The Disneyization of society

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Abstract

This article proposes the idea of Disneyization as a complementary notion to McDonaldization. Disneyization is depicted as a process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks dominate more and more sectors of society. It is presented as comprising four aspects: theming, dedifferentiation of consumption, merchandising, and emotional labour. The empirical manifestations of these attributes are outlined. The roots of Disneyization in theories of consumerism and consumer culture are examined and are contrasted with the grounding of McDonaldization in the idea of rationalization. Some of the theoretical implications of the contrasts between Disneyization and McDonaldization are presented.

Introduction

Ritzer's (1993) concept of McDonaldization represents a stimulating and important attempt to address large-scale issues concerning social change and the nature of modernity and to link these topics to some minutiae of everyday life. Ritzer is at pains to point out that McDonald's is merely a symbol of McDonaldization though it has undoubtedly been a major force behind the process. McDonaldization refers to '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 the rest of the world' (Ritzer, 1993: 3, emphasis added). This means that McDonaldization is not simply about the spread of McDonald's restaurants or of restaurants explicitly modelled on them; nor is it a process that can be specifically attributed to McDonald's alone, since the restaurants incorporate practices that were formulated long before the

McDonald brothers started their first restaurant, such as scientific management, Fordism, and bureaucracy.

The purpose of this article is to propose that a similar case can be made for a process that I will call 'Disneyization', by which I mean:

> the process by which *the principles* of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world.

My view of Disneyization is meant to parallel Ritzer's notion of McDonaldization: it is meant to draw attention to the spread of principles exemplified by the Disney theme parks. Of course, the Disney theme parks are sites of McDonaldization too. A number of Ritzer's (1993) illustrations of the four dimensions of McDonaldization – efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control – are drawn from Disney parks and from theme parks that appear to have been influenced by them. There are, moreover, numerous parallels between McDonald's restaurants and the Disney parks (Bryman, 1995: 123; King, 1983). Bryman (1995) has addressed the question of whether the Disney theme parks can be regarded as McDonaldized institutions in the context of a discussion of the 'McDisney theme park'. While he found that the model of McDonaldization applied broadly, he was less convinced that it applied well to the calculability dimension. Even if Disney parks could be regarded unambiguously as sites of McDonaldization, it is not at all certain that this would capture their significance. Indeed, the notion of Disneyization has been coined in order to reflect and build upon the suggestion that there is more to the parks than their being McDonaldized institutions. Further, we may well find that the McDonald's fast-food restaurants will be bearers of Disneyization, in much the same way that Disney theme parks are bearers of McDonaldization.

There are at least two terms that seem to be extremely similar to Disneyization. The first is 'Disneyfication'. It has been used by one of Walt Disney's biographers to refer to

> that shameless process by which everything the Studio later touched, no matter how unique the vision of the original from which the Studio worked, was reduced to the limited terms Disney and his people could understand. Magic, mystery, individuality . . . were consistently destroyed when a literary work passed through this machine that had been taught there was only one correct way to draw. (Schickel, 1986: 225)

For Schickel, then, Disneyfication referred to the often criticized way in which Walt Disney, his co-workers and their successors put an original work through a Disney mincer to emerge with a distorted version of it. The outcome of the process was and is instantly recognizable as a Disney product. This is a view that has been voiced by many critics over the years (Sayers, 1965), and as soon as a new Disney feature film is released, it occasions a nearly automatic criticism for its perversion of stories and contexts (as with the most recent release at the time of writing, *Hercules* – see Smith and Byrne, 1997).

Warren (1994) writes about the Disneyfication of the metropolis and as such is concerned with the way in which the Disney parks have been taken to represent 'a whole approach to urban planning' (1994: 90). Disneyfication is not explicitly defined, but can be inferred from the components of the Disney city. Firstly, it is a social order which is controlled by an all-powerful organization. Second, we find a breach between production and consumption which is achieved 'through the visual removal of all hint of production and the blanketing of consumption with layers of fantasy so that residents are blinkered from seeing the actual labor processes that condition and define their lives' (1994: 92). Thirdly, it is only residents' capacity to consume that is viewed as in any sense significant or important. Haas (1995) also writes about Disneyfication but in the context of the gangster novel in the form of the Disney version of E.L. Doctorow's novel, *Billy Bathgate*, which was filmed by Touchstone Pictures, a division of Disney. For Haas, the novel underwent Disneyfication in the sense that the Disney version of the story was 'sanitized' and 'clean and civilized' (1995: 74, 79). Disneyfication is also evident in the themes of patriarchy and innocence that are overlaid on Doctorow's story. These notions of Disneyfication are illuminating but are meant to have limited domains of application: literary works and urban planning. The notion of Disneyization being presented here is meant to have a broader frame of reference in a manner that is parallel to McDonaldization.

