
Paul-Brian McInerney
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
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2:00-3:30 pm on Friday, April 6, 2007
Indiana University Bloomington, Herman B. Wells Library, Room LI001

Cookies, tea, and coffee will be available at 1:45 pm.

ABSTRACT

Like all social movements, technology movements grow from inauspicious roots. Their success depends on overcoming many challenges; chief among them is proving to various constituencies that a certain technology is worthwhile. Proving the worth of technology entails making associations between objects and ideals and supporting those associations by acquiring resources and mobilizing adherents. This lecture examines the case of the circuit rider movement, a cadre of politically progressive activists who, throughout the late 90s, sought to distribute the spoils of the contemporary IT revolution to grassroots and nonprofit organizations. Drawing on three-years of ethnographic research and integrating concepts from science and technology studies, economic sociology, and the study of collective behavior and social movements, I show how the circuit riders overcame structural challenges and mobilized a movement by drawing equivalences between information technology and organizational mission in the voluntary sector. Building on this form of association, the circuit riders successfully convinced resource holders and other activists that information technologies were vital to the future of the voluntary sector and a critical component of its mission to promote social and economic justice and a cleaner environment.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Paul-Brian McInerney is Assistant Professor of Sociology and Social Informatics at Indiana University South Bend where he teaches economic and organizational sociology, sociological theory, qualitative methods, and social informatics. Broadly, his research focuses on how organizations and individuals further their interests by translating them into moral claims. He is currently writing a manuscript about the growth and transformation of a politically progressive
technology movement into a market for technology consulting services in the US voluntary sector. He is also working on a project with Dr. Dana Fisher of Columbia University studying civic engagement and youth activism among political canvassers. McInerney is a faculty affiliate at the Center on Philanthropy at IUPUI and the Center for the Study of Social Movements at the University of Notre Dame. He received his PhD in sociology from Columbia University in 2006.