Social Rank in a Small, Distributed Group Stephanie K. Ananth Carnegie Mellon University

Abstract

Because I thought it would in interesting to see how social power dynamics happen within my own friend groups, to calculate each members' page-rank, and see if there are any correlations between dimensions or over time, I collected data from 14 different people about each other in 5 different dimensions by sending each member a survey two years ago and then once again recently. I found out who has the most social power and prestige, and I found some correlation and some surprises between the dimensions and over time. This means that power is unequally distributed to certain individuals and groups, and there are objective ways of determining to whom power is being allocated.

Keywords: page-rank, social prestige, social power, privilege, distributed groups

Theme

In this paper, I will be exploring the applications of page-rank (or social rank/hierarchy) and social power/prestige in small-scale distributed groups over time. I will be utilizing data I collected almost exactly two years ago about distributed groups, and I will be looking at the following five dimensions:

- familiarity (how well one knows/is known by others in the group)
- favor (how much someone likes/is liked by others in the group)
- communication (how often communication happens [in both directions] between members of the group)
- trust (how much someone trusts/is trusted by others in the group)
- support (likelihood of asking/being asked by others in the group for advice or emotional support)

Just as hens abide by a defined "pecking-order", humans abide by learned rules of social behavior. Social rank and hierarchy are aspects of every human community. Rarely written down or documented, these social guidelines are passed along through communities as tacit knowledge or as unspoken rules.

My goal is to define an explicit "pecking-order" for a small, distributed, former high school friend group comprised of 7 males and 7 females, all among the ages of 21-22 and to analyze possible interactions, connections, and explanations between each of the five dimensions I listed.

Issues & Questions

The issues and questions in play are primarily related to social dynamics and subjective, tacit knowledge. (The challenge is to draw out this knowledge without introducing biases.) Three characteristics of social prestige that I will account for and take into consideration are:

• That it is *distributed*: one has power/prestige if others think they have power/prestige; the power is in the perception.

- That it is *subjective*: a person does not have inherent social power; societies determine the distribution of social power. (This distribution can and likely will change and will never be "wrong.")
- That it is *objectively knowable*: this is the crux/backbone of my research; that it is possible to determine popularity/power/prestige.

Due to the distributive and subjective nature of social power, it is important to recognize that social power is also recursive (as the more power you have, the more power you can bestow upon others, but you must be given power first to give power). This is why I will be using PageRank to determine social status and hierarchy, to account for its recursive nature.

Domain & Approach

My approach was from a technical/computational, data-science focused angle. I wanted to compile past social rank data and collect updated ranks and values to make a series of matrices that I could compute means, page-rank, and correlation data from. Because of the abundance of numerical data I collected, I was able to utilize a plethora of different data analytics techniques and find possible connections.

Relevance to Theme

I decided to compute page-rank to determine social rank/hierarchy, the crux of my paper, means to use a less "processed" metric for differences and correlation, and correlations to see possible connections, similarities, and differences between dimensions and metrics. Each of these gives me more insight into the way my small, distributed group functions and values its members.

Each of the questions I asked correlates to an important characteristic:

- How well do you know this person? (familiarity; allows me to find the most well-known person)
- How much do you like this person? (favor; allows me to find the most popular person)
- How often do you communicate with this person (via text, Snapchat, Facebook, in person, etc.)? (contact/communication; allows me to find the most connected person)
- How much do you trust this person? (trust; allows me to find the most trusted person)
- How likely are you to go to this person for advice or emotional support? (help/support; allows me to find the most helpful/possibly influential person)

Each dimension specifically points to an important person or important people in the community, but also may point to or correlate with one another. It is possible that every dimension is relevant to the others and may have some interaction with it. While this may be confusing and confounding, it may also provide some very interesting analysis.

