figure for is only about four times a crew member's pay. In fact, the disparity between an owner of only two restaurants and the

highest paid general manager is much greater than the disparity between a general manager and a crew member. The CEO of Grand Metropolitan was paid 40 times what this general manager was paid, a stunningly larger gap than the earnings gap between the general manager and the crew member.

In the seventh chapter "Understanding the Limits of Mobility" I examine how opportunity from the bottom rungs is shaped by class, cultural, gender, and age features of employees, as well as human and social capital.

Social disparities and social control

The social hierarchy in the restaurant helps to facilitate the various management systems such as "crew empowerment." The middle-level positions, for example, are partly designed as liaisons between crew and management so that feedback from crew can be most effectively communicated. A 1994 letter from one restaurant to the regional office reported that "Advancement among crew to positions as Crew Trainer, SIT has worked well. These crew persons act as a liaison from crew to management to express ideas, concerns and feedback."

While the social hierarchy facilitates greater control, greater control is also perhaps needed as a response to increasing social disparities across the hierarchy where those on the bottom rungs are offered increasingly less, say with the declining value of minimum wage. But these kinds of subtle strategies may viewed as new strategies of control that are prevalent across U.S. corporations as a whole. David Gordon, for example, claims that U.S. corporations have been devising new management strategies to deal with the fact

that they are providing increasingly less to their workers in the way of wages and other material benefits. According to Gordon, the less workers are given, the less material incentive they have to work, then the more they have to be controlled. In other words, as wages fall, as living standards crumble, and as corporations offer less hope for improved circumstances, workers are more prone to "shirk," rebel, and need to be more tightly controlled. Referring to what he called the "stick strategy" Gordon wrote that "The solution to such motivational problems in the absence of strong wage incentives and well-established job security, in general, is a combination of intensive supervision of employees and the threat of job dismissal" (Gordon, 1996).

Beginning in the mid 1980s, a series of books on corporate management strategies in the service sector were published. One dominant idea was that on-site management itself was becoming a service to the top organization. As Albrecht and Zemke (1985) point out: "Quality of service is now the TOP management issue while management itself becomes a service... Leaders must build and maintain a 'customer oriented culture'." It is in this way that restaurant managers can be viewed as "front-line" managers, those primarily responsible for managing the lowest paid workers, within the restaurant. And, unlike managers and corporate staff on the middle and higher rungs of the corporate structure where "downsizing" has occurred (when it has occurred, such as at Burger King) managers at the level of the restaurant have become increasingly necessary. Although Gordon focuses on the big manufacturing corporations such as the Caterpillar corporation, the world's largest manufacturer of earth moving equipment, and doesn't examine service and retail industries, the fast food industry would seem to be an important case in

Gordon's theory. Fast food wages--at minimum wage levels-- are lower than any other corporate employer, and, the real value of minimum wage has fallen considerably (Card and Krueger, 1995; Economic Policy Institute, 1995).

Indeed, very little in the way of material incentives are provided to fast food workers to perform. As I have shown, there is a great need to exercise control over the fast food workforce. But the various mechanisms of control from the "tri-boss system" to the concept of "crew empowerment" help shape a workplace environment that appears and sometimes feels cooperative, rather than coercive. This seems to cast a different light on Gordon's concept of the "stick" ruling workers today.²²

Such so called "empowerment" and "cooperative" based systems are not only prevalent in the service and retail sectors. A CEO of Diebold (the nation's leading manufacturer of automated teller machines) was quoted in the New York Times (July 7, 1996) claiming that it has been necessary to create new plants with cooperative work teams because of declining wages and fewer job benefits being provided to workers.

²² David Gordon (1996), in his latest book Fat and Mean, posited two prevalent management styles today among top U.S. corporations: cooperative systems of labor management, and, coercive approaches. The coercive approach is premised on a rigid hierarchy of authority to ensure worker productivity while a "principal carrot" in the cooperative system is the promise of material rewards such as job security and steady wage increases; the implicit assumption is that if the corporation increases productivity and profits then workers will get a piece of the pie. The promise of material rewards induces employer loyalty, encourages employees to work hard, and allows the corporation to relax hierarchical authority. The coercive approach, or what Gordon called "the stick strategy" is required where employers do not provide strong wage or other benefits; where workers do not have a strong and positive incentive to work hard. A strong authority system, where managers breath down the necks of workers, is the only thing that ensures high rates of productivity. The coercive system, then, "relies on the stick," and the cooperative system "relies on the carrot."

"Unionism is going down because corporations have changed their views...We empower our people now" this CEO said. "They work in teams with shared responsibilities. It's not management versus the workers in the plants now. We're all one for our shareholders" (Winerip, 1996). This is strikingly similar to the ideology propagated by the McDonalds corporation: "We aim for 100 percent customer satisfaction."

Summary

As I try to show in this section, the fast food labor process and management systems reflect various old and modern forms of both service work and mass production. Ester Reiter pointed out in her study of a Burger King outlet in Canada, "From a business point of view, this is a brilliant innovation--applying the methods of the assembly line to the service industry" (Reiter, 1991). On the one hand, the fast food restaurant is a labor intensive industry that relies on cheap, disposable labor, like the typical immigrant or sweatshop factory. On the other hand, the way the work is rationally organized with some of the most advanced efficiency technologies make the fast food work site more similar to a modern mass manufacturer--only workers do not reap the same kinds of benefits, say of a unionized Fordist worker, who earns high wages, health insurance benefits, and a pension plan. Without positive work incentives such as high wages and job security, managing a workforce requires extensive systems of control, including "front-line" managers and an extensive social hierarchy of authority. Managers control over workers' weekly schedule and hours, their power to determine pay hikes and promotions, as well as their ability to hire and fire, are deliberate mechanisms of control over the workforce.

As a *service industry*, however, where workers interact with the public, where the work process is highly visible to the public, and where "service interaction" is considered a valuable product in itself, management practices must also be subtle. "Crew empowerment" and "teamwork," building a "family atmosphere" through social functions, maintaining a clean, "friendly" environment, the "tri-boss" system, bureaucratic authority--where standardized policies take a de-human form in, say, the McDonalds "bible," all contribute to maintaining a docile, flexible, and seemingly "enthusiastic" workforce. In the following case study chapters I show how these dynamics are locally shaped.

Chapter Three

Chinatown

Introduction

Chinatown Manhattan is New York City's oldest, most centrally located Chinatown and thrives as a hub of business, banking, shopping and tourist activity. The heart of Chinatown is Canal Street, around Mott and Mulberry Streets. A McDonalds and a Burger King restaurant are located on Canal Street, a few blocks West of Mott Street, on the fringes of Chinatown in what is considered the "bargain hunters area" or "Little Vietnam." Here, an array of small shops line the street such as jewelry, leather, and souvenir shops. Once owned by Jewish shopkeepers, these shops have recently been taken over by Vietnamese. South Asian owned perfume and cologne shops are interspersed among these other shops on Canal Street. There are various other small shops, seafood and produce markets, street vendors, Chinese restaurants and pastry shops, and subway stations in this area. McDonalds and Burger King restaurants have existed in Chinatown's proximity for over a decade. They are joined by other franchise eateries such as Baskin Robbins, Carvels, and Marias. Tourists from all over the world, including France, Germany, and Eastern Europe are attracted to the "bargains" in this area as well as Chinatown's other cultural attractions and cuisine. Eastern Europeans are especially attracted to the cheap goods and souvenirs and many tourists and New Yorkers including black Americans come here to buy jewelry, including gold chains. The Jewelry district in Chinatown has become a multi-million dollar industry, "turning over \$100 million in gold and diamonds a year."

Chinatown is also a large residential district for Chinese immigrants and their children. Its public schools and parks are filled with Chinese. With the continuing massive flow of Chinese immigrants and Chinese enterprise, Chinatown has been expanding and swelling over its historic borders, and in the process, acclimating itself to neighboring regions.¹ Chinese business, including restaurants, extend South into SoHo, West of Broadway, and over to the North side of Canal Street, into "Little Italy." The shifting ethnic border dividing the Italian and Chinese cultures is represented by a sign in one "Chinese" restaurant window in this area reading "We Serve Italian Macaroni."

While Chinatown is famous among New Yorkers and tourists for its shopping bargains, cuisine, and other ethnic attractions, it is also depicted as a place filled with sweatshops, labor exploitation,² and conflict between different influential groups. Internal conflicts over neighborhood power and status are seen in the rivalry between Chinese and Vietnamese organizations. Ethnic relations within Chinatown, however, are often constructed around protecting the social and ethnic boundaries of Chinatown from outside threats.

¹ More than 150,000 Chinese reside in Chinatown. Nearly 1,500 new Chinese arrive every month into Chinatown (Kinhead, 1992).

² There are nearly 1,000 garment factories and Chinese restaurants in Chinatown where the Chinese work for low wages, often under the legal minimum (Kinhead, 1992). According to the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association, (CSWA)--an association and workers' center run by a professional staff of Chinese people based in Manhattan's Chinatown-- Chinese restaurant employers in Manhattan's Chinatown employ Chinese immigrants who work 70 hours per week and are paid less than \$1.00 per hour (The director of CSWA quoted in the New York Daily News, April, 1995; and "Boycott Jing Fong," CSWA flyer, 1995). Also, the Daily News reported that a Chinatown New York garment factory worker earns \$20 per day after working 15-18 hours (April 20, 1995).

While the vast diversity and constant change in this area brings forth a multitude of perceptions of the social dynamics here among different people, these perceptions help shape our understandings of community relations and how they are rooted in real perceived experiences. A fast food manager here, for example, a Colombian immigrant, claimed that certain groups, most notably American blacks, are sometimes referred to as "the problem people" by local business people. He referred to how racial antagonism against blacks created a bond between the Vietnamese and Chinese small business people:

Even just a few days ago...a lot of haggling goes on for money...three Blacks were around...Blacks tend to feel like they have a lot more push, if people scare them..so they come here with an attitude. And in this neighborhood they won't tolerate that. One Black guy thinks he is going to fight one Chinese guy over a watch or something and all of a sudden 20 Vietnamese guys will come out of nowhere. Just a few weeks ago, somebody was hospitalized, our window was smashed because his head got smashed into it. The Vietnamese will not tolerate any sort of problems like that in this neighborhood. They really control it before the cops see them. When the cops come, it is really over. If you see a Black guy comes running because he stole something. Even though no one knows what is going on, any of the Vietnamese kids in the neighborhood who happen to be watching the stores, they will all chase him. They don't know what is going on. They only rob from one person down the block maybe. Or maybe he just had an argument and he pushed a guy and he is running away. They will all attack him. It is a very united group. They are very powerful in this neighborhood.

The various social dynamics in the area affect the operation of local businesses, including the corporate fast food restaurants. The Burger King owner, who is Vietnamese, pays "protection money" to the Vietnamese gangs, and the McDonalds general manager wears a bullet proof vest because he was once shot at in the restaurant. Similar to any other immigrant neighborhood, particular immigrant groups, and not others settle, establish businesses, or work in Chinatown. Local power

dynamics are shaped between and among these different immigrant and ethnic groups. But the nature of commercial enterprise also attracts *particular* shoppers and tourists to Chinatown, as with American blacks who come to buy jewelry, and Eastern European tourists who buy cheap souvenirs. A particular global, or, cross-national community is shaped among and around shopkeepers, workers, residents, shoppers, and tourists.

Neighborhood ethnic dynamics are also shaped by structures of capital. New York's Chinatown has served as a model for social science's notion of the "ethnic enclave"³ (Zhou, 1992). "Ethnicity" in the ethnic enclave model is linked to economic development as a framework for understanding the growth and success of independent business enterprise among and within immigrant groups, and, opportunity structures within the ethnic community (Portes, 1985). In Chinatown, the ethnic enclave is comprised of the garment factories⁴, Chinese restaurants, and the jewelry industry. They are Chinese (or Vietnamese) owned, managed, and they employ East Asian workers. The ethnic enclave model helps us understand particular segments of the Chinatown economy, yet, it is limited in explaining various new ethnic interchanges and their links to both local and outside capital. The role of corporate franchises in

³ Using Alejandro Portes's definition, the "ethnic enclave" (which is distinguished from the immigrant neighborhood) is characterized by two traits: 1) the presence of immigrants with sufficient capital, and, 2) and extensive division of labor. Immigrant entrepreneurs have access to low wage labor and new consumer markets unavailable to others (provided through on-going immigration from similar origins). Immigrant workers often remain in these low wage jobs because these jobs open up "paths of mobility" unavailable elsewhere. Opportunities come with the expansion of the immigrant enterprise which "create managerial-level openings for members of the same minority, or with opportunities for self-employment" (See Portes, 1985).

⁴ The garment factories in Chinatown have an annual payroll over \$200 million (See Kwong, 1987).

Chinatown, for example, would seem to recast, or, at least, expand the notion of "ethnic enterprise" in the immigrant neighborhood.

McDonalds and Burger King are as typically "American" as they are untypically "Chinese." And, as they are connected to corporate giants, governed by outside capital, they stand far removed from the local Chinese restaurant and Vietnamese souvenir shops. McDonalds and Burger King, however, comprise a significant as well as symbolic part of capital, cultural, and labor relations in Chinatown. They respond, in differing ways, to the various dynamics shaped by the global, or cross-national community of Chinatown in regard to marketing strategies, restaurant design, and recruitment and employment practices. I show in this chapter how these two restaurants are culturally and ethnically linked to Chinatown in various and different ways. The study of corporate American food franchises here, in the very least, helps to understand how mainstream corporate America, economically and culturally, develops and operates consumer and labor markets in what has been considered a "closed" (Kinkead, 1992) immigrant community. This offers a way to view the role immigrants play in this process, as franchise owners, as managers, as workers with a multiplicity of reasons for working, perceptions of employment, and goals in the industry.

McDonalds

McDonalds is located on the South side of Canal Street, three blocks East of Broadway. It is a heavily trafficked block with people making their way to the heart of Chinatown from Broadway and because there is a subway station only meters away from the restaurant. It is located near ethnic Chinese restaurants, tea stores, street

vendors of Chinese food, but also there is series of banks, and there are pastry shops where people in business suits, young couples, and international tourists drink tea or coffee and eat Chinese or European pastries. McDonalds is closer to the heart of Chinatown than the Burger King restaurant.

McDonalds helps shape the image of a thriving, busy, and attractive area. It underwent \$2.5 million worth of renovations in 1991 to expand the restaurant's size, implement state-of-the-art technologies, and create an architectural design with symbols of the Chinese culture--part of a *deliberate marketing strategy*, a process of *cultural reinvention* to reflect aspects of the Chinese culture. Importantly, the ownership, being a large corporation, had the capital reserves to make such an investment in renovations. It is owned by a New York based company, Twenty-First Century, that owns 18 other McDonalds. Thus, it is part of a large scale organization, where the restaurant is linked both to other restaurants in the New York region (that are under the same local ownership), company headquarters, and corporate regional offices. The nature of the ownership provides a competitive advantage over Burger King which is owned only by a small shopkeeper.

Today, McDonalds stands out on Canal Street as a multi-story building with a modern and bright architectural design. It has a tri-level glass exterior and the neon-lit McDonalds arches are visible from several blocks away. Inside is a two-story high Chinese arch painted red (for good luck) and the four Chinese letters symbolizing the philosophy of life--long life, happy marriage, lots of children, and lucky money--hanging on its vast three-floor high walls. While dining on the second and third floors (the back half of the restaurant), visitors can look onto a three story open space (in the

front interior of the restaurant) with a view of Chinese artifacts on the restaurant walls. Customers can also look out onto Canal Street.

A common scene here is a first generation Chinese couple visiting with their young children. The parents often sit and watch their children eat happy meals of hamburgers and fries while sipping tea. Meanwhile, the children are sometimes entertained by a McDonald hostess, which represents a new position in McDonalds, found in some of its renovated restaurants. This is a part of a relatively new concept in McDonalds called the "Customer Care Program." Several employees, usually Chinese and female, cater to clientele by greeting them and wishing farewell to them at the front door, refilling their coffee cups, escorting them to seats, helping to carry their trays, translating when necessary, and holding conversations with customers who are seated by themselves.

According to the McDonalds general manager from Taiwan, the Chinese in New York have not been major patrons of corporate fast food restaurants. This is unlike other immigrant groups like Latinos and West Indians who have been big consumers of corporate fast food. The Asianized McDonalds in Chinatown Manhattan has been an explicit attempt to build a Chinese clientele--beginning with the younger generation to develop taste for "American" fast food. One manager said that prior to the cultural renovations most customers were not Chinese. Another manager said that the Chinese market has increased from 10 percent to 25 percent in 18 months.

From 1993 to 1994, McDonalds in Chinatown increased its sales by 40 percent. It makes approximately \$9,000 in sales per day and, in 1994, made three million dollars in sales revenue. It now belongs to a newly formed club in the company it is

owned by--the "40 percent club." Membership in this club is conditioned upon making profits of at least 40 percent. It earned profits, then, of around \$1.2 million. Part of profit making is keeping labor costs low. This McDonalds projected pulling in an average of a quarter million dollars per month during 1993, while maintaining labor costs at only about 12 percent (McDonald's meeting memo, 1993). Few other industries--especially labor intensive industries--have accomplished such a low expenditure in labor costs. Among unionized restaurants 72 percent of revenues go to payroll, on average, and in nonunion restaurants 29 percent goes to payroll (Miller, 1995).

Such extremely low labor costs are not necessarily industry wide (across the fast food industry). In this McDonalds they have been gained through greater efficiency of production and marketing: implementing the latest in technological developments, new management techniques, and local marketing strategies. What is unique about this restaurant is that it has managed to lower its labor costs consistently, with higher than industry average wages (for New York City)--at \$5.07 per hour for crew members--and with the addition of non-traditional jobs. These jobs, that of hostess in particular, are not directly involved in production or food service, but are, rather, involved in cultural production, entertainment, and fostering relations with clientele.

The renovations in McDonalds--both technical and aesthetic--include what is found in many McDonalds in immigrant neighborhoods--an ethnic matching of employees and clientele. The company hired a Taiwanese general manager who then hired a 100 member staff of about 60 percent Chinese who are mainly immigrants from Taiwan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and China. According to one of the managers, this

staff replaced a once largely American minority workforce. On payroll are 91 crew members and other non-salaried staff, and, eight salaried managers. One manager said that prior to the renovations, most employees "were Black, Spanish or American...not many Chinese."

A young Chinese woman and New York City college student, standing and smiling at the front entrance, visible from the outside, is just as much a part of the restaurant decor and ambiance as is the Chinese Arch she stands under, and the Chinese letters of the philosophy of life on the walls beside her that may not bear any relation to her own life philosophy in America. What is important is that she is Chinese, painting a Chinese face over what could be perceived as an intimidating McDonalds exterior. Here in Chinatown, she is welcoming a local Chinese residential population that has traditionally patronized the local Chinese restaurants, rather than American food. She is also welcoming an international tourist clientele (who have come to the neighboring "bargain hunter area") who can experience both familiar food and symbolic aspects of the Chinese culture.

The marketing strategies employed by McDonalds extend beyond the restaurant to the community at large. The general manager has become a kind of local politician in the community. He sits on local community and school boards. He gives donations to community functions. McDonalds has extensive involvement in the schools in Chinatown. It provides tours inside the restaurant for school classes, and birthday parties for children. The general manager said that "...we are tied into the school system with the elementary schools. I know all the principals, all the school teachers--not all of them but most of them." The general manager hands out McDonalds

"certificates of achievement" to those who have contributed to the community and to children who make achievements in school. In a multiplicity of ways, McDonalds, including its employees, have been involved with several community organizations.⁵ McDonalds community involvement has been reported in local newspapers such as Sing Tao Daily, The China Press and The United Journal. The general manager sits on the Advisory Board of the Chinatown Manpower Project and the local office of the U.S. Post Office.

Community involvement is part of a corporate strategy to foster community support and provide McDonalds with not only a favorable reputation but also a reputation as a local, neighborhood restaurant. The goal is to increase sales. As the general manager said, "All these relationships are built up. Good relationships. You are bound to have stronger foundations because people get to know you and you have better chances for them to come and spend their money here."⁶

McDonalds managers are rewarded and promoted for their community involvement. Letters received from the community are sent to the company office. Based on these letters, managers receive certificates, recognition pins and chances to

⁵ These include the Chinatown Manpower Project, Inc., the Chinatown YMCA, the local public schools (P.S.1, P.S.2, P.S.110, P.S.124, P.S.130) the Chinatown Chinese School, the Chinatown Transfiguration School, the New York City Transit Police, the Coalition of Concerned Medical Professions (CCMP), the Chinatown Head Start Program, the Chinatown Day Care Center, Immigrant Social Services, The Chinese American Planning Council, Inc., the Hoy Ping Hong Hing Association, the Chinese Methodist Center Corp., among others.

⁶ McDonalds' "Orange bowl," a large container filled with McDonalds orange drink that is often served at community functions has become a symbol of McDonalds local involvement. While the golden arches represent McDonalds overarching global omnipresence, the orange bowl has become a symbol of McDonalds local community presence.

win shares of McDonalds stock. The following is a typical letter written to the Chinatown McDonalds from community directors.

I wish to thank you for the generous donations and the use of your orange bowl at our first Open House. The event was a huge success. Many families visited our site with questions about our programs. The familiar sight of McDonalds was inviting and encouraged them to stay a little longer to learn more about the activities available in our YMCA. The added presence of Amy and yourself was very important to us. We are very fortunate to have McDonald's community support. We are looking forward to the use of the orange bowl again. It has proven to be a valuable part of our planning.

Such letters are often requested by managers from clients. What they represent is a particular relationship built up between the general manager and community director, where the letters' function--to promote the manager's reputation within the corporation--is implicitly acknowledged. Importantly, it seems, shared ethnicity among community leaders helps to shape these community relations which work to promote the McDonalds manager's reputation within the McDonalds company as much as it promotes McDonalds among community leaders.

Chinatown McDonalds also does direct local advertising through various means. Garbage cans with the McDonalds logo and address are placed in the near vicinity. Flyers with McDonalds food discounts (in Chinese language) are distributed by hand by McDonalds employees throughout the neighborhood, including at garment factory gates at the end of workshifts. Employees have even been assigned to knock on doors in the community to distribute "Value Meal" coupons. In the last year, McDonalds has started a delivery system throughout most of Manhattan (100th Street and below). Employees deliver \$10 minimum purchases to homes and businesses either by foot or by bicycle.

McDonalds has also contracted with the Chinatown Holiday Inn to provide Holiday Inn employees food vouchers (McDonald's meeting memo, 1993). As the McDonalds general manager said, "They can't afford to feed their employees so it is cheaper to do it through us." What is interesting here is the way corporations cooperate to minimize their costs of labor. The Holiday Inn restaurants are finer, more upscale and expensive, dining cuisine. With the food voucher program, the hotel and restaurant staff now must go to McDonalds after their workshifts to trade in their vouchers for cheeseburgers and cokes. Observers have focused on the "isolation" of Chinese from the American mainstream. McDonald's, however, tries to integrate Chinese into the mainstream by building a Chinese clientele for American fast food cuisine.

Burger King

Burger King, located across the street from McDonalds on Canal Street, ironically is a greater reflection of the diversity of job seekers and cultural changes occurring in this very area. While McDonalds strategies can be viewed as overt in the way it both responds to the community and attempts to change its tastes, Burger King simply reflects the neighborhood dynamics while absorbing some of its changes. The ownership is not corporate. Rather, the owner is Vietnamese, one of the many Vietnamese small scale shopkeepers of gift shops moving into the spatial fringes of Chinatown. The general manager is Colombian and claims that the "neighborhood has changed considerably...we are in Chinatown but this is really 'Little Vietnam.' It is not Chinese anymore. All these shops are owned by Vietnamese and also Korean."

This restaurant is smaller than McDonalds and does not command as great of an

aesthetic presence as does McDonalds. The block where Burger King is located is different from the block McDonalds is located on. It appears slightly more downscale. People in business suits shuffle by, but there are no pastry shops where they linger, and there are no banks nearby. Although it is only a few blocks away from McDonalds, significantly it is a few blocks West, farther away from the heart of Chinatown, and, it is on the North side of Canal Street. Burger King consists of a single floor at ground level, tucked in between small Vietnamese-owned shops with a sheltered, windowless interior (except for the front window). While dining inside it feels dark and dingy, cut off from natural light unlike in McDonalds where the tri-level glass exterior provides the whole restaurant with a feeling of fresh sunlight during the day. Burger King did undergo renovations recently, but at a much more modest level, spending approximately \$30,000, and, as the Burger King manager expressed it, "hired some Mickey Mouse construction guy to do it."

The owner, being a non-English speaking Vietnamese man who only owns a small "Gucci" shop besides Burger King, does not have the resources of capital to implement sophisticated and widescale marketing strategies like McDonalds. Neither can he afford to introduce new technologies that maximize production efficiency. Without them, Burger King becomes less and less able to compete with McDonalds which is gaining an increasing amount of the market share. The owner's shop is directly across the street from Burger King. This shop is even more lucrative than Burger King. Revenues from this shop helped finance the Burger King renovations. He became the Burger King owner a few years ago when he became friends with the previous owner, an Italian from Queens who proposed to go into partnership with him.

Now the Vietnamese is the exclusive owner as his Italian partner pulled out. Burger King has only 25 crew members and four managers. Wages, salaries, and opportunity structures reflect the small company ownership and declining business. The owner has had to cut costs by taking away health insurance benefits of managers and by being more stringent with employee wage increases. Some of the managers earn wages rather than salaries. In general, as a smaller, more independent and less profitable company, it offers relatively less (than McDonalds) to its crew members and managers in terms of wages, benefits, social activities, and opportunities for advancement. The difference in size, company resources and support, marketing strategies and sales and profits between Burger King and McDonalds in Chinatown affect the restaurant ambiance, the nature of the work, opportunity structures and labor composition.

The workforce at McDonalds

McDonalds in Chinatown is a restaurant that attracts a wide range of workers who are diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, national origin, language, place of residence, social class, age, and gender. (See Table 3.1 for cultural features of my respondents among this workforce.) Most employees, including managers, are first generation immigrants. They are from various different countries in East and South Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The McDonalds workforce reflects a *deliberate cultural marketing strategy* to target local Chinese and an international tourist clientele. It employs a majority Chinese (60-70 percent). Both crew members and managers speak various different languages. McDonalds also employs those who can speak other foreign languages including an African who speaks French, a Russian, Latin Americans, and West Indians. American Blacks and Latinos comprise a small minority

in this restaurant. A manager said that if "they speak French, German (or other foreign language), we hire them because it helps us translate to customers." What this manager calls a "United Nations" workforce reflects the kinds of people the "bargain hunter" area attracts.

The Chinese workforce is vastly diverse in terms of national origin, language and social class. They come from various countries including Taiwan, Malaysia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong. They speak various languages depending on where they come from including Malay and Chinese. Various dialects of Chinese are spoken among the Chinese employees including Cantonese, Mandarin, and Taiwanese.⁷ These employees often begin working soon after arrival in New York without speaking English but upon learning English find it is the only common language among them.

Most of the employees, including managers, do not live in Manhattan's Chinatown. The Chinese who do not live in the area mainly come from Flushing, Queens or Brooklyn--newer Chinatowns in New York City. While we know much about the way Chinatown residents seek jobs in Chinatown or outside of it, we know little about how Chinese who live outside of Chinatown seek jobs within it. The West Indians mainly come from a largely West Indian area of Brooklyn around Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park. The Russian employee comes from the Coney Island/Brighten Beach area. And the American Latinos and Blacks come from Queens, Brooklyn or the immediate surrounding area of the Lower East Side.

⁷ There are thousands of Chinese dialects. They are rooted in the same written language. Mandarin is the dialect spoken by the majority in Greater China (interview with the McDonalds general manager). Northern Chinese and Taiwanese speak Mandarin. Southern Chinese speak Cantonese (Kinkead, 1992).

Social class diversity among the workforce in this restaurant reflects the various different reasons for working, and aims, in the fast food industry. Among employees who come from families who have depended on the informal sector, corporate fast food

Table 3.1
Chinatown McDonalds
Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents

Level of Job	Language	Ethnicity	National Origin
General Manager	Chinese (3 dialects) and English	Chinese	Taiwan
Assistant Manager	Malay, Chinese, and English	Chinese	Malaysia
Crew member	Chinese and English	Chinese	Taiwan
Crew member	Chinese and learning English	Chinese	Mainland China
Crew member	Chinese and learning English	Chinese	Mainland China
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Honduras (2nd generation)
Crew member	Russian and English	Russian	Russia
Crew member	French and English	African	Togo, Africa

chains represent an opportunity to join the mainstream economy. Fast food jobs are cleaner, safer, and connected to the mainstream economy and culture. The paycheck, while low, may be guaranteed, and the work is easier than factory work. Among children of parents who work in Chinese enterprises (such as garment factories and restaurants), such as Catrina, the fast food restaurant is a place where she can have a flexible schedule in order to concentrate on studies and where she is not subject to grueling, long hours of work. These are luxuries her parents could not afford as new immigrants. The general manager from Taiwan said this about the children of

working class Chinese immigrants,

The kids, when they go into a real hard working environment they can't handle it. Because they have parents, family here. For most of us that came in 15-20 years ago, we came alone. We didn't have anything to fall back on. We had no choices about working hard to make a living. To support ourselves. The kids now, they don't need that. A hard working environment, 12-14 hours a day working. They don't need that. What they want to do is make some more experiences. They want to get to know more and different people. They want to make a little spending money on the side. That is why we are getting all these people. They want to learn something in their first job. By living in the community they know Chinese restaurant already is a very difficult job.

Comparing the factory conditions to McDonalds, another manager said that "the factory conditions are very dirty. Some there is no air conditioner. It is no good for them." Other high school students choose this work for financial reasons. According to fast food managers, children who work in the Chinese factories can "make a lot of money." "In one week you can make about \$200 for the high school student. But the factory hours are long hours. In here you cannot work long hours. Those under 18 cannot work more than four hours with a half hour break. This is the law and we have to follow it."

This manager implies that McDonalds employment develops a new work ethic among employees, a work ethic that inspires upward mobility, especially among second-generation Chinese. As she says,

After college, they want to find a job five days per week and after four hours have a break. They probably want to find a job in a bank. They don't want to work in a factory. If they work in a factory, they will keep going to work in the factory because in the factory you can make a lot of money. When you feel you have made a lot of money you are not going to go back to school. But here you work hard. You have a little money. But you will go to school. Because you say I don't want to stay in McDonalds all my life. Because you get more [money]..here you choose to go to a higher level when you work here, for a high school student.

Many Chinese workers are recent immigrants and their employment at McDonalds is not just a part time, flexible job. Some view it as a means to gain experience in the mainstream economy. Among recent immigrants, McDonalds is a place to learn English and a place with an opportunity for advancement in the fast food hierarchy, and, hopefully, to gain experience and connections that will be useful in the labor market at large. The story of Tina is a good illustration of this.

Tina has been in New York for five months. She came to join her husband who has been living in Flushing for 11 years and working informally as a chef in a Chinese restaurant near where he lives. After her husband obtained legal status here, he went to China to find a wife (Tina). This was three years ago. Tina was finally able to come after the appropriate paper work was finalized here in New York. Tina is the daughter of factory workers and worked as a television repair person in China. When she arrived here, her husband, who does not speak English, encouraged her to get out of the "Chinese environment" and go to the "foreign environment." It is in the foreign environment where she could learn English, gain mainstream skills, a guaranteed paycheck, safer conditions, and health related benefits. A friend from the McDonalds Chinatown told her about the job, so she applied and was hired immediately, despite her lack of English.

She knew about U.S. fast food in China. There was a Kentucky Fried Chicken in her native city of Shanghai, but she never would have considered working there because it was a job for the "poor" or "jobless." McDonalds is different here, according to Tina. It is a big company, she can learn English and she plans to become a manager after mastering English so she will be on salary and get health benefits for herself and husband. These are preconditions for starting a family here in New York. Tina also points out that she would only work at this McDonalds in Chinatown, in particular, even though it means a one hour to a one-and-a-half hour commute each way every day she works. There is a McDonalds in Flushing, but it is not a consideration for her because it does not employ Chinese workers.

Tina is typical in her preference for working in Manhattan's Chinatown and not in any other McDonalds restaurant. The restaurants in the "new" Chinatowns are not Asianized and they do not, by and large, employ Chinese. Nor do Chinese customers go to these restaurants in these other Chinatowns. The trip to Manhattan, for Tina,

was a first step out of the ethnic community of Flushing. Manhattan's Chinatown represents a place outside of Flushing, where she can fit in and function in her native language and culture. Her employment at McDonalds in Manhattan's Chinatown is a place where she can work alongside other Chinese, some of whom speak her native language and where her ethnicity, independent of particular skills and resources, has value in the mainstream. At the same time, it provides her the opportunity to gain mainstream skills, including speaking English.

Amy, on the other hand, is from a middle class, professional family. Her parents view McDonalds employment as "not good enough." She is Chinese and is from Malaysia. She started out in McDonalds as her first job three-and-a-half years ago as a crew member and has since moved up to assistant manager. She lives with her parents in Brooklyn in an area populated by Chinese. Both parents have export businesses that deal mainly with Singapore and Malaysia. She is a college student studying business and got the job through a college friend from China. She does not work for financial reasons, and her father "does not allow her to work." She started working to gain freedom from a restrictive household. As she says,

My girlfriend told me to work. She said everybody, every student in the United States has a part-time job. Only you don't have it. She said do you want to hang out together after work? I said how can I hang out together when I just came to this country? My father doesn't allow me to go out. She said if you work at McDonalds we can hang out after work. I always opened, like 5:30 in the morning. And after 1:30, I hung out on the street with my friend, going to the movies and the like. After 6:00 my father would pick me up.

She remains in her job because she finds the experience is helpful for her business studies. Unlike Tina whose earnings go toward supporting her household, Amy spends her money on school and traveling and plans to go to Europe next year.

The non-Chinese workforce is ethnically, and, nationally varied to fit the restaurant's aim for a "United Nations" staff that can effectively attract and communicate with Chinatown's international tourists. This aim has also resulted in a workforce that varies by social class. The ethnic diversity, here, reflects a larger class hierarchy of new immigrant groups in New York City. Elena, a second-generation Honduran, does not represent a typical employee at this McDonalds which tends to be either Chinese or middle class, or, both. She is a Latina-American and poor. She lives in Astoria, Queens, with her mother who is too sick to work, and two siblings. Her father is deceased. She got the job through tremendous persistence. She often visited Chinatown for shopping and would go to McDonalds to eat. She applied for a job and as she says, "they said they would get back to me and they never did. So I kept calling and calling to show them I was really interested." Finally they gave her an interview and hired her. Typical of Americans (or those who have grown up in this country), she works outside of her neighborhood in order to escape peer pressure. As she says, "in my neighborhood a lot of people know me and they would come in there thinking I would give them free food, play around and really when I work I don't like to play. I just like to work...try to impress the managers."

Similar to Tina, Elena comes to Chinatown McDonalds to escape her neighborhood, to get into a different environment which promises upward mobility. To Elena, the other McDonalds employees are her "associates", not those in her neighborhood as she says, "I wouldn't hang out with them "24-7"⁸ because they are not

⁸ "24-7" means a 24 hour per day, seven day a week schedule. When used like this it simply means "not all the time."

really about anything." But while Tina escapes the dead-end plight of the Chinese community of Flushing, Elena is escaping a neighborhood youth culture where her peers deal drugs, don't go to college and "are not about anything." They both come from relatively poor families.

Shakil, 25 years old and from the Ivory Coast, is also atypical in that he is one of few Africans in this McDonalds. Yet, he is more typical of this workforce in terms of his middle class background. He is also typical of African immigrants in general in New York, who comprise the highest educated immigrant groups. Shakil has a Masters degree. He immigrated to New York alone five years ago, leaving a "lucrative business" back home. He planned to start a business in New York City but has been unsuccessful. He works at McDonalds because of financial necessity. He speaks only French fluently. He got an entry-level job in this McDonalds because of his foreign language skill. He was hired off the street without an internal connection. He plans to work at McDonalds indefinitely and feels that he can't return to his country of Togo because he can't face his family after being a failure in New York. Shakil lives in Brooklyn.

Ivan, from Russia, has also been hired like Shakil; because of his foreign qualities including his ability to speak Russian. Ivan, like Shakil, is from a middle class background. He was hired like Ivan because of his language skills. While having a staff that can speak a multitude of languages can be interpreted as functional—in terms of having the ability to communicate to international tourists from anywhere—it could also be considered a novelty. After nearly five months of working as a front cashier at McDonalds, Ivan had spoken Russian only twice. And Shakil is not assigned to tasks

that require communication with the customers. But since Shakil is black, then his presence contributes to a racially diverse image the company would like to project among a mainly white, Asian and Hispanic workforce-- without having to hire American blacks. His presence may also be considered to contribute to attracting the black shoppers in the area who come to buy jewelry.

Ivan tried to get a job near his own neighborhood in "Little Odessa" without success. He finally applied for a job at McDonalds in Brooklyn which is owned by the same company that owns McDonalds Chinatown. He was hired at the Brooklyn restaurant to work in the Manhattan Chinatown restaurant, perhaps, as a response to the growing number of Eastern Europeans in the area who come to buy cheap souvenirs from the nearby Vietnamese shops. He commutes 90 minutes each way. Ivan, Shakil, and Elena are similar in that they were hired without internal connections. Ivan has been in New York for two-and-a-half years. While living in the Russian community in Brooklyn he did not learn English fluently. He believes that working at McDonalds is helping his English language skills. His father is a designer/architect, a draftsman of museums and restaurants, but he cannot find work in New York City. His mother works in the home. They emigrated for political reasons. Ivan aspires to continue with McDonalds as a career, "to go as high as possible." He has deviated from the Russian immigrant culture by working at McDonalds. His friends find it strange. Most of them work in traditional ethnic enterprise in car services, taxis and such. It is unlikely that Ivan will start a Russian niche into this McDonalds among Russians. He doesn't bother to refer friends. Ivan's attraction to McDonalds is partly due to his interest in food and cooking when other kinds of restaurants will not hire

him.

The general manager of the Chinatown McDonalds is also from a middle class/professional background. He has been in the food service business for 16 years and has been with McDonalds for nearly three years (since the renovations). He is from Taiwan and came to the U.S. to study mechanical engineering at the graduate level. His introduction to the food business was as a student when he worked in a Chinese restaurant as a busboy, waiter, bartender, and dishwasher. After graduating he went to Cincinnati to manage his sister's Chinese restaurant for three years. He then opened his own Chinese restaurant which was very successful and which he kept for eight years. He became a nationally known chef. His recipes were published in national magazines and he appeared several times on NBC television. He then joined Kentucky Fried Chicken and after a few years, he was recruited to join McDonalds in Chinatown. The transition from the independent Chinese restaurant industry to McDonalds has meant to this manager a step up, or, as he put it, "Coming out of a little league to a big league." His aim is to climb the McDonalds job ladder. He next aspires to be a supervisor of four or five different McDonalds restaurants. The other managers are from Malaysia and China. There is one West Indian manager who is the only Black manager.

The workforce at Burger King

The workforce at Burger King is also diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, language ability, age, gender, and social class. Unlike at McDonalds, however, Chinese workers are in the minority. (See Table 3.2 for cultural features of my respondents among this workforce.) The majority of all employees, including

managers, are Latino. Out of a staff of 30 (managers and crew members included) Burger King employs slightly more than 50 percent first and second generation Latino--from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Venezuela. There are only five Chinese employees, a few South Asian employees (from Bangladesh), a handful of black Americans and a couple of employees from the West Indies.

Most employees do not live in Chinatown. But, some of them live closer to Chinatown than the Chinese workers at McDonalds who commute from Queens or Brooklyn. The Colombians, Venezuelans, and Dominicans tend to reside on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New Jersey, Harlem, or Manhattan. The South Asians live in New Jersey or in Queens. The few black Americans are from near-by neighborhoods such as the Lower East Side.⁹

Importantly, all employees in this restaurant speak English--the only required language for employment. There are two exceptions, however, including an older woman from China. She obtained her job because her children came into the restaurant and "begged" the manager to hire her. She, along with a Spanish speaker from Venezuela who got his job through an immigrant connection, are assigned to the most undesirable work in the restaurant--cleaning the dining room, lounge, and bathroom and other auxiliary tasks.

⁹ There seems to be a trend for South Americans who have settled in the Delancy Street area to move to New Jersey after settling down with a family and children. Some of my respondents live there. Yet, recently, due to increasing economic hardships, some of them, including the manager, has moved to Queens with his wife and two children.

Table 3.2

**Chinatown Burger King
Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents**

Level of Job	Language	Ethnicity	National Origin
General Manager	Spanish and English	Latino	Colombia
Assistant Manager	Spanish and English	Latino	Puerto Rico (2nd generation)
Crew member	Chinese and English	Chinese	Mainland China
Crew member	Chinese and English	Chinese	Mainland China
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Puerto Rico
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Venezuela
Crew member	Spanish	Latino	Venezuela
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Dominican Republic
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Dominican Republic
Crew member	Bengali and English	South Asian	Bangladesh

Like some of the McDonalds employees, some of the employees at Burger King view their jobs as a stepping stone into mainstream society, or a place to gain valuable work experience for the labor market at large. They tend to be the more recent immigrants. Gabriel, the Venezuelan, for example, is 28 years old, and came to New York three years ago from Venezuela, alone, to join his brother. He speaks only Spanish fluently, and supports his American-born wife and child on \$5.00 per hour. His only work alternative, as he says, is to work with his brother in electronics in the informal sector for \$3.75 per hour. He has been working at this Burger King for three years. In Caracas, Venezuela, he worked for a Cuban owned hamburger chain for

three years. He got his Burger King job through an immigrant connection. He commutes from New Jersey to Chinatown every day except Sunday, working 40 hours per week. He has aspirations to move into management. Fast food management, in Gabriel's case, is an attractive alternative considering his exclusive work experience in fast food, his lack of English language skills, and lack of formal education or training in anything else. While the first assistant management salary would be low here, about 7.50 per hour, it is still more than what he makes now, or could hope to make as a crew member in the next several years. There is also a possibility for health benefits. Gabriel, however, will not be considered for a manager job until he speaks English fluently. Because of his language deficiency, he is relegated to dining room tasks of wiping tables, cleaning the floor and taking out garbage.

Raul, on the other hand, who is from a middle class background, does not aspire to a future in fast food. He was born in Puerto Rico, but has been in New York for most of his life and is 17 years old. He lives with his mother (who is a computer programmer) and his father (who is a psychologist). Raul plans to be a lawyer, or join the police force.

Raul and Gabriel represent extreme cases. For Raul, living in a stable middle income family, with college aspirations, working at Burger King is not because he "needs the money" but rather because "it is boring at home." His parents encourage him to work (as a learning experience) and he puts in about 20 hours per week, spending his money on clothing and movies. It is a temporary expedient, a "fun" place to work, but not a place to plan a future. Managers are perceived by Raul as the hardest workers with the most responsibility, yet they are underpaid. Further, for

Raul, like most Americans and long time immigrants, fast food employment is considered of low status, an embarrassment, so much so, that these employees refuse to wear their uniforms on their way to and from work. New Yorkers are used to seeing various workers in uniforms on the city streets, buses or subways. We see people in UPS and Federal Express uniforms making their way home, construction workers wearing their tool belts, and doctors in scrubs. But we rarely see a fast food uniform outside of the fast food restaurant.

Jesus is a more typical case at this restaurant in terms of both ethnicity and class. He is 17 years old, a second generation Puerto Rican/Dominican, living with his cousin on the Lower East Side. His mother, also a fast food employee (at Burger Boy) cannot support him and his sisters. As he says, "...my mom, she can't deal with me and my sisters and all that...so I be needing more money for books, and clothing and all that." His real father is in the Dominican Republic, and his stepfather works off and on, off the books. He got a job at Burger King through a cousin who was quitting her job at Burger King. Similar to Raul, Jesus has no aspirations to become a fast food manager. He plans to pursue college to study science or play football.

Stephen, 15 years old, who came to New York from the Dominican Republic five years ago, is also a typical case in this restaurant. He got the job through his cousin who was a manager and works to supplement the household income (his parents and younger brothers) because "they don't make too much money." He lives in Harlem, and commutes nearly one hour to avoid the embarrassment of being seen working in fast food by his peers. When I asked him "Why do your peers react that way?" he responded:

"I don't know. I was at a party and a friend of mine works at another Burger King. They began to make fun of him. They were like 'can I get you a burger please?' He got embarrassed and left... They act like they are customers and the guy who needs to get their food is like their slave."

Stephen, similar to Jesus and Raul, aspires to a career for something beyond fast food.

He plans to go to college to play baseball. He does not consider fast food management as a possibility. He says his cousin (who is a manager) "works too hard and too late at night."

