

Dissertation Proposal

Anna T. Mayo

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322 GSIA (West Wing)

Dynamic Teams:

Navigating Membership Change and Boundary Permeability

Teams are a necessity in much of today's work, and researchers are increasingly acknowledging that these teams face both membership changes (i.e., when the team composition is not fixed and membership changes frequently) and boundary permeability (i.e., when a team's work crosses boundaries such as those around a team, function, or organization). These conditions, together, define what I refer to as a dynamic team. They present opportunities to improve how resources are distributed and used, and thus to enhance team performance and learning, but they also present challenges. Membership change can be disruptive, and fluid boundaries can be difficult to manage and create harmful confusion around who is in the team. I propose a dissertation to ask, how do dynamic teams manage changing membership and permeable boundaries effectively? Chapter 1 is a proposal to review the literature relevant to dynamic teams. In this review, I will argue that the research on membership change and boundary permeability have evolved separately, and must be integrated to better understand dynamic teams in terms of what current theory can explain dynamic team performance and learning, and where additional theory is needed. I suggest following recent approaches to define teams based on interdependent activities, as well as adopting a view of membership in terms of core and periphery roles, to integrate the currently separate streams of research. I outline implications for future research. Chapters 2 and 3 use the context of a specific type of dynamic team – hospital inpatient teams – to further investigate how dynamic teams navigate both changing membership and shifting boundaries effectively to perform and to learn. Chapter 2 reports preliminary findings from a qualitative study of these teams. These preliminary findings highlight specific team behaviors that are theorized to relate to team performance (in terms of efficiency) and learning in dynamic teams, and I propose continuing to develop the emerging grounded theory. Chapter 3 proposes a field experiment to test whether an intervention can alter the way a team manages its boundary, and thus alter both efficiency and learning. This work, taken together, will have implications for understanding how dynamic teams, despite their constraints, might perform effectively.