Method

In order to collect the data and metrics needed to properly analyze the data and determine a social hierarchy in this group, I sent out an exhaustive (16 page) survey for each member of the group to complete. All 14 members of the group filled out the survey for the first time two years ago, between November 30, 2017 and December 6, 2017. 12 out of the 14 original participants filled out the survey for the second time between the dates of December 7, 2019 and December

9, 2019. The survey asked each participant to rate all 14 participants prompted by the following questions, and every question was required (their scores for themselves were ignored):

- How well do you know this person? (1 = not at all to 5 = very well)
- How much do you like this person? (1 = not at all to 5 = very much)
- How often do you communicate with this person (via text, Snapchat, Facebook, in person, etc.)? (1 = never to 5 = very often)
- How much do you trust this person? (1 = not at all to 5 = very much)
- How likely are you to go to this person for advice or emotional support? (1 = very unlikely to 5 = very likely)

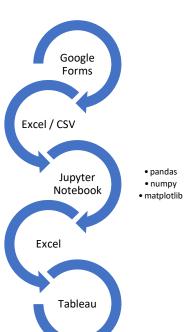
The full survey text can be found in the Appendix (1.1).

Limitations & Capabilities

While it was truly fortunate that I had such relevant data lying around, ready for use and analysis, when I first created the survey, I was unaware that demographic data should be collected at the end of the survey (not at the beginning) to avoid priming subjects, so I asked about demographic data at the beginning. For the sake of consistency, I kept the survey and its order the same, including keeping the order of the people being evaluated in the survey the sane, but that may have introduced some unwanted error into the data. In addition, the some of the questions are not worded as clearly as I would like, and the scale is incredibly relative. (But having two sets of data does allow me to look at the difference and not just the raw values.) There are no open-ended questions, which might have allowed me to understand and analyze the data more holistically. In addition, I am a member of the group I surveyed, and these people are my friends. They knew I would be analyzing this data when taking the survey, and even though I asked them numerous times to be as honest as possible, they may have not wanted to be completely honest in scoring/ranking me or others in the group. These are some of the limitations of the collection method.

However, having two sets of data for the same friend group allows me to see and analyze the changes over time. The questions I had originally asked are very much relevant to the questions I am trying to answer and the problems I am trying to solve, as they are directly related to community, asking for help, popularity, familiarity, and trust—all important aspects of every community and social system. In addition, I had a willing set of participants (even though I have not talked to them recently, as you will see in the results!). Collecting data among five dimensions allows for so many different combinations and possible interactions/correlations. I see this as both a limitation and a great benefit. While I am not able to perform every possible computation and may be missing certain insights embedded deep within the data and this does complicate and lengthen the analysis I will be doing, it also provides me with a more robust data set, especially given the small group/sample size.

Figure 1: The Technical Journey



Implementation

Once a sufficient amount of data had been collected, I began the process of analyzing it. I collected a total of over 1,600 relevant, usable data points (not including demographic data or self-scores), and compiled all this data into 9 different Jupyter Notebooks, each focused on a different angle or of the data:

- 1. PageRank for 2017 Data*
- 2. PageRank for 2019 Data*
- 3. Differences Between PageRank Data*
- 4. Means for 2017 Data*
- 5. Means for 2019 Data*
- 6. Differences Between Means*
- 7. PageRank for Outward Data*
- 8. Means for Outward Data*
- 9. Cleaning & Compiling Data for Export to Excel
 - * includes rankings, charts, gender differences, correlations, heatmaps

Doing analysis and creating visualizations in python were fast and simple, and they were incredibly helpful for uncovering and revealing the insights the data held. I used tables to display simple values and data, bar plots to show values and rank, and heatmaps to show possible correlations more clearly.

In Tableau, I was able to make more sophisticated visualizations, such as matrices of scatterplots with trendlines to quickly scan for interesting correlations.

All data, notebooks, and analysis can be found at https://github.com/stephkananth/bubbles for more details.