A second term that borders Disneyization is Ritzer and Liska's (1997) notion of 'McDisneyization'. The concept is not defined, but it is clear that it represents a fusion of the principles of McDonaldization and distinctively Disney-like characteristics, though the latter are not outlined in a formal manner. However, the analytic slant of the term is largely upon the 'Mc' part of the process because the significance of Disney seems to lie mainly in

being an agent of McDonaldization in relation to tourism. For example, the authors suggest that:

> While McDonald's itself has not been without influence in the tourist industry, it is Disney and its phenomenal success that has been most responsible for bringing the principles of McDonaldization . . . to the tourist industry. (Ritzer and Liska, 1997: 98)

While Ritzer and Liska's analysis is instructive, the present exercise will emphasize the Disneyesque elements.

Various writers have also produced motifs which have affinities with Disneyization. Real (1977) and Wasko (1996) write about the 'Disney Universe'. The use of this term is meant to denote the near-universality and hence global reach of the company and its products and the fact that it 'has created a self-contained universe which presents consistently recognizable values through recurring characters and familiar repetitive themes' (Wasko, 1996: 349). Thus, Wasko notes that the classic Disney Universe, as revealed primarily in the feature films, comprises: escape and fantasy; innocence; romance and happiness; sexual stereotypes; individualism; and the reinvention of folk tales. Yet another kindred term is Rojek's (1993) discussion of 'Disney culture', by which he means a moral order imbued by an image of leisure as 'rational recreation'.

These various conceptualizations and discussions of Disney parks and the company's other products suggest that various writers have been seeking to assess their broader salience and significance. With the possible exception of Ritzer and Liska's (1997) notion of McDisneyization, the writers have tended to emphasize the ideological underpinnings of Disney phenomena and have been only tangentially concerned with the wider proliferation of these features. Also, as has been suggested, the treatments of Disneyfication have tended to have limited domains of application. The present discussion will seek to build upon these fruitful beginnings by emphasizing the principles associated with the Disney parks which have spread increasingly beyond their gates. As far as possible, an attempt will be made not to stumble into McDonaldization territory, so that the distinctiveness of Disneyization can be retained. This distinctiveness will be further investigated in the Conclusion where the contrasting theoretical roots of McDonaldization and Disneyization (in Weber's concept of rationalization and consumer culture respectively) will be explored.

In the following account of Disneyization, four dimensions will be outlined. In each case, the meaning of the dimension and its operation in the context of the Disney parks will be outlined, its diffusion beyond the realms of the Disney parks will be indicated, and aspects of any of the dimensions which precede the opening of the first Disney theme park (Disneyland in California) in 1955 will be explored. The overall aim is to identify large-scale changes that are discernible in economy and culture that can be found in, and are symbolized by, the Disney parks. As with Ritzer's (1993) treatment of McDonald's in relation to McDonaldization, it is not suggested that the Disney parks *caused* these trends, though the parks' success may have hastened the assimilation of Disneyization.

The four trends are:

1. theming
2. dedifferentiation of consumption
3. merchandising
4. emotional labour

This list is probably not exhaustive, any more than McDonaldization's four dimensions can be so regarded. They are meant to be considered as four major trends which are discernible in and have implications for (late) modernity.

Theming

Theming represents the most obvious dimension of Disneyization. More and more areas of economic life are becoming themed. There is now a veritable themed restaurant industry, which draws on such well-known and accessible cultural themes as rock and other kinds of music, sport, Hollywood and the film industry more generally, and geography and history (Beardsworth and Bryman, 1999). These themes find their expression in chains of themed restaurants, like Hard Rock Cafe, Planet Hollywood, All Sports Cafe, Harley-Davidson Cafe, Rainforest Cafe, Fashion Cafe, as well as one-off themed eating establishments. Diners are surrounded by sounds and sights that are constitutive of the themed environment, but which are incidental to the act of eating as such, though they are major reasons for such restaurants being sought out. In Britain, themed pubs are increasingly prominent and popular, while in the USA, bars themed on British pubs are big business too. Hotels are increasingly being themed and it is no coincidence that two of the

more successful themed restaurant brands – Hard Rock Cafe and Planet Hollywood – are being deployed for such a purpose. Ritzer and Liska (1997) suggest that cruise ships are increasingly becoming themed. In Las Vegas, virtually every new hotel on the 'strip' is heavily themed. The famous strip now contains such themes as Ancient Rome (Caesar's), Ancient Egypt (Luxor), ye olde England (Excalibur), the movies (MGM Grand), city life (New York New York), turn-of-the-century high life on the Mediterranean (Monte Carlo), the sea (Treasure Island), and so on. It seems quite likely that this penchant for themed hotels will proliferate though possibly not with the exotic façades that adorn the Las Vegas establishments. Certainly, the theming of hotel rooms as in the Madonna Inn near San Luis Obispo, California, and in the Fantasy Hotel in West Edmonton Mall (see below) seems to be becoming increasingly prominent (Eco, 1986; Hopkins, 1990).

