
BECOMING MCCURCH: A CASE STUDY OF A BLACK CHURCH ORGANIZATION'S TRANSITION FROM LEADING IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO CREATING A GLOBAL BRAND

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Abstract

While much research has discussed the importance and influence of black churches and black church organizations, limited research has been done to express how some of these organizations, through the process of routinization, shift from leading change in local black communities to leading by having a global influence. Following George Ritzer, I will refer to this process as McDonaldization.¹ Utilizing participant observation, this paper details how a black church organization began as a community church but shifted to becoming a global entity, enlarging its brand globally, and reproducing itself into what I call McChurch as a result.

A Shift from Local to National or Global Leadership

Black churches have been known for their instrumental role in the life of black communities throughout history and across America.² They have not only provided spiritual guidance but also community leadership in times of social struggle.³ Quite often, research of black churches has helped us to understand

¹ George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, 8th ed. (New York: Sage Publications, 2014).

² See Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990); Franklin E. Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964).

³ Sandra L. Barnes, "Black Church Culture and Community Action," *Social Forces* 84 (2005): 967–994; Omar M. McRoberts, *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

their achievements, the political influence they have had in dealing with issues of racism historically and currently, and how black churches are using technology for greater social outreach.⁴ Studies have clearly shown us the importance of the black church in African American communities by inspiring educational attainment,⁵ and additional research has provided insight into how black churches have been instrumental in African American communities by providing social services⁶ as well as support during times of tragedy, such as Hurricane Katrina.⁷ However, research has not been conducted to indicate how some of these churches have shifted their focus from leading their local communities or from the African American communities in general to building a more global identity through the process of branding and routinization. Instead of working to influence and help the community, it is possible, as I have found in this case study, that some of these churches, which I call Black McChurches, focus more on creating a global brand. Therefore, I research the question: How does a black church organization shift from leading change in local black communities to leading nationally and globally? This paper details a case study of the transition of one

⁴ Andrew Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Erika Vora and Jay A. Vora, "Undoing Racism in America: Help from a Black Church," *Journal of Black Studies* 32(2002): 389–404.

⁵ Sandra L. Barnes, *Black Megachurch Culture: Models for Education and Empowerment* (New York: Peter Lang Press, 2010); Robert W. Gaines, "Looking Back, Moving Forward: How the Civil Rights Era Church Can Guide the Modern Black Church in Improving Black Student Achievement," *The Journal of Negro Education* 79 (2010): 366–379; Carlos R. McCray, Cosette M. Grant, and Floyd D. Beachum, "Pedagogy of Self-Development: The Role the Black Church Can Have on African American Students," *The Journal of Negro Education* 79 (2010): 233–248.

⁶ Sandra L. Barnes, "Priestly and Prophetic Influences on Black Church Social Services," *Social Problems* 51 (2004): 202–221.

⁷ Karen Trader-Leigh, *Understanding the Role of African-American Churches and Clergy in Community Crisis Response* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2008).

predominantly black church organization to a global church movement. From 2012 to 2015, I was allowed to not just go to the services of the Black McChurch organization,⁸ but to visit leaders' meetings, pastors' conferences, and church functions, and to witness how churches were planted and maintained. For three years, I was able to see the transition from a community-focused local church to a global-minded brand. During these three years, the black church organization established other churches within this country in states including Ohio, California, Texas, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Oklahoma. Additionally, the black church organization established or led churches in Belarus, Ethiopia, Canada, Italy, Guyana, South Africa, and Indonesia. While these churches are in very different locations, through the process of routinization, which refers to the regular, consistent, and mandatory procedures that are in place, the Black McChurch has focused its energy on making a brand of their organization for all to notice.

In this paper, I utilize Ritzer's McDonaldization theory to show how this black church organization, the Black McChurch, is spreading its brand worldwide and creating places that look just like them, even if racially they do not. This case study provides a model for how to view other predominantly black churches that have gone or are going through similar transitions. This is a trend that might be happening in churches that are dominated by other racial groups, but I focus on black churches because of their influential history as a location for local political and social mobilization, as well as a place for social leadership when surrounded by difficult racial environments. There is, therefore, a shift in the functioning of black churches in African American

⁸ To provide the confidentiality requested, I do not include the name of the organization but have instead chosen to call the church I observed for this case study the Black McChurch. Additionally, I do not provide the names of the pastors.

communities, whereas arguably, no shift is necessary for predominantly white or other groups' church organizations.