Alternate Explanations & Confounds

One thing that is important to remember in doing the analysis was that correlation does not equal causation, even if a 2017 dimension is highly correlated with a different 2019 dimension. There are many possible confounding variables that I did not take into great consideration including college/location/proximity, initial friendship level, and significant events that may have occurred. In addition, every member of this friend group voluntarily chose to be part of the group, so there are common experiences and interests members of the group have that are not taken into account by the survey. Others may have been forced into more "leadership" type roles in the group due to having a car or nice backyard.

Due to the nature of the group (small and distributed), being the most liked or connected does not mean much and might not even be a good thing, as it may be an indication of a lack of depth in college community and post-high school friendships.

Results, Analysis, & Significance

Here are the significant results of the survey—the current notable members of the group: (Note: This is not nearly all of the analysis, see jupyter notebooks for more depth and variety.)

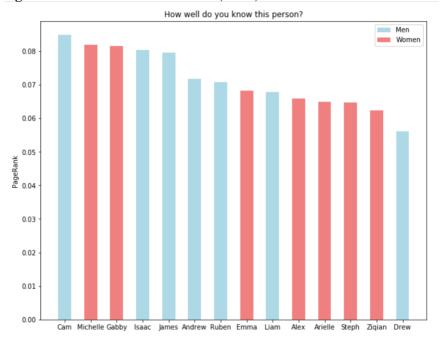


Figure 2: The Most Well-Known (2019)

In this group, the men are slightly better known than the women; Cam is the most well-known member of the group. This is consistent with what I would have assumed. Cam initiated most of our formal and informal gatherings, and we always hung out at his house, so he was the literal gatekeeper of the friend group.

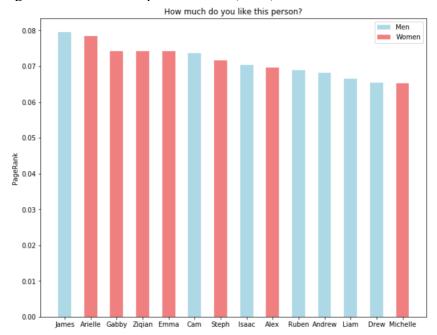


Figure 3: The Most Popular / Liked (2019)

However, the women are more liked on average. This is surprising because two years prior, James was only the 5th most popular (see below).

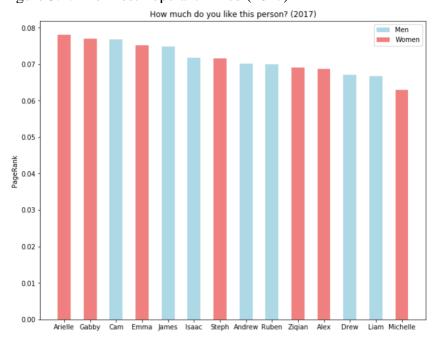


Figure 3.1: The Most Popular / Liked (2017)

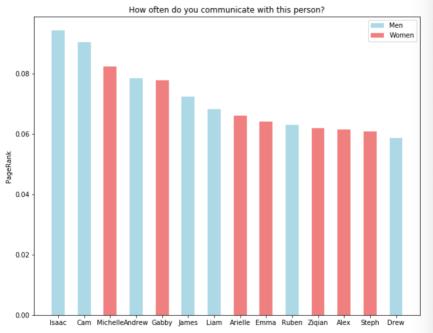


Figure 4: The Most Connected (2019)

Communication is about equal between women and men. Isaac is communicated with the most by the group.

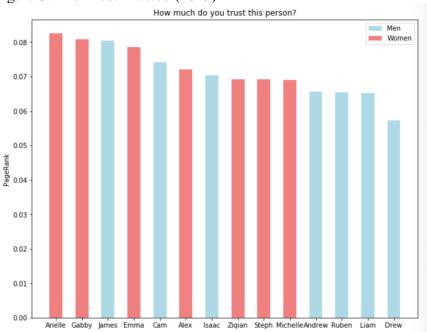


Figure 5: The Most Trusted (2019)

Women are more trusted in this group. Arielle is the most trusted person and scored very highly in popularity, despite being not as relatively well-known.