Shopping in malls is increasingly being accomplished in themed environments. Mall of America in Minneapolis and West Edmonton Mall in Edmonton, Alberta exemplify this feature. Cohn, quoting it would seem from a publicity leaflet about Mall of America, notes that:

> South Avenue was 'chic sophisticated . . . cosmopolitan shopping and flair'; North Garden 'lushly landscaped . . . a park-like setting with Gazebos, trellises and natural skylights'; West Market 'reminiscent of a European railway station'; and East Broadway a honky tonk, all neon and chrome. (Cohn, 1996: 4.1, ellipses in original)

Cohn also notes that the Muzac changes according to which land one is in. In West Edmonton Mall, one encounters arcades modelled on the boulevards of Paris and on Bourbon Street in New Orleans along with the conventional juxtapositions of North American malls. Similarly, the MetroCentre in Gateshead contains themed shopping areas like the Mediterranean Village (Cheney, 1990). Adjacent to Caesar's in Las Vegas is a small mall (though soon to be greatly expanded) called the Forum Shops where the shops and restaurants, which include a Planet Hollywood, are surrounded by signs of Ancient Rome.

Gottdiener (1997) suggests that airports are increasingly becoming themed environments. It must also not be forgotten that many amusement parks have also been themed, so that one tends to hear much more about theme parks than about amusement parks. Even

Knott's Berry Farm, which is close to but predates Disneyland, has taken on the trappings of a theme park with the familiar layout of themed 'lands'. In spite of Gallic horror at the arrival of Euro Disneyland (now Disneyland Paris) in 1992, Parc Asterix is not only a theme park constructed around the well-known cartoon characters, but also comprises themed lands. There is, then, evidence of a growing use of theming, to the extent that Gottdiener (1997) writes about 'the theming of America'. But what was the thinking behind the theming of Disneyland?

Accounts of the founding of Disneyland agree that Walt Disney hit upon the principles of theming as a device for differentiating his vision from the tawdry and grimy amusement parks to which he had taken his daughters. He noticed that many parents were like him in that they only frequented these parks to appease their children. He felt that it should be possible to create an environment which adults would be just as keen to visit as children. In fact, he was more than successful in this regard, because the ratio of adults to children visiting the parks has been estimated at 4:1. For Walt Disney and his successors, theming was a mechanism to achieve the goals of appealing to adults as much as children and of distinguishing Disneyland from amusement parks. It is well known that Disneyland was conceived as a celebration of America's past and as a paean to progress, or as Walt Disney put it: 'the older generation can recapture the nostalgia of days gone by, and the younger generation can savour the challenge of the future' (in Mosley, 1986: 221). The former element allowed Walt Disney to lace many of the attractions and environments with heavy doses of nostalgia that he felt would have a direct appeal to adults. Main Street USA, the thoroughfare to the attractions, exemplifies this sentiment with its unashamed harking back to turn-of-the-century middle America with which many American adults could associate themselves. Similarly, Frontierland recalls the era of the Wild West but in a very cinematic mould and was designed to provide therefore a set of images to which adults could easily relate. Moreover, the very process of theming was central to this product differentiation strategy, since most amusement parks were loose assemblages of rides of various degrees of thrill.

Theming accomplished at least two things in this connection. First, it established coherence to the various rides and attractions in Disneyland and the environments in which they were located. Secondly, in the design of rides and attractions, the accent was placed on their theming rather than on the thrill factor, which was

the emphasis in traditional amusement parks. Indeed, Walt Disney initially did not plan for roller coaster rides in order to set his park apart from the amusement parks he loathed so much. Gradually, such rides have been incorporated as a result of pressure from younger visitors who found Disney fare too tame. However, when such rides were built they were in heavily themed form, for example, Big Thunder Mountain Railroad (themed on prospecting in the Wild West), Space Mountain (space travel) and Splash Mountain (*Song of the South*). By establishing coherence to rides and by placing an emphasis on the theme rather than on thrills, Walt Disney was able to differentiate Disneyland from the traditional amusement parks that he so disliked. Much of this is captured in the Euro Disneyland share prospectus which was issued in October 1989. The prospectus outlines the 'Disney theme park concept':

> Rather than presenting a random collection of roller coasters, merry-go-rounds and Ferris wheels in a carnival atmosphere, these parks are divided into distinct areas called 'lands' in which a selected theme . . . is presented through architecture, landscaping, costuming, music, live entertainment, attractions, merchandise and food and beverage. Within a particular land, intrusions and distractions from the theme are minimised so that the visitor becomes immersed in its atmosphere. (page 13)

But it would be a mistake to think of Disneyland as the progenitor of theming. It may have (and almost certainly has) acted as a high profile spur to a realization of the significance and possibilities of theming, but its basic principles can be discerned in a number of forerunners. Two types of precursor stand out. One is amusement parks which had incorporated elementary theming features at an early stage. Coney Island's Luna Park and Dreamland Park provide examples of this, in that attractions were clothed in exotic and sometimes erotic motifs (Kasson, 1978). A second type of forerunner is the exposition which acted as a means of displaying modernity's wares by suffusing them with a sense of continuing scientific and technological progress and with utopianism. A number of writers have drawn attention to the continuities between the Disney theme parks and expositions and world's fairs (Findlay, 1992; Nelson, 1986). Marling (1994) has suggested that the Chicago Railroad Fair of 1948 was a particular inspiration for Disneyland. The Fair was designed to celebrate the centenary of the first train to enter the city. It showcased many futuristic trains and an even