The purpose of this research is to provide a clear picture of how some black church organizations can successfully and effectively shift from leading in a local community to leading into an international brand through the process of McDonaldization. However, this research also provides an opportunity to raise some questions; for example: When the focus changes from leading in a local community to creating or building a global brand, is less focus placed on building people and maintaining the ability to successfully lead local communities because the focus is instead on building the organization?

Background of the Black McChurch

The black church organization where I conducted my case study has been in existence for more than thirty years. Starting in the 1980s as a local church with in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion tradition, it opened in an area close to Washington, D.C. Its initial membership was twenty-four, but it grew to four hundred members within two years. The pastor, whose family had a history of fighting for civil rights and who had grown up and worked with the family of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, wanted to start a church where he could uplift the black community and help them to achieve not only spiritual success but also educational, social, and financial success. He emphasized "building on the foundation that was laid before us" and "continuing the dreams and visions" as a way to inspire the people he pastored to do great things in life.

Through this one black church, programs to uplift the black community were established such as offering GED assistance, college readiness classes, financial seminars, drug programs, and programs to inspire black men to live above social stereotypes. This church lists community outreach as one of the reasons it is successful today. Eventually, however, as this church grew, it changed as

well. Instead of remaining in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination, it broke away and shifted into becoming its own nondenominational organization. The emphasis is now on planting churches in other places and according to the pastor, “building a brand that is easily recognizable.” By 2015, the Black McChurch boasts of having close to thirty thousand members and having planted or helped to reestablish approximately one hundred churches throughout the world—with more outside the United States than within. I observed the Black McChurch for three years and traveled to several of its branch churches (specifically, Dallas, Raleigh and Charlotte in North Carolina, Harrisburg and Philadelphia, and Richmond, Virginia). Thirty branch churches are found in the continental United States with most of the churches along the East Coast; however, there are churches along and near the West Coast in cities such as Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

Due to international meetings that were held in the United States, I was able to see, meet, and speak to church leaders from all of the churches within the United States and many from outside the U.S. Additionally, this organization has bishops that continue the Black McChurch traditions in their cultural contexts even though they would not be considered black. For example, a European bishop has approximately ten thousand members at his local church but has planted seventeen other churches using the same organizational model. Similarly, an Asian bishop has approximately five hundred members but has planted twelve churches with the same organizational structure. As the observation was conducted, it became increasingly noticeable that the organization operates using dimensions that are commonly evident within the fast-food industry.

Ritzer's McDonaldization and the Black Church Organization as McChurch

The McDonaldization of society was first conceptualized by George Ritzer in 1996 in his book by the same name. While the ideas were influenced greatly by Weber's model of bureaucracy, Ritzer was able to connect it to the proliferation of the fast-food model. Even more importantly, he clearly made the argument that society is becoming modeled after the fast-food industry. Therefore, this trend toward formalized rationality, McDonaldization, indicates that society is becoming dominated more by the fast-food model of efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control. Various facets of society are being influenced by this model, including the black church. Ritzer's four dimensions of McDonaldization, as presented in his description of the McDonald's fast-food restaurant franchise, could definitely be utilized in an analysis of a black church organization's transition from leading within a local community to leading a global multi-church.

The first dimension, *efficiency*, is what McDonald's offers. In the fast-food industry, transforming someone from being hungry to full in the fastest way is what appeals to people. Satisfying a need in the quickest way possible seems to be most appealing in American culture. This efficiency is necessary because it meets a societal need. For example, working parents need to feed children quickly and busy professionals have frequent time limitations, so getting food in the most expedient way possible is important to these groups. This is also evident for people who attend Black McChurches. In the Black McChurch, things are timed so that people can receive their religious fulfillment quickly without being in church too long or being unable to fulfill other plans for their days. To make sure things go smoothly, ushers seat people quickly in a pattern that maximizes use of the space, musicians and singers are required to stick to their time limits, and clergy are taught to teach a three-point message with a conclusion based on a preset annual

theme. These operational parameters provide a religious experience in the fastest and most efficient way possible.