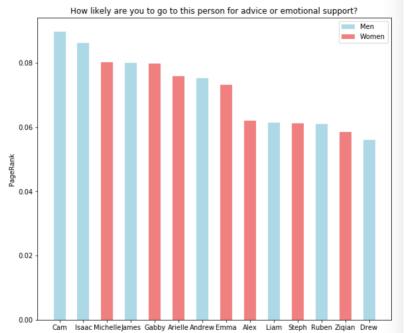


Figure 6: The Most Likely to be Asked for Advice or Emotional Support (2019)

Women are slightly more likely to be asked for help, but this is really about equal. It is interesting that Cam is the most likely to be asked for advice since he is only 5th most trusted, but he is well-known, well-liked, and highly ranked in communication.

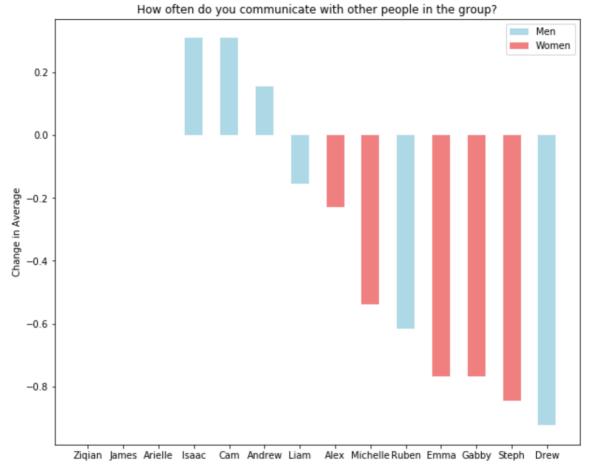
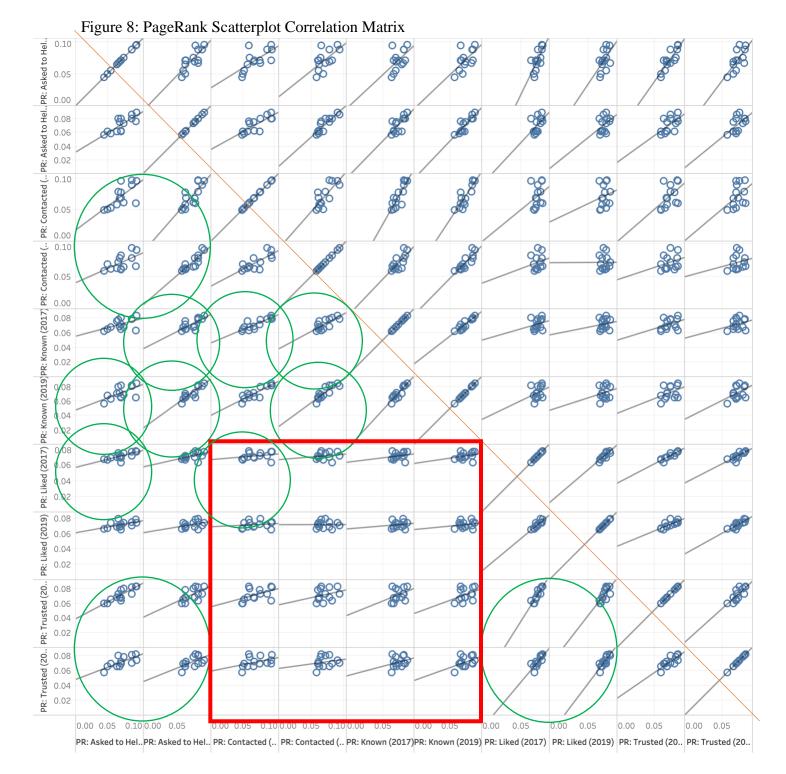


Figure 7: Difference in Average Outgoing Communication Rank

The men's overall contact barely drops, but contact for women plummets between 2017 and 2019.

