

Am I Loving it? On the Possibilities of Employee Recognition in a Rationalized Organization

Tilburg University

Tilburg School of Humanities

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Author details

Name: Lennart Roelof Servaas Jansen

ANR: 255851

SNR: 1239569

Date: 16-06-2017

Supervisor details

Name supervisor 1: prof. dr. G.W. Dubbink

Name supervisor 2: dr. B.W. van de Ven



Abstract

In this philosophical and conceptual research, I will examine the possibilities of adequate employee recognition in a rationalized organization. The concept of rationalization is shaped by Ritzer's (2015) theory of McDonaldization, meaning the increased focus of contemporary society on efficiency, calculability, predictability and nonhuman technology to control people. Recognition is conceptualized by Honneth's (1995) theory of intersubjective identity formation, stating adequate recognition to be a vital prerequisite for a positive self-image as an autonomous individual. Recognition is distinguished in three forms: love, respect and esteem. After translating the general recognition theory of Honneth, focused on respect and esteem, to an employee setting, I will claim that although receiving adequate respect is possible in a McDonaldized organization, receiving adequate esteem is not. Therefore, the McDonaldized organization does not allow for full self-realization of its employees and can accordingly be seen in relation to Honneth's theory as an immoral organization. Ritzer's claim that McDonaldization can be dehumanizing is therefore, at least partially, justified.

Contents

Abstract	- 2 -
1. Introduction.....	- 4 -
2. McDonaldization.....	- 7 -
3. Recognition	- 17 -
4. Employee Recognition.....	- 31 -
5. Self-respect in a McDonaldized Organization.....	- 44 -
6. Self-esteem in a McDonaldized Organization	- 48 -
7. Conclusion	- 53 -
References	- 56 -

1. Introduction

In the last two centuries, Western society is marked by an extensive process of rationalization. This observation has already been made by sociologist Max Weber (1922/1978) in the early 20th century and it seems that this process has not come to an end. Rationalization has certainly left its mark on our modern society, affecting for example the way organizations like governments and businesses are run. According to sociologist George Ritzer (1993, 2015) the process of rationalization is still highly influential in contemporary society. Ritzer states that society is characterized by an increasing focus on efficiency, predictability, calculability and nonhuman technology to control people. Especially organizations focus on these four dimensions, for instance as a method to organize their business or selling their products. Rationalization therefore affects both employees and consumers. Ritzer named this rationalization process in contemporary times 'the McDonaldization of society'. This process of McDonaldization brings about multiple advantages, not only for the McDonaldized organization itself, but also for society in general. For example, due to McDonaldization, productivity rises and consequently an increasing proportion of humanity can access valuable goods. Furthermore, comparable to bureaucracies, McDonaldization increases equality and equal treatment as individual capabilities are assessed instead of irrelevant characteristics such as race or sexual orientation. On the other hand, Ritzer states that McDonaldization induces irrationalities. Ritzer designates dehumanization as McDonaldization's biggest irrationality. According to Ritzer, both working and consuming at a McDonaldized organization has the potential to deny some basic human traits.

In this philosophical research I will examine this dehumanizing side of McDonaldization from the employee perspective. Can McDonaldization indeed dehumanize employees and, if so, what are the reasons responsible for this effect? Is the process of McDonaldization denying or strengthening basic human aspects or does it actually have no influence at all? To answer these questions, one first needs to answer philosophical anthropological questions such as 'what is human' and what are those basic human traits that could be denied by McDonaldization. Answering such questions is however, to say the least, a quest not suited for a research of this size. I will therefore focus on one specific anthropological aspect that is often deemed as essentially human: personal identity. According to philosopher Axel Honneth (1995), recognition is the key to understanding personal identity and its formation. Honneth states that identity

formation can only take place intersubjectively through other individuals; one comes to know oneself in the feedback received from others. Only by receiving adequate positive recognition from others, one can develop a positive self-image as an autonomous individual, allowing for full self-realization. Adequate recognition is therefore a basic human need. Honneth identifies three primary forms of recognition that are essential for one's identity formation: love, respect and esteem. These forms of recognition are responsible for one's development of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, respectively. Honneth states that a denial of adequate recognition blocks the development of a positive self-image. It therefore causes individuals great hurt and is often the trigger for social conflicts in search for due recognition.

In an organization that is highly rationalized as Ritzer describes it, is there still a possibility for employees to receive adequate recognition as argued for by Honneth? This leads to the following research question:

Can an employee receive adequate recognition while working in a McDonaldized organization and what are the reasons responsible?

To answer this research question, I will conduct a formal analysis, focusing on both philosophical anthropology and ethics. I will start off by exploring the two basic theories that form the concepts of my research. Firstly, I will examine Ritzer's sociological McDonaldization theory in more detail, focused on an employee perspective. What are these four dimensions and how is the McDonaldized organization shaped? What historical developments paved the way for McDonaldization and what future prospects does McDonaldization have? Secondly, I will delve into Honneth's recognition theory, focusing on the development and importance of adequate recognition for individuals. How can Honneth's theory clarify the philosophical anthropological question concerning the nature and formation of human identity? Subsequently, I will attempt to normatively translate Honneth's general conception of recognition to the specific setting of employees. What are the minimal formal conditions that should be present in an organization to allow employees to receive adequate recognition? What normative implications does the theory of Honneth have for organizations? Exploring both theories and their normative implications allows for the focus to shift to answering the research question. Are these minimal conditions necessary for adequate employee recognition present in a McDonaldized organization? As I am conducting a formal analysis, emphasis is put on the concepts of McDonaldization and

recognition in themselves, meaning that what is immanently given in the concept. Are there conceptual problems of employee recognition in a McDonaldized organization to be found? Nonetheless, to give this research more direct practical value, I will also examine some material problems, thereby studying 'reality as we know it', meaning the interaction between the concepts and its contingent 'real world' environment. This formal and material analysis is preliminary divided, one part focusing on self-respect and the other on self-esteem. Together, these steps lead to an answer of the research question and the conclusion of my research.

Although both Ritzer and Honneth wrote about their theories for the first time over two decades ago, their concepts are still highly relevant for contemporary society. Ritzer states that initiatives counter to McDonaldization are launched, but, as will become clear in the next chapter, this does not mean the end of it. In contrast, Ritzer states in the latest version of his book from 2015 that the influence of McDonaldization will only grow in the near future. More employees will work in a McDonaldized organization. Also in recent management style trends, such as 'Lean' and 'SMART', emphasis is put on McDonaldized dimensions such as efficiency and calculability. The process of rationalization will not cease in the near future. Furthermore, Honneth states that adequate recognition is a basic human need comparable or even more important than basic material needs. In Western societies where almost all individuals' minimal material needs are met, the demand for other basic needs like recognition will only grow. As the biggest proportion of active human life is still spend on labor, adequate recognition received from work is vital. Putting both these concepts together therefore is highly relevant for present-day society. Hence, this research can answer an important question regarding the morality of McDonaldized organizations.

2. McDonaldization

The invention of the assembly line, the Holocaust and the first McDonald's; at first sight, although all unquestionably influential, all historical events with no apparent similarities. Nonetheless, if one looks more closely, the process of rationalization is the similarity binding them together. The process of rationalization was first described by German sociologist Max Weber (1922/1978) as he argued that the Western world was becoming increasingly rationalized. American sociologist George Ritzer (1993, 2015), inspired by Weber, states that the 20th and 21st century are marked by an extensive process of rationalization, that is, focused on efficiency, predictability, calculability and nonhuman technologies for the sake of controlling humans. Ritzer claims that he applied Weber's rationalization theory to contemporary society¹. Ritzer called his contemporary rationalization process the McDonaldization of society, defined as "the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world" (2015, p. 1). Naturally, the process of McDonaldization is not about the American icon that is called McDonalds itself, although it served as the inspiration of the concept. In general, indicating the influence of the company, McDonalds is a popular company to base theoretical conceptions on as for example indicated by The Economist's Big Mac index² and Thomas Friedman's famous statement that no two countries with a McDonalds will go to war with one other³.

In his book 'The McDonaldization of society', Ritzer describes how the principles of McDonaldization are not only dominating other fast-food restaurants or even restaurants in general, but also other industries like toys, furniture, and clothes. While McDonaldization has its roots in production methods and production focused organizations, it is also spread to service focused organizations like airlines or universities. Ritzer argued that McDonaldization will therefore have a growing influence on society. Ritzer even states that for the process of McDonaldization, time and space are no barriers to its spread as indicated by the world wide spread of big McDonaldized businesses and the increasingly common 24/7 opening hours of

¹ In this research I will not extensively discuss the accuracy of this claim nor Ritzer's interpretation of Weber. I will largely follow Ritzer's interpretation as his theory, although highly inspired by Weber, can be viewed as independent from Weber. Consequently, all references to Weber's work will be in light of Ritzer's interpretation.

² <http://www.economist.com/content/big-mac-index>

³ <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/03/28/magazine/a-manifesto-for-the-fast-world.html>

these companies. The main reason for the spread of McDonaldized businesses is attributed by Ritzer to its extremely successful business model, precisely because consumers, workers and managers highly value efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. With their emphasis on quantity of sales accompanied by low costs, the business principles of McDonaldization are simply a success formula, forcing similar companies to either follow or perish.

Ritzer's McDonaldization theory consists of four dimensions, each adding to the process of rationalization of society. These dimensions are not new in themselves as if organizations did not focus on for example efficiency before. What Ritzer describes is that the priority given to these dimensions is increasing as an incremental process, thereby stretching the line of what is deemed acceptable in society. The first dimension is the focus on efficiency, defined as using "the optimum method for getting from one point to another" (Ritzer, 2015, p. 14). It encompasses the search and use of the best method of accomplishing a goal like work or consumption. Fast-food restaurants use an assembly-line method with a strong division of tasks to most efficiently make a hamburger menu. If possible, also costumers are included in the process to increase efficiency, for example by cleaning their own tables. As explained, McDonaldization does not only take place in the restaurant industry. For example in academia, instead of oral or essay-style exams, universities increasingly use multiple-choice examination to efficiently evaluate the level of their students and to streamline the education process. Even in hospitals, Ritzer states, an assembly-line style operation stream to efficiently operate on a large amount of patients is not uncommon. Even though these examples have a negative connotation, most patients will be glad to be helped as fast as possible, the education system allows for more students get a high education and customers won't have to wait for their food. Noticeably, most of these advantages benefit the customers.

The emphasis on calculability is the second dimension of McDonaldization, defined as "reducing production and service to numbers" (Ritzer, 2015, p. 105). Not quality, but quantity is central in a McDonaldized society. For customers, Ritzer states that quantity is perceived the same as quality. A fast delivery of a large amount for low costs is the gold standard: 'bigger is better'. In a work setting, priority is placed on the quantity of production and work, for example the amount of units produced per day. As already advocated by Frederick Taylor (1911/2004) in his method of scientific management, discard the 'rule of thumb' and instead measure everything. Every task, motion and output must be measured and reduced to plain numbers;

firstly to discover what the best option and method is and secondly, to see if improvements in that method can be made. Take for example the fast-food restaurant. The exact measurements to the millimeter, the cooking time to the second and the assembly exactly like the picture: a hamburger can be perfected. In the at first sight completely different setting of academia, the ‘publish or perish’ culture is driven by a focus on quantity rather than quality. Even when quality seems to be the main focus, the quality is quantified too, for example by awarding more points to a high quality journal publication or by counting the number of citations. In health care, the time spent with patients is measured and preferably reduced to treat as many patients as possible. However, as Ritzer states, the motive is questionable. Is it to increase the health of more patients or is the reason economical of nature and are patients also quantified as dollar sings?

