



# OBTC

## Teaching Conference for Management Educators

**OBTC 2017 at Providence College  
June 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Submission Template

### SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

*\* Remove all identifying properties from this document \**

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*\*Please include ALL supplementary text at the end of this document\* \*Only one document should be submitted\**

### **Submission Template for the 2016 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

*In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.*

**Poverty Poker: An exercise to gain insight into the root causes of poverty**

This session will demonstrate an exercise comparing the structural causes of poverty, and how these causes are borne out in individuals' earning potential. In the guided exercise, two players with full decks of cards will trade in cards as they respond to six scenarios addressing neighborhoods, education, nutrition, parenting, college, and discrimination. Each player's income is then calculated based on a random draw from their deck. Participants will see how differences in the causal factors quickly create significant disparities, and by extension that poverty is a complex social problem that transcends individuals' character and work ethic.

2) Teaching Implications:

*What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

The learning objectives of this activity are to:

- Provide participants a visceral experience of the root causes of poverty
- Investigate how this exercise can complement business curriculum

For many people in America, the experience of poverty is not a new experience. However, many middle-class college students (and their professors) have limited direct experience with poverty. It's worth noting that according to the National Center for Education Statistics, 29% of students nationwide have household incomes below \$20,000 – so this phenomenon is part of our daily lives, whether we see it or not. Data from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops estimates that in 2015, 13.5% of the US population was living in poverty. This is a sizeable piece of society.

The heat and fury of the 2016 elections, and their results, have shone a spotlight on issues related to class, education, and poverty. In business schools, the topic of poverty is more likely to be seen in business and society or social entrepreneurship classes. We suggest that poverty and class is relevant for our business students to understand because:

- Business is an agent of social change, and management can be a key driver in sustaining or reducing poverty (Neal, 2016). Further, poverty intersects with a number of business issues, such as cheap labor, corruption, gender issues, social inequality, and governance (Neal, 2016). Businesses have the potential to improve the quality of life for people in poverty – through employment and wages, of course, but also through the development of more flexible employment policies and better understanding of their needs.

- Pragmatically, our students will be working with and managing employees from a range of economic backgrounds; their customers will also come from a range of economic backgrounds. It behooves them (and us) to understand how the experience of poverty influences daily life.
- The topic is relevant for well-rounded discussions of diversity, ethics, and corporate social responsibility.

To contribute to social change and function pragmatically, business students need to shift their perspective on the causes of poverty, to grasp the underlying structural issues outside of the poor person's control that 'stack the deck' against their success. This session can provide the initial 'aha' experience to begin a broader discussion of poverty.

## References

Fang, M. (2013). Poverty among college students increases the overall rate.

<https://thinkprogress.org/poverty-among-college-students-increases-the-overall-rate-ae283dcd3c47#.bhvck3vtx>

Neal, M. (2016). Learning from poverty: Why business schools should address poverty, and how they can go about it. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, online first.

PovertyUSA. Poverty facts: The population of Poverty USA. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. <http://www.povertyusa.org/the-state-of-poverty/poverty-facts/>

### 3) Session Description and Plan:

*What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that 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.*

This session has been adapted from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops exercise called “stack the deck”, which can be found at this URL: <http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/stack-of-the-deck.cfm>

We request a 60 minute session to demonstrate and debrief the exercise. The exercise is run in 3-person teams (person 1, person 2, and a banker). Each player has their own deck of cards (regular playing cards). The deck represent the person’s earning potential. Person 1 has been born into a low-income, working class family in a poor neighborhood. Person 2 has been born into an affluent, white-collar family in a nice suburban neighborhood. The banker has a deck that will be used to trade out cards for players 1 and 2. Six comparison scenarios will be read. Here is an example of one of them for the category of education:

<p>Person 1 Children who live in poverty are less likely to attend preschool, less likely to read at home and learn basic skills. Also, you live in a poor urban area where schools are bad. When you start school, there will be large class sizes and students have to share text books. <b>Give the Bank the Kings from your deck and the Bank will give you back sixes.</b></p>	<p>Person 2 You started pre-school at the age of three and you picked up numbers and the alphabet really fast. Your parents also practiced with you at home. You enter grade school one step ahead. You live in a wealthy suburb and the schools are well-funded through taxes. You’ll have everything you need. <b>Please trade in your threes and the Bank will give you tens.</b></p>
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After completing the six scenarios, participants are asked to shuffle their deck and flip over the top 4 cards from their deck. The total of the cards represents their annual salary in thousands (add the cards, and then place ‘000’ at the end). After the cards have been traded in and out of their decks, participants in the low income group can make between \$8,000 and \$36,000; those in the white-collar group can make between \$36,000 and \$100,000.

We will debrief with a series of questions about how much each person is making per month, and per hour. To wrap up the activity, we will briefly discuss how teachers can use this activity in their classes.

<b>Segment</b>	<b>Time</b>
Introduction of the topic and activity	5 minutes
Activity, part 1: Assign roles, distributing card decks	3 minutes
Activity, part 2: Run through 6 scenarios and trade cards	20 minutes
Activity, part 3: Flip random cards to determine salary, and answer worksheet questions about what this salary means	10 minutes
Debrief and discussion	20 minutes
<b>TOTAL TIME</b>	58 minutes

4) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents*?

As noted above, conversations about class and poverty have been an occasional theme in this election year, and may continue as the Trump presidency begins in 2017. Further, we are beginning to hear calls for business schools to address poverty issues (See Neal, 2016 for an example). Bringing this topic into our consciousness can help us raise awareness about poverty issues and build better systems to address this social problem.

5) 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?*

I have not presented this work before, and it is not currently under review.