On first glance, it seems intriguing that the most trusted people are not the ones most likely to be asked for advice or emotional support, so I created a scatterplot matrix to compare page-ranks more intuitively. Upon further inspection, there is significant interaction between most dimensions other than being contacted/known and liked/trusted (other than contacted/known in 2017). (See below.)

As the friend group has drifted apart and people have not kept in touch or stayed updated on each other's lives, it seems that members of the group still like and trust one another.



Significant correlation as spreadsheet (circled):

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tPGx8qVpHitUNm-y8QAdbAD8JIMd99WhDH7xdxqe1gA/edit?usp=sharing.

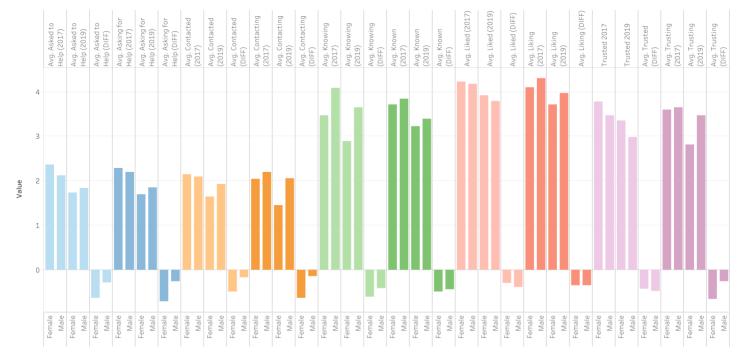


Figure 9: Averages for Different Categories & Changes Over Time by Gender

It is interesting to see the ways these values and rankings change over time. For example, women decrease more than men in every category except being liked, liking others, and being trusted. Why is this? It may just be this particular group, but it sounds reasonable that it may come back down to the way women are raised—to be warm, friendly, nurturing, and trustworthy. Even though the women in the group may not be as close to the group anymore, these characteristics may last because of the way they've been taught to act.

Conclusion

In conclusions, I was able to determine the most popular / influential people in the friend group and see how individuals and the group has evolved over time. I was also able to look more deeply at some of the data and find some correlations. Understanding how people view themselves and how that compares to how others view them is a necessary skill for communication and healthy friendships and relationships. In this group of half men, half women, the women are seen as more popular and trustworthy even though they are not as close to the group, and this affects the social power they have. And while I do not know how best to respond to this discrepancy in power, I think it is important for individuals and groups to recognize the social privilege they have and use it for good. Understanding who has power and why is a critical step for this to occur.

Distributed GroupsPlease be as honest as possible!

Appendix

1.1 Survey

* Required	
1. First Name: *	
2. Last Name: *	
3. Gender: * Mark only one oval.	
Male Female	
4. Ethnicity: * Check all that apply.	

American Indian or Alaska Native

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino

Asian

White Other:

