Chapter 4: Unsupervised Learning

Road map

- **Basic concepts**
- **K-means algorithm**
- **Representation of clusters**
- **Hierarchical clustering**
- **Distance functions**
- **Data standardization**
- **Handling mixed attributes**
- **Which clustering algorithm to use?**
- **Cluster evaluation**
- **Discovering holes and data regions**
- **Summary**

Supervised learning vs. unsupervised learning

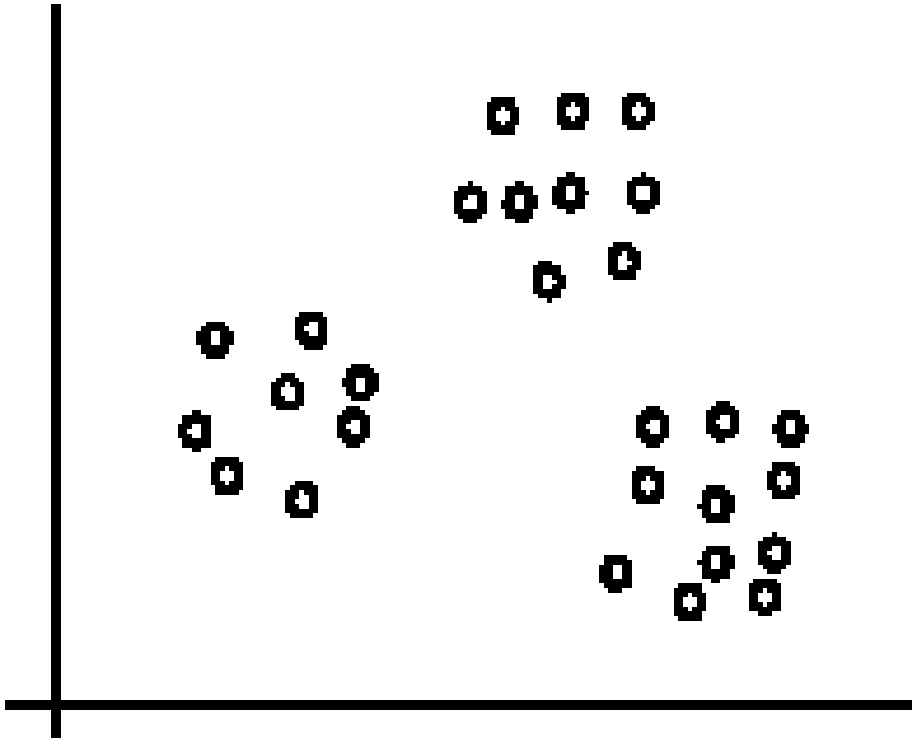
- Supervised learning: discover patterns in the data that relate data attributes with a target (class) attribute.
  - These patterns are then utilized to predict the values of the target attribute in future data instances.
- Unsupervised learning: The data have no target attribute.
  - We want to explore the data to find some intrinsic structures in them.

Clustering

- Clustering is a technique for finding similarity groups in data, called **clusters**. I.e.,
  - it groups data instances that are similar to (near) each other in one cluster and data instances that are very different (far away) from each other into different clusters.
- Clustering is often called an **unsupervised learning** task as no class values denoting an *a priori* grouping of the data instances are given, which is the case in supervised learning.
- Due to historical reasons, clustering is often considered synonymous with unsupervised learning.
  - In fact, association rule mining is also unsupervised
- This chapter focuses on clustering.

An illustration

- The data set has three natural groups of data points, i.e., 3 natural clusters.



What is clustering for?

- Let us see some real-life examples
- Example 1: groups people of similar sizes together to make "small", "medium" and "large" T-Shirts.
  - Tailor-made for each person: too expensive
  - One-size-fits-all: does not fit all.
- Example 2: In marketing, segment customers according to their similarities
  - To do targeted marketing.

What is clustering for? (cont…)

- Example 3: Given a collection of text documents, we want to organize them according to their content similarities,
  - To produce a topic hierarchy
- In fact, clustering is one of the most utilized data mining techniques.
  - It has a long history, and used in almost every field, e.g., medicine, psychology, botany, sociology, biology, archeology, marketing, insurance, libraries, etc.
  - In recent years, due to the rapid increase of online documents, text clustering becomes important.

Aspects of clustering

- A clustering algorithm
  - Partitional clustering
  - Hierarchical clustering
  - …
- A distance (similarity, or dissimilarity) function
- Clustering quality
  - Inter-clusters distance $\Rightarrow$ maximized
  - Intra-clusters distance $\Rightarrow$ minimized
- The quality of a clustering result depends on the algorithm, the distance function, and the application.

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K-means clustering

- K-means is a partitional clustering algorithm
- Let the set of data points (or instances) D be

  $\{\mathbf{x}_1, \mathbf{x}_2, \ldots, \mathbf{x}_n\}$,

  where $\mathbf{x}_i = (x_{i1}, x_{i2}, \ldots, x_{ir})$ is a vector in a real-valued space $X \subseteq R^r$, and r is the number of attributes (dimensions) in the data.
- The *k*-means algorithm partitions the given data into *k* clusters.
  - Each cluster has a cluster **center**, called **centroid**.
  - *k* is specified by the user

K-means algorithm

- Given *k*, the *k-means* algorithm works as follows:
  1) Randomly choose *k* data points (seeds) to be the initial centroids, cluster centers
  2) Assign each data point to the closest centroid
  3) Re-compute the centroids using the current cluster memberships.
  4) If a convergence criterion is not met, go to 2).

