

MCDONALDIZATION/ THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF RELIGIONS CONVERSIONS

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FOUR ELEMENTS OF MCDONALDIZATION

- 1. Efficiency: the search for the optimum means to a given end
 - Includes streamlining processes, simplifying goods and services, and using customers to perform work
- 2. Calculability: emphasis on things that can be calculated, counted, and quantified
- 3. Predictability: emphasis on things being the same from one time or place to another
 - Achieved through offering uniform products, replications of settings, and scripting of employee behaviors
- 4. Control (of people) through replacement of human with nonhuman technology
 - Nonhuman technology includes machines, architecture/interior design, and limited options

IRRATIONALITIES OF RATIONALITY

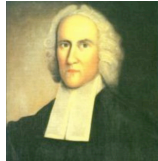
- Ritzer claims that although McDonaldization is supposed to be rational, it can lead to results that are irrational. These include:
 - Inefficiency and higher costs: McDonaldization isn't efficient for everyone, especially customers, and may cost extra.
 - The illusion of fun: Fun has become a guiding principle of many McDonaldized institutions.
 - False Friendliness: Genuine fraternization is restricted or eliminated and replaced with either no human relationships or "false fraternization."
 - Health and environmental hazards: Includes health risks of fast food, food poisoning, litter, environmental hazards of factory farms.
 - Homogenization: Similar products are offered through the U.S. and world.
 - Dehumanization: McDonaldization offers low-skill jobs, treats customers impersonally, minimizes contact between human beings, and has negative effects on families.

DEALING WITH MCDONALDIZATION

- Three perspectives on a McDonaldized Society
 - Velvet cage: McDonaldization is comfortable; it represents a standard of good taste and high quality
 - Rubber cage: the bars of McDonaldization can be stretched to allow adequate means of escape; some aspects are disliked, others are appealing
 - Iron cage: McDonaldization is deeply offensive and there are few ways out
- Strategies for carving out less McDonaldized lives
 - Create non-McDonaldized institutions
 - Fight back collectively
 - Cope individually

RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN U.S. HISTORY

- The Great Awakening (1730s & 1740s): Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield called for a “new birth”
- Second Awakening (early 1800s): Charles Finney borrowed techniques from advertising and showmanship
- Post-Civil War: Dwight Moody was a master organizer and church builder in Chicago
- Post-WW I: Ames native Billy Sunday promoted “muscular Christianity”
- Post-WW II: Billy Graham held first revival meeting in 1949; within 25 years, over 1.5 million people “stepped forward” for Christ at his rallies



Jonathan Edwards



Billy Sunday

TWO VIEWS OF CONVERSION

- Turnabout view of conversion
 - Radical break with past and immersion in a new life
- Institutionalized view of conversion
 - Organized by families, churches and revivalists
 - Often an age-stage ritual to affirm existing values
 - Like other rituals, can still be meaningful experience
- Today's sources: two studies & one documentary on Billy Graham
 - Wimberly et al's survey of Knoxville, TN, rally
 - Altheide & Johnson's covert participant observation of Phoenix, AZ, rally
 - Video: Billy Graham (Biography series, Randall Balmer narrated)



Billy Graham

THE ROLE OF FAMILY AND CHURCHES

- Conversions organized by families and churches as life-stage ritual to re-affirm existing values (Wimberly et al. 1975)
 - Method: survey at Knoxville Billy Graham rally
 - 91% of attendees were church members
 - Bloc mobilization: 31% came with church group
 - Not break with family: 66% came with families/friends
 - Life-stage ritual: 73% of conversions < 20 years old
- Research on conversions to a different religion, shows that conversions result from ties to people in that religious community

THE ROLE OF THE REVIVALISTS

- Publicity begins 18 months before event
- Organize churches to supply attendees
- Train counselors and other workers
- Provide message promoting conversion
- Provide “altar call” period for conversion
- Counselors go forward during altar call
- Counselors help converts through conversion
- Counselors record conversions
- Local churches notified to “follow up” conversion

BUREAUCRATIZING CONVERSIONS

- Altheide & Johnson: covert observation of 1974 Phoenix rally
- Research question: how are decisions made as to type of conversion in face-to-face encounters?
 - Acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord
 - Assurance of Salvation
 - Rededication
- Results: all converts categorized as “acceptance”
- Interpretation: organization environment engulfed spiritual priorities

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS

- Most conversions take place within existing social networks
- Conversions are more likely after changes in social networks (geographical moves & marriage)
- Most conversions involve moving to a religion similar to one previously adhered to