Catrina, 17 years old, is of similar social class, but is from China and has lived in Manhattan's Chinatown for most of her life. She is typical of the other Chinese workers at Burger King who tend to be from the neighborhood and have obtained jobs through each other. Her parents are factory and restaurant workers, but encourage her to go to college. She has no plans to pursue a management position as this job is just part-time and temporary. The general manager, Roberto, is Colombian. His family emigrated to New York when he was a child and settled in Queens. The other managers are Chinese, second generation Puerto Rican, and Jamaican. The Colombian was trained in a vocational high school in aircraft mechanics. He obtained licenses in Airplane mechanics, avionics and aircraft repair. Upon graduating from high school, several major airlines went out of business and job prospects plummeted. He fell into fast food and stayed with it. In contrast to the McDonalds manager, he plans to eventually get out of fast food and start an independent restaurant. Part of this is due to the lack of internal job ladders at this Burger King compared with McDonalds in Chinatown. Since Burger King is owned by an individual, rather than a corporation or company, there are virtually no positions that extend beyond the restaurant itself. And

because it is a small restaurant with only four managers, the opportunity for others to become a manager is minimal.

Recruitment and hiring processes

Many studies have examined labor force trends in respect to the employment of particular groups of people. But few studies have examined the *social processes* involved in recruiting and selecting a workforce. I have found that fast food managers have considerable autonomy in selecting a workforce. This makes it important to examine the ways in which they go about selecting their employees.

Burger King and McDonalds vary in their hiring processes and criteria. In both restaurants, however, social and ethnic networks play a strong role in recruiting employees. Finding out about a job through a friend, or being recommended by a friend, does not guarantee an applicant a job, however. The most basic criteria is willingness to work at low wages, with a schedule that can change daily. A Burger King manager said that he hires those who

are willing to work any hours. If they make themselves completely available. A lot of people come in and they can only work a few hours at certain times. They are the ones we can't really use because then when they come here they give you a hard time with the schedule. Availability really. People who can work any hours, who can work later, or come earlier.

It also means employing people who will work efficiently, and who will complement the corporate public image of "friendly" and "courteous" service. As I pointed out in Chapter two, this usually means emphasizing characteristics of applicants such as attitude, demeanor and appearance. Hiring managers in Chinatown named various subjective features as criteria for hiring. At McDonalds, these features seem to be more standardized. The McDonalds general manager told me that,

We look for four different categories: working standard, adaptability (if they are able to learn the McDonalds system because it is new to most of them), dependability, and their motivation (if they are interested in developing themselves).

What is important is that these categories are left to the managers' subjective interpretation. The subjective nature of hiring criteria provides a partial explanation for patterns of hiring along ethnic lines in Chinatown. It provides the space to legitimize ethnic hiring and the freedom for managers do so. It is not that managers are not conscious of the process that is occurring, and especially the outcome. Rather, they need a form in which to express the process in a way that legitimizes it to the public and to themselves (and in this case, to me, as the interviewer). But on a deeper level, they are being honest to themselves. Characteristics of attitude, appearance, demeanor, and the like carry varying subjective understandings. One's own understanding of what is a good attitude or what should someone look like is continuously being transformed and shaped by surrounding influences, experiences and pressures. The manager in this sense, has his/her own ideas that may carry certain cultural or ethnic understandings.

The fast food manager is also constantly intermediating among corporate demands, bureaucratic standards, particularities of local clientele, and characteristics of employees. At McDonalds, management is responding to a pre-defined cultural strategy and is more deliberate in its quest for particular ethnic, racial, or national groups. At Burger King, in contrast, hiring seems to be less of a top down strategy, done more within networks, but also left up to individual managers making hiring decisions autonomously.

Manager control, autonomy, and the selection of workers

Recruitment and hiring processes and the way managers select a workforce is partly rooted in their ideas about how able they are able to manage this workforce. Having a workforce that is malleable, dependable and presentable to the public means having the power and ability to shape such a workforce. There is a constant shaping, a constant molding that occurs in the restaurant workplace. Managing a diverse workforce in a corporate organization is often highly stressful and requires balancing many elements that are constantly changing.

Management styles generally vary among restaurants as well as among individual managers. What is clear in Chinatown is that a shift has occurred in management emphasis that reflects the emphasis on service work, interacting with, catering to and entertaining clientele. New management strategies focus on *subtle*, more personal methods of control in contrast to the authoritarian kind of management that does not take into account an employee's feelings or reasons for conduct. These methods are apparent in both McDonalds and Burger King in Chinatown where they have developed various strategies including "crew empowerment," "teamwork" and "People on the Leading Edge. The attempt is to build company loyalty in a "positive" way.

McDonalds in Chinatown has introduced a store-wide management system that emphasizes "crew empowerment" and teamwork. The intention is to involve crew members in decision making and making them feel like they are participating members of a "team." Personal conflicts in among McDonalds workers are resolved in

counseling sessions. Teamwork is built through company sponsored social gatherings such as "United Nations" potluck dinners, group trips to amusement parks, and McDonald employee sport teams that play in community leagues. And, the company recognizes its workers for good performance with "Employee of the Week" plaques placed on the wall.

At Burger King, on the other hand, there is no system wide system of management. A manager with several years of experience in Burger King commented on different styles of management and Burger King's recent adoption of a more positive management style called "People at the Leading Edge."

Some of them (managers) are just quiet and they don't even talk to anybody. They don't really relate to the employees in any way. Others are like little Hitlers. They take rules with an iron fist. That is one of the main courses in Burger King called "People at the Leading Edge." They teach you how to deal with employees and customers which is the hardest part of the job. Learning how to do paper work, equipment steps, that's what you did in high school anyway, that is easy. But to teach someone management skills...one of the things I read was the one minute manager. It is a tiny book, like made for a 3rd grader. But it is actually used in all the...it is recommended by ATT and IBM. They give it to their managers to read. Big fat words and it just teaches people...like when you are going to scold someone you are supposed to give them their good points and then tell them what they did wrong. You never wait more than a day. You tell them immediately. It is that type of thing. You don't hold it inside of yourself. It has to do a lot with stress management. But it is a very very simple book.

But rather than a store-wide system such as "crew empowerment in McDonalds" the Burger King system seems to be geared toward the individual manager. This provides a good opportunity to point to some examples of how the individual manager acts autonomously in the hiring process and, in so doing, exhibits individual characteristics and preferences. Part of managerial control in a service organization is built upon familiarity, the sharing of common understandings and ways

of being, even when the management-worker relation is antagonistic. Such familiarity can be built upon ethnic affinities. When asked about such hiring practices some management responses tended to be contradictory, especially when pressed about what in particular made them hire an applicant. As one Burger King manager, Julia, a second generation Puerto Rican, responded when asked what are the specific traits she looks for when someone comes in to interview for a job,

First of all, I tell them a joke. I usually see if they have a sense of humor because you've got to have a sense of humor in this store...I look at their work record first of all. How long they had their last job. Why did they leave. I see the way they fill out their applications. Some people say they need money. At least you are honest. I have some people who come and say "Oh because of the warm atmosphere and the wonderful food and I want to learn how to communicate with people." That is balderdash. I mean, you guys need money. Point blank. So I look for honesty. I look for warmth in them, their character. It is okay if you worked at McDonalds and you got fired because you got in a fight with the manager. I don't care if you are the lousiest looking person on the face of the earth. If I put you in uniform you are going to look all right. Then you are hired. I just sit down and have a personal conversation with someone. The application is really not that impressive to me... A guy came in and I was looking at his application. He was from Puerto Rico. I said you are from Puerto Rico? He said yah. I said, you are hired immediately. He thought that was the funniest thing he has ever heard. The owner comes up to him and goes do you have any experience in the service business. I said, what does that have to do with anything...he can learn. That is why we have a training program. The fact is he laughed at my joke and that is enough. And we need more Spanish speaking people in the store... A very attractive looking guy. Women like that...I think appearance is very important...in the morning I had on eye liner, eye shadow, lip stick, my hair was all up in some attire. My shirt didn't have all these stains on it.

Laughing at a personal joke in a job interview can imply an emotional affinity which could translate into a greater ability for emotional management--how to know how to make a cashier smile, for instance. Or how to motivate the crew to enthusiastically entertain children. This is not to say that ethnic affinity is a prerequisite. Nor that there is any particular cultural way of knowing. Rather, that it

may simply be one common identity that managers in some cases feel comfortable with and are able to use. We may ask, did she hire the Puerto Rican because he was Puerto Rican? Or did she hire him because he laughed at her joke? What is certain is that he laughed because he was Puerto Rican. He laughed because they shared a particular common identity which made the content of the joke absurd. Absurd because the literal translation of the statement is against corporate policy and to simply make such a statement must be in a context of some kind of familiarity and trust. It must be safe. Second, to say it in the first place, meant she intended to hire him, and that broke down any professional barriers to a relaxed setting where he felt comfortable to laugh. Third, the whole notion of hiring a Puerto Rican because he is Puerto Rican is not a standard societal practice, for Puerto Ricans are a disadvantaged population and have been increasingly discriminated against by employers in New York City's labor market. We may ask, would a joke like this have had the same affect between a white employer and white applicant? Would it have had the same effect between an American black employer and an American black applicant? We could safely assume that a White manager would never even have admitted such a joke to me in the first place.

Some managers are more explicit about ethnic hiring. As the Burger King general manager from Colombia said,

I think what happens is that people tend to hire within their own races. I think I tend to hire more Spanish. The black manager, he tends to hire more blacks....if you go across the street, there are mostly Chinese because the managers are mainly Chinese.

Yet, this process, according to managers, also seems reciprocal where applicants seem

to seek out their own ethnic group. As this same manager says,

I know the Spanish people seem to come to you because they feel there is a camaraderie. They won't go to the Chinese manager. They will always come to me or the other girl who is Puerto Rican. And the Black people won't go to the Chinese guy. They will go to the Black guy. And over there where everybody is Chinese they do have more Chinese employees and more Chinese customers.

Race, ethnicity, social relations and work ethics

Recruitment and hiring practices are also shaped by workplace dynamics among different ethnic and racial groups. These dynamics affect and shape perceptions and attitudes of these groups resulting in preferences and often biases in hiring, promotions, and wage hikes. Workplace dynamics here, are referred to as the social relations among crew members, management and clientele. Because they occur in the restaurant workplace, they are locally specific, yet they are affected by external factors, such as cultural attitudes, perceptions, or work ethics employees bring to the workplace. Thus, social relations are shaped both by the demands of fast food employment and the characteristics employees bring with them that can be associated with any number of factors including ethnic tradition, social class, gender ideology, wider youth culture. They are also shaped by employers' perceptions of different ethnic and racial groups concerning work ethics and aptitudes for performing certain functions in the store.

Employers' perceptions are locally specific in that they vary from store to store. Yet, they are also individually specific, in that they vary even from manager to manager in the same store. What they verbally express in terms of ethnic, racial or gender differences is grounded in their experiences--what they have seen, experienced and interpreted as happening in the workplace. While these interpretations may be

affected by prior established ideologies or prejudices, it is also important to examine what they say about their own experiences in the restaurant.

Among four managers--Taiwanese and Malaysian at McDonalds and Puerto Rican and Colombian at Burger King, they all say that the "Orientals" are hard workers and highly motivated. Yet, they differ in how they interpret their motivations for working and how their style of working fits into the organization. At Burger King, there are only about five to six Chinese employees. While one is a manager and male, the rest are crew members and female. The Chinese, according to these employers, tend to have rigid schedules determined by family demands for school studies and being at home. Because Burger King has a smaller staff than McDonalds, it tends to be more demanding on its workers, especially in terms of being flexible with their schedule, like working beyond their shift, coming in early, etc. according to the pace of business for the day. As the Colombian manager put it, "the Chinese are all study, study, study...but, the Asians are the hardest workers. Less complainers. They will do anything...anything at all...they are the nicest ones." Some managers tend to view this more critically than others. The Puerto Rican manager views the Chinese rigidness as more problematic. As she said,

"I don't know why the oriental girls never volunteer for extra work. They don't want to come in early. They don't want to stay late. They never want to work on their day off. Like today we were short handed. She came in (Latino) and two oriental girls came in. She (Latino) was supposed to start at 3:00 and she started at 12:00. I told her I need you and she came in. The two oriental girls sat down, had lunch on their day off and then they didn't want to work. They had lunch on the store. I don't think it is because of the nationality. But I see the difference in them. All of them are like that. Every single one of them. And they are constantly late. And they want to go home early. They don't want to work till it is dark outside because their parents want them at home. With the Spanish girls they call their parents up and say, listen I am working

late and that is it."

Amy, the McDonalds assistant manager said, there are "White, Spanish and Chinese." In explaining the differences between the way these groups work, she says that,

The Chinese people just work. They are quiet. They just work, and go home and punch out. The Spanish people they love to sing. They love to talk with the people. If they are quiet you say what happened, what happened. They will do something and they are laughing, laughing, singing... and the White people...I don't know...

In general, at Burger King, since the Chinese represent a minority of the workforce, then management tends to categorize them as a group, distinct from other groups. They are often labeled together as "Chinese" or "oriental" by the non-Chinese at Burger King. Since they are a minority group in this restaurant they tend to "stick together" and according to managers, exhibit similar characteristics.

Part of this difference in perception in the same store can be explained by the managers' different responsibilities. It cannot be explained by antagonism between the two managers as they have been working together for several years, following each other from restaurant to restaurant. The Puerto Rican manager came up through the ranks as a cashier, then moved to head cashier, and then became an assistant manager. Because of this track, she may be more attentive to and focused on the service relations between cashiers and clientele, more attentive to the subtle interactions that occur. Pointing out the differences between Chinese, Latinos, and American blacks, she says that the "oriental" girls are friendly with the oriental customers, but they are not so friendly with the "English" customers. The Colombian manager, on the other hand, thinks of the restaurant as a "come and go" kind of place, where speed of service is

much more important than the friendliness of the cashiers.

Moreover, as an assistant manager her responsibilities include making sure the store is appropriately staffed for the day which sometimes means making calls to employees' homes. She is required to be more aware of the availability of the employees. The Colombian manager is more focused on the overall operation of the store, including food preparation work in the back, where he did his crew work. Also, being an American minority woman and single mother, the Puerto Rican manager seems to have a greater sensitivity to both women and minorities. It is not that this sensitivity would generally lead to a different perception of gender or racial differences, but rather, this sensitivity has become a part of the way she communicates to her staff and the kind of role model she is. Such sensitivity, I believe, becomes a reciprocal process, cultivating good and bad work performance. What she perceives then, is actual, but embedded in the social relations she cultivates. Her perception of American black women also stands in stark contrast to the Colombian manager. For example, he says that "a lot of girls have a chip on their shoulder... usually the Spanish and black Americans...who are eager to work but always seem to be angry..." and who "talk back to the customer when the customer gets cross with them" and "will fight back" (while the Chinese girls are not like that). She says, about these same girls, on the other hand,

We have three girls in here all from the same neighborhood. They are from Harlem. They are terrific. They are black. There is one particular girl. She'll say "Hi, welcome to Burger King, may I take your order please. Every single customer. And every time she gives the order she reads it back to them. She goes thank you for eating at Burger King and have a nice day." People love her. They get such a kick out of it.

Her interpretation of the source of any kind of aggressive behavior in the restaurant exhibited by minority women, also differs from that of the Colombian manager. The anger, the "chip on their shoulder" he refers to implies to her a reaction to the general social conditions women have been subjected to and are resisting and fighting here in the restaurant workplace. As she sees it, women tend to want to be managers before men do and they are more aggressive about it, and exhibit this aggressiveness toward management. The aggressiveness, then, is directed toward management who they perceive to have formed a prejudicial attitude against them. This, in itself, works to limit their opportunity. The ambition to become a manager stems from general social conditions. As she says, "I just think women are tired of being suppressed...we are tired of being underpaid and overworked. Tired of people thinking we are just housewives." In this sense, it seems, that men tend to undervalue the work itself, as a low paying occupation with minimal opportunity structures, with less ambition to move up. When the guys refuse to come to work because the Nicks are playing, the girls "are like get a life, we are missing All My Children, you don't see us complaining." But it could also be interpreted as women simply being more dependent on these jobs, in a material sense, especially those with dependents to support such as single mothers.

It is important to understand how this immigrant male manager may perceive the behavior and attitude of a working poor American black woman differently from an American minority woman manager. This perception may be based on what he experiences in the restaurant workplace. But it is also shaped by direct and subtle forms of communication that take place in the managerial-worker relation. When

hostility reigns, it is often perpetuated through prior established perceptions and prejudices. These perceptions--that may characterize an individual, or small group--often become generalized to a whole race, ethnicity or gender. This affects recruitment and hiring practices as well as opportunity structures in discriminatory ways (Steinberg, 1995).

While different managers have different perceptions, they also have different amounts of power in the restaurant. What is also important is who has the final decisional power within the organization regarding hiring and promotions. In the fast food restaurant, it is usually the general manager. The Colombian general manager, in the case of Chinatown Burger King, also has more autonomy and authority because of the owners language barrier. While the Vietnamese owner is generally present at the store site, he doesn't speak English, nor Spanish, nor any of the Chinese dialects. Thus, hiring, firing and promotional decisions are delegated to the general manager.

In this sense, we could expect that the general manager's preferences to result in a tendency to hire immigrants over American minorities--especially American blacks. This becomes clearer by looking at his perception of the differences in work ethics among various groups, including immigrants and Americans. As he says,

The Asians are the hardest workers. The Whites want better. They will not stay in this job. They always want better. They always strive for better jobs. The Spanish are content with just making their money. The Blacks really just want to get it over with, make their money and go home. Their spending is more toward recreational, going out. A lot of the girls just want their money to do their hair, their nails. And get home. Go out for the weekend. It is really strange how the cultures change. I think the Black Americans, if they don't change their attitudes they are really going to affect the job market. They are going to be pushed out of the job market. Right now I think the Spanish are running a close second as the largest minority.

Immigrants in general, he says, including South and East Asians, are hard working because "they come from lives that are difficult for them. When they come here it is a lot easier, it is a lot nicer and they know the more they work the better they are."

Also, they tend to work harder because they have "more fear."

He also distinguishes between American-born and foreign-born blacks. The Haitians and Jamaicans, he claims, are different. "They come here to work." What is interesting, however, is that managers always seem to attempt to explain these group differences. While the differences are considered cultural, in that they are particular to different groups, there are also social explanations. This manager, for example, while he says the black Americans "seem to want things handed to them more" he tries to reason it out. "It could be a lot of preaching that is going on--America owes, America owes them...They feel they are being pushed down because they are not getting good jobs." This is important, because he is distinguishing differences within race by social and cultural factors, and therefore dismissing any innate racial factors.

Philip Kasinitz, a sociologist who has also examined employment practices that concern black Americans, showed in Redhook, New York, how employers distinguish among black workers on the basis of various features including national origin (Kasinitz, 1996). Others, passionately claim that the practice of distinguishing among black workers today does not mean that racial discrimination does not exist. Rather, as Malcolm Gladwell articulated "It is the means by which discrimination against American blacks is given one last, vicious twist: I am not so shallow as to despise you for the color of your skin, because I have found people *your* color that I like. Now I can despise you for who you are" [Emphasis added] (Gladwell, 1996).

This Burger King manager is also attentive to conflict and antagonism among the American and foreign blacks, especially how foreign blacks perceive American blacks. He pointed out how a Jamaican employee told him how they despise the black Americans because black Americans give them a bad name. While everyone tends to group blacks as one, this Jamaican employee feels that they (Jamaicans), as opposed to Americans, are much harder workers. The black Americans he believes, are "very lazy." This is consistent with what Gladwell claims, that West Indians *depend* on "remaining outsiders...on being distinct by custom, culture and language from the American blacks they would otherwise resemble."

What is important is that such antagonism creates conflict in the fast food workplace. There is a lot of arguing among them, says the general manager. The Jamaican often reports to the managers about how black Americans take advantage of the situation when managers are out of view--just trying to "get away with something." They will stop working to "take a rest, just to take a rest...not that they need a rest."

American blacks, in general, do show various forms of resistance according to managers. This is not only by stopping production when managers are out of view. It is also by refusing to perform certain tasks. According to this manager, for example, American black women refuse to clean the bathrooms. "When asked to check the bathrooms, they quit. Any other group, including American black men, don't refuse." Thus, as he says, he has learned not to ask American black women to clean the bathrooms. The large number of immigrants, compared to Americans, employed in this store can be explained by simultaneous processes of resistance by Americans, especially blacks, and perceptions and prejudicial attitudes by managers of who

constitutes a "good" worker. Black Americans may be resisting their co-workers who denigrate them, the managers (who form biased perceptions against them), and the conditions of the work itself. These are inter-related factors. Resistance is more likely when social relations become antagonistic. Social relations become antagonistic when workers perceive a bias against them by management. As black Americans come to be viewed as poor workers compared to others, then they are less likely to be hired over others. And, as it becomes more difficult to get a job, they are less likely to want these jobs and apply for them. The result, as the Colombian manager says, is that Black Americans eventually "fizzle out."

Moreover, because recruitment tends to occur through networks, particularly favorable groups get hired. Managers either asks a "good" worker to recommend friends, or a worker will simply tell a friend of an opening and then inform a hiring manager that a friend (or relative) is coming in to apply. In this scenario (when Black workers are perceived as hostile), it is not likely that a manager will approach a black American to recommend a friend or relative, or be receptive to an acquaintance of an American black woman who refuses to perform certain work, or has been reported to be shirking on the job. Also, since black Americans are perceived by managers to create conflict among other groups who they believe to be better workers, there would seem to be a tendency on the part of management to reduce conflict. In this case, reducing conflict would mean simply not having African Americans working in the restaurant.

On the other hand, managers' sensitivity to the particular situations and social conditions of their poor minority workers often leads to a favorable interpretation of

work performance and work ethics. Perception and actuality shape each other through subtle forms of communication that express such sensitivity. But there are important things to consider here. One is that sensitivity toward one group can mean insensitivity toward another group. The Puerto Rican manager is especially sensitive toward minority women. Yet, she is less favorable toward the Chinese. The Colombian manager, while having more authority in the store has the opposite opinion about these two groups.

What is clear is that sensitivity toward American minorities is becoming rare in the industry if only because it means being sensitive to their reasons for resisting, their reasons for being aggressive. American minority women, for example, may show signs of resistance because of oppressive social conditions. As the Puerto Rican manager interprets this, this is to be expected. In other words, we shouldn't expect otherwise. Perhaps they resist in the workplace to express a history of subjugation. One form of this resistance is to refuse to clean the bathrooms. How many generations preceded them in this form of work--their mothers, their grandmothers--as domestic workers? What needs to be recognized here is that they are not refusing to work, for they are employed. When they do show signs of resistance, it is to particular jobs in the workplace. For immigrants, work, any kind of work, has meant self-improvement. But for many black Americans, intergenerational mobility is not part of their history.

It is interesting that the Puerto Rican manager has managed to try and cultivate managers among her minority women crew members. She had established intimate ties with the employees that the male managers didn't understand. Her employees go to her home. She entertains them. They socialize after work. She knows their families. She

shared an apartment with one of her employees she was cultivating to become a manager. Her own history enables her to relate to her workers and for the workers to relate to her.

Moreover, in terms of both gender and racial identity within Burger King, she is closer to her workers, than those among the management and corporate level staff. Among the women managers she knows of in Burger King, she says most of them are White. And of the managers who are Asian or Spanish, they are mostly men. She has also been negatively perceived by the other male managers and employees when she exhibited aggressive behavior, and performed tasks usually delegated to men, such as taking apart equipment and running shifts on her own. Many men were threatened. One quit. Some reported negative things about her work performance to the general manager. At times she had problems with her male crew members, as she said,

I had an employee yell at me because I gave him an order. He was a male, spanish guy. I said I don't care what they do in Argentina. I don't care what you tell your wife to do. When you are here, you do as I say. If you don't like it, if you can't deal with it, because I am a woman, then go home to mommy. Because I am not going to be intimidated by you or any man. I am like--I hate to use the word--but the bitch. The girls love it though. The other girls are like, yah.

Inter-ethnic differentiation

At McDonalds, where the staff is much larger with Chinese representing the majority of the workforce, the representation of other groups--while wider--is much smaller for each group. For example, there is one second-generation Honduran, a few Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, one Russian, three Africans and two black Americans. There is also more tendency to differentiate among the different East Asians--Chinese, Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Malaysia, and the different languages--Cantonese, Mandarin,

etc. It is common that a Chinese will not speak English (but is in the process of learning). But it is not common that a non-Chinese will not speak English. For example, a non-English speaking Latino would be more likely to find a job at the Burger King across the street than at McDonalds. And a non-English speaking Chinese will be more likely to get a job at McDonalds than at the Burger King. But more generally, at this McDonalds, there seems to be a top down strategy to employ as diverse a workforce as possible. Even the Chinese are so diverse as to speak several different dialects and therefore must communicate in English with each other. When asked about relations among different ethnic groups and if there are ever any conflicts, the general manager responded,

Always. It doesn't matter which group you're in. Even in the same group you have conflicts. Because people are individuals. They are all different. Everyone comes from different backgrounds. Everyone has different experiences. Everybody grows up differently. Different environments. Changes.

The attempt to individualize people is also part of a strategy to homogenize the workforce. Everyone is the same, in that they are individuals, rather than members of some ethnic or racial group. It also fits its marketing strategy to create the "United Nations" image catering to its international tourist clientele. The menu is in several different languages. and at the front counter, employees representing several different nationalities who also speak these languages are placed. At the same time it has a workforce that speaks several different languages to cater to a diverse clientele, the one common language remains English. Most of the workforce is bilingual. Yet, the McDonalds is more capable of hiring non-English speakers, especially for some positions, than is Burger King because of its advanced technologies.

Technology and computerization and the social division of labor

The way technology and computerization affect the social division of labor is most apparent in Chinatown by looking at the differences between McDonalds—which has implemented new technologies, and Burger King—which still uses old technologies. Fast food technologies which have made the production of food speedier and more efficient have resulted in a greater emphasis on "front-line" service, and, the creation of more jobs such as dining room hosts and neighborhood marketers in the McDonalds restaurant. Labor criteria, consequently, stress subjective (or auxiliary) features of employees. In McDonalds, we see, how appearance, personality, and "cultural capital" such as ethnic affinity and speaking the foreign language of the local and targeted clientele have become more important than technical skills or experience.

The implementation of state-of-the-art technologies and computerization at McDonalds in Chinatown has transformed language needs. The technologies, in general, have deskilled jobs requiring technical skills. The front registers are computerized and automatically compute the price of food orders so that math skills are no longer necessary, exemplified by the fact that this McDonalds no longer requires a math test with the application process. The food order is automatically transmitted to computer screens in the back food preparation area.

These changes affect the social organization of the workplace. They affect the kinds of people who can work together and the ways in which they work together. In McDonalds, different immigrant workforces who do not necessarily have a common cultural identity or language coexist in the restaurant. And this has resulted in a

cultural division of labor. Those who work on the "front-line," for example, are required to speak a common language with a diverse clientele. Yet, computerization has diminished the need for a common language between "front" and "back" workers.

The computerized register, then, has shifted emphasis on verbal interaction from that between "front" and "back" employees to that between "front" employees and the customer. Not only do front and back employees not have to speak a common language, they also do not have to pay attention to what goes on at the "front-line" by listening to orders. They simply have to keep an eye on the computer screen for incoming orders.

At Burger King, on the other hand, where they still have old technologies, the cashiers announce the order to the food preparers in the back via a microphone, or, face to face. Thus, the back employees always have to be attentive to the cashiers and quiet in order to hear the order. Further, all employees need to speak a common language. This is a major reason why English is a required language for employment at Burger King, and particularly for "front" and "back" work (as opposed to the undesirable dining room and cleaning tasks). These factors help us understand why a Chinese speaking mother got a job her only after her children *begged* the manager, and then why she was assigned to the cleaning tasks.

With the computerized register at McDonalds, the front and back communication--the giving of the order and the receiving of the order--are no longer simultaneous. This is another important difference from the old technology. In McDonalds, then, the workers in the back are freer to socialize with co-workers while they work, or to do more work elsewhere in the restaurant. This is why a McDonalds

manager pointed to some of the cultural differences between the Chinese and Spanish by saying that "Spanish people sing in McDonalds." The same is not allowable in Burger King where back workers always have to be attentive to front workers. The McDonalds can have a Mandarin/English speaking cashier take an order from a Mandarin speaking customer who specifies no cheese on a Big Mac. This cashier can then communicate this order to a Spanish speaking Honduran in the back who is singing with a Dominican. Since there are computer screens in several places in the back, the Honduran can receive the order at the Dominican's station and can then quickly return and fulfill the order--without having to stop singing.

McDonalds Chinatown has also implemented other advanced technologies such as a fully automated french fry machine, called the "arch fry" system. While Burger King requires a whole crew member to work the fry station when it is busy, making fries at McDonalds is completely automated. The only thing required of human labor is to dump frozen fries from a box into the machine. The machine is then set at a certain pace of production according to the rate of customer flow and demand.

The differences in technologies between Burger King and McDonalds in Chinatown help us see how culture, communication, and technology are interlinked and combine to form divisions of labor based on cultural features of employees. And how technological and social shifts in the work process facilitate the bringing together of culturally diverse groups of employees as much as the emphasis on service places greater emphasis on particular cultural criteria especially for "front-line" work.

The differences have also helped us understand how computerization and automation do not necessarily result in labor displacement. In McDonalds, the

implementation of new technologies has worked to shift the emphasis from technical production to the servicing of clientele. It has shifted McDonalds emphasis from *what* it produces to *how* it produces and *what it looks like*, appearance wise, when being produced. Part of this service is the creation of an ambiance, and here, a Chinese, international, and upscale ambiance to fit into the neighborhood. The Chinese and "United Nations" workforce help create this ambiance.

Summary

This chapter has shown how McDonalds and Burger King in the area of Chinatown are culturally and ethnically linked to Chinatown in various and different ways. The explicit cultural strategy of McDonalds to draw a Chinese clientele for American fast food has involved enormous capital expenditures, creative marketing strategies, the employment of a cultural manager, and developing ties to the local community including involvement in the local schools and business associations, as well as soliciting Chinese workers at factory gates and canvassing their homes.

A globally diverse workforce has also been integral to Chinatown McDonald's operation and success that has seen its sales and profits boom, and its clientele of Chinese more than double. Global diversity here is reflected among a majority workforce of Chinese immigrants of numerous national origins, and who speak different Chinese dialects. They come together in a "Chinese environment," where their cultural and ethnic capital is valued, but, where communication among each other, and job advancement require "acculturating" into the mainstream corporate structure, including speaking English, rather than remaining "isolated" within the Chinese

community. In any case, many of these workers do not live in the "closed" community of Chinatown. Rather, they come from other "satellite" Chinatowns in the New York's outer boroughs. Corporate fast food restaurants, then, draw Chinese from *outside* of Chinatown *into* Chinatown seeking job opportunity and often, upward mobility into corporate mainstream manager jobs. Global diversity among the workforce is also reflected in inter-ethnic diversity where restaurant demands for a "United Nations" workforce has resulted in a minority assortment of non-Chinese immigrants from Russia, Africa, and Latin America.

Burger King, on the other hand, provides more of an actual lens for capturing some of the ethnic changes that are occurring in Chinatown. Not being corporate owned, and relying solely on operating capital that is locally based, it is a greater subject to neighborhood influences than is McDonalds, including having to "pay out" to Vietnamese gangs just like any of the other independent ethnic enterprises in the area.

The growing Vietnamese presence in Chinatown also shapes changing ethnic capital in Chinatown with growing Vietnamese business such as small scale souvenir and gift shops. But who would have thought that Vietnamese capital would be used for buying into an American corporate fast food chain in Chinatown? How does such a phenomenon fit into the model of Chinatown's "ethnic enclave?" It is clear, at least, that "ethnic capital" helps shape and expand American corporate franchises in Chinatown. But, how do we theoretically reconcile the differences among "ethnic capital," "corporate capital," and "American capital?"

What is clear is that corporate franchises, regardless of the ethnic make-up of

ownership. favor and encourage diverse workforces. Whether this is indicative of the "divide and conquer" strategy, or, it is intended to appeal to popular sentiment towards multiculturalism that giant corporate retailers seem to profess today, or, it reflects the vast diversity of the neighborhood and potential fast food clientele who are attracted to bargains and cultural sites in Chinatown, various groups of people are brought together in the same workplace. But diversity also reflects structural factors to do with neighborhood characteristics, local manager autonomy in recruitment and hiring, the nature of the work--being temporary, part-time, low wage, and flexible--and the nature of the industry--being a symbol of job opportunity in America, which are all inter-related factors that help attract diverse groups of job seekers.

At Burger King in Chinatown where there is no explicit cultural strategy, unlike at McDonalds, workforce diversity particularly reflects what the Colombian manager called "the hire your own" strategy, recruitment through social networks, and, the vast diversity of job seekers in Chinatown. Thus, the workforce is comprised of Latino, Caribbean, South Asian, and a minority of Chinese. They are joined by a small minority of American blacks, who, according to managers I interviewed, are "fizzling out" of the fast food workforce in Chinatown. A "multicultural" workforce as I showed, can result in what Gladwell (1996) calls "multicultural racism" where the negative traits of a particular ethnic group, such as American blacks, are played off against the positive traits of another group, such as foreign blacks..

Perhaps one of the more important phenomena we have learned in this neighborhood study is that there are multiple and differing factors that shape each corporate fast food restaurant. As we move on to the other case studies I show that the

differences we have seen between McDonalds and Burger King in Chinatown do not merely reflect differences between parent corporations.

The local variations among restaurants imply a limitation to the popular notion of top-down control by U.S. corporations, especially in respect to understanding recruitment and hiring practices, and workplace social relations that affect employees' experiences and opportunities. This is especially important when we consider that hiring criteria and job demands revolve around an emphasis on service relations in the restaurant, where they are, more often than not, defined subjectively rather than in technical terms. As I have shown in this chapter, these subjective criteria are shaped by inter-related factors including neighborhood characteristics, corporate or local ownership demands related to marketing strategies, and manager preferences or biases. This is why local and ethnographic study is important and revealing.

In the next chapter we go to Washington Heights where I found a global workforce dominated by Latino immigrants from several Latin American countries who are joined by a minority group of West Indians, South Asians, and a few American-minorities. Like Chinatown, Washington Heights is an ethnically changing neighborhood. While immigrants from the Dominican Republic move into this area, largely replacing their predecessors, "white ethnics" including German Jewish and Irish, other Latino groups, such as Mexicans, Equadorians, and Puerto Ricans, also move here, and help shape an ethnically diverse Latino community in Washington Heights. Importantly, however, language is no barrier among these groups and Spanish is the dominant language spoken in Washington Heights. The cultural strategy among restaurants, here, is one of *cultural matching between employees and clientele*.

Fast food restaurants are geographically and culturally stratified within Washington Heights according to the degree to which Spanish or English is required to service clientele.

Chapter Four

Washington Heights

Introduction

Washington Heights, like Chinatown, is an immigrant neighborhood. But, its population is dominated by immigrants from countries in Latin America. Since the 1960s, immigrants mainly from the Dominican Republic, have been moving into the area, largely replacing German Jewish and Irish populations (Katznelson, 1981; Garcia et.al, 1988; Georges, 1984).¹ Unlike Chinatown, however, Washington Heights is not a tourist area. Therefore, most business enterprises, including restaurants, cater to a local residential and business clientele. Rather than providing a "Dominican" ambiance, the fast food restaurants I examined emphasize features such as a playground for children, and a leisurely place for youth, young families and the elderly to dine on affordable food in a clean environment. Yet, employment practices vary spatially in Washington Heights, depending on the restaurants' precise location, the local population and clientele, and available labor supplies.

Washington Heights spans the area from 150th to 200th/Dyckman Streets. Two of the restaurants I examined, a McDonalds and a Burger King, are located on 181st Street. This Street is similar to Canal Street in Chinatown, in that it is a major

¹ The Latino population has increased by 85 percent and the White population has decreased by 44 percent since 1970 in Washington Heights. Seven percent is Irish, and seven percent is German. Dominicans comprise the largest Latino group, about 80 percent. Cubans and Ecuadorians make up the other largest Latino groups (See Garcia, et.al, 1988; and see Georges, 1984).

shopping street filled with street vendors, newspaper stands, restaurants, retail stores, and fast food chains. Yet, it differs as an immigrant neighborhood in significant ways. Not being a tourist area, it seems less overtly "ethnic," in that local business does not market itself as "Dominican." There are no shops in which to buy souvenirs or replicas of Dominican culture, as there are in Chinatown. (There is, however, an Irish souvenir shop in the area.) The Dominican restaurants are not identified as specifically Dominican. Local business ownership is ethnically mixed. On 181st Street alone, there are pizza shops owned by Greeks, electronic stores owned by Arabs, South Asian clothing stores, Jewish bakeries, Irish Pubs, an American style coffee shop owned by Mexicans, and large franchise companies such as Lerner's, Payless Shoes, and Woolworths.

Like Canal Street in Chinatown, however, the Dominican culture is greatly present on 181st Street, if one only listens to the Spanish conversation of passers by, the street vendors yelling prices in "pesos" and Latino music loudly playing. Also, similar to Canal Street, the street food is ethnic. On Canal Street one can buy pork dumplings and scallion pancakes; on 181st Street one can buy churrillos and slices of Dominican cakes.

While McDonalds and Burger King have been here for several years, the introduction of other fast food franchises in the area recently has instigated controversy over who belongs in the area, and what actually is an "ethnic enterprise." Similar to the Vietnamese businessman who bought the Burger King in Little Vietnam, local Dominicans opened a Dominos Pizza in the last few years on 181st Street near a long established independent and Greek owned pizza joint. The Dominicans' marketing strategy included a sign in their window which read "locally owned." The Greek owned shop had a counter

sign in their window which read "locally owned." The Greek owned shop had a counter sign reading "We've been here longer" and "traditional pizza." The ensuing conflict created price wars among the pizza shops in the vicinity. It forced one independent pizza shop owner to close down and renovate, and even led Domino's to alter its universal policy against selling pizza by the slice.

Restaurant features and neighborhood characteristics

I examined three restaurants in Washington Heights: the two on 181st Street, and, a McDonalds restaurant on the corner of 200th Street (Dyckman Street) and Broadway. Marketing strategies do not consist of "ethnic symbols" to deliberately market ethnic culture. They are not like the Chinatown McDonalds, for example, where ethnic symbols such as the Chinese arch are built into the architectural design. Their employment practices, however, do suggest patterns of ethnic hiring. Employees are hired to match the neighborhood in terms of ethnicity, language and culture. One manager claimed that being a neighborhood restaurant you have to "represent the neighborhood as far as you hire..." "You try to make it as easy as possible for people to come in. You represent the neighborhood the best way you can and you try to have as many people as you can who are willing to work and willing to deal with whatever the clientele is. And in this case it is basically Hispanic."

Recruitment practices are mainly based on ethnic networks/referrals and language capacity. The interaction of the two work to maintain a workforce of largely Latino immigrants and some second generation Latinos. They represent the countries of the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Mexico, countries in Central America, as well as

as Puerto Rico. One major exception is a network of immigrants from Antigua working in one restaurant that emphasizes English rather than Spanish. This network has been in existence for at least 10 years.

Hiring criteria, divisions of labor and opportunity structures in Washington Heights are shaped by race and ethnicity. But, they are also affected by other factors. The workforce in Washington Heights, generally, tends to be of the working poor, which reflects the growing economic impoverishment of the area,² and the restaurants' marketing to this local population. With the exception of the group of Antiguans working in the first McDonalds, my research shows that divisions of labor and opportunity structures reflect differences within the Latino workforce, similar to the differences I showed within the Chinese workforce in the Chinatown McDonalds.

First, language capacity determines place of employment in Washington Heights. Second, social class background and material conditions affect opportunity structures. The most disadvantaged have the least possibility of climbing the occupational hierarchy, and the most advantaged do not aspire to management positions. This is not necessarily different from my findings in Chinatown. But, here, in Washington Heights, where most of the workforce is Latino, we have the opportunity to examine features of social class more closely and independent from ethnic and cultural differences. Like my findings in Chinatown, age and gender affect divisions of labor, for "front" employees are more likely to be female and/or young, and older employees are assigned to auxiliary tasks of cleaning,

² The average salary in Washington Heights is only about \$15,000 per year and more than 20 percent are on welfare (Garcia et.al, 1988; Georges, 1984).

mopping and taking out garbage.

Both the McDonalds restaurants employ about 60 people while Burger King employs about 30 people. Opportunity structures are similar across all three restaurants. Similar to the Chinatown McDonalds and unlike the Chinatown Burger King, they are all owned by companies that own other store sites. In all three cases, there are management opportunities beyond the restaurant level. Both McDonalds restaurants tend to hire from their crew for management positions. The general managers at both stores started out in McDonalds as crew members. At Burger King, while the general manager tends to hire his assistants from the crew, he himself was hired from the outside as an assistant manager.

Geography and language demands

While all three restaurants are located in Washington Heights, the closer they are to ethnic borders within the ethnic neighborhood, the more diverse the employee base is in the restaurant (in terms of language, race and ethnicity). The more diverse the clientele is, the more ethnically diverse the employee base is. Where there is a mainly Dominican population with few non-Latinos in the neighborhood (as residents, business people or shoppers), the majority of the employees tend to be Spanish speaking Dominicans and other Latinos. Thus, employer practices vary according to spatial location within Washington Heights.

The McDonalds on 181st Street is the most diverse, employing first and second generation Dominicans and Puerto Ricans as well as a group of Antiguans and a handful

of West Indians. (See Table 4.1 for cultural features of my respondents among this workforce.) Half of the managers are Antiguan. The language most spoken here is English. All of the employees speak English and about half of the employees are bilingual in English and Spanish. Many start out knowing only English, but learn Spanish, including the Antiguan. As the general manger, Greg, said, "right now we have many Black kids (Antiguan) and especially on my management team who only spoke English at the time I was here four years ago. Now, 1994, basically all of them can speak Spanish a little bit and they can basically understand. They can defend themselves." ("Defend" is a commonly used verb in Washington Heights used to describe workers ability to counter customers' defamations, special favors, and other actions that are considered to be harassing or that could jeopardize a worker's reputation.)

Table 4.1

**Washington Heights McDonalds (near ethnic border)
Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents**

Level of Job	Language	Ethnicity	National Origin
General Manager	Spanish and English	Latino	Dominican Republic (spent childhood there, born in New York)
Assistant Manager	English	West Indian	Antigua
Middle Manager ("Swing Manager")	Spanish and English	Latino	Puerto Rico (2nd generation)
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Puerto Rico
Crew member	English	West Indian	Antigua
Crew member	English	West Indian	Antigua

Greg was born in New York, but spent most of his childhood and teenage years in the Dominican Republic. He is bilingual. He started out in McDonalds as a crew person in 1985 while he was a high school student. He had two cousins working in this restaurant at the time who encouraged him to apply. While he was resistant to the idea, he said, "I didn't want to make my cousins look bad or anything so I came and I was like, I'll be here a week or two and ended up being here for nine years. I moved up the ranks." He has since obtained a college degree from Hunter College. He plans to remain with McDonalds, eventually to become a store supervisor. Like the McDonalds, and unlike the Burger King in Chinatown, hierarchical mobility is an attractive feature among some of its employees. The supervisors speak English.

This McDonalds is close to an ethnic divide within Washington Heights between an area of low-income Latinos and a more affluent area consisting of German Jewish and other populations. This McDonalds, more than the other two, caters to a more diverse clientele of mainly English and Spanish speakers--residents throughout the area as local non-latino business people.

A few blocks East of McDonalds is the Burger King on 181st Street. It is in a predominant Latino area of Washington Heights. The clientele tends to be mainly Dominican. The majority of employees tend to be first generation Dominican and Puerto Rican and bilingual in Spanish and English. Some are Cuban and Puerto Rican. There is one Jamaican. There are some employees who speak only Spanish, but no employees who speak only English. (See Table 4.2 for cultural features of my respondents among this

workforce.) The dominant language spoken in the restaurant is Spanish and the employees have been instructed to say "permiso" on the floor, rather than "excuse me." As the general manager said, "The whole neighborhood is Dominican. If I start having people in my front line dealing with customers who do not know Spanish I am not going to be making a lot of money because most of my customers do not know English." Communication is important because the interaction between employees and customers is not exclusively the ordering itself. The manager said that if a customer is not familiar with the menu items, and cannot read, they often describe the product to the cashier, rather than stating the name of the product. Or, they give the order in Spanish. As Gitu explained,

they don't ask for a whopper, you don't know what they are asking for... They would say a 'big burger' or 'big hamburger' in their language and it is difficult to understand. If they are asking for fries, they call it something else in Spanish. Soda, something else in Spanish. It is not the same thing. That is where we have problems.

Table 4.2

**Washington Heights Burger King
Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents**

Level of Job	Language	Ethnicity	National Origin
General Manager	Marathi, Hindi and English	South Asian	India
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Cuba
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Dominican Republic
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Dominican Republic
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Dominican Republic

Yet, this general manager, Gitu, is South Indian (from Bombay), and only speaks Hindi, Malay, and English. Two of the other three managers are Puerto Rican and the third is from Panama. They are all bilingual in Spanish and English.

This Burger King is owned by the Woolworths Corporation which owns 26 other Burger Kings, including 12 in New York City. Gitu has been with Burger King for seven years, and with this store for one-and-a-half years. He has a Physics degree from India. When he moved from India to New York to join family members he did not intend to go into the fast food industry. He got a job at Burger King through an acquaintance. He used his social contacts to obtain a job and started out with Burger King as a "manager trainee." This Burger King is different from the one in Chinatown, as it is owned by a large company and therefore has wider opportunity structures as well as benefits at the store level. Opportunities and benefits are similar to McDonalds' Chinatown, which is also owned by a company that owns 18 other stores. These two restaurants are also similar in that their general managers were hired from outside the company. And Gitu, like Charles, the Chinatown McDonalds general manager, plans to become a district manager.

