Assignment 9:
Experimental study of contagion on Facebook

Sociology 204 (Social Networks)
Matthew J. Salganik

Due: April 24, 2013
Remember to write your name and precept on your assignment and staple it!

In this assignment you will run a social contagion experiments similar to the ones run in Nickerson (2008). Before beginning this assignment, you will need to read that paper. Also, you will need to start this assignment right after class on Monday (if not sooner).

Here are the steps you should complete in order to collect your data. You must report your results in a format similar to Tables 1 and 2 so that another scientist (e.g., your preceptor) can review your results.

- Pick Facebook Page that people can "Like" and that you want to support. For example, it could be the Princeton University page (`http://www.facebook.com/PrincetonU`), the Save Darfur Coalition (`http://www.facebook.com/savedarfurcoalition`), or anything else you want.
- Pick 8 pairs of people that are connected by a strong tie. These could be two roommates, a romantic couple, or just good friends. For example, if Adam and Brian share a room, they could be one of your pairs; if Alice and Bob are dating, they could be another pair; if Allison and Brett always each lunch together, they could be another pair. There are three criteria that these pairs must meet. First, you need to be connected to all 16 people on Facebook. Second, none of these people can have already "Liked" the Page you selected to promote (e.g., Save Darfur). You should check this by going to that Page, and it will show you which of your friends have "Liked" it. Finally, none of the 16 people should be in this class.
- Randomly chose 4 pairs to be in the treatment condition and 4 to be in the control condition. One way to do this would be to write down each pair on a slip of paper, put the slips into a hat, and draw 4 slips.
- For the pairs assigned to the control condition, don't do anything different with these people than you normally do. Do not tell them about the Page you are promoting.
- For the people in the treatment condition, flip a coin to decide which one to approach (or if you are uncomfortable with that, approach the one you know better). For each of the friends you are supposed to approach, send them a personalized message suggesting that they like the Page you are promoting. When you send the message, try to get them to like the Page much as you would if you were trying to encourage them to vote (as in the Nickerson paper); make your case, *but do not be pushy*. Also, you should not volunteer that this is for a class project, but, if the persons asks you later, you should not lie to them.
- Tuesday night before class you should visit the Facebook page that you were promoting and see if the 16 people under consideration have "Liked" the Page.

Now that you have collected your data, here are some questions:

1. What is the url of the Page you were promoting?
2. How many of the people that you approached directly actually "Liked" the Page you were promoting?
3. How many of the pairs of these people actually "Liked" the Page you were promoting?
4. How many of the people in the control condition "Liked" the Page you were promoting?

Treatment pairs

Pair	(Initials) Person 1, encouraged	(Initials) Person 2, not encouraged	Person 1 "Liked" page?	Person 2 "Liked" page?
1				
2				
3				
4				

Table 1: Results from your data collection for the treatment pairs.

Control pairs

Pair	(Initials) Person 1	(Initials) Person 2	Person 1 "Liked" page?	Person 2 "Liked" page?
1				
2				
3				
4				

Table 2: Results from your data collection for the control pairs.

5. From this data, what can you conclude about the contagiousness of "Liking" pages on Facebook? Think about both direct influence (the adoption rate of people you approached) and indirect contagion (the adoption rate of partners of people you approached).

6. How do your results compare to the results from Nickerson's voting experiment? *Be specific and cite actual numbers.* Do not speak in vague generalities.

7. Did you notice any other patterns in your data that were not addressed in the previous questions? If so, please explain.