

## Session Proposal for OBTC 2017 at Providence College June 14th – 17th,

### 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.*

“The Social Capital Game: Introducing Instrumental and Affective Social Networks”

Provided ID numbers and a random selection of playing cards, students explore the formation and extraction of value from social networks as they make deals to accumulate high scoring combinations of cards. Students record the ID of each partner they negotiate with, and dyads may persist for as long as both parties wish. At the end of the game, the student(s) whose card combinations yield the highest score are rewarded, and the ID numbers recorded reveal each individual’s network structure and the overall network structure of the entire class. Debrief examines the emergent network structures, approaches to “networking” and negotiation.

Keywords: Social networks, social capital, networking

### 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.*

Summary of Contribution

This exercise provides 20-30 students with a valuable opportunity to explore factors that influence their formation, understanding and use of social networks to obtain resources necessary to their accomplishment of goals. Courses in management and organizational behavior often provide students with readings and content extolling the importance and benefit of social networks and “networking” but we believe that the availability of live, in-class experiential options to support teaching of these concepts has lagged behind. The proposed exercise helps address this gap by offering support for instructors wishing to facilitate deeper learning of a range of important topics described by the following learning objectives:

1. Identify tendencies and biases in choosing people to interact with
2. Examine communication patterns or tactics that enhance or impede cooperative outcomes with other people.
3. Develop understanding of how network ties facilitate discovery and accessing of resources within a network.

4. Critique different approaches to seeking and obtaining resources within a network.
5. Explain how power accrues not only to those who are central in social networks but also to those who are aware of social networks.

## Background

The relevance of social networks to effective professional success, management and leadership of organizations has been well established within the literature (Krackhardt 1999; McGrath and Krackhardt 2003; Cross et. al. 2003; Balkundi and Kilduff 2006; Kilduff and Brass 2010). Recent work has even investigated how individual actors take conscious actions to affect or optimize their network positions (Burger and Buskens 2009). In creating this exercise, we sought to help students gain a more concrete understanding of what they stand to gain through social networks and how that gain is realized. We sought to both empower and inspire students to gain a greater grasp of how solutions and capacity are distributed among groups of people and how creating, revealing and accessing that value relies on patterns of human interaction that can be understood and influenced. In fewer words, we sought to foster a deeper conversation with our students around social capital.

Since its formal introduction to the literature in 1988 (Coleman), the concept of social capital has gained firm standing within the literature (Kwon and Adler 2014) and has found its way into the typical organizational behavior text ( ). While Coleman identifies social capital as a resource for action that takes on the multiple forms of obligations, expectations, information channels, and social norms (1988), this exercise primarily focuses on networks as information channels. In undertaking the exercise with the objective of obtaining the highest scoring combination of cards that they can, students need to address a number of factors that are relevant to building and exploiting networks.

First, they face the question of whom to approach. In most cases this is driven by their already established friendship network, and indeed ongoing accesses to classmates during the exercise continues to be dominated by this factor, consistent with the findings of Casciaro and Lobo (2005). As these contacts become exhausted or less free when needed (or when students get the feeling that the correlation between who is their friend and who has the cards they need may not be high), outreach begins to involve other factors. Perhaps the law of propinquity will make the difference, with people turning to whoever is nearby in the room. Perhaps welcoming nonverbal will make the difference between whom a student approaches and whom they walk past. Considerations of whom the student believes they can negotiate most successfully with may also come into play, contributing to opportunities to examine the basis of such perceptions.

Second, behavior and tactics during a given encounter come into play. Students negotiating for a favorable exchange of cards during this exercise receive the opportunity to develop their ideas regarding trade-offs between competitive and

collaborative thinking. They also receive the chance to learn about the effects of positive and negative emotion and how those are communicated and reacted to while a discussion regarding a deal is underway.