Gitu's position as a general manager of a mainly Latino workforce in Washington Heights reflects the larger global and ethnic hierarchy among immigrants in New York. Indian immigrants comprise one of the most highly educated immigrant groups in New York while Latinos, and Dominican immigrants are among the least educated groups in

New York.

About a mile north, and east of the ethnic divide, is the second McDonalds on Dyckman Street. This restaurant is located in a predominantly Latino area with few non-Latinos residing in the area and few non-Latinos with local businesses or visitors to shop. It is owned by Cubans, a father and son, who own four other restaurants. This restaurant fits the concept of the "ethnic enclave" more than any other restaurant I have examined. These owners rely on cultural capital of Latino managers, and they capitalize on "ethnic solidarism" (Light, 1972). Nearly all employees are Latino, or, "co-ethnics" if we expand the notion of "co-ethnic" to include those who are bound by a common language and Latino heritage. The Latino employees consist of first generation Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Central Americans, and Cubans who speak mainly Spanish. (See Table 4.3 for cultural features of my respondents among this workforce.) They employ 58 crew members, ranging in age from 18 to 58 years.³ In turn, they provide job and advancement opportunity for "co-ethnics" who have little opportunity elsewhere. It employs five managers, three of whom are women, and, two of whom speak only Spanish. Spanish in this restaurant is not only the dominant language spoken, it is also required for employment.

Unlike the restaurants on 181st street, the ability to speak English is not a

³ They don't hire those under 18 because of the legal restriction on their hours. As Lillian says, "We only have 18 and up. Not because they don't apply. But because they can only work weekends. They only can work certain hours. On Fridays they only can work until 10. Saturdays they can only work eight full hours and only until 10. Sundays they can only work until 7:00. Sometimes when it gets extremely busy and we forget about them but they hardly have any hours so we go over the limit. The last time we got a fine."

requirement. Further, unlike the restaurants on 181st street, Spanish is a language requirement. As the first assistant manager, Marta, said, "Some of them only speak Spanish. Our whole morning crew. The whole grill team only speaks Spanish. The front counter, I won't say they know perfect English but they can defend themselves. (This is the opposite of what Greg said: "They can defend themselves" with the Spanish they know.) Our night crew, some of them speak English and some don't. They try. They can defend themselves. They are not going to defend themselves that well. But good enough to get by for McDonalds.' As Marta says, "I have a lot of people who speak English who don't want to apply because they feel like they will never be hired because they don't speak

Table 4.3

**Washington Heights McDonalds (near Inwood)
Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents**

Level of Job	Language	Ethnicity	National Origin
Assistant Manager	Spanish and English	Latino	Dominican Republic
Assistant Manager	Spanish	Latino	Puerto Rico
Crew member	Spanish	Latino	Dominican Republic
Crew member	Spanish	Latino	Dominican Republic
Crew member	Spanish	Latino	Dominican Republic
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Dominican Republic
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Dominican Republic (spent childhood there, born in New York)
Crew member	Spanish and English	Latino	Cuba

any Spanish." She did however, end up hiring one employee who does not speak Spanish.

As she says,

I have a guy who doesn't speak one drop of Spanish. It is very interesting because I thought he wasn't going to last that long. But he has. His mother is Arab and his father is Cuban. But he doesn't live with his father. She doesn't speak any Spanish. Sometimes people talk to him in Spanish and he just acts like he really understands. He tackles everything. I told him the other day, "wow I didn't think you were going to stay here that long". But he has been here for more than five months.

In this restaurant, the majority of clientele speak Spanish. This was the only restaurant I entered in Washington Heights where the cashiers asked me my order in Spanish. And it was the only restaurant where I interviewed respondents in Spanish because they did not know English. In terms of language, this restaurant represents the reverse situation from the first McDonalds. It is a Spanish-language fast food franchise in an American City.

In Washington Heights, we see that Latinos, and even second-generation Latinos, differ from the Chinese, in that they often do not learn English on the job. This both restricts their mobility outside of the immigrant neighborhood, and works to retain their identity as "Dominican" rather than "American." The question to managers, "Do you have Americans working here?", would usually get a response, "No, it is mainly Dominican." Only the question, "How many were born in this country?" would lead to finding out their status as first or second generation Dominican.

The retention of Spanish language, and identity from generation to generation is both a product of Washington Heights peripheral location in New York City and its concentrated population of Latinos, as well as its economic impoverishment. Parts of

Washington Heights, especially the North East part where the McDonalds on Dyckman Street is located, is majority Spanish speaking. It is also not an area that attracts non-Spanish speakers from outside of the area who don't live there. Further, according to McDonalds managers, it lacks city resources that emphasize English language skills and training. Marta, the manager at this McDonalds, told me that English classes in the area teach more Spanish than they do English. Moreover, the public schools in the area emphasize bilingual education. These factors shape this restaurant as a virtually Spanish-only speaking McDonalds.⁴

Marta is from the Dominican Republic and is bilingual. Two of the assistant managers, however, speak only Spanish. Further, the owners are Cuban, and are Spanish speaking. The owners also own other McDonalds restaurants, which provide opportunities for management and district management positions beyond the restaurant site. Marta began working for McDonalds five years ago as a crew member and worked her way up to her current position. She is similar to Greg, as she is making a career in McDonalds and plans to move up the hierarchy. She plans to become a general manager.

To find an Antiguan or Indian working at Dyckman Street McDonalds is as unlikely as finding a non-English speaking Cuban manager at the 181st street McDonalds. This is partly due to ownership and management. The owners, or, the supervisors, must speak a common language with the general manager who then must speak a common language with his/her assistant(s). The assistants, then, must speak a

⁴ An study of language use in Washington Heights revealed that less than half (49 percent) of Hispanics in Washington Heights spoke English "very good." More than 50 percent spoke English either "not good" or "not at all" (Garcia, et.al, 1988).

common language with the employees. In the first and second McDonalds, there is a common language across the hierarchy. In Burger King, however, there is not a fluid and complete communication line. The restaurant supervisors (from the corporation) are mainly English speaking and they have hired an English speaking manager in a restaurant where Spanish is mainly spoken, including between employees and clientele. The general manager often needs a translator, usually one of his assistants, to speak with the few employees who only speak Spanish and with Spanish speaking clients.

Labor supply: neighborhood matching and geographical recruitment

Similar to the employees in Chinatown, however, even though employees match the neighborhood clientele, they are largely recruited from outside of the restaurants' immediate neighborhood. The tendency in Washington Heights is to hire those who live "close, but not too close." In practice, this means the Bronx, as well as lower and upper Manhattan. From the employees' perspective, this reflects a desire to avoid the social pressure and embarrassment that comes with working in fast food in one's own neighborhood. (The social stigma of working in fast food is much stronger here among Latinos than among the Chinese in Chinatown.) From the employers' perspective, recruiting employees who live outside of the neighborhood alleviates a commonly acknowledged problem of employees giving away free food to friends and relatives. One employee, Tony, a second-generation Puerto Rican, said,

I wouldn't want to work at a McDonalds around my block because then a lot of my friends would know and they would be like hook me up, hook me up, give me free this, free that. If they [managers] see that they'd be thinking I'm giving away

food. So I wouldn't. I would rather work far away.

Nina, the sister of Tony, said that "basically some of my friends make fun of other people who work in the restaurant."

During an interview with a crew member, Cristiana, at the Dyckman McDonalds I got a first hand account of such peer pressure. We were harassed by a neighborhood teenager known by Cristiana as someone who commonly harassed her while she worked. Cristiana is from the Dominican Republic and is one of the few employees who live very close to the restaurant. She lives only a few blocks away with her mother. The teenager repeatedly interrupted the interview with sarcastic remarks. "What do you want to know? How she mops the floor? How she cooks the food?...What are you doing here....why don't you get out of here...?" Cristiana said that "he comes in all the time bothering me...I know him but I don't talk to him. He lives around my house. I don't get along with these people around my house because they are rude, they are very mean."⁵

Cristiana lives nearby because she is one of the poorest employees and can't afford the expense to travel to another place to work. Her mother works as a seamstress off the books. She makes children's dresses. Cristiana has learned to ignore the harassment from the neighborhood youth, walking directly to work and back, and spending the rest of the time inside her home. She is studying now to obtain her GED. At the age of 19, she has experience working at McDonalds and

⁵ Upon leaving the restaurant, rather late in the evening, and heading toward the subway station, the same boy along with a friend, expressed their animosity toward me by charging at me on their bicycles.

Burger King off and on for five years.

Cristiana, is similar to Elena, the second generation Honduran working at McDonalds in Chinatown. They are both poor, Latino, and struggling with tremendous resilience to climb out of neighborhoods filled with crime and poverty. Cristiana has plans to be a "cop" or an AT&T operator. Her mother encourages her to become a McDonalds manager. Any step towards upward mobility means, to Cristiana, actively resisting the neighborhood pressure by staying at home. On the street, she says, "There is so much trouble...the other girls, they are always ending up in something." It means ignoring the peer pressure and embarrassment when those she knows come into the restaurant and harass her, or pressure her to give away free food. "I tell them if you ever go to my job, don't get on my line. I don't want you to bother me. I don't want them [management] to think I am giving you something." Elena's strategy, on the other hand, is more common, and involves making the long commute from Queens to Manhattan, to physically avoid this pressure.⁶

Social contacts and the referral system

How do people get jobs? Common among all restaurants in Washington Heights is that they tend to receive many more applicants than they can handle, and certainly more than they can hire. At Burger King, the general manager said that out of 30 employees, 18 have been working for more than one year. Thus, only 12 positions have been open in the

⁶ It could also be that restaurants located in residential areas, rather than business, shopping or tourist areas, are more prone to peer pressure as it is a common place for teenagers to hang out.

past year for what he claimed to be "hundreds of applicants." Gitu said, "Every week I get a lot of people coming in for jobs and I don't have that many positions open."

Burger King has fewer positions open compared to the McDonalds in the area because its workforce is half the size of the McDonalds.

Processes of labor recruitment vary among restaurants in Washington Heights. What is similar in all three restaurants is that recruitment is mainly done through social contacts (referrals) among the current workforce. Those who are hired but are not recommended by a friend, relative, or acquaintance of an employee are usually those who are extremely persistent about needing a job. Persistence often means repeatedly visiting the store and talking to a manager and/or making repeated phone calls to the store. As I said in the previous chapter, managers often give in to this pressure, especially by older, and, seemingly desperate applicants.

While Gitu says he gets calls from nearby employment agencies, such as the Harlem Department of Labor, to ask if there are openings, he mainly relies on his current employees to bring him "their friends who are looking for jobs." This referral system acts as a supply of labor, out of whom management conducts interviews and selects.

Managers at the Dyckman Street McDonalds rarely put up a hiring sign, or advertises in newspapers. Advertising causes problems because there are "so many applicants." As a manager said, "People misinterpret what hiring means...The reason why we don't like to advertise is because if we say 'Now hiring' people usually think 'Oh, I am going to get hired automatically.' If they don't they usually think it is something against them." She adds that with a hiring sign, and people coming from

the street,

you are going to judge them as soon as they walk in. They see your expression on your face and they see a HELP WANTED sign and they walk in and you say "Yah, but right now, we have already filled the spot." Then you feel bad because you are judging them by their actual appearance. I don't feel that that is fair.

This restaurant, like most, gets a constant flow of job inquiries from the street, even without a HELP WANTED sign. The cashiers have been instructed to hand out applications which are then kept on file, but rarely are they used as a pool for selecting employees, or even interviews. As Marta said, "Applications, we give them year round. We don't say 'No, we are not hiring.' If we run out, we always order more, because I don't like to tell people 'No, we don't have any applications because we are not hiring.'

Hiring, rather, is done on a referral basis. Crew members usually tell their friends or relatives to come into the restaurant to speak to a manager. Marta said that

I tell them to come to see me because....my crews' friends, I feel like...if your friend is like you, then I don't mind hiring them. I interview them and keep them on hold and when there is an opening I usually tell their friends first. So sometimes I don't even have to do interviews because I ask them..."Do you have a friend who can work these days..things like that. So sometimes I don't do interviews.

Greg, on the other hand, says he does post a hiring sign at the front window, but he prefers to "keep it McDonalds... referrals and word of mouth." Referrals are encouraged through "kids who work pretty well." Similar to the other restaurants, those applicants who have been referred by one of the current employees are usually selected among all the applicants. But Greg, as does Gitu, conducts interviews. Social contacts help applicants get interviews, and are even necessary to get an interview, but they don't guarantee a job.

The existence of an Antiguan workforce in the first McDonalds is a good example of how the referral system works and how it can work to reproduce ethnicity in a restaurant. A chain of Antiguan has worked in this restaurant for over a decade even though the original Antiguan are no longer working. They reside in the Bronx, just over the bridge between Washington Heights and the Bronx. This is perhaps the only restaurant where Antiguan, who are not Spanish speaking would be able to work out of these three restaurants in Washington Heights.

A changing labor supply in Washington Heights

The reliance on the referral system, as we can see, is partly a way managers handle an overwhelming number of job applicants. Managers recognize the increasing numbers of and variety of people looking for fast food jobs. They relate it to worsening economic and social conditions where more people are becoming dependent on minimum wage type work. The worsening economic and social conditions are manifest in an increase in numbers of applicants, older applicants, employees who are worse off economically, and, more full-time employees. According to managers, the percentage of full-time employees is currently 50 percent, and, in one restaurant full-timers comprise 60 percent of the workforce. Average tenure of employment has also increased among crew members. Many leave their jobs within a month or two, but those who remain do so for more than a year. Many remain for several years.

Managers see signs of these worsening conditions among their clientele. Greg, the general manager of the first McDonalds has observed that "Nowadays kids are having

kids...If you look around now you see a lot of kids with a lot of other kids. Sometimes it is hard to figure out who is the parent." They also see these conditions reflected in their employees, as Greg elaborates,

The job market is not as easy as before. Unfortunately because kids are having kids they are forced to go out to work and a lot of them are not prepared to work. So McDonalds is sometimes the obvious answer. It is like one thing is leading to another. Lack of preparation, scholastically wise. Moving out of their house before their time. Having kids before their time.

Washington Heights is different from Chinatown in this respect because Chinatown attracts more applicants from middle class backgrounds due to its more central location in Manhattan, and, because it is a tourist area. Because of this it can be more selective in who it hires. Moreover, Chinatown, being a tourist economy, is not as affected by economic downturn as is Washington Heights. Nor is Chinatown considered a high crime, or riot prone area. Finally, the restaurants in Washington Heights primarily attract Latino applicants. And even though many of them come from outside the neighborhood, Latinos, as a whole, have higher poverty rates than every other racial group. Thus, the character of the neighborhood is seen in the character of the employees.

While young people work to support children and families, employers have also experienced a rise in employment applications by older people in the last few years. Marta is conscious of the trend in applicants who are relatively older and more financially needy than those who normally applied five years ago when she started. As she says,

Now people are just looking for work in general. They don't care what they do. I have tons of applications of older women. Old enough to be my mother. They want to work because it is a necessity to work. Just enough to get them by. Also, we have people here who have other jobs, who work here because they need token money to get to their more important job, or for lunch money. They get paid

\$4.25 here, but they may get \$11. over there which is their rent money."

Gitu, the general manager of the Burger King, has also hired more older people.

As he says "Years back, we used to have a lot of kids. That has decreased. We are hiring more elderly and mature people now." "Elderly" and "mature" means an age range between 21-30 years, with a few employees who are older, ie. 36, 38, and 52 years of age. Also he says there are lots of older men seeking employment. He has a 52 year old man who works "the lobby." Burger King may hire more older people than McDonalds because this chain tends to be less concerned with a particular image, but the majority of employees remain youth.

Marco works alongside the 52 year old man in the lobby at Burger King. He is a 36 year old Cuban and former U.S. marine. He is a father and divorcee who claims his only other alternative "is to become a cop", but his parents are against the idea because of the danger. He tried to join the Marines again, but they said he was "too old." He tried college but he "couldn't take it." He said to me, jokingly, "Do you have anything? I will clean your house, wash your clothes, anything..."

Marco is an example of the situation of many non-college educated men who are willing to work hard with a simple life of going to work, doing the job and being done with it at the end of the day. These are men who a generation earlier would be doing semi-skilled manual work. They are finding little or no place in the labor market of today. No place, that is, that provides a decent standard of living for a family--job security, good income, and health insurance. As Marco describes it, it was his precarious job situation that put too much pressure on the marriage that led to divorce. Now he makes barely

enough to pay part of the rent of an apartment he shares with a stranger. He works most days, and spends most evenings at home watching television. He can't afford to go out. He can't afford a telephone. The only thing he looks forward to is the one day per week he spends with his son.

If Marco did not have a supportive family structure, if he could not depend on his parents to be there in time of crisis, he would be only one step away from the streets. He is, however, motivated in his work by the fear of losing his job. The extent of his fear was startling and evident when I interviewed him. We met in a Mexican restaurant. He refused to be recorded. He was terribly suspicious of me and made me answer questions for 45 minutes before I could ask one of him. And he hardly said anything negative about Burger King except how he finds it distasteful the way the managers "suck up" to owners. About the wage? At least, at \$4.50, he said it was better than his previous job at McDonalds at \$4.25.

While Burger King does not seem to be a decent job for Marco, Marco is not the ideal candidate for Burger King. The competition for jobs--between the young and energetic and the mature and needy--poses a dilemma for many managers. Marta says she experiences a great deal of pressure to meet the corporate image of youth.

It causes a problem because we have the younger people who want to work and sometimes you feel so bad. I say to myself 'I wish McDonalds had 30 floors so you could hire a whole bunch of people to do all different things.' A lot of people come to you and you feel so bad. They are like 'look, I am really in need of a job.' Then you have an older person who is more in need of a job than a younger person and you are stuck in between.

While she says she ends up hiring the older person, she also says that "knowingly or not

we end up hiring younger girls to be up front...maybe to look prettier, to look more sophisticated...more alive...more energy. Maybe we do it unconsciously....Some of the customers want to come in and look at the pretty faces and have conversation." This, however, should not be considered entirely unconscious. Rather, it reflects the uneasiness and trepidation managers feel about their position in the face of the way worsening social conditions are affecting the industry. It reflects a sensitivity to these conditions and their inability to resolve conflict in the face of the multitude of pressures managers face. This is also reflected in the common tendency of managers to give in to those applicants who are very persistent about being hired while expressing their desperate need. McDonalds, afterall, is considered a job of last resort. Turning someone away is like refusing to give someone food at a soup kitchen. When older people are hired, they are usually assigned the auxiliary tasks of wiping tables, mopping, and taking out garbage. This usually results in a division of labor based on age. (Remember the older Chinese woman in the Burger King in Chinatown.) The older persons find it hard to fit into a workplace culture that is youth oriented. In the first McDonalds, women over 25 years of age, and at the crew level, are called "old maids." And they often find themselves isolated, in a job meant for youth, and a job meant to be temporary. On the night I met Marco, for example, one of his co-workers was having a party for all the employees. But Marco felt uncomfortable about going, because, as he said, "it would be all young kids."

Further, for someone as old as Marco, the possibility to become a manager is minimal. Either you start out young, like Marta, Nina, Amy, Greg, Julia and Roberto, or you enter with other credentials, such as a college degree or management experience

elsewhere, like Gito and Charles. While Marco claims not to want to pursue a management job because the "hours are long and requires responsibility beyond just a job," this could also be a rationalization in the face of an impossibility--a resignation to a position he is finding harder and harder to climb out of as he grows older. A kind of resignation that becomes increasingly common among men, like Marco, a former marine, now mopping floors and cleaning tables at Burger King, after losing his wife, friends, and, perhaps, human dignity.

In the tide of worsening economic conditions, managers in Washington Heights, like those in Chinatown, maintain that fast food employment is still a better opportunity for the most disadvantaged than their other alternative: working in the informal economy and/or ethnic enterprises, such as Dominican restaurants. As Greg says,

A lot of these kids, like the ones who talk around the neighborhood and the Dominican kids come in from the Dominican Republic or from another area, they know here that in McDonalds in general, if they work they are going to get paid for what they work. They have benefits. They have rights. They are not going to get abused. On the other hand when they work in certain restaurants, I don't know which ones, they know from heresy they are going to get abused. Maybe if they don't pay their taxes or whatever, but in the long run it is going to catch up with them. So they don't want to, for the most part, take that risk. It just is not worth it. If they are legally here, that is.

The interview process

Managers usually conduct interviews of prospective employees who have been referred by current employees. And like I found in Chinatown, when I asked managers what they look for in an applicant during a job interview, they expressed various subjective qualities to do with appearance, personality, and malleability. (Language

demands were taken as a given and not usually mentioned as a response to this question—unlike in Chinatown.) One manager said that

The smile is the clue...if throughout the whole interview, this individual never smiles, you know that is a big hint that this is not a McDonalds person...if they don't smile, the odds are that they won't get hired.

When I asked Gitu what he looks for in an employee he responded,

I talk to them and I try to ask them open-ended questions and make them talk to me. When they start talking it gives me an idea of how they perceive me as a person. I briefly check their referrals, and their past employment.

Marta looks for high levels of motivation, and energy level among applicants she interviews. Energy is important, for one must be "enthusiastic," and "quick." Marta said that "a customer must be served within three minutes... Two minutes on line and one minute being serviced." Marta, like Amy in Chinatown, compared fast food work to factory work. "You may take girls who are like wow. Their energy level becomes different [in McDonalds] than if they worked in a factory. In a factory they would sit and sew all day."

Subjective criteria such as energy level, a good appearance, and malleability are often associated with particular traits of people. Greg, for example, is deliberate about hiring youth to work at the front register. As he said,

I think, and my friend [Susan], she works over at [another Street], have always believed that the younger your cashiers are, the friendlier they are, the more bubbly they are, the nicer they tend to be, the more pleasing they tend to be, regardless of what sex they are...It is just that the younger they are, the less problems they may have. I don't know. They have a different outlook on life. The older they are, maybe they have more problems and they definitely have a different outlook on life.

Managing emotion in a neighborhood of crime and poverty

But in hiring decisions, there is something that runs deeper than a simple smile during an interview, looking for a "bubbly," "pleasing" personalities, or looking to match the language needs of the area. Greg is aware that he runs a restaurant located in an area filled with crime, violence, and impoverishment and that his employees are driven by need, ambition, and often fear. Consciously or not, during the interview process, he is measuring this individual's ability to respond and be deferential to a clientele that is often degrading to his employees. He is also measuring his own ability to control this interaction. Greg admits that most of his employees hardly ever smile. Another manager thinks that "maybe it is because they are depressed." Because of this they get pressure from their supervisors. Greg says that in this particular neighborhood it is hard to get employees to smile and be enthusiastic. "When you have a rough clientele, it is hard to get these kids to smile and greet these customers when sometimes they come in here like they want to chop your head off. It is rough sometimes."

This is important considering that part of managerial control in fast food is the management of emotions. In this sense, emotions must be malleable. Such management is necessarily more elaborate among a workforce comprised of mainly working poor than, say, a relatively better off workforce, such as the Chinatown McDonalds workforce. The social conditions of workers are ridden with financial, social, and family-related problems that affect an employee's emotional state. Moreover, fast food workers in Washington Heights constantly deal with various aspects of youth culture highly prevalent in the inner city such as the dangers and temptations of the drug trade, and the social stigma attached

to low-wage work--especially fast food work. (Managers find themselves dealing with problems and conflicts concerning neighborhood crime, violence, and peer pressure.)

Greg elaborates on one situation.

Two years ago, the riots in Washington Heights, the next day, and for the next week to two, you got tons of police officers all over the place. Basically the clientele at the time were police officers. And these are what these kids are seeing. And then, after the whole drama is all over, you tell these kids to smile at their customers. It is hard because you know all your customers are not all bad. But unfortunately, they are bad customers. Like I told you before. We are in the business to make money. Sometimes, money obscures the fact that we may be pushing these kids too far in the sense that the reality is, there are some bad customers. So two weeks later when the riots are all over, some of these bad customers who were probably out there burning tires, looting, whatever, these kids had to serve them. So like I told my supervisor, I have to be careful how far to push because I want to be as real as possible. It is rough at times but at McDonald land you just don't give up. You try and try and try again.

At "McDonald land" the emphasis is on a "customer oriented culture" where the employee is supposed to be in a good mood, is supposed to smile, is not allowed to talk back to a customer--regardless of the neighborhood conditions, the nature of the clientele, and the relative hardships of the workforce. These are grounds for promotion, for disciplinary action and sometimes, dismissal. As Hardy explains what happens when an employee talks back to a customer. "We take them to the back and talk to them and sometimes we give them a break and explain to them that the customer is always right; [even though they are wrong] they are always right. The crew person doesn't seem to understand that. There are times when the customers are really....they get us really mad."

Thus, a "customer oriented culture" implies that, in general, employees are dispensable, but customers are not. Crew members are subjugated to both management and customers and the customers needs are given priority. As Hardy articulates,

Maybe sometimes they need a break and they can't get one. Because most of the time it is very busy. We know everybody is hungry but we have to take care of the customers so they can get fast, friendly service so that they could come back again. But they think of their stomach all the time. Sometimes they get us so mad... We give breaks but they are like "I'M HUNGRY" right in front of the customers. That is not nice. Or, "IT IS TIME FOR ME TO LEAVE." I don't like when they do that because I think that is disrespectful. When they do that to me, I let them close their lines, but then I let them sweep and mop and then I will find something else for them to do before they leave.

On the other hand, employees complain that managers often change their schedule while working by making them stay later than scheduled, or, by sending them home early.

"Some of the managers, if you have to go home at a certain time, they don't let you go sometimes" said an employee. "They keep you. I don't think that is right."

The management of the service interaction varies among restaurants as well as among individual managers who often have their own means to motivate their crew to be in a "good mood" where the expression of this good mood is smiling. Hardy says that

Well, like myself, they like to hear rude things. So I will go to their ears and tell them something about their boyfriends. That is the only way I get them to smile. Like I, myself, I don't smile. But as my boss tells my supervisor, just mention the word "sex" and you will see that Hardy smiles. So, I will smile. So to get these guys to smile, we have a contest. That is the only way they have fun, most of the time. A contest to see who collects the most customers or who makes the most money and they will get a free meal. They will put their energy into that and they will smile for those few hours that the contest is on. Nine out of 10 times when we have a contest. They win a free meal. Or we used to have this program who sells the most extra-value meals--meaning the fries, the soda, the sandwich. At the end of the month, they get \$50. But they have to have at least 200.⁷

⁷ According to a manager, "The contest runs like this: We start from 11 to 2. Who makes the most money. Who has the most customers. Who has the less deletions--a customer orders something and changes their mind so you have to delete it...We have a big screen but on the big screen you can take three different orders. If a customer doesn't want something, you can roll down another screen, another part of the screen and take that order so you don't have to delete from that."

The McDonalds on Dyckman Street holds counseling sessions for employees with personal problems. Marta, like Julia, the Burger King Chinatown's manager, maintains close ties with her employees. She gives her crew members her home phone number and beeper number. As she says, "I try not to have just a crew-manager relationship. I try to go a little beyond. It becomes a little more relaxing because they know that if you have a problem they can come directly to me." (This style of personal management is common among my Latino women respondents.) Yet the nature of the problems must be resolvable, outside the context of the actual employment conditions, and most importantly, the wage itself. Marco's problems, for example, that are embedded in the employment arrangement itself--a shifting schedule and a wage that is too low to live on--are not.

Family background and its affect on perceptions, experiences and goals in fast food jobs

The restaurants in Washington Heights draw employees from various social class backgrounds. But, unlike the McDonalds in Chinatown where several employees are from middle class/professional backgrounds, the majority of employees in Washington Heights are from working class backgrounds. Only a few workers in Washington Heights are middle class, living in households that earn over \$50,000 per year. A few workers live with both parents. More live with single parents. Some live with parents and have children of their own. Still others are heads of households with children or an elderly family member as dependents. (As I showed earlier, the McDonalds in Chinatown tends to be of higher social class background on average).

Class background affects employees' perception of the fast food job, the degree to which they depend on it, their aims in the industry, and their chances to climb the fast food hierarchy. Among Latinos in Washington Heights, management opportunity was a consideration among those from working class backgrounds. Unlike middle class Chinese in Chinatown, middle class Latinos did not aspire to become managers. But among the working class, I found various material conditions that were necessary in order for workers to be able to pursue a manager position. The most materially disadvantaged workers, those who depended on the fast food wage as a "living wage" were the least likely candidates for a promotion.

Miriam, 20 years old, is an extreme case among my respondents in Washington Heights. She came to New York City from Cuba 10 years ago as an only child with her parents. Her father was a housekeeper at the Hotel Hilton, until recently when he was laid off. Her mother was a nurses aid until she died 2 years ago. Prior to her mother's death, Miriam had planned to become a medical doctor. Because of her mother's illness she quit high school and has not been able to finish. Now she is supporting herself and her father on her McDonalds wages. She has fallen from the aspiration to become a doctor, to simply trying to survive on a daily basis. "My dream", as she says, "I see it so far now."

Miriam earns \$107 per week and can't get a second job because her schedule at McDonalds changes every week. Moreover, being the only woman in the household, she is responsible for most of the household duties so she does not have time to hold a second job. Her boyfriend lives with them part-time. He is from Bangladesh and is a busboy in a restaurant at the World Trade Center. When she has a day off, "it is worse than when I

am working" she says. "It is the day to wash clothes and clean the house and everything. Cause you know how it is being with the men. It is tough."

Her financial difficulties, compounded with her responsibilities at both home and work, make it impossible for Miriam to pursue the fast food management path. The investment it would take--in terms of accruing tenure as a crew person--and the immense studies it involves (the McDonalds "Big Book" or the "Bible"), are too costly. She simply cannot afford, in a financial sense, to work at McDonalds. She needs to find a better-paying job. From management's perspective, Miriam is not an ideal candidate for a promotion because she agitates for more hours and she is too often out sick. Moreover, Miriam does not fulfill emotional criteria including being enthusiastic, in a good mood, and friendly. Her material burdens negatively affect her emotional state.

It is here where we are able to see how the demands of this job and criteria for being promoted are difficult to fulfill by someone who is self supporting, and especially by someone who has dependents to support. One needs to be financially "subsidized" simply to afford to work in a fast food restaurant. One main difference between Miriam and Cristiana, for instance, is that Cristiana is subsidized by her mother's earnings and they share the household duties, while Miriam supports herself, her father, and is responsible for all household tasks. Further, with the industry's emphasis on employee presentation, then characteristics of attitude, emotions and appearance play major roles in determining who is and who is not promotable. As a manager at McDonalds, Marta, said, "personal problems" are not supposed to get in the way. It is important to come to work in a "working mode." This implies expressing a "positive attitude," viewing the work shift in

the context of a "wonderful day." For Marta, the most important criteria for working in McDonalds are "to have a lot of motivation and a high energy level." She even hired a boy who is mentally retarded because his "energy level when I interviewed him was outstanding."

In other words, a crew member needs to be emotionally sound and stable to smile and interact with customers, a criteria that are difficult to fulfill when the conscience is burdened with threats of eviction, thoughts of leaving the job, and household responsibilities. Miriam, only 20 years of age, already feels "old and tired." In this sense, the image of youth the industry tries to project, is more of a social category; "youth" implies, at a minimum, a daily life free of major financial and emotional burden.

Wendy, 17 years old, from the Dominican Republic, is Miriam's co-worker and also an extreme case as she comes from an advantaged family background relative to the workforce in Washington Heights. Her father is a journalist and her mother is a nurse, earning a combined income exceeding \$50,000 annually. She is one of few college students I found working in Washington Heights. She also does not intend to pursue management, but for other reasons than those of Miriam. She started out in McDonalds "as a hobby", against the will of her parents, and plans to pursue a career in communications, something she considers better than a McDonalds career. Yet, unlike Miriam, she perceives the opportunity to enter management to be open to her.

Maria's advantaged position relative to Miriam--enables her to view her job as a hobby, rather than as a burden. This places her in a favorable position for a promotion into management. She is considered an asset to the organization, "management material,"

and is commonly granted the numbers of hours and schedule she requests. Miriam, on the other hand, while in absolute need of more hours and a consistent schedule that would allow her to get another job or take vocational courses, is not given this consideration.

Marta, like Maria, is emblematic of management material, for she did not start out in McDonalds in dire financial need, but rather, also as a hobby, "more just for the fun of it." Her work experience "all started out as a game...me and my friend thought lets go work for McDonalds. McDonalds always seemed to be so fun." This is also similar to Nina, a swing manager in the first McDonalds, a second generation Puerto Rican, 19 years old, and a single mother. As she said, "As I was going to school, my friends were always telling me about this place, that it was fun... I said so where do you work at? My friend said, 'McDonalds.' I said 'Well, I would like to work there.'" But, unlike Maria, for Marta and Nina, McDonalds management represents upward mobility. McDonalds offers them career opportunities, perhaps more attractive than other opportunities available to them. They are not only the first managers in their respective families, but also the first women managers in their families.

Here, it becomes clear that perceptions, as well as industry goals are affected by material conditions and family background. One must be in a relatively secure and stable situation financially to view the job as favorable. Management must be viewed as upward mobility relative to family background. For example, Marta's mother is a nurse and her father was an ambulance driver before he retired. Marta is now married to a manager of a Burger King and has a young son. Marta started out not with the idea of working to make ends meet, but with goals of climbing the hierarchy.

My goal when I first started as crew...you always look at a step up..and I was like wow, becoming a crew chief would be great. After becoming a crew chief and mastering it, I thought becoming a swing manager would be great. And then I wanted to become a salaried manger. Now my goal is to become a store manager.

Nina comes from a similar family background. Her parents and siblings are supportive of her work and encouraging about her becoming a manager. Moreover they assist Nina and her child financially and care for her child while she works and attends college. Her mother even attends McDonalds social events.

Inter-ethnic and racial perceptions and experiences

The Antiguan in Washington Heights often have different perceptions of and goals in the industry than the Latinos and the Chinese in these neighborhoods. Their perception is partly based on race, for they are of African descent, working in a neighborhood that is majority Hispanic. They often face racial prejudice both inside and outside of the workplace. As Treacy, from Antigua said,

In Antigua, we didn't know nothing about racism. Soon as you come up here...I experience it when I walk into a store. And I go inside, I have my wallet in my pocket. A lady was standing in front of me and thought I had something else in my pocket. I said 'Hello, this is just a wallet. It is just a wallet.' Everybody was just looking at me, man...I just walked out. It is just a wallet. One time a guy called me 'nigger'. I didn't even know what word is that. I go home and tell mother what is a nigger and she told me. In Antigua, White, Black, mixed, in schools we play together, go to the beach together, everything. As soon as I come up here I know about racism.

Treacy has worked at this McDonalds, on her first job, for nearly four years. She has been in the United States and New York City for six years. She works a 40 hour week during the daytime and walks to and from work. She lives in the Bronx which is

only a 30 minute walk away from McDonalds. She lives with her mother (a nurses aid) and her sister (a restaurant cook at Fridays). She received a degree from the IBM business school, but after an unsuccessful search for a job in computers, she applied at McDonalds through a friend, also from Antigua.

Treacy is one of several Antiguan working in this restaurant, alongside mainly Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. There are also some Haitians and Jamaicans. Treacy's experience of racism in New York may help shape her own perceptions of blacks in New York, particularly American blacks. When I asked Treacy if there were any African Americans working in McDonalds with her, she responded,

I don't think so. I haven't seen any. To me, they don't want to work...I worked here with some when I first started and in the next few months they are out. They don't want to work...Some of them are drug dealers, whatever they want. Some of them are in drugs. And I keep far from them.

As the Jamaican from Burger King Chinatown said about African Americans, "they give us a bad reputation", likewise, it could be that Treacy is projecting blame onto African Americans for the racism she is subjected to. For, it is easier to distinguish oneself, rather than to defend one's whole race. And like most immigrant groups, who come with, or quickly learn, and often believe the stereotypes that have historically afflicted African Americans, foreign blacks perhaps, should not be expected to be different. What is different is that foreign blacks are often mistaken for being African American. In so far as they believe the stereotypes--that Africans Americans don't want to work, they are thieves, and the like--then they may continuously feel the need to distinguish, the need to show they are willing to work, they are honest, etc. Even if they don't believe the stereotypes,

they must live in constant acknowledgement that much of society does believe them. In this way, her racial identity is constructed around her own social experiences and relations here in New York City.

While my research shows that foreign born blacks sometimes share negative perceptions about American blacks, it also shows that foreign born blacks sometimes hold biases against each other which, in some ways, is no different from any other kind of inter-ethnic conflict, say between Irish and Italian at the beginning of the century. Only here, we cannot help to acknowledge that it may also be intertwined with the stereotype that plagues African-Americans and which foreign blacks try to escape. And, where the process of escape means building up ethnic or racialized boundaries. When I asked Treacy if there were any differences between the way people work from different countries, she responded,

Yes. Haitians. They are too lazy. They are very dirty. The Dominicans. They understand you. They are ready to understand you. But they don't want to do nothing. Antiguan. You see, we work in Antigua, we gotta make coals and go to the mines and you gotta go to the grounds and plant sweet potatoes so we are used to work. Work is nothing to us. We can work. And they will come and help you out if you need help. They will help you. But no, they are not helpful here. Unless you just tell them to help. Or they will just stand up there without helping. They have this one Haitian guy. I can't stand him. He is too lazy. I gotta clean the grill when he sees he is supposed to clean it. Look at me! Burns. I am dying of burns from cleaning the grill! He doesn't want to clean so I gotta clean. I tell Hardy and she just report it to Greg. And then they quit. She when they quit I gotta do it.

Cleaning the grills, plus changing the oil vats are the most undesirable tasks in the fast food restaurant. At temperatures exceeding 400 degrees, these jobs are extremely dangerous. A number of my respondents showed me scars from the burns they received

while performing these tasks. Other workplaces have trained professionals come in to do this kind of work. It is not surprising that conflict would arise around the performance of such work. Since the company policy is that everyone is required to perform all work tasks, conflict is often based on blaming those groups or individuals who refuse to perform certain functions. Just as African American women are blamed for refusing to clean bathrooms in the Burger King in Chinatown, Treacy blames the Haitians for refusing to clean the grills. Those who resist often end up quitting. Instead of being viewed as justified in not performing work that causes injury, they are labeled "lazy." And the worst tasks end up being performed by the least resistant, such as Treacy. Treacy feels that her burns are not caused by her employer, but rather the Haitians. Treacy's frustration is taken home to her mother who reinforces her compliancy in the workplace. Treacy's mother tells her to "ignore them" (the Haitians). As Treacy says,

I do that a lot. Just ignore them and if the manager tells you to do something just do it. Just stay away from them. I just come here. I ask Greg to punch in, work and every time he needs me to do something I do it. And then when he tells me to go, I go. And then I put on my coat and I am out until the next day.

Ethnic conflict or solidarity can affect opportunity structures in the restaurant. For instance, Treacy was promoted to a management position, but only lasted a week because she was met with resistance by the Latino workers. As she said, "I couldn't take it...Because these Spanish, they don't listen to me. So I just told Greg put me back to crew trainer. Then they will listen to me." Treacy's relationship with the Latino workers was conditional upon being at the same level. Another Antiguan woman who is a manager, Hardy, is not liked by the Latino crew. She has been told by Greg that she is

"too strict." But as she says, "You have to be strict sometimes because as soon as you let your guard down they take advantage of the situation."

Transnational identity and goals

Hardy's ambition and persistence as a manager seem partly rooted in her career ambition to return to Antigua and go into the hotel business. She has also earned a great deal of status within her family by becoming a manager. This differs from Treacy in that while Treacy also plans to return to Antigua, she does not have high career goals.

Treacy's persistence and compliance on the job, compared to others who end up quitting may be based on her viewing her job as temporary, as she also plans to return to Antigua to live. Further, because she is currently building her future life in Antigua by sending her wages to her father there. Her father is using her earnings to build a house for her. Thus, it can be interpreted that Treacy and Hardy have a much different perception of the value of their wages based on the international exchange rate. While the McDonalds wage is buying Treacy a house, it is not even enough for basic subsistence for Miriam. Moreover, Treacy (as well as Hardy) is advantaged relative to Miriam, in that she shares the costs of the household rent and other expenses with her mother and sister. The subsidizing of fast food wages is important because fast food earnings do not provide a "living" wage.

The transnational identity of Hardy and Treacy is as much a psychological state of being as it is rooted in a practical goal of returning to their country of origin. Their compliance on the job is rooted in this identity, and on a psychological level, being able to look forward to a different and better future. It is an identity that is shaped by both class

and race, where they find themselves negotiating between these two features that constitute their beings between their two countries. In Antigua they were poor, but were part of a racial majority. In New York, they are still poor, but they find themselves associated with a racialized minority, a black poor population. Being subjected to racism and discrimination without the material means to escape this racialized experience in New York, helps shape their desire to return "home" and to retain the idea that Antigua *is still* home. The situations of Hardy and Treacy help us understand how race shapes "temporary" migration (Portes, 1996b). But even though Hardy and Treacy are materially associated with black poor population in New York, their class position is distinctively different. It is transnational as they are able to earn relatively higher wages in New York which will help to elevate their class position in Antigua.

Cultural differences in perceptions and goals in the fast food industry

Perceptions and goals in the industry also differ according to cultural and family background. Chinese and Latino respondents (who were female immigrants and living with their fathers), for example, sought employment partly to gain freedom from restrictive households. Like Amy in Chinatown, the assistant manager from Malaysia, this was the case of Maria and Marta. As Marta said, "As I was growing up it was kind of hard to say, 'Mom, can I hang out.' She thought it was dangerous. 'Oh, well no.' But with a job you get to stay out late because you are working."

Maria, is similar to Amy in terms of social class. They both are from professional families and are both university students. They are also similar in that

joining McDonalds meant adopting aspects of the American youth culture and going against their family traditions and expectations. For Amy, this meant working a part-time job, "just like all other American students." It meant gaining practical experience alongside her business studies.

Maria views work as necessary for consumption purposes--in order to buy clothes in a youth culture she perceives as competitive compared to the youth culture in the Dominican Republic. As she says, "Here you have to buy your clothes...It is the same there but there you don't have to show to everybody. There the father puts the clothes for you but here there is competencia." This causes conflict between Maria and her father. She adds,

Oh, yah, you have a Jordan sneakers? Oh you have Rebok? I am going to buy something like that. That is what my father don't like. If I see a sneaker I say, "I like that sneaker. I want to buy that sneaker." I tell my father but he says, "I don't want to buy that stupid thing because it is ugly." That is why I work. Because if I work, I can buy the shoes.

Amy, on the other hand, does not buy clothes. She doesn't view it as necessary. She doesn't work to earn money, but mainly for the experience. Further, like many of my Chinese respondents who are recent immigrants, she does not seem affected or influenced by the derogatory status of the industry in America, while Maria is. Maria feels embarrassed to wear her uniform to work, while Amy is comfortable with it.

While both come from similar social class backgrounds, it is partly their cultural differences that makes Amy view management as upward mobility and Maria as downward mobility. For Amy, working at McDonalds means working for the "number one company of the world." For Maria, it is just a job to earn money to help shape her

image in an American culture she finds competitive. When I asked her about becoming a manager she responded "No way! This is only for now, I will do something better." And for Marta and Nina, who also have been influenced by the derogatory status of the industry, their social class background, being less advantaged than Amy and Maria, makes them view their position and potential in the industry on a more practical level, as an actual step up in terms of status, earnings and benefits.

Gender roles in Washington Heights

Managers and crew members were more inclined to talk gender differences in the workplace than about ethnic and racial differences in work ethics in Washington Heights. This could be because the workforce is more homogenous, in terms of being predominately Latino. We can recall that it was in the restaurant with the most diverse workforce--Chinatown (Burger King)--where I got the greatest elaborations on ethnic and racial differences. Likewise, in Washington Heights, it was at the most diverse restaurant where I got at least some insight on work ethic differences.

But in Washington Heights gender differences were easily talked about and my interviews were steered in this direction. There is one gender difference that all of my respondents point out. Men are assigned to any heavy lifting such as french fry boxes or other food stock, unloading the trucks, and difficult manual tasks such as "breaking down equipment." This difference is accepted by management and crew members alike, on the basis of assumed gender difference in physical strength.

While it is common in New York for there to be a gender division of labor in terms of "front" and "back" positions, it was also common that my respondents were not inclined to elaborate on any gender difference as such until I actually pointed it out to them. Partly this is due to the corporate ideology which professes no gender differences. Further, all positions are perceived to be interchangeable. Divisions of labor are perceived to exist not in terms of what actually happens, but what should or can happen. Men and women both work in the front and back. But, it is more common for the majority of cashiers to be women. It is also the case that if any employee is terribly persistent about working in any particular position, then management usually accommodates such requests, eg. if a male wants to work as a cashier and he is considered appropriate for the position (in terms of appearance, personability, and age) then it is likely that he will, sooner or later, be given the opportunity.

