

## **Unit 5 Social Change and Modernity**

### **Text A**

#### **Preparatory Work**

(1)

George Ritzer is an American sociologist known for the idea of McDonaldization, which means the process by which institutions in society become standardized and focused on efficiency and predictability. McDonaldization is a reconceptualization of rationalization, or moving from traditional to rational modes of thought, and scientific management. Where Max Weber used the model of the bureaucracy to represent the direction of this changing society, Ritzer sees the fast-food restaurant as having become a more representative contemporary paradigm.

Rationalization in sociology refers to the favoring of efficiency through quantification and calculation in social transactions over, for example, tradition or custom. It is usually tied into bureaucracy and the process of bureaucratization. Rationalization is considered to be central to the concept of modernity.

According to Ritzer, the McDonaldization's of institutions is part of a general drive to rationalization. They share the following four dimensions:

- a. efficiency
- b. calculability
- c. predictability
- d. control

(2)

1) Drive-through window (para.9)

A type of service provided by a business that allows customers to purchase products without leaving their cars. A drive-through is different from a drive-in in several ways—the cars create a line and move in one direction in drive-throughs, and do not park, whereas drive-ins allow cars to park next to each other, the food is generally brought to the window by a server, called a carhop, and the customer can remain in the parked car to eat.

2) Tract house (para.16)

A type of housing development in which multiple similar homes are built on a tract of land which is subdivided into individual small lots. Tract housing developments are found in world suburb developments that were modeled on the “Levittown”

concept and sometimes encompass large areas of dozens of square miles.

3) Custom-built home (para.16)

A one-of-a-kind home that is designed for a specific client and for a particular location. The custom home builder may use plans created by an architect or by a professional home designer. Custom homes afford consumers the opportunity to control layout, lot size, and accessibility.

4) Flexible specialization (para.17)

Competitive strategy where a firm equips itself with multi-use equipment, multi-skilled employees, and innovative executives, in order to adjust very quickly to a fast changing marketplace and business environment. Flexible specialization is viewed as a shift away from the mass production and relatively rigid organizational hierarchies of the Fordist era.

(3)

Its professed mission:

to be the best talent developer of people with the most committed individuals to Quality, Service, Cleanliness and Value (QSC&V) in the world

Its students:

Personnel employed by McDonald's are trained in this corporate university in the various aspects of restaurant management. More than 80,000 restaurant managers, mid-managers and owner/operators have graduated from this facility.

Its main curriculum:

Curriculum is delivered using a combination of classroom instruction, hands-on lab activities, goal-based scenarios and computer e-learning modules. McDonald's employees align training with their specific career paths, including development paths for crew, restaurant managers, mid-managers and Executives.

## **Critical Reading**

### **I. Understanding the text**

#### **1.**

(1) Purpose: to examine the nature and characteristics of jobs in McDonaldized settings.

Conclusion: By means of formal and informal training, McDonald's

and similar organizations control not just their employees, but also their customers.

- (2) McDonaldization of the society has led to the creation of more and more McJobs.

Basic realities: a) part-time workers b) a high turnover rate c) Minorities overrepresented d) low-paid e) greatly affected by changes in the minimum wage

- (3) Five characteristics:

- a) Performing each task as efficiently as possible
- b) The time for performing the tasks is carefully calculated
- c) The work is predictable, with employees doing and saying the same things all the time
- d) Nonhuman technologies are employed to control workers
- e) A variety of irrationalities, especially the dehumanization of work

The meaning of the statement: The favoring of efficiency leads to dehumanization of work.

Irrationalities refer to the the dehumanization of work, including, for example, poor quality, loss of creativity, low skills, lack of variety, etc.

- (4) See para.6.: Offering a large number of entry-level positions, giving new employees basic skill training and preparing them for upward occupational mobility.

No. Ritzer thinks that it can only be true when the middle-level jobs to which they move are also routinized and scripted. In fact, the skills acquired in McJobs are not likely to help one obtain or function well in the far more desirable and complex postindustrial occupations.

- (5) See para.7.: In terms of culture, for example, efficiency and standardization have become part of the value system; in terms of social structure, bureaucracies use scripted (or institutionalized) rules and regulations.