8. Major(s) and Minor(s):

5. Current/College City: *	
6. Current/College State:	•
7. College:	

About Stephanie Ananth

	1	2	3	4	5			
Not at All	\bigcirc					Very Well		
How much			is perso	on?*				
	1	2	3	4	5			
Not at All						Very Much		
	1	2	3	4	5			
Never (/erv Often		
Never () \	/ery Often		
	one oval					ery Often		
How much			his pers	son?*	5			
How much	one oval					Very Much		
How much Mark only o	1 are you	2 to go t	3	4	5		al suppor	t? *
How much Mark only of	1 are you	2 to go t	3 to this p	4 operson f	5	Very Much	al suppor	t?*
How much Mark only of	1 are you	2 to go t	3 to this p	4 operson f	5 or advice	Very Much		t? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
ot at All						Very Mucl
. How often o	lo you	commu	nicate	with this	s persoi	n (via text, S
Mark only or	ne oval.					
		2 .		4	-	
	l	2 3	3	4	5	
Never (\mathcal{O}		\mathcal{I}			/ery Often
. How much Mark only or			s pers	on? *		
orny or	. J O FWI					
	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at All						Very Mucl
-	-	_	tnis p	erson f	or advic	e or emotio
Mark only or	-					e or emotio
-	ne oval.					
Mark only or	ne oval.					5
Very Unlikely	oby B	ı 2) (5
Very Unlikely	oby B	ı 2) (5
Very Unlikely Oout Gab ase be as hor	bby B	l 2 Bodet possible		3 4		5
Very Unlikely Oout Gab ase be as hor	bby Enest as	l 2 Bodet possible now this		3 4		5
Very Unlikely Oout Gab ase be as hor	bby Enest as	l 2 Bodet possible now this		3 4		5
Very Unlikely Oout Gab ase be as hor	bby Enest as by you k	3 Sodet possible now this	s perso	3 4	4 !	5
Very Unlikely Oout Gab ase be as hor How well do Mark only or	bby Benest as by you keep oval.	Sodet possible now this	s person	3 4	4 !	5 Very L
Very Unlikely Oout Gab ase be as hor How well do Mark only or	bby Enest as by you keep oval.	Bodet possible now this	s person	3 4	4 !	5 Very L
Very Unlikely Oout Gab ase be as hor How well do Mark only or	bby Enest as by you keep oval.	Bodet possible now this	s person	3 4	4 !	5 Very L
Very Unlikely Oout Gab ase be as hor How well do Mark only or	bby Enest as by you keep oval.	Bodet possible now this	s person	3 4	4 !	5 Very L
Wery Unlikely Out Gab se be as hor How well do Mark only or	bby Enest as by you keep oval.	Bodet possible now this	s perso	3 4 on?* 4 on?*	5	5 Very L

Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All	How much Mark only o	1 2 3 4 5 do you trust this person? * ne oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Very Often Very Often
How much do you trust this person? * Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All	How much Mark only o	do you trust this person? * ne oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Very Often Very Much
How much do you trust this person?* Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All	How much Mark only o	do you trust this person? * ne oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Very Much
Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Not at All	Not at All How likely	1 2 3 4 5 Very Much
How likely are you to go to this person for advice or emotional support? * Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Very Unlikely Very Likely Dout Cameron Hudson ase be as honest as possible! How well do you know this person? *	How likely	Very Much
How likely are you to go to this person for advice or emotional support? * Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Very Unlikely Very Likely DOUT Cameron Hudson ase be as honest as possible! How well do you know this person? *	How likely	
Mark only one oval. 1 2 3 4 5 Very Unlikely	_	are you to go to this person for advice or emotional support?*
Very Unlikely Very Likely Oout Cameron Hudson ase be as honest as possible! How well do you know this person? *		ne oval.
pout Cameron Hudson ase be as honest as possible! How well do you know this person? *		1 2 3 4 5
ase be as honest as possible! How well do you know this person? *	Very Unlike	ly Very Likely
1 2 3 4 5		ne oval.
Not at All Very Well	Not at All	Very Well
. How much do you like this person? * Mark only one oval.		
		1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Not at All	Very Much
	-4 -4 -11	
	NOL at All	Very Much

7. How much do you trust this person? * Mark only one oval.	
1 2 3 4 5	
Not at All Very Much	
8. How likely are you to go to this person for advice or emotional support?* Mark only one oval.	
1 2 3 4 5	
Very Unlikely Very Likely	
bout Andrew Jeon ease be as honest as possible! 9. How well do you know this person? * Mark only one oval.	
1 2 3 4 5	
Not at All Very Well	
0. How much do you like this person? * Mark only one oval.	
1 2 3 4 5	
Not at All Very Much	
11. How often do you communicate with this person (via text, Snapchat, Facebook, i	n persor
Mark only one oval.	
1 2 3 4 5	
Never Very Often	
2. How much do you trust this person? * Mark only one oval.	
1 2 3 4 5	
Not at All Very Much	