K-means algorithm – (cont …)

Algorithm *k*-means(*k*, *D*)

1 Choose *k* data points as the initial centroids (cluster centers)
2 **repeat**
3 **for** each data point $\mathbf{x} \in D$ do
4 compute the distance from **x** to each centroid;
5 assign **x** to the closest centroid // a centroid represents a cluster
6 **endfor**
7 re-compute the centroids using the current cluster memberships
8 **until** the stopping criterion is met

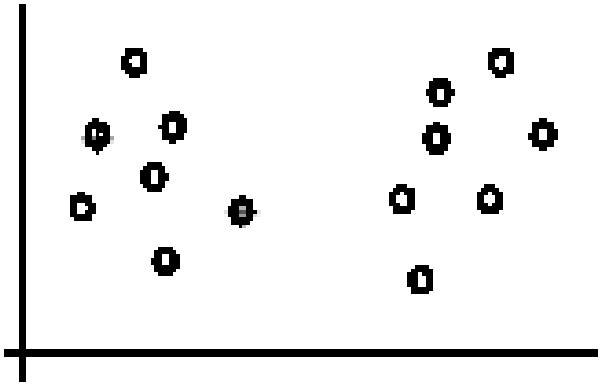
Stopping/convergence criterion

1. no (or minimum) re-assignments of data points to different clusters,
2. no (or minimum) change of centroids, or
3. minimum decrease in the **sum of squared error** (SSE),

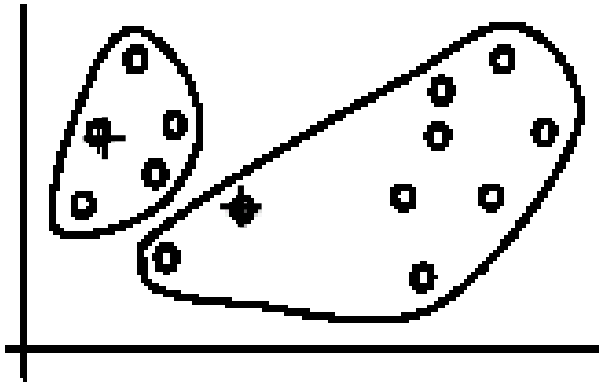
$$SSE = \sum_{j=1}^{k} \sum_{\mathbf{x} \in C_j} dist(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{m}_j)^2 \qquad (1)$$

- C_i is the jth cluster, $\mathbf{m}_j$ is the centroid of cluster C_j (the mean vector of all the data points in C_j), and $dist(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{m}_j)$ is the distance between data point $\mathbf{x}$ and centroid $\mathbf{m}_j$.

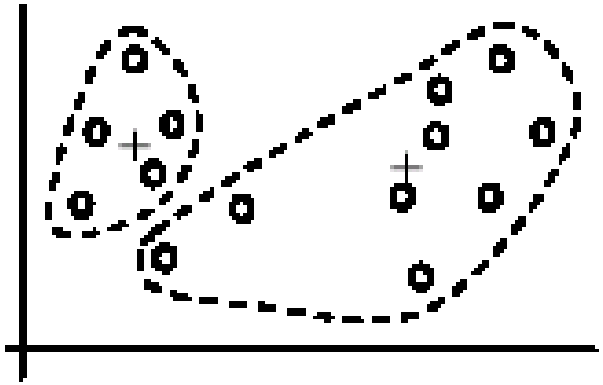
An example



(A). Random selection of k centers

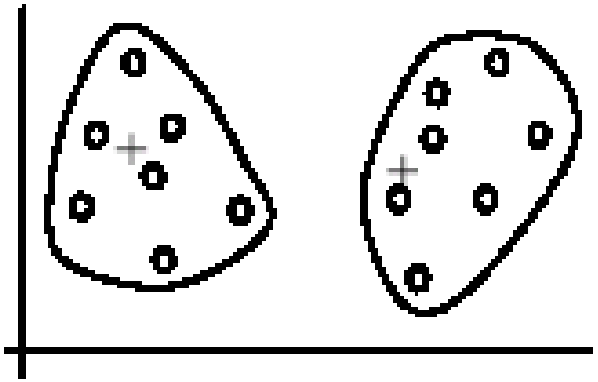


Iteration 1: (B). Cluster assignment

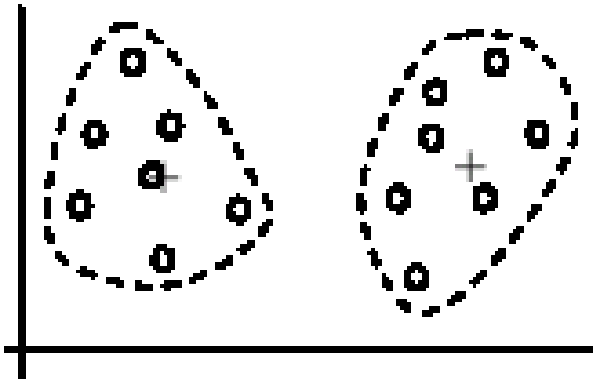


(C). Re-compute centroids

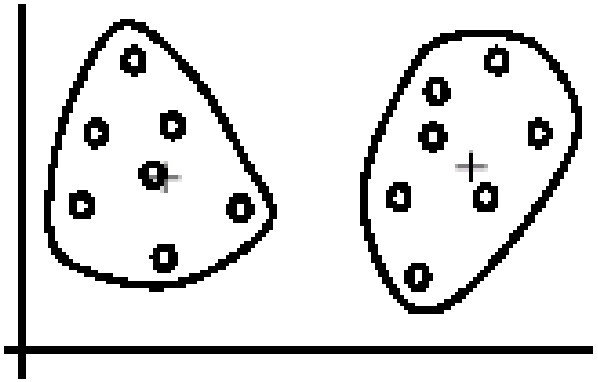
An example (cont …)



