Intro to Social Network Methods

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Networks are currently enjoying a great deal of popularity. Come to this workshop to see how they're different from what you normally do. You might not end up using social network methods in your research, but this intro session will give you a sense of what your colleagues might be doing, what's going on in some journals, and, possibly, directions you might take to include a networks perspective in your own research.

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Networks are currently enjoying a great deal of popularity. Popular business press features regular articles speculating on how companies can make money off of the Facebook-and variant-like phenomena (cf., an entire special issue of Forbes last spring). Marketing has long acknowledged the importance of word-of-mouth, e.g., in diffusion models, and in recommendations for selections of service providers, yet only recently have they begun to embrace social network concepts. Further from acceptance still is the use of the social network analytical tools that might actually contribute to the understanding of network structures.

This workshop will provide an introduction to social network methods—the micro, actor-level indices, the meso, group-level methods, and the macro, network-level approaches. Attendees have probably heard of such concepts as centrality, and we’ll see the many ways of computing it. Similarly, we’ll look at techniques for identifying, cliques, structural equivalence, etc.

This overview will give attendees an appreciation of what social network methods are, e.g., as they read journal articles in which the techniques are used, or as they attend talks by their management colleagues. Perhaps some attendees will also be inspired to experiment with some social network aspect of their own research. To that end, we will also spend some time talking about how social network data are collected (not just modeled).