The third dimension is predictability, defined as “the assurance that products and services will be the same over time and in all locales” (Ritzer, 2015, p. 15). For employees, work is often standardized and thereby highly predictable because one best way is sought to execute every detail. Tasks become highly predictable and routine by extensive rules and regulations that accompany the job. Tasks are simplified and divided as much as possible to avoid any mistakes. There is only one best way to make a hamburger and that is the only way allowed to do it. The organization tells the employee how to behave and what to say to customers when they enter and leave. The organization even determines the exact dress code of its employees. In telemarketing, employees receive training that goes as far as the exact intonation of their voices. As Ritzer argues, this predictability increases the perceived fairness as every employee is treated exactly the same. Employees can enjoy the stability of the job and rules and regulations can give them support. Also customers always know what they will receive with no surprises involved. However, this preference for predictability of customers is remarkable as McDonaldization is the product of a highly individualized society as Ritzer noticed.

The last dimension of McDonaldization is control over humans. Ritzer explains that organizations have increasingly gained control over their employees, especially with nonhuman methods. As seen in the other dimensions, tasks are divided, simplified and standardized. As a consequence, workers are almost reduces to a mere means of production, similar to machines. Often they are eventually even replaced by machines. The contemporary trend of robotization is an excellent example of how the work process is maximally controlled. Frequently humans are no longer directly needed, unless it is an indirect function like wielding a machine. Already in a

classic bureaucracy, employees are being controlled by nonhuman technologies like rules and regulations. The 'head' work of employees working in a McDonaldized organization is often thought out already, leaving only the simple 'hand' work. Increased control diminishes the risks of variations in quality for the organization. The biggest source of variation in an organization are humans. Limiting human involvement means limiting risks and variation. A checker in a supermarket can make mistakes while reading the prices of the label and entering it into the cash register. A scanner will not make these mistakes. A McDonald's employee can pour too little or too much soda. An automatic drink dispenser will do it exactly right. The soda machine however also controls the worker by telling when it is done. Nonhuman technology not only eliminates variation, it also eliminates the need for skilled workers capable of autonomous judgment. The old craft of cooking a perfect hamburger is fully replaced by machines and strict regulations. As a result, low skilled workers can be hired which can easily be controlled and more importantly, be paid a low wage. However, also in high skilled jobs employees are increasingly controlled by nonhuman technology. In health care, physicians are increasingly managed by professional non-medical managers who are often more concerned about the financial side than the quality of health care. Physicians are often externally controlled, for example using 'pathways'. These are standardized protocols consisting of steps to follow in giving a diagnosis and treating patients. Physicians are not always free to decide over their own work, but are increasingly hassled by intensive bureaucratic rules, thereby decreasing autonomy.

As already implicitly described, these four dimensions of McDonaldization greatly affect those working at McDonaldized organizations. Ritzer (2015) claims that almost all jobs have been affected by McDonaldization. However, the most visible affected jobs are those low in financial reward, hierarchy, need of skill and training with little upwards mobility, for example a basic factory job. Although in general, contemporary society often has the tendency to criticize this development, Ritzer states that these so called 'McJobs' offer many people a job who would be otherwise unemployed. McJobs offer a valuable learning experience as a starting point for young people's or immigrant workers' careers. Next to the more 'blue-collar' jobs, also higher in hierarchy jobs are affected by McDonaldization. Ritzer describes as examples the job of a university professor, embodied in the 'publish or perish' culture, or an airplane pilot whose flying job has mostly been taken over by nonhuman technology.

Important to notice is that for Ritzer, McDonaldization is not an all-or-nothing process. Some organizations are more or less McDonaldized than others and, although the four dimensions overlap to a large extent, some organizations focus more on one aspect than another. There are degrees of McDonaldization and although Ritzer states that there are no limits on the process, not everything in society is McDonaldized. Nonetheless, McDonaldization is a highly influential process and besides the attractiveness generated by the four dimensions, Ritzer describes three factors responsible for its growing prevalence. First of all, McDonaldization is an attractive business model thanks to its economic factors and profitability incorporating low costs and high profits. Also for non-profit organizations, McDonaldization is attractive to reduce costs and thereby increase its achievements. Secondly, Ritzer claims that McDonaldization is often valued as an end in itself, especially in the United States. People value the four dimensions associated with the process. Thirdly, Ritzer states that the trend of McDonaldization fits in perfectly with further changes in society. Demands are changing as for example the strive for efficiency in preparing food is greatly amplified by the growing amount of women workers, leaving less time to prepare own meals. Globalization and the global increase in capitalist systems also increase the access to franchises operating in McDonaldized settings. In addition, the growth in technological advancement like scientific management and the assembly line, clearly helped the development of McDonaldization. Contemporary technological developments like robotization, especially in the dimension of control, hugely advances the growth of McDonaldization.

Ritzer mentions several other developments that could run counter to the development of McDonaldization. Ritzer sees McDonaldization as originating in an industrial society and others have argued that society is moving to a postindustrial society (e.g. Bell, 1973), declaring the end of McDonaldization. A postmodern society moves along a different path, putting less emphasis on hierarchy and routine and more on a flat organization structure and creative employees. Jobs are getting more complex and simple jobs are replaced by automation. Ritzer however thinks the process of McDonaldization and the simplification of jobs is still growing. Ritzer sketches a division between high skilled more creative workers and low-status routinized workers in McDonaldized systems. Although Ritzer thinks that also high skilled work is influenced by McDonaldization, he states that especially McDonaldized low skilled work will not disappear in

postmodern society. Many low-skilled service jobs are still highly reliable on humans. He therefore states that McDonaldization and postmodernism can exist and grow simultaneously.

In addition to these developments shaping contemporary society -to fully understand the concept of McDonaldization- it is important to sketch those events and developments that preceded and lay the foundation of McDonaldization. McDonaldization as Ritzer explains it did not emerge out of the blue. Different economic and social developments preceded this influential process. McDonaldization can be characterized as the sum of different rationalization processes and historical events. In explaining the emergence of McDonaldization, Ritzer focuses especially on the part of Weber's rationalization thesis that is aimed at bureaucracies⁴. According to Ritzer, one of the most influential predecessor of McDonaldization is this bureaucracy, an organizational method Ritzer states to be characterized by a formal hierarchy, specific responsibilities and subtasks, rules and written regulations, allowing for large-scale organizations. This type of organization is comparable to Mintzberg's (1979) machine bureaucracy, relying on large techno-structure design allowing for standardization. In these bureaucratic organizations, Ritzer states that workers no longer needed to search for the optimum way by themselves, but could rely on organizational institutions to assist in their decision-making. This form of formal rationality searches for the optimum means to the desired end, allowing for great efficiency and standardization, as one optimal choice can be made. Another big change made possible by bureaucracies is the decoupling of the person and the worker, introducing impersonal rules and processes. In traditional societies, roles, jobs and loyalty were given on account of personal relations of who you are. In contrast, in bureaucratic societies, who you are mattered less than what you could do.

Although certainly many advantages accompanied this rationalization process, Weber, as explained by Ritzer, thought that this process of rationalization would become ever more influential, until all was trapped in an 'iron cage' of rationality and rational structures, excavating meaning and dehumanizing people. Bauman (1989), argued that Weber's thoughts of this irrationality of rationality came to a climax in the Holocaust. Bauman states that this mass dehumanizing and killing of people happened not despite the rationalization of society, but due to modernity and the rationalization of society. This thought was already expressed in

⁴ As debate on the right interpretation of Weber exists, I want to stress again that I will not discuss the accuracy of Ritzer's interpretation of Weber in this research.

Horkheimer and Adorno's (1947/2002) 'Dialectic of Enlightenment' in which they used Weber's instrumental rationality as outcome of the enlightenment in explaining the barbarism of the Nazis. Ritzer builds on Bauman and describes how the Holocaust is a distinct modern phenomenon in which the basic characteristics of rationalization and McDonaldization were visible and even made it possible. Ritzer admits that this extreme and immensely disturbing form of irrationality of rationalization might seem highly incomparable to the ways of a fast-food restaurant. Nonetheless, Ritzer claims parallels can be made. According to Ritzer, the Nazis searched for the most efficient way of killing people just as a McDonaldized organization searches for the most efficient way to produce. Burgers should be produced in the shortest amount of time, similar to the emphasis Ritzer states the Nazis put on the quantitative aspect of killing the most people. Once the optimal method was found, this method of either producing hamburgers or, in extreme opposition, killing people, was made predictable by standard proceedings. In death camps, Ritzer states that all was controlled and managed by nonhuman technology as for example the administration systems counted every death almost as it was a production output of the amount of hamburgers produced. Although highly unsettling with immensely different goals and outputs, the underlying principles of organization show apparent resemblance. Obviously, in modern society the goals of the Holocaust would not be considered rational. It is also highly debatable if the goals of the Holocaust can be considered rational at times when the tragic happened. Nonetheless, the method of organization was organized according to rational principles.

Another important precursor of McDonaldization, also in a way used in the Holocaust, is scientific management as firstly described by Taylor (1911/2004) and its outcome in the form of the assembly line developed by Ford. Taylor stated the highly inefficient way that most organizations operated. His concept of scientific management emphasized the existence and importance of finding the 'one best way' of doing a task or job. In order to create efficiency, tasks should be standardized, measurable or quantifiable and be controlled. These principles were successfully applied to the automobile industry as Ford introduced the assembly line production method. The concept of the assembly line would be highly influential for all future production processes, also highly visible in the fast-food industry which inspired Ray Kroc, the man responsible for the empire of McDonalds, to shape his fast-food chain. Everything in his business process would be as rational as possible, all up to the amount of seconds to deep-fry

potatoes and the sequence to flip the burgers, following the four dimensions of what Ritzer later described as McDonaldization.

Skipping forward to contemporary society shows that McDonaldization has many advantages, not only for the organization itself but also for society. Its success is based on solid reasons and Ritzer (2015) mentions several positive changes. As a result of McDonaldization, a growing proportion of humanity can afford a wider range of products and services, otherwise unaffordable. Productivity rose due to McDonaldization. These products and services are also increasingly available regardless of space and time and people can often instantly satisfy their needs. By virtue of predictability, products and services have a more uniform quality for all people consuming it. These developments result in a more similar treatment of people, regardless of race, social class, gender etcetera. Perceived fairness is increased by McDonaldization. Everyone can buy a hamburger at McDonalds and a job application is judged on one's capabilities.

Despite these advantages, Ritzer wrote his book also as a critique on McDonaldization. According to Ritzer, paradoxically, the strive for rationality embodied in the four dimensions often brings about its contrary, that is, irrationality. "Rational systems inevitably spawn irrationalities that limit, eventually compromise, and perhaps even undermine their rationality" (Ritzer, 2015, p. 132). Ritzer defines irrationality as the fifth dimension of McDonaldization and calls McDonaldization a "double-edged" phenomenon (2015, p. 17), being both enabling as constraining. Ritzer lists a wide array of examples with a focus on the consumer role that he defines as irrationalities: inefficiency (long check-out lines), high costs (a fee using an ATM), false friendliness (by personnel), disenchantment (loss of magic and mystery), health and environmental hazards (unhealthy food) and homogenization (the same products everywhere) as possible outcomes of McDonaldization.

Moreover and most important for this research, Ritzer's claims that McDonaldization induces dehumanization. This critique, already expressed by Weber, states that rationalization can deny the basic traits of humanity and therefore be irrational. Even in places where all should be about the individual like health care or education, people are increasingly becoming 'just a number' in standardized processes instead of an individual with individual needs and wishes. Focused on a working context, Ritzer claims that 'McJobs' also have many irrational elements. In

itself, nothing is wrong with working at a McDonaldized organization and embracing its dimensions. Most employees would like to work efficiently and simplified and regulated tasks give employees a certain level of stability, easiness and security. However, Ritzer states, when taken too far, McDonaldization brings about irrationalities. If too much emphasis is laid on efficiency, work pressure tends to increase without an in equal increase in salary. Too much emphasis on quantity and time with for example explicit targets put great pressure on workers often resulting in mistakes or even burn-outs. A totally predictable job with fully regulated tasks can be perceived boring and mind-numbing, resulting in a high turnover. Too much control may result in a denial of an employee's basic capabilities and in resentment to the organization. Together, Ritzer states, these irrationalities also lead to a dehumanization of the workforce.