- (6) Control at structural level: for example, the drive-through window structures both what customers in their cars and employees in their booths can and cannot do (see paras.8 & 9).

At the cultural level, both employees and customers are socialized into, and have internalized, the norms and values of working and living in a McDonaldized society (see para.10)

- (7) See paras.11 & 12. Similarity: deskilling. Differences: McDonaldized jobs are characterized by both routinized actions and scripted interactions.

The scripting of interaction leads to further deskilling of workers. Employees are now asked to follow scripts mindlessly.

- (8) See paras.14 & 15. The distinction between customer and

employee is eroding in McDonaldized systems. As a result of this dramatic change, the analysis of the labor process must be extended to what customers do. To apply the analysis of Marxian theory, we can see that McDonaldized systems have been able to supplement the exploitation of employees with the exploitation of customers.

Revolutionary because customers are not simply paid less than the value they produce, they are paid nothing at all. In this way, customers are exploited to an even greater degree than workers.

- (9) See para.16. The lower classes: likely to go to McDonaldized schools, live in inexpensive, mass-produced tract houses, and work in McDonaldized jobs.

The upper class: likely to send their children to non-McDonaldized schools, live in custom-built homes, and work in occupations in which they impose McDonaldization on others while avoiding it to a large degree themselves.

- (10) See para.17. Yes, to a significant extent.

It is occurring side by side with postindustrialization.

Characteristics of postindustrial occupations: relatively high-status, well-paid occupations requiring high levels of education and training.

## 2.

Para	Main idea	Outline of the text
1	the spread of McJobs	Part I: Growth of McJobs as a result of McDonaldization
2	Basic realities of employment in fast-food industry: a model for employment in other McDonaldized settings	
3	Speeding growth of McDonaldization in the larger society	
4	McDonaldization is leading to the creation of more and more McJobs (new McJobs, deskilling of middle-level jobs)	
5	Five dimensions of McDonaldization that characterize McJobs	
6	Consequences of deskilling of McJobs: it does not help one to function well in more desirable	

	post-industrial occupations (routinized, scripted)	
7	Impact of McDonaldization at macro level	Part II: <u>Impacts of McDonaldization at various levels</u>
8	Impact of McDonaldization at micro level	
9	Control of both employees and customers at structural level	
10	Cultural level of the constraints (trained or socialized into the norms and values of McDonaldization)	
11	New distinctive characteristics: routinized actions and scripted interactions	Part III: New type of control characterized by scripted interaction
12	The scripting of interaction leads to new depths in the deskilling of workers	
13	Involvement of customers in the labor process	Part IV: <u>new type of exploitation</u>
14	Customers being asked to do more work	
15	A key to the success of McDonaldized systems—supplementing the exploitation of employees with the exploitation of customers	
16	Lower classes are the most affected by McDonaldization	Part V: Social class issue in McJobs
17	McDonaldization and postindustrialization occur side by side	

## II. Evaluation and exploration

**(Note: For the open questions, the following are only some key points and additional materials for reference.)**

- (1) A note is a string of text placed at the bottom of a page in a book or document or at the end of a chapter, volume or the whole text, which can provide an author's comments on the main text or citations of a reference work in support of the text, or both. Here the author provides an additional information on the statement

lest it should turn out to be too sweeping, since as the author points out toward the end of the text, the two trends occur side by side.

It seems that the author does not provide any data sources here. But in the original text, there are in-text citations and references on the relevant information. It should be noted that throughout the book, for the special purpose of a reading textbook, all the citations and references have been left out. Please brief the students on the importance of documentation in academic works.