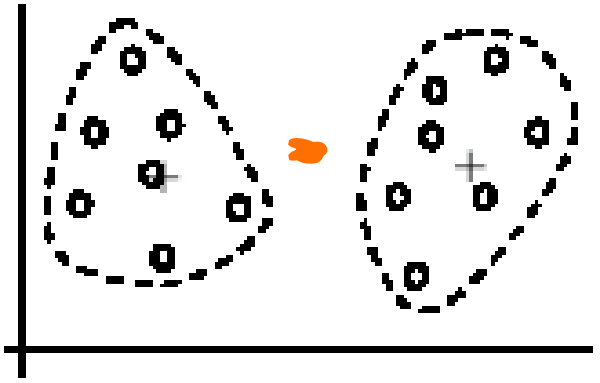
Iteration 2: (D). Cluster assignment



(E). Re-compute centroids



Iteration 3: (F). Cluster assignment



(G). Re-compute centroids

An example distance function

The *k*-means algorithm can be used for any application data set where the **mean** can be defined and computed. In the **Euclidean space**, the mean of a cluster is computed with:

$$\mathbf{m}_j = \frac{1}{|C_j|} \sum_{\mathbf{x}_i \in C_j} \mathbf{x}_i \qquad (2)$$

where $|C_j|$ is the number of data points in cluster C_j. The distance from one data point $\mathbf{x}_i$ to a mean (centroid) $\mathbf{m}_j$ is computed with

$$dist(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{m}_j) = \| \mathbf{x}_i - \mathbf{m}_j \| \qquad (3)$$

$$= \sqrt{(x_{i1} - m_{j1})^2 + (x_{i2} - m_{j2})^2 + \ldots + (x_{ir} - m_{jr})^2}$$

A disk version of *k*-means

- K-means can be implemented with data on disk
  - In each iteration, it scans the data once.
  - as the centroids can be computed incrementally
- It can be used to cluster large datasets that do not fit in main memory
- We need to control the number of iterations
  - In practice, a limited is set (< 50).
- Not the best method. There are other scale-up algorithms, e.g., BIRCH.
  - ***BIRCH*** *(balanced iterative reducing and clustering using hierarchies)*

A disk version of k-means (cont …)

Algorithm disk-k-means(k, D)

1 Choose k data points as the initial centriods $\mathbf{m}_j$, $j = 1, \ldots, k$;
2 **repeat**
3 initialize $\mathbf{s}_j = \mathbf{0}$, $j = 1, \ldots, k$; // $\mathbf{0}$ is a vector with all 0's
4 initialize $n_j = 0$, $j = 1, \ldots, k$; // n_j is the number points in cluster j
5 **for** each data point $\mathbf{x} \in D$ **do**
6 $j = \arg\min_j dist(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{m}_j)$;
7 assign $\mathbf{x}$ to the cluster j;
8 $\mathbf{s}_j = \mathbf{s}_j + \mathbf{x}$;
9 $n_j = n_j + 1$;
10 **endfor**
11 $\mathbf{m}_i = \mathbf{s}_j / n_j$, $i = 1, \ldots, k$;
12 **until** the stopping criterion is met

Strengths of k-means

- Strengths:
  - Simple: easy to understand and to implement
  - Efficient: Time complexity: $O(tkn)$,

    where n is the number of data points,

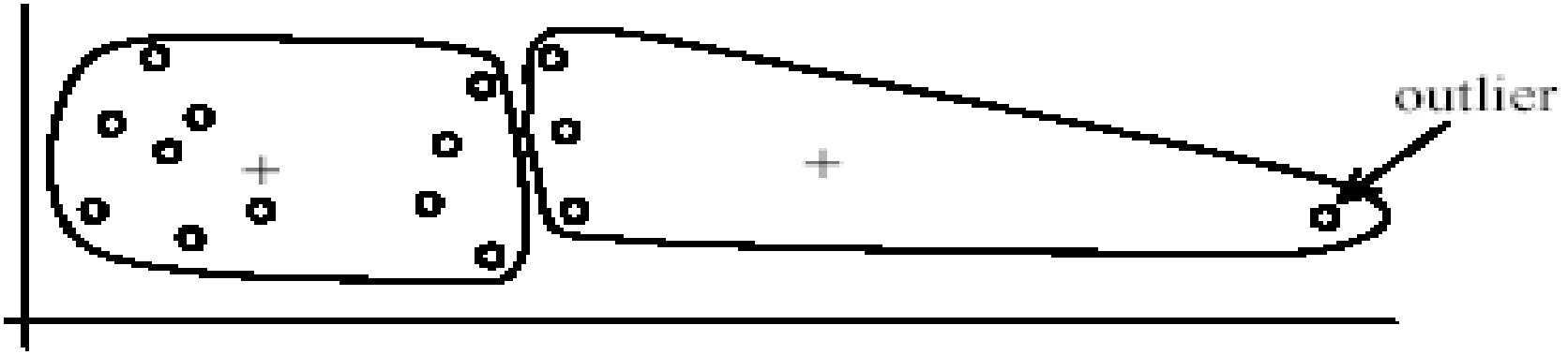
    k is the number of clusters, and

    t is the number of iterations.
  - Since both k and t are small. k-means is considered a linear algorithm.
- K-means is the most popular clustering algorithm.
- Note that: it terminates at a local optimum if SSE is used. The global optimum is hard to find due to complexity.