The most interesting and insightful comments on gender from my respondents were those pertaining to differences in management styles. Women are increasingly moving into management positions in fast food across New York, including in Washington Heights. In both McDonalds in Washington Heights, the majority of managers are women. In the first McDonalds, five out of eight managers are women. Greg prefers working with women and actively trains and promotes women. This is partly because he believes women work harder in order to prove their ability. As he says, "I don't know if it is their nature or whatever, but women tend to be more meticulous, better speakers, I don't know...as far as more in control. They have a way of managing situations. Because, unfortunately, so many women feel like they have to prove something. They just tend to

be awesome." But Greg also observes that women are socialized to be more concerned with appearance, behavior and attitude, which makes women better fit into the needs of the organization. Greg says,

I have a problem when I shave everyday I get bumps. One of my managers, my second assistant, Karen, she is like, I guess the epitome of what meticulous is. She was here today and was like, "Hey Mike, it is time to shave already." She will say to me, "Look, you need to talk to so and so, because his attire is really getting pretty bad. Some of these guys need hair cuts." And she will speak to the ladies. And Hardy is the same way. And Lea is the same way. While on the other side, where Will, if he sees me with a beard, he will grow one too. He wouldn't turn around and comment on it. But I guess because of the society we are in, guys don't turn and tell other guys you look good or you look bad. While women tend to easily give their opinions on what looks good and what looks bad. I guess that is one of the reasons. But I would rather work with female managers...I don't have a problem working with the male managers....but female managers, I think one of the reasons why I have done well is because I have more females. And I was trained by a female. Basically all my trainees were female managers. So I give a lot of credit to the females I have worked with and the females that I work with now. And when they are upset, that is a big problem too. But I think it all balances out. So I think it is good. I worked in a store where the managers were all male with the exception of one female manager. She only worked Saturday and Sunday. Here I am working in a store where...there is difference when you "put" a cup and when you "place" a cup... Males tend to be...they work and work and work but they don't have a problem whether the cup is straight or crooked.

In the second McDonalds three out of five managers are women. Here we can see that women tend to have a different perspective than Greg about male/female differences in management style. Because women tend to be perceived as more passive--by both employees and clientele--they have to be more aggressive. Marta says, for instance that for male managers, play is after work. "All work and no play. That is the way they work. So far, all the male managers I have worked with that is their style of managing. Us female managers, we are usually more...I have been intimidated by men because of the fact that crew gives more respect to men than they do women. So that makes me more

aggressive than a normal woman should be."

Women managers, it seems, must constantly reflect on what "a normal woman" actually is. What seems to be the case is that women managers tend to believe they are perceived differently--as more emotional, more detail oriented--and, at some level, are reacting to this perception. But it is a style they can implement only during certain occasions, such as particular times of the day. In other words, women's management style is more flexible and varied, while men's style is constant. Women managers need to be womanly, and, they need to be aggressive. But a different kind of aggressiveness: aggressive, but not offensive--and flexibly aggressive according to certain times of the day. Marta articulates this,

When I first started I was always closing. I always got 4:00 to 12:00, 4:00 to 1:00 things like that. I had to be more aggressive than a woman manager who worked in the daytime. Working at night because it is more rough--you have the rough crowd coming in. So you have to be a little more rougher than you usually are. Men are usually just rough all together, in the day or the night. That is the difference that I see. Us women, in the changing of the shift has to make our attitudes change. In the morning time when we work, we could be jolly and act all crazy. Because now we have all families and kids so we don't have any problems. But when it comes to the nighttime, you have to change your attitude. I have to become one of those rough managers. "Yah, uh huh, how can I help you...things like that." Because kids, and the older guys, men they usually think they see a female manager she is a pushover. We get over on her. We do whatever we want. I try to say in a nice way. It is not what you say. It is how you say it. I try to say, not to offend anybody. I just try to get my point across. Not offending anybody. If I offend then it turns out to be what I don't want it to be. That is the difference you see between female and male managers. They are rough all day long. But us women we are rough just at a certain shift.

Women managers, then, are constantly mediating between the perceptions of being "push-overs" and being more emotional. The challenge of being a manager for a woman is to retain her sense of womanhood by acting out her "womanly" characteristics and at the

same time commanding respect when such respect is not traditionally associated with these womanly features. To be legitimate as a woman manager means acting out what Greg perceives in women to be valuable to the organization.

It seems that gender differences as such are what provide women access to management positions. But the gender difference may be built upon women's unequal access to internal job ladders to begin with. It could be, for example, that women are simply exhibiting more competence in view of the company's increasing emphasis on the service features of the restaurant operation. They exhibit more emotion, more courtesy, in the customer interaction. They pay more attention to employees' appearance and attitude and the overall presentation of the restaurant. Perhaps, because men have always had such access to management positions, they simply do not have to exercise such extreme competence. And, as Julia, in Chinatown suggests, it could be that women, because of their social conditions, because of their historical oppression, and because of their more limited opportunities in the labor market at large, they simply value these positions more than men. As more women are promoted to management, gender differences in style seem to become accepted as inherent. This may reinforce and establish gender criteria for management positions, where men retain the old style of management, and women adapt to the changing organizational emphasis.

Summary

Unlike in Chinatown there are no *deliberate* cultural marketing strategies employed by the restaurants I examined in Washington Heights. They do not try to

culturally reinvent aspects of the Latino culture. But, the implicit cultural strategy among restaurants, here, is one of *cultural matching between employees and clientele*. Fast food restaurants are geographically and culturally stratified within Washington Heights according to the degree to which Spanish or English is required to service clientele. Thus, although most employees do not reside in the immediate area, there are patterns of ethnic hiring resulting in a workforce dominated by Latino immigrants and some second generation Latinos.

While the Latino workforce is nationally diverse, coming from several different countries including the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Central American countries, as well as Puerto Rico, there is no language barrier as there is among the nationally diverse Chinese workforce in the Chinatown McDonalds who find the only common language among them is English, and, that learning English is required for continued employment, and, to climb the fast food job ladder.

Recent Chinese immigrants who do not speak English would not find a job in Washington Heights. But Antiguans, whose native language is English, do find opportunity here. This opportunity, however, is limited to the one restaurant (among the three I examined) which stresses English over Spanish language due to its close proximity to a "white ethnic" border. And, for those endowed with human and social capital, like the South Asian manager at Burger King, there does seem to be management opportunity at the top levels of the restaurant hierarchy in some restaurants. This English, Hindi, and Malay speaking manager in Washington Heights represents a growing tendency of the industry in New York to hire highly educated South Asians for management positions.

They have hoped for something better, but have accepted this as the best of available alternatives. At the same time, they still aim at the highest levels of the occupational hierarchy. His position in Washington Heights reflects the larger global and ethnic hierarchy among immigrants in New York. Indian immigrants comprise one of the most highly educated immigrant groups in New York while Dominicans are among the least educated groups in New York.

Spanish language is a criterion for being hired at the crew member level in the other two restaurants in Washington Heights which works to provide opportunity for Latinos, while excluding other groups. One restaurant, owned by Cubans, however, requires Spanish fluency at all levels of the hierarchy, and, even provides advancement opportunities for those who speak only Spanish, unlike any restaurant in Chinatown which require immigrants to be fluent in English to be eligible for a promotion.

This Cuban-owned restaurant would seem to fit the model of the "ethnic enclave" more closely than any other restaurant I have examined (Portes, 1985). It is owned by Cubans who operate in a Latino neighborhood. These owners rely on cultural capital of Latino managers, and they capitalize on "ethnic solidarism" (Light, 1972). In turn, they provide job and advancement opportunity for "co-ethnics" who have little opportunity elsewhere, such as the assistant managers at McDonalds on Dyckman Street who speak only Spanish.

The concept of "co-ethnic," here, however, is expanded to include all Latino groups, where "ethnicity" is bound by a common language. And, the concept of "ethnic enterprise" is embraced within the structures of giant corporate capital. Structures

of capital, in other words, do not include horizontal linkages within the ethnic neighborhood. Rather, they are comprised of vertical (hierarchical) linkages from the local restaurant site to corporate headquarters of the parent company.

The Latino workforce here, like the Chinese workforce in Chinatown, is also diverse in terms of age and social class. Unlike the Chinese in Chinatown, however, the overwhelming majority of fast food workers in Washington Heights are of working class origins. This reflects larger demographic features of the Latino population in New York which confirm high levels of dependency on low wage work. Latinos have lower levels of human capital, and higher levels of poverty than any other group. But the outnumbering of working class versus middle class among employees in this area also reflects characteristics of the neighborhood and surrounding areas such as being impoverished, its long distance from the center of Manhattan, not being a cultural attraction for tourists, and, its reputation as a riot-prone and crime ridden area. These factors deter "middle class" youth from seeking fast food jobs in this area.

I also showed how age and gender affect job and promotion opportunity, and divisions of labor in Washington Heights. In some ways, these factors are universal across restaurant sites in New York City whereby the emphasis on service interactions works to favor the "energy," image, and malleability of "youth" and, the "feminine" features of women which include "emotional flexibility," and docility, especially for "front-line" work, and for manager positions. But in Washington Heights, the features of age and gender are also viewed by employers in the context of growing economic and social impoverishment in the area. Applicants who depend on this work are younger--with teenagers starting

families, ~~older~~--with increasing numbers of middle age people being disemployed or underemployed, and ~~female~~--with a rise in "broken" families. Importantly, employers are witnessing a "changing workforce" where more people are depending on this work for longer periods of time, and for "full-time" jobs.

Equally important is the fact that the labor supply for fast food employers is changing and growing, which allows employers to be more selective in hiring and recruiting. These managers, however, most of whom rose through the fast food ranks, feel caught in-between the growing demand for jobs among a non-traditional workforce--such as older and more needy and "depressed" workers, and, the continued corporate demand for a young, "enthusiastic" workforce without "problems" who are easier to emotionally manage, who "smile," and contribute to an upbeat ambiance.

The resignation of Marco, the resilience of Cristiana facing a hopeful future, the simple desperation of Miriam, the aim of Maria to fit into a competitive and consumerist American youth culture, the transnational identities and goals of Hardy and Treacy, the practical ambition of Greg, Nina, and Marta, and the use of social and human capital by Gitu represent the various underlying approaches to the industry among Latino, Antiguan and South Asian immigrants in Washington Heights. These are perceptions rooted in class, gender, race, ethnicity and material conditions.

In the next chapter we go to Downtown Brooklyn, one of the oldest commercial areas in New York City, and, an area markedly defined by New York's black population as workers, shoppers, and diners. In this next chapter I examine more closely the racial and ethnic social relations in New York's changing workplace and, its

affect on the conceptualization of "race" among New York City employers. In the case study chapters so far, I have discussed racial and ethnic relations and conflicts, as well as perceptions and biases about different groups, and how they affect employment opportunity for certain groups. In this context I have alluded to various situations that pointed to the "fizzling out" of American blacks from the workplace. In both Chinatown and Washington Heights, managers claimed that the numbers of black Americans in these areas have declined over the last few years. In the next chapter where I focus on an historically black area, I look more particularly at the experience of black Americans in the industry. In what ways are they distinguished from "foreign" workers by employers? How do they articulate their own experiences, work ethics and "attitude," and how does this help us understand the emergence of a hierarchy of racial and ethnic hiring preferences and biases among fast food employers in New York?

Chapter Five

Downtown Brooklyn

Introduction

The Borough Hall area of Downtown Brooklyn is one of New York City's oldest commercial areas. Just across the Brooklyn Bridge and on the waterfront it is only minutes away from Downtown Manhattan by vehicle or subway. Municipal buildings and court offices of centuries old architecture span and cover several blocks and constitute the core structures around which this area has been built. Today, the municipal complex stands at the heart of an area becoming more and more globally diverse with workers, shoppers and entrepreneurs from all over the world, and especially the Third World.

I examined two restaurants here--a Burger King on Fulton Street and a McDonalds on Court Street. Fulton Street is part of the Fulton Mall, Brooklyn's famous shopping street for New York's black populations. It is filled with other corporate franchises, downscale retailing and immigrant enterprise. The Fulton Mall is located just North of the municipal complex, on the other side of Boerum Place--the street that borders the municipal complex to the North. At the southern end of Fulton Street are City housing projects where mainly poor Black Americans reside.

The McDonalds is located on the other side of the municipal complex on Court Street, the street that lines the southern border of the municipal complex. South and West of the municipal complex is Brooklyn Heights--a "high priced" mainly White

residential area and with it, private schools, upscale and moderate scale ethnic restaurants and various commercial retail. North and West of the municipal complex is MetroTech, a new corporate plaza that was built as a self-contained unit--to remain detached from its surroundings. It is only a few blocks west of the Fulton Mall.

On weekday mornings the area bustles with activity and displays a racial, ethnic and social class diversity that is commonly seen in New York City with such intensity. Middle class residents are making their way to their 9:AM jobs in Manhattan. Minority group office workers joined by various other administrative employees from outside neighborhoods file into the municipal buildings. Middle Eastern bagel cart owners and Bangladeshi fruit vendors are on the busiest street corners and Spanish speaking immigrants are busy preparing produce and flowers outside for sale by Korean deli owners on Court Street.

On the Fulton Mall--various shops and department stores from Arab and South Asian owned gift and jewelry shops to Macy's, Woolworths and the Wiz are opening their doors. Old style diners, take-out delis owned by Greeks, and numerous other eateries owned by Afghanis, Bangladeshis, Venezuelans, Salvadorans, and Americans are already serving breakfast and coffee to the areas workforce.

It is nearly the middle of the working day for Elizabeth, an immigrant from Guyana who works as a cashier at Burger King on Fulton Street. She awoke at 4:30 AM to arrive to work at 6:AM after a 45 minute commute from her home on East Flatbush Avenue, a largely West Indian neighborhood. Peggy, from Jamaica, who lives near Elizabeth, has just started her shift at McDonalds on Court Street where she also works as a cashier.

Elizabeth and Peggy are newcomers to Downtown Brooklyn as are the Central Americans, Koreans, South Asians, Arabs and many others. They make up part of a globally diverse workforce in this area that is one of New York City's oldest government districts.

Downtown Brooklyn is different from Chinatown and Washington Heights. It is not considered an "ethnic neighborhood." Immigrants do not live here and most fast food patrons are workers, students and shoppers. The people Elizabeth and Peggy serve are not looking for an ethnic ambiance nor do they expect cashiers to speak anything but English. Yet, Downtown Brooklyn is similar to Chinatown and Washington Heights in that it has become predominately an immigrant area.

Another difference between Downtown Brooklyn and the two previous areas is that the global character of this area is being molded around what has been a piece of traditional America--government buildings, court houses, public service employment, shopping, and lunch-hour eating out with co-workers. What is also different is that this piece of traditional America has been markedly defined and shaped by and around American minorities, especially African-Americans. Since the 1970s, the public sector has been the major employment niche for American minorities comprising well paying, unionized jobs with benefits. Although African Americans are not business owners here, they have claimed a large presence as workers, as shoppers and as diners.

While this area is considered predominately a black shopping district there are few black-owned establishments. Rather, the large corporate franchise stores, which are not black owned tend to cater to cultural demands of its black clientele who have been their

major patrons. In this way, Woolworths on Fulton Street carries sweet potato pie and likewise, McDonalds on Court Street offers fried chicken.¹

With the basic laws of economies of scale, coupled with the relative impoverishment of the black population in New York City, these corporate chains maintain a captive market with black New Yorkers by ensuring their patronage for the cheapest goods and deterring their possibility for independent entrepreneurship. There are multiple factors operating here. First, while immigrant entrepreneurs flourish through immigrant support networks such as the Koreans in the Deli business and nail salons, South Asians in the newspaper stands, gift shops and Indian restaurants, Chinese in Chinese restaurants, gift shops and street vending, Mexican taco caravans and flower vending and Nigerians and Latinos in the gypsy cab business, the black Americans have no such industry wide niche. Bailey and Waldinger point out, there are few black businesses of any significance. "The black business sector is still a cluster of small and marginal businesses in the personal service and petty retail lines with virtually no employment expanding potential" (Bailey and Waldinger, 1989).

¹ About the fried chicken sold at McDonalds, the owner (who is Jewish) said they developed it in Downtown Brooklyn as a regional product where it was also developed in places in the South. As he said,

This fried chicken product that we are selling here was actually developed locally. But previously McDonalds wanted almost a generic menu across the country. But i think in the last several years they wised up because there are regional differences. So we are going to be able to increase our market share by catering to the regional differences that are there. The fried chicken product that we are selling is in the NY region (including New Jersey) at about 50 restaurants. Certain markets, like I think Raleigh, or Roanoke, Virginia is on a market wide. Everyone on their television market is on their product.

Second, those immigrant enterprises that do flourish as the ones mentioned here, are businesses that either have not been corporatized, or are those that offer a cheaper, new or more accessible commodity for their own immigrant groups such as gypsy cabs or New Yorkers in general such as nail salons. Or, in some cases, provide a novelty commodity to New Yorkers such as “exotic” ethnic restaurants. Or, in the case of Chinatown, Chinese restaurants serve tourists looking for a different experience as much as they serve Chinese looking for affordable, native food.

Aside from some types of ethnic food such as Chinese restaurants which remain cheap partly due to labor costs below minimum wage, and surviving independent pizza shops, cheap food in general has been corporatized by corporate giants. This is partly because they have usurped the market and linked to this, because of economies of scale, where it is virtually impossible for an independent to produce food at such a low cost. Two 99 cent Big Macs provide enough calories for a whole day. For these reasons corporate fast food has become not only a part of traditional American culture, but a food supply Americans--especially the more impoverished--have become dependent upon and entrepreneurs cannot compete with. Thus, rather than compete, increasing numbers of entrepreneurs, especially immigrant entrepreneurs, have been opening corporate fast food franchises rather than independents as the best of business alternatives. (The average tenure of a franchise restaurant is 10 years as opposed to five years for an independently owned restaurant) (Emerson, 1990).

Several changes have been occurring in Downtown Brooklyn that work to recast issues of race and employment and intensify the global character of this area. New York

City's privatization efforts have emptied out these municipal office buildings of thousands of its workers--including American minorities. Commercial activity in the area has been under constant conversion. On the Fulton Mall upscale or moderate scale retail space has become converted to immigrant enterprise and corporate franchises. Metro-tech brings thousands of new workers into the area from Manhattan, many of them middle class, but who don't integrate into the neighborhood. Most significantly, increasing numbers of Third World immigrants are finding home in the Borough of Brooklyn and are coming to Downtown Brooklyn to find jobs and to shop. A global workforce here becomes sorted and structured around declining and growing industry sectors where race is defined by ethnicity, nationality and social class.

It is here, in Downtown Brooklyn, where we can begin to see how the tendency to employ immigrants rather than the American born transcends the demands for clientele and neighborhood matching shown in the previous two chapters and reshapes service industries. Respondents at both restaurants claim that their workforces have been transformed over the years from mainly American minority group members to a majority of foreign-born employees.

As much as we might expect Korean Delis and Arab jewelry shops to employ immigrants we would not go so far as to necessarily expect the same from American franchise companies of giant corporate America in this area. They are not like Chinatown McDonalds integrating into Chinatown by becoming Asian-ized or the restaurants in Washington Heights integrating into Dominican neighborhoods by becoming Latino-ized. What is important about Downtown Brooklyn restaurants compared to Chinatown and

Washington Heights is that they are sites where we can examine employment practices that do not emphasize ethnic or language matching nor a cultural marketing strategy. Here we can examine processes that account for the "fizzling out" process of American-born workers. The "fizzling out" process is what Roberto from Chinatown Burger King referred to but which we have not yet explored in depth. American-born workers (referring to American-minorities) eventually "fizzle out" according to this manager because of their poor work ethics and too much "attitude" compared to foreign-born workers.

This is also important because the process by which immigrants gain a greater presence in these restaurants does not represent simply an ever evolving ethnic changeover in immigrant occupations like from Jewish to Latina garment workers (Waldinger, 1986), Irish to Jamaican domestic workers and Italian to Mexican dishwashers. Rather, this is an ethnic change among people of color--that is First World people of color to Third World people of color. It reflects multiple factors that include employer preferences, recruitment practices and increasing job competition. The way Americans and immigrants differ in terms of perceptions and experiences of fast food employment, desire for these jobs, workplace conditions, structural and living conditions, larger labor market opportunities, and social mobility affect this process. In general, immigrants tend to stay longer, tend to be managers more than Americans and tend to have friends and relatives of their own ethnic group working with them in the same restaurant. Immigrants also tend to view these jobs more favorably than Americans.

The way race and ethnicity are ordered in and between these restaurants mainly

reflects who applies for jobs where, who stays and for what reasons, who gets promoted and who accesses information about job openings. At McDonalds, for example, most employees are from the West Indies. But at Burger King the workforce is more diverse representing several countries from Latin America, South Asia, as well as the West Indies.

The McDonalds and Burger King in Downtown Brooklyn are similar in size, employing 50 and 60 employees respectively with five salaried managers each. At least half of their workforces are employed full-time, a percentage that has increased dramatically over the last decade. They are also similar in management styles and labor processes mainly due to the fact that this Burger King has deliberately adopted many features of the McDonalds model. They both have implemented some of the latest technologies including computerized registers. They are different in that at Burger King all managers hold equal status, whereas at McDonalds there is a management hierarchy. Most employees speak English and English is required on the front-line. And, managers are required to speak English.

They also differ in ownership. Burger King is owned by a large company based in New Jersey that owns nine other restaurants. McDonalds is family owned by a two-brother team--"second generation candidates" who own one other McDonalds in Brooklyn. In this sense, Burger King in structure, more closely resembles the McDonalds in Chinatown and McDonalds in Downtown Brooklyn more closely resembles the Burger King in Chinatown. Another difference is that Burger King is newer, established in 1992, and has hired its managers from outside the company. In this sense, this Burger King is similar to the Burger King in Washington Heights where the managers were also hired

from outside the company. The McDonalds has been here for more than 20 years and has hired all managers from the crew level, similar to most restaurants I have examined.

Divisions of labor--mainly "front" and "back" work and auxiliary clean-up and lifting work--follow the same patterns here as in Chinatown and Washington Heights. Women work on the "front line," men perform heavy lifting and machinery tasks, and older people are usually assigned to extraneous clean-up work. Young men and women work in the "back" preparing food orders.

McDonalds on Court Street

McDonalds on Court Street has two levels with a seating capacity of over 100. From the outside its appearance is similar to Chinatown McDonalds. It has a two-level glass exterior with a large McDonalds arch visible from several blocks in each direction. From the second floor one looks out onto Court Street and White street vendors of jewelry, T-shirts and sunglasses. Also, one can see a bank, a hardware store, and a Korean deli across the street.

In its early years in the 1970s, this McDonalds stood alongside only one other eating establishment--Nick and Joes, a pizza joint. Now, it sits amidst various other quick service food places such as a Korean deli, more pizza joints, and a bagel shop. It is next door to a more upscale Italian restaurant. On its other side is a bargain drug store. At the end of the block going West is a new check cashing place and on the following block are boarded up store fronts signifying the growing decay of the area. Chinese street vendors are on the sidewalk in front of these boarded up store fronts selling various accessories

such as hats, socks, and underwear similar to Chinese vendors in Chinatown Manhattan.

Other fast food chains are located a few blocks East on Court Street. They include Dunkin Donuts, and one of two food courts in the area comprised of Nathans, Pizza Hut and Bruce Rogers. These food courts are managed exclusively by South Asians and owned by the Riese corporation—a family operation of second and third generation Russian Jews and one of the biggest restaurant owners in New York City. The fast food restaurants serve mainly a business crowd with lunch being their busiest time. With heavy competition from these other places to service an afternoon crowd during lunch break, McDonalds focuses on fast, convenient service, customer turnover, and cheap food—rather than a leisurely place to dine, be entertained or a place to experience a different culture.²

This McDonalds is a family operation in terms of its ownership. It was opened by the father and mother of the current co-owners—brother owners. The father was a

² Henry, the owner of this McDonalds commented on how McDonalds has a different emphasis in different locations.

We are selling different things in different locations. This is a very mature market here. We have a lot of competition. This block here, I got here eight years ago first. This restaurant is older though. Nick and Joes was there, and us. That was the only food sold on either side of this block between Livingston and Schimmerhorn. Now we have Evergreen Deli across the street. There is a new pizza place going next door. There is a full service restaurant there. There is the bagel place. There is the seafood place on the corner. So the competition is much greater than it was before, a few years ago. They are not going to line up outside our door, like they do in Moscow. We are not that much of a novelty. Then we have to sell a different commodity here than they do.

worked for. Richard, the main owner-operator for this McDonalds on Court Street for the past nine years, has a management team consisting of four immigrants and only one who is American-born. The general manager, from Barbados, has been with this McDonalds for 17 years. He started at this McDonalds at the age of 15 or 16 while still in high school. Two managers are from Jamaica. The only woman manager is from Trinidad and has been with McDonalds for 14 years. Augustine, the American-born, is a second generation Puerto Rican and has been with McDonalds for nine years. He is now a first assistant manager.

The workforce largely consists of immigrants from the West Indies who are English speaking. They are largely from Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana. (See Table 5.1 for cultural features of my respondents among this workforce.) According to Augustine, the number of foreign born has increased from about 15-20 percent nine years ago (when he started) to over 50 percent today. The rest of the workforce consists of American minorities but also includes the one White woman employee, MaryAnn.

In some ways, this McDonalds resembles the Burger King in Chinatown more than any other restaurant in my study. It is a relatively small operation consisting of about 50 employees. The management turnover is extremely low, as most of these managers have been with the company for close to a decade or more. And, opportunities for advancement in the restaurant are minimal. Augustine, for example, starting out as a crew member, used this job to work his way through college in the City University System. He is now enrolled in a masters program in criminal justice and plans

Table 5.1

**Downtown Brooklyn McDonalds
Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents**

Level of Job	Language	Ethnicity	National Origin
Assistant Manager	Spanish and English	Latino (Puerto Rico)	U.S.
Crew Member	English	Italian-American	U.S.
Crew Member	English	West Indian	Jamaica
Crew Member	English	West Indian	Jamaica
Crew Member	English	West Indian	Barbados

to go into the police force because as he says "I know that I am a little frozen in vertical movement here...the higher you get to the top, it levels out a lot." Being a manager at McDonalds holds a respectable status within Augustine's family. Augustine grew up in a Puerto Rican neighborhood in Williamsburg Brooklyn (where he still lives with his parents) and attended one of the poorest public schools. His father worked in a candle factory as a foreman for 30 years. His mother worked for the Avon company as a salesperson and a manager. Augustine is a first generation college graduate.

Unlike the Chinatown McDonalds, the implementation of new technologies at the Borough Hall McDonalds has resulted in a reduction of staff. Nine years ago, the store had 70 crew members on payroll. A current staff of 50 means a staff reduction close to 30 percent. The difference between Chinatown and Borough Hall McDonalds is that Chinatown has created new jobs in its emphasis on service and dining room staffing because of their attempt to draw in a new residential Chinese and international tourist clientele. The Borough Hall McDonalds does not have such an emphasis on dining room

service as it does not actively target a particular group as clientele.

But like the Chinatown McDonalds, the Borough Hall McDonalds is one of the 15 McDonalds in New York City that are participating in the new program in McDonalds called "crew empowerment" which is discussed in chapter two. At the Borough Hall McDonalds this began about three years ago.

Like Chinatown and Washington Heights, most employees do not live in the immediate vicinity. According to Augustine, "there is nobody who lives in the neighborhood." Augustine explained that we couldn't expect to find employees from the area given that Brooklyn Heights--the closest residential area to Borough Hall--is a "high priced area." He says that some of the employees live in the projects which are 10 to 15 minutes past the Fulton Mall by walking. Most of the employees who are immigrants from the West Indies live in East Flatbush and some live in Crown Heights. They travel by bus or subway to and from work.

Burger King on the Fulton Mall

This Burger King opened in 1992. It is located on Fulton Street, one block North of Boerum Place. Like McDonalds on Court Street, it is also bi-level with a large seating capacity of over 100. The Burger King logo looms large over Fulton Street and can be seen from several blocks away. Sitting on the second floor, one looks out onto Fulton Street and can see a Korean Deli, The Wiz, a ladies clothing store and an upscale restaurant. After lunch hour Burger King employs an armed security guard to stand at its doors. Burger King has video cameras surveilling every part of the store interior--except

the restroom. This includes the front-line, dining room, kitchen, basement, and stairwell. Television screens at the front-line and in the managers office located in the back of the kitchen constantly display what the cameras are filming.

Fulton Street is the major shopping street of the Fulton Mall. It consists of several corporate chains. These include one large department store (A&S, now Macys), shoe stores such as Payless and Thom McAnn, discount stores such as Woolworths and Connellys, music stores such as The Wiz and drug stores such as Duane Reade. Several fast food chains are located on Fulton Street. Next to and North of Burger King is a Subway. On the other side of Burger King is a Wendy's and a Blimpies.³ Further North of Wendy's is the second fast food court in the area. A few blocks away from Burger King is a Mamas Fried Chicken.⁴ On the street behind Burger King is a White Castle, the cheapest fast food outlet often selling four burgers for one dollar. Next door to this White Castle is a check cashing and track betting establishments. There are independent businesses in the area as well. Many of them are ethnic enterprises. Besides pizza and coffee shops and a several decades old upscale steak house,⁵ there are several Arab and South Asian owned small electronic, bag and gift shops. There are West Indian bakeries and Korean delis.

³ The Blimpies is owned by a husband-wife team--immigrants from Argentina and El Salvador respectively.

⁴ The Mama's Fried Chicken is co-owned by immigrants from Bangladesh and Afghanistan with a South Asian male workforce.

⁵ This steak house is several decades old and was established mainly to cater to municipal officials in the area. It sits there oddly today as it is extremely upscale amidst fast food eateries, pizza joints and other downscale eating establishments.

Unlike Chinatown and Washington Heights, the street food is typically American (or New Yorkian) and licensed by the city. It includes vendors of hot dogs and soft drinks, falafel and slouvaki sandwiches, bagels and coffee, and fruit stands. For a sweet, one is likely to go to Woolworths for their sweet potato pie which has become as traditional to Fulton Mall shoppers as buying a Dominican cake on 181st Street is to a Dominican, or for a Chinese, going to a Chinese bakery in Chinatown.

Ownership and employee features at Burger King

At Burger King on the Fulton Mall the workforce is more diverse than at McDonalds on Court Street. But similarly, the majority are immigrants. In total, there are 60 employees out of which 60 to 70 percent (or 35 to 40) are foreign born. They are immigrants from countries in Central America, South America, South Asia, and, the Caribbean. There are no white non-hispanic employees. There are about 15-20 black and Latino-American born employees. All of the employees and managers speak English, either as a first or second language. (See Table 5.2 for cultural features of my respondents among this workforce.) None of the employees live in the neighborhood. Some Latino-Americans live in New Jersey. Other employees live in Queens and other parts of Brooklyn including as far away as Coney Island and Far Rockaway. The West Indian immigrants live in East Flatbush.

There are four male managers and one female manager. Three are immigrants from India. Two are black American. The only woman manager is black American. This Burger King does not follow the typical managerial hierarchical system. All five

managers have equal status. Four out of five managers have extensive managerial experience with McDonalds. One manager implied that the ownership deliberately recruited managers from McDonalds in order to duplicate the McDonalds' management system. They have also adopted McDonalds' system of service. Rather than a "multi-convention" system which exists in most original model Burger Kings, this Burger King has adopted McDonalds' "hospitality" system. (A description of these two systems is given in chapter two.)

Table 5.2

**Downtown Brooklyn Burger King
Language, Ethnicity, and National Origin of Respondents**

Level of Job	Language	Ethnicity	National Origin
Assistant Manager	English	African-American	U.S.
Assistant Manager	Hindi and English	South Asian	India
Production Leader	English	African-American (second-generation Antiguan)	U.S.
Crew Member	Spanish and English	Latino (Puerto Rican)	U.S.
Crew Member	Spanish and English	Latino (Puerto Rican)	U.S.
Crew Member	English	West Indian	Guyana
Crew Member	English	West Indian	Guyana
Crew Member	English	African-American	U.S.
Crew Member	English	African-American	U.S.
Crew Member	English	African-American	U.S.

The restaurant is owned by a large company that owns nine other Burger Kings and whose main office is in New Jersey. The restaurant services 1700-1800 people per day and makes sales of about \$9,000 per day (based on a five dollars per person average). This amounts to over three million dollars in sales per year, in the same range as the Chinatown McDonalds. Opportunity structures here are greater than they are at McDonalds on Court Street since it is a large organization with internal job ladders beyond the store site. In this way, it again, resembles McDonalds in Chinatown. Additionally, at this Burger King, they have implemented incentive schemes for managers such as profit sharing beyond established sales and profit quotas. One recent month the managers were awarded \$16,000 to share among themselves out of which they included production leaders and selected crew members. Managers here claim to make enough to save for future investment in their own fast food franchise. Two of the managers (Donald--a black American and Aseem--from India) plan to eventually open a Sbarro chain restaurant together.

Donald has been in the fast food business since he was 16; McDonalds was his first employer. He became a manager within a year and was with McDonalds for more than 10 years. He was recruited from McDonalds by this Burger King ownership with a better offer in 1992. He plans to move up the management hierarchy and eventually open his own franchise. Donald lives in Far Rockaway but prefers to commute an hour and a half each way (by car) because when he did work for McDonalds in Far Rockaway, he became a visible public figure and even during his non-working hours was constantly associated with McDonalds. Donald views himself as successful and distinguishes the success of his

family from the black American population in general. His father has been in and out of the workforce and an alcoholic for most of his life. But his mother has been a manager of a hotel for several decades. All of his siblings (three sisters) are college graduates and have professional career jobs.

Another manager, Britto, is an immigrant from India and is similar to Gitu, the Burger King manager in Washington Heights who is also from India. Both came to the United States with different expectations and joined Burger King as the best of available opportunities. Britto supports two children in college and his wife on his Burger King salary. He came to the U.S. to join his sister who encouraged him to sell a profitable tourism business in India and reinvest the money in the U.S. He was a Ph.D. candidate in India in Philosophy. Shortly after arriving in New York, he lost all his money in an investment plan. Now, he says, he can't go back to India (even for a visit) while being a Burger King manager. Britto is a good example of how some immigrants today perceive their experiences in the U.S. as a failure according to the kind of work that they do. Britto feels ashamed of his position and can't face his family in India who would consider being a manager at a Burger King as very low in social and economic status. He says that his situation is "a pathetic, pathetic story." In the United States his whole lifestyle has changed from what it was in India. He works at Burger King 10 hours per day or more and five days per week. But "This is America" he says. It is "entirely different with bad social conditions." He has accepted his position for now until his children graduate from college. As he says "If you don't have time to laugh, you cry and half my life is over, so I try to be satisfied with my life." He plans to eventually get out of the industry and to start

his own independent business.

Hiring criteria at McDonalds and Burger King

What employers at these two restaurants said about their criteria for hiring crew members was similar to what managers' at the restaurants in the previous case studies said. They referred to various subjective criteria concerning attitude, energy level, appearance, motivation and personality. Such criteria is linked to the way the restaurant wants to present itself to the public. Even though there is no explicit emphasis on ethnic affinity or cultural marketing strategy, there is still an emphasis on how crew members fit into the overall presentation. Donald said "We have to sell the personalities, the courtesy, the respect. We sell all that."

When I asked managers what they looked for in people when hiring, their responses included statements such as "High energy. We need people who are friendly...with a little bit of pep." "We need good people...we care about their hygiene, their appearance." Augustine was the only manager (out of four respondents) who claimed to look for particular skills and experience during hiring including while interviewing applicants, as he said,

In the interview process..first of all you don't want them to answer yes or no. You try to give them questions where they can't answer that way. Find something they are interested in and hit on that. If they go to school, you want to find out what classes they are interested in. So you try to find out peoples' likes and dislikes, ask them questions like that. Former jobs and what they did.

Augustine, however, did not say that he looks at school grades, math skills, or any concrete measure of assessing an applicant. It seems more the case that he uses this line

of questioning to assess an applicants personal characteristics including attitude and personability as he also says that "The biggest skill you have to have is you have to be personable. You have to work with your fellow worker. You have to deal with the public." On the other hand, Augustine suggested that attitude itself is measurable by certain actions or behavior as he says that "Some of them will come with a bad attitude. A lot of times they come here, "Can I have an application please? And "Can I get a pen?" Some people will look at that wrong...well this person isn't prepared to work."

Certain experiences indicate to employers the ability to fulfill these subjective criteria. Donald, for example, says that "young guys who are into the sports and the ladies who are in gymnastics and acting are apt to be energetic." Augustine says that "If you are a person who worked in day care and they want to work here then you have a good prospect. If you work with three, four, and five year olds then you are prepared to deal with an adult who is a little bit wilder but thinks better."

There are also indicators that suggest to employers that applicants are incapable of fulfilling these criteria. Those from the street--those unemployed, those who do not have internal connections (friends or relatives working in the restaurant already)--have become part of an "other" category. These are people rendered suspicious and unemployable. They are identified by various traits such as speaking street language and wearing clothing from the street. Donald said that "you never know what you are getting from the street." John, a 28 year old second generation Puerto Rican and crew member said that "If you speak like street language, he (the manager) is not going to hire you." John elaborates on this, pointing to how nebulous the distinction between this "other" and the employable is.

Gus (a manager) hires people who have a good attitude, who have a good personality. He doesn't hire a person who looks too rough...they dress like they live in the streets. People that look presentable and that otherwise give a good impression. A lot of them speak very well...When a person first comes to an interview, appearance is the first thing an employer is going to look at. Your attitude, your response to questions, that all plays a part in what he thinks about you...if you speak like street language, you will be perceived as a trouble maker in the first interview.

Here, John tries to specify precisely what are these desirable traits of attitude and personality. But in his response to my question "what precisely are these characteristics" John seems to be only able to respond by relative association. A "good attitude" and a "good personality" are the opposite of "rough." Living "in the streets" is associated with being "rough." "Dress" and "language" determine where you live--either "in the streets" or not "in the streets." Further, the subjective criteria, such as a good attitude, are explained by specifying undesirable traits. "Good attitude" and "personality" do not consist of "street language." Looking "presentable" means not dressing like "they live on the streets."

These are not only indicators of how managers judge one's ability to present oneself to the public--traits required to work in the "front" as a cashier--or, to work as a team player. They are also indicators of how managers judge deference implying the ability to exercise control over the individual in the restaurant workplace. The cryptic and relative nature of these traits and how they are identified in applicants is widely conceded to be within the managers' sphere of knowledge, experience and responsibilities. As another crew member said, they (managers) can really tell if you really want to work." Significantly, this "want to work," this "good attitude" has become the hallmark of immigrants, as opposed to American-born workers.

Foreign-born versus American-born: Differing perceptions

The foreign/American-born distinction was the most prevalent distinction made about the workforce. It was a distinction made even by Americans themselves--both workers and managers. Donald was most explicit about this distinction, even though he is a black American, born and raised in New York City. When asked "Do you see any difference here between people who were born here and people from other countries," he responded,

I do. I do. People who are born here, they are more into saying I don't need this. There is not the same pride in their work as much as people who come from somewhere else and say "Hey, this is my life. I have to start from somewhere. And when I get to this place, I will move to the next place." That is what I am seeing from people who are coming from other places. Believe it or not, I see those kinds of people being hired in the future than the ones who are just saying "I don't need this job. I don't need you. I am just here for the paycheck." And there is a lot of that going on by people who are born here. They live with their parents. They have boyfriends or girlfriends, they are pretty stable. They are just comfortable at 4.25 and working 20 hours a week and doing this for the moment. They are not looking ahead. That is what is unfortunate about people who are born here. That is what I am recognizing at this store. Not all. But a majority. They are not looking ahead. That is where the problem starts.

Like Roberto at the Chinatown Burger King, Donald makes reference to a trend in hiring immigrants over the American-born and its future implications. "Those kinds of people (meaning immigrants)...are hired in the future." Donald here also implies how the company criteria of motivation and company loyalty, values embedded in 19th century Protestant conceptions of work, are affecting the immigrant preference. This conception of work is articulated within the context of a neoconservative moral structure whose values are linked to the traditional family, self-reliance, hard work, and civic mindedness (Weber, 1958; Vidich, 1987). "I am just here for the paycheck" is to Donald an

unacceptable reason for working. An employee must not only work, but must be proud of their work and exhibit this "pride" while working. Further, an employee must be upwardly mobile, or at least believe they are by "looking ahead."

Augustine was also rather explicit about differences between immigrants and Americans even though he is Latino American, born and raised in New York City. He said,

...the big difference I do notice is that a lot of the foreign born come here knowing mopping or sweeping because they have done it before. The ones who are born here, are not used to mopping, cleaning...like they have had everything handed to them. It is a lot more frustrating sometimes because like you got people in orientation that you explain to them mopping and sweeping and they get up and say "No, I am not going to work here because I don't mop and sweep." I find that rather strange sometimes.

Most of the ones who are foreign born, they come here and their parents push them because it is the American dream. Like I brought you to America to seek the American dream. And a lot of people who were born here, they think the American dream is something that is given to you. People who come here, they realize that the American dream is what you work for. You reap what you sow literally. So they push themselves hard because they know--a lot of people tell them it is a waste of time to go to school--but they know that all the sacrifices now have to pay off sooner or later...A lot of kids who are born here, I notice that, it is like they work here, they don't want to come to work, they want to leave early. Fridays and Saturdays are very difficult for them. Friday evening rolls around and people try and call in sick. Partiers. I try and tell them that a party is nothing. You don't understand they tell me--that I am not of their generation. I try to tell them when I was your age I was in your same place.

Like Donald, for Augustine the negative traits of Americans are counterposed to the positive traits of immigrants. The foreign-born "come here knowing mopping and sweeping" and the Americans "don't mop and sweep." To the foreign-born the "American dream is what you work for" and to the Americans the "American dream is something that is given to you." The foreign-born "know that all the sacrifices now have to pay off

sooner or later" and the Americans are "partyers" and for Donald, "not looking ahead." In this way, it seems that the traits of immigrants have come to reflect management expectations and labor criteria for all workers.⁶

Racial or ethnic differences regarding the performance of work were often said not to exist. Some admitted some racial or ethnic differences yet in a way that suggested a lack of importance. For example when I asked Donald if he ever experienced any conflict among his employees of different ethnic background he responded,

I never had a problem with anybody really wanting to push something. Other than certain nationalities requiring a break to be given at a certain time. I forgot which ones. Or couldn't stay past a certain amount of time. Adjustments on schedules. Couldn't work certain days. Those things. Not a conflict between say a Jamaican and a Spanish. Teamwork is mandatory whether you like it or not.

In contrast, recall the ethnic differences cited among managers in Chinatown. For example, Roberto, the manager at Burger King said that the Chinese often had to go home early. In most workplaces there seems to be a common tendency to make distinctions among the workforce. What kinds of distinctions are made partly depends on the composition of the workforce and who is making the distinctions. In Chinatown McDonalds, Chinese managers distinguish among their Chinese workforce in terms of country of origin and language dialect. But across the street at the Burger King, Latino managers make broader generalizations pertaining to Chinese. They are typically called "Chinese" irrespective of their ethnicity and compared to the Spanish and Blacks. In Washington Heights, Marta, a Dominican manager, placed great importance on age and

⁶ The concept of blacks wanting "something for nothing" is not new and was a major response of successful working class white ethnics to blacks in the civil rights marches in the 1960s (Vidich, 1987).

gender distinctions among her mainly Dominican and Spanish speaking workforce.

What seems important about distinctions within workforces regarding employment practices is that they form a basis for comparing whole groups of people. Good and bad features are associated with each group through comparison. Bad features of a group become issues in regard to employment practices precisely because they are juxtaposed to features of a group that are considered more ideal for the organization. The latter group then, enjoys a *de facto* preference in hiring and promotions. It is interesting that in the Chinatown McDonalds where most of the workforce is Chinese, staying past a certain time did not emerge in my interviews as an issue. Apparently, the organization adapts to this characteristic.

Let us suppose that it is peculiar to West Indians to resist mopping and sweeping. Then Augustine, at McDonalds in Downtown Brooklyn, where most employees are West Indian, may not "find it strange" that Americans "don't mop and sweep." He may place more emphasis on another explanation, such as generational difference. If this was the case then it would become a fundamental norm in the organization that would have to be adapted to in the same way Chinatown McDonalds adapts to the more stringent scheduling among the Chinese workforce. Adapting to any fundamental norm means being sensitive to the reasoning behind this norm. Recall how Julia at Burger King Chinatown was sensitive to her American minority women employees and channelled their hostility toward organizational empowerment by cultivating them to become managers and serving as a role model. In some ways it seems that this sensitivity alone was a source of empowerment among her minority-group crew members. And the sensitivity exhibited by

Julia was, in part, grounded in her own experiences, both as a woman and as a minority-group member.

