

UNDERSTANDING HOW NEW PROGRAM EVALUATORS PERCEIVE THE CONNECTIONS AMONG PROGRAM EVALUATION THEORISTS

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Overview

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- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Methods
- ▶ Results
- ▶ Conclusions/Potential next steps



Purpose

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- ▶ **Explore how students link information about evaluation theorists**
- ▶ **Target population:** students who are new to evaluation theory
- ▶ **Approach:** social network analysis



Implications

- ▶ Refine current evaluation theory & practice
- ▶ Develop alternative approaches to teaching evaluation theory



Subjects

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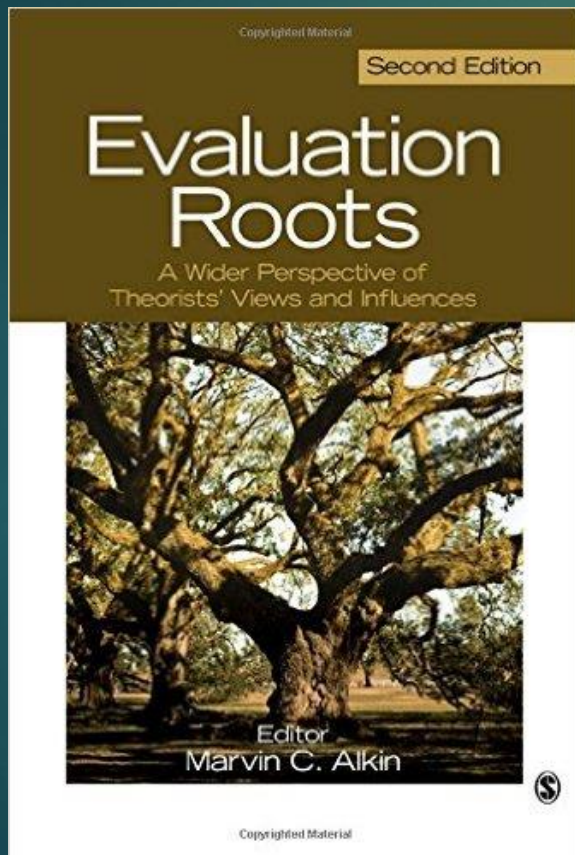
- ▶ **Who:** University of Denver graduate students
- ▶ **Course:** RMS-4960
(Program Evaluation Theory)
- ▶ **When:** Fall 2015, Spring 2016



Evaluation Theorists

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Alkin. M. C. (2013). *Evaluation roots: A wider perspective of theorists' views and influences* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



Methods: Campbell, Chen, Cook, Cronbach, Mark-Henry, Rossi, Tyler, Weiss

Use: Chelimsky, Fetterman, King, Patton, Preskill, Stufflebeam, Wholey

Values: Eisner, Greene, Guba-Lincoln, Mertens, Scriven, Stake

Discussion boards

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- ▶ Used 7 weeks/term
- ▶ Each week, students required to comment on 1 of 3 theorists
- ▶ Comments based on a prompt:



Based on today's presentations, and your reading of the materials, please provide a brief answer for [AUTHOR].

- 1) Post your "5 minute elevator speech" about [AUTHOR].
- 2) You find that the person in the elevator with you was [AUTHOR]. What will be one question you will ask him/her about his/her approach?
- 3) Reflect on the potential impact of this author on your evaluation practice

Procedure

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- ▶ Removed all identifying information
- ▶ Coded students' selected theorists
- ▶ Created a table with the authors selected by each student
 - ▶ Each student selected multiple authors, so the table shows authors “linked” by the student



Example of tables used for compiling the SNA table

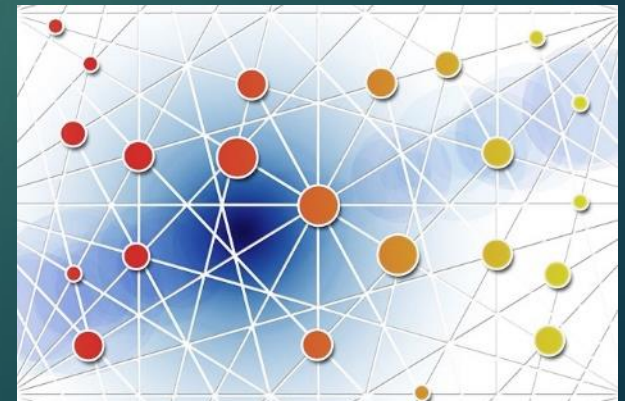
Student-5	Student-6	Student-7
Campbell	Campbell	Campbell
		Chelimsky
Chen	Chen	