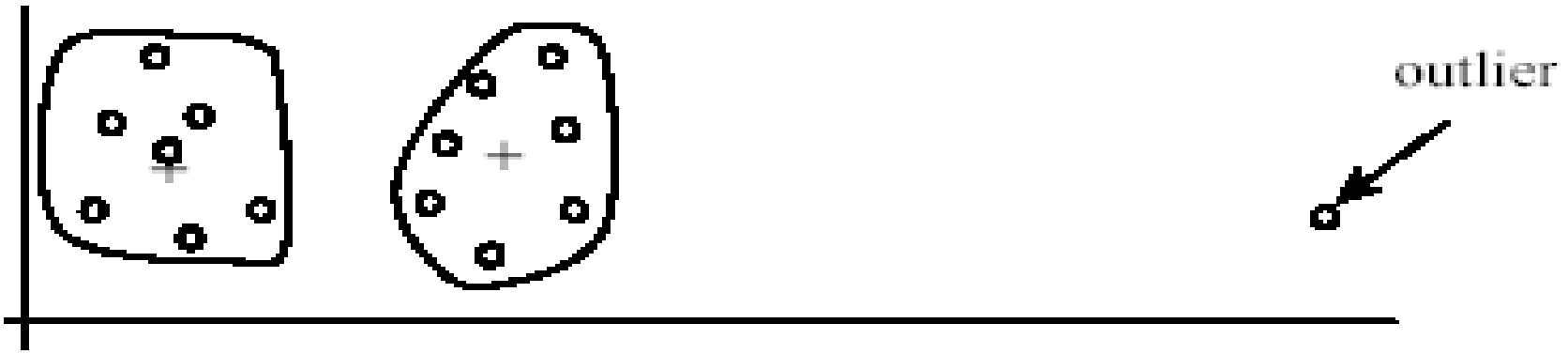
Weaknesses of k-means

- The algorithm is only applicable if the mean is defined.
  - For categorical data, *k*-mode - the centroid is represented by most frequent values.
- The user needs to specify *k*.
- The algorithm is sensitive to **outliers**
  - Outliers are data points that are very far away from other data points.
  - Outliers could be errors in the data recording or some special data points with very different values.

Weaknesses of k-means: Problems with outliers



(A): Undesirable clusters



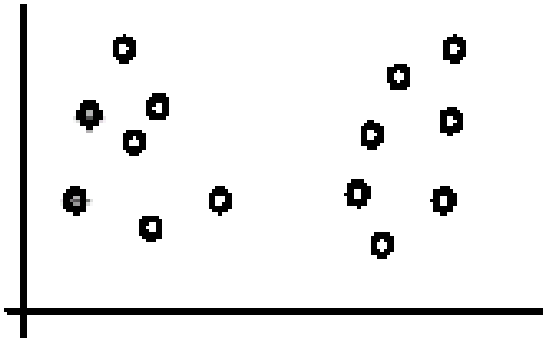
(B): Ideal clusters

Weaknesses of k-means: To deal with outliers

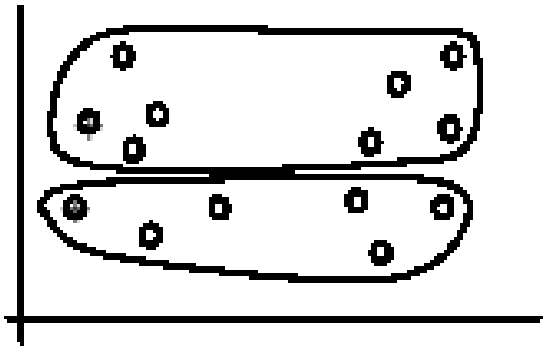
- One method is to remove some data points in the clustering process that are much further away from the centroids than other data points.
  - To be safe, we may want to monitor these possible outliers over a few iterations and then decide to remove them.
- Another method is to perform random sampling. Since in sampling we only choose a small subset of the data points, the chance of selecting an outlier is very small.
  - Assign the rest of the data points to the clusters by distance or similarity comparison, or classification

Weaknesses of k-means (cont …)

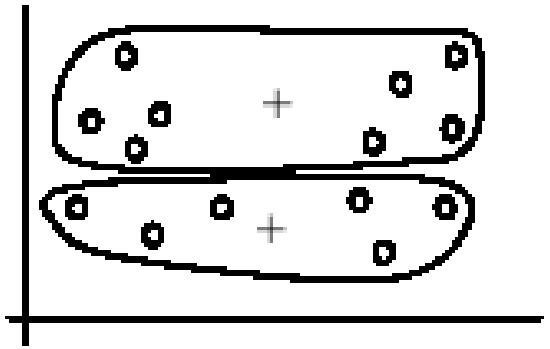
- The algorithm is sensitive to initial seeds.



(A). Random selection of seeds (centroids)



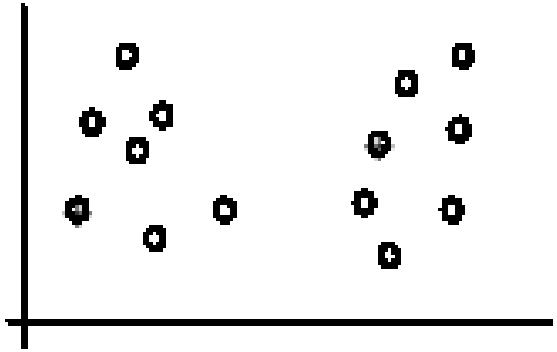
(B). Iteration 1



(C). Iteration 2

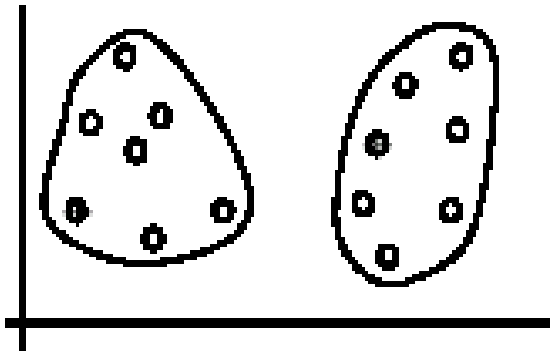
Weaknesses of k-means (cont …)