Finally, students gain a stronger perspective of how network structure emerges and that value within networks takes on multiple forms. The checksheet that students fill out as they do the exercise sometimes reveal individual patterns of access and exchange that reflect biases, preferences, or rational responses to prior experience during the session. Reputation can come into play in the event that participants share information about their encounters with others. Also, sharing of information about other participants can lead to students realizing that the value of a new connection lies not only in which cards that connection has control over and how pliable that party is when certain cards are sought but also with the knowledge that connection may hold regarding other players, what cards they have or need, or what they are like to negotiate with. In addition, another strong lesson that comes from the interaction records kept during this exercise comes from showing the overall directed graph (across all students) of who spoke with whom during the exercise. This reveals who was more and less central (by anonymous ID number) and allows a concurrent view of how well individuals scored. Strength (frequency) of ties can also be incorporated using the data provided on the student worksheets.

We have observed other learning taking place during this exercise and have had additional concepts come up during debrief. This has proven to be a rich, high energy exercise in our undergraduate organizational behavior classrooms. Our expectation is that we will see similarly strong results when this exercise is conducted in graduate classrooms this spring.

#### References:

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- Kwon, S. W., & Adler, P. S. (2014). Social capital: Maturation of a field of research. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(4), 412-422.
- McGrath, Cathleen and David Krackhardt. 2003. Network conditions for organizational change, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 39, No. 3:324-336.
- Prusak, L., & Cohen, D. (2001). How to invest in social capital. *Harvard business review*, 79(6), 86-93.

### 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.*

#### Requirements

1. Three decks of regular playing cards
2. A whiteboard, pad and easel, or digital slide for projecting information
3. Tags for up to 30 students (self-adhesive labels or tags work best)
4. Space for up to 30 students to stand at least 2 feet apart

#### Pre-work

1. Remove the jokers from the card decks, shuffle and combine to make one stack of cards
2. Put a distinctive number on each tag so that the number is easily visible
3. Prepare copies of the exercise worksheet (one per participant). See Attachment 1.

#### Running the Exercise (60 minutes)

1. Seat students for class and read Exercise Instructions. See Attachment 2.
2. Distribute exactly 5 cards to each participant, reminding all to keep cards face down (or use small envelopes that are to remain closed until later).
3. Post or project Payoff Information and explain. See Attachment 3.
4. After assuring that participants do not have any questions, announce the time at which the exercise will be ended and have the participants begin.
5. Periodically remind participants to note the IDs of the persons they are talking to and to talk to only one person at a time if this seems necessary. A few time checks can be useful as well to inform participants of how much time they have left.

#### Debrief

1. Reflection. Once the time period for the exercise is concluded, bring the room to order and instruct students to take their seats and abstain from any discussions as they silently reflect on the experience they have just had. You might prompt them to consider

specifically their own behaviors, the behaviors of others, what made the game harder, what made the game easier).

2. Process discussion. After providing 2-3 minutes for immediate reflection, begin the first discussion and debrief. Many possible questions could deliver valuable insight and observation. The following are merely examples
  - a. What did you find to be challenging during this exercise?
  - b. How did you choose whom to seek the next deal with?
  - c. What tactics or behaviors did you find yourself engaged in?
  - d. What are some examples of competitive behavior you observed or perceive to be possible in this game? Collaborative?
  - e. What sources of power do you think you had during the exercise?
  - f. Did anyone obtain a card without giving a card? If so describe what happened. Sometimes a card is exchanged for information about where another card may be found, requiring both capital and trust. Sometimes liking alone influences surrender of a desired card, or (more rarely) apathy or resignation to a low-scoring outcome (low self-efficacy that can also be discussed).
3. Scoring and awards. Have students calculate the value of their current collections of cards and provide a fun reward for those having the top score in the class. Encourage applause and celebration of these successful deal makers
4. Performance discussion. Now questions may be asked that seek possible explanations for why the top scorers did so well. It will be natural for the winners and many of those who did not win to attribute this to special skills, tactics, or traits. A call for critical thinking should yield additional possibilities.
  - a. Luck in the initial hand – Comparison of the initial score and the final score can help with this. Optionally, you may consider rewarding those who obtained the greatest improvement over their initial collection of cards.
  - b. Luck in the size or quality (in terms of cards held) of the friendship network – reasoning being that people went to friends first and possibly enjoyed more collaborative or cooperative behavior from members of that pre-existing network.
  - c. Network Structure Discussion. The following questions can drive interesting discussion related to network structures during this class session
    - 1) Which classmate did you meet with the most times? Sometimes a small number of people dominate this, roughly indicating that they were highly central. Follow up discussion can try to get at why more people talked to them more than they talked with others
    - 2) Do you think the best performance comes from talking to every person in the room? Why or why not?
    - 3) If you cannot talk to everyone in the room, how can you do your best to talk to the right people in the room?
    - 4) Why should anyone talk to you?
    - 5) What if you had been allowed to collude?

