Comment on "Social Interactions and Individual Reproductive Decisions"

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What the paper is about?

- Social networks effect in the probability of getting tested for HIV
- Randomized field experiment with two different lotteries: one unconditional and another conditional on being tested for HIV.
- Effects: 63% of the B lottery and 20% of the A lottery were tested
- Results: effect of male tested friends is positive, effect of female tested friends is negative. Same results for the married sub-sample

- Is it relevant?
  - Literature on social effects on various outcomes (risky behavior, technology adoption, etc.). Relevant for policy
  - Methodologically relevant: how to better measure network effects. Quoting Graham (2008) "...in what is a large, but very problematic empirical literature"
  - Three different issues in order to identify network effects: 1) endogeneity of networks, 2) correlation, 3) Inconsistency when networks are not measured completely: census

- Malawi context: AIDS prevalence in the region
  - location matters for HIV spread (Djemai, 2011)
- Power calculations: relevant unit, network? (Group level heterogeneity matters here)
- Information collected: other reproductive decisions? Controls?
- Definition of networks: friends, families & people they admire, distance across villages? how many network members where outside the village?
- Regressions: controls? Baseline characteristics?
- Explanation of the intervention, how does it relates to other campaigns for HIV testing?
- Policy implications: what do we make out of this?

- Literature on social interactions (Manski, 1993, Lee 2007, Bramoulle et al 2009, among many others)
- You should better explain how the study you are designing helps you to overcome and what randomization is buying you.