	Campbell	Chelimsky	Chen	Cook
Campbell	--	7	2	4
Chelimsky	7	--	3	2
Chen	2	3	--	4
Cook	4	2	4	--

Analysis Overview

- ▶ Description of the overall network
 - ▶ Including week, theory branch
- ▶ Analyses to segment the network
 - ▶ Cliques
- ▶ Multidimensional scaling
- ▶ Ego network
 - ▶ Pictures



Analysis

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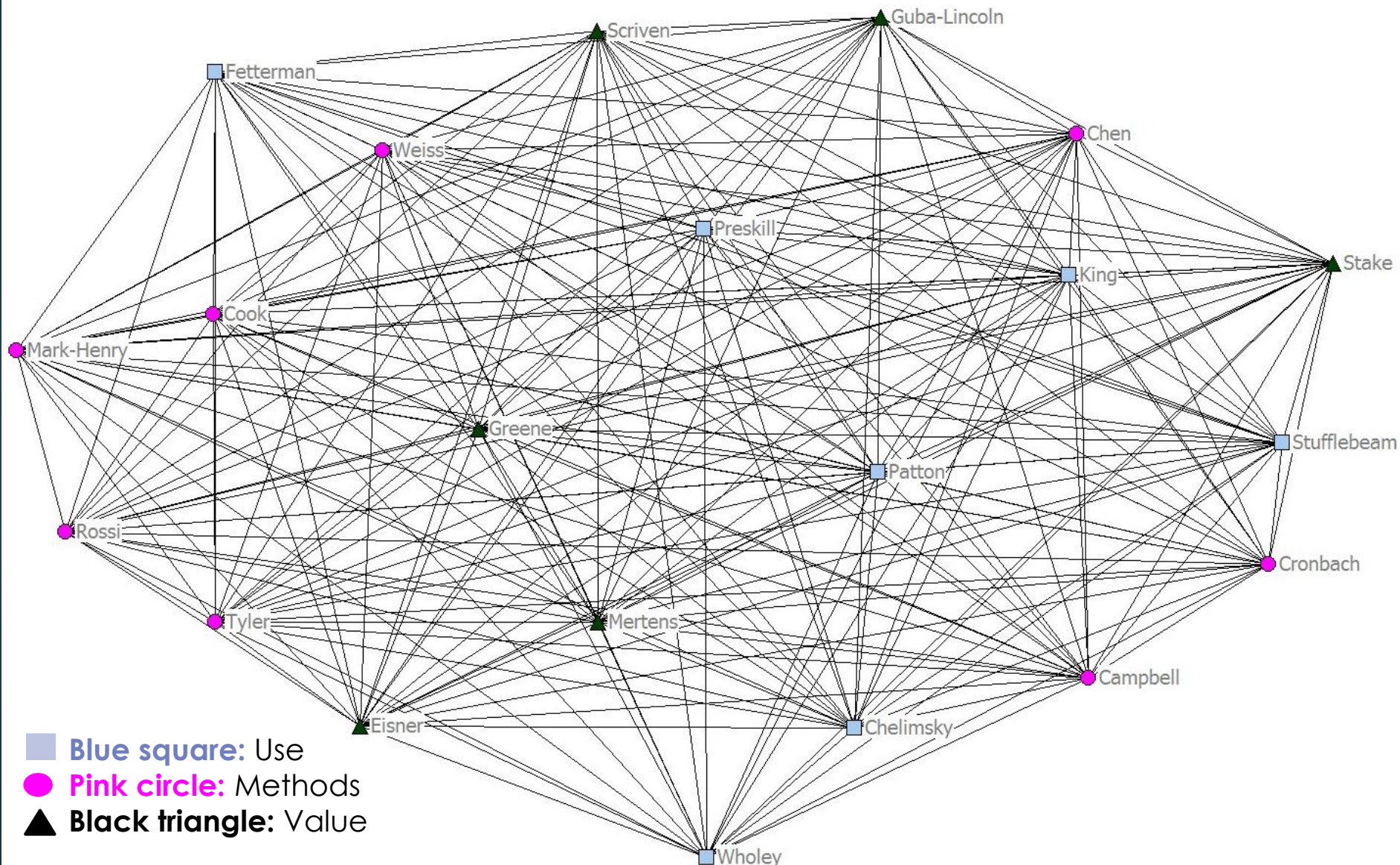
► Ucinet

