




Weak Ties and Virtual Communities

From Granovetter to
Zuckerburg

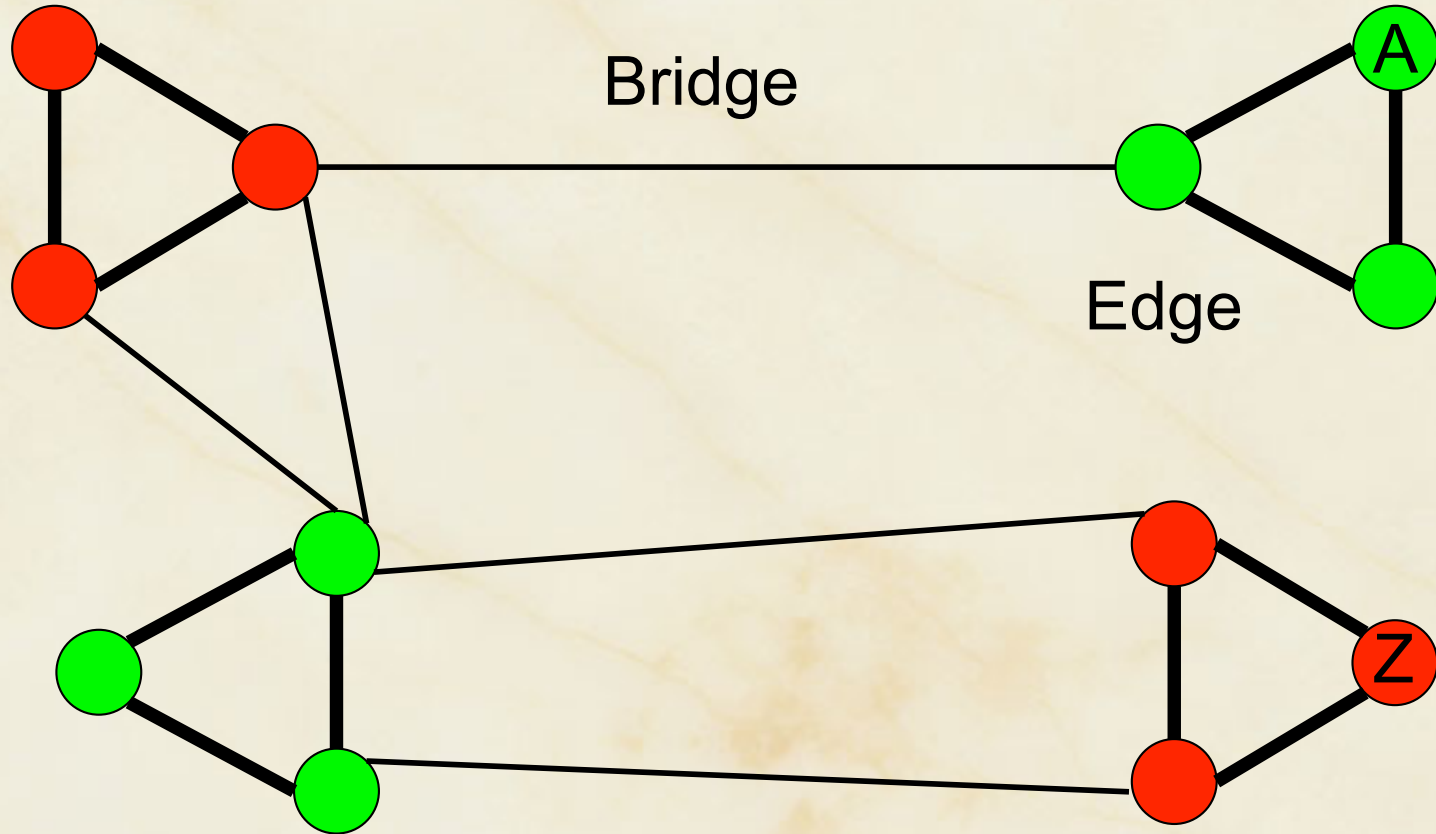


The Strength of Weak Ties

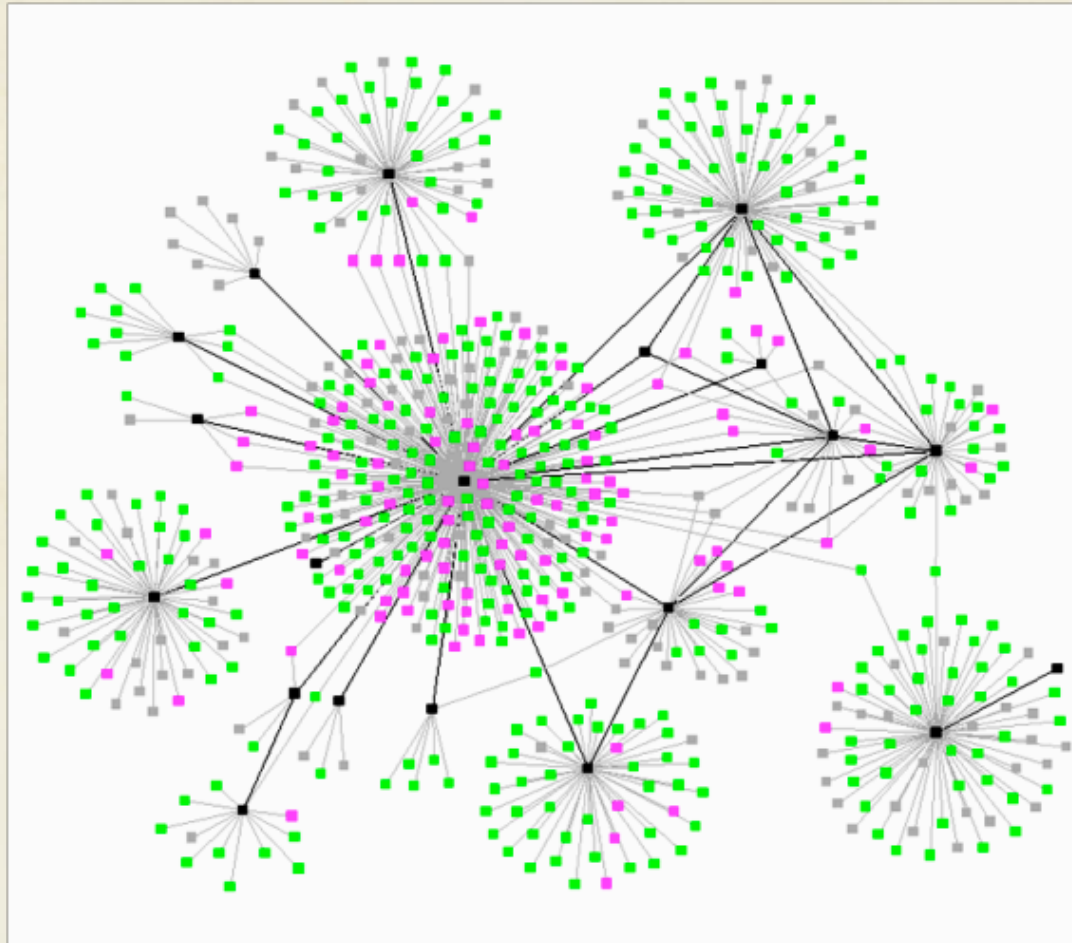
- Granovetter: Interviewed people and asked:
 - “How did you find your job?”
 - Kept getting the the same answer:
 - “through an acquaintance, not a friend”
- Interaction network
 - *Nodes*: People
 - *Edges*: Between people with a social relationship
 - *Weight*: strength of connection
 - Quantize to either “weak” or “strong”

Network Analysis

Nodes



Network Analysis





Bridges

- Bridges allow diffusion of information between otherwise disconnected communities.
- bridges bring otherwise distant communities together
- “Bridge” concept provides an important piece of the micro => macro puzzle
 - What sort of relationships act as bridges?



Tipping Point

- An individual's uptake of a new technique depends on how many of those around him have "bought in"
 - The "Tipping Point" (Gladwell, 2000)
- Quickly adopted techniques must be rapidly spread to many cliques



Tipping Point

- People with many weak ties critical to spreading the idea
- Without weak links, community exists as a set of strongly connected, but disjoint cliques
- Lets talk Politics!
 - Consensus building and weak ties



Access to Resources

- Our weak ties are with people whose ties are with those socially distant to us.
 - Weak ties bring us knowledge of our community not available through friends
- Many weak ties => more access to wider community's ideas, resources, etc.
- Few weak ties => little information of outside world




Access to Resources

- Example: Academic Hiring
 - School's reluctance to hire your own PhD's
 - Want to prevent “intellectual inbreeding”




Social Networks

- Social networks can explain how communities are created and maintained.