In sum, Ritzer's McDonaldization theory provides an intriguing observation of contemporary society, including the effects of rationalization on employees. However, some comments on the work of Ritzer (2015) are needed. Firstly, it is not often clear whether the four dimensions of McDonaldization are actually as independent as Ritzer describes them. For example one can also conceptualize efficiency as the overarching goal, while calculability is a mere means to that goal. Quantifying processes to optimize the time spent on production seems not a goal in itself, but aimed at increasing efficiency. Calculability can furthermore help discovering the 'one best way' and increase predictability. Also increased control increases predictability. The four dimensions are therefore not independent, but highly interconnected and seem to strengthen one other.

Secondly, in his fifth dimension of rationality, irrationality, Ritzer seems to mix perspectives. Ritzer claims that too much rationality can lead to irrationality, but his conception of irrationality contains both counterproductive rationality defined as irrationality and also irrationality outside the scope of McDonaldization itself. He therefore mixes two perspectives on what irrationality entails. To give an example, too much emphasis on time saving efficiency can indeed result in McDonaldized employees to make mistakes in their work. Too much rationality therefore results in irrationality within the scope of McDonaldization. However, to give another example, the whole aspect of dehumanizing resides outside of the scope of McDonaldization. In light of those four dimensions alone, dehumanization is not a negative outcome at all. In contrast, if employees are to a large extent dehumanized, they can be easily controlled and become more predictable. Ritzer's fifth dimension now blurs the boundaries of what is actually irrational from

a McDonaldization perspective, that is, works counter to its four dimensions and what is irrational from a broader perspective of humanity as a whole, often also including a normative perspective. So the dimension of irrationality can better be regarded as negative outcomes of McDonaldization as defined by Ritzer, than as irrationality resulting from too much rationality. While keeping these points of criticism in mind, I can largely use Ritzer's theory of contemporary rationalization processes.

However, having sketched the process of McDonaldization, the major question still stands if McDonaldization can be seen as a desired development for society and consequently its employees. Although Ritzer mentions positive outcomes of McDonaldization, his book oftentimes has a rather negative and pessimistic undertone criticizing the development, often with an almost normative content. Ritzer states himself that the critique uttered at McDonaldization may often just come from a nostalgic and romanticized perspective, a longing for a time in which the world did not move that fast and was less complex. More substantive criticism can, in line with my comment in the last paragraph, be divided between critique from within McDonaldization and critique on the effects of McDonaldization as a whole. The former is thus critique to the counterproductive forces of its own dimensions and can be settled from within McDonaldization. If this kind of irrationality takes place, the dimensions are simply not implemented optimal enough. The latter form of critique however addresses how McDonaldization changes society and its members. Criticism of this kind seems to mostly focus on the dehumanizing aspect of McDonaldization. As described, McDonaldization is charged with denying basic human aspects, by for example lessening creativity and controlling emotions.

Ritzer's positive outcomes of McDonaldization seem to focus mostly on economic development while his critique thus focuses on dehumanization. It seems clear that McDonaldization indeed facilitates large economic benefits, but can it also, as Ritzer claims, induce dehumanization? Does this criticism still hold in a conceptual analysis of McDonaldization? As stated in the introduction, I will specifically focus on the philosophical anthropological question of identity. In other words, does McDonaldization indeed fail to provide the necessary conditions needed for the vital human need that is adequate recognition? To answer this question, I first need to examine this concept of recognition. In the next chapter, I will describe Honneth's (1995) ideas about recognition and investigate his claim about the importance of recognition for humanity.

3. Recognition

Being recognized is essential for humans, as Charles Taylor states it: “Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need” (1992, p. 26). Recognition is not only important in a normative sense, but also has an important psychological dimension. It is normative in that you recognize others as having positive features and psychological in that it is essential to develop a personal and practical identity (Iser, 2013). Especially the latter dimension is an important dimension in explaining social and political resistance and challenges to the status quo (Iser, 2013). Although certainly an important topic, contemporary social challenges are often not about the distribution of wealth. They are instead identity politics about the lack of recognition of a certain feature of a group, for example a lack of equal rights for women or the LGBT community. Recognition theories are therefore often intertwined with political philosophy addressing subjects such as justice, multicultural societies or social conflicts.

In contemporary philosophy, both Taylor (1992) and Honneth (1995) stand out as leading figures and their work is regarded as the foundation of modern recognition theory. Both authors state the importance of recognition for identity formation and self-realization. Whereas Taylor focused more on the grand narrative of political injustice and misrecognition of whole groups in societies, Honneth’s extensive deliberation provides a more detailed description of the recognition process. Honneth’s focal point is the individual process of recognition and corresponding identity formation. Therefore, as this research contains the focus of the individual employee, Honneth’s theory of recognition is especially helpful.

In ‘The Struggle for Recognition’, Axel Honneth (1995) attempts to develop a new critical social theory with a normative content. Whereas thinkers, for instance Machiavelli and Hobbes, argued in line with an atomistic worldview that social conflicts stem from a struggle for individual survival and self-preservation, for example aimed at economic and material wealth, Honneth claims otherwise. Honneth states that many social conflicts have their origins in the struggle for recognition of the individual as an autonomous and individual person. According to Honneth, recent struggles of social groups are less about the distribution of resources than about the recognitions of differences, in particular the misrecognition of differences. These struggles are therefore grounded in intersubjectivity, rather than purely individualistic experiences. The mediating concept that Honneth uses between recognition and an ethical society is the practical relation-to-self of individuals, one’s self-image. Honneth argues that for an ethical society to

emerge, individuals need an adequate degree of recognition in order to foster a positive self-image.

An essential part of Honneth's philosophical endeavor, which is particularly relevant for this study, is his conception of recognition. Like Taylor (1992), Honneth describes recognition as a universal and fundamental human need, essential for an individual's sense and development of personal identity. Honneth states that only in the intersubjective realm where the individual can see him or herself through the eyes of the other, that is, in mutual recognition, the individual can come to know his or herself and develop and realize an identity. To arrive at this claim, Honneth first builds on the early works of Hegel's political philosophy. The original goal of these early works was to establish a philosophical structure of how ethical communities were organized and developed over time as resulting from different phases of the struggle of recognition, ordered in a particular sequence. Hegel sees the development of an ethical community not in a Hobbesian or Machiavellian way of individual survival, but in this intersubjective process of mutual recognition.

Honneth then describes what Hegel understood as recognition. For Hegel, mutual recognition is necessary for the development of the practical self. Identity formation is a process of interaction. Only when individuals are confirmed by others as independent, they can understand themselves as autonomous and individuals. Honneth extracts three primary forms of recognition from Hegel's work that all have a different relation to the development of the practical self. The first describes interpersonal love, found in affective relationships of the family that recognizes persons as individuals of need. The second form is a formal relationship in the context of a modern society. A person in this system of formal rights is recognized as an abstract legal individual. The third and most emotionally advanced form of recognition encompasses a recognition for the individual subject as found in particularity, brought about by a relationship of recognition in a state of solidarity. These forms of recognition have become the foundation of Honneth's recognition model.

While Honneth draws from the speculative theory of recognition as developed by Hegel, Honneth states that this framework is built on outdated metaphysical premises as presupposed in German Idealism. For Honneth, these premises are not compatible with contemporary sciences. Therefore, to revive Hegel's ideas, Honneth states that he must find an empirical basis that supports this three-way distinction of recognition. Honneth claims that he can ground his theory

in the empirical work of social psychologist George Herbert Mead (1934). Mead's work shows the mental development of humans in relation to recognition. Honneth therefore claims that this work allows for the necessary naturalistic transformation to relate the three patterns of recognition to corresponding stages of practical relations-to-self, that is, identity formation.

Mead argues that intersubjective mutual recognition is the basis of human identity. For Mead, recognition has three successive forms that are comparable to Hegel's forms that I have described earlier. I will therefore not excessively discuss Mead's work. However, it can be helpful to explain why Mead regards recognition as the center of identity formation. To explain the importance of adequate recognition in identity formation, Mead distinguishes between the concepts of 'I' and 'me'. Important here is that 'me' is related to the object-position of an individual. According to Mead, the object-position is the only position in which individuals can become conscious of themselves, in interacting with others a person's self becomes known. The 'me' can therefore only become known through the other, that is, in the perception of the other as a reflection of past actions and reactions. Therefore, Mead claims that interaction is vital to know 'me', that is, oneself. This interaction encompasses a constant struggle for recognition that has its origin in the 'I' of a self. Mead's concept of the 'I' of a person is "the unregimented source of all my current actions" (Honneth, 1995, p. 74). It represents the core of an individual, responsible for creative responses and involuntary reactions to social challenges. This 'I' however, according to Mead, can't be known *an sich* and precedes consciousness. It is in that sense uncontrollable. Mead describes how the 'me' and 'I' constantly interact. The 'I' has unceasing urges looking for expression and individuation, but 'me' is necessary for adhering to social norms and societal expectations, that being the 'generalized other'. A friction exists between the two where the I-demands try to be satisfied and recognized by this generalized other. The self or person is the result of this friction and interaction with others is the only way for this friction to occur. Therefore, according to Mead, the concept of recognition is vital for developing one's identity. One can only develop a practical relation-to-self if the individual can view itself from the interaction partner's normative perspective. The claim that both Hegel and Mead then make is that in this imperative of mutual recognition, social life is reproduced which allows societies to develop morally.

From this basis laid by Hegel and Mead, Honneth (1995) departs to develop his own model of recognition. The key elements of this model as summarized by Honneth are shown in Table 1. Honneth distinguishes three primary forms of recognition that are essential for the development of one's practical relation-to-self as being autonomous and individual: primary relationships of love and friendship, legal relations embodied in rights and communities of values based on mutual solidarity. Recognition exists only intersubjectively, as one gains recognition by those who one also recognizes. These three forms of recognition are structured hierarchally; one form must be adequately fulfilled before the next stage can emerge. According to Honneth, an adequate level of recognition is a necessary condition for self-realization and self-identification as an autonomous individual:

“For it is only due to the cumulative acquisition of basic self-confidence, of self-respect, and of self-esteem... that a person can come to see himself or herself, unconditionally, as both an autonomous and an individuated being and to identify with his or her goals and desires” (1995, p. 169).

Honneth accordingly argues that an adequate degree of recognition is necessary for the development of ethical communities.

Mode of recognition	emotional support	cognitive respect	social esteem
Dimension of personality	needs and emotions	moral responsibility	traits and abilities
Forms of recognition	primary relationships (love, friendship)	legal relations (rights)	community of value (solidarity)
Developmental potential	-	generalization, de-formalization	individualization, equalization
Practical relation-to-self	basic self-confidence	self-respect	self-esteem
Forms of disrespect	abuse and rape	denial of rights, exclusion	denigration, insult
Threatened component of personality	physical integrity	social integrity	'honour', dignity

Table 1: The structure of relations of recognition (Honneth, 1995, p. 129)

The first form of reciprocal recognition, love⁵, is responsible for building one's basic self-confidence. In love, individuals mutually confirm and thereby recognize one another as an individual human being with needs and desires. Hegel referred to this process as 'being oneself in another'. To strengthen this claim, Honneth draws on the object-relations theory of psychoanalytic researchers Donald Winnicott and Jessica Benjamin. Following Winnicott and Benjamin, Honneth states that the development of this first phase starts in the earliest stages of human life. The relation between a child and its primacy caretaker, the 'mother'⁶, is already a struggle for recognition between ego and boundary dissolution. As a child learns to distinguish between what is ego and what is an external object, the baby slowly discovers that he or she is

⁵ Love is expressed by Honneth not only in the narrow romantic conception, but in a strong emotional bond between people for example found in father-son relationships.