- If we use different seeds: good results

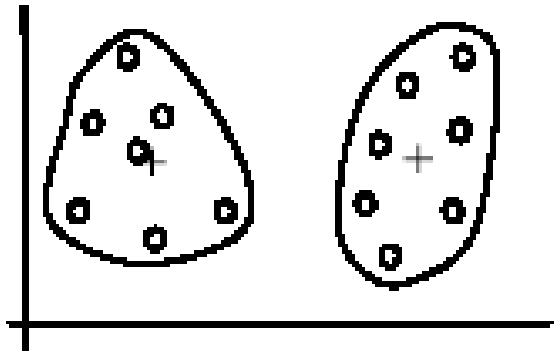


(A). Random selection of k seeds (centroids)

- There are some methods to help choose good seeds



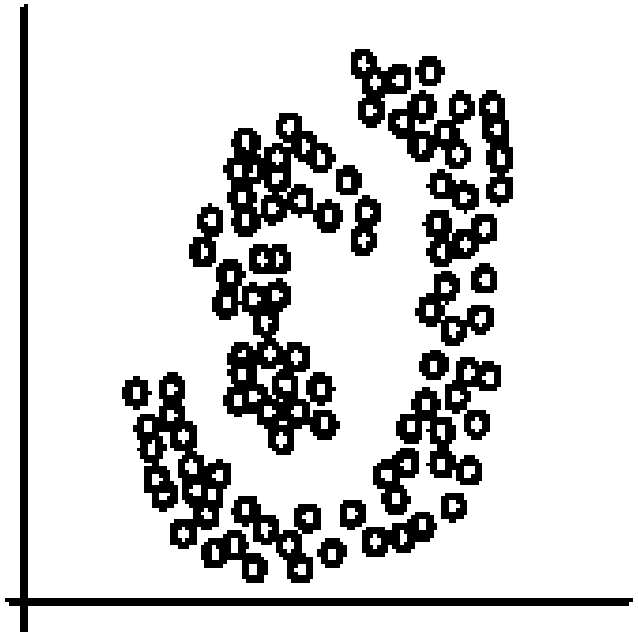
(B). Iteration 1



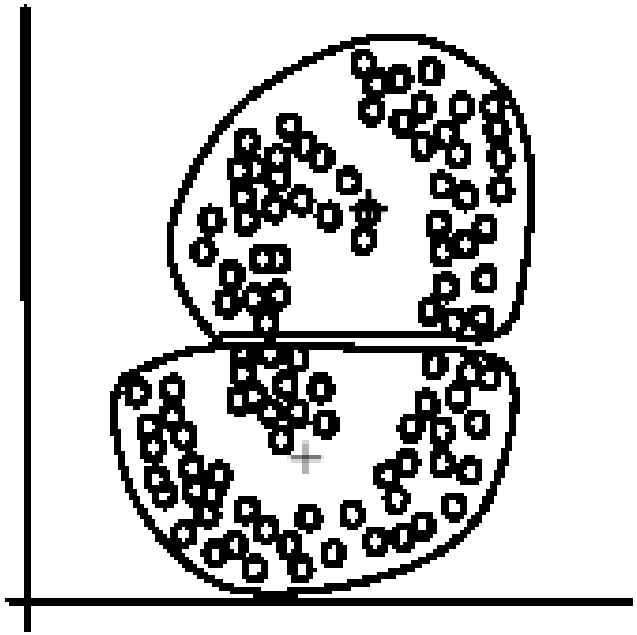
(C). Iteration 2

Weaknesses of k-means (cont …)

- The *k*-means algorithm is not suitable for discovering clusters that are not hyper-ellipsoids (or hyper-spheres).



(A): Two natural clusters



(B): *k*-means clusters

K-means summary

- Despite weaknesses, *k*-means is still the most popular algorithm due to its simplicity, efficiency and
  - other clustering algorithms have their own lists of weaknesses.
- No clear evidence that any other clustering algorithm performs better in general
  - although they may be more suitable for some specific types of data or applications.
- Comparing different clustering algorithms is a difficult task. No one knows the correct clusters!

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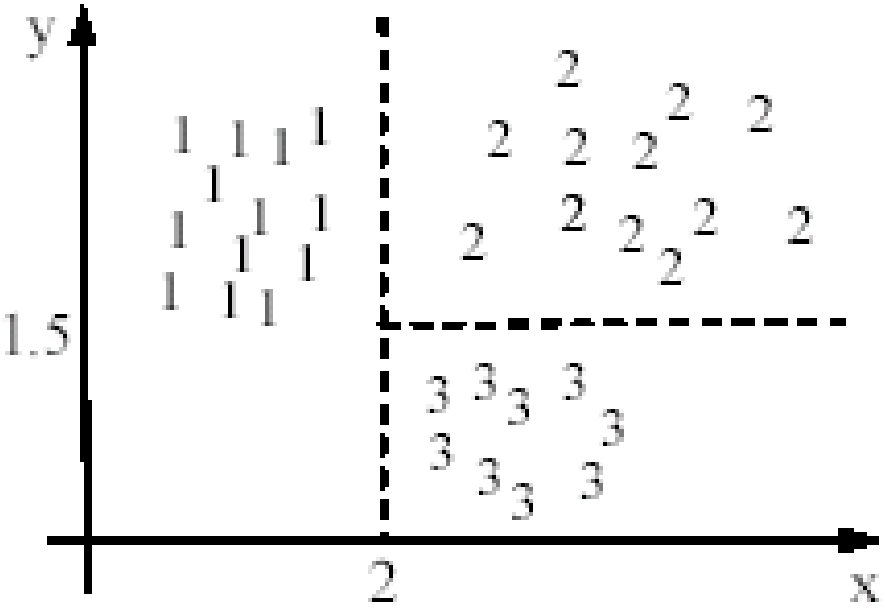
Common ways to represent clusters

- Use the centroid of each cluster to represent the cluster.
  - compute the radius and
  - standard deviation of the cluster to determine its spread in each dimension

  - The centroid representation alone works well if the clusters are of the hyper-spherical shape.
  - If clusters are elongated or are of other shapes, centroids are not sufficient

Using classification model

- All the data points in a cluster are regarded to have the same class label, e.g., the cluster ID
  - run a supervised learning algorithm on the data to find a classification model.



