

Research Project

Option 1: Workers striking at a clothing shop in newly independent and post-Apartheid Zambia

Background

In 1964 the people of the then-British-colony, Northern Rhodesia, declared independence and formed the country of Zambia. It moved quickly to put an end to the previous government's policy of Apartheid, opening up all sorts of new social and economic opportunities for the African population.

Around the same time a young Anthropologist named Bruce Kapferer began a study of a clothing shop in the Zambian town of Kabwe, offering a glimpse of the forces at work in this moment of social transformation (this work was published as *Strategy and Transaction in an African Factory*). While he was there the African workers at the Indian-owned factory would organize two strikes in order demand better pay and working conditions from their employers. Their first strike failed, but their second strike was successful in forcing ownership to ameliorate pay and work conditions.

The Project

Your research for this project will focus on the social network within the factory, and on the question of why the first strike failed and the second strike succeeded. To that end, there are *two* social networks for you to analyze. In a wonderful twist of fate, Kapferer collected the data for the first social network just before the first strike took place, and collected social network data for the factory a second time just before the second strike took place. Look for the characteristics of each network, and the differences between them, to understand what happened from the perspective of social network analysis.

Write a 1250- to 1500-word report explaining why the workers succeeded in their second attempt at a strike, while their first failed to produce any change. Consider what advantages and disadvantages existed in each network structure. When you make a claim, support it with evidence. Be sure to address the full range of the course's content in answering this question, as nearly all of it is relevant to the question at hand.

Broad Subfields in Sociology that This Project addresses

This is fundamentally a matter of social networks, social movements, and economic sociology. Depending on how creative you get it may also overlap with the sociology of race and the sociology of gender.

Skills/Technology Required

- Minimal internet access
- Gephi, which can be downloaded [here](#)

Where to Find Data

Data files for each network are available on the course website. I have also taken the liberty of uploading three figures from Kapferer's book, showing you the names of each person in the network—in case you want to infer race or gender (he doesn't provide that data otherwise)—and their physical

location on the factory floor at T_1 and T_2 . You do not need to collect any of your own data for this project.

How to use Gephi to analyze social networks

There are instructional videos posted to the course website, in the research project folder. This will walk you through how to produce the kinds of things you are required to do here. Additionally, one of our laboratory sessions will be dedicated to helping you use Gephi.

Learning Objectives & Rubric

Objective	Description	Score
Demonstrate an ability to deploy social network analysis	You need to apply a range of social network concepts and techniques, and include the results in the paper. ¹	/15
Demonstrate an ability to construct an argument based on evidence	You need to effectively show that your argument is right, using evidence to support each point in your argument.	/15
Total		/30

¹ One easy way to do this is to make one table (and include it in the paper) that shows the main statistics relating to the network as a whole (diameter, density, triadic closure, etc.), and another table that shows node-specific statistics (degree, betweenness centrality, modularity, etc.). Then you can refer to those tables when you need evidence for your arguments.

Option 2: Rise to power of the Medici in Renaissance Florence

Background

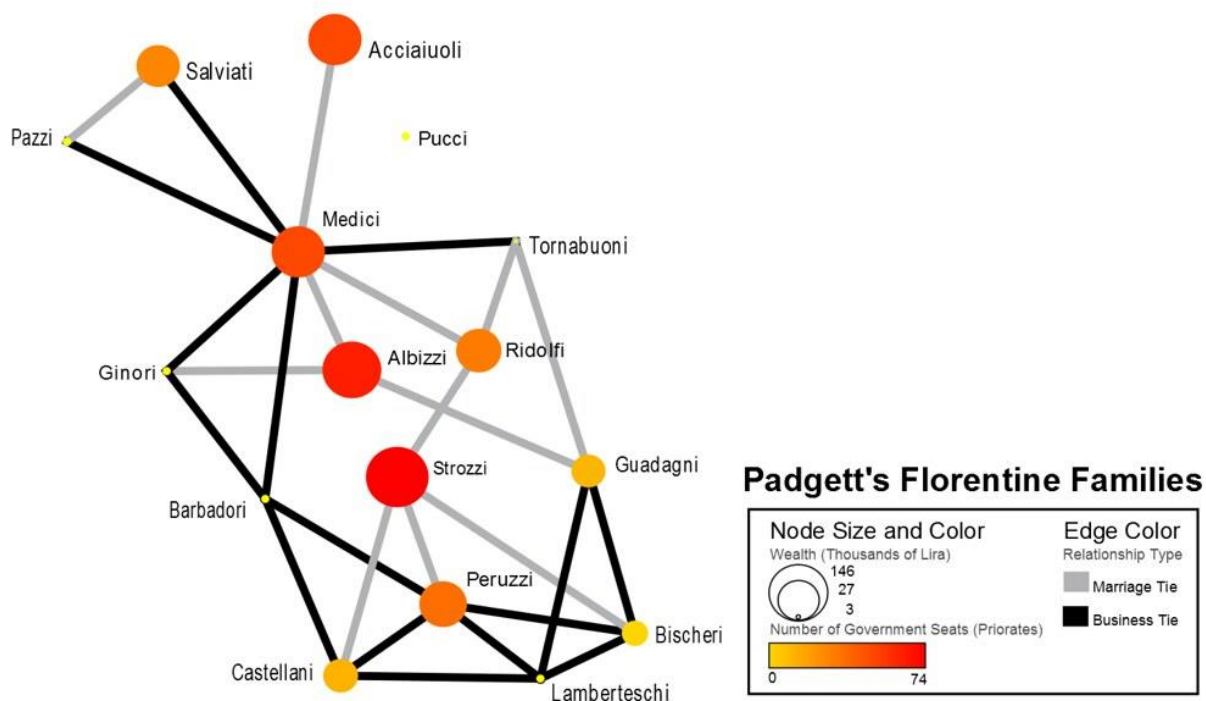
The Medici were the ruling family in Florence (Italy) from 1434 until the mid-1700s. They ran the most important bank in Europe, managed to get four of their family members elected as Pope, and helped popularize double-entry bookkeeping. Just as importantly, the Medici presided over the birth of the Renaissance, sponsoring architecture and works of art that remain foundational pieces in their fields today.