The second applicable dimension is *calculability*. As Ritzer states, “quantity has become equivalent to quality; a lot of something, or the quick delivery of it, means it must be good.”⁹ In addition to the idea that larger is better, as evidenced by the creation and popularity of the supersize meal, consumers can calculate how long it would take to get a fast-food meal compared with cooking at home. Similarly, parishioners can calculate how much time is required for a service. Because they get singing, dancing, a message, opportunities to build relationships, community, and a moment of respite from life’s issues in a very short time, they might see the church service as beneficial. A huge problem with this dimension, calculability, is that workers at McDonald’s are required to do a lot of work with low pay. Similarly, people are used within this organization as workers to fulfill the demands of those who are in leadership for little or no pay. They are expected to do a lot of work with little investment from the organization.

Next is the *predictability* dimension. Predictability means that the service will be the same every time and in every place. Just as the Big Mac in the South is roughly the same as the Big Mac in the West, the church services will be extremely similar regardless of location. There is little variation and little to no room for innovation. The only difference will be the faces that are serving the meals or conducting the services. The goals have been set, and the workers follow a model or script. Just as a script tells the McDonald’s workers how to dress, how to speak, how to act, how to make food, and so on, a script tells people in the Black McChurch how to dress, how to speak, how to act, and how to live. This is done in organizations through routinization, deskilling, and automation according to Ritzer. As a result, creativity is lost. This loss occurs because what the workers say and

⁹ Ritzer, 10.

do is controlled through scripting. This scripting and deskilling benefits those who are on the top of the socioeconomic ladder by making sure their desires are carried out by their workers. The people at the bottom are not allowed to add or subtract from the script; they simply carry out the desires of those at the top. They must follow the plan or lose their position.

Last is the *control* dimension. In the fast-food industry, Ritzer argues that the customers and the workers are controlled. The customers are controlled by the fact that there are lines, few options, uncomfortable seats (designed to have customers eat quickly and leave), and they have to clean up after themselves. The workers are controlled due to their training. They are trained to do a limited number of things precisely the way they are told to do them. Managers are put into place to make sure protocol is maintained. Likewise, in the Black McChurch, the people are controlled by seating arrangements, by limited options for services, and by sermons that tell them to pay a certain amount of money, to act a certain way that benefits the organization, and to leave at a certain time. Additionally, those who are workers in the organization are trained to do things based on the organizational way, and clergy are trained to believe in those limited ways and protocols and to ensure that everyone under their watch is abiding by those protocols. Clergy and leaders are quickly removed for being too innovative, or for not following the protocols exactly. While they might not have the ability in the Black McChurch to replace humans with technology, in some ways they have tried by utilizing technology to communicate specific messages or requiring all of the churches within the organization to show recorded talks from the chief bishop. This ensures that the right message is disseminated to everyone in the organization instead of having actual live church services at times.

In this case study, I go through each of these dimensions more specifically to show how the McDonaldization model is easily applied to the black

megachurch's protocols. The rest of this paper will provide more details and examples from this study based on these dimensions.

Efficiency

The first dimension in Ritzer's McDonaldization theory is efficiency. Efficiency refers to the optimum method of completing a task. In my observation of this local church from 2012 to 2015 and its shift to becoming a global ministry in the form of the Black McChurch, efficiency was evident. Several examples exist: constructing the organization's constitution and its importance to the organization, the consistent and mandatory structure of the church services, the strongly recommended way of teaching, and the structure of auxiliary ministries and groups.

Developing the Constitution: The leaders of the church met behind closed doors and constructed a constitution in monthly meetings over five years. According to a church leader, this document is "the guiding official document of the [church] to specify how to do everything in the church, worldwide, regardless of location." The shift from a local church that influences the community to a global ministry developing a brand is evident in every part of the document. For example, the constitution states:

Each Black McChurch, whether located in the United States or internationally, will operate as a local Black McChurch in conformity with the Holy Bible, the Black McChurch's statement of faith, The Black McChurch's doctrine and theology, and the Black McChurch's constitution.¹⁰

¹⁰ From the *Constitution of the Black McChurch*. Here in the title, and throughout the quotations, I have substituted "Black McChurch" for the actual name of the organization in order to provide anonymity.