$x \leq 2 \rightarrow$ cluster 1

$x > 2, y > 1.5 \rightarrow$ cluster 2

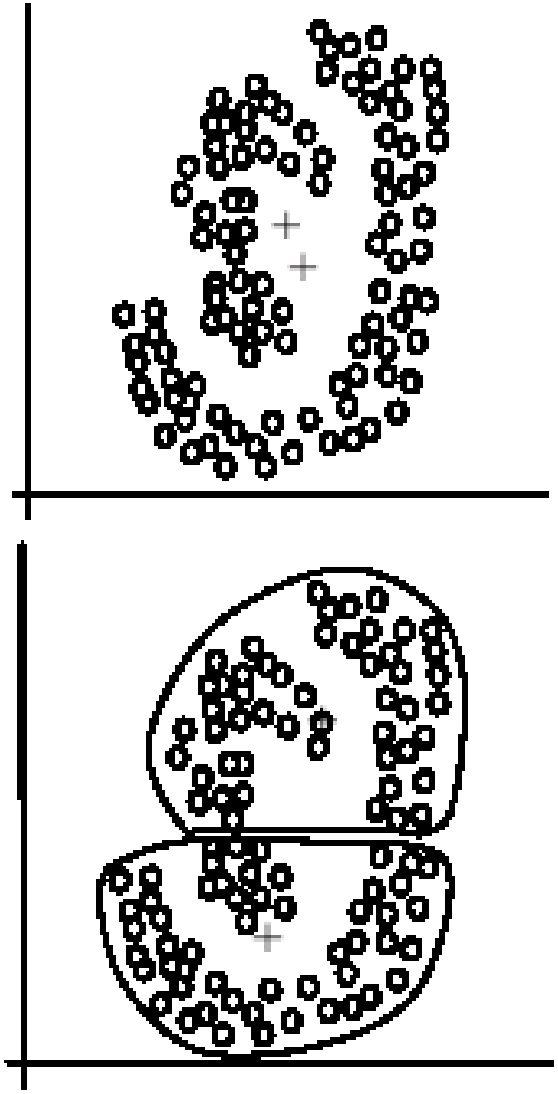
$x > 2, y \leq 1.5 \rightarrow$ cluster 3

Use frequent values to represent cluster

- This method is mainly for clustering of categorical data (e.g., *k*-modes clustering).
- Main method used in text clustering, where a small set of frequent words in each cluster is selected to represent the cluster.

Clusters of arbitrary shapes

- Hyper-elliptical and hyper-spherical clusters are usually easy to represent, using their centroid together with spreads.
- Irregular shape clusters are hard to represent. They may not be useful in some applications.
  - Using centroids are not suitable (upper figure) in general
  - K-means clusters may be more useful (lower figure), e.g., for making 2 size T-shirts.



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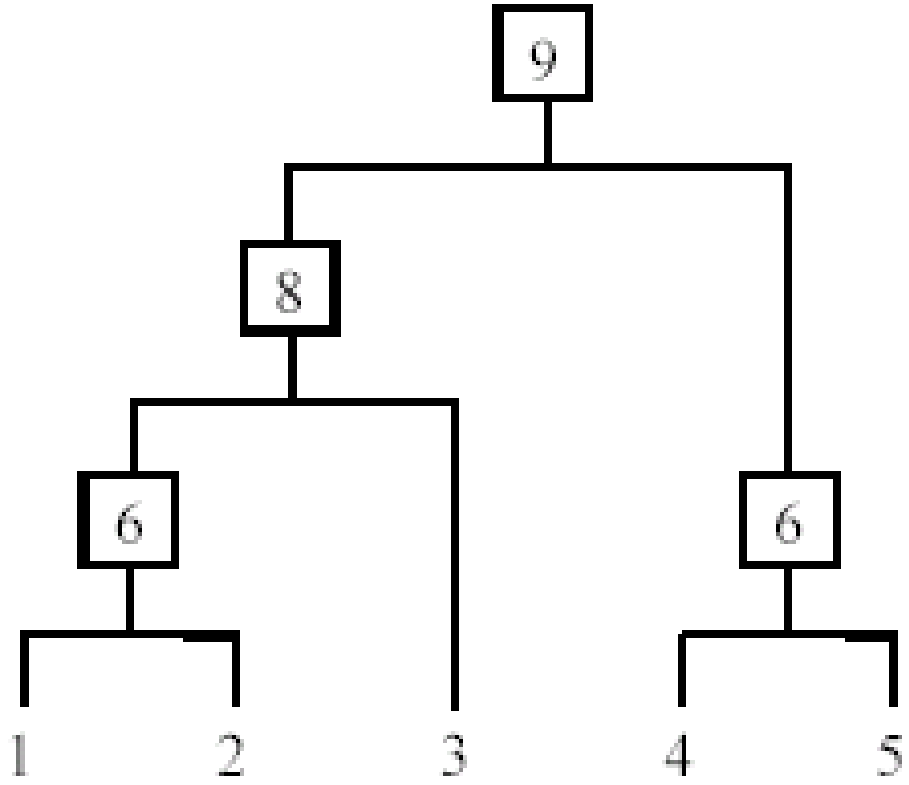
Hierarchical Clustering

- Produce a nested sequence of clusters, a tree, also called Dendrogram.