- Density, centrality, clustering
- **Binary analyses:** 1+ students commented on the pair of authors
- **Valued analyses:** sum of all the students
 - Values ≤ 2 set to 0

Network

Theory “branch” as attribute

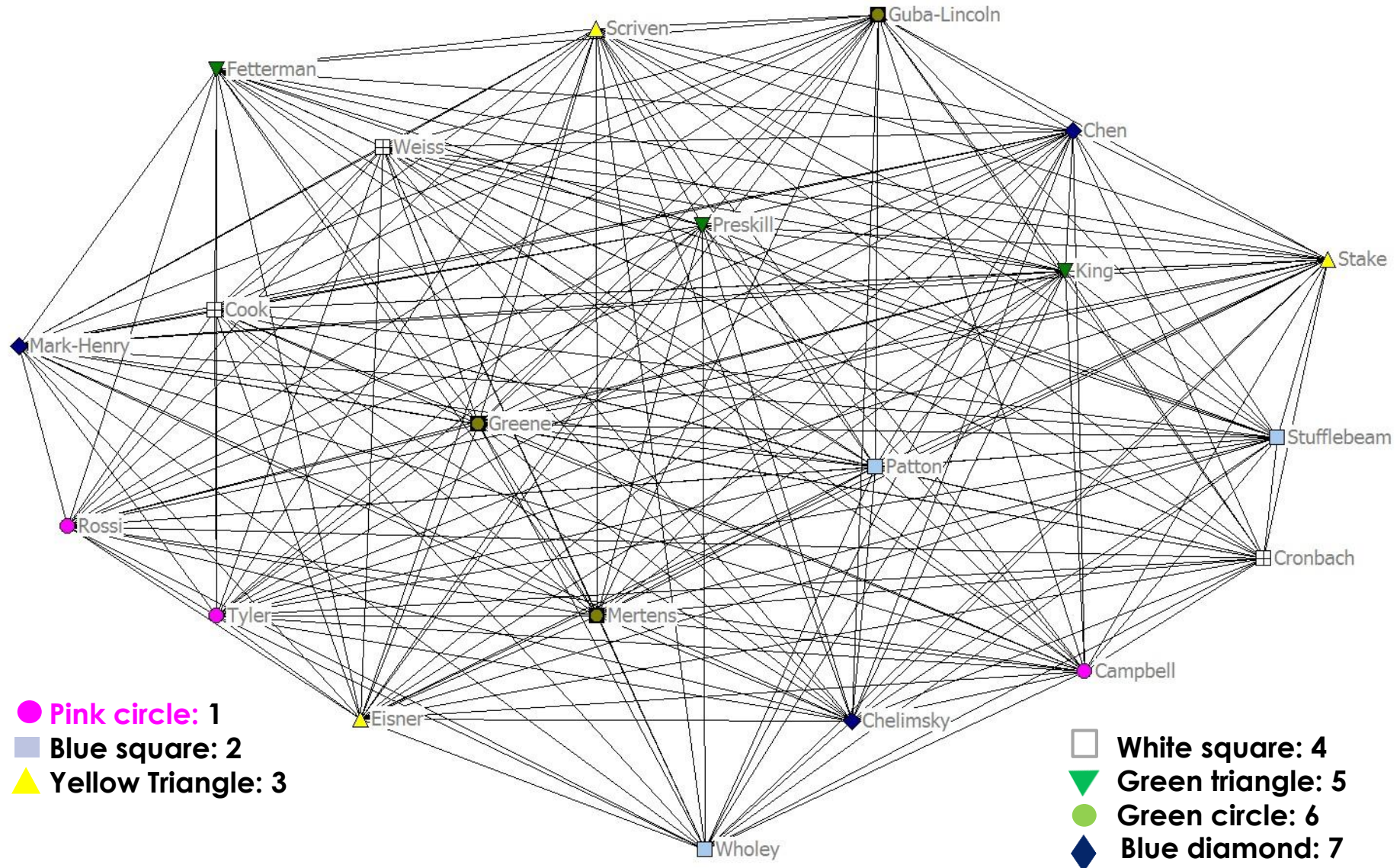
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Network

