# Fame and fate: Why is global success so unpredictable?

Principles of Complex Systems | @pocsvox CSYS/MATH 300, Fall, 2015 | #FallPoCS2015

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The most famous painting in the world:



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## Outline

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# The dismal predictive powers of editors .....



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Twelve ...





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# The completely unpredicted fall of Eastern Europe:



Timur Kuran: [2] "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989"

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# Reason 2—"We are all individuals." Archival footage:

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▶ Individual narratives are not enough to understand distributed, networked minds.

Reason 3—We are spectacular imitators.





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We understand bushfire stories:

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- 1. Sparks start fires.
- 2. System properties control a fire's spread.
- 3. But we make two mistakes about Social Fires...





BBC/David Attenborough.

Mistake 1:



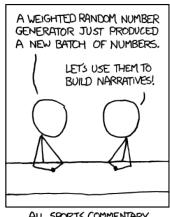


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## Reason 1—We are Homo Narrativus.



ALL SPORTS COMMENTARY

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See "Becoming Mona Lisa" by David Sassoon

Success is due to intrinsic properties





http://xkcd.com/904/♂



48 songs 30k participants

Exp 1— weak social Exp. 2—strong social

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"An experimental study of inequality and unpredictability in an artificial cultural market" 

Salganik, Dodds, and Watts, Science, **311**, 854–856, 2006. [3]

Exp. 2

Resolving the paradox:

Rank: minfluence

24

36

48

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Mistake 2:

belong to us'

Seeing success is 'due to social' and

The hypodermic model of influence:

wanting to say 'all your interactions are

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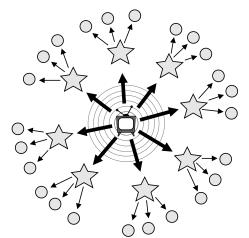
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# The two step model of influence: [1]



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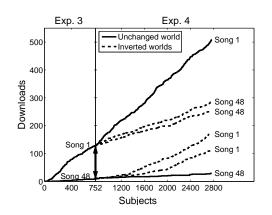


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## Payola/Deceptive advertising hurts us all:

Increased social awareness leads to Stronger inequality + Less predictability.

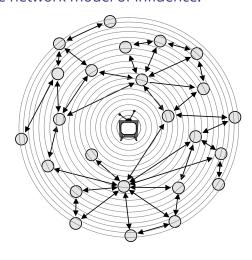
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## The network model of influence:



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## Etymological clarity:

- ▶ Fate—from the Latin fatus: meaning "spoken".
- ▶ Fate is talk that has been done. "It is written", fore-tell, pre-dict.
- ▶ "There is no such thing as fate, only the story of fate."
- Destiny is probablistic.
- ▶ Fame—from the Latin fāma: meaning "to talk."
- ▶ Fame is inherently the social discussion about the thing, not the thing itself.
- ▶ Renown 🗹: Repeatedly named, talked about. Old French renon, from re- + non ("name").
- Réclame ☑. "Clamo"—Proto-Indo-European: "to shout" (again). Connected to "lowing".



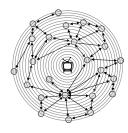
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### The network model of influence:



### How superspreading works:

Many interconnected, average, trusting people must benefit from both receiving and sharing a message far from its source.

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## Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray



"There is only one thing in the world

worse than being talked about,

and that is

not being talked about."

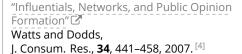
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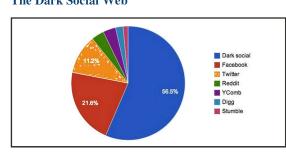
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## The Dark Social Web

Spreading in the social wild:



Dark Social: We Have the Whole History of the Web Wrong [ The Atlantic]

# Things that spread quickly:









+ News ...

buzzfeed.com <a>C¹</a>:





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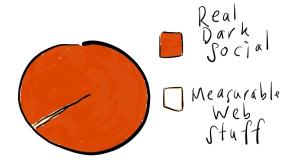
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## A completely made up pie chart:



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[2] T. Kuran.

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[3] M. J. Salganik, P. S. Dodds, and D. J. Watts. An experimental study of inequality and unpredictability in an artificial cultural market. Science, 311:854-856, 2006. pdf





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How to make things spread (maybe):

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[4] D. J. Watts and P. S. Dodds. Influentials, networks, and public opinion formation.

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## Shareworthy Content is King:

- 1. Build entities/messages/stories that have intrinsic and social value out in the Social Wild.
- 2. Advertise but lay off the social interactions.
- 3. Just keep trying.





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