The fact that there is a difference between West Indians and Americans in Downtown Brooklyn, compounded by an apparent lack of sensitivity by managers, or at least a lack of will to deal with the fundamental sources of resistance to certain tasks such as mopping and sweeping makes mopping and sweeping one factor setting the basis for generalizations and biases against American minorities as a whole. Similar to what Kasinitz (1996) found in Redhook Brooklyn, and what Mary Waters (1993) found in a "food service" company in New York City, Americans of racial minorities are considered a group with a poor work ethic.⁷

Managers have said that the lack of a work ethic among the American born affects the way the work is performed. Donald links "no pride in their work" to an inability to respond to the various spontaneous demands the work requires. As he says,

Some people are automatic. The ones who are automatic have that pride. Again if there is something on the floor pick it up. If something spills you gotta mop it. If a customer is sick you try to encourage them. Some people have this naturally and that comes from the way they are brought up. Others are quick to say if something comes off the wrong way, or bumps you "what is your problem" as opposed to "excuse me." A lot of people make a big issue out of a customer coming back and saying "my french fries are cold." "Well I didn't give them." That is not the point. The person at Burger King has to accept this. "You didn't get nice hot french fries? This has to be changed." Maybe the customer sat 20 minutes under the air conditioning and the french fries got cold. But Burger King states that they want the customer taken care of regardless. Me trying to explain that to some people, they really don't understand. They say "She didn't have to tell me that way." Yes, yelling and screaming is not the way to go all the time. But she (customer) has a reason to be upset. There are people who can really understand and there are those who can't. The ones who can't have never been around that surrounding. I

⁷ Also see Gladwell (1996) concerning both of these studies.

know for a fact. I see the guys here. I look at them. The way they carry themselves. I don't do this at home. Believe it. Trust me. I know you don't wash dishes, you don't clean. I know for a fact. I know your mother does all your laundry and everything else. I know. The majority who come here are like that. The ones who have the pride in their work are under some situation where they really feel the need to grow and grow and grow and grow. Until these guys (American born) get it, they are going to be that way anyway. "I don't need to do this."

The lack of pride, the lack of motivation, which are linked to the lack of a strong work ethic among the American-born is also perceived by some managers as reflecting "outside forces," such as the drug trade, that offer more prestige and more money. As Augustine explains,

We have a lot of outside forces where you can make a quick buck doing things illegally. Unlike here where everyone starts at 4.25 an hour. So you make 4.25 an hour and you got to wear that uniform and there is a lot of pressure. So why do they want to take a job like this?

Other "outside forces" particular to the youth generation who were raised in the United States include the strong emphasis on individualism and lack of social skills that come with it. Television and new developments such as the walkman and video games contribute to social isolation and hence, a lack of ability to deal with the kinds of pressure workers confront when dealing with the public. As Augustine suggests,

There is a lot of stress in this job at times. As you came in yourself, you see the front counter. There are a lot of customers. Some of these customers get on you. A lot of these young kids are not used to dealing with pressure. Being heaped and being heaped. A lot of them put on their walkmans. The bigger (newer) generation, I was telling people, they watch television, play video games, they are locked in a room most of the time where everything comes to them. So then when they deal with the public it is harder for them to deal with them. I come from a different generation. We would go on the street and we had to invent our own games and invent our own fun, our imagination would go wild. But now things are in such a way that you can isolate yourself and it is a lot harder to deal with the public.

Here, Augustine implicitly suggests that those who come from countries where these modern technologies are not widely affordable as they are in the United States are better prepared to apply the kinds of social skills the industry demands.

Managers further claim that the foreign-born are more future oriented--the delaying of immediate gratification such as going to parties when one is scheduled to work. The foreign-born, then, are perceived to be more adaptable to the industry's scheduling and labor demands. The future orientation characteristic seems to carry intrinsic value in this industry. It is a value that earns fundamental respect from employers. This is partly because it has been a major source of self-respect by these managers at Borough Hall--especially considering Donald and Augustine, both American-born minorities who consider themselves successful and self-made. They attribute their success to a work ethic built on a "future orientation," or, as Weber might see it, "transvaluations of earlier Protestant conceptions of America" (Vidich, 1987; Weber, 1958).

These managers seem intolerant of those who don't have this same orientation. Part of this intolerance seems to reflect their lack of ability to influence youth. Augustine says he tries to tell them "that a party is nothing. You don't understand they tell me as I am not of their generation. I try to tell them when I was your age I was in your same place." Similarly Donald says,

I tell young kids today when they get here, "Let me tell you something. All your Whitney Houstons, all your Sylvester Stallones and all your Donald Trumps have worked in fast food before so you just take note of that. Try to find out why and be aware of what people really have been doing and what they've been against...all the young basketball players...maybe those are skills that don't have to use so much brains, but all the people who do have to use brains have worked at Burger King

or McDonalds. They joke about it now because they remember the days. I try to tell kids today that they should be getting a start somewhere. You can't just be an engineer one day. And nobody is going to give you the keys to any corporation without knowing you a little bit. So you are going to have to work buddy, whether you like it or not.

Managers identify more with and hold greater respect for their foreign-born employees which is reflected in how they talk about their foreign-born employees. For example, Augustine spoke highly about numerous former co-workers who are immigrants.

One person, David Jordon, he is a Doctor and for four years, he literally just went to college and worked here. He had no social life whatsoever. He was born in Jamaica. He had no social life for four years. Now he is an anesthesiologist at Lennox County Hill Hospital. He has all the time in the world. Much more relaxed. It paid off. He is only 26 years old, also. He has everything ahead of him now. Another one is a teacher. The third one, she is a registered nurse. There are a couple of nurses. The biggest thing about them is that none of them were neither born here or their parents were born here. They all came from different countries. They came from other countries, they went to school here, they worked here, and they busted their backs in order to make it. Doctors, lawyers. We also have some who went into the police force.

Augustine also refers to the social stigma of working in fast food and the peer pressure associated with it. This peer pressure--particular to the current generation--affects the work ethic and creates a problem for management in terms of assigning American-born workers certain tasks. As Augustine adds,

A lot of them, if they are working here in uniform in back and you want them to go in the lobby or go to another store to pick up something, they want to change their clothes. They want to change everything completely. Like they don't want their friends to see them. A lot of people just look down on working here. "Oh you are just a burger flipper."

Donald tries to reason with the source of this social stigma that affects the American-born more than immigrants.

It is the picture that was probably painted for them, on advertisements, maybe in comedy clubs, maybe throughout the years. Maybe they are those customers

were turned away...Again, someone who is from somewhere else, not listening to all the things that people are saying--they haven't been associated with it--"you are hiring? Hey great." When they come here to work they appreciate it.

According to these managers in Downtown Brooklyn, their foreign-born employees are less vulnerable to peer pressure prevalent in the American youth culture. As Augustine says, "You got workers here, most of the workers who come from other countries, come to work in their uniform. They get here and just take their jacket off." In this way there is no limit in the assignment of tasks such as the running of errands outside the restaurant or working in the dining room.

While these managers distinguish between foreign-born and Americans, they also distinguish themselves from American youth. Both Donald and Augustine have very similar experiences. They both started out as crew members while teenagers. They both aspired to and climbed the hierarchy at an early age. They have both been in the industry for nearly a decade. When I asked Donald what makes you different from other American-born employees, he said,

I was born in Brooklyn. But I will tell you one thing. I got all my thought patterns and all my everything from my family. My family is strictly hard work, serious business. If I talked back at my mother it was like I had swung at her. I see kids with their parents now "Ma, shut up. You don't know what you are talking about." What? If I said that I'd be history. I think it comes from the home. What they see their parents doing. What they see their parents friends doing. What they see their brothers and sisters doing and getting away with. Parents. I believe in them. No. It is not always their fault. There are a lot of hard working parents who have nothing against their children. But it is not the majority, unfortunately. A lot of what I have seen is coming from the parents. Look at the language he is using. Look at the way she is carrying herself. And it is no wonder. And again, you talk about someone coming from somewhere else, they are raised from hard work, I'm sure. Hard work whether it is McDonalds or sweeping the streets. They better be the best garbage picker upper you can be to get ahead. Hey, there is no pride in the work when it comes down to other people saying "I don't need this."

Augustine's explanation also relies on family values. But, he also refers to changing structural conditions of the family today.

...some of the people who were born here, they are at a disadvantage because their parents don't push them as hard (as immigrants). And then some of them, their parents both have to work. Some have to work two jobs. So they are not home. So you have a child who goes to school, he may be by all by himself in the day at home. Nobody asks him how he do in school, what did he do for the tests. So, a lot of them are unmotivated. But you can't blame the parent either. Sometimes it is just the system. You get caught in the cycle that never ends. And it is very difficult to break that cycle.

In terms of how he succeeded in over coming the structural obstacles, however, he turns back to an explanation of family values.

My parents made sure I did my work. Made sure I studied hard. Made sure I was accessible to a library. My mother bought me an encyclopedia set. So I didn't have to go breaking my neck in a library...So I think the blame must be shared between the system, and among the family. Somehow they have to work together to try to knock down this barrier that seems to be preventing kids from getting a good education.

While much of the distinction between themselves and other Americans referred to family values, their explanations tended to be in the context of changing structural conditions in the society at large--changes they have seen and experienced since they started in the industry. As I have discussed, "outside forces" such as the drug trade, media influences, technological developments and peer pressure were said to affect "attitude", work ethics, and work performance. However, similar to the managers in Washington Heights, they also referred to changing economic conditions.

The increasing employment of immigrants in Downtown Brooklyn

Managers at both restaurants at Borough Hall in Downtown Brooklyn claim that

the types of people employed in their restaurants has changed over the years. Yet, the most significant change has been the greater hiring of immigrants from countries in the Third World who have come to make up a majority of their employees. While managers were quite explicit about foreign/American distinctions, my questioning about the increased hiring of immigrants often reflected a great sensitivity to its implications by managers. Some managers appeared startled with the question I asked all managers: How many employees were not born in this country? Donald at Burger King responded,

"...oh my goodness...that is a good question...I haven't looked at that. I am looking at...20 percent are American and most of them are from somewhere else with some other values. It is true. Really, honest to God truth. Everywhere I can look. Out of 60 people, 40 or 35 are from somewhere else."

Along with the response to my question was usually an attempt to justify the reason for employing so many foreign-born compared to the American-born. These justifications tried to deflect personal responsibility onto the American-born youth. Donald, while more blatant, was indicative of other managers. When I asked Donald if there had been a change over the years, he replied,

Yes. Back in those days there were many more Americans working here...I can take anyone on the street now. "Hey, you want to work here man? We are hiring at 4.25 an hour." "I'm not working at Burger King." Even though they need the money, Burger King is just a minimum wage cheap job that is not going to bring you anywhere.

Long term employees have also noticed the change. James, who is second-generation Antiguan, has been at Burger King since shortly after it opened in 1992. He said that the workforce is "so mixed. They are mostly West Indian. Some people from down South-- Puerto Rican, Dominican. Some it is hard to tell. Some are mixed. Some are hispanic and black." One difference he sees between now and two years ago is the disappearance

of a few White workers. As he says, "We had a few more white people working here. We just got over run. We are just all black and hispanic, like a whole bunch of nothin but minorities." When I asked him about the increase in foreign born employees he says, "it seems like they are getting jobs quicker than the ones who were born in this country."

The way James makes racial and national distinctions and places himself reflects the growing complexity of issues surrounding racial and ethnic identity in New York City. James is technically Black American, but not African American. He is a second generation Antiguan and considers himself American by distinguishing himself from foreigners. "They are getting jobs quicker..." What is interesting is that at another level James seems to group all Blacks and Hispanics, both foreign and American, into one category--unlike Donald and Augustine. "We are all just Black and Hispanic..." Further, this unifying category is both contrasted and subjugated to the disappearance of "White people." "We are...like a whole bunch of nothin but minorities."

Job competition and the hiring process

A growing demand for minimum wage jobs in New York City has suppressed wages and intensified hiring selectivity. Lila, a 47 year old black American woman crew member expressed what she has observed:

The way the economy is situated right now, so many people are out of work and there are so many immigrants and there are so many other people who would snatch a job in a minute to really have money. So it really is a bit of a problem. If you try to get a group organized, say to protest the conditions. There are others who would walk through that door, and you are out of a job so you end up right back where you started.

Donald expresses the magnitude of this competition by exaggerating to say that

Burger King receives 3000 applications for about 45 positions open every year.

Here is the problem with us. We start everyone out at 4.25. Something that I personally don't agree with but that is just the way the system goes. Again, you have 3000 applications wanting to work at 4.25 an hour and a handful who want to work at 10 dollars an hour. These guys at 4.25 who will do the job better and quicker than anybody else, so why should I go ahead and experiment with 10 dollars an hour. It is business like anything else.

Henry, the McDonalds owner, more realistically says that McDonalds has about 20 applicants lined up for interviews every Wednesday. From what Henry says, this means that more than 1000 people apply for positions every year at McDonalds.

Further, the competition for jobs has intensified in recent years which allows management to be more selective in hiring as Henry says,

A few years ago, it was very difficult to get employees--the late 80s. Now it is less difficult. So, the people coming in the door are probably the same quality but the people we are able to select now are of better quality. Maybe because there is less opportunity now. So people normally wouldn't stay in this job are temporarily staying until the economic condition gets a little bit better.

The longer tenure of employees heightens the competition for jobs. Positions at McDonalds tend to remain occupied for more than a year on average. According to Augustine, at this McDonalds full-time people (about 50 percent of the workforce) tend to remain two or more years. Part-time employees typically remain for a year to a year and a half. Henry says that "labor needs, being that our turnover is not that high, is one or two people per week. Sometimes none, sometimes a little bit more. It varies." This means that for every 1,000 people who apply for jobs every year, there are only about 50 openings. At this restaurant alone, then, 950 people are rejected from fast food jobs every year.

Hiring through referrals

Yet, McDonalds and Burger King continuously accept applications--regardless if they need employees or not. It is the employees themselves--the front line workers--who have been instructed to give out applications to those who request them and to hand over completed applications to managers. Hiring, however, does not occur primarily through unknown applicants. According to Britto the "job application process and hiring are often two different things." What this could mean is that those who submit an application are simply adding themselves to the companies' pool of available labor. It could be that the application process itself is a mechanism of control over the current workforce. A filing cabinet drawer full of applications implies to the workforce that if you don't like your wages, if you don't like your conditions, there are thousands of others to take your place. Donald, like other managers in Washington Heights, claims that if he put out a NOW HIRING sign he would run out of applications. "If I put out that NOW HIRING sign everybody is willing to make that extra dollar. We don't have a problem in that area." Similarly Henry claims that job advertising is not necessary: "There is enough people coming in the door here, every single day. We actually limit the times we do interviews because we could be interviewing constantly."

It is even more apparent that the job application process and hiring are two different things in that when a position does open up managers do not necessarily look through the applications. Rather they hire through referrals among their current workforce. At McDonalds the referral process is worker initiated. As Augustine says, "rarely do we ask a worker do you know anyone?" Rather, "We tell them if you want us

to meet anyone, just bring them in...and tell them that you sent them and I will speak to them." Henry, the owner, is more explicit about this.

So if there are two or three Jamaicans in the restaurant we may find that their friends come down for interviews and so then you have five Jamaicans in the restaurant. That pattern is existing but we don't use any kind of organized network or anything like that.

At Burger King it is management initiated. As Donald says,

Our main source of hiring comes from the rest of the people here. "Hey fellows, listen, I need someone in the afternoons." You ask your best people or the people that you really like to be with. Their judgment can't be as bad as what you are getting from the street. You don't know what comes from the street. I would start out with them (current workforce). I would say "do you know someone who can work in the evenings?" "Yah, my cousin is really looking for a job." "Bring him in." 30 percent of my staff have brothers or sisters or cousins working here. That is pretty much how it works."

The hiring of friends and relatives of the current workforce shouldn't necessarily lead to the hiring of more immigrants. The crucial point is that managers say they usually hire the friends and relatives of their "best people." This is crucial because managers' best people are more often than not immigrants rather than the American-born. The logic of how this works is expressed by Henry at McDonalds:

At least half of our labor force is mostly West Indian from the Caribbean and things like that. It is a mixed bag. We will hire any good people. That is our only criteria.

At the McDonalds in Downtown Brooklyn, the "employ your own" logic seems to apply as well. The fact that four out of five managers are West Indian seems to be the most significant factor in the emergence of a mostly West Indian workforce. Immigrants tend to refer their own immigrant groups. We can contrast this to Burger King in Chinatown where the "employ your own" logic, as Roberto has stated it, also exists. But

here, the management team is diverse. Recall Roberto who is Colombian, Julia who is second generation Puerto Rican, an Chinese male, and an African American woman. The workforce reflects this diversity.

We can also contrast this to Burger King in Downtown Brooklyn where the management team is comprised of three South Asians and two African Americans. The "employ your own" logic does not exist here, but for different reasons. As I mentioned before, who is hired partly reflects who seeks jobs and where. South Asians are not a group that tends to seek crew member positions at these two restaurants. When they are hired, it tends to be for management positions and they tend to be highly educated and Indian. It seems to be the case that when South Asians do seek crew member positions in Downtown Brooklyn in fast food they may go where they have crew level connections. This tends to be at the two food courts owned by the Riese Corporation and managed by South Asians who tend to hire South Asians. (Or the Mama's Fried Chicken which also tends to be predominantly South Asian.)

On the other hand, the lack of the tendency and will to apply the "employ your own" logic among American minority group member managers in Downtown Brooklyn is not because Americans don't seek jobs, but rather for the various reasons already discussed. Employer preferences, biases against the American-born including managers tendency to disassociate from the "street" image, intense competition for fast food jobs, selective hiring practices and the method of labor recruitment (by immigrant referrals) help explain the increasing immigrant presence in these two restaurants.

The Gendering of Work in Downtown Brooklyn

The Burger King and McDonalds here in Downtown Brooklyn are similar to Chinatown and Washington Heights in their divisions of labor. Generally, young women work in the "front," both men and women work in the "back" kitchen and dining room cleaning is often assigned to older people but also assigned to various other crew members indiscriminately. It is widely conceded that men perform the work that requires physical strength such as unloading trucks, lifting french fry boxes and other heavy materials or equipment. Men also perform any mechanical work necessary as well as cleaning oil vats and "breaking down" equipment at the closing of the restaurants.

In downtown Brooklyn some of my respondents revealed to me how much gender roles have become established in fast food and how they continue to be reproduced despite a corporate ethos that tries to counter them. In general, the corporate ethos emphasizes homogenizing work and workers for 100 percent interchangeability of all work stations and tasks. A woman should be able to unload trucks and carry stock. A man should be able to be in "front" smiling to customers. While many of my respondents tended to imply that they agreed with the corporate ethos, they also tended to view it as an abstract notion rather than a practical idea or a representation of what actually occurs, especially in regard to heavy physical work. As Augustine said, "There shouldn't be a difference but we do make a difference."

Most respondents--men, women, managers, and crew members alike--agreed that physical work requiring strength is and should be done by a man. Lila said that "The women basically don't lift. I wouldn't even lift. Because I am a woman. Why should I lift

something when there is a man there to lift it." Alice said that "They [men] have to fetch the heavy stuff and we don't. They setting things they can lift that we can't lift, or we don't want to lift, whatever."

Heavy physical work is required constantly throughout the day. At Burger King, a small supply of frozen food stock is kept in a large refrigerator in the kitchen. Most of the stock is stored in a basement below the kitchen that is reached by climbing a steep stairwell. Whenever the kitchen stock runs low, someone must go to the basement to fetch more. Men are selected to do this task. It involves carrying boxes of beef patties and french fry boxes that weigh 40 pounds from this basement and up this steep staircase to the kitchen. Other heavy physical work includes carrying large garbage bags outside of the store, and unloading boxes from trucks.

One important feature of such work is that it is not part of the normal process of production and is, rather, part of the auxiliary work in the restaurant. It is very noticeable work. In other words, when a heavy physical task needs to be done it requires taking a crew member(s) away from the normal process of production. It means taking a crew off the station they are assigned to in order to perform this task. For example, the kitchen may run out of beef patties. Everyone is busy working at their respective stations so it means someone has to leave their station to go to the basement. In this way, because it involves an interruption then it is a highly noticeable process--moreso than work involving food production, assembly and service.

It is also noticeable because the heavy physical work is, for the most part, undesirable work. And because of this, women play the greatest role in reinforcing

gendered roles, and men sometimes try to break down these roles. Recall what Carol said: "...we can't lift, or we don't want to lift..." Further, men complain about it, and sometimes complain that women don't help out with the physical work. For example, John said that "Some ladies are more helpful doing some heavier work." And women often said that they have to ask men to lift or fetch things for them, as MaryAnn said, "if there is something really heavy that one of us can't carry then we usually ask a guy to do it."

There are instances when women resist the gender stereotype about strength and offer to perform heavy physical work. This, however is rare. In any case, in these restaurants, perhaps partly because the management is dominated by men, managers usually reject womens' offerings. As Augustine explained,

We have deliveries that come here every three days. I would never ask a woman to do that. I tell the girls, I am not putting you down, I am not sexist, I am not saying you are weak. We are getting 800 pieces of boxes and fries are 40 pounds each and those things go flying down the stairs, the ladies, you never know when you could injure yourself. So we don't let the women do physical work, we don't let them bring up stock and stuff like that. They can bring up their own stock which is paper stuff.

Heavy physical work was always mentioned when I asked "Is there any difference between the work that men do and the work that women do?" Most of the time it was the only thing mentioned until I pointed out to the respondent the difference between "front" work and "back" work. In this way, the gender division could be interpreted as being more conscious concerning physical work (since it is more noticeable and undesirable) and less conscious concerning "front" and "back" divisions. Or, it could be interpreted simply as an established norm that goes without question--so established, so part of common sense, that my question was not interpreted as being questioned in this realm. But most

likely it is because workers and managers do in fact view the front/back division as interchangeable by gender whereas they don't view heavy physical work as interchangeable by gender. As I explained in Chapter two, there is a distinction between the *social* division of labor and the *technical* division of labor in the fast food restaurant.

It is important to examine in what ways cashier positions are perceived as "women's" work by managers and crew. Donald said that,

In Burger King and McDonalds restaurants you see that the women are front counter and the guys are in the kitchen. All the stores I have dealt with have tried to put guys on the front counter. But they are not out to do that. They are not motivated to stay in it. They say, I don't want to be a front cashier. It is a girl's job. Its a women's thing. "Hi, may I take your order please?" Its a woman's thing. Where that came from? I don't know. I think it has just been that way.

Some of my male respondents compared "men's" work (in the back) and "women's" work (in the front) in terms of the physical strength, knowledge, and appearance required for the respective jobs. The general attitude among men seemed to be that the cashier position was not "real work," that it was "easier," and, that the personal qualities valued for the cashier position were, for the most part, superficial.

James, for example, said that,

Half the girls don't even know what the hell comes on a cheeseburger. Because the girls, especially if they look cute, don't let them look gorgeous, the first day they come in and work here, they be in the kitchen for about five minutes and they'll be working cash register for the rest of their lives. With the guys it is different. They mostly have the guys in the back or like the girl who is not very pretty. That is basically it. Two days for each station.

The reasons for the gender division between "front" and "back"--when it is "not supposed to be" according to the corporate ethos--varied. McDonalds and Burger King to a large extent follow what they believe is most appealing to customers. Augustine said

that McDonalds conducted a survey and "80 percent of the people they claim would rather be served by a woman than by a man." He elaborated. "A woman would rather be served by a woman, a little more intimacy they feel, more bonding, they feel more relaxed. And a man would rather have a woman serve him for obvious reason, that it is a pretty face and they are happy." A male crew said that,

It is like this. Mostly I guess because girls are more friendly when it comes to doing things like the majority of guys when they see a cute little girl in here they are going to come in here especially if they are hungry. It is going to be the first place they stop. They see someone really nice--I want her to take my order. Plus they can have a little conversation when they are waiting for their food. And the company knows that so they keep all the girls in the front. Sometimes I might go in the front now and then but I don't really like the front. I hate pressing buttons all the damn time. I want to do something.

Managers also indicated that women are more malleable, and easier to control. Donald suggested that "women try harder" than men. Augustine said,

I have noticed on the shift that I work, that it seems that we get more cooperation out of ladies and more enthusiasm than you do out of guys. Most men are like, oh I know I do this, I know, I know (grudging tone). A lot of woman are always very enthusiastic and will do a lot of stuff. And I find it easier to work sometimes with a lady than with a man.

The feminine qualities of the front-line position, however, do not always carry value. In certain locations and at certain times that are perceived as dangerous, just as they are in Washington Heights. The valued characteristics of a cashier shift from feminine to masculine characteristics. Most generally, during the day the front line is a woman's job because of her features of malleability, personability, being pretty--feminine features. At night it is a man's job for security reasons--for his masculine features of strength and his ability to intimidate customers who are potential troublemakers.

Do women become managers in Downtown Brooklyn? Unlike in the two other neighborhoods, women are underrepresented in manager positions. Out of 10 managers at these two restaurants, only two were women--one from Trinidad at McDonalds and an African-American at Burger King. I didn't interview these women managers. But because Donald and Augustine are American minority men, their perspectives on gender and management are important to consider. Their views and experiences are similar to Greg in Washington Heights. Donald, in his 10 years of experience in McDonalds--like Greg--claims to have always been supervised by women. Like Greg, he has seen no gender difference in aspirations to become managers among crew. He claims that he "never stops anyone (from climbing higher in the organization) who has that drive."

Also like Greg, Donald says that women are more attentive to "neatness" than men. "Trying harder" also affects the way women manage compared to men, according to both Donald and Augustine. Donald says that he has "seen women try harder because it has been a man's area." Augustine says that when he tells women not to lift heavy boxes, he also tells them "you are as smart as we are, probably even smarter, you can run this store as well as anyone can."

While Donald and Augustine exhibit a great sensitivity toward the capabilities of women, it still remains the case that few management opportunities exist at both stores. For one, most of the 10 managers here in these restaurants are in the industry as a career and have occupied their positions for several years. It also still remains the case that only two out of 10 managers are women.

Gender distinctions in Downtown Brooklyn were not linked to distinctions made

between foreign and American-born employees. Gender differences are specifically linked to divisions of labor and the performance of particular tasks in the restaurant while the foreign versus American difference concerned differences in work ethics and "attitude." This is important because both of these distinctions refer to particular qualities associated with work performance. "Womanly" features are associated with "service interaction" skills. And, being a foreigner is associated with having the right "attitude" that translates into good work performance in general. In the next chapter I examine the notion of "work values" from the perspective and experiences of American-minority employees.

Chapter Six

Downtown Brooklyn: Life, Work, and "Attitude"

The differences in "attitude" and work values between immigrants and the American-born play a major role in growing employer bias and discrimination. These differences are important to examine especially considering that Americans themselves--both managers and crew members recognize it as problematic. "Attitude" can also be seen as a form of resistance to service roles, especially among minority Americans. This attitude of resistance is represented in popular culture. Chantelle (Ariyan A. Johnson), an African American cashier in the film "Just Another Girl on the IRT" talks back to a white middle class customer who insulted her in a small grocery on the Upper West Side and loses her job. "I won't work at no fast food joint because I've got talent" are the lyrics of a rap song that reached the top charts.

Service management literature has been complaining about American youth's lack of service etiquette since the mid 1980s (Albrecht and Zemke, 1985; Czepiel, Solomon, and Surprenant, 1985). A national survey of 3,000 employers conducted in 1995 by the Census Bureau of hiring, training and management practices in American business, revealed that employers rely on the job applicant's "attitude" and "behavior" more than anything else (Applebome, 1995). Does this reflect a general "attitude" among U.S. youth? Or is it, as Robert Zemsky, co-director of the group that developed this employer survey, asks, "something in the culture now that young people get dumped upon?" (Applebome, 1995)

This chapter examines how work values are affected by the experience of working including the perception employees have about what can be gained through working. What I want to emphasize is that "attitude" may be partly shaped by the workplace experience and conditions--a reflection of factors endemic to low wage jobs--and not solely by external factors. I found that fast food managers link the poor work ethic and attitude to a different value orientation plaguing American youth which is caused by poor family values, media propaganda, peer pressure and individualism. They even link values to economic structural factors that affect the family.

The emphasis on "values" by employers may reflect the rise in neoconservatism in the United States since the Reagan era which has, according to Arthur Vidich (1987), brought back earlier conceptions of the Protestant work ethic grounded in "a morality of self discipline, hard work, and civic mindedness" and the "sanctity of the traditional family." My research, however, suggests that American inner-city youth who are working reflect some of these same neoconservative values regarding work and family.

These values, as articulated by my crew member respondents, include the notion that work itself should carry intrinsic social value. They include an emphasis on the "breadwinner wage"--the norm that by working they should be able to support a family. They include a future orientation--having goals and aspirations--and the idea that working should be a means for social elevation. Belief in these values, however, embody certain expectations in the workplace. First, that the social value they hold intrinsic to work itself will be recognized by their employers, the larger society, and the government. With this that they should be treated with respect for working by their employers, by customers and

that they should be protected by Federal, State and City workplace laws. Second, that working should provide a means for supporting themselves and their families. Wages, work schedules, and benefits should allow for this. Third, their work experience should carry some value in the labor market at large. Working hard and being loyal to an employer should pay off in the long run in terms of better wages, opportunities for advancement, or being able to find a better job.

It is when these expectations regarding work, family and social mobility--are not met that resistance to the work conditions by workers becomes prevalent. As I said in the Chinatown chapter about the black-American women working at Burger King it is important to recognize that these employees are not resisting *work itself*, but rather some of the *conditions under which they work*.

What seems contradictory about fast food managers' comments (explained in Chapter Five) is that at the same time they seem to find reasons for American-born youth not to want to work they also say they receive so many requests to work and job applications that they can't even handle them. Alongside this they also do say Americans do apply but cite reasons why the American-born are not qualified for these jobs. Augustine, for example, said that while "those kids could get jobs if they want...while a lot of them want jobs, some of them lack the necessary skills to do good in an interview. Some of them will come in with a bad attitude." "Attitude" here is implicitly equated with social skill in a supplicant position. Further, managers claim to strategically try to curtail job inquiries by, for example, not putting out NOW HIRING signs or advertisements in newspapers. Although it wasn't specified, it is not likely that all or even most of these job

seekers are immigrants. Putting aside the contradictions in managers statements what is important here is that even though a social stigma exists, even though youth encounter peer pressure and customer degradation while on the job, many still attempt to and do work--when hired--in fast food jobs.

What is more, at the same time managers cite reasons for the American-born not to want to work and not to perform well when they do actually work, these reasons are never wholly consistent with what these workers say about their own experiences and what I have observed in the workplace. What I have found is that employees--when they do show signs of resistance or simply complain about their work--are referring to very specific conditions and relations with their employers.

By examining what American youth say, and my observations of the social relations and conditions in the workplace we can at least begin to see in more precise ways how this "attitude" may be shaped through the work experience rather than solely external conditions. We can begin to see precisely what is the nature of this resistance and how it does indeed reflect unfulfilled expectations which are derived from the reassertion of traditional protestant values regarding work. Attitude is a manifestation of these unfulfilled expectations and expressed through subtle comments such as "they treat us like slaves" and asking managers "when are you going home?" in a way that implies I wish you would leave me alone. It can be viewed as a form of resistance in itself rooted in both their racial and class position.

The "slave" reference is important here. It refers to the most oppressive relationship of bondage built into our country's history. African-Americans are

descendants of a forced migration--slavery (Silberman, Charles, 1964). This is a history unforgotten, a history those who are oppressed today will not let us forget. But when it is used here and today the "slave" reference also speaks specifically to America, from an American, with an American identity and with American values and expectations regarding work. A 17 year old American with African ancestry is claiming her right to be American with the same privileges, dignities, and protections that white Americans have historically been provided. Even during the great prosperity in America between 1950 and 1970, when mainstream America comprised a growing middle class who shaped new values of consumerism, and affluence, most blacks were left behind (Vidich, 1987). And today, black Americans historical plight, and their American identity needs to be constantly asserted when as workers they are so often compared negatively with each new immigrant group (Steinberg, 1995).

The historical reference is also an immediate reference. "Attitude" may reflect a strong sentiment among youth who have witnessed and are sharing the experience of growing hardship and denigration of their previous generation. Their parents may symbolize African-American's historical relationship to America. Chantelle (from *Just Another Girl on the IRT*) cannot sleep at night in her apartment in a Brooklyn housing project because her parents are fighting. She hears her father scream out "They don't want to hire us black folks even if we're qualified." Her own parents, as it is perceived by Chantelle, bought into society's traditional work values, but never achieved any gains. *Work itself*, then, is not perceived to pay off. As Chantelle claims, "My parents work from paycheck to paycheck. That's not gonna be me. After graduation I'm going straight to

college."

But working in a low wage job for someone like Chantelle is an unsettling experience when there is no pay off in the job itself, when the means for getting out of the low wage sector--by going to college--is never guaranteed and not socially expected, and, when employers and customers treat them as Chantelle said, "like we were some street girls with no future." This kind of treatment by clientele serves as a constant and intolerable reminder that "having no future" is a real possibility. It is perpetuated by the underlying notion (partly rooted in the traditional notion of the protestant work ethic) that they are *individually responsible* for their future.

My American respondents tended to view their jobs as temporary, but not necessarily because they were actively pursuing another career or better opportunities. Rather, because they felt they "couldn't take it (the job) anymore" or that they would like to have something better in the immediate sense. It is not that they lack a "future orientation." It is rather that their future is glaringly uncertain. The thought of the future made immediate needs crucial. The thought of getting stuck in the "cycle that never ends," getting locked into the present situation for the future, is a catalyst for seeking immediate change. Thus, it was more of a tendency among Americans to view the job on a day to day basis, making it a point to constantly inquire about other jobs or refer to what they would rather be doing--what may lead to what Donald refers to as the "hopping around" tendency--or what Lipset and Bendix (1952) called job "shifting."

There is a related dimension--a dimension that refers to the consequences of poor material conditions. In fast food restaurants attitude is supposed to embody active

qualities such as enthusiasm, motivation, and high energy. In the Washington Heights chapter (Chapter Four) I discussed how material conditions (relative social class advantage) affect an employee's ability to fulfill these social criteria regarding attitude. Some of my American respondents in Downtown Brooklyn work two and three jobs to support families and children. These respondents are representative of increasing numbers of people "moonlighting" in fast food jobs. They work 60 and 80 hours per week because of the value they place on their families and the value they place on providing a better future for their children. In this way they have a "future orientation" by living for their children. But, as Liebow (1967) put it "Living on the edge of both economic and psychological subsistence, the [worker] is obliged to expend all his resources on maintaining himself from moment to moment." The future orientation of the "middle class" on the other hand, presumes "a surplus of resources to be invested in the future and a belief that the future will be sufficiently stable" (Liebow, 1967).

In this way, the "lack of motivation," "the lack of enthusiasm" managers speak of and which they claim to be manifestations of "bad attitude" may simply represent disempowerment due to their social conditions and the feeling--both physical and psychological--that stems from what Augustine calls "the cycle that never ends." Disempowerment is expressed through tiredness, lack of energy (what Donald refers to when he says "I can see it in the way they carry themselves") and lack of desire to work in a way that expresses enthusiasm. But this manifestation of disempowerment is interpreted by managers as a lack of motivation to work, a lack of a "positive attitude," rather than as rooted in disempowerment itself. It becomes a vicious circle. "Bad attitude" is caused by

over work, and unfulfilled expectations regarding work. Bad attitude is reinforced by oppressive conditions including low wages and lack of promotion opportunities.

Foreigners, on the other hand, were said by managers to reflect positive values and attitudes associated with a strong work ethic, a future orientation, and individual responsibility. Indeed, my immigrant respondents in Downtown Brooklyn were more upwardly mobile. But, unlike my American respondents, their mobility depended not only on *individual responsibility*. Rather, it was strongly rooted in family and household support structures.¹ It was also rooted in creating and taking advantage of immigrant niches in the workplace. Because of this, these immigrants had longer tenure in fast food jobs--they had an interest in remaining to secure employment for others. Moreover, they didn't feel an immediate need to find another or better job because they were, or were planning, to invest in training or education to eventually get out of the low wage sector all together. Thus, they looked upon their fast food jobs as temporary because they had a long term focus ensuring upward mobility. And this understanding of fast food being temporary gave them a psychological and material edge to deal with their fast food jobs

¹ Immigrants, as a whole, were a step above their American counterparts in respect to any number of things such as living in a stable and financially secure household with other family members so that their wages do not have to go toward living expenses, but rather could be saved for future investment in vocational or college education. Also, having the time and resources to study alongside part-time minimum wage employment. This can mean time invested in education or training for something better outside of the industry or it can mean investing time to further oneself in the industry--ie. by studying the company manual. Further, it can mean one doesn't necessarily have to take on a second job and therefore has this time to invest. It can mean having role models among their immediate family who have successful careers or are attending or have completed college or some kind of vocational training. Role models are important on a psychological level for it represents the possibility for upward mobility.

for a longer period of time, and to even consider becoming managers.

Social relations in the workplace

I spent three months working at a Burger King restaurant in New York City. The conditions I describe are based on participant-observation and interviews with employees. Examining one work site in-depth allows us to suggest social processes rather than overall trends. My first day on the job at this Burger King was a memorable one. At the end of the workshift, while I was mopping the dining room floor after the store closed a manager approached me and said, referring to three black American women crew members leaving the restaurant, "These niggers are so fucken lazy. They don't care about their work. They are just going to go home, sit on their fat asses, and watch television." A few days later I recorded that one of these woman commented during a shift that "They treat us like slaves." Is this black employee responding to general work conditions she finds too demanding? Is the manager then interpreting this resistance to be racially (or culturally) rooted based on the fact that she is black American? Or, has this manager been communicating a racial prejudice all along to his black employees through biased treatment? Are these black employees simply responding to this biased treatment? And why did he say this to me and at this time? Perhaps this manager wanted to create a distance between me, as a white woman, and the Black American employees. He wanted to reinforce my work, my staying late as positive behavior by pointing out the negative behavior of those who went home before the work was done. This is a good example of what sociology calls "positive and negative reference group theory." The main

idea is that "many attitudes and beliefs get instilled in the minds of social actors by their taking some persons or groups as a natural reference" (Boudon, 1991).

In other words, this manager needed a way to distinguish my "good" behavior from their "bad" behavior in order not to appear to sanction their actions. His distinction took a racial form. These Black women had a legitimate right to leave when they did. Their shift was over--at least according to the posted schedule. But so was mine. If I had left also, the work would not have gotten done. In order to ensure my continued subservience, this manager had to somehow distinguish us--to provide a reason to me why they (the Black women) went home and I was left to do the work. In other words, on my first day, he did not want me to think that they went home because their shift was over and they didn't want to stay later into the night because the restaurant was located in a dangerous neighborhood. These reasons, he thought, would appeal to me to. Perhaps on my second night I too would leave before the mopping was done. Rather, he wanted me to think that they went home because they are Black, because they are "niggers." Because "niggers" are lazy.

It is not difficult to imagine here how negative management-crew relations become cultivated. It is not unlikely that this manager held prior established prejudicial attitudes toward black Americans. It is also not unlikely that these women had prior established ideas about what their jobs should entail, how they should be treated according to established legal codes and the value of their work in terms of wages.

While managers seem both knowledgeable and sympathetic about workers' concerns, they also connive with systemic goals. Let us first consider the wage. Both

managers and crew often referred to 4.25 per hour as not being an acceptable amount for the American-born in society in general. As Donald said "...the pay here...4.25 is not an acceptable amount...kids nowadays won't work for 4.25 around here. \$5 is now the starting pay in their minds. They are not going to get it but they would rather not work than take 4.25." James reinforced Donald to say that "the average person looks at a fast food restaurant and is like hell no, I don't want to work there...One would rather work at \$7 per hour."

But inherent in this is the belief that the work itself actually is worth more than what it is paid. And part of this belief is based on the cost of living today and the actual experience of the falling real wage of the minimum wage. Britto says that the wage should be raised based on the "cost of living today and the work itself." Yet he says that it is "built into the government and industry structure" and therefore it can't be changed. Other managers expressed similar sentiment, like Donald when he said "We start everyone out here at 4.25. It is something I personally don't agree with but that is just the way the system goes." The fact that the problem is claimed to be rooted in institutions external to the workplace renders an internal solution impossible. Some employees simply accept this rationale. MaryAnn, for example, applied at McDonalds at Borough Hall after nearly two years of experience at a McDonalds in Tennessee where she was making \$4.75. She started at \$4.25 at Downtown Brooklyn because as she said the management told her that simply "everyone here starts out at \$4.25."

Other crew members suggested that the industry wage determination was a deliberate labor cost saving strategy. John said, "As far as wages, I think that that is just

management making the best buck. To get the most out of workers. John, like others, also referred to strategies--that are sometimes illegal--on the part of Burger King management to save on labor costs as in the way they handle over-time. "One of the things here, is that instead of having someone work overtime, they will hire four more people." Further, a common practice across all restaurants I examined is to pay employees only up to 40 hours per week even if they work more than 40 hours. Those hours exceeding 40 hours are put on the following paycheck. This allows employers to avoid paying the legal overtime rate. Employees know this, complain about it, and feel unable to change it.²

Part of the disempowerment workers feel is built into the way hours are handled and allocated in these restaurants. There are no set schedules or set number of hours one works. Individual schedules vary from week to week and often change on a daily basis according to the restaurant business. While schedules change on a weekly basis to cater to employees fluctuating demands they also change due to the fact that scheduling is often based on work performance and therefore works as a labor control mechanism. Good work performance can mean being granted the schedule--including number of hours--one requests. This is considered a reward for performing well. Referring to those who depend on Burger King as their sole source of income Donald said that "They are awarded that 40 hours a week, provided their performance of course. That is a big issue."

Scheduling is also based on the number of employees on payroll. Often the

² James said that he works overtime sometimes but "we don't get paid for it. So if you work 42 hours then, minus those two hours and add up on regular hours on the next pay check. So you don't make overtime hours."

restaurants, especially Burger King, will hire a large number of people at one time and therefore reduce the overall hours of the whole workforce. Burger King does this about every three months. As one foreign-born employee said, "like now they are hiring people. So they cut your hours until everyone is settled in and stuff and then they move you back up. Every time they are hiring, they cut your hours." Not everyone is moved "back-up" however for this is also a means for getting rid of undesirable employees. It is in this context where an employer will simply stop putting an undesirable employee on the schedule or to reduce their hours.

In other words, the hiring of a large number of people at one time is a way to cut hours of all employees. But it is also a way to severely cut the hours of some employees who are "not working out." Hours are cut so severely that an employee can no longer afford to work at the restaurant and therefore eventually quits and "fizzles out." In this way the company avoids having to pay unemployment benefits. Or, hours are simply cut as a disciplinary measure on a week by week basis. Yet, the setting of the schedule is done in a positive fashion. As I said, good employees are awarded hours. This means that bad employees are not awarded hours.

Employees are conscious of this mode of being "let go" and being disciplined and controlled. Yet it is off-set by the actual action of being "fired" and being disciplined in a negative fashion. Employees said that one can be fired for "anything...taking food, taking money, coming in late without calling, mouthing off at the managers." These are considered "average things, common sense things." Disciplinary action regarding negative behavior often involves a series of steps--a warning, counseling and then being fired, but

there is no guarantee that these steps will be followed. While being fired is a response to deliberate negative behavior, the cutting of an employee's hours is more of a response to a lack of proficiency on the job. In both cases employees do not have legal recourse to challenge their case.

Employees weekly schedules are posted and designated for certain days and time periods. Yet, employees are often requested to work beyond or less than these pre-designated work hours. For example, one may be scheduled to work from 5:00 to 10:00. At 10:00 the store closes. A manager requests this crew member who is scheduled to go home to mop the dining room floor. Technically this worker can go home but if she does it is interpreted as resistance or unfavorable work performance. It is interpreted as not fulfilling responsibilities to the job. It is not considered a legitimate right. She probably will not be fired. But repeated actions like this can lead to a decrease in the number of hours she is scheduled for. Eventually, she may be reduced to one four-hour shift per week. If she inquires why then managers may tell her business has slowed or they are trying to fit more workers on the schedule. She will be forced to get another job and leave Burger King. In this way, she "fizzles out." On the other hand, if she agrees to stay later then it is considered favorable work performance by managers. Numerous times I heard managers tell workers "If you stay late to close then I will remember this when we do the reviews." Reviews are conducted about every three months to decide who does and does not deserve a raise.

Also, workers are often requested to "clock out" during their shift for either a designated or indefinite time period. This is usually when business slows down. Workers

are not paid for this time. Workers also may be asked to go home when they come in for their scheduled shift instead of working if the store has been slow. These are labor cost saving techniques. The main point here is that part of good work performance is considered being flexible to meet the often sporadic management demands for labor regardless of employees' financial needs. Favored workers also tend to get the hours of their choosing. Then the flexible schedule can work in their behalf. Also, workers who don't depend on the money may perceive the request to clock out in a favorable way.

Managers build a relationship of dependency among employees. It is a structural dependency in the way hours, work shifts, and raises are assigned according to an award system based on good work performance. It is also a personal dependency. At the same time management keeps wages at the minimum, allocates over-time hours to the following week's paycheck, or asks someone to go home before their shift ends, they also make it known that if an employee has a financial problem they will "help you out" with a personal loan. This form of patronage works to cast managers in a positive and human light, distinguished from the oppressive nature of the institutional structure. To recall what Donald said about the wage structure, "...its something I personally don't agree with, but it is just the way the system goes."

