

SPIRITUAL LABOR AND SPIRITUAL DISSONANCE
IN THE TOTAL INSTITUTION OF THE PAROCHIAL BOARDING SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative project introduces the concept of “spiritual labor” as the organizational commodification, codification, and regulation of members’ spirituality. The study illustrates how the spirituality of teachers/staff in a parochial boarding school system is part of the commodity or service such schools have to offer. The spirituality of teachers/staff was also codified both officially in organizational documents and unofficially in the form of unspoken but identifiable norms and values. Regulation of the spirituality of teachers/staff was enacted formally via confrontation, termination, and transfer. Informal regulation of spirituality occurred via concertive control of other organizational members. Spiritual dissonance was also present when faculty/staff members did not personally believe or privately practice the doctrines of their sponsoring church yet appeared compliant by word, deed, or continued organizational affiliation. Organizational members had a number of strategies for dealing with spiritual dissonance.

This study also placed parochial boarding schools in the category of total institutions illustrating how the panopticon might be enacted in a contemporary organization.

Keywords: concertive control, dissonance, emotional labor, Goffman, panopticon, spiritual labor, spirituality, total institutions