OBTC 2017 at Providence College
June 14ᵗʰ – 17ᵗʰ, 2017

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE
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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.

Navigating the Dangerous Currents of Poverty

Abstract: The large scale behavioral simulation provides students and staff with a hands-on experience of what life is like for those living in poverty while fostering an environment to confront stereotypes and biases related to poverty. During this experiential session, you will experience a portion of the Poverty Simulation, then be introduced to the full simulation. You will learn why behavioral simulations are excellent instructional methods. You will hear students' comments about their experience. We will share details about the simulation, cost, and other learning that we have gained while using the simulation.

Keywords: Behavioral simulation; diversity; socioeconomic; experiential experience

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.

Learning Objectives:

1. To experience first-hand socioeconomic status as a diversity issue.

2. To introduce participants to an impactful large scale behavior simulation.
3. To link the simulation to learning theory.
4. To share the impact that the simulation has on students.

One of the difficult categories to help students understand in a diversity course is socioeconomic status. It is a measure of a person's economic and social position in relation to others. Unless students have lived the experience, they may not relate to people who live near or below the poverty line. Bucher (2015) pointed out that since poverty is systemic, persistent, and complex it does not grab the public's attention. In addition, a recent national wide poll revealed that a significant percentage of people place the blame for poverty on the impoverished individual (Lauter, 2016). According to the U.S. government (Federal Poverty Level: Definition, Guidelines, Chart, 2016) the poverty line for 2016 was set at $24,300 for a family of four within the contiguous United States. For each addition family member, the family can add $4,160 to calculate whether or not they meet the criteria of living at or below the poverty line. In the United States there is estimated 43.1 million people living in poverty which is 13.5% of the population (Basic Statistics - Talk Poverty, 2016). While you can tell students about these numbers it is not as powerful as experiencing what it is like to survive on this level of income. The purpose of the Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) program is to provide an experiential learning opportunity where students can begin to understand the complexities of living in poverty, assess their own biases and stereotypes regarding poverty, and be inspired to become part of the solution to ending poverty in the United States. According to Hattery (2003), university students are mostly from middle/upper class and have little to no experience of poverty. As a result, students often develop unrealistic ideas and expectations about the poor due to no personal experience and often

hold stereotypic assumptions about why people are in poverty such as laziness, lack of education, or failure to work hard enough (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Hunt, 1996; Tynes, 2001).

The simulation was developed by The Missouri Association of Community Action (MACA). Participants experience one "month" (divided into four 15-minute "weeks") as a family navigating the currents of life in poverty. Participants role-play the lives of real low-income individuals, from single parents trying to provide for their children, to senior citizens trying to maintain their self-sufficiency on Social Security. The task of each participant is to provide food, shelter, and other basic necessities while interacting with various community resources. The goal of the simulation is to enable participants to view poverty from different angles in order to understand what life is like with a shortage of money and an abundance of stress and become motivated to be part of the solution to ending poverty in the United States.

This experience is particularly important for business students when they begin their careers because they will have people working in their organizations who are living at or below the poverty line. It will be important that these future managerial leaders know how to show compassion and understanding for these individuals. In addition, there is no community that is exempt from poverty. Organizations -- while they need to do well for their stockholders -- must also do good for their community. The simulation bring awareness to the importance of community consciousness regarding people living in poverty.

The outline of how we will use our time is below.

References

Basic Statistics - Talk Poverty (2016). Retrieved from https://talkpoverty.org/basics/

Bucher, R.D. (2105). *Diversity consciousness: Opening out minds to people, cultures, and opportunities*, (4th ed.). Boston MA: Pearson.

Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes toward the poor and attributions for poverty. *Journal of Social Issues*, *57*(2), 207-227. DOI: 10.1111/0022-4537.00209

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Hattery, A. J. (2003). Sleeping in the box, thinking outside the box: Student reflections on innovative pedagogical tools for teaching about and promoting a greater understanding of social class inequality among undergraduates. *Teaching Sociology*, 31(4), 412-427. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3211366

Hunt, M. O. (1996). The individual, society, or both? A comparison of Black, Latino, and White beliefs about the causes of poverty. *Social Forces*, *75*(1), 293-322. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/75.1.293

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lauter, D. (2016). How do Americans view poverty? Many blue-collar whites, key to Trump, criticize poor people as lazy and content to stay on welfare. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-na-pol-poverty-poll/

Poverty Simulations – Missouri Community Action Network. Retrieved from http://www.communityaction.org/povertysimulations/

Tynes, S. R. (2001). Bringing social class home: The social class genealogy and poverty lunch projects. *Teaching Sociology*, 29(3), 286-298. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1319188

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.

Specific Time	Cumulative Time	Topic
5 Min.	5 Min.	Introductions
40 Min.	45 Min.	Full participation in the mini-simulation
20 Min.	65 Min.	Why simulations are a powerful instructional method
20 Min.	85 Min.	Introducing the full simulation
5 Min.	90 Min.	Wrap up/Closure

4) Application to Conference theme:

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

One of the best ways for a student to learn is to experience what we want them to learn (Kolb, 1984). Once we have the experience we can reflect upon it and then challenge our assumptions and beliefs. This often leads to changes in our mental models. As one student said after experiencing the simulation, "When I use to see a homeless person I often thought 'get a job'. After the simulation, I realized I need to help because maybe that person just lost a job. What can I do to help?" Another student commented, "I never realized how something as small as having your car

break down can cause a family to spin out of control. They really do live from

paycheck to paycheck and anything can disrupt this balance." This experience allows

students to try to navigate poverty for themselves. As another student after the

simulation, "Poverty is hard." Navigating poverty is hard because the currents always

seem to be working against you.

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?

We have not presented this at OBTC or any other management or business conference.