Employees have also expressed grievances about the "auxiliary" tasks that are delegated ad hoc by management. As I explained in Chapter two, these include dining room and restroom cleaning, changing oil vats, work on machinery and the like. Numerous times I was left alone to mop the dining room floor and to scrub the bottom tips of the chair legs in the dining room after the store closed because other workers

conveniently found an excuse to have to go home. But these tasks are often resisted precisely because they are auxiliary. American employees claim that in other work sectors there are other workers hired for auxiliary work, ie. cleaners and machinists.

As James said,

You go through a lot of bull shit here. If you actually think about what you do...Scrubbing floors, scrubbing walls. Like doing everybody else's job. Especially when it comes to inspection time. We do things that I think the maintenance men should do. I remember when we didn't have a maintenance guy for about a month. We were doing extra things I think we shouldn't have been doing. If we were doing it then pay us extra for that. Pay us the difference....[The manager] wants me to do a technical job for 5.15 per hour and then do my regular job that day (referring to fixing the broilers and fryers). When the company calls in for our master (technical expert) it costs something like 75 to 100 dollars. It is not a problem doing both but I am not getting paid the difference for fixing their equipment that is worth thousands and thousands of dollars. Because if those fryers and the broiler goes down they are losing hundreds of dollars and I don't feel that is right. They want me to do their equipment for nothing? That is not cool. You can't do that to people. That is like slave labor.

Further, and significantly, it is only in the assignment of auxiliary tasks where managers have ultimate authority and control over crew, when the "tri-boss" system doesn't apply. In the other jobs--those on the front-line and in the back preparing food--there is always accountability to customers which mediates the crew-manager relationship. Preparing a customer order takes precedence over every other job in the restaurant. A crew member has the right to refuse to do a certain task requested by a manager if she is preparing an order of hamburgers. When a cashier is engaged in a conversation with a customer (provided it is not a friend or relative) a manager should not intervene.

When managers talk about good and bad work performance while comparing American-born with foreign-born employees, they are primarily referring to these auxiliary tasks. As Augustine says, "the ones who are born here, are not used to mopping,

cleaning... And Donald. "you talk about someone coming from somewhere else, they are raised from hard work, I'm sure. Hard work whether it is Mcdonalds or sweeping the streets. They better be the best garbage picker upper you can be to get ahead."

Yet, resistance to auxiliary tasks is more deeply rooted in the social relations that are cultivated in the restaurant workplace. Employees express an acute awareness of how dispensable they are as Lila said "There are others who would walk through that door, and you are out of a job." They express how this devalues their status not only in terms of being disempowered to change their conditions but also in terms of managers being insensitive to what workers find problematic in the workplace, such as the danger involved in changing oil vats. James expressed this most vividly.

If a company does not care about their employees, then the employees are not going to care about the company...I think the main reason I don't like [the main manager] is that he really doesn't care about the employees. They are breaking my equipment. One of the ladies one time she hurt herself. She fell on the steps and twisted her ankle. He said, "well she should have noticed the step. She should have been careful." I believe with the New York City safety code you are supposed to be wearing protective gear when you are doing equipment like that. All we have are gloves that come up to here. So if oil splashes on our hands it is fine. But if it slashes on our faces we are fucked. They don't care. That is why we hate him. When people take food, they don't give a fuck and I don't blame them. I hope he [the main manager] goes back (to the country where he came from). I hope his car blows up. I wish he would just drop dead.

Here we can see that employees are not only reacting to specific conditions they view as problematic but also to a general lack of sensitivity on the part of managers to these conditions. Employees also refer to managers lack of sensitivity to their social and living conditions--the admitted fact that they are dependent on these jobs yet they do not provide the means for adequate support for their livelihoods, as James said "A lot of people in here have families and children and they are not making enough to support them." Some

managers, as I have shown, admit workers' difficult social conditions yet, it seems, they fail to convey such understanding to their workers. The low wage, the fluctuating and conditional scheduling, combined with managers' general failure to recognize employees' hardship reflect this insensitivity.

Employees never directly blame the owners or stockholders. There seems to be a general lack of awareness among workers about who had ultimate authority over their work conditions and wages. This was conveyed when I asked employees questions such as "Who owns this restaurant?" Employees sometimes responded as if I had asked a dumb question. "Burger King owns it, who else?" said one employee. "I think the men in suits who come in sometimes and stand in the back of the restaurant" said another employee. "Some company in Jersey" was another response. (In another restaurant I informed an employee that the owner of the restaurant she had been working in for a few months was not a manager in training, but rather, he was the owner.) Employees' lack of knowledge in this regard can be viewed as a combination of factors: the fact that ownership information is never made explicit to employees and the fact that employees do not consider this information as essential or even pertinent to their daily jobs. Moreover, the fact that employees do not invest a lot of time thinking about their employer because they plan to leave fast food work.

Employees, however, were conscious of a hierarchical authority structure that restaurant managers--their own supervisors--are subsumed under. While workers seemed to blame managers for their conditions, they also often implied that managers had limited power to affect fundamental change in the restaurant. I asked a group of teenage girls in

the ladies room (the only private place in the restaurant) while we were changing after a work shift why they said they were treated like slaves by managers. The hostility they showed while working changed to empathy toward the managers. "I don't really blame them" said one employee. "I feel sorry for them" said another. "I wouldn't want to be a manager. They are doing a job like we are." While this empathy does not mean they did not blame managers for their ill-treatment, it does imply that they understood that managers were not solely to blame. What workers were not clear about was who was ultimately responsible for their conditions. My respondents generally believed that managers did not have the power to affect starting wages, fringe benefits, and other material job conditions. These were affected by some force outside the realm of the restaurant and immediate social relations.

But employees still expect managers to be sensitive to their social and work conditions. Managers' insensitivity in this regard is often associated with a lack of respect for employees especially when employees believe they deserve respect. "If a company does not care about their employees..." implies an expectation that an employer should care. It implies an expectation that employers should hold a social value on what workers commonly call "honest" work. When "honest work" does not earn respect from employers then the social value of their work is perceived to be de-valued in the workplace. This de-valuation is cultivated through the social relations between management and crew. Moreover, such sensitivity by managers should be conveyed through those things that managers do have the power to affect such as employee promotions, raises in wages, and work schedules.

Fast food jobs and the societal stigma

"Honest work" is also devalued by customers who employees claim often degrade them as fast food employees. Crew members and managers commonly describe the ill treatment of workers--especially front-line workers--by customers. Customers are often perceived by crew members to embody the general societal stigma associated with the fast food jobs, especially in regard to the low status of fast food workers. Linked to this low status is the idea that those who work in fast food simply cannot get a better job and therefore are individually at fault. The belief that fast food workers are "losers" is often expressed by customers in New York.

One McDonalds worker said that "some of the customers they come in and they are like, they have an attitude and they take it out on us. They want to scream on us. They just be screamin on us for absolutely no reason because we don't do anything to them." Recently I struck up a conversation with a McDonalds teenager walking in the Village of Manhattan who was making a McDonalds home delivery. She told me she didn't like doing deliveries because people "make fun of me all the time." When I asked Alice, a Burger King cashier, from Guyana, if she thought there were any young people who might not try to work here her response derived from her experiences with customers and how she thought the customers perceived her status as an employee. She said,

When the customer come in, if they have to wait on their food they be nasty to you and then they say "*You better be glad you have this job because I think it is the only job you can get.*" So I guess, people like them. I guess they wouldn't come and work here because that is the way they treat us [emphasis added].

Alice does not seem to internalize this perception held by customers. She said "It is someone's choice whether or not to work in fast food" implying that the customer is

simply wrong. Alice has been in New York City for only two years. Those who have been here for all or most of their lives may be more vulnerable to customers' defamations because they share the dominant values of society regarding fast food jobs, and/or because of peer pressure. This would support what managers say about an internalization of the social stigma of fast food workers by the American-born or at least those who have been in the country for long enough to be affected by the stigma.

If there is an internalization by workers, it is important to consider that it may not be based on what workers actually think about the value of their work. Rather, it is an internalization of what society itself has internalized--a forced internalization of a false notion. In other words the social stigma is rooted in the idea that fast food work is degrading work in that it doesn't require skill and anyone can do it. The wage (more than anything else) confirms and symbolizes it.

According to current fast food employees--especially American employees--it is the wage (along with the lack of fringe benefits, insecurity, and unstable work schedule) that partially degrades the work for the work they believe should hold greater value. Still, workers are forced to be embarrassed to wear their uniforms in public because society tells them they should be embarrassed, but not for the underlying reasons for this embarrassment. Elliot Liebow, three decades ago in Tally's Corner, pointed out that it made perfect sense that "street corner men" would hold little value for low level jobs like dishwasher or janitor. As he said, "He cannot draw from a job those social values which other people do not put into it" (Liebow, 1967). Liebow refers to Alex Inkeles (1960) who found " a clear positive correlation between the over-all status of occupations and the

experience of satisfaction in them."

The very question I posed to fast food workers: "Why don't you wear your uniform to and from work?" was embarrassing to workers. My question was usually followed by a slight pause, a humorous smirk, then an answer like "I usually have to go someplace before" or "It smells like grease and I don't want to bother people on the subway." Besides, workers understood it to be a question of the obvious. They knew that I knew why they didn't wear their uniforms in public. The social embarrassment had applied to me as well. For their same reasons I never wore my Burger King uniform to and from work. A straight answer from workers in this context would be a statement of the obvious, and hence, ridiculous.

The societal stigma, however, is constantly contrasted to the alternative of not working or leading a criminal lifestyle. This contrast helps workers cope with the societal stigma and deflect personal insults from customers. Time and time again, I heard "At least it is 'honest' work." One crew member said, "Some say it is an honest living. Some, I don't care what they say...Well the ones who don't work, they say they would never work at Burger King for 4.25 an hour. But they don't work, so I don't care what they say." And another, "They say it is demeaning to them to flip burgers. But you see that is a person with a poor self esteem. If you believe in making an honest dollar, you wouldn't care if you were mopping the floor. It is honest. You haven't stolen anything. You are not stealing."

The concept of "honest work" is, to the fast food employee, psychologically positioned between society's contempt for fast food work, and, the very values embedded

in neoconservatism including the dissolution of the "welfare state"--honesty, autonomy, hardwork, etc. and contempt for dishonest work, "living off the street," or off of someone else, including the government. The latter are sometimes the closest alternatives to fast food workers. Fast food workers, then, are constantly negotiating social and personal values in order to justify their work roles, identity, and future, in the larger society.

American Work Values and Employees' Perceptions: Linkages between the restaurant workplace and wider societal conditions

I questioned American crew members about the work ethic of American youth. Their responses referred to their own experiences, what they know and have talked about among friends, family and acquaintances. While they often referred to the workplace conditions at Burger King what they said usually had a larger context. The shaping of work values are linked to larger structural factors including the family, social/material conditions, labor market opportunities and the illicit economy. On the other hand, work values seemed to be affirmed in the personal, or private realm of family and friends, rather than in the workplace, or public at large. In this way, they tended to associate their values with a personal/individual/family value system, rather than a value system held by society.

It was a common tendency for American crew members to distinguish themselves from other Americans. James and John, for example, both at some level blame Americans for their lack of motivation to work in minimum wage jobs. Yet they differ in explaining the underlying cause of this lack of motivation. For John, Americans are simply lazy. But for James, Americans are "too into being handicapped." "Being handicapped" implies

doing what one can for the most money which often means illegal activity. James says that they are "too much into drugs, into the drug gang, which a lot of my friends are. I know I was when I was younger. But it was stupid. I am not going to jail and ruin my life. And a lot of them are out there robbing people."

At the same time, James doesn't totally dismiss a criminal lifestyle as irrational. Being "handicapped" also means to James a kind of giving up on or dismissal of the mainstream way of life when the opportunities for success seem unattainable, especially considering what entry level jobs like fast food offer. It takes a special kind of person not to be handicapped, as he implies here.

A lot of people want to start from the top and keep going. Not many people are really strong willed enough and will take the embarrassment and the putdowns from other people to start from 4.25 and work your way up. It is messed up. But we have a lot of strong willed people here. So regardless of what they say about fast food, we are cool about it. But the money is an issue.

James here is distinguishing between two dominant societal values regarding work that American youth without skills and education are constantly caught between. One regards money and prestige (consumerist values) and the other concerns making an "honest living." Both have their costs. The first--"...to start from the top..."--usually means resorting to illegal activity and therefore great risk of being criminalized. The latter means taking a low wage, low status job and therefore being subject to often demeaning conditions and social embarrassment. Neither are socially acceptable. But the latter, at least historically, has held the promise of a *long term* pay off, premised on the American Dream. But, the experience of working itself is what often makes workers lose faith in this long term pay off.

It is not difficult to realize the dilemma James posits, which is based on personal experience. James was involved in the drug trade and rejected this for what he considered a more socially legitimate path. Now, after years of fast food experience at the age of 22, James has burns up and down his arms from changing oil vats. When he was working at a Hardies restaurant in North Carolina for eight months he damaged some nerves in his hand which still goes numb when he gets hit. He never received compensation for this injury.³ James has planned and aspired to become a manager at Burger King and has changed his mind because of what he has experienced in the industry. It seems that unfavorable work conditions compounded by poor material/living circumstances and lack of job alternatives help shape a particular work ethic, or set of values among employees in the restaurant workplace. James says,

That is why a lot of employees here, I have seen them take money, take food. But in a way I can't blame them because they are not getting enough money in here. A lot of people in here have families and children and they are not making enough to support them. And plus it is bad enough they are going through that. They are getting stressed out. They want you to do everything in here in such little time and for nothing. So I can't really blame them when they want to take money from the

³ In James' situation, living from paycheck to paycheck, he feels that he cannot afford to get compensated for his injuries, as he explains what happens when he gets burned:

You fill out an accident report and if it is bad enough you can't go to work until you receive workers compensation or until you are better. But in my situation it doesn't allow me to do that. If I get burned I have to continue coming to work. I don't have any money coming in from anywhere else. I am not trying to be a statistic and go on welfare or social services. I like working for my money... If I don't work I have no money. Bottom line. I can't do anything without money. I am not going to sit out waiting for compensation and then when you get it you only earn half of what you earn normally for 40 hours. It would be a bunch of headache for nothing.

Concerning his Hardies injury and not getting compensated he says that the "Company was fucked up" and was "trying to cut corners every way down to..tax evasion."

cash register and get over.

In this sense, James implies that "to take money" from the employer and "getting over" is rational and legitimate in the workplace because employees are just trying to make a living from wages that do not provide enough to do just that.

James is making a distinction between "robbing from people"--the activity of the "handicapped" and "taking" from the employer--the activity of the employees. It is different and legitimate because they are performing work that is worth more than what they are actually getting paid. In other words, employees are taking what is rightfully theirs.

James Tucker (1993) in a study of temporary workers, found that employees commonly respond to "offensive behavior" on the part of their employers in various ways including "theft, sabotage, or noncooperation." Jason Ditton (1977) in "Perks, Pilferage, and the Fiddle" showed how low-wage workers have historically been situated in a "double-bind" system whereby part of the worker's wages are paid "in-kind" as part of a structure of "invisible wages." "His wages are geared down to an invisible pilferage value of his job, but his attempt to secure this invisible value could well lose him his job, and, land him in court." Importantly, employers in this system maintain the power to define the action, either as a "perk," or, as a "theft." ⁴

⁴ Ditton (1977) examined the historical emergence of three categories of what he calls "kind payment." "Perks" refer to employers/managers and the white-collar employed where an employee is legally paid part of her wages in kind. "Pilferage" refers to blue-collar employees where stealing from the employer is institutionalized in an abstract sense. Low wages are supposed to be compensated for through the act of stealing but the outcome of being caught is unpredictable. It is a "double-bind" system. "His wages are geared down to an invisible pilferage value of his job, but his attempt to secure this

In the fast food restaurant, "taking" from the employer--if caught--is grounds for dismissal. But rather than the employer having the power to define the particular action, the institution has institutionalized the definitions of various actions. Stealing money from the cash register, for example, is absolutely grounds for dismissal. And, so is taking, or giving away, food. But, there are many forms of "taking" besides taking money from the cash register. And there are different ways to steal food that are interpreted as legitimate, and not defined as "stealing."

Sometimes employees steal by exploiting the workplace rules. For example, at Burger King in Downtown Brooklyn, employees are allowed to eat (on the premises) food that has already been "put down" after the store closes (prepared food that will not be sold). ("Putting down" refers to the beginning stage of preparing a food item.) A nightly ritual while I was working there was for employees to "put down" whatever they wanted to eat for the night--plus a little extra. This had to be done while customers were in the store so that managers thought it was being prepared for the customers. Another form of taking from the employer is the giving of free food to friends who come into the store as customers. This has become so commonplace that employers have taken a very active role in curbing it. Managers are suspicious of any cashier who is serving a friend or relative. Out of fear of losing their jobs, cashiers encourage friends and relatives not to come into the store (or at least not get on their line) while they are working. As I have

invisible value could well lose him his job, and, land him in court." In any case, management maintains the power to define the action, either as a "perk," or, as a "theft." "Unequivocal theft" refers to the "unemployed poor" where in all cases the "offender will be defined as a thief." In this case, "the worker has to steal part of his own wages."

already discussed, employees also tend to seek jobs and work outside their own neighborhoods.

James is also implying that one should not expect employees to have "pride" in their work as Donald suggests, and respect their employer or their jobs, if the employer does not have the same respect for the employees. In other words, James is saying that employees value their jobs as much as managers value their employees who perform the work. Consequently, the social value attached to doing "honest work" is devalued in the workplace. When workers do hold pride in their work it is supposed to come from some influence external to the organization such as the family.

This helps to explain how some employees assert a distinction between the job itself and the reasons for performing it. For instance, while John says that management tries to make the "best buck" and "get the most out of workers" he also legitimizes his role in conceding to these conditions by distinguishing himself from those who don't (the Americans who are "lazy") in terms of his distinctive family influence. Robert Merton, in developing the "reference group theory" showed the common tendency for people to judge unequal relationships not in absolute terms, but by "taking their own orientation status point as a reference point" (Boudon, 1991). John, for example, says

I was born in a family who believes in work. I would rather work three jobs than to be on welfare. Even when my father was laid off, he would go back to his old job and he would work at five dollars per hour instead of 15. He still wanted to maintain that pride he had.

The common reference to a strong work ethic rooted in the family represents a search for legitimation that is not found by workers in the workplace or in the society at large. This counters the widely held belief by managers that those who refuse to work in

fast food or those who leave the industry or are not enthusiastic or don't have a positive attitude on the job are plagued by some other value system. Rather, it is the fact that they hold the same values with the same expectations of work, with the same aspirations to grow and become something "better." But, these values and expectations are not necessarily upheld in the workplace. Working does not seem to pan out as a means for fulfilling their aspirations or at least helping them obtain a better job.

Many of my respondents suggested that a job at McDonalds or Burger King does not necessarily lead to a better job in the labor market at large. None of my respondents at the crew level--American-born and immigrant alike--believed that their jobs at McDonalds or Burger King were going to have value in the larger labor market. John implied that putting his Burger King employment on a resume may hurt him when applying for office work. As he says, "If I am applying for an office opportunity, I certainly wouldn't put Burger King, I would put my other job. I would make up a good lie--that I had my other job instead of this. It is more prestigious."

Fast food crew experience is not even perceived to prove beneficial in the industry beyond the restaurant or company one works for. For example, moving from one fast food restaurant to another one usually starts at minimum wage all over again, regardless of any earned wage hikes in the previous restaurant. Bruce worked at a McDonalds for seven years until it was taken over by another ownership that brought in its own workers. He was making \$7 per hour. He applied and was hired at the Burger King at Borough Hall at \$4.25. Christina applied at McDonalds at Borough Hall after considerable experience at a McDonalds in Tennessee where she was making \$4.75. She started at

\$4.25 in Downtown Brooklyn because as she said, management told her that simply "everyone here starts out at \$4.25." Peggy didn't even think to tell the manager who interviewed her that she had worked at a McDonalds previously.

Summary

In this chapter I have shown how "attitude" and work ethics are partly shaped by the experience of working in fast food jobs, and not solely by factors external to the workplace. American minorities in fast food jobs reflect some of the same neoconservative values regarding work that fast food managers seem to profess regarding hard work, family, individual responsibility, and social mobility. Part of the contradiction, here, is that managers discriminate against these same employees based on the fact that they believe that they don't hold these values. In fact, they believe that these same people hold contrary values to do with immediate gratification, conspicuous consumption, and "wanting something for nothing." These values are associated with social stagnation, welfare dependency, and "living off the street." "Attitude" according to managers is a reflection of the poor American work ethic. Associating these values with African Americans is hardly new and was a dominant form of association by white ethnics during the civil rights movement.

But "Attitude," as we have learned from my employee respondents, can be viewed as a rejection of social stagnation and welfare dependency on the part of poor minority American youth who are experiencing the hardships their own parents have faced. I found that it is usually minority Americans from the poorest material conditions or backgrounds

who depend on and defend neoconservative values the most--because *working*, they believe, should be the main avenue for sustaining a livelihood, supporting a family, and achieving social mobility. But, this doesn't necessarily mean they believe that these values hold any real promise for the future. This belief is often shattered through real life experience.

It is when they find that working does not support the means for mobility or to sustain a livelihood, or when "honest" work earns societal contempt rather than respect, that Americans seem to show signs of resistance, or "attitude," on the job. As I pointed out, Americans don't resist work itself. To the contrary. These restaurants receive thousands of job inquiries and applications every year. And, we can safely assume that a good number of them are African-American. Worker resistance, rather, is targeted towards some of the conditions of the work, such as staying later than the posted schedule and performing auxiliary work like changing oil vats. And it is expressed verbally such as referring to their relationship with their employers as a slave relationship.

The American versus immigrant difference cited by managers constitutes a cultural breakdown of the category of race especially in regard to those of African ancestry. The racial category of "black" is broken down by national origin. But it is also a class based category in so far as those of the American black middle class do not seek fast food work, at least in Downtown Brooklyn, and, foreign blacks who seek fast food jobs here are usually a step above their American counterparts in regard to material conditions and life chances. Among a workforce dominated by people of color in Downtown Brooklyn, then, features of nationality, ethnicity, and class, help shape employer preferences, biases and

discriminatory practices. In the next chapter I expound on the material and social conditions that help define the various racial and ethnic groups who work in the fast food industry and that help explain ethnic and class patterns of occupational mobility in New York's labor market.

Chapter Seven

Occupational Mobility Among Fast Food Employees: Beyond the fast food job?

Little has been known about the structures of opportunity within the fast food industry. Through corporate advertising, and media reports, we have been confronted with a two-sided picture of these giant corporations. On the one hand, the majority of jobs are low-wage, temporary, contingent, and dead-end. They are the kind of jobs economists have traditionally called "secondary" jobs. On the other hand, they are not simple "mom and pop" shops. They are part of giant corporations, where there are...supposedly...job ladders and opportunities for advancement beginning at the entry-level...emblematic of what we have known as "primary markets." This dual picture is just part of a kind of increasingly ambiguous perception we have about the corporate world. As we have seen with the fast food industry, restaurants are structured around layers of various global and local ownerships, and they are linked to different bureaucratic office centers. These structures are far from obvious to restaurant visitors. These restaurants are in our neighborhoods, we view them all the time on television commercials, we all know someone who has worked in one of these restaurants. They are so much a part of our everyday lives that we rarely think about them.

But there are important questions that need to be asked today: To what extent do people and households actually depend on these kinds of jobs for their livelihoods? Why is it that some people move on to better jobs and careers while others get stuck at this level...in what some of my employer respondents describe as "the cycle that never ends?"

or what Lipset and Bendix (1952) so long ago described as job "shifting." How good are the opportunities for advancement within the industry, who seizes them and why, and how far can one climb in the restaurant and/or corporate hierarchy?

Among my respondents I found what we can view as four different occupational trajectories (or mobility patterns) among fast food workers today: 1) moving beyond the fast food industry into a career job outside of the industry; 2) getting stuck in "the cycle that never ends;" 3) "moonlighting" in the fast food job while working in another job; 4) and advancing to a managerial position in the fast food job ladder. These trajectories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Some employees advance in the job ladder while they are studying for another career job. Some are moonlighting precisely because they are stuck in the low-wage sector, or, alternatively, they are moonlighting to develop the means to get out of the low-wage sector.

I first examine the role the fast food job and its wages play in supporting employees' households. I show how the structure of the household today is linked to the kinds of opportunities people are capable of pursuing in the labor market and/or the limitations people confront. I then examine the four different occupational trajectories and patterns within and between the different immigrant and ethnic groups among my respondents. I show how multiple interlinking factors affect these different trajectories including household structure, family and cultural environments, social class background, cultural and social capital, educational attainments and goals, gender, age, opportunities in the labor market at large, and perception of the fast food industry. I then discuss, in particular, the opportunities for advancement within the fast food restaurant and those

who pursue them.

The study of occupational mobility has always been important in American social science. The notion of equality of opportunity, or the "egalitarian ideology" as Blau and Duncan (1967) called it, has historically and ideologically served to justify real socioeconomic inequalities. The occupational structure has been a principal medium through which people are supposed to achieve social mobility (Sorokin, 1927; Lipset and Bendix, 1953; Blau and Duncan, 1967; Duncan, Duncan and Featherman, 1973; Featherman and Hauser, 1978).

Immigrants who come to the United States in search of occupational opportunity have always been willing to work hard and work long hours for it.¹ But new immigrants today have entered a very different labor market than the labor market immigrants entered at the beginning of the century. It is a service economy, but hardly the "post-industrial" economy envisioned by Daniel Bell (1977) two decades ago. Many question both the amount of good opportunity that exists and the real possibility for achieving success. Studies have pointed to growing socioeconomic inequalities caused by economic polarization, labor market segmentation, and growing income and status disparities in the occupational structure (Newman, 1996; Botwinick, 1993). Moreover, the privatization and reduction of public services, including public universities, have put the means of

¹ Moreover, migration has always been strongly correlated with success according to social scientists. Those who emigrate are the most motivated among their populations. The experience of geographical mobility helps shape skills of adaptation that prove valuable in the labor market. And shifting to another region eliminates ascribed restrictions on achievement that exist in an immigrant's homeland (Blau and Duncan, 1967).

access farther from the most disadvantaged populations. In New York, these populations include immigrants as well as native New Yorkers. Those who don't have technical skills or educational degrees demanded for "career" jobs in New York's labor market--are often restricted to the low-end of the service economy where most newly created jobs, as in fast food, are, by definition, low-wage, temporary, contingent and part-time.²

The fast food industry and New York City households: the subsidized wage

A great deal of documentation has made it clear that most families today can hardly be supported by one income. Even a single person dependent on low-wage work can hardly survive on his or her own (Gordon, 1996). Increasing financial difficulty and insecurity either keep families together or they pull them apart (Thurow, 1995). By looking at the relationship between the household and the labor market we see that upward mobility and simple survival in today's economy--especially among the working classes--requires a tremendous amount of resources, including several income earners in each household, and a careful balancing of fluctuating household and work schedules to meet both income needs and family maintenance. (See Tables 7.1-7.7.)

² In the 1950s, during the great industrial boom period in the United States, Seymour Lipset and Reinhard Bendix (1959) found that workers were more apt to shift jobs than occupations. They also found that white collar workers (what we now consider "service" workers) were considerably more prone to job shifting than were manual workers. Moreover, they found that unskilled workers were more prone to job shifting than were skilled workers. These findings of more than four decades ago are important because they indicate that the underlying problems of job shifting today have not changed. The increasing prevalence of job shifting is rooted in structural changes in the labor market at large with growing proportion of service sector jobs that are inherently, insecure, transient, and low-wage (See Lipset and Bendix, 1959).

Immigrants have always been willing to pool together household resources, including several incomes from various household earners. Perhaps what is different today is the vast difficulty many immigrants have in doing this and achieving their expectation of improving their circumstances. Some of my respondents who came to New York with the intention of staying, like Treacy and Hardy, plan to return to their country of origin because of the tremendous material difficulties they encountered in New York. Americans, on the other hand, are not simply adjusting expectations. Many are adjusting to a declining standard of living while, as immigrants have always done, working longer hours in more than one job.

The fast food job is increasingly a significant source of household income in New York City. According to managers, the proportion of "full-time" employees--more than 50 percent today--has dramatically increased in the last 10 years. Part-time jobs in fast food are made as full-time as possible by most employees--immigrants and Americans alike (depending on how many hours employers schedule them for). Employees constantly make reference to the fact that they want, need, or hope to "get more hours." In this industry 40 hours is the maximum number of hours an employee is "allowed" to work in a week. As we have learned from numerous respondents in this study, the corporate pressure to minimize labor costs often leads managers to violate federal labor laws when employees do exceed 40 hours and are not paid for overtime. Managers' monthly memos I mentioned in Chapter 3, which particularly highlight "significant improvement" in lowering labor costs and increasing profit levels, vividly illustrate the conscious effort to minimize wages--at all costs.

Aside from a few cases, fast food income is usually just one among various other household incomes. High-level restaurant managers, like Charles, the Taiwanese manager in Chinatown, earn a high enough salary to support a family and a middle-class way of life. Julia, who earns only \$7.50 per hour as an assistant manager, barely scrapes by on her income and child-support payments from her former husband. Most fast food workers live in multiple-job households. The average household in my sample consists of five people--including children--and three adults (including teenagers). The numbers of household earners in each household with at least two adults (including teenagers) ranged from one to five. On average, each household is supported by three jobs--including the fast food job of the respondent.

What is particularly striking are the various kinds of jobs and income sources that support households of fast food workers today. Income is derived primarily from three different sources, including the formal economy, the informal economy, and government subsidies. While some respondents were open about stating that one or more of their family members received government subsidies, others were not. On the other hand, respondents were quite open about the kinds of jobs other household members had whether they were formal jobs or jobs "off-the books." Nearly one-third of all households (15 out of 52) derived some earnings from jobs off-the-books. Seven households depended solely on jobs off-the-books to supplement fast food earnings. These informal jobs included factory and independent restaurant work, garment homeworking, child care, domestic services, beautician services, construction work, and auto repair. In some cases, the fast food job was the most stable income in the household.

Most households were supported by various mainstream jobs and didn't rely on informal income sources. They ranged from the dual-earner professional couple and their child who was the fast food worker--like Amy or Maria--to the five-income family of Nina and Carlo, where three fast food incomes, a public sector job, and a factory pension were pooled to support a nine-member household. Some fast food workers--like John, Lila, and Bruce--worked a "regular" day job and "moonlighted" in their fast food job. They had children to support and their spouses also worked. There were households supported solely by various fast food jobs. Marta, the Dominican manager in Washington Heights, for example, was married to another fast food manager. Two manager salaries provided an annual family income equal to the average U.S. household income--about \$30,000. Roberto, the Colombian manager in Chinatown, hired his wife as a crew member in his restaurant whenever they had a tough time paying the bills.

Even students who work in the industry tend to make substantial financial contributions to their households. Students' fast food wages often help to pay household rent, their clothing, tokens for public transportation. In the best of circumstances, and depending on class background, fast food wages helped to pay for college tuition fees or summer traveling. According to several of my respondents college students today [especially those of working class background] often work full-time, rather than part-time, and attend college part-time, rather than full-time. Nineteen of my respondents were students. Thirteen were high school students. Only five out of 52 respondents were currently college students. Three college students were from professional backgrounds and lived with their parents. The other two were from working class backgrounds, were

managers, were attending college part-time and were financing their education with their salaries. Seven more respondents had a high school degree and planned to attend college in the near future...depending on their financial and household resources.

The typical fast food workforce today, however, is not comprised solely of students and young people. The fast food workforce in New York City ranges greatly in age. My crew member respondents ranged in age from 15 to 47. Many fast food employees had dependents to support. Sixteen of my respondents--including managers--supported children or a parent(s). And, as several managers said, in recent years single mothers have been joining the fast food workforce. Three of my respondents, Julia, Nina, and Claudia, were single mothers. Julia, a manager, lived on her own with her son. But Nina, and Claudia, lived with other household members and their own mothers were the primary caregivers for their children. Also, in every restaurant I examined, there were senior citizen workers as well.

Fast food wages have always been supplemented by other household earnings. What is different today is that the fast food wage is often a substantial part of household income. It is often depended upon to keep households afloat. What is also different, and perhaps a bit more surprising, is that fast food wages are supplemented by other income sources besides formal sector jobs. Fast food workers' wages are sometimes supplemented by government subsidies and informal sector income. The various ways households derive income represent *strategies* in the daily lives and future plans of different immigrant and ethnic groups to both survive and better their circumstances. They are important for understanding the kinds of resources households can invest in

college education and technical training, that provide chances for occupational mobility.

Mobility patterns among immigrant and ethnic groups

Here, I focus on explaining mobility patterns between and within immigrant and ethnic groups including Chinese, West Indian, South Asian, Latino, and African and Russian immigrants. I also look at second generation Latinos and Black Americans. While these groups reflect the diversity of New York's new immigrant populations, they do not necessarily represent the vast diversity within these groups in the New York City population. Rather, they represent particular segments within each immigrant group which vary by class background, national origins, language skills, etc.

Distinguishing between the diversity among immigrants in the fast food workforce and the diversity among New York's immigrant populations at large is important. This distinction points to 1) structural and geographical demands of the fast food industry including cultural criteria which pull certain immigrants--and not others--into the workforce; 2) the way culture affects the class composition of the workforce--such as the Chinese fast food workforce coming from professional and working class backgrounds and Latinos and West Indians mainly coming from working class backgrounds, 3) dependency on (or willingness to work in) this kind of minimum wage work by particular groups and not others. For example, certain immigrant groups, like the Japanese and Italian, are not found in fast food jobs. Among Americans, minorities of color, rather than White Americans work in fast food jobs. This implies either that these groups do not depend on minimum wage work, and/or that they have other job opportunities.

Distinguishing among immigrant groups is also important because social scientists, as well as politicians, have been in the practice of making broad generalizations about "immigrants" as a single aggregate group. In the case of Thomas Bailey, who did excellent research on the restaurant industry in New York City in 1985, it can lead to oversights. Bailey claimed that the preferred labor supply for the industry was native youth. For one, fast food chains require verbal and written language skills both to interact with the clientele and to communicate food orders. Immigrants, according to Bailey, tend to have language deficiencies since English is not their native language. Bailey was correct in emphasizing the importance of language skills. Yet, he was shortsighted to conclude that all restaurants demand English language skills. Further, as I have shown, in immigrant neighborhoods like Washington Heights, the language deficiency is with Spanish not being the native language. And English is a first language for such immigrant groups as West Indians and South Asians from urban areas.

Bailey also suggested that while both immigrants and native teenagers have a short term employment perspective ideal for the industry, the reasons for that perspective differ. The primary purpose for many immigrants, as Bailey pointed out, was to accumulate savings to send back to their home country. Therefore, immigrants tend to want to maximize income and minimize consumption and work on a more intensive daily basis--to work more hours of work in a shorter span of time. In contrast, teenagers have a more temporary perspective because they are engaged in more significant activities on a daily basis--such as going to school, social activities, sports, etc. Teenagers, then, tend to want to work fewer hours on a daily basis, which better meets the needs of the industry. Bailey

concludes that native teenagers are a better suited labor supply for the industry given the nature of the fast food production process and native teenagers' goals (part-time and more casual employment) in contrast to immigrants' goals (full-time and more permanent employment.)

Bailey was correct to emphasize the industry's emphasis on youth. Yet, he was wrong to focus on a clear division between "native" youth and immigrants. As I have shown, many of the industry's employees are immigrant youth, endowed with many of the same characteristics and employment demands as native youth in this industry have traditionally had. They intend to remain in this country. Many--like Peggy from Jamaica who plans to become a medical doctor--are students seeking careers outside of the industry and thus view fast food employment as temporary, as students, they need a job with a flexible schedule. Moreover, there are, as we know, vast differences among immigrants that Bailey failed to recognize. Bailey characterized immigrants as a single aggregate group without material resources or opportunities to gain mobility in the mainstream labor market. Yet, as I have shown and want to elaborate, there are numerous differences within and between immigrant groups.

The Chinese

The Chinese immigrants among my respondents come from Mainland China, Taiwan, and Malaysia. (See Table 7.1.) They speak different languages and represent both "uptown" and "downtown" Chinese. Five out of seven were most characteristic of the uptown Chinese. Importantly, four out of these five were young, upwardly mobile,

and came from professional families whom they lived with in New York. Audrey, Sharon, Linda, and Amy all lived with both of their parents. (The fifth was Charles, the Taiwanese general manager in Chinatown.) These four were enrolled in college or high school and planned to attend college. They viewed their employment as temporary. Like all others who were seeking or who had attained a higher educational degree they pursued the fast food job ladder as a temporary expedient to help them get through school, and as a career alternative in the event they were unable to find employment in their field of choice. As one manager said, the Chinese people who work here "don't want to work in a factory. If they want to they will keep going to work in the factory because in there you can make a lot of money...here you work hard, you have a little money, but you will go to school...Those who choose to go to a higher level work here."

Importantly, the parents of the uptown Chinese did not necessarily support the fact that their children worked. This was characteristic of middle class immigrant parents in general. As Amy, the young immigrant assistant manager from Malaysia, who was pursuing a degree in business and who was from a professional family background, said,

"They (my parents) don't want me to work here. They don't allow me to work here. I have to study and I spend a lot of time in this store....So my father doesn't allow me to work. He says, 'Why don't you stop your work?' I said 'Father, studying from the book is not everything. The book has a limit. It teaches me just the knowledge from the book. I studied how to inventory, accounting, only from the book. But the way you use it...what you study you use it here.' Most of the Chinese people who study have part-time jobs."

Other young Chinese immigrants among my respondents, such as Tina and Jill, illustrate the situations of the majority of recent "downtown" Chinese immigrants. They live in family households that rely on employment in the informal economy of factories and

restaurants, and they were using the fast food industry as an entry-level job into the mainstream labor market. Some downtown Chinese, like Jill, who was only 17 years old, planned to attend college. The fast food restaurant in Chinatown was a place to work where she could be around other upwardly mobile youth--instead of a factory or restaurant where her parents worked and that most workers would never leave. But others, like Tina, already in her mid 20s were already trained in another field (television repair)--with skills she found obsolete in the United States. Tina took the restaurant job ladder seriously and planned to become a manager. This was her family's first chance in the mainstream and her first chance to make an upwardly mobile step with material rewards such as a salary and health insurance benefits.

Among the older Chinese employees in Chinatown, working in the mainstream in fast food is a kind of haven away from the harsh conditions of Chinese factories and restaurants. In their case, fast food jobs are not upward steps to mobility because they will not move from the entry-level position. Rather, it is a downward step because their earnings decline from their factory earnings with reduced and fluctuating hours of work.

In this way, Chinese immigrants and all immigrants in general, have redefined the notion of "entry-level" employment in this industry. Fast food is not simply a first job for youth. It is a first job in the U.S. mainstream for many Chinese immigrants--whether it is their first job as a young person, an upwardly mobile step from the informal economy, or, a haven from harsh conditions of the informal economy.

Their current fast food job was the first job for most of the Chinese employees among both uptown and downtown Chinese. The average age at which they started

working at any job was over 19 years old. Fast food employment in Chinatown enabled them to use their native Chinese language, while also learning English skills and gaining mainstream job experience and professional contacts.

Among some of the downtown Chinese, like Tina, employment was used as a base for mobility, in contrast to educational attainment, which was the primary base for mobility for the uptown Chinese and the ambitious downtown Chinese like Jill. And for the uptown Chinese, fast food job ladders were considered more as a temporary expedient on the way to other careers. Amy, for example, did not consider a managerial position as a career goal or as an upwardly mobile step as Tina did. Rather, it was simply a college student job, and a job her college peers and parents considered "not good enough."

Employment and promotional opportunities among the Chinese immigrants seemed to be significantly shaped by geographical and cultural factors. Among the three neighborhoods I examined, Chinese immigrants only worked in Chinatown, where their native Chinese dialects were culturally valued and where those who did not also speak English fluently were able to work. The promotion of the Chinese in Chinatown tended to be partly due to their cultural capital, that could be used in marketing strategies in the Chinese community. The Chinese did not apply for fast food jobs in other New York City neighborhoods.

West Indians

The West Indians respondents came from Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, and Antigua. (See Table 7.2.) They were young, like the Chinese, ranging in age from 17 to

27. Unlike the Chinese, who varied in social class background, the West Indians all came from working class backgrounds. But like the Chinese, they were predisposed to upward mobility, with educational and career goals outside of the industry.³

The parents of my West Indian respondents worked in working class occupations and they were links in chains of individual family members and relatives making their way to New York from the Islands. They did not necessarily live with their parents. But they all lived with relatives who were either in school or college or working. All but one household was supported by at least three incomes from the informal or formal economies or both--including the respondents' fast food wages. Four out of seven households derived earnings from the informal economy, which included baby sitting and construction work.

The West Indians, then, lived in various household arrangements, often with extended family members endowed with a range of material resources from home ownership to nothing. Most other family members in the respondents' households, tended, regardless of age, to be working in, or being trained for, jobs in the mainstream economy. Only a few relied on work in the informal economy. The West Indian households seemed to have greater access to, and mobility in, the mainstream labor market because English was their primary language--unlike the Chinese. They were not restricted to working in particular neighborhoods.

The West Indian employees' families tended to emphasize upward mobility and,

³ According to Malcom Gladwell (1996), "They make substantially more money than American blacks. They live in better neighborhoods. Their families are stronger" and they "fare about as well as Chinese and Korean immigrants."

with it, investment in college education or at least marketable job training. The household emphasis on education seemed to play a significant role in West Indians' educational goals . But the extent of achievable mobility seemed to depend on the amount of resources the household had to invest in education and training and the kind of household arrangement they lived in. These factors determined and sometimes modified aspirations.

The West Indians were aiming for either professional degrees in law, medicine, teaching or accounting, business degrees or technical professions in health and nursing. Like the "uptown Chinese" they tended to view their participation in the industry as temporary and perceived the job ladder as a way to facilitate their goals outside of the industry. None had long term aspirations in the fast food industry.

Audrey, a cashier in Downtown Brooklyn who is from Jamaica, for example, lives with both of her parents who work. Her mother is an attendant in a nursing home and her father is a repair technician. She plans to become a pediatrician. Peggy, from Guyana, who works with Audrey, plans to become a lawyer. She also lives with both her parents who work. Her mother is a nurse's aide in a hospital and her father is studying refrigeration repair in college. Alice, from Guyana, who works in another restaurant in Downtown Brooklyn, also plans to become a lawyer. And like Peggy and Audrey, she lives with two parents who both work. Her father works "in computers" and her stepmother is a baby sitter off-the-books. Grace, from Antigua, who works in Washington Heights, lives with both of her parents who work. But both parents work informal jobs. Her mother is a private beautician and her father is a construction worker. She planned to attend college to study business the following year away from home. She

planned to quit her fast food job when she started college. She had three elder sisters currently enrolled in college. These four young West Indian women are either in college or in high school on a college trajectory. All but Grace planned to remain in their jobs until they finished college. They considered pursuing promotions as managers, but only as a temporary expedient--to facilitate their college studies and then move on to their career of choice.

Elizabeth, from Guyana, who works with Alice in Downtown Brooklyn, had less ambitious plans. She experiences more difficult material circumstances. She planned to become a nursing assistant like her mother. She lives with her mother who now works as a nurse's assistant seven days a week, and two cousins. Both cousins also work; one is a fast food worker and the other works for a catering company. Elizabeth is struggling to save enough money to go to nursing school. She will have to quit her fast food job to study full-time. Thus, she does not consider investing the time it takes to be considered for a promotion.

Among some of the West Indian immigrants, the job ladder has become a basis for social mobility after they fail to attain their original goals. Treacy, for example, already had a two-year business degree but "fell into" fast food because she simply couldn't find a job in her field. It was difficult for her to pursue another degree or continue her studies because her household--comprised of her mother and sister--depends on her earnings. Her mother was a nursing home attendant and her sister was a chef at a restaurant in Manhattan. As I mentioned in Chapter four, partly because of her failed attempt in the New York City labor market, Treacy plans to return home. She is sending part of her

earnings to Antigua where her father lives and where she is having a house built for her. Hardy, the assistant manager in Washington Heights who had a dream of becoming a teacher, remained in fast food and moved up the job ladder because of the lack of household resources to pursue a teaching degree. Hardy's household also depends on her earnings. She brings home most of the household income. She lives with her aunt and her sister who both work off-the-books as baby sitters.

The fast food industry tended to be an entry level employer for the West Indians, like the Chinese. Their current fast food job was the first job for most, and only a second job for a few of the West Indians. They began working, on average, at 18 years old. Because their native language is English, the West Indians were more geographically mobile in the fast food industry than were the Chinese immigrants. West Indian immigrants were found working in all three areas I examined, and some, like Peggy, had worked in other fast food restaurants in other neighborhoods.

South Asians

The three South Asian respondents came from India and Bangladesh. (See Table 7.3.) They were most similar to the uptown Chinese, having come from professional backgrounds with high educational goals and attainments. As I have already mentioned, two of the South Asians were among my few respondents who "fell into" the industry on the management rungs due to their social contacts in corporate management. They were older than most who initially become managers. Gitu, the manager in Washington Heights, was among the few who had made a choice to turn fast food into a career, partly

due to perceived lack of opportunity elsewhere. He had a B.A. degree from India and his first employment experience was in fast food as a manager. The other manager, Britto, planned to eventually leave the industry to start his own business. Working as a fast food manager, for Britto, was a severe compromise in light of his expectations. He continued in his job due to lack of other job opportunity, lack of financial capital to start his own business and because he had a family to support, including children in college.

