

Constructing Latino Pentecostal Communities: A Response to the McDonaldization Process¹

Wilmer Estrada-Carrasquillo

Introduction

Pragmatism can be a blessing or a curse.² It is a blessing due to its shift toward the practical concerns of theories and ideas. Yet it can become a curse if, in the process of reaching practicality, it dehumanizes the individual or community. In his work *Economy*

1. This article is part of my master's thesis. See Wilmer Estrada-Carrasquillo, "Building Latino-Pentecostal Communities: The Opportunities and Challenges in the American Diaspora," Master's Thesis, Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, TN, 2013.

2. Pragmatism is an approach that assesses the truth of the meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.

Wilmer Estrada-Carrasquillo, his wife Laura, and their three daughters live in Wilmore, KY where he is pursuing a PhD in Intercultural Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. He also serves as a long-distance professor for the Center for Latino Studies at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, TN and holds ministerial credentials from the Church of God in Cleveland, TN.



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and Society, Max Weber describes a company's standard operating procedures as a "steel cage" in which employees are not motivated to think or make decisions on their own merits but are programmed to operate as robots, draining their human capabilities.³ This is one of the challenges that society faces as it moves forward in the twenty-first century. Yet it is as problematic, or more so, when the church adopts the same *modus operandi* to fulfill the Great Commission and focuses strictly on the end and not the means. An example of this is what John Drane, building on George Ritzer's work, called the "McDonaldization of the church." This article is a modest attempt to propose a Latino Pentecostal response to the challenges that new and revitalizing churches in the United States may confront due to the effects of the McDonaldization process. First, I will define the main concepts of the McDonaldization process. Second, I will present the main argument of John Drane's *The McDonaldization of the Church: Consumer Culture and the Church's Future*. Finally, I will propose a three-fold response that can help develop churches that can stand against the McDonaldization process.

McDonaldization Process?

George Ritzer's goal in *The McDonaldization of Society* is not to merely talk about McDonald's or any other fast-food franchise but rather to present the key role that McDonald's and the fast-food industry has played in what he calls the process of "McDonaldization." McDonaldization is the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of US American society as well as of the

3. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 956–1006.