⁶ This need not be the biological mother.

not omnipotent. It must encounter its first experience of intersubjectivity. The child then learns to balance between symbiosis and self-assertion. On the one hand the child is dependent on another individual and on the other hand he or she is an independent human being. Honneth therefore states that a person's need for symbiotic relationships can only be fulfilled if it is independently recognized. While birth brings a state of absolute dependence, both child and 'mother' need to decouple and gain or regain their independence by releasing one another from this dependency. At the same time, they need to assure each other of love, care and emotional support. They should be able to trust each other, without fear of abandonment.

Honneth argues that this described process in which independence is regained embodies a struggle for recognition. The child shows aggressive behavior to discover what is self and what is not while it simultaneously claims its place in the world. The 'mother' becomes a separate entity in the perception of the child and that child realizes his or her dependence on the love of another person, a person who has claims of his or her own. The 'mother' realizes by these 'attacks' that the child has wishes of its own and therefore slowly starts to leave the child to itself. Both start to recognize the other as an independent subject. The child learns to trust the other for care and protection and subsequently learns to be alone. A child's focus goes to what Mead (1934) called 'I' and a basic trust in him or herself is developed as a result of this recognition received as an independent being. The child feels recognized as the object of another person's concern. Honneth argues that if this first struggle of recognition is successful, the basis is laid for future social relations of trust with others in the life of the child. This phase is crucial in developing a child's faculty to form attachments as this relationship of love becomes the blueprint of future relationships. It is vital for participation in future public life. Basic self-confidence gained through the earliest recognition serves as the first practical relation-to-self. It precedes all other forms of recognition. As Honneth concludes it: 'Love relationships represent a symbiosis refracted by recognition' (1995, p. 106).

The next and second phase of mutual recognition as described by Honneth is grounded in legal relations embodied in rights. Honneth claims that being accepted as having legal rights establishes a person's self-respect as practical relation-to-self. In contrast to mutual recognition in the form of love, mutual recognition in the form of rights is not established personally exclusively in the small area of primary relationships, but is established universally, beyond this small scope, for example in the form of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This form of

mutual recognition is stipulated in a legal form as law. Law makes it possible to go beyond this personal sphere and generalize recognition for the other as being worthy of basic rights and dignity.

With recognition in the form of law, Honneth targets those rights that are, in a certain community of norms with corresponding rights and duties, entitled to every human being. Rights are therefore not personal, but impersonal signs of social respect stimulating equality. Accordingly, respect is labeled by Honneth as cognitive respect, in which cognition is the counterpart of emotional support as defined in the first form of recognition. To grant others a certain degree of rights, is to cognitively recognize the other as being entitled to those rights. No emotional or highly personal bond is required. Mead's concept of 'the generalized other' here explains what normative and legal obligations one has vis-à-vis the other. It is only in this perspective Honneth argues, that own rights become clear and therefore one can perceive him or herself as being a legal person. Recognizing others can thus be regarded as following the law. This reads almost like a Kantian maxim, in which one must recognize others as bearer of rights in order to be regarded as one.

Honneth's concept of the recognition of rights is also a moral concept. Being recognized as a legal person means to be recognized as having autonomy and moral responsibility. One is seen as being able to morally and rationally deliberate, to make autonomous moral judgments based on reason and to partake in a communal development of norms and law. One's own autonomy is respected. Legal recognition is thus not only limited to legal protection of one's personal sphere of liberty, but further grants the right to partake in what Honneth, as borrowed from Habermas, calls "the public process of will-formation" (1995, p. 117): what does it mean to be a morally responsible person and who should be recognized as such? A legalization of rights is therefore also necessary as it grants individuals the public means of defending their own rights, appealing to a public authority while also granting the right of participating in the public-process of will-formation. Only if the possibility of participation and rational agreement with the law exists, an individual can be expected to obey this law. Legal relations should therefore not only protect these rights of individuals, but also enable them to participate. For this state and public-process to function properly, Honneth states that individuals need an extensive level of liberty and political rights to co-decide the legal relations while also having social rights with regard to basic welfare.

Honneth argues that as others recognize someone as a legal person deserving of rights, that person develops a basic form of self-respect. This person is held to be capable of moral and rational deliberation and responsibility. The person will feel as if his autonomously chosen actions are respected by others in the public domain due to legal recognition. In this public domain, he or she can show his or her capability in being morally responsible and able to participate in this will-formation. Self-respect makes individuals comprehend that they are entitled to the same rights and treatment as others. Honneth therefore concludes that what love does to self-confidence, rights do to self-respect.

Honneth, however, states that, in contrast to love relationships, rights are contingent on the historical development of a community. What the certain norms and rights are that a person is entitled to, is contingent on this discursive public will-formation. The conceptual step to a struggle of recognition is therefore not hard to make. In this will-formation, the less recognized will continuously strive and struggle for equal recognition and cognitive respect for all, for example as seen in the struggle for equal right for LGBT people. According to Honneth, historically, equality in modern law is increasing both in broader and in extending ways. It becomes broader in the sense of content and new claims that are recognized. It becomes extending in the sense of an increasing number of people being included. Recognition in the form of legal rights therefore has the developmental potential of generalization, stressing the universality of rights. According to Honneth, previously disadvantaged groups are slowly granted the same rights as others. Honneth thus sees the development of legal relations as a lengthy process of equalization and generalization, due to social struggles by groups which fight for equal recognition. This induces an increased autonomy of the free individual and lessens interference in one's personal sphere of liberty as a broader and more diverse community is rewarded these legal rights. Legal relations as Honneth understands it promote equality and inclusion among its beneficiaries. Therefore, not just any constitutional state and corresponding content of those legal relations will suffice for Honneth's framework of recognition.

The third and last form of recognition in Honneth's model is that of a community of value embodied in a system of solidarity. In contrast to mutual recognition in the form of legal relations expressed in the universality of certain rights shared by all, solidarity is aimed at the individual's particular traits and abilities. What makes a person unique and significant? Honneth argues that being recognized and valued for one's distinct characteristics establishes their self-

esteem and positive relation-to-self. Recognition of this kind allows an individual to positively relate to their particularity consisting of their specific traits and abilities, consequently creating the feeling of being an irreplaceable individual. This allows for a unique self-realization. Honneth considers an existence of an intersubjective and shared value-horizon as a prerequisite for this development of self-esteem. The value-horizon or community of value, driven by dominant cultural values, determines which values and achievements are significant to society and the life quality of others. It serves as a system of reference to judge individual's worthy of appraisal. Those values that contribute the most are awarded the most social-esteem.

Like legal relations, these societal goals by which individuals' contributions are judged are contingent on historical and communal developments. Honneth in particular describes the transformation of traditional to modern societies in the form of individualization and equalization. Whereas social esteem in traditional societies was contributed to one's status-group, in modern and individualized societies esteem is rewarded directly to an individual for being that particular individual. In modern societies, the development of equalization makes social-esteem less fixed in a predetermined social hierarchy, but leaves room for a pluralistic framework of evaluation. These developments as described by Honneth are firstly responsible for the division of self-respect and self-esteem which in traditional societies could be merged as social honor. Secondly, it therefore allows for individuals to be recognized as unique and feel individually responsible for contributing to an overarching societal goal, instead of attributing their esteem solely to their social group.

As Honneth understands it, self-esteem is established in the recognition one receives for particular positive and valuable abilities contributing to the realization of societal goals. Person A gets recognized for being an excellent construction worker while person B establishes its self-esteem by being recognized as a hilarious comedian. Mead thought an adequate level of self-esteem would be realized democratically, that is, available to all, in a system of 'cooperative division of labor' with objectively pre-established labor functions. According to Mead, in a modern individualized society, what makes an individual unique is what he or she does better than others. With a division of labor as seen in contemporary societies, Mead argues that one can develop a self-consciousness about its particularity and feel superior to others by practicing its best functional role. Honneth describes that in installing the realization of self-esteem in the division of labor, Mead hoped to uncouple self-esteem from contingent value-premises of a

community. A functional division of labor would be more objective than the dependence on 'the generalized other' defining what way of life is supposed to be granted social-esteem. Less dependence of the individual on the influence of collective values would mean more autonomous choice of the individual. In this system, Mead thought that each individual would be able to receive social-esteem and that therefore, mutual recognition would exist.

Honneth, however, critiques this view of Mead. Honneth states that what Mead did not realize is that the division of labor itself is also contingent on the ethical goals of the community and thus 'the generalized other'. It is therefore not the value-neutral system in which individuals can come to know their particular contribution as Mead stated. Honneth furthermore states that Mead failed to see that not all jobs are valued enough by the community for individuals to sense this feeling of superiority needed for self-esteem. If all individuals of a community should get the opportunity to acquire social-esteem for their particular choice of living, more than merely a division of labor is required.

Honneth argues that in contemporary society, in contrast to a traditional society, esteem is less awarded up front to a full group and every member of that group like for example the family you were born into. Social-esteem is increasingly rewarded to particular individuals in a social group for their individual achievement. In this contemporary society where achievements are individualized, not giving all individuals the chance to acquire social-esteem induces the risk of social disintegration of the community. This risk is particularly important with regard to receiving social-esteem, because exactly in this community, the value-horizon is determined. In general, an individualized society is already problematic as it gives social-esteem to individual achievements, while this social esteem is determined by the collective value-horizon. Nonetheless, this collective value-horizon can also provide the opposite, that is, social integration. A tension thus exists between individual achievement and social integration of the community. As described earlier, one can only come to understand one's own contribution intersubjectively through the 'generalized other'. The difficulty then, as Honneth states, is that individuals should be autonomous in their self-realization while simultaneously establishing a common good of the 'generalized other', that is, the community.

Honneth therefore places the acquisition of self-esteem not only in a division of labor, but defines it broader, placing it in the contribution of the individual to the common good determined by the value-horizon of a community. This opens up the opportunity for a social and cultural

struggle on what is a valued contribution to the common good, making the conditions of what should earn self-esteem an area of contestation. In this struggle, previously denigrated individuals can strive for a new evaluation of their values and way of life. The struggle of recognition therefore manifests itself in contesting the value added by certain attributions to the greater good. What are the criteria for something to be valued? Honneth states that this struggle is often fought together with a similar group, in which they attempt with symbolic force and their claim of adding to the overarching goal to get recognized for their abilities, achievements and way of life.

However, for a democratic system of self-esteem, Honneth states that the value-community must allow for an open and pluralistic framework of esteem-granting recognition. To accomplish this, Honneth argues, a system of solidarity must exist within a community in which all individuals can acquire social-esteem. This system of solidarity is established by the shared value-horizon based on mutual interests. These interests are in line with individual interests which creates a communitarian system of individual uniqueness. As Honneth understands it, only if individuals share with each other the value of attributing the other as having qualities that significantly contribute to one's own life, individuals can mutually recognize one another as particular individuals worthy of social-esteem. These relations of solidarity can only exist within a community that allows for all individuals to strive for recognition in the form of social-esteem and thereby full self-realization, while also recognizing others for their contribution. A system of solidarity can thus also realize social-integration. Honneth admits that even in this system of solidarity, mutual recognition cannot be completely symmetrical. Not everyone can receive social-esteem to the same degree because it depends on one's achievements. However, what is important is that in this system of solidarity, each individual is at least recognized as a potential achiever and contributor. The interests of individuals therefore should match the common values of the community: no individual should be denied the opportunity to acquire social-esteem. As Honneth concludes: "to the extent to which every member of a society is in a position to esteem himself or herself, one can speak of a stake of societal solidarity" (1995, p. 129).

