DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

IDENTITY WORK OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISPARATE WORK IDENTITIES

By

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the experiences of individuals working in disparate professions. Specifically, it focuses on the identity work of individuals who are simultaneously working in a church as well as a secular workplace. In so doing, the present study examines how individuals working in disparate professions construct notions of 'Who am I' and understand themselves both as religious and secular workers. The present study is important because it focuses on plural forms of organizing at the individual level which is increasingly becoming a common phenomenon yet remains an underexplored research concern. Findings of the present study also make novel contributions to extant research in identity.

First, findings suggest that individuals with disparate professional identities experience both identity conflicts and identity synergies. By showing the coexistence of identity conflicts and synergies, the present study offers a dialectical perspective on the relationship between identities and thereby challenges the dominant view that the relationship between identities is typically either conflicting or synergizing. Second and consequently, the present study emphasizes the process of synthesizing the dialectic between identity conflicts and identity synergies as the identity work of individuals with disparate professional identities. That is, the study contends that identity conflicts precipitate identity work and identity synergies serve as resources in identity work. Understanding identity work as a synthesizing process thus counters the present linear perspective of the identity work process as one that begins with conflicts and ends with resolution of those conflicts.

Further, findings of the present study also highlight how individuals take charge of their work-selves in plural work environments (Ashforth, Moser and Bubenzer, 2020) and how they utilize values and ethics as discursive resources in making sense of their work-selves (e.g., Kornberger

and Brown, 2007; Van Buren, Syed and Mir, 2019). Taken together, this dissertation not only offers theoretical insights but also has practical implications as it sheds light on how an individual's notion of 'Who am I' influences workplace behaviors and practices.