The high-school-age crew member came from Bangladesh. He planned to leave the industry eventually in order to go to engineering school. His father, a former high school teacher, was deceased. His mother did not work outside the home. His household was supported by siblings who worked in professional occupations.

Fast food employment was the first employment in the U.S. for all three of the South Asians. It was the first job ever for the two younger ones. They had started working, on average, at about 20 years old. The South Asians, like the West Indians were more geographically mobile than the Chinese because their second language from birth is English. South Asians were found working in all three areas I examined. These three immigrants were among the middle class elite in South Asia--being from urban areas, from highly educated families, and multilingual. Their experiences in the U.S. were very different from their lower class counterparts--in terms of their social and human capital, and, life chances. Being of the middle class, and, speaking English is what provides them opportunity to join fast food jobs.

Latino Immigrants

Latino immigrants among my respondents tended to vary the most in terms of family social class background, household resources, and educational attainments and goals. (See Table 7.4.) They ranged from those living in households with substantial earnings derived from the informal economy to those from middle-income, professional backgrounds. But very few Latino immigrants were from professional backgrounds. Only three out of 17 Latino immigrants among my respondents had middle class origins. They were students in either high school or college. Fourteen had working class origins and had a greater span in age, from 15 to 36 years old. Age is correlated with social class background.

An important difference between Latinos and both South and East Asians was that middle class Latinos were not and did not aspire to be managers. And the fact that only a minority of employees had middle-class origins suggests that fast food employment is less attractive to middle-class Latinos than for working class Latinos. Like the uptown Chinese, the middle-class Latinos had parents who did not necessarily support their working in fast food jobs. Maria, the Dominican whose father is a journalist for a well-known Hispanic newspaper, said,

"They (my parents) don't like me working. He (my father) has agreed but he don't like it. It is because sometimes I don't have time for study and for work. I tell them I have to work. But I work because I want to...as a hobby. My father can pay me the money. But I want to get my money. He don't like it. But I like it."

Many Latino immigrants from working-class backgrounds did aspire to be and were managers. Three Latino immigrants from working-class backgrounds were managers, including Greg, Marta, and Miguel. Four Latino immigrant crew members considered the management track as a possibility for the future. But it was among the

working-class Latino immigrants where it became apparent that there is a level of household stability required to simply remain in a fast food job long enough to even consider, or be considered, for a promotion into the management tract.

If a crew member was self-supporting or had dependents with no other source of income it was very difficult--on the edge of impossible--to sustain a livelihood by working in a fast food job. It was certainly nearly impossible to work at the minimum wage level long enough to be promoted into the management track, not to mention meeting the most important criteria for promotion: being able to express positive emotions and attitudes about the work and the employer. The Latino immigrant managers were promoted from the ranks only after one to three years of working as a crew member. (Latino-American managers were promoted after one to four years of working as a crew member, Chinese and Caribbean were promoted much earlier.)

The 20 year old Cuban immigrant among my respondents who worked in Washington Heights represents a typical scenario of those who simply cannot remain working in the industry, who often leave for other jobs, and who invariably end up "hopping around" from one low wage job to the next without any upward mobility. She was planning to quit after only three months because she needed to support both herself and her unemployed father who got laid off as a housekeeper at a Hilton Hotel. After five days of working 26 hours she received only \$107 for the week. The low hourly wage she earned was burdened by the shifting fast food schedule that often cut her hours shorter than anticipated. "I want to leave..." she said "...because they pay too little. And then sometimes they tell you to go home because there are not enough customers and its slow

business and everything. I live with my father and I have to help him. And this is not good enough." She was considering attempting to get a job at a Payless shoe store where she had a social contact and where the wages were about 25 cents more per hour.

Another difference among the Latino immigrants as a whole, as opposed to the Asians and West Indians, was that they were not necessarily predisposed to pursuing education or job training beyond high school. Rather, the educational goals and attainments among Latinos tended to correspond with family social class background as well as the extent of household support and resources.

Only one Latino immigrant among my respondents had a four-year college degree. The most highly educated Latino immigrants were managers: Greg, the Dominican with a B.A. in Liberal Arts, and Marta who had earned an associates degree in management. They were both from working class backgrounds and had earned their degrees while they were crew members. Greg did not become a manager until he had finished his Bachelors degree. He became a manager partly because of his inability to find a job in his field of study. As Greg said,

I was going to high school. I worked nights and weekends. I graduated. I went to Hunter College. I needed money to stay in school. I had financial aid but you still need more money to buy books, tokens...four years went by (since I started in high school) and I was promoted.

Greg aspires to become a store supervisor. His parents had been factory workers. He also had a sister who was a fast food manager.

The other Latino immigrant managers had only high school degrees, were also from working class backgrounds and never planned to pursue further education. One was Roberto, the Colombian who studied at Aviation High School and "fell into" the industry.

The other was Miguel, the Puerto Rican who only spoke Spanish and was beginning the management track in Washington Heights. His father worked in a warehouse in New Jersey, his brother worked as a security guard, and his sister worked at a bank. His mother worked occasionally off-the-books as a child care attendant.

Only five out of 14 Latino immigrant crew members were attending or planned to attend college. Three of these five came from professional family backgrounds. Raul planned to go to college to be a lawyer or police officer. He lived with both his parents who were a psychologist and a computer analyst. Thomas lived with his aunt, a social worker, but he was supported by his parents who are an accountant and a teacher in the Dominican Republic. Thomas planned to go to City College to study mechanical engineering, and the other is Maria who was already attending college and whose father was a journalist and mother was a nurse. The other two, Jesus and Stephen, from the Dominican Republic, worked in Chinatown and were in high school. Jesus lived with his aunt, a social worker, because his mother, also a fast food worker (in another restaurant), was not able to care for him. She had other younger children. Stephen was only 15, and lived with both his parents and younger siblings. His father was a janitor, his mother worked as a baby sitter off-the-books. Stephen and Jesus claimed to want to go to college to play baseball and football respectively.

The rest (10 out of 14)--those who were not attending or planning to attend college--came from working class backgrounds. Further, all of those who were currently enrolled in high school (except for Stephen and Jesus)--like Pedro, Thomas, and Antonio--were attending vocational high schools and hence, were not on college trajectories. They

planned to be mechanics or business owners.

Unlike in other immigrant groups, those with high educational aspirations did not consider pursuing the fast food job ladder while attending college. Rather, they considered their employment status as temporary and believed they could get a better job while going to school. Or, those from middle class or professional family backgrounds--like Maria and Raul--they did not necessarily need to work to support a college education as did, say, the working class West Indians.

The Latino immigrant crew members who did consider pursuing the fast food job ladder were those without further educational or job training aspirations beyond high school and whose households were supported by income from the informal economy. These included Antonio, who lived with two aunts working as a nurses assistant and in home day care; Claudia, a 21 year old Dominican living with her mother who was a nurse's assistant and her sister who was a baby sitter; Roman, a 19 year old Dominican whose mother and aunt were baby sitters and his father who was a car mechanic (off the books); Pedro, a 21 year old Dominican living with his father who was also a car mechanic (off the books); and Gabriel, the 28 year old Venezuelan supported his family including his wife who contributed to the household by baby sitting.

Employment and promotional opportunities among Latino immigrants were similar to those among Chinese immigrants because they seemed to be at least partly shaped by geographical and cultural factors. Although Latino immigrants were found working in all three areas I examined, their geographical mobility was dependent on language skills. Those who only spoke Spanish, like Miguel and Thomas, tended to work

in Washington Heights and those who were also fluent in English worked in the other two areas. (There were a few exceptions, however; Some Latino immigrants--like Gabriel--who only spoke Spanish worked in a restaurant in Chinatown.) Opportunity for promotions tended to be based on cultural factors in Washington Heights, where Latino origin and ability to speak Spanish were considered valuable for neighborhood marketing and recruiting more workers. Among the Latino immigrant managers in Washington Heights, most were bilingual like my respondents Greg and Marta. But some only spoke Spanish, like Miguel. In the other geographical areas, however, Latino immigrants were required to be fluent in English to be considered for a promotion. Gabriel, for example, aspired to be a manager, but he was required to become fluent in English before he could be considered.

Second-generation Latinos

The second-generation Latinos were all second-generation Puerto Rican except for one respondent--Elena, the Honduran. (See Table 7.5.) They were all from working class family backgrounds. Most of them grew up in stable income-earning households where both parents worked. Unlike the first generation Latino immigrants, the second-generation depended nearly entirely on formal sector jobs. None were from middle class or professional backgrounds. This may indicate that young second-generation Latinos of middle class origins simply have better alternatives with wider social contacts in better jobs. Or, they simply do not need to work and their parents, like many middle class parents, do not want their children to work while attending school. Household and family

stability were correlated with educational and career aspirations among my respondents. Like the West Indians, who also all came from working class backgrounds, upward mobility among the younger generation seemed largely dependent on the household environment and stability of income rather than social class and occupational status.

Among eight second-generation Latino respondents five had gone to college or were planning to go to college. Two of these five accounted for two out of three managers who were second-generation Latinos. This seems to indicate a greater propensity for the college bound to become managers while they are employed because it provides them greater income and flexibility of time to attend college. Nina, for example, was studying computers. And Augustine was earning a Masters degree in criminal justice. Both were financing their studies on their own. As Jose said,

I came here as a crew worker and just to get a part time job to help me get through high school and then to college and as I moved up in position and pay I stayed here. I went through college and finished that. And I am working on my Masters degree now. I stayed here because it allowed me to be flexible with my hours and school and my studies. I couldn't do a nine to five job Monday through Friday.

The college-bound tended to have grown up in financially secure households. This is a major difference between the first-generation and second-generation working class Latinos. Three of these five (two of whom were siblings) had fathers with steady jobs in the public sector. The mothers of these three included a building cleaner and a former candy factory worker.

Being a manager, according to Nina, provided her extra income, more status, and greater work experience, but also a flexible schedule that enabled her to work part-time while taking care of her child and attending college. Importantly, she lived in a highly

supportive household that pooled resources from five income earners; three McDonalds earnings as well as her father's more steady earnings from his public sector job. Her mother was retired from her factory job where she had worked for three decades, and therefore was able to be the primary caretaker of Nina's baby. One of her brothers, a high school junior, who worked 30 hours a week, was among the respondents; he planned to go to college to become a scientist. The younger brothers also planned to go to college. The other second generation Latino, Elena, who was currently in high school planned to go to college to become a lawyer.

The other two second generation Latinos who had gone to college or were currently attending college also grew up in households with steady employment. Two were currently managers who had worked in fast food jobs while they attended college. Jose had already earned a B.A. degree. As an assistant manager he had reached a glass ceiling in the restaurant he was working in and was currently earning a masters degree in law enforcement so that he could leave his managerial job to join the police department. His father had been a factory foreman in Brooklyn and his mother had been an Avon salesperson. The second, who worked as a "closer" and who considered his fast food job simply as a "moonlighting" job, had a day-time career job as a salesperson. He had gone through two years of college before he dropped out. His father was a printer, belonged to a crafts union, and earned high enough wages to support the household without requiring his mother to work outside the home.

The three second-generation Latinos who had not attended and did not aspire to attend college included two crew members in high school and one manager. The crew

members were planning working-class careers outside the fast food industry. They were not taking college preparatory courses in high school. Two males, both second-generation Puerto Ricans, were in vocational high schools. Joe planned to become a unionized electrician. He grew up in a relatively stable income earning household. His father was a public sector worker in the city Sanitation Department and his mother worked informally as a domestic cleaner. David planned to become a construction worker. David had the most modest aspirations among the second-generation Latinos and also grew up with the most financial instability and fewest resources in a household that largely depended on income from the informal economy. He lived with his aunt, who was a social worker and his uncle, who was an auto mechanic off-the- books.

The manager, a second-generation Puerto Rican, with only a high school degree with no plans for college, came from a large two-parent and single wage-earning family. Her father worked as a factory foreman and simply did not support women having a role outside of the home. College was not considered an option. Working, however, was an option. As I mentioned in Chapter three, becoming a manager was an upwardly mobile step. Moreover, her ambition to become a manager was driven by her financial needs as a single mother.

What is evident among the second generation Latinos is a great deal of support and encouragement for the younger generation to work and to work at a very young age. Working is a means for helping to support the household and, in the most stable-income earning household, to save money for college. Tony, the brother of Nina, who planned to become a scientist said that "We (his sister and brother who also work at Mcdonalds) give

my mother \$40 per week. She is teaching us responsibility. So when we go out there, we know what to do. She is teaching us how life is. So everything is working out." The second generation Honduran crew member as well as her two siblings--who worked as a tour guide and a clerk, helped to support the household they lived in with their mother. Their mother had "stopped working" due to health problems caused by working "so much." Their father was deceased. "She (the mother) gets a little money from her job (pension), plus the money from our father's death. And us three contribute to her."

The second generation Latinos started working far earlier in age than any other group. They started working between the ages of 13 and 17, and, on average, at 14.7 years of age. Those who began working under the age of 14--the legal age required to work--worked off-the-books in small stores, independent restaurants, or did odd jobs. Second generation Latinos, on average, had three jobs prior to joining fast food and some had as many as 10 previous jobs. In contrast, Latino immigrants began working at age 16.5 and worked less than two previous jobs. The Chinese began working at 19 years of age and had less than 1 previous job. The West Indians began working at age 18 and had less than one previous job. The South Asians began working at 20.7 years of age and had less than one previous job. And the Black Americans began working at the age of 16.7 and had nearly four previous jobs. (See Table 7.6.)

In this way, fast food jobs cannot be considered entry level jobs for native born minorities (Black Americans and second generation Latinos). But they are entry level jobs for recent immigrants, and especially the Chinese, West Indians, and South Asians. Jose, who had the greatest number of jobs before he started working in McDonalds, said,

This (fast food job) was my first full-time job. I had about nine or 10 jobs when I was younger. I worked in a grocery store just cleaning and taking groceries down the street. I had various other city jobs in the summers cleaning the park, working for the Board of Health, working in buildings, maintenance. I did those between 13 and 17. This was a job I took to *get something more steady* when I was 18.

On the other hand, fast food managers tend to encourage their employees to perform well in school and to attend college. The spheres of household, school, and work sometimes seemed to work together to encourage upward mobility among the working class. While the working together of these spheres was not limited to Latinos, it seems to have the greatest Effect on Latinos. This is partly because they begin working at young ages, often with little choice, and when they might have a greater propensity to simply get stuck working in non-skilled jobs without investing enough time in school performance that would enable them to pursue better opportunities.

Fast food managers, regardless of their racial or ethnic group, are often forthright about the value of good school performance and encouraging about college aspirations. The second-generation Honduran, for example, was suspended from her fast food job by the Taiwanese manager in Chinatown because of a poor school report card. Her mother had informed the manager who then told the employee that she could only return to her job after her grades went back up. This employee said that when she first started working

...my mind was too much on the job. I worked from three to 10. I would come here, go to work, and then I would be so tired I wouldn't do my homework and I would just go to sleep, and go to school. Be tired in school and sleep during every class. All I was worrying about was coming to work. So my grades started to drop. I didn't study for no test.

Greg said that the most gratifying part of his job was pushing his employees to pursue better opportunities.

The gratifying part is that you work with kids who were 14 and 15 and they come back and they have graduated from high school or from college. Or Ruth who became a nurse. Or Aba got married and had children and they have a nice job. Our former administrative assistant graduated from Baruch and now she has a great job. Maria majored in psychology at Hunter. She has a job and now she is doing her masters. That is what keeps me going.

No second-generation Latino crew members were considering becoming fast food managers. This partly reflects the fact that second generation Latinos had the longest length of time of employment as crew members before being promoted from the ranks. On average the second generation Latinos worked nearly three years before being promoted, well above the average of one-and-a-half years among all of the manager respondents. And, on average, the second generation Latino crew members had been working in their jobs for only one-and-a-third years. It is likely, then, that some of these respondents would become candidates for promotion de-facto--after working for a longer period of time and, after finding no other, or better, job opportunity. But for John, the "moonlighter," the process of becoming a manager was an impossibility because it meant having to leave his daytime job. As John explained,

I am sure that I can [become a manager]... but for me it is too much effort, just to move up. Especially for what I am doing right now with my first job. The management position I can handle." When I asked why it was too much effort he explained that "it is very slow. It is not to my satisfaction, what I would need for my family needs. I am a lot different from most of the kids. I have responsibilities to my family, more than these high school kids. They are only responsible to themselves.

All of the second generation Latinos were bilingual. Thus, as a group they seemed to have the most geographical mobility among the three areas I examined. Second generation Latinos were found working in all three areas. Their cultural features, however, were valued in Washington Heights where they were promoted partly due to

their Spanish speaking skills and cultural affinity in the Latino community.

Black American

The five black Americans among my respondents differed a great deal. (See Table 7.7.) One was the 26 year old manager mentioned previously whose mother was a hotel manager and who began in fast food at the age of 16 and quickly became a manager in a matter of months. He was one of the few respondents who considered fast food management as a career.

Another was James, the 22 year old production leader who was a second-generation Antiguan but identified himself as a Black American. James has no parents, is unmarried and has no dependents. He doesn't have a high school degree. He lives in Queens with roommates and shares equally the rent to their apartment. As a production leader he makes \$5.15 an hour (after two years of working at Burger King) and works 40 hours per week. James was most expressive about disliking his job. When I asked him "Why do you stay?" he suggested that he simply felt stuck being unable to go on the job market because of the demands of the job and because of the fluctuating schedule, as he replied,

The money, what little bit it is. Plus, when I do come in here it is like 4:30-5:00. By the time I get home it is 12:30 or 1:00. I can't really sleep because my body is still awake. So I don't get to sleep until about 3:00 in the morning. Then when I wake up it is like 10:00 and you can't go on no interviews at 10:00. Or you could but who would hire you? By the time you get to an interview it will be like 11:00 or 12:00. They will be busy and they will look at you like you are a fool because you usually go on interviews at 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning.

James is single, does not have responsibilities beyond himself, and works full-time--main

criteria for pursuing a management position according to John. James is also young and male--main criteria for pursuing a management position according to Lila. Yet, while James was once planning to become a manager he finally decided against it considering the conflict of interest and undue stress it would pose. He explained why.

I am going through all this bull shit now. I know I would be going through a lot more bull shit when I become a manager. Plus it is real hard to make a transition from crew to management in the same store. The crew looks at you like "oh James will let me "getover" in getting this free food" and you have to be really different when you are a manager. When you are a regular crew you can bug out and joke around. So I don't even want to be bothered by it. If you don't like being a manager here, it is not worth it. You will hear them (crew) keeping complaining about not making enough money. Just being stressful. If money is missing from the cash register and they can't figure out who it is, the managers have to take it out of their own pocket. I don't think that is right.

While James is indeed young and independent he has made a choice that many with dependents cannot afford to do. He plans to take the risk and leave the company without another job because, as he says "I can't take it anymore." James has found himself in the "cycle that never ends." He wants to get his GED and go to college to eventually become a federal agent. To do that he has to get another job that would afford him tuition. To do that he has to quit his job at Burger King. If he doesn't get another job soon enough after quitting this job to be able to pay his share of the apartment rent it is not unreasonable to think that he could be back to where he started from--on the streets and into the drug trade.

Lila is the 47 year old woman with a bachelors degree who was moonlighting in her fast food job as a crew member. Her day care job was not enough to supplement her husbands earnings as a carpenter and to support several young children. In total she works 58 to 60 hours per week. She lives with her husband (who lays carpets for a

business owned by his brother-in-law) and several school age children. Lila has a college degree but has not been able to find a higher paying job. She works a second job due to "financial difficulties." In response to my question about moving up to a management position she said that "Basically, I don't desire...this is not where I want to stay..but right now, I have financial difficulties. But this would never be what I would choose to work, not wiping tables. There is nothing wrong with that. It is money. But it is what I do for my children." Lila's lack of "desire" may be partly attributed to what she implied in terms of women having limited opportunities at this Burger King and very little attraction to management positions. As she said, "It is really not an advanced job for a woman. It might be a wonderful job from a man's point of view." Lila also suggested that there was only one avenue for women to pursue in order to move up the hierarchy. "Being a woman, you know how you can move up into management real fast. There is such a thing as being sexual oriented. It is very sad that a woman, even today, in certain areas cannot move up based on her ability, what she has to offer."

Lila's perception of the opportunities available to women runs contrary to what other women respondents as well as managers have expressed. It certainly runs contrary to an overall trend in the industry of increasing numbers of women becoming managers. What it may represent is a view at one particular store site---where the opportunity for women may, in fact, be limited. After all, it is the case that out of five managers only one is a woman and this woman manager does not usually work at night when Lila works. It may also represent only one individual's perception that does not coincide with other women crew at this same store. Yet, it is still important for while her perception may be

unique it is also the case that she is unique among the rest of the crew. She is a black American and she is "old" compared to most of the employees. What is clear is that her perception affects her aspirations in the company.

Bruce and Debbie, the married couple who worked together in Downtown Brooklyn, represent the struggles many young American minorities go through trying to support a family when dependent on low service sector work. Like Lila's family, Bruce and Debbie, together, worked three full-time jobs. Bruce had two jobs and Debbie, who is a high school student, worked nearly 40 hours a week in her fast food job.

Bruce was also one of few respondents considering management as a career. But he was actually pursuing it. I worked with Bruce and his wife, Debbie, in 1992 at Burger King. They were both born and raised in New York City. Bruce said that he had been promised a management position. Bruce trained me on several stations at Burger King so I had an opportunity to get to know him and learn about his job experiences and personal situation.

I remember well the day Bruce said to me that "In New York you simply have to work two jobs to survive." By this he meant that if you work at low wages with no benefits you must work two full-time jobs--a total of 80 hours per week--just to make ends meet if you have a family. Bruce, who only had a high school degree, worked at Burger King at night after his day-time job. His wife joined him at night at this Burger King after attending high school and also worked 40 hours per week. At the time they had a two year old son who was sick in the hospital.

It is important to examine here what 120 hours at minimum wage affords. In total,

from 120 hours of work per week, Bruce and Debbie netted about \$500 per week and about \$2,000 per month. After taxes, they brought home about \$1,500 per month. The rent for their apartment was \$700 per month. Their bills--gas, electricity and phone were about \$150 per month. Subway transportation--from home to baby sitter--to school/first job--to Burger King--to baby sitter--to home--cost about \$300 per month (with some days not working, going to school, etc.). This left Bruce and Debbie only \$350 per month (or about \$90 per week) for food, clothing, and other necessities. They were fortunate in that Debbie's mother cared for their son while they were working and when Debbie was attending school (without cost). Yet still, clearly, they could not afford health insurance and anything beyond basic necessities. Even if there was time beyond so many working hours it could not have afforded expenses and tuition for further education or vocational training.

As I mentioned earlier, Bruce had worked at a McDonalds for seven years prior to joining Burger King. He had been earning seven dollars per hour at this McDonalds before it was taken over by a different ownership and the total workforce was "let go." After a few months of working at Burger King with Bruce, he still had not received any indication that he would be moving up to "blue shirt." (At the time this Burger King had a hierarchy of managers represented by different color shirts.) Further, he was still earning minimum wage despite his extensive experience at McDonalds. He had begun to lose hope although he maintained his relentless optimism and humor over his admitted exhaustion.

At the age of 30, it was clear that Bruce had simply become exhausted by the

process of working enough hours at minimum wage to support a family. But not only is such work physically exhausting. It is also psychologically exhausting when one does not see a way out of the "cycle that never ends." It had taken seven years to finally make seven dollars per hour at McDonalds (at the nearly industry-wide standard of 25 cent raises ever three months--at maximum and not always). The single sweep of an ownership take-over at this McDonalds completely de-valued--monetarily--Bruce's seven-year tenure in the industry. We cannot help but to imagine that the threat of another ownership takeover at this Burger King--or at least what it represented in terms of his personal vulnerability--may have been lingering on Bruce's mind when he weighed staying in his job (without a management position) with quitting--the latter of which he finally chose.

Other non-representative respondents

There were three respondents who were single representatives of their respective racial or immigrant groups. (See Table 7.7.) The groups they represent are atypical in New York City's fast food restaurants. They include MaryAnn, the 19 year old White American who migrated to New York from Tennessee to live with her sister, who "works in computers," and whose parents are small business owners. She was single, pregnant, and had modest career aspirations. She planned to go to business school or become a fast food manager like another sister.

The other two were young male immigrants from Russia and Africa. Ivan, the 19 year old Russian came to New York with his family. His father was an architect who couldn't find work in New York and his mother never worked outside the home. They

lived with, and were supported by, relatives in "Little Odessa." Ivan found his alternatives limited in New York as his family couldn't afford to send him to college and he needed to help support the household. He didn't desire to drive a cab as many young Russian male immigrants did, and he wanted to work in the food industry. Not finding work in an independent restaurants, he applied for a fast food job. Soon after starting he decided to pursue the fast food management ladder as the best of available options.

Shakil, the African from Togo, fell into the industry after having travelled to New York City on his own and not finding success with his plan to start a business. He was simply trying to earn enough money to return to Africa where all of his family members still remained. Thus, he had no plans to pursue the fast food job ladder.

These latter two immigrants were valued for their cultural features in the Chinatown McDonalds which had not only Asianized its workforce but had also partly "internationalized" it in order to attract an international tourist clientele. They both spoke English but their native languages of Russian and French, respectively, were considered a cultural asset to the organization, which marketed itself as having a multi-lingual, "United Nations" staff. Ivan had applied for a job in a restaurant closer to his own neighborhood that was under the same corporate ownership. His application, however, was forwarded to Chinatown where his cultural features were in demand.

Opportunity within the industry

As we have seen in this dissertation, some employees aspire to be and are promoted as manager. For some crew members, like Tina, who compare fast food

employment to conditions in the informal sector, or Ivan, who compares it to being a taxi driver, becoming a fast food manager is an ambitious social and financial step up occupationally. And for others, like Charles, who started out on the high rungs in the industry as a general manager in the biggest fast food corporation in New York City, it was a significant career shift with financial and social benefits rare in this industry. Those with important cultural and class contacts in the high rungs of the industry, like Gitu and Britto, immigrants from India, were able to start out as fast food managers, rather than climbing through the crew member ranks. But, people like Charles, Gitu and Britto--endowed with high levels of human, social, and cultural capital--would never have joined the industry if it meant becoming a fast food crew member to begin with.

The extent of opportunity varies from restaurant to restaurant and from company to company--depending on the size of the restaurant, the kind of ownership, manager turnover rates, ratio of managers to crew members in the restaurant, and employer practices regarding promotions. The variation between restaurants is important because there is little or no horizontal mobility between fast food companies unless they are under the same ownership.

What I try to show in this dissertation is that opportunity for upward mobility in this industry--how high one can climb in the career ladder--is minimal. Although Parcel and Sickmeier (1988) posit a long extensive corporate career ladder, we have learned from many of my respondents that the glass ceiling is, more often than not, within the restaurant itself, below the general manager position. We have also learned that becoming an owner of one of these franchises is not even a pipe dream for fast food workers. It is not a

position one moves up into for it requires enormous financial capital, not work experience.

The price of a franchise restaurant varies considerably. McDonalds and Burger King restaurants are among those with the highest initial costs. To open a McDonalds restaurant requires an investment of over \$600,000, 40 percent of this in personal resources, and, years of training, some of it unpaid (Noble, 1995). It is not difficult to imagine that the capital it requires is clearly out of the reach of the kinds of people who work for minimum wages in New York and the average manager who earns a modest salary. Those managers who did aspire to be restaurant owners one day--like Julia, Roberto, and Donald--considered only "mom and pop" establishments, or, smaller, less prestigious corporate franchises.

Due to the low ratio of managers to crew members, the low turnover among higher level managers, and the tendency to hire from outside the company managers for the highest level positions--like Charles and Gitu, most manager opportunity within the restaurant is restricted to the bottom rungs, where low salaries and job responsibilities provide little incentive to pursue them. Fast food managers, on average, as I have shown, are among the lowest paid managers and supervisors across all industries in New York City. The pay and benefits of a non-supervisory position in another industry, in fact, often exceed those of a fast food manager. Most people who become managers do so *de facto*...they "fall into it" like Roberto, or "grow into it" like Greg, or don't find any better options, like Hardy and Julia. Or, they simply use it as a temporary expedient and better financial option to being a crew member while studying and pursuing another career, like Jose and Amy. If they are lucky and a managerial position is vacated above them, then

they have the opportunity to pursue this position--as Greg became a general manager.

But even though moving into the manager track is a kind of unintentional occupational move, it is also the case that not everyone has the opportunity to kind of fall or grow into it. As I have shown, women, immigrants, and young people are those most likely to be offered the opportunity and to join the managerial ranks. Employers commonly claim that the younger one is, the more one can be shaped and cultivated according to the organization's image, structure, and management styles. They are more malleable. "There is a difference when you hire someone from the street and you raise a manager from McDonalds...someone from the street, high power person, has an I'm the boss attitude..." said one manager. "Growing up in McDonalds..." is the kind of language used to describe "the kid" who started out at 16 or 17 and developed their work ethics and attitudes within the fast food restaurant--like Donald, Greg, and Jose. Young people are also considered to have more energy and enthusiasm, fewer problems, better able to keep up with the strenuous physical demands of the job including the long and fluctuating hours. They are better able to relate to and supervise young crew members.

Women, in recent years, have been promoted into managerial positions at faster rates than men have, and in these two companies are said to occupy about 50 percent of all manager positions. Yet, women are still concentrated on the lower managerial rungs. In the seven restaurants I examined, for example, only one women occupied a general manager position. Like youth, women are considered more willing than men to work for the low salaries paid at the lower manager levels. Women tend to have less manager opportunity in the labor market at large and therefore more aggressively seize the

opportunity in the fast food industry while passively accepting the conditions that come with it.

Like youth, women are considered more malleable and more emotional and enthusiastic while performing their work. Owners and managers claim that women are more meticulous about and attentive to the service aspects of the organization including employee-clientele interaction, employee appearance, and cleanliness of the restaurant. While some employers as well as women employees attribute womens' more meticulous ways to a natural gender difference, other employers and employees view it as womens' perceived need to prove their capability especially around other male managers.

Cultural capital helps shape managerial opportunity in restaurants and neighborhoods that demand foreign language or other cultural skills. Greg, for example, as well as Marta, and Nina in Washington Heights, and Amy in Chinatown, are valued for their bilingual language skills as well as their cultural knowledge of and social links with the neighborhoods in which they work, helping to build and sustain local clientele. Sam, while he only speaks Spanish, is culturally valued for his native Spanish language skills, but he is also limited--both horizontally and vertically--in where he can work and how far he can go up the hierarchy without also speaking English.

Age, gender and culture then, help shape opportunity for promotions in this industry and also set boundaries in terms of the extent and location of opportunities available among crew members and managers. As we have learned from my respondents, however, becoming a manager is not an easy proposition. There are various criteria to fulfill prior to being considered for a promotion. Those who do have worked as a crew

member, on average, for at least a year-and-a-half--well above the industry's average tenure among crew members. Some, like Greg, are not promoted for several years. Greg only "grew into it" after working as a crew member for four years. Simply to be able to continue in minimum wage employment one's earnings must be supplemented by other household income. As we have learned from crew members like Miriam, who supports her unemployed father and is responsible for household chores, it is virtually impossible to stick around for so long on a minimum wage income as the sole provider of a household. Moreover, her difficult social and material conditions made her constantly depressed and therefore, an unlikely candidate for a promotion given the social and emotional criteria including having a "positive attitude" and "enthusiasm." Emotionally depressed employees in this industry, like Miriam, tend to be ostracized for not contributing to an upbeat team oriented ambiance. Eventually, as what happened with Miriam, the employee's weekly hours are steadily and increasingly reduced making the conditions that cause the depression in the first place even more severe.

Those who become managers, then, are usually financially supported by other household earners and, importantly, don't have another job. As we learned from John, who has a day job, one has to have the time outside of work to invest in studying company material. One also has to have the flexibility of time to extend their hours on demand to learn the intricacies of the restaurant operation when restaurant business slows down. The pace of business, as I have pointed out, is largely unpredictable. These pre-promotion criteria, favor young people who live with their parents or other relatives who are also working and who are least likely to have dependents to support.

Is being a fast food manager a career job?

Once one becomes a manager a lot of social pressures set in, and they increase with age. Anyone who visits a fast food restaurant now and then can observe that managers are rarely beyond middle age. It was made quite clear by my respondents that no one retires into old age as a fast food manager. Some managers, like Roberto, claimed that it would be socially embarrassing to be a manager beyond the age of 30. Part of the pressure is simply physical. The demands of the job become too strenuous. Roberto said,

I don't think someone in their 30s or 40s can take this job anymore. Standing on your feet for 10 hours per day. A lot of older gentlemen, 35 or 40, who have been in the system for 10 years are like dinosaurs. They can hardly deal with the job.

They physical demands are also related to neighborhood influences. The job tends to be harsh and dangerous, especially in particular New York City neighborhoods. All of the restaurants I examined were located in areas where violence was common. Chinatown managers, for example, had to deal with the gangs in Chinatown. Downtown Brooklyn is considered a volatile area and at night some restaurants hire armed security guards to stand in the front of the restaurant. During the 1993 rioting in Washington Heights, these restaurants too hired armed security guards. Managers recounted numerous stories of harassment by "customers" and other dangerous situations they had had to deal with. It is more difficult to handle crime and violence the older one gets.

Another factor is simply the age difference between managers and crew members, which makes the job increasingly difficult the more the age gap widens. "The pressures of dealing with young kids" are too great said a manager. Especially those 35 or older, "they are dealing with kids who are 20 years younger than them. They have raised their kids

and now they have to raise more? They have no patience anymore at that age for young kids."

There is a constant social, physical and financial pressure, then, to move up in the organization as one ages. With the promise of advancement, managers often linger on in their jobs. And the higher they go, due to better salaries and less direct supervisory responsibility, the less pressure there is to leave the industry. When one has hit a glass ceiling, particularly in the lower manager rungs, one has to begin thinking about leaving the industry. The question is Where does one go? This was not a question I anticipated to be of such importance when I began my research.

What we can ascertain from my research, however, is that the possibility of obtaining another job outside of the industry largely depends on human capital--particularly educational degrees--and/or social contacts. Jose, the assistant manager in Downtown Brooklyn, and Greg, the general manager in Washington Heights, for example, are very similar in many ways. They both have a bachelors degree, they are both Latino, and they are both in their late 20s. Greg, however, plans to remain in the industry indefinitely. Most importantly, he is a general manager and works for a large company that owns other restaurants. Therefore, he has an opportunity to become a store supervisor, and, perhaps, to climb even higher. Importantly, he has a B.A. degree to fall back on, or to build upon if and when he does leave the industry.

Augustine, on the other hand, will not be able to climb higher than assistant manager since the general manager in his restaurant has been there for 14 years and does not plan to leave his position. Moreover, the ownership is a small proprietorship so it

does not offer opportunities beyond the restaurant site. Jose, in the meantime, is earning a Masters degree in order to leave the industry and join the police force.

Donald, like Augustine, has made the best out of his position as a fast food manager to secure his future outside of the fast food industry. But he has done this through building up social contacts rather than by pursuing higher education. Donald, as we know, only has a high school degree, and has no other work experience outside of the fast food restaurant industry. At Burger King he was in contact with many of the local business people in Downtown Brooklyn. During the writing of this dissertation Donald was fired from Burger King, but he was immediately hired as a manager at a discount electronic store chain, through a neighborhood contact he had established.

Other managers--without social, financial, or human capital--have few alternatives outside of the industry. If and when they leave the industry they often fall into jobs of lower status with lesser pay--sometimes starting all over in an entry-level position. One such manager, according to Roberto, "went to work at Genevieve Drugs and she was just a regular employee." Another manager, said Roberto, went to work "at some dinky restaurant as a waiter or something." And, as we know about Bruce, he had been a fast food manager. After losing his job in a restaurant buyout and going to work for another fast food employer as a crew member, he was not able to climb back up to the managerial rungs.

Higher educational degrees and social contacts, then, appear to help managers find other career jobs, or at least jobs of similar status outside of the industry. Without one or the other, they are doomed. While being a manager seems to help one go to college--

because one earns a salary and has a greater degree of control over the work schedule than a crew member--and it helps to make useful social contacts, fast food managerial experience itself doesn't appear to hold value in the New York City labor market at large--at least not enough value to get a job of equivalent status and earnings.

Table 7.1
Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of Chinese Respondents (n=7)

Age	Other household members	Other household occupations		Educational attainments or goals	Career goals	Relations to fast food management
		Formal Economy	Informal Economy			
40	Wife, children			Masters degree	Stay in fast food	Currently a manager
20	Parents	Export business (father)		In college	Stay in fast food while in college and until find job in business management	Currently a manager.
20	Parents	Professional s (mother and father)		Plans to attend college	Undecided	Possibility while in college
20	Parents	Professional s (mother and father)		In college	Undecided	Possibility while in college
17	Parents, younger brother	Professional (father)		Plans to attend college	Business management	Possibility while in college
17	Parents		Factory and Restaurant workers	Plans to attend college	Business	No plans for management
24	Husband		Restaurant Chef	Vocational degree	Fast food manager	Fast food manager as career

Table 7.2

Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of West Indian Respondents (n=7)

Age	Other household members	Other household occupations		Educational attainments or goals	Career goals	Relation to fast food management
		Formal economy	Informal economy			
27	Aunt and sister		Domestic help	High school degree	Start business in home country	Currently a manager
19	Father, stepmother, other children	Computer clerk	Domestic help	Professional degree	Professional	No plans for management. Will quit job to find better paying one required to support educational goals.
18	Parents and younger brothers	Nurses aid, and one parent earning vocational degree		Professional degree	Professional	Possibility while in college
17	Parents, sister and cousin	Health related vocation, technician, fast food worker		Professional degree	Professional	Possibility while in college
18	Parents		Vocational occupations	Plans to attend College	Business owner	No plans for management (because will go away to college)
22	Mother and sister	Health related vocation and restaurant chef		Business degree	Failed to find job in business field. Plans to return to home country.	Was promoted but encountered problems so gave up.
22	Mother, 2 cousins	Health related vocation and fast food worker	Domestic help	Plans to get vocational degree	Health related occupation.	No plans for management.

Table 7.3

**Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of South Asian Respondents
(n=3)**

Age	Other household members	Other household occupations		Educational attainments or goals	Career goals	Relation to fast food management
		Formal economy	Informal economy			
27	Mother, brother	Professional		BA degree	Stay in fast food	Currently fast food manager
40s	Wife			Graduate degree	Open own independent business	Currently fast food manager
17	Mother, 2 younger siblings (father is deceased)			Professional degree	Professional	Not interested in fast food management

Table 7.4

Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of Latino Immigrant Respondents (n=19)

Age	Other household members	Other household occupations		Educational attainments or goals	Career goals	Fast food management
		Formal	Informal			
28	Wife, small children	Fast food worker		Vocational degree	Stay in fast food for time being, then start own independent restaurant	Currently a general manager
26	Lives on own			BA degree	Stay in fast food	Currently a general manager
24	Husband, 1 year old son	Fast food manager (husband)		Associates degree	Stay in fast food	Currently an assistant manager
24	Parents	Laborer in Warehouse (father)	Baby sitting (mother)	High school degree	Fast food management	Currently an assistant manager
17	Parents, younger siblings	Professionals		Plans to attend college	Professional	Not interested in management
26	Husband, small children	Fast food manager		High school degree	No plans	Not interested in management
28	Wife and small child			High school degree	Fast food management	Fast food management
17	Aunt	Social services		Plans to attend college	Professional or professional athlete	No plans for management
15	Parents, younger siblings	Vocational trade	Domestic help	Plans to attend college	Professional athlete	No plans for management
19	Parents, younger sister, aunt		Auto repair and domestic help	In vocational high school	Vocational trade	Fast food management is a possibility
18	Parents, younger brothers	Professionals		In college	Professional	No plans for management

19	Mother		Factory homeworker	Earning GED	Vocational trade	Fast food management is not considered a possibility
18	Father (mother is in home country)		Auto repair	In vocational high school	Vocational trade	Fast food management is a possibility
18	Aunt (Parents are in home country. They are professionals.)	Social services		In vocational high school.	Auto repair	No plans for management
20	Father (mother is deceased)	Recently disemployed hotel cleaner		High school degree. Plans to attend vocational school	Health related vocation	Fast food management is not considered a possibility. Needs to quit fast food job for higher paying one due to financial difficulties
36	Roommate (has child dependent who lives with mother)	Professional		High school degree	Severely depressed, future is unplanned	Fast food management is not considered a possibility
18	Aunt	Health related vocation		In vocational high school	Independent business owner	Fast food management is considered a possibility.
21	Mother, stepfather	Factory worker	Auto repair	High school degree	Undecided	No plans for management
21	Mother, sister, own baby	Health related vocation	Domestic help	GED	Clerical work or fast food manager	Fast food management is considered a possibility

Table 7.5

Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of Second Generation Latinos Respondents (n=8)

Age	Other household members	Other household occupations		Educational attainments or goals	Career goals	Relation to fast food management
		Formal economy	Informal economy			
24	Child			High school degree	Independent restaurant owner	Currently assistant manager.
22	Parents, child, five siblings	Government, fast food workers (2), (Retired factory worker)		Attending business school	Stay in fast food for time being. Then go into clerical field	Currently swing manager
27	Parents	Factory foreman , salesperson		Attending graduate school	Stay in fast food for time being. Then join police dept.	Currently assistant manager
28	Spouse and children			High school degree. Did 2 years college	Stay in white collar field	Fast food management is not considered a possibility
18	Parents, sibling	Government worker	Domestic help	In vocational high school	Vocational trade	No plans for management
18	Aunt, Uncle, younger children	Social services	Auto repair	In vocational high school.	Vocational trade	No plans for management
18	Parents, four siblings, sibling's child	Government worker, fast food workers (2), (retired factory worker)		In high school. Plans to attend college	Professional	No plans for management
18	Mother, two siblings	Tourism, clerk, (retired office cleaner)		In high school. Plans to attend college	Professional	Possibility while in college

Table 7.6

Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of Black American Respondents (n=5)

Age	Who live with	Other household occupations		Educational attainments or goals	Career goals	Fast food management
		Formal	Informal			
26	Spouse, children			High school degree	Stay in fast food for time being until can become franchise restaurant owner (cheaper chain)	Currently an assistant manager
47	Spouse, five young children	Day care (day-time job), vocational trade		B.A. degree. Plans to attend graduate school	Social services	Fast food management is not considered a possibility
22	Two roommates	Retail job, retail job		High school degree. Plans to attend college	Professional	Currently an entry-level manager. Does not consider higher level management a possibility. Plans to quit for better paying job to afford college.
30	Spouse and child	Laborer (day-time job), fast food worker		High school degree	Fast food manager	Was a fast food manager in another restaurant. Plans to become a fast food manager again
18	Spouse and child	Fast food worker, laborer		In vocational high school	Vocational trade	No plans for management

Table 7.7

Household Structures of Support and Occupational Aims of single Respondents of Immigrant/Ethnic Groups (n=3)

Age	Who live with	Other household occupations		Educational attainments or goals	Career goals	Fast food management
		Formal	Informal			
19	Parents and siblings	Unemployed professional		High school degree	Fast food manager	Stay in fast food and become a manager
25	Roommate	Professional		High school degree, some college	Independent business owner	No plans for management
19	Sibling	Computer clerk		High school degree. Considering business school	Computer clerk or fast food manager	Fast food management is considered a possibility

Table 7.8

**Job Experience, and Age Started Working
Respondents By Ethnic Group**

Ethnic Group	Number of Previous Jobs (on average)	Range of Previous Jobs	Age Started Working (on average)
Latino Immigrants (n=17)	1.5	0-4	16.5
Second generation Latino (n=10)	2.7	0-10	14.7
Chinese (n=7)	1.0	0-4	19.0
South Asian (n=3)	.3	0-1	20.7
Caribbean (n=7)	.4	0-1	18.0
Black American (n=5)	3	0-8	16.0
Russian (n=1)	0	0	19.0
African (n=1)	1	1	18.0
White American (n=1)	2	2	16.0

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The shaping of a workforce in New York's corporate fast food restaurant is a product of both global and local social forces (Amdur, et.al, 1992). A global workforce is sorted and structured around declining and expanding occupational sectors in New York's changing labor market. A good many workers rely on expanding sectors in low-level service industries such as corporate fast food restaurants. Yet, despite typical immigrant conditions such as low wages and contingent work, corporate fast food restaurants are not the typical immigrant employer. Employer demands for a multicultural workforce, "cultural capital" and a temporary labor supply pull in a diverse group of employees in terms of national origin, race and ethnicity. This diversity is reinforced by differences in gender, social class backgrounds, and human capital attainment, such as educational degrees, that affect future mobility.