This means that no individual should be excluded on arbitrary reasons. Every subject should be free of collective denigration as all have the chance of making themselves feel recognized. As achievement and consequently recognition is individualized, nobody should be excluded from the possibility of receiving recognition just because he or she is a member of a

certain group. Similarly, nobody should receive recognition just for being a member of a certain group. Therefore, as Honneth states, in modern and ethical societies, competition for social-esteem can exist without excessive pain, not necessarily connected to massive disrespect by means of excluding individuals and groups beforehand. Due to the system of mutual solidarity, one can strive for an increase in self-esteem while not necessarily denigrating. For this lack of collective denigration, the system of solidarity is important to realize the ethical society that Honneth envisions. Honneth's concept of self-esteem therefore can be seen as negative: individuals should be free from being denigrated based on their characteristics and life-style. All should have the opportunity to be valued for their particularities.

According to Honneth, positive identity-formation as an autonomous individual with needs and desires is dependent on the three mentioned forms of mutual recognition. Honneth views a denial of one of these forms of recognition to a person as an immoral event. A denial of recognition triggers feelings such as 'pain', 'insult' or 'humiliation' and can be a direct attack on one's identity. The three forms of recognition as described by Honneth all have their corresponding form of absence of that recognition, that is, misrecognition. This is what Honneth defines as disrespect. Disrespect is thus not merely the negative counterpart of self-respect, but for all three forms of recognition.

As Honneth understands it, disrespect hinders the development of the particular practical relation-to-self. The first form of disrespect is related to self-confidence and incorporates the most fundamental relation-to-self. This form of disrespect is at first physical of nature meaning physical abuse, in its most extreme forms seen in rape and torture. It deprives the person from bodily autonomy. This physical pain expands to psychological pain and influences one's capacity to relate to others. It undermines basic development of trust and basic self-confidence. The second form of disrespect denies a person's rights and excludes that person from being recognized as being capable of moral deliberation and responsibility. It excludes someone from participating in the public process of will-formation. A person is not seen as an equal interaction partner which affects his or her development of self-respect. The last form of disrespect robs a subject of developing self-esteem, it hinders feeling important and unique in a system of shared values. People being insulted or denigrated for who they are lose their capacity to positively value their own significance in their community. Honneth claims that these three forms of disrespect form a breeding ground for social struggle and thereby motivate social conflicts.

The main focus of this research however remains in Honneth's (1995) conception of recognition, its effect on individuals and the general human need of due recognition. I will largely follow Honneth in this conceptualization. Nonetheless, some critical remarks on Honneth's ideas are necessary. Firstly, Honneth stresses the historical contingency of legal relations determining who and what is deemed worthy of rights. Honneth particularly stated that those who are the recipients of rights will be both broader and extended, stating the universality of rights in the long run. This sounds almost like a Hegelian notion of a predetermined historical path, meaning in Honneth's case that it would lead only to an ever more including system of legal relations. Two nuances can be made to this idea of Honneth. First, it is not sure if this historical path that should lead to ever more inclusion is actually heading the desired way. It is hard to determine how those legal relations will develop in the near future, even to determine if this process will continue to be ever more including, instead of returning to a more excluding system. Contemporary society gives plenty examples of systems of legal relations that seem to be on the path of excluding, for example the systems in Russia or Turkey. This could however be dismissed as being merely small bends in the road, but a view that is more careful and paints a less positive picture would be more likely. Second, a more postmodern critique of the absolute truth of these values and end goal of society can be made. As the recipients of rights are determined by the *zeitgeist*, the goals itself can also be determined by current events and streams of thought. It is at least hard to determine if the goal of an ever more including society and system of legal relations is absolute and universal.

My second comment on Honneth's work concerns the implied homogeneity of value-horizons. It seems that Honneth's theory implicitly states that an individual has only one community of norms and only one system of value. I however think it is highly plausible that an individual is a member of a multitude of communities and systems. An individual's community of norms can be for example both universal as also particular for his nation or state. These both have different legal relations. Furthermore, an individual can be a part of multiple groups, therefore having multiple value-systems earning social-esteem from different sources. I will follow up on this remark in the next chapters.

Thirdly, although Honneth claims that he finds his empirical basis in the work of Mead, it is not clear how this exactly plays out. What part of Mead's work is indeed naturalistic and what is actually as speculative and normative as Hegel's work? The dividing line between both seems

rather vague. Is Mead's work actually as empirical and naturalistic as Honneth claims it to be? Furthermore, Hegel's work may indeed as Honneth claimed be built on outdated metaphysical premises, but Mead's work also preceded Honneth's theory by 60 years. New empirical work, for example in neuroscience, could have potentially produced new findings on the phenomena of identity formation. Most importantly however, is a more fundamental critique concerning the question if the essence of 'what is human' and corresponding philosophical anthropological questions of identity formation with regard to recognition actually can be captured in empirical research. In other words, does Honneth really need an empirical basis for his normative theory and can this actually be found, or can this theory stay the theoretical framework it started out as? Perhaps Honneth opens a door for potential concern and critique that need not be opened. A discussion on this topic would however go far beyond the scope of my research. A rather intimated and normative theoretical framework would suit the purpose of this research too. I will therefore take Honneth's model of recognition in this regard which gives an excellent explanation on the importance of due recognition.

My description and discussion of Honneth's work remains mainly on an abstract level. However, before I can answer my research question on the effect of rationalization on the possibility of employee recognition, Honneth's recognition model needs to be normatively translated to a work context and therefore studied from the perspective of labor. That will be my goal for the next chapter.

4. Employee Recognition

Due recognition, as I have argued in the previous chapter based on Honneth (1995), is a vital human need. As most human adults still spend most of their active life engaging in the activity labor, the workplace determines for a large part if this vital human need is satisfied. This raises the question how recognition plays out from the perspective of labor. In this chapter I will make this needed normative translation of Honneth's general concept of recognition to the setting of employees. What are the minimal formal conditions that should be present in an organization for employees to receive adequate recognition as argued for by Honneth? What could be possible material interpretations for these formal conditions? In addition, what are the normative implications of these conditions?

First of all, what is labor? Labor, frequently used interchangeably with work, is attributed many different meanings and evaluations that have changed historically. My purpose in this chapter is to discover the minimal formal and material conditions that an employee needs in order to receive adequate recognition in his or her workplace, thereby contributing to the development of a proper identity. My purpose therefore is not to address all these different possible meanings and evaluations that are attributed to labor and employment. Nonetheless, some clarifications are necessary. When discussing labor, I will refer to modern professional work from an employee's perspective in relation to an employer. This I will call gainful employment, defined as: "the achievement or the exercise of activities for remuneration on the basis of a contract between the offerer and buyer of these activities or achievements" (Rössler, 2007, p. 138). As Rössler describes, typically, modern gainful employment is market-contingent and organized in organizations while working for others. It thereby separates gainful employment from for example domestic work in a private sphere. Rössler identifies three major traditions in discussing the meaning of gainful employment. First of all, the Lockean tradition defines labor in economic terms. The remuneration of labor is vital for self-preservation. Secondly, the meaning of labor can be viewed in from a Marxian perspective as work induces self-realization, thus stressing the importance of self-determination of employees. The third tradition that Rössler describes is the Hegelian tradition, identifying work as a pathway to receive social recognition. In a system of social needs, workers can gain recognition by contributing with socially relevant achievements. The Hegelian tradition stands closest to Honneth's theory of recognition and highlights the relation of work and recognition. This

Hegelian theory stresses the important role that gainful employment can play in establishing one's identity as an autonomous individual. Therefore, this Hegelian meaning of gainful employment will be the conceptualization of work that this research focuses on.

Having briefly clarified the meaning of gainful employment leaves the important question of what the minimal formal conditions are for these gainful employees to receive adequate recognition. In other words, how can the recognition theory of Honneth be normatively translated to this setting of gainful employment? Of the three recognition stages, that is, basic self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, basic self-confidence seems, by definition, to be unable of direct translation to a workplace setting. Honneth describes this stage as focusing on primary relationships in an intimate sphere like romantic love, parents or friendship. Although friendships and other love relations can certainly be formed while working, its main manifestation will be outside of the work sphere. This leaves the other stages of self-respect and self-esteem.

I will start off with researching and describing the formal conditions needed for self-respect. What conditions need to be present for employees to receive recognition as cognitive respect and thereby build self-respect? Following Honneth's (1995) theory as described in the last chapter, this is best realized in the recognition form of legal relations and rights in a community of norms. What is needed for employees to receive adequate recognition is a constitutional state, reassuring their rights as workers. In this constitutional state, rights of workers need to be both acknowledged and enforced while also allowing for participating in the public will-formation concerning the content of these laws. For an employee, engaging in gainful employment in a constitutional state that acknowledges and enforces its legal rights means being recognized as an equal being and worthy of these rights. The employee is recognized and accepted as a full member of a collective and community of norms, recognized as capable of partaking in the public process of will-formation and thus influencing the norms and legal relations of the community itself. Honneth states that only if the individual is recognized as being worthy to participate, he or she can be expected to follow the legal system. Therefore, an individual also needs to be able to defend his or her claims, especially when disrespected, for example by means of a higher authority.

As an employee feels recognized, he or she feels recognized as if his or her autonomously chosen career path is respected by society and he or she believes to be capable of this responsibility. In an ideal constitutional state, an employee is recognized as being an equal and autonomous being, capable of own life and career choices and being granted to make these choices individually. If, for example, a female employee is refused a promotion because of her gender or an individual is forced by law into his or her particular profession, due recognition is denied. Disrespecting basic rights in the form of denial would entail to not accept the employee as a member of the collective and not recognizing him or her as an individual capable of partaking in the public process of will-formation. This renders him or her unable to consider himself or herself an equal partner of interaction, defying his or her social integrity and almost deny its basic human nature, thereby blocking the development of proper self-respect.

So how does this abstract theory of employee recognition play out in practice? What could be possible material interpretations that follow from this conceptualization and which materializations are already in play in contemporary society? The prerequisite of a constitutional state ensuring worker's rights does not sound utopian or farfetched, especially in most Western countries, workers have access to an extensive system of laws and regulations. In fact, most countries worldwide have at least some legal relations concerning employees and employment. The broadest community and perhaps the very minimal standard of norms is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷. Originally established in 1948 and extended by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁸ in 1966, the following passages cover the basic human rights with regard to employment:

Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

- (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*
- (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*
- (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.*

⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

⁸ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular:

- (a) Remuneration which provides all workers, as a minimum, with:*
- (i) Fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, in particular women being guaranteed conditions of work not inferior to those enjoyed by men, with equal pay for equal work;*
 - (ii) A decent living for themselves and their families in accordance with the provisions of the present Covenant;*
- (b) Safe and healthy working conditions;*
- (c) Equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence;*
- (d) Rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, as well as remuneration for public holidays*

The rights as expressed in the Declaration have important consequences for employees. Although they leave room for interpretation, these rights are currently endorsed and ratified by most countries and incorporated in their legal systems. These rights are implemented in the legal relations of the constitutional state. Therefore, a certain minimal level of legal relations concerning employees is present in contemporary society. This law protects employees from outside interference with their personal sphere while also making sure that whatever job they choose, they will get sufficient remuneration, safe working conditions and reasonable rest. Furthermore, employees are being able to participate in the will-formation by for example joining a trade union.

The historical development of the Declaration clearly demonstrates Honneth's argument as explained in the last chapter that stresses the historical contingency of the beneficiaries of these legal rights. Article 2 of the Declaration states that the basic rights are supposed to apply to any human being, that is, without any distinction to for example race, color, gender, religion or

political opinion. Although the rights, including this Article 2, were already established in 1948, historical developments of social struggles like the African-American Civil Rights Movement or the contemporary LGBT social movements demonstrate that the beneficiaries of rights are determined by the development of a community. The Declaration can be seen as an example of a lengthy process of worldwide equalization as described by Honneth. It has a significant impact on employees as they are increasingly being fully and equally recognized as individuals with certain basic employment rights. As a consequence, an important condition for the development of self-respect is already met resulting from the Declaration.