greater number of trains of the past. It therefore combined the cele-
bration of the past with visions of the future which would be a fea-
ture of Disneyland. Furthermore, the rolling stock was surrounded
by carefully recreated models and settings. According to Marling
these included: a model dude ranch; a mechanical representation of
Yellowstone Park's Old Faithful geyser; and a French Quarter,
Indian Quarter and an area modelled on the beaches of Florida's
Gulf Coast. There were also numerous shows including re-
enactments of historical events. Marling argues that what was sig-
nificant was not the originality of these ideas, many of which could
be seen in the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago in 1933;
instead, the significance lay in the 'coherence and concentration of
the experience' (1994: 105). It was this aspect of the Fair, in particu-
lar, that she regards as a major inspiration for the form that
Disneyland assumed. Disneyland's originality lies in the combina-
tion of the transformation of themed *attractions* into one of themed
environments with the transformation of the world's fair/exposition
concept into a *permanent* site.

Dedifferentiation of consumption

The term 'dedifferentiation of consumption' denotes simply the
general trend whereby the forms of consumption associated with
different institutional spheres become interlocked with each other
and increasingly difficult to distinguish. For one thing, there has
been a tendency for the distinction between shopping and theme
parks to be elided. Walt Disney realized at a very early stage that
Disneyland had great potential as a vehicle for selling food and var-
ious goods. Main Street USA typified this in that its main purpose
is not to house attractions but to act as a context for shopping. As
Eco puts it: 'The Main Street façades are presented to us as toy
houses and invite us to enter them, but their interior is always a dis-
guised supermarket, where you buy obsessively, believing that you
are still playing' (1986: 43). Nowadays, the Disney theme parks are
full of shops and restaurants to the extent that many writers argue
that their main purpose increasingly is precisely the selling of a vari-
ety of goods and food. With many attractions, visitors are forced to
go through a shop containing relevant merchandise in order to exit
(eg a shop containing Star Wars merchandise as one leaves the Star
Tours ride in the two American Disney parks and Disneyland
Paris). In the EPCOT Center, a Disney World theme park which

opened in 1982, there is an area called World Showcase which comprises representations of different nations. But one of the main ways in which the nations and their nationhood is revealed is through eating and shopping. Indeed, the buildings which iconically represent some of the countries do not contain attractions at all (eg Britain, Italy), or perhaps contain little more than a film about the country concerned (eg Canada, France). However, each 'country' has at least one restaurant (some, like France, Mexico and China, have two) and at least one shop. It is not surprising, therefore, that for many commentators EPCOT and indeed the other parks are often portrayed as vehicles for selling goods and food. Thus, the Euro Disneyland share prospectus presented as one of the main management techniques associated with 'the Disney theme park concept' the fact that 'Disney has learned to optimise the mix of merchandise in stores within its theme parks, which consequently are highly profitable and achieve some of the highest sales per square metre for retail stores in the United States' (page 13). If we add hotels into this equation, the case for dedifferentiation in the parks is even more compelling. At Disney World the number of hotels has grown enormously since Michael Eisner took the helm at the Walt Disney Company in 1984. In addition to being themed (see previous section), there has been a clear attempt to ratchet up the number of guests staying in its hotels by emphasizing their advantages over non-Disney ones. For example, Disney guests are able to enter the parks earlier and can therefore get to the main attractions before the arrival of hordes of tourists. They are also able to secure tables for the sought after restaurants (especially the EPCOT ethnic ones) from their hotels rather than having to take a chance on their availability when they turn up at the parks. Also, for some time now Disney has been offering its hotel guests inclusive length-of-stay passes to the parks. It is striking that it was recognized during the days when Euro Disneyland's financial troubles were common knowledge that one of the reasons for its problems was not the number of visitors to the parks but the fact that they were not spending as much on food, souvenirs and Disney hotels as had been predicted (Bryman, 1995: 77). Thus, we see in the Disney parks a tendency for shopping, eating, hotel accommodation and theme park visiting to become inextricably interwoven. Any distinctions are further undermined by the fact that Disney have created what is essentially a mall in the centre of Disney World (Disney Village, formerly called Disney Marketplace) and have announced that they will be developing a mall adjacent to Disneyland Park (Finch, 1997).