- (2) There are two articles for reference: one can be found in the following website:  
<http://www.economist.com/blogs/freeexchange/2007/03/mcjobs>;  
the other is an article entitled “Multinational Retailers in China” in the book *McDonaldization: The Reader 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* (Los Angeles: Pine Forge Press, 2010). The following is the review of the article:

*The process of McDonaldization has led to the creation of a large number of McDonaldized jobs, or as they have come to be called – “Mcjobs.” Jos Gamble studied the issue of Mcjobs in UK and Japanese retailers in China through hundreds of interviews and questionnaires with service workers in these settings. He is critical of the idea of Mcjobs, especially the negatives that tend to be associated with the idea such as seeing the jobs as dehumanizing, degrading, deskilled, and leading to a deadend. Gamble focuses mainly on the workers’ perceptions of their jobs rather than the structure of the jobs. That is, for example, he looks at the workers’ perceptions of whether they acquired more skills on the job rather than looking at the job itself and asking whether it required less skills than jobs like it did in the past. He did find that the work in the Japanese stores was more McDonaldized structurally than in the UK stores, but even there employees felt that they had acquired new skills on the job. It is argued that there are specific aspects of these retailers, and the Chinese context in which they exist, that make it less likely that service work will be McDonaldized (although this could just be a transitional development) in those settings. However, it should be borne in mind that this study focuses on workers’ self-perceptions, which could well be, and frequently are, distorted and idealized. A more fully adequate study would need to examine both self-perceptions and the structure of jobs, especially as they have changed over time.*

- (3) Value: a collective conception of what is considered good, desirable, and proper –or bad, undesirable, and improper–in a

culture.

Norm: an established standard of behavior maintained by a society

- (4) Advantages of full-service restaurant over fast-food restaurant: extensive menus, service, and on-site preparation...
- (5) Ritzer says, "in fact, paradoxically, the irrationality of rationality can be thought of as the fifth dimension of McDonaldization" (see *McDonaldization: The Reader 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.*, p.18). That is, what were designed as highly rational operations often end up quite dehumanizing.
- (6) Examples: fashion retailers such as Zara, H&M, etc.; Wal-mart; IKEA (宜家家居)
- (7) McDonaldized systems enable us to do many things we were not able to do in the past; however, these systems also keep us from doing things we otherwise would do. McDonaldization is a "double-edged" phenomenon. We must not lose sight of that fact, even though we may focus on the constraints associated with McDonaldization – its "dark side."
- (8) Examples: the ATM; automated gasoline pumps; self-assembling furniture; etc.  
In some restaurants, customers are given a pencil and an order form and are expected write down their orders by themselves.
- (9) Ritzer obviously adopts Marxist theory in his analysis of McDonaldized settings' control of employees and customers, which focuses on the idea of exploitation.  
Alternative perspectives: For example, from the point of view of education, the fact that McDonald's customers are expected to dispose of their own debris helps to cultivate good habits among teenagers. From the perspective of the whole society, customers' sharing of service work helps reduce the number of workers engaged in simple labor. In terms of economics, customers' participation in the service will reduce the cost, enabling the restaurants to offer cheaper food.
- (10) For example, there is a shift towards customized offerings that allow for more individual expression, products from smaller

producers with a homespun image.

Factors such as the oil shocks of 1973, increased competition from foreign markets due to globalization, the end of the post-World War II boom, and increasing privatization made the old system of mass-producing identical, cheap goods through division of labor uncompetitive.

The development of the computer was very important to the technology of flexible specialization. Not only could the computer change characteristics of the goods being produced, but it could also analyze data to order supplies and produce goods in accordance with current demand.

- (11) Consult the article: Anthony M Gould : Working at McDonalds: Some Redeeming Features of McJobs

## **Language Enhancement**

### **I. Words and phrases**

#### **1.**

- 1) a person whose job is to receive and pay out money in a bank
- 2) a person who claims to have magic powers and who tells people what will happen to them in the future
- 3) a machine, usually in a wall outside a bank, from which you can take money out of your bank account using a special card
- 4) almost or very nearly the thing described, so that any slight difference is not important
- 5) describes something that can be done or seen using a computer and therefore without going anywhere or talking to anyone
- 6) change a situation, discussion etc. by giving special attention to one idea or subject instead of a previous one
- 7) a period of time worked by a group of workers who start work as another group finishes
- 8) sell goods, especially goods that are difficult to sell
- 9) a simple straight loose-fitting woman's dress
- 10) the total amount of goods or services sold by a company during a particular period of time
- 11) the rate at which employees leave a company and are replaced by new people
- 12) the rate at which goods are sold in a shop/store and replaced by others
- 13) to make changes to a business, system, etc. In order to make it more efficient, especially by spending less money
- 14) to find or try to find a logical reason to explain why sb thinks,



behaves, etc. In a way that is difficult to understand  
15) the words of a film, play, broadcast or speech  
16) done according to a previous plan  
17) arranged before it is performed

