

The Strength of Weak Ties

After reading papers and articles about social visualization, it became clear that translucency, saliency of data and privacy of each subject must be considered. Due to that fact, most of visualization can depict up-to a certain degree of macro scale representation and little if not information of micro scale is hard to be seen. The Strength of Weak Ties, however, explains very important yet insightful nature of what is considered “not-likely-be-used-for-visualization”, weak ties and its application to macro level understanding.

One of the most interesting fact that i realized about this paper was that even though it was written 20 years ago, i cannot believe that no one ever thought about the concept of “weak ties” and how this affects human interaction within the society before Granovetter. Although his work emphasized on how weak ties can be used to expand ones network and implicitly cultivate communication channel among cliques (rumors or any information flows more easily to other cliques) within a larger network, he missed out the point of having strong network and credibility of weakly-tied network. Even though weakly-tied network does expand one’s network further than that is of strongly-tied network, i believe that as network expand further based on weak tie, it decreases the credibility of then network. Whereas strongly-tied network might not expand as much as of weakl-tied network, each one of the network has certain degree of credibility. And i believe this credibility is what makes people focus more on strongly tied network.

Another fact that i liked about this paper is its application to the real world analysis. I think the example of the Italian community of Boston’s West End shows the strength of weak ties, the information flow. Just like the paper says,i believe that the information flow from one network to another in is almost none unless there is a weak tie that initiate the information flow or “marginal” innovators. Without marginal innovators, no information flow will be initiated and cliques stays where they are and no more interaction with other will be possible outside of the clique. I think the marginal innovators are the one who actually initiate what we call social network.

Visualizing Social Networks

As social visualizations need to make salient data more noticeable and interrelation among participants, making visualization simple to interpret and clear enough to understand the connection is the key. Moreno's work with points and line sure is the fundamental technique lying on modern days visualization. Not only are the points and line the only techniques used but also the meaning of points and line from the variation such as position and shapes. Starting from points and line to computer generated visualization, i think the underlying principle is to follow much of Moreno's work, patterns of linkages. Based on the understanding of how visualization has changed over the years, I found two most interesting visualization in Visualizing Social Networks. Not surprisingly, both of them look like much more complicated extension of Moreno's work.

The first one is Clusters of Occupations by Laumann and Guttman. Clusters of Occupations has its excellency in both intuitive deployment of data according to its prestige levels in occupations and following the Moreno's basic principle using points and line. By placing higher prestige levels of occupations at the top and low prestige level at the bottom, one can easily understand its meaning without much of explanation or information gathering. Also I believe that while in Clusters of Occupations uses many lines to represent the relation that occur among other points(occupation), the number of the cross line does not seem to interrupt the understanding of the sociogram. I believe that this kind of work was carried out due to the use of three-dimensional space where people can interpret the meaning of the visualization from mental clustering.

The other is Cliques by Proctor. Cliques does not quite follow all those Moreno's "few crossing line" or different shapes and various positions, it provides unique understanding despite of its many crossing line with same shapes. I think due to unusual complexity and closeness of the same shape, it lets viewer construct mental cluster of the visualization which leads to its own understanding of the representation.

The Network Community: An Introduction

The Network Community: An Introduction covers very broad topics and its concern from early community era to modern community with its persistent concern about the community, mostly related to whether the nature of community has been changing. While reading paper, I found particularly interesting topics that are well studied but need more explanation or adjustment. The main flow of the paper I focused on was how people cope with the problem of community itself and how it has been changed from being concerned about urbanization to well tied community to more individualized community where privacy of people within the community exists besides the entire social network to modern day community where the author defined it as “feminized”. During this so called process of community, I enjoyed the part where people become more free in terms of their social identify in the community since they become partial engaged in many communities at the same time, the identity of being oneself has become less bounded. I think it is especially true since having engaged in only one community might predefine one’s identity or image pretty quickly and hard to make change out of it. This notion of less bounded-ness to a particularly community goes on to build a foundation of more private, strongly tied network which leads to another phase change of the community; hanging out with close friends within their house as opposed to going out to a movie or concert. However I don’t think this less bounded-ness to a particular community is not the only reason of the phase change of the nature of community. I believe that the availability of Internet to everyone might also be part of this phase change as we can see every thing online almost force ourselves to do anything within our house such as renting a movie, watching a concert and play games etc.

However, I enjoyed reading the part where author explains about the feminized community. I believe it is very well studied and written on why women’s are considered more suited at social situation/relationship and how the social management strength of women influence and change the nature of today’s community. I believe that this cannot be done with the existence of weak ties within the community and women’s strength on making constant connection among many of their surrounding people including neighbors, relatives, in-laws etc.