In some very large shopping malls, the opposite has happened, though this too represents further evidence of the dedifferentiation of consumption: the mall designers have built theme parks and other leisure facilities. This extends well beyond the eateries and cinemas that are standard mall fare. At Mall of America is a seven acre theme park called Knott's Camp Snoopy, which features 23 rides. There is no entrance fee and visitors pay for each ride. In the first six months of operation, the park took more than 4 million rides (Spellmeyer, 1993). Early research showed that the average visitor spends 3.1 hours in the mall which includes a half-hour visit to Camp Snoopy, but since then the average visit to the mall has been calculated as 2.6 hours (Cohn, 1996). As is well known, West Edmonton Mall has similarly incorporated a giant water park and theme park attractions in 'Fantasyland'. One of the Ghermezian brothers who own and operate the company that was responsible for the Mall's design was apparently very influenced by the Disney theme parks (Hopkins, 1990: 9–10). The MetroCentre similarly contains 'an enormous fantasy kingdom of fairground rides' (Urry, 1990: 149). The rationale for this hybridization of consumption and theme park attractions is well summed up by the mall developer, Bill Dawson, who is quoted as saying: 'the more needs you fulfill, the longer people stay' (in Crawford, 1992: 15). Moreover, in broadening the range of facilities on offer, the mall transforms itself from a local amenity to a tourist attraction and at least one investment analyst predicts that the trend towards injecting amusements into malls will continue (Barber, 1995: 132). Further illustrations of dedifferentiation of consumption include the way in which many airport terminals are being turned into mini-malls (Hamilton and Harlow, 1995) and such simple manifestations as the tendency for many museums and heritage attractions to force visitors to exit through a shop. Moreover, hotels and casinos using the Hard Rock Cafe and Planet Hollywood restaurant brands are being built in different locations. McDonald's is frequently involved in a form of dedifferentiation of consumption when it links its fare with Disney cartoon characters and films. It also attached itself to the opening of the Segaworld theme park in September 1996 by offering free burgers to visitors.

Las Vegas is possibly a better illustration than the Disney theme parks of Disneyization in the form of dedifferentiation. For a start, the hotels mentioned in the previous section could equally be described, and probably more accurately, as casinos. Each houses a massive casino, although they could equally be described as casinos

with hotels attached. But in recent years, dedifferentiation has proceeded apace in Las Vegas. You may enter the Forum shops at Caesar's on the moving walkway but the only exit is to walk through the casino. More than this, in order to attract families and a wider range of clientele (Grossman, 1993), the casino/hotels have either built theme parks (eg MGM Grand, Circus Circus) or have incorporated theme park attractions (eg Luxor, Stratosphere, New York New York, Treasure Island, Excalibur). In the process, conventional distinctions between casinos, hotels, restaurants, shopping, and theme parks collapse. Crawford has written that 'malls routinely entertain, while theme parks function as disguised marketplaces' (1992: 16), but current trends imply that even this comment does not capture the extent of dedifferentiation.

Merchandising

In this discussion, I will use the term 'merchandising' simply to refer to the promotion of goods in the form of or bearing copyright images and logos, including such products made under licence. This is a realm in which Disney have been pre-eminent. Walt Disney's first animated star was arguably not Mickey Mouse, but Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, around which he and his studio had created a popular series of shorts in 1927. When he tried to negotiate a better financial deal over these shorts, Walt found that it was not he but the distributor that owned the rights to them. As a result, the studio had no rights to Oswald's name and therefore to the small range of merchandise that had begun to appear bearing the character's name and image. Thereafter, he zealously guarded his rights in this regard. A major factor may well have been the revenue-producing capability of merchandise bearing Oswald's image, including a pop-up puppet, stencil set, celluloid figures and posters (Tumbusch, 1989: 28).

   Merchandise and licensing proliferated, however, in the wake of Mickey's arrival in November 1928 (deCordova, 1994). A year later, Walt Disney Productions was transformed into four mini-companies, one of which dealt with merchandising and licensing. Deals were handled through first of all George Borgfeldt and from 1934 onwards by the flamboyant Kay Kamen. Walt Disney certainly did not create the idea of merchandising or even of merchandising animated cartoon characters. Felix the Cat was the subject of a large range of merchandise in the mid-1920s (Canemaker, 1991). What Walt Disney did

realize was its immense profitability. In the years after Mickey's arrival, the company did not make large sums from its cartoons, because Walt Disney's incessant quest for improvements in the quality of animation cut deeply into the studio's profits. To a very large extent, he was able to finance expensive technical innovation and his unyielding insistence on quality by using profits from merchandise. Klein (1993) has suggested that about half of the studio's profits were attributable to merchandise (see also, Merritt and Kaufman, 1992: 144). Indeed, some writers have suggested that in later years, the design of cartoon characters, in particular their 'cuteness', was at least in part motivated by a consideration of their capacity to be turned into merchandise (Bryman, 1995; Forgacs, 1992). It may also account for the changes in Mickey's increasingly less rodent-like appearance over the years (Gould, 1979).

