

Public Abstract

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Title: Spiritual Labor and Spiritual Dissonance in the Total Institution of the Parochial Boarding School

Spirituality is a concept as old as recorded history, yet the concept has often been relegated to what might be considered the personal or private spheres. However, those who become members of organizations do not simply abandon their spirituality when they cross the threshold between their personal and professional lives. Though spirituality certainly impacts organizations and organizational members, it has been difficult to study in a systematic manner.

This qualitative study offers a way to examine spirituality in organizations. It introduces the idea of spiritual labor where organizational members' spirituality is part of the commodity (or service) the organization offers, when rules for that spirituality (how it should be shared or suppressed) are written down, and when those rules are enforced or regulated in some way. More particularly, this study paints a picture of how parochial boarding school teachers/staff's spirituality was commodified, codified, and regulated by their respective organization and also suggests that these elements of spiritual labor might be found and studied in other organizations as well.

In addition, this study examines how members deal with situations when they do not personally agree with the spiritual rules expectations or beliefs of their organizations – termed spiritual dissonance in this study. Participants might reframe issues out of the spiritual realm, might keep silent about their dissonance, might move to a different organization, or might weigh the benefits of the job against the discomfort caused by their spiritual dissonance.

Finally, this study examines how parochial boarding schools might be thought of as having many of the same qualities attributed to total institutions (such as prisons) but how the total-institution-like qualities might contribute to both positive and negative elements of organizational life. These qualities include the sense of always being watched and of being immersed in organizational life. The results suggest that more organizations than the more traditional total institutions such as prisons might be studied from the perspective of the total institution. Such a lens would reveal how controlling elements of an organization both constrain and enable organizational members.