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Exercise 4 Report: Exploring Sheep Social Dynamics through Network Visualization

Motivation: In the context of understanding the intricate social hierarchies and interactions within a flock, the primary motivation for this data visualization project revolves around unveiling the dynamics of dominance and submission among sheep. By focusing on the records of wins and losses in their interactions, the goal is to identify the sheep that exhibit the highest rates of dominance (winning record) and those that are more frequently submissive (losing record). This approach not only provides insights into the social structure of the flock but also highlights the individuals who play pivotal roles within these social dynamics.

Data augmentation: The project augmented the sheep dataset by converting 'id', 'source', and 'target' fields to strings for clarity and introducing an 'Age_Group' attribute to categorize sheep into 'Young' (<5), 'Middle-Aged' (<9), and 'Old' (>9). This categorization allows for the analysis of age-related dynamics within the flock. A color-coding scheme was applied to visually distinguish these age groups in the network visualization, using green for 'Young', blue for 'Middle-Aged', and red for 'Old'. This enhancement not only aids in the visual differentiation of age groups but also enriches the dataset, enabling a more nuanced understanding of social structures and dominance patterns among the sheep.

Task: The task is to identify sheep with the highest winning and losing records, aiming to reveal the most dominant and submissive individuals and the overall social network structure within the flock.
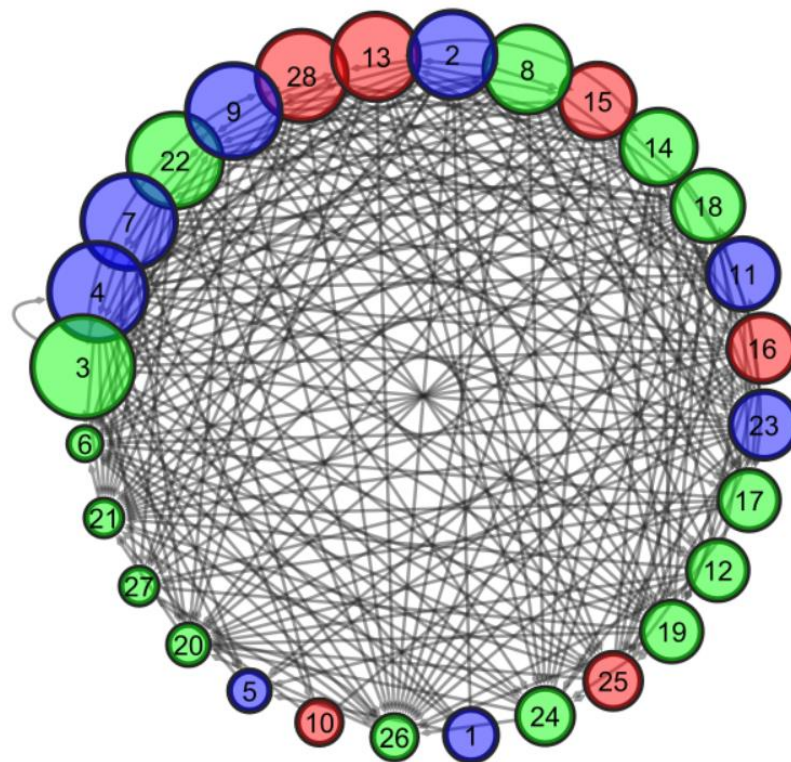

Figure 1: Dominant sheep (sorted based on Outdegree)