Their rise to power, though, was unexpected. They were not the most politically important family, nor were they the wealthiest family. Instead, the story of how they became a ruling dynasty in Florence is one of social networks.

The Project

Your job in this research project is relatively straightforward. Provide an explanation for how the Medici rose to power, in terms of social networks. The social network among the prominent families in Florence, from the decades immediately before the Medici took power, is shown below. The network displays two different types of relationships between the families: marriages (in grey), and business connections (in black).

Write a 1250- to 1500-word report explaining the advantages and disadvantages of the Medici's position in the social network, and how it may have helped them in their pursuit for power.



Broad Subfields in Sociology that This Project addresses

This is fundamentally a matter of social networks, political sociology, and economic sociology.

Skills/Technology Required

- Minimal internet access, if you want to search for additional historical background on the families here or the events of the time

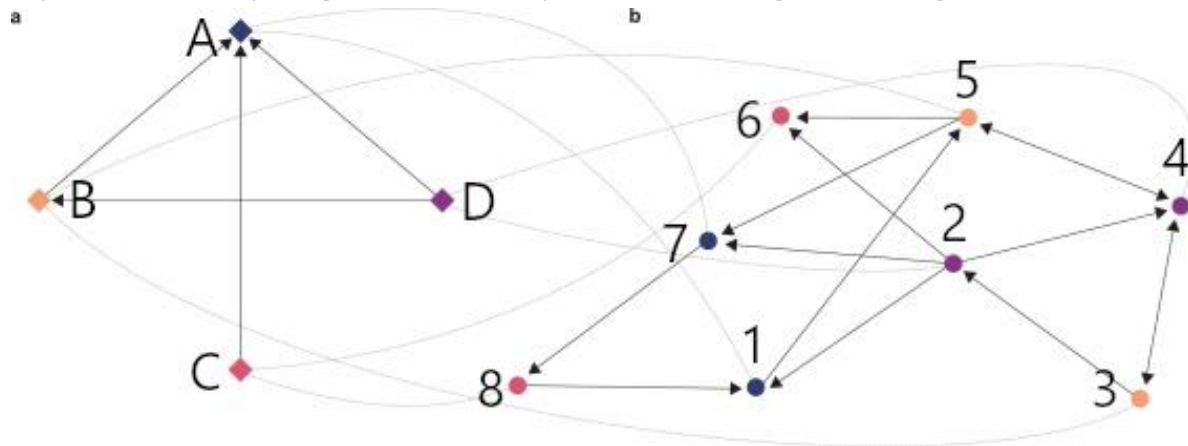
Where to Find Data

The image here is all you need. You are still expected to back up your statements with evidence, so you will need to do some basic calculations on your own (clustering coefficient, degree, etc.), and make some informed guesses in other cases (betweenness centrality, eigenvector centrality, etc.).

Learning Objectives & Rubric

Objective	Description	Score
Demonstrate an ability to deploy social network analysis	You need to apply a range of social network concepts and techniques, and include the results in the paper.	/15
Demonstrate an ability to construct an argument based on evidence	You need to effectively show that your argument is right, using evidence to support each point in your argument.	/15
Total		/30

Option 3: Adopting sesame crops in a Nicaraguan village



Background

The people living in the small village of Arang dak in northern Nicaragua were violently forced out of their homes by the Sandinistas in the 1980s. But they fought to recapture their lands and negotiated the right to semi-autonomously govern their community.

This data is from a subsection of the village, where diamonds represent households and circles represent individuals. There are edges here indicating individuals' membership in certain households (this is also color-coded), edges representing families with agreements to lend seeds, with arrows pointing from the lending family to the borrowing family, and edges representing individuals with their own separate seed-lending agreements, again with arrows pointing from lenders to borrowers.

The Project

For this project, you need to imagine that the people in Arang dak are considering planting a new kind of crop—sesame—but most people are hesitant. Write a 1250- to 1500-word report explaining how far the innovation would spread among individuals if it started from Node 2 under the following two scenarios:

- If their threshold of adoption was determined by the household status. Blue would have the lowest threshold at $1/3$, Orange would have the second lowest at $2/3$, while Pink and Purple would each require a threshold of $3/3$.
- If adoption only occurred when there was neighbor from a higher status family (Pink = Purple > Orange > Blue) recommending the new seed.

Assume that every person considers *any* connection to be a neighbor, regardless of the direction of the edge connecting them.

Further, be sure explain in your paper what the village could do to increase the overall adoption of sesame seeds, and how your various suggestions would help (if it all) in each scenario?

Broad Subfields in Sociology that This Project addresses

This is largely a project based in the areas of social networks, economic sociology, and perhaps as well the sociology of the global south.

Skills/Technology Required

- Minimal internet access, simply to access to this prompt

Where to Find Data

The image here is all you need. You are still expected to back up your statements with evidence, so you will need to some basic calculations on your own (clustering coefficient, degree, etc.), and make some informed guesses in other cases (betweenness centrality, eigenvector centrality, etc.).

Learning Objectives & Rubric

Objective	Description	Score
Demonstrate an ability to deploy social network analysis	You need to apply a range of social network concepts and techniques, and include the results in the paper.	/15
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Total		/30