Situation Invisibility and Attribution in Distributed Collaborations†

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This article expands theoretical and empirical understanding of interpersonal relationships under distributed conditions by highlighting the importance and consequences of situation invisibility. In a laboratory study, the authors demonstrate that distributed teammates are significantly more likely than collocated teammates to make internal dispositional attributions rather than situational attributions concerning negative partner behavior because of situation invisibility. These dispositional attributions in turn affect relational outcomes such as satisfaction and cohesion. The authors also demonstrate the impact of situational explanation as an antidote to situation invisibility.

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Advances in telecommunication and information technologies are facilitating the collaboration of people who do not share the same physical location. Technology-enabled, geographically distributed collaboration has become commonplace, particularly among

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