

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Abstract Of Thesis

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Title of thesis: SPIRITUALITY AT WORK: AN EXPLORATORY SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY

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Spirituality in the context of work has become increasingly topical but there has been little empirical or specifically sociological research conducted to date. After reviewing this research, a case study is reported of a Benedictine monastery as an exemplar for a global and enduring organizational form that emphasises the integration of work with spirituality. Benedictinism is primarily explored through non-directive interviews. From its analysis the "spiritual-family", a new ideal type of spiritually informed social structure based on charismatic authority is proposed and compared against Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy. In their purest forms, the spiritual-family *elects* and Weber's bureaucracy *appoints* their superiors respectively. The essential structural difference between the two is the means for this selection.

These two ideal types are then used to investigate the Ford Motor Company. This second case study, of a contemporary global industrial organization, is explored from two perspectives: a) the official pronouncements of its most senior spokespersons; and b) non-directive workplace-based interviews with grassroots level "knowledge workers" in conjunction with extensive participant observation over a three-year period. Analysis of these extremities reveals a shared aspiration for a radical reform of the underlying corporate authority structure from a type characterised by Weber's legal-rational type, typical of bureaucracy, to one more adequate described by his charismatic and contrary form.

Finally, the investigation briefly considers the affinity of this new ideal type with broader social and workplace trends, and finds that it is high. However, a transformation from a bureaucratic to a spiritually informed organizational structure would require a paradigm shift that in present circumstances within the Ford Motor Company is improbable short of a major crisis.