Types of hierarchical clustering

- Agglomerative (bottom up) clustering: It builds the dendrogram (tree) from the bottom level, and
  - merges the most similar (or nearest) pair of clusters
  - stops when all the data points are merged into a single cluster (i.e., the root cluster).
- Divisive (top down) clustering: It starts with all data points in one cluster, the root.
  - Splits the root into a set of child clusters. Each child cluster is recursively divided further
  - stops when only singleton clusters of individual data points remain, i.e., each cluster with only a single point

Agglomerative clustering

It is more popular then divisive methods.

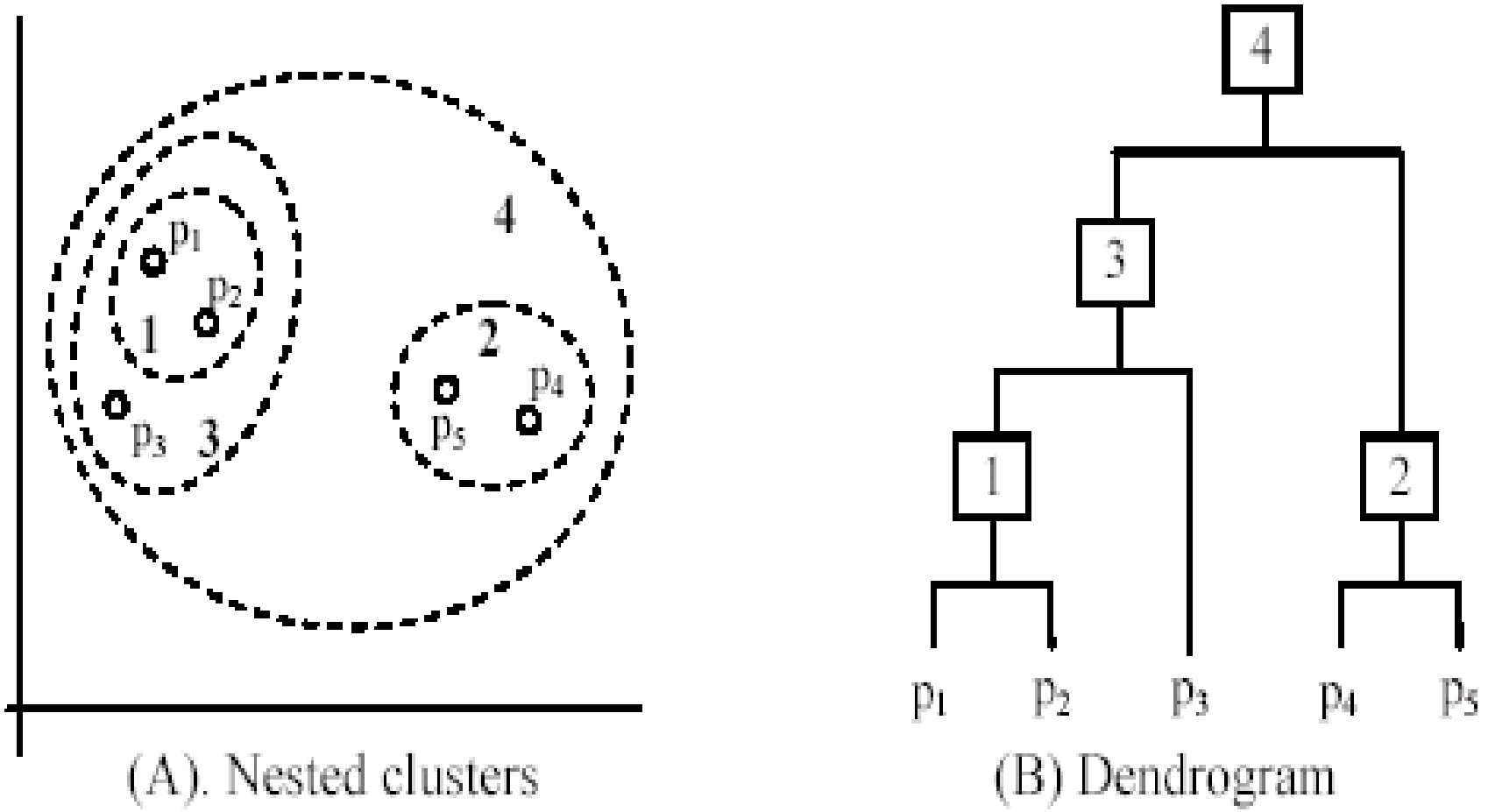
- At the beginning, each data point forms a cluster (also called a node).
- Merge nodes/clusters that have the least distance.
- Go on merging
- Eventually all nodes belong to one cluster

Agglomerative clustering algorithm

Algorithm Agglomerative(D)

1 Make each data point in the data set D a cluster,
2 Compute all pair-wise distances of $\mathbf{x}_1, \mathbf{x}_2, \ldots, \mathbf{x}_n \in D$;
2 **repeat**
3 find two clusters that are nearest to each other;
4 merge the two clusters form a new cluster c;
5 compute the distance from c to all other clusters;
12 **until** there is only one cluster left

An example: working of the algorithm



Measuring the distance of two clusters

- A few ways to measure distances of two clusters.
- Results in different variations of the algorithm.
  - Single link
  - Complete link
  - Average link
  - Centroids
  - …

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Distance functions

- Key to clustering. "similarity" and "dissimilarity" can also commonly used terms.
- There are numerous distance functions for
  - Different types of data
    - Numeric data
    - Nominal data
  - Different specific applications

Distance functions for numeric attributes

- Most commonly used functions are
  - Euclidean distance and
  - Manhattan (city block) distance
- We denote distance with: *dist*($\mathbf{x}_i$, $\mathbf{x}_j$), where $\mathbf{x}_i$ and $\mathbf{x}_j$ are data points (vectors)
- They are special cases of Minkowski distance. h is positive integer.

