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Making good on a threat: Leading innovation in healthcare teams

Healthcare professions are differentiated from other occupations on the basis of exclusive authority over specialist knowledge. While individuals tend to operate in uni-professional silos, there is evidence that bridging professional divides in multidisciplinary teams facilitates innovation. Indeed, such teams have been found to significantly enhance patient and organizational outcomes through the development of innovative solutions to complex clinical, service and policy problems. However, some studies provide evidence that multidisciplinary healthcare teams can be characterized by conflict, hostility and poor team outcomes. In an effort to resolve these ambiguous findings, this study investigates the role of leader inclusiveness in enhancing innovation within multidisciplinary healthcare teams. In particular, we argue that leader inclusiveness has the potential to increase team innovation by strengthening professional identification. We further argue a novel role for perceived threat in this mediated pathway by suggesting that the beneficial impact of strengthened identification only exists when team members feel that their professional distinctiveness is under threat. Data from our survey of 75 healthcare teams suggests that strengthened professional identification and distinctiveness threat interact to enhance multidisciplinary team innovation.

Biography

Rebecca Mitchell has a PhD from the University of Sydney. She is an Associate Professor at the University of Newcastle, Australia and Visiting Scholar at the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland. Her research interests lie in the area of organizational behavior, including team dynamics, leadership and social identity in organizations. She is particularly interested in healthcare team dynamics and leadership in the health sector. Her research has been published in top tier international journals including Medical Research & Review, Journal of Advanced Nursing, International Journal of Nursing Studies, Health Care Management Review, Human Relations and Human Resource Management (US). She has been recognized for her research and academic contribution through numerous awards from the US and British Academy of Management. She is a professional member of the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology and the US Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

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