Expressiveness of design: The visualization, employing degree-circle layouts coupled with color coding indicative of age groups, presents a detailed examination of the social dynamics within a sheep flock. By illustrating outdegree and indegree in distinct visual formats, it effectively identifies the most dominant and submissive members, elucidating the underlying social hierarchy. The utilization of specific colors—green for young, blue for middle-aged, and red for old individuals—enhances the expressiveness of the visualization, facilitating rapid recognition of age-related trends in social interactions. Adjustments in node properties, such as opacity, size, and shape, tailored to represent social standings, make the visualization both informative and user-friendly. Through this meticulous approach, the visualization unravels the complexities of social behavior across different age brackets, providing an in-depth understanding of the flock's social structure. It highlights the dynamics of dominance, submission, and the influence of age on social roles within the network.
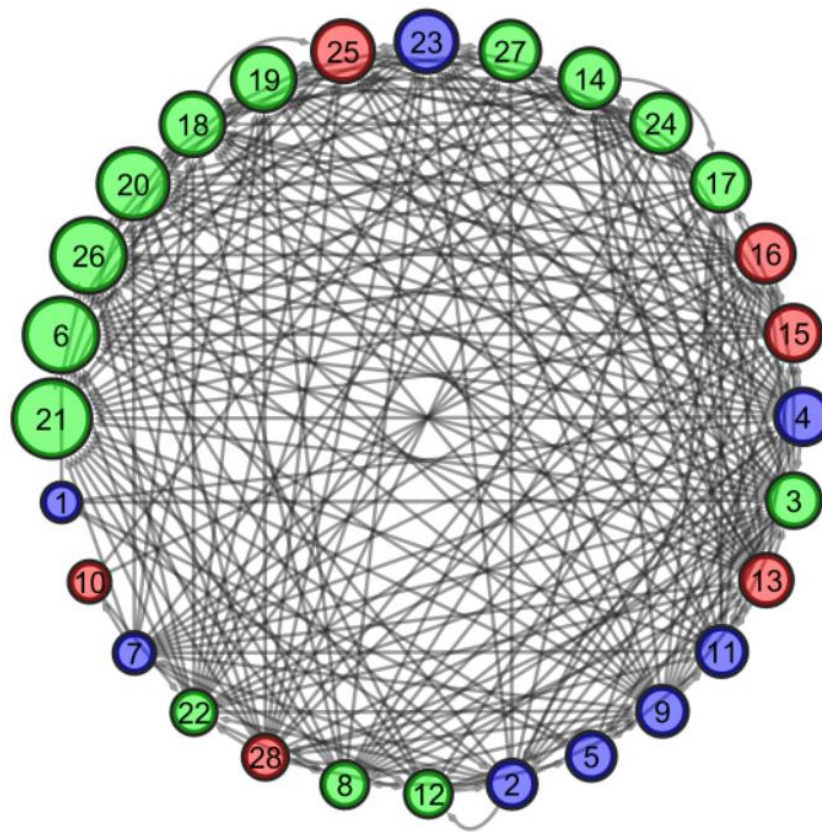

Figure 2: Submissive sheep (sorted based on Indegree)

Effectiveness of the Solution: The visualization is highly effective in addressing the initial motivation to identify sheep with the highest winning and losing records and to explore the social network structure within the flock. By visually mapping out degrees of interaction through outdegree and indegree layouts, it directly highlights the individuals who dominate or are submissive in their social engagements, aligning perfectly with the project's objectives. The

color-coding by age group not only adds a layer of depth to the analysis but also enables the identification of potential age-related patterns in social dominance and submission. The tailored node properties further enhance the effectiveness by making critical data points stand out, facilitating a quick and comprehensive understanding of the flock's social hierarchy.

Interaction: The visualization's design implies a level of interactivity through the manipulation of node sizes, color coding by age groups, and the ability to switch layouts based on outdegree and indegree metrics. These features collectively enhance user engagement by allowing for an intuitive understanding of dominance and submissiveness within the sheep flock, as well as age-related social dynamics. Although the final static images do not offer direct interaction, the underlying process of adjusting visual properties suggests a framework for interactive exploration. Users can theoretically delve into the data, highlighting specific nodes or focusing on age groups to uncover nuanced patterns in the social hierarchy, making the visualization an effective tool for analyzing complex social networks.

Conclusions: The visualization of the sheep flock's social interactions, through a detailed analysis of winning and losing records alongside age group differentiation, has yielded significant insights into the complex social structure within the flock. A few key conclusions can be drawn:
1. Dominance and Submissiveness Identification: The visualization identifies dominant and submissive sheep based on winning and losing records, offering insight into the flock's social hierarchy.
2. Age-Related Social Dynamics: A distinct trend shows young sheep as more submissive with higher loss records, while middle-aged sheep display dominance through better loss statistics, highlighting age's impact on social standing.
3. Limitations in Age Comparison: Due to the limited number of old sheep, comparing their social dynamics is challenging, restricting a full age-based analysis of dominance and submission.
4. Conclusion on Age and Social Behavior: The analysis suggests young sheep tend to be more submissive, whereas middle-aged sheep are more dominant, revealing age as a significant factor in the flock's social hierarchy.