The structural and cultural features of this industry are tied to New York's vast and changing diversity of populations and neighborhoods as a result of post-1965 immigration. I have shown that particular cultural and neighborhood demands of restaurants pull certain immigrant groups into the industry, especially in immigrant neighborhoods. Cultural and social labor criteria are often geographically defined--sometimes deliberately through "cultural reinvention" and "cultural matching" in ethnic/immigrant neighborhoods, and

sometimes simply as a response to neighborhood cultural changes and the social composition of job seekers. And, modes of production based on "old" or "new" technologies affect the kinds of people who can work together and how they are organized in the restaurant.

Intense competition for fast food jobs enables employers today to be highly selective. And by working through immigrant social networks employers ensure that particular ethnic and cultural combinations are established, maintained, and reproduced. Although employers often hire employees for their social features to *culturally match* the neighborhood, these employees, for various reasons, lived outside of the neighborhood. And, as we have seen, manager preferences, ethnic and racial bias and discrimination, and, in rare cases, a desperate and persistent plea by an applicant for a job, also affect who is hired in the fast food restaurant.

The workforce diversity of each restaurant, or what I call a global workforce, is comprised of various combinations of immigrant and ethnic groups. The particular composition of the workforce, however, varies by neighborhood, and, by restaurant. A global workforce of Chinese from various countries such as Taiwan, Malaysia, and China, comprise a majority in one restaurant in Chinatown. A global workforce of Latinos from several different countries such as the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Panama, form a majority in the restaurants in Washington Heights, and in one of these restaurants, they are joined by West Indians who are mainly from Antigua. A global workforce of West Indians from Barbados, Jamaica, and Guyana, dominate a restaurant in Downtown Brooklyn. Another restaurant in Downtown Brooklyn and a restaurant in Chinatown are more

equally comprised of Latinos, West Indians, American minorities, and, in Chinatown, Chinese.

Such diversity of combinations has allowed me to explore relations among various social groups new to New York City and examine how new cultural categories are formed. As an ethnographic study, my intent was to focus on *social processes* in the restaurants, rather than trends that would be generalizable. The study of social relations is important because they affect hiring practices as employers continue or discontinue the recruitment of individuals of particular groups. They also affect promotions. With new immigrant groups coming into the labor market, employers develop hierarchies of racial and ethnic preferences and biases that are also influenced by social class and cultural differences. Race as a category, for example, was often broken down by national origin, ethnicity, gender, and, social class. Various studies by economists and sociologists have explored these dynamics in other large U.S. cities and confirm some of my findings (Kasinitz, 1994; Kirshenman and Neckerman, 1991; Kirschenman, Moss, and Tilly, 1995; Moss and Tilly, 1996; Kasinitz, 1996).

Nearly every employer spoke quite freely about ethnic and racial differences in regard to work ethics. They varied in their perceptions, and in what they emphasized. To a Puerto Rican manager in Chinatown, the Chinese "studied too much" and weren't flexible enough with their time. To a Chinese manager from Malaysia, the Chinese were the "most diligent" and "reliable." Latinos were said to be "too loud" by one manager, and "willing to work anytime" by another. The West Indians were often compared positively with African-Americans.

Some restaurants, as I showed, showed signs of ethnic conflicts among workers such as among Caribbean and American Blacks in Burger King in Chinatown, or among Antiguan and Latinos in Washington Heights. The most disturbing social dynamic I encountered was bias against American minorities and particularly, African-Americans whose "negative" traits were often "played off" against the "positive" traits, or "good work ethnics" of foreign black workers. Whether bias was portrayed among managers like Donald, also African American, who explicitly said he would not hire them, or West Indian crew members' comments, such as "they are lazy" or "they try to get away with doing no work," it was the only bias against a particular group that I found pervasive. Malcolm Gladwell (1996) suggests that this dynamic which has been shown to exist in various other workplaces is "racism's newest mutation--multicultural racism...the means by which discrimination against American blacks is given one last, vicious twist."

I discussed the implications of this dynamic at my greatest length in Chapters Five and Six on Downtown Brooklyn where the only African-Americans among my respondents worked, and, where I had experience working in a restaurant alongside African and Latino Americans, as well as various immigrant groups, in 1992. I tried to show how such bias was partly rooted in social conflict in the restaurant, especially among crew members and managers. I stressed the fact that employers' grievances about American-minority work ethics were rooted in real conflicts in the restaurant, as well as a reflection of society-wide and preconceived prejudices. I tried to emphasize concrete factors and conditions that exacerbate it. Conflict that often arose between American workers and the managers was partly rooted in American workers' unmet expectations

about how they should be treated by their employers and their lack of power in the face of employers' violations of federal labor laws in regard to wage increases, overtime pay, the assignment of dangerous work tasks, and work-related injuries.

James, for example, who was financially struggling to live independently on fast food wages, had been severely burned in work-related injuries. He felt he was not respected and his work unappreciated by the "top boss." He had never received overtime pay for working over-time in several years of working in the industry. For these reasons he had grown highly cynical. My dissertation research was not intended to explore the pervasiveness of these conditions in the industry. But the little we have learned in this dissertation is enough to suggest a rethinking of what we have come to commonly regard as "too much attitude" on the part of our inner city minority youth populations. If "too much attitude" has become pervasive, it is also rooted in concrete work conditions.

I also explained how a particular sensitivity to American-minority groups by managers can create a different dynamic. Julia, for example, the Puerto Rican manager, who had struggled against gender and racial bias to climb the hierarchy herself, claimed to be able to empathize with her minority workers, especially women. She claimed to give them particular attention during the work day and encouraged them to pursue the restaurant job ladder.

In the last chapter I tried to broaden my focus to show the various factors that affect mobility in New York's labor market, including household structure, family and cultural environment, social class background, stage of life-cycle, and educational

attainments and goals. Exploring multiple factors in this way is the kind of approach taken by the prominent social mobility theorists beginning with Duncan and Blau in the early 1950s. Fast food employment, as I emphasized, is simply a passing phase in most people's lives, but, also the kind of temporary employment highly indicative of our times where many people, and a growing number of people, are *involuntarily* employed temporarily and part-time because they can't find stable career jobs (Sassen, 1991; Mishel and Bertstein, 1995).

The difference in the fast food job today from, say 10 years ago, is that this job is sometimes the most stable source of income in the New York City household. Fast food wages today often keep households afloat. Fast food workers live in households that depend on various different combinations of incomes from government subsidies, mainstream jobs, and informal sector jobs. We have always known fast food wages to be subsidized by other household incomes. But in New York today the traditional scenario of a fast food worker living in a stable middle-income-earning home and using his/her wages simply for movie tickets or Nike Jordon Air sneakers is not the average case in New York City. Fast food wages today are sometimes supplemented by government subsidies and even illicit income sources. The way a good many New York City households of fast food workers keep afloat today represents *strategies of survival* and *strategies to achieve upward mobility* in New York's changing economy.

As I showed, there was a great deal of variation between and within immigrant and ethnic groups in regard to future opportunities. Some groups, like the Chinese, the South Asian, and the West Indian, seemed predisposed to upward mobility as their families,

households, and cultures--regardless of class background--socially and materially encouraged and supported it. Latinos, on the other hand, were more affected by class differences in the pursuit of college education and higher aspirations. Latino immigrants from working-class backgrounds had a great deal of work experience prior to joining fast food jobs. Most began working at least by the age of 15 and on average they had worked in three jobs prior to joining fast food. Latino immigrants from middle class backgrounds, however, were on college trajectories and fast food was the first job they had.

I discussed opportunities for advancement within the industry itself. I emphasized that horizontal mobility (across restaurant sites) does not really exist in this industry because of the autonomy of local ownerships and that vertical mobility from the restaurant to corporate headquarters is limited. Parcel and Sickmeier (1988) suggest that the fast food industry, and particularly McDonalds, offers job ladders similar to what we have traditionally known in economics as "core" industries. But, as we have learned, being a manager is rarely a career job. If one does stick around to become a manager, it is likely that he/she will always be under pressure to leave the industry. Even though a manager receives a salary and fringe benefits, the average manager earns a salary among the lowest of managers across all industries in New York City. Moreover, with age, the job becomes increasingly physically and socially taxing. The extent of opportunity is limited. Most never make it beyond the restaurant level itself. And manager experience in this industry doesn't seem to be valued in New York's labor market as a whole. The only way to reduce the pressures managers experience is to continue to climb the restaurant hierarchy. The higher the position one obtains, the less pressure there is to leave it.

Age, gender, and culture affect opportunities for promotions. Youth and women--due to perceived malleability, energy and enthusiasm, and willingness to work for low salaries--are most likely today to be favored for, and to pursue, a promotion. Youth are considered to have fewer personal problems and responsibilities, which makes them more flexible on working hours. Women, on the other hand--due to either biological or socialized gender differences, or feeling the need to prove capability in the presence of men--are considered to be more meticulous about the service aspects of the organization. And immigrants are often promoted because they have valuable cultural capital in demand in immigrant neighborhoods.

While the typical manager job, the typical opportunity to get it, and the typical incentive to pursue it, are all dismal, we learned that there are exceptional cases. Charles, the Taiwanese manager, entered the industry at an uncommonly late age and as a general manager--highly endowed with human, social, and cultural capital. Gitu and Britto had social class and ethnic contacts in the corporate bureaucracy, and, like Charles, started in the industry as managers. Tina was also atypical when she chose to pursue fast food manager opportunity over her only other real alternatives: remaining as a crew member or going back to the informal economy where her husband, and other relatives worked. These atypical cases, however, may be a signpost for future trends where, for example, people like Jane will provide the industry with a substantial amount of highly ambitious, malleable labor, endowed with cultural capital but who can be paid just a cut above informal sector wages even as supervisors. As I tried to show, perception of the industry and opportunity in this industry varied, depending on class, culture, and opportunities in

the labor market at large.

A great body of work has emerged and continues to grow concerning immigrants' economic roles: where new immigrants are working, how they are stratified, and how they are concentrated in particular occupations and industries (Foner, 1987; Kim, 1995; Marshall, 1987; Pessar, 1987; Waldinger, 1996; Portes, 1995; Fernandez-Kelly, 1995). This study should contribute to this body of knowledge. It should also contribute to a small but growing body of work surfacing across all the social science disciplines attempting to understand changing race and ethnic employment patterns in the urban economy (Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991; Moss and Tilly, 1996; Kasinitz, 1994; Waters, 1993; Newman, 1995). This dissertation should also contribute to the conceptualization of "race" and the contemporary experience of African-Americans (Steinberg, 1996; Winant, 1994; Waldinger, 1996). And the sociology of the "ethnic enclave" I hope will be informed by my work in introducing giant corporate America into its conceptual framework (Portes, 1985; Zhou, 1992).

In a more particular way this dissertation informs social science work on labor processes in the fast food industry. I have examined fewer points about the actual work process than I have about the social structures that guide these processes in New York City restaurants. But this was my underlying approach to bringing forth the importance in examining variations among restaurants rather than resting on the assumption that "standardization" standardizes workers (Ritzer, 1993).

Two recent studies, by Robin Leidner (1993) and George Ritzer (1993), have examined the industry's bureaucratic structure, the labor process, and the "routinization"

or "robotization" of work. Their contributions have been important to my understanding of the process of deskilling, mechanization, the devaluation the fast food workforce, and the nature of "interactive service work" in fast food. In Chapter 2, I have raised only a few concerns about their theses.

I am concerned about the effect technology has on redefining work (rather than labor displacement as Ritzer suggests) and, in particular, how this affects gender and ethnic relations, gender and cultural divisions of labor, and gendered, and culture-based opportunity. The other related point concerns the degree to which, and the ways in which, workers actually feel and are personally or socially affected by the process of routinization or robotization. This certainly was not the focus of my dissertation. I don't contest the fact that the work is degraded in so far as it devalues labor and creates a disposable workforce. The high turnover in this industry and relatively short duration of training required reflect this. (Although as I point out in Chapter two, the duration of training is actually a great deal more than the public has assumed; extending up to 12 months according to some restaurant managers. Moreover, worker disposability in the fast food restaurant is a relative concept. Workers are disposable to the extent they are replaceable by other co-workers. The restaurant always needs a certain percentage of experienced, "skilled," and "interchangeable" workers to be able to function efficiently.) I don't contest the lack of meaning, the *alienation* of the worker from the product, in the fast food work process. Nor do I disagree with the notion that the *routinization* and *standardization* of the work are *dehumanizing*.

I believe, however, that more emphasis must be placed on the employment

relations or the conditions of employment. In other words, not simply the work people do, but the conditions under which they perform the work. Ritzer takes as a given that the process of degradation is inevitable, primarily because it is a product of rationalization or mechanization--both natural tendencies in advanced capitalism. We can take this as a given, but still question how workers deal with it today, and how, in the course of history, workers have come up against the "iron cage" and the capitalist power structure, and have developed strategies of combat. These strategies--throughout history--have always been "psychological" in the way workers personally deal with and toil through work that is not a creative product of their own. These strategies have been "social" in the way workers develop work cultures and meanings of their own in the workplace (Epstein, 1990; Westwood, 1985). And, these strategies have been "political" and "economic" in the way workers have fought for personal dignity and wages, benefits, and security for a decent standard of living through our nation's political apparatus, through labor unions, and even through manager-employee negotiations (workplace democracies).

In the fast food restaurant, psychological and social strategies are already highly prevalent. Leidner, for example, shows how front-line workers use routinization to their advantage: as a means of protecting the authentic self by creating a social distance between themselves and customers. As Gramsci would say, routinization frees the worker from mental toil or alienation by reducing the work to a non-thinking process. If a worker does not have to think about work while working, he or she has the freedom to imagine, or create one's own thoughts, or, to create meanings together with co-workers. As I have tried to show, however, employees in the restaurants I examined aren't simply

dealing with the tedium of work, or the psychological affects of "standardized" interactions with customers.

Fast food managers in New York City often require workers, especially front-line workers to be personally involved with clientele, at least to add a "personal touch" to the service which requires, however limited, "emotion work"--whether this entails flattering a customer's new hair cut, showing appreciation for a company compliment, or simply being responsive to every customers' particular concerns and needs. A colleague recently told me about a McDonalds he had visited in California where every worker was required to where a button on their uniform that identified their country of origin. (This is similar to the "flag system" in the Chinatown McDonalds.) He was told that these buttons were intended to "encourage customers to ask employees personal questions." A group of people together, I am sure, would come up with scores of such examples in McDonalds restaurants from around the world. Management encouragement of personal "interaction," I believe, is mainly a response to a threat involved with routinization that results, not necessarily in "robotic" behavior, but rather, the opposite: workers' own active response to their work conditions.

Moreover, in New York City, due to the low status associated with, and even contempt for fast food work, fast food workers are barraged with personal insults from customers that they are expected to deflect with silence. These nonstandardized interactions have the most degrading psychological effect, especially when workers are required to show personal involvement with customers, and especially when such personal involvement is linked with the fast food company identity. Personal insults from

customers, such as "You must work in fast food because you can't do anything else," harassment, or intense peer pressure, are considered far more degrading than having to repeat "Welcome to McDonalds" to every customer. These are not isolated factors. The fast food job has a social stigma partly because of its "dehumanizing" including standardized aspects.

Some of my respondents, like Jesus, told the story about going to a party where another fast food employee was ridiculed; his friends were acting out the McDonalds standard lines..."May I help you..." Fast food workers go up against this stigma everyday in New York. So they don't deal psychologically with the standardization of their work as much as they deal with the social stigma attached to it.

Workers also develop social meaning in the workplace independent of the work process itself. When I worked at a Burger King in 1992 I found that employees had developed various different rituals such as the "putting down" system. The benefits of this ritual were free food of choice for all the "closers" (the policy was that workers had to pay 50 percent for meals) and the intense satisfaction derived from getting away with it. There were different roles that people played in this process, including a "waiter" who took all the workers' food orders, a surveillance crew who watched the manager (near closing time there was usually only one manager who would be in the back office doing the day's paper work), someone who ensured an appropriate stock for the food orders, and the others who had to cover the station assignments of those involved and were eventually responsible for "putting down" the workers' orders of the day. One person coordinated the whole process, walking around the kitchen and service counter making sure that

everyone's food orders had been taken, that the surveillance crew was doing its job, and that everyone was content. The hired security guard for the restaurant even got involved sometimes by diverting the manager's attention away from what the workers were doing to a pseudo event taking place outside.

There were many other ways workers bonded with each other to create a socially meaningful work place. Young people, for example, would flirt with each other and manipulate the means to work next to each other--a young man, for example, would quickly run from the kitchen to the back of the service counter where a woman was working and spill a drink on the floor. As anticipated, a manager would then notice and ask "who spilled this on the floor?" Then the man, sheepishly admitting the offense, would then be told to get the mop and clean it up. For a good many minutes he would have the opportunity to work around this woman.

There was one drawn out pseudo marriage that took place in this Burger King while I worked there. They were called "husband" and "wife." It was a kind of drama in which everyone participated. All the workers tried to facilitate the means for these two people to be together while they worked and during breaks. The woman worked on the front-line and the man worked in the kitchen. He was always assigned the periodic sweeping duty so he could go to the front-line. And she periodically worked in the kitchen. When they were apart the responsibility for their communication was given to the rest of the workers who relayed messages, and often distorted these messages to add more drama. Stories were built and elaborated on these two characters. What made it most interesting was the fact that it was all play, that it went no further than the

workplace, and that even though the story involved only two characters, the story was created by everyone. The story went into "pause" every night after her work shift when her real boyfriend--who had a much more prestigious job as a salesman at Macy's--showed up at the restaurant to pick her up.

These social interactions are the strategies workers develop every day to create meaning in their work lives when there is little meaning to be found in the work itself. The kinds of work cultures and social interactions that evolve are certainly linked to the work process, the structure of the workplace, and the kinds of people who work together. The games that were played at Burger King involved the technologies and products in the "putting down" ritual. The advanced technologies and computerization even worked in favor of this ritual--by facilitating more spatial mobility. The flirting games and stories that took place in Burger King may not occur, at least not in the same way, among an older, middle aged workforce. But in a different place, or among a different workforce, different kinds of social interactions and bonding would take place. They are not specific to the fast food restaurant.

The work culture was indeed important to the working lives of fast food workers at this restaurant, but it involved more than games and rituals. Few people would have stayed another day if offered a better paying job somewhere else. There was a strong solidarity in this feeling...the feeling that one needed to get out. Employees were strongly aware of the real social conditions of their co-workers. "You need at least two jobs to survive in New York," Bruce said to me. Every work shift I watched several employees, tired, but full of adrenaline, come into Burger King to begin their second job of the day. A

Panamanian worked as a baggage boy at a New York City airport during the day and supported a family. A Puerto Rican mother worked at night while her daughter slept at her mother's house, and her husband worked the night shift in a Brooklyn warehouse. Another Latino worked three part-time jobs while he studied at City College. He was often working past 1:00 in the morning when he had a class at 8:00 in the morning.

Social and psychological strategies for coping in the fast food restaurant are, indeed, quite prevalent, at least in this restaurant. Participant observation in other restaurants would likely find various other forms. My original point was that more attention needs to be paid to the *work conditions*: the low pay, lack of benefits, contingency of employment, lack of security, and lack of legal protection of workers in entry-level fast food jobs in New York City. Part of this point entails questioning the social disparities in the fast food hierarchy. It should be alarming that the chairman of Grand Metropolitan earns 170 times the amount of a full-time crew member in New York City, and, simply for sitting on the board of directors. How do we reconcile growing profit margins among these top fast food corporations in the face of a declining real value of minimum wage, and, a declining standard of living among those dependent on low-wage work? The politics of social disparities such as these need to be integral to the sociology of the service economy.

The corporate fast food restaurant industry is, in the final analysis, an important player in the New York City economic and social order. Although the vast majority of fast food jobs are unstable, the fast food industry itself is a stable and expanding force in New York City's economy and culture. Decentralized and centralized features of the

industry to do with complex and varying structures of ownership and corporate control, economies of scale, advanced efficiency technologies, local manager autonomy, and global and local consumer marketing practices, provide a powerful foundation for its stability and expansion. Although these two major chains started out four decades ago as suburban phenomena on the fringes of the manufacturing economy, their greatest expansion in the U.S. today is in the largest cities, including New York City, as central employers in the service economy. According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics Study, "Food Preparation Workers" as an occupational category, is accounting for the second greatest occupational growth in the United States, adding more than half a million jobs (525,000) between 1992 and 2005. The greatest job growth is in the high level professional category: "Computer systems analysts, engineers, and scientists" (Passell, 1995). The growth of these two categories alone helps confirm the labor market polarization thesis (Sassen, 1991).

Today, as urban forms, fast food restaurants help shape the economic, social, and aesthetic order of the global city, both as a producer of low level services and cuisine, and, as a major low-wage employer of new immigrants and racial minorities. This industry, perhaps not unlike other low-wage mainstream employers in major U.S. cities, introduces a different form of capital-labor relationship in New York; where corporate mainstream America is linked to the informal economy through subsidized wages of its own fast food workers. Saskia Sassen (1988), in *The Mobility of Labor and Capital*, shows the mutual linkages between the formal and informal economies in the global order of New York. But the position of the fast food restaurant industry between these two economies points to a particular corporate, household, labor linkage whereby the reproduction of fast food

labor power depends on multiple earning households, and where some of these earnings are derived from the informal economy.

The industry is also fueled by the changing household arrangements that this kind of capital-labor relationship implies. In the low wage service economy, where households depend on multiple earners, where growing numbers of women have joined paid production, where schedules are erratic, constantly changing, unstable and uncertain, the historical social glue and fabric of the household--dining at home together--would seem to be disrupted. It is not merely a question of "dining out" and quickly (Finkelstein, 1989). Corporate fast food restaurants in their expansion represent the increasing commodification of household production and services. And, as a growing employer, it represents the increasing labor demand for this kind of production and service. The capital-labor relationship particular to this industry only reinforces these mutually enforcing trends.

The minimum wage issue and suggestions for labor

The fast food industry has been highlighted in recent political debate concerning raising the minimum wage because it is believed to be the largest minimum wage employer, and perhaps the most visible, in the United States, comprising about 25 percent of all minimum wage workers (Card and Krueger). Raising the minimum wage has become an important political issue for various reasons. First, the real value of the minimum wage is still 25 percent below its 1978 level. Secondly, the fallen minimum wage has been linked to rising poverty levels in the United States. Third, growing

numbers of adults--not only teenagers--are dependent on minimum wage work. As I have shown in this dissertation, a great number of fast food workers are adults and live below the poverty threshold. And if they are not adults, they often have adult responsibilities. Raising the minimum wage has been a highly contested issue because it doesn't only affect fast food workers and others working at minimum wage but it will have an upward ripple affect on millions more American wage earners working at wages around but above the minimum wage.

Who the nation's minimum wage workers are has been at the core of the minimum wage debate. The conservative argument has rested on trying to convince the nation that most minimum wage workers are still young, upwardly mobile people from middle-income-earning families, and that raising the minimum wage would simply increase overall middle-class household earnings--and therefore intensify the gap between the middle class and the poor. The liberal argument has been rooted in trying to prove that growing numbers of minimum wage workers are adults whose wages are not necessarily supplemented by other, higher earning household members, who live below the poverty threshold, and who are not necessarily upwardly mobile. Raising the minimum wage, in the liberal argument, helps lift the living standards of the poor, encourages them to work, and provides a stronger foundation for achieving upward mobility.

How raising the minimum wage affects employment levels has also been central to this debate. Numerous economic studies have speculated on both sides of the issue--that raising the minimum wage causes job loss and that it has little or no affect on job loss. But the soundest and most comprehensive study was conducted by Card and Klueger (1994)

on the fast food industry in New Jersey. It showed that in New Jersey, where the state minimum wage was raised above the federal minimum wage, there was little or no effect on job loss.

Even though this debate has been narrowly centered on only a few core issues--who the workers are and how increasing the minimum wage effects job loss--it has still been flawed by not recognizing regional differences among fast food employers both in terms of the wages they pay and the kinds of people they employ. Regional differences are important because they point to both the flexibility fast food employers exercise in the setting of wages, and how the price of wages is linked to job competition and the degree of dependency on low-wage work among local populations.

Fast food wages vary considerably across the United States. In Omaha, Nebraska, fast food wages begin at \$7-8 per hour. In parts of Pennsylvania, fast food employers pay \$7.50 an hour to its entry-level workers. But in the nation's largest cities, including New York and Los Angeles, the overwhelming majority of fast food workers earn a starting rate of \$4.25 per hour. The regional disparities clearly suggest that employers have the ability to pay well above the minimum wage. Moreover, it shows that employers set wages according to the levels the local population, or the employers' desired population, is willing to work for--this is what economists call a "reservation wage" (Gordon, 1996).

The regional disparities also indicate the varying levels of dependency on low wage work in different areas. If wages are higher, it suggests a shortage in an available workforce needing or willing, to work at the federal minimum wage--thus, there may be a higher reservation wage. Likewise, if wages are at the lowest legal level, it suggests an

abundance of people not only willing to work at minimum wage, but who depend upon it. In places like New York, intense job competition can drive the reservation wage down. Or, we can look at it in another way. A reservation wage exists at a higher level than minimum wage among a significant portion of the population like American minorities. But employers don't have to pay it because there are simply so many people competing for minimum wage jobs. There are so many who can't hold out for a better wage. They have children or other dependents to support. So they take on more jobs, work longer hours, and hope for the best. As Donald, the manager in Downtown Brooklyn, said "We have 3000 people willing to work at 4.25...why should I experiment with a higher wage?"

The minimum wage hike, then, will most affect regions where employers actually pay the minimum wage, where dependency on lowest wage work is the highest, and where a significant portion of these people are poor, have dependents to support, and household incomes to contribute to. It will have little effect on those areas where employers pay significantly higher than minimum wage already and, hence, where it is needed less, since there is little dependency on low-wage work.

But raising the minimum wage to only \$5.15 from \$4.25 per hour will only marginally improve the social conditions of the entry-level crew member in New York City. The maximum annual gross earnings of a full-time crew member earning minimum wage would increase from \$8,840 to \$10,712. But it would do little to alter the structural conditions of the crew member position that do not make it conducive to permanent employment--conditions such as lack of job security, income stability, and fringe benefits.

The Republican amendment to the minimum wage proposal that will allow

employers to maintain the current level of \$4.25 for the first three months among employees under 20 years old of age may even have severe negative implications, especially in New York, where employers can be highly selective in their hiring practices. Employers in this industry already violate federal labor laws in regard to overtime pay, assigning employees to dangerous work tasks that legally require technical experts, such as changing oil vats, and hiring employees under the legal age permitted to work by federal law. Employers are often callous when it comes to cutting labor costs and some of them use every loophole possible to do it.

This amendment is to the advantage to employers in this industry primarily because fast food work requires little initial training, training takes place on the job, and fast food workers are highly disposable because of the emphasis on interchangeability. A common practice already in this industry is the continual weeding out of long-term or unwanted employees. Employee work hours are assigned weekly by managers and one way employers get rid of unwanted employees is by gradually reducing their weekly hours. In this way the employer forces the employee to quit and avoids paying unemployment benefits. Considering the callous practices that already exist in *some* restaurants in this industry and the intense bureaucratic pressure to reduce labor costs, there is every reason to think that this amendment may simply lead to a younger workforce with a higher turnover.

Considering the great number of people dependent on minimum wage work in New York, and the growing numbers using fast food as full-time work, fast food restaurants perhaps should be required to employ a staff of 50 percent full-time workers

and provide them with salaries and benefits including health insurance. This requirement would alleviate the tendency to cut labor costs through high turnover rates. It would provide greater security among those most dependent on this work. This is simply one policy measure in a long series of measures that should be taken in the fast food industry in the years to come.

Policy initiatives targeting this industry make sense. The corporate fast food restaurant industry is a signpost of the corporate restructuring occurring in all service industries today. Corporate reorganization indicative of the decentralized franchise system ruled by a centralized hierarchical structure, the use of efficiency technologies--especially computer technology, and new management systems such as "crew empowerment" and "teamwork," all contribute to an organization capable of amassing enormous profits while suppressing workers' wages, and providing little in the way of benefits and job security. Certainly, one company or industry is not to blame for the current and unrelenting "wage squeeze" affecting millions and increasing numbers of Americans. It is only recently that this industry has been challenged and questioned in regard to its labor policies. But this industry has risen from the fringes of the manufacturing economy in the 1950s to the core of the service economy as the fastest growing service employer in the 1990s. As much as it is not to blame for the wage squeeze, it is as much responsible for ensuring decent living standards for all of its employees dependent on this form of work.

The organization of labor in corporate fast food restaurants is pertinent and possible. The barriers of yesterday are advantageous today. A growing number of workers, as I have shown, are temporary, and part-time, but don't necessarily *want* to be.

These restaurants are linked to giant corporate America, but, their ownerships are *local* and, often *big*. Thus, organizational efforts can focus on particular restaurant ownerships, especially large local ownerships. They can be approached on the multi-unit, but local level (say with owners of several restaurants), and, because they are big and amassing huge profits, there is room for bargaining in favor of labor.

Moreover, corporate fast food restaurants have a vested interest in *staying where they are*. There is no threat such as capital flight. And, importantly, they depend on a large consumer base which can be an integral part of a campaign to organize and improve the conditions of labor. Unlike in small suburban towns, or highway rest stops, fast food restaurants do not have a monopoly over cuisine in New York. An organized consumer boycott, for example, may prove highly effective in a place as diverse as New York. While workers may refrain from joining such efforts out of fear of losing their jobs, or, because they refuse to identify themselves as fast food workers, there is an alternative: The organizing platform being based on improving *jobs*, rather than *particular workers*.

The justification for this pertains to the high turnover in these jobs. Even though one aim of an organizing effort is to reduce turnover, the fact is that a certain percentage of these jobs will always have a high turnover. The organizing platform, then, can be based on improving jobs for the future, rather than people for the present. One in four Americans have worked in fast food jobs and many more will be working in these jobs. Thus, the point is not that an outside organization or union is simply trying to improve conditions for a small workforce. Rather, it is that this organization is trying to improve conditions of jobs for a quarter of America's population. The focus then, would be on

organizing jobs rather than people. In this way, the local-ness of the restaurant ownership can be used on a practical level, and the global-ness of the trademark name can be used on an ideological level to gain the support of consumers and the public at large to support the unionization of the workers under the same local and corporate ownerships. The fact that fast food workers are already unionized industry wide in other places, such as New Zealand, also points to the potential here.

Bibliography

- Albrecht, Karl and Ron Zemke (1985) *Service America! Doing Business in the New Economy*. Homewood, Illinois: Dow Jones-Irwin.
- Amdur, Louis et. al. (1992 and 1995--reprint) "The Bubbling Cauldron: Global and Local Interactions in New York City Restaurants" in *Comparative Urban and Community Research*, Volume 4, pp.105-132.
- Applebome, Peter (1995) "Employers Wary of School System: Survey Finds Broad Distrust of Younger Job Aspirants" in *New York Times*, February 20, p.A1.
- Attewell, Paul (1990) "What is Skill?" in *Work and Occupations*, Vol.17, No.4, November, pp.422-448.
- Bailey, Thomas and Roger Waldinger (1989) *Urban Fates: African-Americans and New Immigrants in the Post Industrial City*.
- Bean, Frank D., Jorge Chapa, Ruth R. Berg and Kathryn A. Sowards (1994) "Educational and Sociodemographic Incorporation Among Hispanic Immigrants to the United States" in Edmonston and Passel (eds.) *Immigration and Ethnicity: The Integration of America's Newest Arrivals*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.
- Becker, Gary (1975) *Human Capital*. New York: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Bitner, Mary Jo, Bernard H. Booms, and Mary Stanfield Tetreault (1990) "The Service Encounter: Diagnosing Favorable and Unfavorable Incidents" in *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.54, January, pp.85-101.
- Blau, Peter M. and Otis Dudley Duncan (1967) *The American Occupational Structure*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Bluestone, Barry and Bennett Harrison (1982) *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bluestone, B., P. Hanna, S. Kuhn, and L. Moore (1981) *The Retail Revolution: Market Transformation, Investment, and Labor in the Modern Department Store*. Boston: Auburn House.

Boserup, Ester (1970) *Woman's Role in Economic Development*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Botwinick, Howard (1993) *Persistent Inequalities: Wage Disparity Under Capitalist Competition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Boudon, Raymond (1991) "What Middle Range Theories Are" in *Contemporary Sociology*, 20, 4, pp.506-530.

Braverman, Harry (1974) *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Butterfield, Fox (1995) "More Blacks in Their 20s Have Trouble With the Law" in *New York Times*, p.A18.

Card, David and Alan Krueger (1994) "Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania" in *The American Economic Review*. September, 84 (4), pp.772-93.

Crompton, Rosemary and Kay Sanderson (1990) *Gendered Jobs and Social Change*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Crozier, Michel (1965) *The World of the Office Worker*. Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press.

Czepiel, Solomon, and Surprenant (1985) *The Service Encounter: Managing Employee/Customer Interaction in Service Businesses*. Lexington Books, DC Heath and Company.

Deng, Shang-Gang, presentation at "The Power Structures of Exploitation: The Political Economy of Chinatown" conference at the New School for Social Research May 11, 1995.

Ditton, James (1977) "Perks, Pilferage, and the Fiddle: The Historical Structure of Invisible Wages" in *Theory and Society*. Volume 4, No.1, Spring, pp.39-71.

Doutt, J.T. (1984) "Comparative Productivity Performance in Fast Food Retail Distribution," in *Journal of Retailing*, 66, 3, pp.98-106.

Dreyfuss, Carl (1933) *Beruf und Ideologie der Angestellten*. Munich and Leipzig.

Duncan, Otis D. And Peter M. Blau (1967) *The American Occupational Structure*. New York: Wiley.

Edwards, Richard C. (1979) *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in*

the Twentieth Century. New York: Basic Books.

Elango, B. and Vance H. Fried (1992) "Franchising: An Overview with Suggestions for the Future." Paper presented at the 1992 Academy of Management Meetings, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Emerson, Robert (1990) *The New Economics of Fast Food*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

England, Paula (1992) *Comparable Worth: Theories and Evidence*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Epstein, Cynthia (1988) *Deceptive Distinctions: Sex, Gender, and the Social Order*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press & New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

----- (1989) "Workplace Boundaries: Conceptions and Creations" in *Social Research*, Vol.56, No.3 (Autumn), pp.571-590.

----- (1990) "The Cultural Perspective and the Study of Work" in Erikson, Kai and Steven Peter Vallas (eds.) *The Nature of Work*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Feder, Barnaby J. (1995) "Dead End Jobs? Not For These Three: Immigrants Flourish in the McDonalds System" in *New York Times*, July 4, p.L45.

Fernandez-Kelly, M. Patricia (1995) "Social and Cultural Capital in the Urban Ghetto: Implications for the Economic Sociology of Immigration" in Portes, Alejandro *The Economic Sociology of Immigration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Fine, Ben (1992) *Women's Employment and the Capitalist Family*. London and New York: Routledge.

Finkelstein, Joanne (1989) *Dining Out: A Sociology of Modern Manners*. New York: New York University Press.

Galbraith, Jay (1973) *Designing Complex Organization*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Garcia, Ofelia (1988) "Spanish Language Use and Attitudes: A Study of Two New York City Communities" in *Language and Society*, 17, pp.475-509.

Garson, Barbara (1975) *All the Livelong Day: The Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work*. New York: Doubleday.

Georges, L. (1984) *New Immigrants and the Political Process: Dominicans in New York*:

- Occasional Papers 45*. New York: New York University Press.
- Gladwell, Malcom (1996) "Black Like Them" in *New Yorker*, May 6, pp.75-81.
- Gordon, David (1996) *Fat and Mean*. New York: Free Press.
- Grand Metropolitan (1995) *Grand Metropolitan 1995 Annual Report*. London: Author.
- Hadfield, G.H. (1991) "Credible Spatial Preemption Through Franchising," in *Rand Journal of Economics*, 22, 4, pp.531-543.
- Hall, Elaine (1990) "Waiting on Tables: Gender Integration in a Service Occupation," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Connecticut, Department of Sociology.
- Harrison, Bennett (1994) *Lean and Mean: The Changing Landscape of Corporate Power in the Age of Flexibility*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hearn, H.L. and Patricia Stoll (1975) "Continuance Commitment in Low-Status Occupations: The Cocktail Waitress," *Sociological Quarterly*, 16, pp.105-14.
- Hisrich, R.D. and M.P. Peters (1989) *Entrepreneurship: Starting, Develoing, and Managing a New Enterprise*. Homewood, Illinois: BPI-Irwin.
- Hochschild, Arlie (1983) *The Managed Heart*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hughes, Everett (1994) *On Work, Race, and the Sociological Imagination*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Hunt, S.D. and J.R. Levin (1975) "Tying Agreements in Franchising," in *Journal of Marketing*, 39, pp.20-26.
- Inkeles, Alex (1960) "Industrial Man" in *American Journal of Sociology*, LXVI, No.1, July, pp.1-31.
- Jenson, Jane, Elisabeth Hagen and Ceallaigh Reddy (eds.) (1988) *Feminization of the Labor Force*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kasinitz, Philip (1992) *Caribbean New York: Black Immigrants and the Politics of Race*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- (1996) "Missing the Connection: Social Isolation and Employment on the Brooklyn Waterfront" in *Social Problems*. Vol.43, No.2, May, pp.501-519.
- Katznelson, Ira (1981) *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the*

United States. New York: Pantheon Books.

Kaufman, Jonathan (1995) "A McDonald's Owner Becomes a Role Model for Black Teenagers" in *Wall Street Journal*. August 23, p.A1.

Kessler-Harris, Alice (1980) *Women Have Always Worked*. Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press.

Kim, Dae Young (1995) "The Limits of Ethnic Solidarity: Mexican and Ecuadorian Employment in Korean-owned Businesses in New York City," Working Paper for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center.

Kinkead, Gwen (1992) *Chinatown: A Portrait of a Closed Society*. New York: HarperPerennial.

Kirkland, Edward C. (1962) *Industry comes of Age: Business, Labor, and Public Policy, 1860-1897*. New York.

Kirschenman, Joleen and Kathryn M. Neckerman (1991) "We'd Love to Hire Them, But...": The Meaning of Race for Employers" in Christopher Jencks and Paul Peterson (eds.) *The Urban Underclass*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute.

Kirschenman, Joleen, Philip Moss and Chris Tilly (1995) "Employer Screening Methods and Racial Exclusion: Evidence from New In-Depth Interviews with Employers," Working Paper #77. New York: The Russell Sage Foundation.

Kracauer, Simon (1930) *Die Angestellten aus dem neuen Deutschland*. Frankfurt.

Kroc, Ray (1977) *Grinding It Out: The Making of McDonald's*. Chicago: Contemporary Books.

Kwong, Peter (1987) *The New Chinatown*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Lamphere, Louise (1987) *From Working Daughters to Working Mothers: Immigrant Women in a New England Industrial Community*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Lawrence, Paul and Jay W. Lorsch (1967) *Organization and Environment*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Leidner, Robin (1993) *Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinization of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Liebow, Elliot (1967) *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Street Corner Men*. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company.
- Light, Ivan (1972) *Ethnic Enterprise in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin and Reinhard Bendix (1953) "Social Mobility and Occupational Career Patterns" Bendix, Reinhard and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.) *Class, Status and Power*. New York: Free Press.
- (1959) "Intragenerational Occupational Mobility in Oakland" Pessan, Edward (ed.) (1974) *Three Centuries of Social Mobility in America*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Love, John (1986) *McDonalds: Behind the Arches*. New York: Bantam.
- Marx, Karl (1844) *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. New York: International Publishers.
- McDonalds Corporation (1994) *McDonalds 1994 Annual Report*. Oakland, Illinois: Author.
- Miller, Bryan "Tempest in the Kitchen" in *New York Times*, March 15, 1995, p.C1.
- Mills, C.W. (1953) *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mishel, Lawrence, and David M. Frankel (1991) *The State of Working America, 1990-91*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Moody's Investors Service and United Nation's Center on Transnational Corporations (1990) *Directory of the Largest Service Companies*. New York: Author.
- Moss, Philip and Chris Tilly (1996) "Space as a Signal, Space as a Barrier: How Employers Map and Use Space in Four Metropolitan Labor Markets," Paper presented at the "Multi-city Study of Urban Inequality Conference," February 8-9, 1996, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- New York State Department of Labor (1990) *Labor Market Assessment, Occupational Supply and Demand, New York City*. New York: Author.

New York State Department of Labor (1992) *Occupational Outlook, 1991-1996*. New York: Author.

New York State Department of Labor (1994)^A *Occupational Wages, 1994, New York City Region (BLMI Report 1995 No. 6)*. New York: Author.

New York State Department of Labor (1994)^B *Tomorrow's Jobs, Tomorrow's Workers, New York City, 1993-94*. New York: Author.

New York Restaurant School (1992) *A Menu For Success, Food Service Training*. New York: Author.

Newman, Katherine (1995) "What Inner-City Jobs for Welfare Moms" in *New York Times*, May 20, p.A23.

Noble, Barbara Presley (1994) "The Women Behind McDonalds" in *New York Times*, March 27, Section 3, p.23.

Orleck, Annelise (1987) "The Soviet Jews: Life in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn" in Foner, Nancy (ed.) *New Immigrants in New York*. New York: Columbia Press.

Osterman, Paul (1988) *Employment Futures*. New York: Oxford University Press.

----- (1994) "The Great American Job Hunt, Getting Started" in *The Wilson Quarterly*. Autumn, pp.46-49.

Parcel, Toby L. And Marie B. Sickmeier (1988) "One Firm, Two Labor Markets: The Case of McDonald's in the Fast Food Industry" in *The Sociological Quarterly*. Volume 29, Number 1.

Passell, Peter (1995) "Job Advice for 2005: Don't Be a Farmer, Play One on TV" in *New York Times*, September 3, p.F9.

Pessan, Edward (ed.) (1974) *Three Centuries of Social Mobility in America*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company.

Pessar, Patricia R. (1987) "The Dominicans: Women in the Household and the Garment Industry" in Foner, Nancy (ed.) *New Immigrants in New York*. New York: Columbia Press.

Piore, Michael J. and C. Sabel (1984) *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity*. New York: Basic Books.

Portes, Alejandro and Ruben G. Rumbaut (1990) *Immigrant America*. Berkeley:

University of California Press.

Portes, Alejandro and Robert L. Bach (1985) *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Price, D.G. and A.M. Blair (1989) *The Changing Geography of the Service Sector*. London and New York: Belhaven Press.

Reiter, Ester (1991) *Making Fast Food: from the Frying Pan into the Fryer*. McGill-Queens University Press.

Ritzer, George (1993) *The McDonaldization of Society*. London: Pine Forge Press.

Sassen, Saskia (1988) *The Mobility of Labor and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flow*. Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press.

----- (1992) *The Global City*. New York, London, Tokyo. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Sellers, Patricia (1990) "What Customers Really Want" in *Fortune Magazine*, June, pp.35-42.

Silberman, Charles (1964) *Crisis in Black and White*. New York: Vintage Books.

Standing, Guy (1988) "Global Feminization Through Flexible Labor," International Labor Organization, Geneva Switzerland.

Steinberg, Stephen (1981) *The Ethnic Myth*. New York: Atheneum.

----- (1995) *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Stinchcombe, Arthur L. (1990) "Work Institutions and the Sociology of Everyday Life" in Erikson, Kai and Steven Peter Vallas (eds.) *The Nature of Work*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Stromberg, Ann and Shirley Harkess (eds.) (1978) "Women, Work, and the Labor Force" in *Women Working: Theories and Facts in Perspective*. CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Thurow, Lester C. (1995) "Companies Merge; Families Break Up" in *New York Times*, op.ed., September 3, Section 4, p.4.

Tucker, James (1993) "Everyday Forms of Employee Resistance" in *Sociological Forum*, Volume 8, No. 1, pp.45-58.

U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990)^A *Detailed Occupation, New York City, 1990 EEO Files..* Washington, D.C.: Author.

----- (1990)^B *Socioeconomic Characteristics of the U.S. Foreign-Born Population Detailed in Bureau Tabulations, Release CB84-179.* Washington, D.C.: Author.

----- (1990)^C *1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Metropolitan Areas, Release CP-2-1B.* Washington, D.C.: Author.

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1988) *1987 Annual Report.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Waldinger, Roger (1986) *Through the Eye of the Needle.* New York and London: New York University Press.

----- (1990) "Ethnic Business in Sunset Park" in Winnick, Louis (ed.) *New People in Old Neighborhoods.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Walsh, John P. (1993) *Supermarkets Transformed: Understanding Organizational and Technological Innovations.* New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Weber, Max (1958) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Westwood, Sallie (1985) *All Day, Every Day: Factory and Family in the Making of Women's Lives.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Whyte, William Foote (1977) *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry.* New York: Arno Press.

Wilson, William Julias (1978) *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Winant, Howard (1994) *Racial Conditions.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Woll, M. (1968-69) "Sources of Revenue to the Franchisor and Their Strategic Implications," in *Journal of Retailing*, 44, 4, pp.14-20.

Wong, Bernard (1987) "The Chinese: New Immigrants in New York's Chinatown" in Foner, Nancy (ed.) *New Immigrants in New York.* New York: Columbia Press.

Zhou, Min (1992) *New York's Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Zukin, Sharon (1991) *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of Chicago Press.