Another part of the constitution states:

Each local Black McChurch shall be an independently incorporated and operated local church that has the authority to conduct Christian activities and activities related to and consistent with the Holy Bible; the Black McChurch statement of faith; the Black McChurch's doctrine and theology; the Black McChurch's vision, purpose, and motivation; the spiritual direction established by the presiding bishop; and this constitution.¹¹

What is evident is that this constitution outlined not the rights and freedoms of the individuals in the organization, but instead how every church within the organization should function. Each church must be just like the original church in color scheme, logo, sayings, order of service, worship style, and governing structure. It's organized in such a way, as the chief bishop stated in one meeting, "so that the ministry can be packaged" for others to use.¹² The model that is presented is one that is believed to be the best, based on what the local church did, for all the other churches to imitate. Therefore, the constitution itself is a document that indicates what the organization believes and how each local church should operate. Additionally, it dictates with detail how each church should conduct its worship services. From specific time frames for messages, to order of services, to attire for officials in services, to what each person is supposed to know theologically, the constitution was constructed to be viewed as almost as important as the Bible. For example, statements are made in the constitution that say members of the church must follow "the Holy Bible, this constitution, and the Theology and Doctrine of the Black McChurch."¹³ The constitution is more of a manual or guidebook for pastors and parishioners so they know

¹¹ *Constitution of the Black McChurch.*

¹² From a private conversation with the chief bishop in April 2012.

¹³ *Constitution of the Black McChurch.*

how to conduct church services and produce and maintain the Black McChurch brand efficiently.

Structure of the Church Services: During my observation, I was able to visit the organization's headquarters numerous times over a span of three years. I was also able to go to seven of the churches in the United States and meet church leaders from other countries who are a part of the organization. Several key things stood out about how the services were structured and organized in order to be most efficient. First, the organization requires that services start on time. One thing that was repeated over and over about timeliness is that everything must be done "decently and in order." So, as I attended multiple services, I noticed that every service started promptly at the times that were listed on Web sites, signs, and flyers. I even heard at the headquarters as well as one of the auxiliary churches that people have joined because of "the timeliness and order of the services." Additionally, most of the churches I attended had digital clocks on the walls that can be seen from the stage area for the ministry workers. Therefore, when the clock displayed the time they were to begin, they began. In addition to starting on time, there was a specific time for "praise and worship" or the singing portion of the church service. It was believed by the church elders that twenty minutes was enough time for this musical session, and, therefore, all churches should apply that time frame to their church services regardless of location. The local churches of the organization that I visited in the United States followed this injunction. For example, at a branch in North Carolina, the pastor motioned for the leader of the singing portion to stop because they had reached their time limit.

Second, the order of the service was fixed as well. Each church that is a part of the organization is required to have the same service structure. The service structure refers to a set schedule of events that happen during the worship service. Each church was required to follow the

same pattern and list this pattern in their bulletin so parishioners could follow the order of the service. As a result, each service that I went to regardless of the city followed the same structure. They started with prayer, followed by twenty minutes of praise and worship. Next, the church leader read a scripture from the Bible. Then they sang “The Hallelujah Chorus.” Another prayer followed, and then a congregational song. As I went to the different churches or attended the same church over and over, I began to expect the same routine. After the congregational song came the Morning Prayer, welcoming of visitors, church announcements, the offering, the final song, and the sermon for the day. Even the way they did each of these things was the same.

For example, they would say a phrase before the offering, “Give and grow, build and show, share so no one will be without.” Then people would put their offering in an envelope and wait for the ushers with the offering baskets to get to their rows. I remember seeing these envelopes often and also hearing the church leadership encouraging parishioners to fill out the offering envelopes and put their offering in the baskets. On the envelopes, people could designate where they wanted their giving to go. Different ministries were listed on the envelope. Over time, I noticed that people were encouraged to fill out the envelopes with their name and membership number. When I questioned why this was done, a pastor of an affiliated church on the East Coast explained, “We don’t want people feeling too proud or having low self-esteem because of what they give.” I later was able to witness a pastor who would read each of the church’s offering envelopes so he knew who the tithers were. Placing an offering in an envelope and filling out the information had a dual purpose. It was a way to hide what people were giving from each other, but at the same time, it let the leaders know who the givers were in the church. As will be discussed later, leadership was monitored and chosen not just based on how nice they

are and how faithfully they attended, but also based on how committed they were in their giving.