- Individuals create interpersonal bonds with others within their social network that are interwoven with the social institutions of their society.



Virtual Communities

- “The online social network provided a venue for storytelling, showcasing, projects and best practices that could be leveraged to create new knowledge resources” (Kimball & Rheingold, 2000)
 - People who are geographically separated or “on the road” need a way of maintaining contact, whether they are part of a large community or an organisational project team.
 - Virtual settlements.



The Future of Networks

- Opposite to what you might expect:
 - Weak personal relationships bind communities together
 - Exclusively strong ties lead to global fragmentation
- Social Media has emerged as an example of the strength of weak ties



facebook

- Social Media Website

- Interact with other members inside or outside of your organization
- Make and develop friendships
- Get to know somebody
- Putting a name to a face



facebook



History of facebook

- Founded by Mark Zuckerberg
 - Harvard University
 - Launched Feb 4th, 2004
- Originated for College students only
 - High School level
 - All users from different organizations
- Approximately 900 Million users



Academic Debate

- We are going to split into two teams and debate the following statement
 - The long term impact of social media sites and increased reliance on technology as means for communication is ultimately harmful to both individuals and society



Academic Debate

- We will meet in class on Weds and go to the SS Computer lab (A123)
 - Each team will have the day to do research and prepare a 5-7 argument that presents their teams position.
 - Students will be prepared to engage in questions and argumentation with the opposing side.