	1	2	3	4	5			
ery Unlikely						Very Like	ely	
out Isaa e be as hon			gle					
ow well do lark only on		ow this	person?	*				
	1	2	3	4	5			
lot at All						ery Well		
ow much o		ke this	person?	*				
	1	2	3	4	5			
lot at All						ery Much		
low often d tc.)? * Mark only on		ommuni	cate witl	n this p	erson (v	ia text, Sna	pchat, F	acebook, in p
1	2	3	4	5				
lever (\supset) Very	Often		
low much o	_	ust this	person	?*				
	1	2	3	4	5			
						ery Much		
lot at All							Leunnor	+2 *
lot at All low likely a flark only on		o go to	this pers	on for a	advice o	r emotiona	i suppor	t r

About Alexandra Minasian

Please be as honest as possible!

). How well do Mark only or			s perso	n? *					
	1	2	3	4	5				
Not at All						Very Well			
). How much of Mark only or			perso	n? *					
	1	2	3	4	5				
Not at All						Very Much	n		
. How often o	lo you	commu	nicate v	vith thi	s persor	ı (via text, S	Snapch	at, Face	book, in per
etc.)? * Mark only or	ne oval.								
1	I	2 :	3	4	5				
Never (/ery Often			
Mark only or			is perso	on? *	5				
Not at All						Very Mucl	n		
B. How likely a Mark only or	ne oval.				or advic		nal su	pport? *	,
Very Unlikely						Very I	ikely		
very offliker	, (Very	LINGIY		
bout Arie									
How well do Mark only or	you k	now this		n? *					
State of the of									
	1	2	3	4	5				

	1	2	3	4	5	
t All						Very Much
often d * only or			nicate v	with this	s persor	ı (via text, Sı
1		2	3	4	5	
ver) \	ery Often
w much o	ne oval.				_	
	1	2	3	4	5	
ot at All						Very Much
			this p	erson f	or advic	e or emotior
					or advic	
lark only or	e oval.					
How likely a Mark only or Very Unlikely Dut Lian Se be as hor How well do Mark only or	n O'l	Toole possible	: :	3 .		5
Mark only or Very Unlikely Out Lian se be as hor How well do	n O'l	Toole possible	: :	3 .		5
Mark only or Very Unlikely Dut Lian Be be as hor How well do Mark only or	n O'l eest as o you k	Toole possible	!	3 ·	4 5	5
Mark only or Very Unlikely Dut Lian se be as hor How well do	n O'llest as you kee oval.	Foole possible now this	! s perso	on?*	4 5	Very Li
ery Unlikely out Lian e be as hor ow well do lark only or ot at All	n O'llest as you kee oval.	Foole possible now this	! s perso	on?*	4 5	Very Li

ıvlark onl)	y one ov	al.								
	1	2	3	4	5					
Never						Very Ofter	- 1			
How mu	_		this per	rson?*						
Mark only	1	aı. 2	3	4	5					
Not at All) _				Very M	luch			
How like Mark only	_		to this	person	for adv	ce or emo	otiona	l supp	ort?*	
		1	2	3	4	5				
Very Unli	kely					Ver	ry Like	ely		
		Palm as possib								
se be as How wel	honest a	as possil ı know t	ole!	son? *	5					
se be as How wel Mark only	I do you y one ov	as possib I know t al.	ole! his pers		5	Very W	/ell			
se be as How wel Mark only Not at All	I do you y one ov 1 ch do you	as possilul know to al.	ole! this pers	4	5	Very W	/ell			
se be as How wel Mark only Not at All	I do you y one ov 1 ch do you	as possilul know to al.	ole! this pers	4	5 5	Very W	/ell			
How well Mark only	I do you y one ov 1 ch do you y one ov	u know t al. 2 Du like t	ole! this pers 3 his pers	4)son? *		Very W				
Not at All Not at All	I do you y one ov 1 ch do you y one ov 1 ch do you y one ov 1	as possition to the possition of the pos	shis pers 3 his pers 3 his pers	4 son? * 4 with the	5 oils person	Very M	luch	pchat	, Faceb	ook, in pe
Not at All How much Mark only Not at All How ofte etc.)?*	I do you y one ov 1 ch do you y one ov 1 ch do you y one ov 1	as possition to the possition of the pos	shis pers	4 son?*	5	Very M	luch t, Sna	pchat	, Faceb	ook, in pe