The Disney theme parks have two points of significance in relation to merchandising as a component of Disneyization. Firstly, and most obviously, they provide sites for the selling of the vast array of Disney merchandise that has accumulated over the years: from pens to clothing, from books to sweets and from watches to plush toys. Sales from merchandise are a major contributor to profits from the parks. The parks are carefully designed to maximize the opportunity for and inclination of guests to purchase merchandise. Secondly, they provide their own merchandise. This occurs in a number of ways, including: tee-shirts with the name of the park on them; EPCOT clothing or souvenirs with a suitably attired cartoon character on them, such as a 'French' Mickey Mouse purchased in the France pavilion or a sporty Goofy purchased in the Wonders of Life pavilion; merchandise deriving from characters specifically associated with the parks, such as Figment (a character in the Journey into Imagination ride in EPCOT); and a petrified Mickey looking out from the top of the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror (a Disney-MGM Studios attraction) emblazoned on clothing. Thus, while the merchandising of Disney creations predates the first Disney park by nearly thirty years, the parks exemplify this aspect of Disneyization by virtue of their substantial promotion of a host of items. Indeed, Davis (1996) suggests that theme parks have become major vehicles for merchandising and that this at least in part accounts for the growing tendency for media conglomerates to buy or build them. Davis writes somewhat more generally about the 'cross-promotion' of goods, which itself can be seen as a principle of Disneyization, but as she observes, merchandising is central to the appeal of cross-promotion: 'Licensed images and . . . merchandise

are at the heart of the matter, and the potential of the theme park industry to sell and support licensed products is central to synergy' (1996: 407). Fjellman, similarly, refers to the merchandise associated with Disney films as being part of 'an endless round of self-referential co-advertisements' (1992: 157).

Over the years, it has become increasingly apparent that more money can be made from feature films through merchandising and licensing than from box office receipts as such. While hugely successful merchandise bonanzas like those associated with *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park* and *The Lion King* are by no means typical, they represent the tip of a lucrative iceberg. Like many movies, television series also often form the basis for successful lines of merchandise and indeed it has sometimes been suggested that they are devised with merchandise and licensing potential very much in mind. There are no guarantees, however. If a movie flops, like *Judge Dredd*, even though based on a popular comic book character and having superficial merchandise potential, the products will either not be developed or will not move out of stores. Also, the merchandising of even fairly successful films like *Flintstones* and *Casper* can be disappointing (Pereira, 1996). Certainly, Disney seems to have been very disappointed with the merchandise sales associated with *Dick Tracy*, produced by Touchstone Pictures (Grover, 1991: 261). Even so, the potential for merchandising in relation to movies is reckoned to be huge and is an important element in what Wasko *et al.* (1993) refer to as 'the commercialization of US films' and more generally as 'the commodification of culture' (1993: 271). The potential of merchandising lies behind the tremendous growth in studio stores, like those associated with Disney and Warner Brothers, a market into which MGM, Sony and others are moving. Moreover, there has been a trend in recent years for licensing firms to buy up the rights to merchandising of a variety of traditional characters, including Thomas the Tank Engine, Noddy and other Enid Blyton characters, Marvel comic characters, and Sooty (Alberge, 1996; Fox, 1996; Lee, 1996).

But it would be a mistake, of course, to view merchandising purely in terms of the movies and cartoon characters. The new themed restaurant chains all follow the lead of Hard Rock Cafe of developing extensive lines of merchandise, including the ubiquitous tee-shirt which simultaneously informs where wearers have been on their holidays and acts as literally a walking advertisement for the chain. You do not necessarily have to eat in the establishment in order to purchase the items. Very often, if not invariably, you can enter the shop area without needing to eat the food. In the case of

the Rainforest Cafe chain, the shopping area is often as big as many restaurants; this contrasts somewhat with the small booths in Hard Rock Cafe, All Star Sports and Planet Hollywood restaurants. professional sport has succumbed to the attractions of merchandising and in Britain major clubs and events can be the focus for successful merchandising (Longmore, 1996; Truss, 1996). Kuper, for example, has written that Manchester United Football Club 'tripled its turnover to £60m over the last five years, largely thanks to merchandising' (1996: 2). While British universities have lagged behind their North American counterparts, it appears that they too have realized the potential of what one news reporter appropriately refers to as 'Disney-style merchandising' (Swanton, 1997: vi).

Emotional labour

Ritzer (1993) was somewhat silent about the nature of work under McDonaldization, but it is clear from his view that since it incorporates Scientific management and Fordism the work tends to be dehumanizing and alienating. More recently, Ritzer (1998) has written about 'McJobs', that is, jobs specifically connected to the McDonaldization of society, and links his reflections with insights from labour process theory (Braverman, 1974). While he finds the insights of this theory instructive, he notes that there is more to these jobs than their being 'simply the deskilled jobs of our industrial past in new settings' (Ritzer, 1998: 63). McJobs have a number of new characteristics including 'many distinctive aspects of the control of these workers' (1998: 63). In particular, Ritzer draws attention to the scripting of interaction in service work. Not only does this process result in 'new depths in . . . deskilling' (1998: 64) but also it entails control of the self through emotional labour, which has been defined as the 'act of expressing socially desired emotions during service transactions' (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993: 88–9). Drawing on the work of Hochschild (1983) on airline attendants and Leidner (1993) on insurance salespersons at Combined Insurance in the USA, he notes that in addition to interaction with clients being controlled, the organization seeks to control 'how they view themselves and how they feel' (1998: 64). This is revealed in the insistence that workers exhibit cheerfulness and friendliness towards customers as part of the service encounter. There is some uncertainty about how far emotional labour is associated with McJobs. Leidner (1993) conducted research on work in a McDonald's outlet

(where presumably one finds the archetypal McJob) and argued that the kind of emotional labour discerned by Hochschild could be found among counter workers. Such a finding would be consistent with Reiter's research on Burger King which 'urges employees to be pleasant, cheerful, smiling, and courteous at all times' and to 'show obvious pride in their work' (1996: 136). However, Ritzer (1998) argues that emotional labour is not a feature of McDonaldized organizations, because they are mainly interested in workers' overt behaviour rather than with how they feel about themselves.

