Selection of routines in organizational search:
Role systems and routine systems in the search process

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Routines & Organizational Change

• Change in routines is a critical component of organizational change

• Practice perspective on Routines
  – Change is endogenous
  – Experiential – cycles of performance & action
  – Routine specific – individual routine as a unit of analysis
  – Problems relating to performing individual routines may trigger re-evaluation and change

*Partial account of how routines change*
Cognitive Search

• Is a source of change in routines

• Contrasts with experiential (on-line) search
  – Triggered by problems < aspirations (on any goal)
  – Involves consideration of multiple alternatives
  – NOT trial-and-error
  – Draws on organization members’ cognitive frameworks

• Involves selection of which routines to change
  – Search theory requires “a mechanism (a) for generating alternatives and (b) for choosing among those generated”
Our Study

• **Research Question**
  – How do organizations select which routines to change in cognitive search?

• **Data**
  – Participant observation of cognitive search process aimed at increasing perioperative efficiency in 7 Ontario hospitals

• **Methods**
  – Narrative and comparative case analysis of discussion of potential changes in routines relating to the use of OR resources and staff
  – 6 issues (e.g. scheduling surgical blocks, block allocation, moving procedures out of OR) & 25 proposed changes in routines
Simple Story: Roles & Routines

Role system

Routine system

Frames/Cognition

Persistence or change in routines

Experience

Offline Search

Frames/Cognition
Persistence or change in routines

Attention to interdependence between routines

Perception of the effect of routines on role-specific goals

Patterns of authority over/interdependence between routines

Cognition/Framing in Search

Strategic & contested framing

Evolving Frames

Experience

Offline Search

Persistence or change in routines
Patterns of Stability/Change

MD Collective Control
Interdependent Routines impact MDs, Admin & RNs
Goal conflict among MDs, coalitions with Admin
Change: 6
No Change: 1

MD Collective Control
Interdependent Routines impact MDs, Admin & RNs
Alignment between MDs & Admin
Change: 6
No Change: 0

MD Collective Control
Interdependent Routines impact Admin & RNs
Alignment between MDs & Admin
Change: 3
No Change: 2

MD Collective Control
Interdependent Routines impact Admin & RNs
Goal Conflict between MDs & Admin
Change: 0
No Change: 7
Contributions

**Routines Literature**
- Theorize selection of routines in cognitive search
- Attention to interdependence between routines
- Interplay between role system/routine system central to routine change process

**Search Literature**
- Shows how experience informs cognitive search
- Attention to effects of history & embeddedness of routines on search
- (Re) Introduces role systems & political coalitions into search process