	67. How much do you trust this person? * Mark only one oval.	
	1 2 3 4 5	
	Not at All Very	Much
	 How likely are you to go to this person for advice or en Mark only one oval. 	notional support? *
	1 2 3 4 5	(on Likely
	Very Unlikely	/ery Likely
lea	About Drew Pelusi lease be as honest as possible! 9. How well do you know this person? *	
	Mark only one oval.	
	1 2 3 4 5	
	Not at All Very	Well
	60. How much do you like this person? * Mark only one oval.	
	1 2 3 4 5	
	Not at All Very	Much
	61. How often do you communicate with this person (via te etc.)? *	ext, Snapchat, Facebook, in persor
	Mark only one oval.	
	1 2 3 4 5	
	Never Very Off	en
	22. How much do you trust this person? * Mark only one oval.	
	1 2 3 4 5	
		Much

	1	2	3	4	5			
Very Unlikely						Very Likely		
out Rube	n Wal	ter						
se be as hone	st as poss	sible!						
How well do		this pe	rson?*					
Mark only one	ovai.							
	1 2	3	4	5				
Not at All () Ve	ery Well		
How much do	vou like	this no	son2 *					
Mark only one		tilis pei	SOII:					
	1 2	3	4	5				
Not at All () Ve	ery Much		
How often do	you com	munica	te with	this per	son (vi	a text, Snapch	at, Facebook, in	pe
etc.)? * Mark only one	oval.							
1	2	3	4	5				
Never					Very	Often		
How much do	you trus	t this ne	erson?	*				
Mark only one	_	r tins pe	,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,					
	1 2	3	4	5				
					\ \/a	ery Much		
Not at All) ve	Ty WILCH		
Not at All (
How likely are		jo to thi	s perso	n for ac	lvice or	emotional sup	pport? *	
		jo to thi	s perso	n for ac	lvice or	emotional sup	pport?*	

About Ziqian Zhang Please be as honest as possible!

9. How well o Mark only o			is perso	n?*					
	1	2	3	4	5				
Not at All						Very Well			
0. How much	_		s perso	n? *					
Mark only o	ne oval	-							
	1	2	3	4	5				
Not at All						Very Much	1		
1. How often etc.)? * Mark only o			inicate	with thi	s persoi	ı (via text, S	napcl	nat, Fac	cebook, in pe
	1	2	3	4	5				
Never (/ery Often			
2. How much Mark only o	-		nis pers 3	on? * 4	5				
Not at All						Very Much	1		
3. How likely Mark only o			o this p	erson f	or advic	e or emotio	nal su	ipport?	*
		1 :	2	3	4 :	5			
Very Unlike	ely (\supset	\supset	\supset		Very L	ikely		
bout Mic ease be as ho									
4. How well o Mark only o	-		is perso	on?*					
	1	2	3	4	5				

	1	2	3	4	5					
Not at All						Very Much				
etc.)? *			ınicate	with thi	s persor	ı (via text, Sı	apcha	t, Fac	ebook, in pe	rson,
Mark only	one oval	1.								
	1	2	3	4	5					
Never (/ery Often				
How much Mark only (nis pers	on?*						
	1	2	3	4	5					
Not at All						Very Much				
How likely Mark only (to this p	erson f	or advic	e or emotion	al sup	port?	*	
wark only	orio ovai									
		1	2	3	4 5	5				
Very Unlike	ely () (Very Li	cely			
u're do										
nks so muc	h, I reall	y appred	ciate it!							
What is yo	ur favo	rite type	of coo	kie?*						