

Day 3: Networks in Economy, Management and Communication

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Keynote Lecture

A NATURAL EXPERIMENT ON THE ORIGINS OF HUMAN DYNAMICS: THE CASE OF A LARGE NETWORK OF BUSINESS ELITES

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Abstract

Network evolution studies have suffered from selection and left censoring problems - actors choose the networks they wish to enter and are observed after their networks have matured. Both empirical challenges limit inferences on how social networks evolve and affect human achievement. We use rare "natural experiment" data on three cohorts of elite MBA students to study network evolution with an eye to the determinants of attachments and individual success. In this natural experiment students have had no prior school contact and are randomly assigned to 60 person sections that have unique social characteristics (i.e., experimental conditions). The data contain over 12 million emails among MBAs and between MBAs and their external contacts, as well as, complete profiles of each student's demographics, job history, test scores, and job market performance. In addition, we use a companion dataset that matches self-reported network data with the email data to gauge the appropriateness of email as a valid proxy for the real social network.

Biography

Brian Uzzi is the Richard L. Thomas Distinguished chair in leadership, Professor of Sociology, and Professor of Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, where is also the co-director of NICO, the Northwestern Institute in Complex systems. His research focuses on the association between networks and creativity, innovation, and outstanding human achievement. He has won numerous best paper prizes in sociology and management, including the W. Richard Scott Prize twice and the Lou Pondy Prize, as well as 7 teaching awards. His work appears in leading social and scientific journals and has been featured in Newsweek International, Science, The Economist, and other international media outlets. His book on the gender gap in science, "Athena Unbound", was published by Cambridge University Press in 2000. Outside Kellogg, he advises major firms worldwide.