## **2.**

(1) distinct (2) distinctive (3) distinct (4) distinction  
(5) adapt/adjust (6) adepted (7) adopt (8) adapting (9) adjust  
(10) hideous (11) tedious (12) hideous  
(13) explode (14) exploded (15) implode (16) went off/exploded  
(17) sector; sector (18) segment (19) part (20) segments; segments  
(21) origin (22) root (23) source (24) resources

## **3.**

(1) translate...into (2) dispose of (3) oriented to (4) immune to (5) in accord with  
(6) exchange...for (7) extended to (8) ratcheting up (9) reduced to (10) imposing...on

## **4.**

(1) expected of (2) in terms of (3) in the main (4) concerning poverty  
(5) transform...into (6) dispose of (7) impact on (8) accustomed to living  
(9) complain about (10) be manifest in

# **II. Sentences and discourse**

## **1.**

(1) Some technologies are about to be put into use; others are being developed. They are computerized robots which will eventually replace human labor, although in some work places workers are now working like robots.

(2) Spokespeople for McDonaldized systems claim that they offer employees basic skills which will help them move up the occupational ladder. This is probably true if the middle-level jobs they move up to are shift leader, assistant manager, or manager of a fast-food restaurant, whose jobs are also characterized by repeated actions and pre-designed interactions.

(3) According to Giddens, McDonaldized systems enable us to do many things we were not able to do in the past; however, these systems also keep us from doing things we otherwise would do. It is a 'double-edged' phenomenon.

(4) Institutions like McDonald's Hamburger University focus on

instilling rules and values in the same way as they are concerned with teaching basic skills.

- (5) Customers at fast-food restaurants are usually expected to clear their own table after the meal. Compared with employees who are assigned to do the job all day long, customers are less likely to complain about the task.
- (6) With the growth of relatively high-skilled postindustrial occupations, there is a growing amount of literature dealing with the strategy of flexible specialization, where a firm equips itself with multi-use equipment, multi-skilled employees, and innovative executives, in order to adjust very quickly to a fast changing marketplace and business environment. The growth of postindustrial occupations occurs side by side with the deskilling of many other jobs.

## **2.**

- (1) WikiLeaks made manifest the idea that technology had enabled all information to be spread quickly and widely, even if it's labeled secret by a government.
- (2) Today, the cycle of these elections has become totally professionalized and routinized.
- (3) Mark has a friend who is a car dealer and can let him buy the car at cost.
- (4) The advertising agency is more concerned with making arty ads than understanding its clients' businesses.
- (5) About 93 percent of U.S. residents are immune to measles either because they were vaccinated or they had the disease as a child.
- (6) The lack of capital is also a major constraint on the business operations of the private enterprises.
- (7) A mother almost reduced to begging told us that our food-for-work program had not only saved her life, but restored her dignity.
- (8) If arms of this type are found, countries concerned must confiscate and dispose of them.
- (9) Many military factories have been transformed into civil ones in order to meet the needs of the country.
- (10) He pointed out in his speech that the President's health care proposals would not impose a huge burden on the state's finances.

## **3.**

从某种意义上说，麦当劳化体系成功的关键是，他们在剥削员工之外，还能够增加对顾客的剥削。不要忘了，马克思“使剥削的主题成为其社会学的中

心内容，而其它社会学不曾这样做”。按照马克思的理论，资本家支付工人的工资低于工人所创造的价值，而把剩余价值留给自己。这种状态的在当代社会还在持续，但资本家已经认识到，他们不仅可以通过更多地剥削工人，而且可以通过剥削一个全新的群体—消费者，来增加剥削的水平。根据马克思理论的解释，顾客在完成的同时也为麦当劳化体系创造价值。并不是顾客被支付的工资少于其创造的价值，他们压根不被支付任何报酬。从这点来看，顾客被剥削的程度大于工人。

#### **4.**

(3) (2) (4) (1)