There is some disagreement, then, about how far emotional labour accompanies McDonaldization, but there is no doubt that many aspects of this form of control are spreading, as the work of the authors cited in the previous paragraph suggests (for reviews of much of the evidence for this trend, see Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Wharton and Erickson, 1993). But emotional labour is in many ways exemplified by the Disney theme parks. The behaviour of Disney theme park employees is controlled in a number of ways and control through scripted interactions and encouraging emotional labour is one of the key elements (Bryman, 1995: 107–13). The friendliness and helpfulness of Disney theme park employees is renowned and is one of the things that visitors often comment on as something that they liked (Sorkin, 1992: 228). Moreover, anyone with even a passing knowledge of the parks *expects* this kind of behaviour. The ever-smiling Disney theme park employee has become a stereotype of modern culture. Their demeanour coupled with the distinctive Disney language is designed among other things to convey the impression that the employees are having fun too and therefore not engaging in real work. In one instance, at least, the diffusion of emotional labour from the Disney theme parks was very direct: Findlay (1992) maintains that the city of Anaheim's stadium and convention centre, built in the mid-1960s, consciously adopted a Disney-style approach to handling customers. He quotes a local newspaper article as saying that at both organizations could be found 'an attractive and smiling staff' who had been tutored in a 'Disneyland vocabulary' (1992: 101).

It was not quite that way at the beginning, however. In Disneyland's very early days, Walt Disney was appalled by the behaviour of some of the park's staff toward visitors. The staff, many of whom had been hired by lessees, lacked training and were gruff and unhelpful towards visitors. The only employees who exhibited the kind of behaviour Walt wanted were the attraction operators who had been trained by the company itself. According to

Randy Bright, a Disney Imagineer: 'What Walt really wanted were employees with a ready smile and a knack for dealing pleasantly with large numbers of people' (1987: 111). The Disney University was created precisely in order to inculcate the necessary training and was responsible for a new vocabulary. According to the founder of the Disneyland University, one of the central elements of the early training approach was to inculcate the principle that '[i]n addition to a "friendly smile", we sold the importance of "friendly phrases" ' (France, 1991: 22). Since then Disney has developed seminars which introduce executives from a variety of organizations to its distinctive approach to human resource management (Blocklyn, 1988; Eisman, 1993) and has publicized this approach more generally (eg Johnson, 1991). These seminars may have been instrumental in the further diffusion of this aspect of Disneyization. Moreover, a number of management texts have emphasized this ingredient of the success of the Disney theme parks (e.g. Connellan, 1996; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Zemke, 1989).

Needless to say, the manifestations of emotional labour are sometimes repudiated and behaviour that is inconsistent with Disney principles of how hosts and hostesses should act is exhibited, as a number of commentators have observed (e.g. Koenig, 1994; Sutton, 1992; Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989). However, to concentrate on these features is to miss the point: as Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) observe, there is an almost remarkable acceptance among Disney staff of the emotional requirements of the job. Moreover, the very fact that these emotional requirements sometimes occasion considerable resentment among hosts or hostesses (Project on Disney, 1995) is a reflection of the demants of emotional labour just as it was for Hochschild's (1983) airline attendants. Even among some former Disney hosts or hostesses who have had adverse employment experiences, there seems to be a certain ambivalence that combines a degree of admiration with a recognition that the job was not for them (Zibart, 1997).

Conclusion

In this article, I have sought to position the concept of Disneyization in two different ways and senses. On the one hand, I have employed a term that has been used much less often than 'Disneyfication' which now has a number of connotations, some of which are pejorative. By adopting a term with less conceptual

baggage, it is possible to outline its features in a more untrammelled manner. Secondly, I have had in mind a kind of analogue to Ritzer's (1993) influential concept of McDonaldization. In other words, like McDonaldization, Disneyization is depicted as a large-scale process which is made up of a number of analytically separate components. Many institutions may be described as *both* McDonaldized and Disneyized, thereby perhaps warranting being referred to as McDisneyized, following Ritzer and Liska (1997). Shopping malls and theme parks are prominent examples. However, Disneyization and McDonaldization may sometimes overlap with respect to certain institutions but they are distinctively different processes. What is more, as this article has suggested, institutions may be McDonaldized but not Disneyized or Disneyized but not McDonaldized or may even be Disneyized in some respects and McDonaldized in others. The Disney theme park itself may be an example of this last pattern. Bryman (1995) has argued that it displays characteristics of three of the four dimensions of McDonaldization and is obviously a Disneyized institution.

