

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar



Role-based Identity Foils in Organizational Life By

Prof. Blake Ashforth
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Date : 3 Feb 2021 (WED)

Time : 9 am – 10:30 am

Venue : Online via Zoom

Abstract

Soldier-medic. Undercover police officer. Collaborative divorce attorney. Certain roles require an individual to enact antithetical expectations (X and not-X), such as saving a life and taking a life, when needed, in the case of a soldier-medic. Despite their important consequences, we lack a unifying framework for such role-based antithetical expectations and their implied identity foils — where one is expected to be both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (a life-saver and a life-taker). We discuss how and why antithetical role expectations and their implied identity foils arise in organizations. We offer a model of the responses through which individuals tend to manage these seemingly impossible binds—avoidance, favoritism, gray compromise, black and white compromise, and holism—and discuss the conditions under which a given response is likely. We also consider how each response affects positive outcomes (i.e., clarifying the identities; fostering resources; enabling synergistic solutions) as well as negative outcomes (i.e., increased role strain and cynicism; impaired role-holder performance and credibility) for individuals and thus their organizations.

Prof. Blake Ashforth is a Regents Professor and Horace Steele Arizona Heritage Chair in the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. His research concerns the ongoing dance between individuals and organizations, including socialization and work adjustment, identity and identification, respect and dignity, and the links among individual-, group-, and organization-level phenomena. Recent work has focused on dirty work, ambivalence, and anthropomorphism. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Management, and a winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Academy's OB Division and the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Academy's MOC Division.

All interested are welcome.



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