Structure of the Message: Connecting back to timeliness, in the headquarters and in every church I visited in the United States, the structure of the message was the same. Not only did each pastor or minister use a similar structure during lessons, but they also used similar wording to communicate. For example, each would teach a standard three-point sermon and close with the line “my time is done, thank you for receiving what God had for you.” Each preacher would pray before giving the sermon, and even the structure of the message was extremely similar: “point one, point two, point three” and conclusion. There was also a time limit on the messages that the minister or pastor was presenting. Many of the churches displayed a digital clock, located on the back wall, which usually showed the time but changed to a timer countdown of fifty minutes when the pastor got up to give a sermon. The pastors also made similar statements and used organizational argot to explain differences between women and men—such as women are “life sources” and men are “life leaders.” Additionally, each message was similar to what was being spoken at the main headquarters. When asked how they knew what was being taught, a pastor of an affiliated church in the Midwest told me that the pastors receive weekly CDs of the services from the main headquarters and are encouraged to watch the main church’s services online if their service time conflicted with the live streamed broadcast.

Calculability

These churches did not operate because they were focused only on spiritual goals like saving souls, helping others, or being better Christians. Instead, most of the meetings were geared around how to increase attendance, financial giving, and member retention rates. A clear assessment of each church was conducted every six

months to see which churches were and were not considered successful. In other words, the focus was not on the qualitative aspects of the church environment but rather on quantifiable measures. An obvious business model made it clear that the numbers weighed more heavily than any other aspects of the branch churches. Local pastors believed that numbers indicated success. One leader told me “you can know how successful you are by looking at the number of people in attendance, salvations, new members, and the offering. Always review the numbers.” This focus on numbers connects clearly with Ritzer’s argument of calculability; outcomes are assessed based on quantifiable rather than subjective criteria. This was evident in the Black McChurch in several ways: the reporting of numbers at meetings about members on the roll, people giving their lives to Jesus, and how much money each church makes within a given time period.

Twice a year, all of the pastors were required to meet at a conference, officiated by the chief bishop. I was able to attend four of these meetings as an observer. At each of the meetings, the chief bishop gave instructions on how to become a more successful church. He referred to steps that he had taken, which he believed led to his success when he was the pastor of the headquarters church. After spending two days giving instructions, he would solicit each pastor to stand before everyone to give a report at the conclusion of the meeting. He wanted to know four things: how much money they were bringing in, how many people were attending, how many people came for salvations, and how many people had become members of the church since the last meeting. Similar to a business, the church that brought in the most people and the most profit was lifted up as being successful. Furthermore, the pastors of the four largest churches are also selected to be on the advisory board of the chief bishop. This emphasis on numbers funneled down to the local churches.

The chief bishop emphasized at the meetings that success is measured by how many people raise their hands for salvation and join the church. At every branch I was able to observe, I noticed that calls for salvation—when the pastor asks people to give their lives to Jesus—were done in a specific way: people raised their hands and walked down the aisle. I also observed at multiple churches within the organization that service workers would stand in the back of the auditorium or sanctuary watching and counting the number of people that stood at the front. Upon closer inspection at one branch, every week some of the same people were walking to the front; this resulted in some people being counted multiple times as part of the total tally of those who received salvation.

Additionally, I witnessed an aggressively long “invitation to Christ,” with an emphasis on death that felt like a sales pitch about life or about the church itself. In several churches, I believe this invitation caused a great number of people to join the church. I commonly heard statements such as “If you want to live a high-impact life, you need Jesus” or “Don’t let the devil hold you any longer, stomp on the devil’s head.” When people came for salvation, they remained at the front with the pastor for approximately ten minutes. After praying for them, the pastor would tell them the importance of joining the local ministry. They would be told, “You need to be a part of a church so that you can really grow,” and “Church membership is a necessity for a believer.” For these churches, it seemed like it was more important for people to join in order to get added to the membership list, although not necessarily to increase the average attendance. As a result, some churches within the organization boast about having three thousand members even though only about two hundred show up in regular attendance. Even the main church at the headquarters, which boasts about having tens of thousands of members, has roughly a few thousand typically attending its services.

Additionally, a strong emphasis is placed on tithing. Tithing is the belief that a Christian should give at least ten percent of his or her income to the church. Pastors speak of tithing often, teach it in sermons, and emphasize it at the local leadership meetings of the churches. One pastor of a local church clarified the reason they talked about tithing at their leadership meetings. He stated, "One cannot be a leader if they do not tithe" and if the leader is not tithing, that the chief bishop must "confront and correct them."