McDonaldization and Disneyization can be depicted as having contrasting intellectual traditions. Ritzer positions McDonaldization in relation to the classical concern in social theory with rationalization exhibited by Weber and others, whereas the intellectual heritage of Disneyization is much closer to recent more theoretical concerns about consumerism. This contrast could be taken to imply that they are grounded in different images of society. Ritzer (1993: 156–8) has unambiguously located McDonaldization in relation to modernity, but as he also observes 'consumption . . . is often considered the hallmark of postmodern society' (1998: 9). This raises the consideration of whether the grounding of Disneyization in consumerism and the consumer society implies a quite distinctive intellectual heritage from McDonaldization and equally a different vision of the nature of the society in which each flourishes. Disneyization can be depicted as having points of affinity with many of the attributes of a consumer culture identified by writers like Baudrillard (1970/1988), Bauman (1998), Featherstone (1991) and Jameson (1991) who emphasize the sign value of goods and their connectedness to notions of life style and individuals' personal identity projects. There are different aspects to this current of thought, not the least of which is that it encapsulates both the propensity of people to respond to goods and services in terms of sign value and the conscious manipulation of signs by the suppliers of goods and services. These features can be discerned in relation to

Disneyization in the growing use of theming devices and in the deployment of copyright images in merchandising coupled with the individual's preparedness to respond to them. The dedifferentiation of consumption is also relevant here as it is to do with the ways in which people are encouraged to get on with their consumption projects while actually giving the impression that they are doing something else. Emotional labour serves to convey a sense that the employee is not engaged in work, so that the consumer is not reminded of the world of work and can get on with the happy task of buying, eating, gambling and so on. The smiling, helpful demeanour may also encourage spending in its own right.

The identification of Disneyization with theories of consumer culture seems to imply that whereas McDonaldization is a modern phenomenon, Disneyization is a post-modern one. However, one has to be cautious about such simple connections, not least because Ritzer's (1998) more recent writing on McDonaldization displays a greater preparedness to associate it with postmodern themes and writings. Certainly, there are many features in Disneyization that are frequently associated with postmodernity: the proliferation of signs, dedifferentiation of institutional spheres, depthlessness, cultivated nostalgia, and the problematization of authenticity and reality. However, it is important not to fall headlong into an immediate association with postmodernity: as Beardsworth and Bryman observe in relation to themed restaurants, for consumers to enjoy the experiences associated with trends like Disneyization '. . . they must know that their feet remain firmly planted on modern ground in order to be sure of the reassuring securities of modernity: punctuality, physical safety, comfort, reliability, hygiene, etc.' (1999). On the other hand, Disneyization and the consumer culture in which it is embedded (and which it cultivates) appear to betoken a sea change of considerable proportions. On that basis, Disneyization would seem to be inconsistent with McDonaldization. In fact, as has been suggested above, they represent contrasting trends which co-exist. My purpose here has been to suggest that the growing interest in McDonaldization and its spheres of application (eg Hartley, 1995; Parker and Jary, 1995; Prichard and Willmott, 1997; Smart, in press) should not obscure the significance of other trends and that the apparently all-encompassing tone of the notion of the McDonaldization of society should not blind us to aspects of the modern world that do not appear to be readily subsumed by it. Disneyization is one of the 'other trends' that needs to be considered in tandem with McDonaldization while it also represents an

attempt to capture certain features of the modern world with which McDonaldization does not readily deal.

McDonaldization and Disneyization also differ in that the precursors to the former – scientific management, Fordism, and bureaucracy – have been underway for a century or longer. It has been possible to point to a number of precursors to Disneyization, but in most cases its chief impact has been felt in much more recent years. Further, Disneyization is almost certainly nowhere near as extensive as McDonaldization – at the moment. McDonald's itself gave a huge boost to the spread of McDonaldization, but whereas fast-food restaurants can crop up all over the place, Disney-style theme parks cannot. Thus, while the lessons of the Disney theme parks are widely emulated (selling and theming strategies, use of emotional labour), the fact that they are less prevalent and prominent almost certainly means that their lessons diffuse more slowly. None the less, the pace of diffusion of the four dimensions of Disneyization seems to be increasing (eg Gottdiener, 1997: 1–4), so that its significance may well be similarly accelerating.

In the end, the crucial question is whether the concept of Disneyization is useful. Many writers have found the idea of McDonaldization helpful as a capsule statement about the nature of social change and of modernity and as a reference point for discussing these changes. It has been used as a reference point for discussions of specific institutional spheres (for example, Bryman, 1995; Hartley, 1995; Smart, in press). It is in a similar context and with similar purposes in mind that the concept of Disneyization has been proposed. However, in the case of Disneyization there is one further purpose. The term 'Disneyfication' has been deployed in a variety of ways with a variety of meanings to a variety of objects. Clearly, writers have felt that 'Disney' signifies something meaningful in terms of its effects, but the general approach to writing about Disneyfication lacks coherence and has rather pejorative overtones. I have been concerned in this article to provide a specific set of denotations for the term 'Disneyization' and in large part to avoid the disparaging tone of much previous writing.

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