$$dist(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) = ((x_{i1} - x_{j1})^h + (x_{i2} - x_{j2})^h + ... + (x_{ir} - x_{jr})^h)^{\frac{1}{h}}$$

Euclidean distance and Manhattan distance

- If *h* = 2, it is the Euclidean distance

$$dist(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) = \sqrt{(x_{i1} - x_{j1})^2 + (x_{i2} - x_{j2})^2 + ... + (x_{ir} - x_{jr})^2}$$

- If *h* = 1, it is the Manhattan distance

$$dist(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) = | x_{i1} - x_{j1} | + | x_{i2} - x_{j2} | + ... + | x_{ir} - x_{jr} |$$

- Weighted Euclidean distance

$$dist(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) = \sqrt{w_1(x_{i1} - x_{j1})^2 + w_2(x_{i2} - x_{j2})^2 + ... + w_r(x_{ir} - x_{jr})^2}$$

Squared distance and Chebychev distance

- Squared Euclidean distance: to place progressively greater weight on data points that are further apart.

$$dist(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) = (x_{i1} - x_{j1})^2 + (x_{i2} - x_{j2})^2 + ... + (x_{ir} - x_{jr})^2$$

- Chebychev distance: one wants to define two data points as "different" if they are different on any one of the attributes.

$$dist(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) = \max(| x_{i1} - x_{j1} |, | x_{i2} - x_{j2} |, ..., | x_{ir} - x_{jr} |)$$

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How to choose a clustering algorithm

- Clustering research has a long history. A vast collection of algorithms are available.
  - We only introduced several main algorithms.
- Choosing the "best" algorithm is a challenge.
  - Every algorithm has limitations and works well with certain data distributions.
  - It is very hard, if not impossible, to know what distribution the application data follow. The data may not fully follow any "ideal" structure or distribution required by the algorithms.
  - One also needs to decide how to standardize the data, to choose a suitable distance function and to select other parameter values.

Choose a clustering algorithm (cont …)

- Due to these complexities, the common practice is to
  - run several algorithms using different distance functions and parameter settings, and
  - then carefully analyze and compare the results.
- The interpretation of the results must be based on insight into the meaning of the original data together with knowledge of the algorithms used.
- Clustering is highly application dependent and to certain extent subjective (personal preferences).

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Cluster Evaluation: hard problem

- The quality of a clustering is very hard to evaluate because
  - We do not know the correct clusters
- Some methods are used:
  - User inspection
    - Study centroids, and spreads
    - Rules from a decision tree.
    - For text documents, one can read some documents in clusters.

Cluster evaluation: ground truth

- We use some labeled data (for classification)
- Assumption: Each class is a cluster.
- After clustering, a confusion matrix is constructed. From the matrix, we compute various measurements, entropy, purity, precision, recall and F-score.
  - Let the classes in the data D be $C = (c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_k)$. The clustering method produces k clusters, which divides D into k disjoint subsets, $D_1, D_2, \ldots, D_k$.

Evaluation measures: Entropy

Entropy: For each cluster, we can measure its entropy as follows:

$$entropy(D_i) = -\sum_{j=1}^{k} \Pr_i(c_j) \log_2 \Pr_i(c_j), \quad (29)$$

where $\Pr_i(c_j)$ is the proportion of class c_j data points in cluster i or D_i. The total entropy of the whole clustering (which considers all clusters) is

$$entropy_{total}(D) = \sum_{i=1}^{k} \frac{|D_i|}{|D|} \times entropy(D_i) \quad (30)$$

Evaluation measures: purity

Purity: This again measures the extent that a cluster contains only one class of data. The purity of each cluster is computed with

$$purity(D_i) = \max_j(\Pr_i(c_j)) \quad (31)$$

The total purity of the whole clustering (considering all clusters) is

$$purity_{total}(D) = \sum_{i=1}^{k} \frac{|D_i|}{|D|} \times purity(D_i) \quad (32)$$

An example

Example 14: Assume we have a text collection D of 900 documents from three topics (or three classes), Science, Sports, and Politics. Each class has 300 documents. Each document in D is labeled with one of the topics (classes). We use this collection to perform clustering to find three clusters. Note that class/topic labels are not used in clustering. After clustering, we want to measure the effectiveness of the clustering algorithm.

Cluster	Science	Sports	Politics		Entropy	Purity
1	250	20	10		0.589	0.893
2	20	180	80		1.198	0.643
3	30	100	210		1.257	0.617
Total	300	300	300		1.031	0.711

A remark about ground truth evaluation

- Commonly used to compare different clustering algorithms.
- A real-life data set for clustering has no class labels.
  - Thus although an algorithm may perform very well on some labeled data sets, no guarantee that it will perform well on the actual application data at hand.
- The fact that it performs well on some label data sets does give us some confidence of the quality of the algorithm.
- This evaluation method is said to be based on **external data** or information.

Evaluation based on internal information

- **Intra-cluster cohesion** (compactness):
  - Cohesion measures how near the data points in a cluster are to the cluster centroid.
  - Sum of squared error (SSE) is a commonly used measure.
- I**nter-cluster separation** (isolation):
  - Separation means that different cluster centroids should be far away from one another.
- In most applications, expert judgments are still the key.

Indirect evaluation

- In some applications, clustering is not the primary task, but used to help perform another task.
- We can use the performance on the primary task to compare clustering methods.
- For instance, in an application, the primary task is to provide recommendations on book purchasing to online shoppers.
  - If we can cluster books according to their features, we might be able to provide better recommendations.
  - We can evaluate different clustering algorithms based on how well they help with the recommendation task.
  - Here, we assume that the recommendation can be reliably evaluated.