Closing the Exercise

1. Provide a brief closing synopsis of the session take-aways and have the students carefully organize or turn in their cards.
2. (Optional) Instructors familiar with social network visualization software (many applications are freely available) should consider collecting all worksheets and following up with the class briefly regarding this exercise. Using the data from the worksheets, this follow-up can include graph visualizations of the network formed by the overall class interaction during the game. Seeing the graph adds quite a “wow” factor and also provides the opportunity to discuss correlations between centrality and game performance (as measured by both final score and change in score from initial).

#### 4) Application to Conference theme:

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

The key changes and challenges that lie before all of us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be largely the result of the complex human interactions that drive or influence decision making, perception, values, the development and exploitation of capacity, among many other aspects of the social world. In order to maximize their potential within this environment, our students must be prepared to learn, adapt, and mobilize resources at unprecedented rates. The understanding of network power, social capital, and a more concrete realization of what it means to be stronger together – understanding reinforced by this exercise – will prove invaluable to the leaders of tomorrow.

#### 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?*

This exercise has never been presented or submitted for publication anywhere before. Our intent is to continue collecting data this spring, receive feedback on the exercise at OBTC 2017, then submit a manuscript to JME or MTR.

Attachment One – Exercise Worksheet

**SECTION I: HOW YOU STARTED**

Please indicate your ID number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list your initial cards (e.g. “4-Clubs” , “J-Hearts” , “7-Diamonds” , “A-Spades”)

\_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_

Initial Score: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION II: INTERACTIONS**

Place a check mark for each time you connect with each of these people):

1		11		21	
2		12		22	
3		13		23	
4		14		24	
5		15		25	
6		16		26	
7		17		27	
8		18		28	
9		19		29	
10		20		30	

**SECTION III: FINAL RESULT**

**Final Cards** (e.g. “4-Clubs” , “J-Hearts” , “7-Diamonds” , “A-Spades”)

\_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_

**Final Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Attachment 2 – Exercise Instructions

The game you are about to play is designed to help you deepen your understanding of exchange and social capital in social networks as well as some aspects of bargaining and negotiation

You win this game by accumulating combinations of playing cards that provide the highest score. Scoring rules will be provided before you begin so that you know how to score your cards.

Additional rules

Using the worksheet provided

- Make sure to enter your ID number, initial card setup, and initial score on your worksheet.
- Every time you interact with someone to discuss possibilities for a deal, put a check mark next to their number on your interaction table (repeats are allowed).

No collusion (you cannot work with other people to ensure a particular person wins. You should make your best attempt to be the winner yourself.

All communications have to be person-to-person (no broadcasting, announcements, or questions to multiple people at once).

You can choose to show your cards to people if you want to, but you don't have to. You can talk about absolutely anything you want to with the one person you are talking with at any given time.

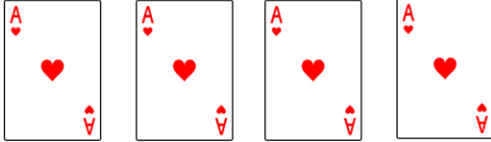


The winner(s) of this game will receive FABULOUS PRIZES!!!



### Attachment 3 – Payoff Information

Combo	Description	Points
Crusher	Four IDENTICAL aces	200 points
Royal Triple	Three IDENTICAL J,Q or K	100
Royal Double	Two IDENTICAL J,Q or K	50
Runner	<u>Sequence</u> of AT LEAST THREE CARDS of the same suit	30 per consecutive card

	<p>Crusher: 200 Points!</p>
	<p>Runner: 90 Points!</p>
	<p>Royal Double: 50 Points!</p>