The rights of the Declaration are a material interpretation on a universal level and make clear what contemporary society deems valuable in relations to employee's rights. Conceptually however, as each employee works in an organizational setting, the formal conditions needed for adequate self-respect also need to be translated to a general and conceptual organizational setting. Following Honneth's theory in this regard gives the important conceptual and normative implication that an organization should have their own community of rights and system of legal relations. It thereby reassures employee rights and establishes a feeling of equality and worthiness of these rights among their employees. Furthermore, an important conceptual and normative consequence is that employees should also be enabled to engage with the content discussion of these rights. They should be enabled to partake in the public process of will-formation of their own organization. This process can be seen as similar to a larger constitutional state. The translation made however brings two important nuances to light that I would like to address here as additions to Honneth's theory. These have important conceptual consequences as will become clear. If these nuances are made, I can describe a more detailed picture of the formal conditions that are necessary on an organizational level in order for an employee to receive adequate recognition in the form of self-respect.

First, following up on my comment in the last chapter, I would like to add to Honneth's theory that being respected and its contrary of disrespect can have more origins than just one universal system. By engaging in an employee contract, employees enter the system of legal relations of the organization. This is a different system of legal relations than the overarching one as seen in a constitutional state. Besides being part the overarching system of a state, employees are therefore also part of a closer community of norms. These communities are accompanied with certain rights and legal relations that are not universal, but have their own system of legal

relations and therefore mutual recognition. Employees are consequently part of multiple systems of norms and legal relations. Subgroups exist within the larger framework in the form of organizations and the specific content of the legal relations of subgroups matter. It is therefore important to look at different contents of different legal relations and their comparative meaning within and between different subgroups or communities.

In taking the perspective of ‘the generalized other’ of the community as Honneth explains, humans come to understand, next to other's rights, their own rights. If recognition of legal rights is about facilitating a feeling of equality and worthiness of those rights, comparison will be sought closer to home within one's own community. As employees are part of these different communities of norms, they compare themselves not only with other humans in general, but even more with closer communities like their own organization. For example a salesman in company A will compare himself primarily to a colleague in the same company. The underlying idea is that employees look for equal recognition of rights in the communities they are part of, communities that all have their own legal relations and norms. Employees want to be recognized in being a part of this community and being able to partake in the public process of will-formation determining the ruling legal relations. This also has a consequence for receiving disrespect. Disrespect, being the denial of these rights and thus the denial of belonging to the particular social collective and thereby blocking the development of self-respect, can therefore have multiple origins. The organization still functions within the boundaries of one or even multiple constitutional states. It has to adhere to those overarching legal compliances. However, beyond this broad setting, it is important to have employee rights embodied in an internal system of law specific for the organization.

Another addition I would like to make to Honneth's theory is to highlight the limited facilitating role that legal relations can play in relation to work. As described, the existence of a functional constitutional state establishing autonomy is an important formal condition in assisting the development of self-respect. Notwithstanding, this form of facilitating rights is inherently limited. There is a potentially problematic side to an extensively legalized society when relating it to labor. In any complex system of law with corresponding rights that facilitates autonomy, some effects will contradict and clash. If people are free from far-reaching interference from government, as should be the case in a constitutional state that facilitates autonomy, people are also free to renounce particular rights. From an employee perspective,

certain rights can be seen as being temporarily ‘traded’ for other benefits. For example, an employee trades a part of his right to self-determination when engaging in a contract with an employer. This employer determines, to a greater or lesser extent, what activities the employee should engage in and how he or she has to spend his or her labor time that is sold to the employer. In other words, the right to self-determination is used to renounce complete self-determination. Practically this becomes clear in contemporary society with its diminishing boundaries between work and private life, it is not even clear which part of one’s day is considered sold labor and which is personal time.

Conceptually, rights of employees can thus also be seen as personal property that can be renounced and sold accordingly. In this constitutional state focused on autonomy, emphasis is put on detailed contracts as a material interpretation of legal relations. With regard to autonomy, emphasis is put on self-determination to engage in these contracts. The contracts themselves are protected by the same law as other rights. As emphasis is put on self-determination, contracts are often prioritized as they are the result of autonomous decision. The danger in such a constitutional state is that employees, conscious or perhaps more unconscious, engage in contracts that will diminish some of their rights that could be fundamental. Paradoxically, they can get themselves excluded from certain rights. Questionable then is what this does to an individual’s recognition. Do required rights still exist for each individual if rights can be traded in favor of for example remuneration found in gainful employment? A legalized society can therefore also work against receiving recognition and the development of self-respect. This brings certain tensions in which in practice a proper balance in law is needed between protecting fundamental rights on the one hand and emphasis on decent and reliable contracts on the other. An important conceptual conclusion therefore is that in order to assure adequate recognition, some rights should be fundamental and protected by law, regardless of the pressures put on it by external forces like the market to renounce them. Some rights should be non-negotiable. Practically, most constitutional states already protect their workers to at least some degree. Often constitutional states have specific laws, for example against employee exploitation, that deal with these issues and protect employees. Assuring a proper balance in practice however is challenging. Especially within the legal relations of an organization, finding a proper balance between the interest of the organization and the interest of the employee in terms of rights is a

very delicate and difficult endeavor. This puts more weight on the importance of the possibility to defend one's rights in a system of legal relations.

With these two additions made, the formal conditions and their normative consequences of translating Honneth's theory to an employee setting with regard to self-respect have become clear. Next to these formal conditions, several material interpretations can be made accordingly. The Declaration of Human Rights offers an important basis as a system of legal relations to facilitate cognitive respect and to grant non-negotiable rights. With regard to an internal system of legal relations, common examples could be the instalment of a specific system of rules and regulations or a code of conduct, both in relation to a possibility to defend one's rights. With regard to participation, organizations can for example install a representative body for employees. Practically however, this suggestion is less common in an organization than in a full state, as almost all organizations are structured more or less hierarchical. Notwithstanding, both suggestions made that stimulate recognition for employees are common in contemporary human resource literature, for example by employee involvement (e.g. Brun & Dugas, 2008). This would suggest that also an empirical base can be found stressing the importance of recognition.

To conclude, several formal conditions for employees in order to gain adequate recognition in the form of cognitive respect should be fulfilled. In the focal community a system of legal relations that is both acknowledged and enforced should be present to establish and reassure employee's rights. These legal relations should encourage equality and autonomy while also some rights should be seen as non-negotiable. This means that employees should be able to participate in the public process of will-formation and be able to publicly defend their rights, both specific as within an organization and generally in a larger constitutional state.

Having translated self-respect into an employee setting leaves the last phase of recognition in the form of self-esteem. In contrast to building self-respect, self-esteem as Honneth (1995) describes it is all about the specific individual or, in this context, the employee. An employee receives social-esteem not because he or she is the same as every other employee, but precisely because he or she is different and has specific special features worthy of appraisal, making it unable to be captured in legal relations. Employees feel valuable by being recognized for their achievements that they do not share with others, but characterize them as unique individuals with unique achievements. Important to keep in mind is that, at least in my reading of Honneth, humans do

not get social-esteem up front just for being human and having specific qualities. Humans only get awarded social-esteem if these specific qualities are actually deemed worthy of appraisal by a community's value-system as described in the previous chapter. Social-esteem is earned functionally through contributing to the common goal of a community. This contribution can be direct or indirect, broad or small, but to earn social-esteem, one has to contribute with personal characteristics and achievements that are valued by 'the generalized other', the community. An important factor to mention is that this should not only be just a contribution to the community, but also a contribution that expresses an individual's values and characteristics. A condition for being considered as unique is that the achievement is an expression of an individual itself and therefore allows for his or her unique self-realization. While cognitive respect in legal relations should apply to every human just for being human, social-esteem focuses on the added value of unique and personal characteristics and achievement.

So which conceptual conditions should be present for employees to receive recognition in the form of social-esteem and thereby build self-esteem? According to Honneth, building self-esteem is best realized in a system of solidarity in which each employee is able contribute to a community of value with their characteristics and individuality. For an employee, the direct community of value would be the organization itself. Especially in the community of an organizational setting, the common goal and value-horizon is often clear. The value-horizon of the organization determines which work and corresponding skills are valued and worthy of recognizing individual employees with esteem for their achievements and values. Honneth's theory seems to become rather descriptive with regard to social-esteem, arguing that those who contribute the most to this value-system, are awarded the most social-esteem. This in turn establishes the employee's self-esteem. Considering that work often offers individuals the possibility for achievement, it provides extensive opportunities to earn social-esteem. This makes the activity of work an excellent application for the recognition theory of Honneth. This corresponds neatly with Rössler's (2007) third function of labor, designating gainful employment as a method to receive social recognition. On a side-note, practically receiving social-esteem in a work setting does not necessarily need to be limited to financial rewards. Although material rewards can certainly be an expression of social-esteem, oftentimes social-esteem takes the form of immaterial appreciation.

Although social-esteem is thus awarded based on individual contribution, this does not mean that just a few employees could possibly be awarded this form of recognition. As explained in the previous chapter, Honneth puts emphasis on a system of solidarity of a community. The state of solidarity emphasizes the existence of a common project for all members of a community. In this state, each member of the community should be able to participate and consequently contribute to the common goal. Each member should be seen as having potential to contribute. Therefore, in this community of value, all employees should be in the position and have the opportunity to earn social-esteem. If for example an employee has certain skills and expertise, but is not able to utilize that expertise, he or she is being excluded and thereby not able to contribute to the value-horizon of the organization. He or she feels like his or her skills, traits and achievements are not adequately recognized by the larger community. He or she is being disrespected and cannot positively relate to his or her own way of life and identity, which damages his or her self-esteem. While the concept of who receives social-esteem seems to be descriptive, Honneth's idea of mutual solidarity is clearly normative.

In short, what is needed for all employees to possibly receive adequate social-esteem is a community with a value-system of solidarity, sharing a common project in which all employees must feel that they get a chance to show their worth for that common project. Honneth argues that a system of solidarity is not a mere tolerance of the other, but an active search for the particularity in that other. Considering the highly diverse nature of different employees hence also means in Honneth's theory that a value-system should allow for a multitude of praiseworthy characteristics, values and achievements. Acknowledging the specific in the individual for each individual requires a form of value pluralism. However, this is not to defend a relativist position. It merely states that, for a state of solidarity to arise, differences in achievements are valuable and actually needed. A value-system should allow for different modes of self-realization that express one's own values and individuality. This conceptual condition of the pluralistic value-horizon has an important practical implication. To achieve this state of solidarity that Honneth envisioned in relation to gainful employment, the division of work is vital. Exactly in this type of work setting, employees can find and express themselves in the optimal way and utilize their skills, thereby receiving social-esteem. Nonetheless, as described in the last chapter, problems arise when relying solely on a functional division of labor as Mead (1934) suggested. As Honneth stated in response to Mead, not all jobs are valued enough by the

community to be valued with adequate social-esteem. However, pointing out the importance of the division of labor is not meant to replace the system of solidarity with this division Mead had in mind. It is only to highlight the important role the division of labor can play in granting each individual employee a chance of earning social-esteem within this system of solidarity.

This division of work needed for Honneth's system of solidarity has some important consequences to consider. There is one clear advantage of this system and division of labor (Smith, 2009). Dividing work provides an explanatory framework of how certain individuals of a certain denigrated group of employees or profession feel disrespected and hurt because they are not recognized enough, for example by excluded them from utilizing their talents or undervaluing their contributions. As Honneth described, these feelings of hurt can start a social conflict over the value of their work, for example about the work that is traditionally associated with females. This struggle can bring about progressive social change, increasing the value of particular achievements.