Predictability

The amount of uniformity within the organization's churches was the most surprising aspect to me. They all looked like the main church. From California to Pennsylvania and Massachusetts to Texas, the branch churches looked like miniature versions of the main headquarters. They pretty much sound the same, using the same words and even preaching similarly. Ritzer argues that the process of production is organized in such a way as to guarantee uniformity of product and standardized outcomes. This was evident in the brand expansion in these churches.

Several examples of this predictability were evident. Each church had the same color scheme as the headquarters as well as the same logo. The church I observed had blue carpets with gold accents throughout. The logo was prominent in each of the churches and on any material that was handed out during the service. As mentioned earlier, the preaching style was similar, and, oddly, the sermons were consistent with each other. The same wording and structure were repeatedly evident in each of the sermons. This similarity appeared to be the aim of the organization: to create a brand for their church so the packaged experience could arrive in any location across the country and in certain parts of the world, regardless of the actors within the local branch of the organization. Pastors could be interchangeable as long as the ideas, the culture, and the feeling of the main

headquarters were consistent. This predictability also allows people to move to different geographical areas and find a church similar to their home church. This might be good for parishioners, but it is of questionable benefit for the pastors because once the system is in place in a local branch, anyone could run it and a pastor could easily be removed if he or she was not the right fit. I noticed this when two pastors left the organization and another was dismissed from his role. The church buildings and most of the membership remained with the organization, and other people were simply brought into those branches to manage what the last pastors left with ease.

Control

The chief bishop has complete autonomy and authority over the churches. He decides what should be taught and how the church should be run. At every pastors' meeting I was allowed to attend, only he gave instructions. Others could ask questions, but he was the only one to answer them. He was in charge. He made every decision and established the focus of the church. There was no room for innovation by others. As a result, the rest of the clergy fulfilled the roles of rank-and-file orderlies who are just given their orders to go, implement, and complete them. This relationship and interaction exemplifies Ritzer's argument of control. There was a deskilling of the workforce where ideas and traditions are paramount, and innovations from others were not only frowned upon but were also unwarranted and spoken against.

The chief bishop gives the theme for the year and indicates what should be taught at the local churches for the whole year. Efforts, such as video conferencing, requiring pastors to attend meetings and submit sermon outlines, and church visits by the chief bishop and his board, are made to ensure that all pastors have the theme and outlines to guide them in what they should be teaching and to maintain (creative) control. Pastors are expected to teach sermons that have already been taught

by the chief bishop without changing the points, subpoints, or even the main emphases. In the more than thirty sermons I reviewed and compared to those taught by the chief bishop, even the jokes and examples were used by other pastors.

Pastors are required to know the “foundational teachings” and to be able to teach from them. Statements are scripted, and auxiliary classes are scripted as well. For example, the membership class, which must be conducted for new members in every church, is guided by a handbook from which pastors must teach, word for word, to their congregants regardless of church location. During my observations, I did not see one pastor attempt to question what was going on or even provide innovative ideas. Pastors actually believed that everything that could be done had already been tried and done in the main church. In fact, the chief bishop would often say in pastors’ conferences, “Anything you can think of has already been done in the church headquarters. There’s no need to do anything else. We are the example, exhibit number one, for all to follow.”

The four dimensions of McDonaldization are evident in this participant observation because of the desire to be able to replicate the success in one location in other locations. Also, McDonaldization is evident because of the desire to leave a mark or build a brand as a church. For the Black McChurch, the local community is not the sole focus. The focus has been spread to the nation and the world. Building a marketable and replicable brand has become the central focus of the studied Black McChurch. As a result, the organization even added the word *International* to its name in 2012.

In efforts to package what it means to be a part of this organization, the ideals of one person became the central focus. These ideals were replicated as the ideals of the various local churches that are a part of the organization. This was accomplished with the most efficient means, the fewest problems, and maximum control. The process of McChurching was taking place; a

model was established, a standard was mandated, and a system that could run without specific people other than the chief bishop was in place. The routinized structure had become evident in the Black McChurch.

