



**OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne  
June 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**Submission Template**

**SUBMISSION GUIDANCE**

- \* Remove all identifying properties from this document \**
- \* All files must be saved in PDF format \**
- \*Please include ALL supplementary text at the end of this document\**
- \*Only one document should be submitted\**

**Submission Template for the  
2015 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

**1) Title of Proposal:**

Addressing Both Personal and Community Tragedy in the Classroom: Yes or No?

**2) Abstract:**

*Because tragedy affects us all, this session outlines how the facilitation of ongoing conversation in the author's classroom paved the way for an unusually cohesive group of management undergraduates. Specifically, the unrest in our community (Saint Louis Ferguson protests) as well as the death of the author's spouse during the semester were the two events which affected both the author and her students: This session will outline how these events affected dynamics between students as well as with the author; attendees are invited to share their own experiences with similar events. Relationships through the lens of LMX will be described.*

### 3) Keywords:

*Use three or four keywords to describe your session.*

Tragedy discussion, LMX, community-building

### 4) Format

- Activity or exercise
- Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)
- General discussion session

### 5) Time Requested:

- 30 Minutes
- 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
- 90 Minutes

### 6) Planning Details:

*Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?*

The session has no special requirements; perhaps a round table would work best.

### 7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:

*What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?*

1. Knowledge of experiences from author and other session attendees regarding facilitating classroom discussion when unrest in the community occurs.
2. Knowledge of experiences from author and other session attendees regarding how personal tragedy can/should be shared as well as how these experiences affect the students.
3. Strategies from the author and other session attendees regarding facilitating such discussions.

## **8) Management or Teaching Topics:**

*Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

In the undergraduate classroom, we recognize that we do not operate in a silo and community social events and happenings have an impact on student learning, student's feelings, and perhaps even motivation to learn and their focus. While one strategy is to insulate students, another strategy is to create a community in the classroom which may embrace environmental events and to use these conversations to build trust with students and to encourage them to voice their feelings, both good and bad. Psychological stress theory (specifically, Lazarus theory) and LMX are the theoretical foundations for this session.

The application of Lazarus theory suggest that individuals experience a two-fold type of response to stress; first, cognitive appraisal (determining how the event may affect them) and second, coping (behavioral and psychological). Through the discussion of unsettling community unrest, students can begin to experience how (or if) these events affect their management of stress, which is a step to understanding how they may subsequently manage others (in the workplace) who may experience something similar.

In a similar vein, a tenant of LMX suggests that the quality of relationships between leaders and followers is important to observe, measure, and be cognizant of. Specifically, by sharing a personal tragedy with students, relationships between the faculty and each and every student may be affected differently, depending on the prior relationship as well as the student's ability/willingness to express his or her feelings. To this end, each faculty to student relationship may be changed, and in some cases, the changed relationship could increase mutual trust, respect, and perhaps increase student learning.

## **9) Session Description and Plan:**

*What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session. Include a timeline for your session.*

This session is proposed as a round-table so that session attendees can share similar experiences, as well as offer feedback and constructive criticism. The author has been fortunate to have attended OBTC eight times, and has learned that the best round-tables often unfold based on the principle “less is more” when it comes to the session leader talking. The basic session plan would be to share the author’s experiences with the Ferguson discussions and the changed dynamics that resulted after the personal loss and to invite others to not only share any similar experiences, but also to invite attendees to offer their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages to incorporating discussion on local social unrest as well as the sharing of personal information at the classroom level.

### **10) For Activities and Exercises:**

*Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.*

No materials will be needed for this proposed round-table.

### **11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:**

*What is the contribution of your session?*

A dialogue regarding how the community of learning is impacted by social unrest as well as dynamics within the classroom might reveal advantages as well as disadvantages of monitoring student reactions and facilitating open discussion and sharing feelings.

Another possible contribution could be the exchange of ideas as it relates to creating the best and safest environment for students to share their concerns and opinions regarding social unrest in their own community. In addition, in schools where the demographics include a large percentage of minority students, faculty may benefit from learning about experiences that the author had when facilitating conversations which involve student sharing about race relations.

Another possible contribution might be to illuminate ways in which faculty can engage students who may have suffered their own personal losses to share about them, and to help students bridge the connection to how they might then, in their future jobs, assist co-workers or subordinates who may have had similar losses.

## **12) Application to Conference theme:**

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?

*The proposed session speaks to the idea that if we serve as authentic teachers in the classroom, we may foster deeper connections with our students and increase their learning in a number of different ways. Essentially, this session might be seen as an example in which two unrelated events, one a community movement (Ferguson) and one a personal event (death of the author's spouse) served to create a constructive and meaningful place which then created deeper and more meaningful learning.*

## **13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:**

*Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?*

*This is a unique contribution and is not under review anywhere else; in fact, it is the beginning of an idea regarding the use of different techniques to recognize student stress in the classroom and the feedback gained from the session will allow the author to refine her ideas and perhaps move forward with other OBTC attendees in developing a paper.*

## **14) References and/or Additional Materials:**

Lazarus, R S and Folkman, S, (1986). Cognitive theories of stress and the issue of circularity. In M H Appley and R Trumbull (Eds), (1986). Dynamics of Stress. Physiological, Psychological, and Social Perspectives (pp. 63–80). New York,: Plenum.