Nevertheless, there is also an important downside of Honneth's system from a labor perspective (Smith, 2009). If social-esteem in a value-system is earned in competition by individual achievement, enormous pressure is put on an individual employee. Not only is success a matter of personal responsibility, so is failure. Even in a system of solidarity in which every employee gets the chance, not taking this chance results in low self-esteem. Employees are in this sense forced to achieve and make something of themselves. Moreover, inevitable in a grand system of a grand societal value-system, an individual's impact on what is deemed valuable will be limited. Questionable is then if every ability and skill is actually considered worthy of receiving recognition. Honneth's idea of a system of solidarity seems praiseworthy, but some skills will find it hard to gather recognition. Yet, when evaluating these two downsides, in my view it is not the theory of Honneth that needs revision. These downsides should rather be seen as unfavorable practical consequences rather than a flaw in Honneth's theory.

In addition to Honneth's theory and these consequences, I would like to make a conceptual addition with practical consequences. When applying Honneth's concept of self-esteem to an employee setting, it seems that employees can receive recognition from different angles. The difference is made by the community of value one looks at. I have described earlier that in relation to self-respect, a human can have a multitude of memberships concerning the community of norms and legal relations. What I am making here is a similar case, arguing that

an employee can also relate to different value-systems, therefore receiving social-esteem from different forces. The main distinction is between internal and external social-esteem.

Internal recognition would entail how an employee's traits and abilities contribute to the organization's value-system like the goal of the organization. An example of internal social-esteem is the salesperson when he or she meets his or her target or when the researcher develops a new valuable product. The value-horizon resides within the organization and entails the values and goals of the organization itself. The more one contributes, the more social-esteem one receives of colleagues in the organization. Social-esteem is thus earned by direct social contacts within the organization. A state of solidarity as Honneth envisioned within the organization would entail that every employee has the chance to receive self-esteem by contributing to the common project of the organization.

External recognition can be viewed as recognition received from a grand societal communal perspective in contributing to society's value-system. Recognition is received from the outside world as a certain image of a profession or organization is mirrored to the employee itself. Clear examples would be a firefighter that receives social-esteem for retaining public safety or a physician who works for a NGO in a war-zone treating local casualties. Also in this sense Honneth's principle of a state of solidarity is applicable. Every profession or organization should at least have the possibility to contribute to the common project of a community, thereby enabling its employees to develop self-esteem.

What is interesting in this conceptual dichotomy is its practical consequences. It is plausible that internal and external goals and therefore received recognition can clash. Different value-horizons and thus different triggers of social-esteem can create a certain tension of what is actually deemed valuable. Practically, the goals of an organization are not always in line with those of a community. A banker might be regarded as a valuable person within the bank as he or she sells many highly profitable mortgages, the community might not be so grateful if the housing market consequently crashes. An employee often low in rank like a basic administrator, might not receive much social-esteem within the organization, but if he or she works at a highly valued organization, received external social-esteem might be higher than a basic administrator working at a moderately valued organization. On a more general level is the organization who values hard work and long hours, while society values the family person. And what about the employee who just does what his or her management asks while society values individuality and

autonomy? In short, what is deemed valuable can conflict and this brings tensions. An individual can be esteemed by one group while disrespected by another group. The individual can simultaneously receive praise and humiliation for the same values and characteristics he or she expresses. If an individual forms his or her personal identity with the feedback of others while at the same time this feedback is highly conflicting, it seems to me at least very difficult to form one coherent and positive self-image and identity. Clashing value-horizons and corresponding feedback therefore hinder one's self-realization. These tensions are an interesting focus when researching the possibilities of adequate social-esteem recognition in a McDonaldized organization. For now the normative implication that I can conclude is that highly conflicting value-horizons can endanger the possibility of developing a positive self-image and hinder full-self-realization. Ideally, all value-horizons are in line.

In conclusion, what is needed for employees to receive adequate social-esteem as described by Honneth is a setting where they can earn it by expressing their particularity. A system of solidarity should therefore exist within a given community. This system should incorporate a common project established by the value-horizon. Those employees who possess values that contribute to this common project are awarded with social-esteem. In this system of solidarity, each member should be able to contribute to this common goal and receive social-esteem. The division of labor forms an excellent structure for a democratic system of social-esteem. Furthermore, different value-horizons should be in line.

Summing up this chapter makes clear that what is needed for gainful employees to receive adequate recognition is both a system of legal relations establishing rights and a community of value establishing a state of solidarity. While the former fosters self-respect, the latter establishes the possibility for developing self-esteem. Knowing what conditions should be present in order for employees to receive adequate recognition, the question now remains if these conditions are present in a McDonaldized organization. Is it conceptually possible for an employee to receive adequate respect and social-esteem working at a McDonaldized organization and what are the reasons responsible? To address this twofold question will be my aim for Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

5. Self-respect in a McDonaldized Organization

In the previous chapter, based on Honneth's (1995) theory of recognition, I have examined the minimal formal conditions that should be present in an organization for an employee to receive adequate recognition. In this chapter, focusing on self-respect, I will examine whether these conditions are actually present in a McDonaldized organization as described by Ritzer (2015). In other words, is it possible for an employee engaging in gainful employment at a McDonaldized organization to receive adequate recognition in the form of cognitive respect? McDonaldization can have both enabling and disabling effects on the possibility of receiving adequate cognitive respect. To answer the research question, I would have to examine both types of effects. However, emphasis should be put on the disabling effects as it is important to examine if these disabling effects can be compensated by the enabling conceptual effects or represent mere material obstacles that can be changed within the structure of McDonaldization. If, however, these disabling effects are not mere small obstacles but represent a more fundamental and conceptual road block that cannot be solved within McDonaldization, the possibility of adequate employee recognition seems bleak.

First, I will briefly examine the enabling effects. A McDonaldized organization satisfies a vital conceptual condition for self-respect: a system of legal relations. A McDonaldized organization is highly standardized due to its focus on calculability and predictability. To achieve this high level of standardization, rules and regulations are indispensable. All processes are rationalized and standardized, expressed in an organizational community of rights. This includes not only the work processes themselves, but also regulations about the hiring and promotional processes. It matters not who you are or what the color of your skin is, but what you can do for the organization. As also seen in its precursor of a bureaucracy (Perrow, 1972), a McDonaldized organization reduces what Honneth would call immoral events like nepotism and particularism. In other words, this community of rights found in a McDonaldized organization emphasizes the equality and generalization among its members, foresting the development of self-respect. These rules and regulations found in a McDonaldized organization also give employees the means to stand up for their rights and demand equality. If a female employee earns less for the same work than comparably skilled and experienced male colleagues, she can demand an equal treatment arguing on the basis of this system of legal relations of the organization. The McDonaldized organization represents a meritocracy that does not care about personal background if one's

skills are adequate. Each person in the same function needs to do the same job and receives the same salary. Each employee is treated equally. So, if employees primarily compared their received cognitive respect with the closer community as argued for in the last chapter, a McDonaldized organization offers plenty of room for equality and the acquisition of cognitive respect.

Yet, this facilitating role that the McDonaldized organization can play has its problematic side in the form of disabling effects. These disabling effects are mostly practical problems arising from a specific material interpretation of the concepts. One important disabling effect concerns the lack of possible participation in the will-formation of the McDonaldized organization, therefore endangering an important part of how these legal relations can stimulate self-respect. As I concluded in the last chapter, a community of legal relations should not only exist, but members should also be able to participate and engage in the content discussion about them. Can the employee actually participate in the ‘public process of will-formation’ of its McDonaldized organization? At first sight, it looks that the endangerment brought about by the McDonaldized organization concerns the lack of possible participation of employees. Just like its organizational successor of the bureaucracy, a McDonaldized organization most likely functions with a highly hierarchical structure. Employees working under these conditions are tightly controlled, not only by these rules and regulations themselves, but also by a multitude of managerial layers which demonstrate the highly top-down organizational structure underneath this regulatory system. Mainly the employees functioning at the top of the hierarchy determine the legal relations of the organization. The employees at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy hardly have any influence on the content discussion of the regulatory regime in the organization. Employees are simply expected to follow orders and regulations, allowing for greater efficiency and predictability. This can decrease their practical relation-to-self as autonomous and responsible individuals as their received cognitive respect is often inadequate.

Another material problem that stems from the McDonaldized organization is that it limits an employee’s self-determination. This is related to the rights of self-determination and the possibility of ‘trading your rights’ as described in the previous chapter. Employees use their right of self-determination to engage in employee contracts, thus limiting their self-determination. This ‘trading’ is even stronger when engaging in gainful employment in a McDonaldized organization. In such an organization, especially low-level employees are seen hardly seen as

autonomous and responsible individuals as they are highly controlled by nonhuman technology. As McJobs are highly regulated, a large amount of self-determination is temporarily given up and contractually sold to the organization. At the same time, employee contracts at McDonaldized organizations are also standardized, leaving no room for negotiations of a potential employee, especially for entree-level jobs. Practically, this constitutes a 'take it or leave it' situation. Even promotion and higher-level contracts are regulated within a McDonaldized organization. One starts in an entree-level job and after an X amount of experience and level of performance, an employee can receive an expected promotion. These set career paths and regulations of how to get there that are often found in the McDonaldized organization leave no room for an autonomous career choice within the organization, unless of course, the employee decides to leave. This possibility to leave adds an important nuance to the story. As all legal relations of a McDonaldized organization still function within an overarching legal system of for example the constitutional state or even the universal Declaration of Human Rights, each employee is, at least theoretically, free in their choice of employment. Practically, however, most McJobs are filled by low skilled employees with little experience. It is questionable if every individual, particularly a low skilled employee, is able of choosing another job that is not McDonaldized. In sum, working at a McDonaldized organization impairs the possibility of low-level employees' participation in the organizational process of will-formation and limits an individual's self-determination, thereby offering less opportunity for the development of self-respect.

The question now remains whether these disabling effects are mere material obstacles or actually represent some fundamental contradictions. Examining both enabling and disabling effects makes the former option more likely, mostly because of other material reasons such as equality and basic rights. Although a McDonaldized organization does not grant room for all employees to participate in the content discussion of their legal relations, it does grant equal opportunity for all employees to, in the long run, achieve this position. Employees at least have the prospect of being able to co-decide the legal relations they subject themselves to. This is important, because with this prospect, low-level employees know they are not arbitrarily excluded from participation, but that there is a hierarchy in place based on meritocracy. Their momentary exclusion is therefore not aimed at something inherently personal, for example their demographic background. They know that if they fulfill the right criteria and have adequate

qualifications, they too can potentially participate in the public process of will-formation of the organization. Their participation is not inevitably denied.

Furthermore, the overarching legal system can facilitate the employee's search for adequate cognitive-respect and protect them from 'trading away' rights. The Declaration of Human Rights ensures non-negotiable rights. Together with these Human Rights such as reasonable rest and sufficient remuneration, these overarching rights also ensure employees with a right to self-determination. Employees can for example choose which contracts to sign. As a result, employees are free to choose their way of gainful employment and are cognitively respected by society for their choice. Employees can hereby indirectly participate in the public process of will-formation by selecting an organization to work and a profession to work in that reflects their thoughts on adequate legal relations. The Declaration of Human Rights also ensures the right of participation in trade unions, enabling employees to engage in a struggle for recognition with likeminded colleagues. In this struggle as Honneth described, employees can fight for recognition of what they deem respectable and worthy of legal recognition, thereby earning cognitive respect.

In sum, I can conclude that although a McDonaldized organization certainly has disabling effects that make the acquisition of cognitive respect difficult, these can be considered as mere material difficulties and are not effects that make receiving adequate respect impossible. Conceptually, the McDonaldized organization offers adequate possibilities to receive cognitive respect. In the next chapter I will examine if the same conclusion can be drawn when examining social-esteem.