Implications for Black Church Organizations and Leaders

Based on this research, there are positive and negative implications for black church organizations that want to go beyond leading within their local communities to creating more of a global, multicultural brand. The positive implications are that the components of McDonaldization as conceptualized by Ritzer prove to be influential in making sure the church organization brand is disseminated and maintained in church plants, regardless of the location. To make the transition into leading beyond a local community and going beyond the traditional focus of the church and becoming a Black McChurch, the organization must be efficient, calculable, predictable, and maintain control. This research illustrated how an organization could be efficient by making sure there is a clear goal and mission, as well as by creating structures for the various aspects of church practices. On the other hand, when it comes to the time of the service and strict structure, these might go against historic black church practice, especially in more Pentecostal-type churches where the belief is that services are not led by man but by the Spirit of the Lord. Regarding calculability, the church organization must maintain records of weekly attendance and offering to provide measurable benchmarks of success, progress, and atrophy. In addition, no church organization can fully make the transition into spreading their brand and influence globally without maintaining Ritzer's McDonaldization concepts of predictability and control in every church that is planted by the organization. Focusing on these areas may be helpful for church organizations to make a successful transition.

However, some issues should be considered by black church leaders and practitioners in deciding if their

church organization should transition into becoming a Black McChurch and leading beyond the local scale. These implications come from my research but also from having been in mostly predominantly black churches and church organizations all of my life. I have not only researched the various trends, history, transitions, and contemporary issues within black churches, but I also have been able to experience them in various forms—from the black holiness and Pentecostal traditions to Baptist and non-denominational churches. More recently, I have made my own transition to a non-denominational multicultural church organization, Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). As a result, I am entrenched greatly in the black church tradition and evangelical Christianity academically and personally. This greatly influenced my concerns as I researched the Black McChurch.

Therefore, I believe church leaders and practitioners should consider some of the problems of shifting from a local black church organization to leading through a global brand, specifically through the process of McDonaldization. First, black church organizations' foci may be less directed toward strengthening people in local communities and more directed toward building a brand using the resources of people in local communities around the world. While the transition allows the Black McChurch to reach more people, the focus might be misplaced if church leaders are not careful to focus on what the people need in other local communities instead of what the organization needs them to know in order to maintain the brand. I recommend ensuring that people-building takes precedence over brand-building.

Second, too much organizational control could limit individual creativity at the local levels. Routinization disconnects people from the opportunity to use their gifts and creative ideas to help improve the Black McChurch. I recommend that black church organizational leaders make sure there is room for creativity even while spreading the organization's brand. Allowing for some creativity from local leaders or congregations might help

the larger organization to adjust practices that are not efficient or to make changes that will be beneficial to the organization as a whole. Too much organizational control might even limit creativity and the influence of the Spirit of God that allows change to take place where it is necessary.

Lastly, while building a brand and having more of an opportunity to lead on a global scale, church practitioners should fully consider the impact of branding on a local level. I recommend that each local church have some liberty to seek what is needed at the local level within the community and to adjust their focus as a result. This way, the churches can hold on to the main tenets of the Black McChurch organization as a central source of connection and comfort, while also holding on to traditional black church practices of being leaders in the local community. Becoming more influential by spreading a brand on a global scale should not happen at the expense of the local community, but should, in some way, continue to benefit the local community.

Limitations and Future Research

While this case study of a black church organizations' transition from leading in a local community to leading on a global scale has helped to strengthen our understanding of a process not viewed in the literature, more work needs to be done. First, I only examined one large black church organization, their transition, and how it has been effective through the process of McDonaldization to become a Black McChurch organization. I believe what I found here, especially due to my background and study, might be applicable to understanding other black church organizational transitions. Additionally, while the racialized history has caused racial division in protestant churches and even different approaches to helping others through various issues in society, what I described in this paper might also be relevant to predominantly white churches and other racially differentiated churches. More research should be

done to see if McDonaldization has had such an impact in other churches and how the processes differ based on the racial dynamic of various church organizations.

This model might not seem new as many church organizations plant churches throughout the world. However, when it comes to black churches and their historical importance, the shift from local community to global expansion with uniform structures and governance is new for black churches. More research needs to be done to see if and how other Black McChurches are becoming more routinized and are slowly shifting focus from solely being local groups with a primary focus on the local community to becoming an international brand through the process of McDonaldization. This research should look at why these changes are happening and what impact it might have on local communities as these churches focus on making a global mark instead of uplifting local communities. Additionally, church leaders who desire to go beyond the traditional view of the black church or black organization model might find that the process of routinization is effective not just for maintaining the organization's brand, but also for spreading the Christian message in a specific and standardized way. With all things considered, as long as the overall focus remains on people over processes and protocol, McDonaldization could be a useful tool for making disciples of all the nations.

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