6. Self-esteem in a McDonaldized Organization

Honneth's (1995) last form of recognition is to receive social-esteem, earned when contributing with one's particularity to the value-horizon of a community. In Chapter 4 I have examined how gainful employment stands in relation to self-esteem. This chapter is focused on examining the possibility of receiving adequate social-esteem while being an employee within a McDonaldized organization as described by Ritzer (2015). To answer this research question, I will use the same method as in the discussion of self-respect, described in Chapter 5. To discuss social-esteem in the McDonaldized organization, I will briefly mention the enabling effects to give the full picture, but emphasis is put on possible disabling effects. How fundamental are these disabling effects in blocking the development of an employee's self-esteem?

The McDonaldized organization offers some important conceptual facilitators in earning social-esteem. Firstly, as all tasks are specialized and standardized, it offers a far-reaching division of labor. This division is crucial in Honneth's envisioned system of solidarity. In this division, employees should be able to find and fulfill that position that suits their qualities best, thereby using their specific talents and consequently earn social-esteem. Secondly, as the McDonaldized organization is a meritocracy and achievements are individuated, all tasks and achievements are highly quantified and linked to specific employees. Therefore, employees can earn social-esteem for their particular individual contribution. Also, as all tasks are standardized and the overarching goal of a McDonaldized organization is made clear to all employees, employees know how to earn esteem. This offers employees a clear roadmap to social-esteem while also giving them an excellent opportunity to show off their worth for the collective. Thirdly, at first sight, as a consequence of striving for efficiency, the system of solidarity that Honneth argued for seems to be present in a McDonaldized organization. Each employee gets the chance to contribute to the goals of the organization. It is hard to imagine that a McDonaldized organization so focused on efficiency would hire and continue to hire a noncontributing employee.

Nonetheless, these enabling effects may not be as positive in relation to recognition as they seem to be on first appearance. On the contrary, an employee working at a McDonaldized organization may find him or herself in an organizational setting that is not facilitating, but hindering his or her development of self-esteem. Both formal and material problems can be

detected. I will start by mentioning the formal problems that arise in the McDonaldized organization in relation to self-esteem.

The drive to standardize every task of every employee and to capture them in extensive rules and regulations has little in common with being an autonomous individual. In a McDonaldized organization, the individual employee has very little influence on how to do the tasks ascribed, let alone influencing the value-horizon of the organization. As Ritzer (2015) described and as mentioned in Chapter 3, in McDonaldized organizations, most 'head' work is already set and regulated, leaving only the 'hand' work. In other words, very little of the employee's self is expressed in his or her work. It is therefore highly questionable if employees actually feel recognized for something they have done themselves, something that they truly call their own creation and an expression of their own values and individuality. It is more likely that what employees have produced, be it a product or a service, is thought of as the work of someone else. So how much true social-esteem does the employee then get for being him or herself and being a unique employee with particular characteristics when just following regulations? How much esteem do employees get while being intensely controlled for perfection while doing their tasks? The esteem employees receive by using their own specific qualities and characteristics is very limited in a McDonaldized context. Employees working at a McDonaldized organization are rather treated as mere productive resources, instead of being valued for their particularity. The employee feels more like a number than a particular human being. This organization offers little room for individual employees to express their particularity, thereby hindering their acquisition of social-esteem.

This conclusion can even be expanded. In a McDonaldized organization, employees do not receive esteem for being a unique individual person. In contrast, in the McDonaldized organization it is actively incentivized to be a non-person. As far as the McDonaldized organization is concerned, it does not matter who the employee is, as long as he or she does his or her task well. This task is done best, when one's personal characteristics are left out. An employee is a 'good' employee if it follows the exact orders, rules and regulations, if he or she does the task exactly right. An employee is expected to follow regulations and be as much like a machine as possible. Particular characteristics are therefore suppressed rather than encouraged.

This disabling effect becomes greater when regarding the narrow value-horizon that characterizes the McDonaldized organization. In such an organization, employees are offered

only a small number of values that are potentially recognized. Only those values corresponding to the task are valued. So only if one's specific characteristics and skills are matched by the task description, social-esteem for their particularity is earned. However, how many employees have the exact same value-set the job demands and prescribes, having no additional values to call their own? Even if some values are in accordance with the value-horizon of the organization, most employees also have values that are particularly not valued by the organization. As McJobs are highly regulated, those values are expected to be suppressed, rather than expressed and are therefore not used to receive social-esteem. The McDonaldized organization with its extensive division of labor values only a very particular set of characteristics, mostly focused on skills. In Honneth's envisioned system of solidarity, each individual is able to receive social-esteem for their particularity, allowing for full self-realization. Although a system of solidarity is certainly present in a McDonaldized organization, it allows, if any, only for a limited expression of particularity. It certainly does not entail the pluralistic value-system that is conceptually needed for each individual to receive adequate social-esteem. It is therefore already conceptually a problematic system of solidarity.

Next to these conceptual problems, there are two material problems that arise out of the McDonaldized organization. These two problems can be categorized as material problems as they are rooted in the interaction of the implementation of the concept of McDonaldization and its contingent real world environment. The first problem arises when taking the tension between internal and external recognition into account. As argued for earlier, the value-horizon of an organization is in practice not always in line with those of society. The internal value-horizon of the organization is, at least in for-profit organizations, highly determined by market forces (Rössler, 2007). Only those values that contribute to the organizational goals, for example its competitive position, are valued by the organization. In contrast, the external value-horizon is a lot broader, valuing more than mere market demands. Clashing value-horizons bring about tension in the individual employee's self-image. Where for example the McDonaldized organization highly values obedience, individuality is valued by the value-horizon of Western society. However, especially when working in an assembly line setting that characterizes the McDonaldized organization, individuality is hard to find. In other words, the behavior that earned the employee social-esteem might at the same time be condemned by society. These

different signals received in the intersubjective realm endangers the full self-realization as one autonomous individual.

Furthermore, as achievements are individuated and the McDonaldized organization is organized highly hierarchically, strong competition between employees arises. In a strong hierarchy characterized by its pyramid structure, only a few employees can make it to the top. Social-esteem is given primarily to those contributing most and employees higher in rank are at least seen as contributing more, thereby earning more social-esteem. What happens if an employee does not have the skills to be promoted? Success is one's own responsibility, but so is failure. A promotion does give the employee positive feedback expressed in social-esteem. However, the denial of a promotion gives the employee a feeling of disrespect. Honneth describes that only if you value the other as significantly contributing to one's own life, you can mutually esteem one another. In a highly competitive environment that is the McDonaldized organization in our contemporary society, it is questionable if employees see their colleagues as significantly contributing to their own lives, or if they see them as disturbing it. A system of solidarity that is needed for Honneth's moral community would not exist in this competitive organization.

Having examined the formal and material disabling effects leaves the question whether the McDonaldized organization is a type of organization in which employees can receive adequate social-esteem. Discussing these disabling effects already make some fundamental road blocks implicitly clear, hinting at a negative answer to the research question. At first sight, the organizational environment of McDonaldization offers some facilitators as discussed above. However, at closer inspection, the very basis that underlies these enabling effects are also the breeding ground of several disabling effects. These effects are too fundamentally part of McDonaldization to ignore. Materially, a highly individuated system of achievement in combination with quantification might enable visible social-esteem, yet it also creates a system of competition that endangers the system of solidarity. Although some employees may find themselves in a position to earn an abundance of social-esteem, most employees in the McDonaldized organization will not be so lucky. Conceptually, the focus on specialization that empower employees to earn social-esteem for their qualities, turns out to be too narrow for employees, surpassing a large part of their other characteristics. Apart from these effects, most fundamentally impeding adequate social-esteem is at the foundation and conception of

McDonaldization itself. By standardizing and simplifying all tasks and by controlling their employees, the McDonaldized organization ignores the particularity of their employees and rather seems to treat them as mere productive resources. Employees have no room for expressing their particularity, but are actively stimulated to suppress their individuality. The link that self-esteem makes with autonomy and individuality disappears within a McDonaldized organization. In contrast to self-respect, the McDonaldized organization offers not enough possibilities for adequate social-esteem for all its employees.

7. Conclusion

I have started this research explaining the modern development of rationalization, in particular Ritzer's (1993, 2015) concept of McDonaldization. This development is often criticized as being dehumanizing, denying basic human traits. In order to investigate this criticism, I have researched the effect of McDonaldization on one specific and vital human need: adequate recognition. In particular, I have examined if an employee working at a McDonaldized organization is able to satisfy this need. Using Honneth's (1995) theory of recognition, I described what employee recognition entails and what conditions need to be satisfied in order for an employee to receive adequate recognition. In relating these conditions to the organizational setting of McDonaldization, several conclusions could be drawn.

Firstly, I have come to the conclusion that an employee can adequately receive cognitive respect in a McDonaldized organization. In this organization, an extensive system of legal relations exists in which every employee is treated equally and opportunities are granted on merit. Secondly, I concluded that, in contrast to self-respect, a McDonaldized organization does not offer all employees an adequate possibility to earn social-esteem. The McDonaldized organization does not focus on particularity or solidarity, but emphasizes standardization and control. It thereby treats its employees as mere productive resources. As only a small part of an employee's diverse range of characteristics is valued by the organization, full-self-realization is impeded. The largest part of an employee's characteristics is actually actively repressed. In sum, I can therefore conclude that the McDonaldized organization does not offer its employees adequate possibilities to earn recognition. Although it fulfills the conditions of self-respect, most employees working at a McDonaldized organization are not able to fully realize themselves as described by Honneth's theory. They are neither able to build a positive practical relation-to-self nor to see themselves as autonomous individuals, at least not in relation to their work. In Honneth's terms, McDonaldized organizations would be considered immoral. This relates to Ritzer's claim, stating that McDonaldized organizations can indeed, at least partially, be dehumanizing.

Several possible scenarios can be drawn from this conclusion. If nothing changes with regard to McDonaldization, Honneth's theory of recognition would predict a struggle for recognition in those organizations. Disrespected employees would either engage in a struggle to raise their social-esteem, stay disrespected and therefore hurt within the organization or they

would simply leave the McDonaldized organization to find other employment. These scenarios would cause instability, a demotivated workforce or a high employee turnover. Even from a McDonaldized organizational perspective, all three options are highly undesirable as they would mean a lower efficiency and lower net results. However, the biggest issue stemming from the conclusion regards a moral problem. If adequate recognition is a vital human need as Honneth (1995) and Taylor (1992) advocate, the morality of organizations ignoring this need is highly questionable. If McDonaldization is such a bad development, is there actually something we can do to stop it? Can the process of rationalization be stopped at all? What about the economic development that McDonaldization brings? Can a different version of McDonaldization be created in which adequate employee recognition is possible? These are all questions that can be addressed in future research.

In addition to these questions and my conclusion in general, I have some other recommendations for future research. Firstly, in this research I have focused on the ideal type of a McDonaldized organization, taking the dimensions to the extreme. However, as Ritzer argued, McDonaldization is not an all or nothing process, some organizations are more McDonaldized than others and gradations exist within this concept. Future research can examine whether adequate employee recognition is possible in a setting that is not fully McDonaldized but shows signs of the development, for example in academia or health care. Secondly, future research can focus on a more philosophical notion of employee recognition. Most philosophical notions on recognition are aimed at a political level, for example focused on apartheid (Presbey, 2003) or freedom of expression (Thompson, 2012). Theories about employee recognition are mostly found in the discipline of human resource studies (e.g. Brun & Dugas, 2008; Bradler, Dur, Neckermann & Non, 2016). More research on the notion of employee recognition allows for a better understanding of the combination between a vital human need and one of human's most common activities that is work. Thirdly, this research has assumed that employment plays a big role in individual's lives and is therefore responsible for a big part of one's needed recognition. However, employees still have a whole live outside of work. Future research could examine how recognition earned detached from their gainful employment influences individuals. Would it be possible for non-work related recognition to compensate for the lack of recognition in the workplace? How big is de role of employment in relation to recognition? Especially when

production levels will continue to rise, it is not unthinkable that work will take a smaller proportion in human lives.

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