Week as attribute

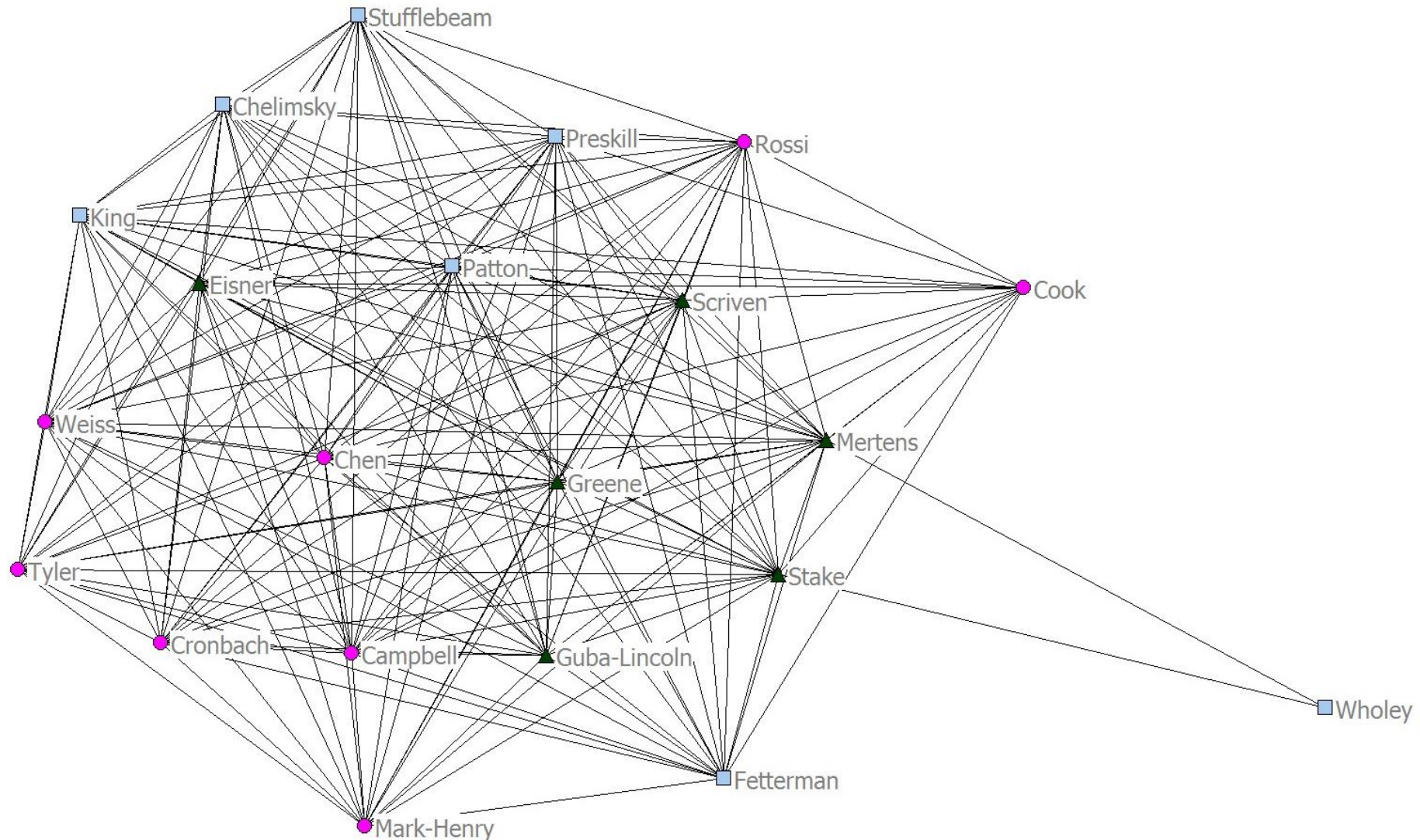
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SNA removing 1 or 2 contacts

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Branch as attribute



Degree-Centrality

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Binary

	Degree	Nrm Degree	Share
Stake	20	100	0.056
Mertens	20	100	0.056
Campbell	19	95	0.053
Preskill	19	95	0.053
Chen	19	95	0.053
Scriven	19	95	0.053
Guba-Lincoln	19	95	0.053
Greene	19	95	0.053
Patton	19	95	0.053

Valued

	Degree	Nrm Degree	Share
Campbell	175	48.611	0.075
Preskill	175	48.611	0.075
Scriven	166	46.111	0.071
Mertens	165	45.833	0.071
Stake	139	38.611	0.06
Chen	136	37.778	0.058
Patton	135	37.500	0.058
Cronbach	123	34.167	0.053
King	123	34.167	0.053

Closeness-centrality

	Farness	nCloseness
Stake	20	100
Mertens	20	100
Campbell	21	95.238
Preskill	21	95.238
Chen	21	95.238
Scriven	21	95.238
Guba-Lincoln	21	95.238
Greene	21	95.238
Patton	21	95.238

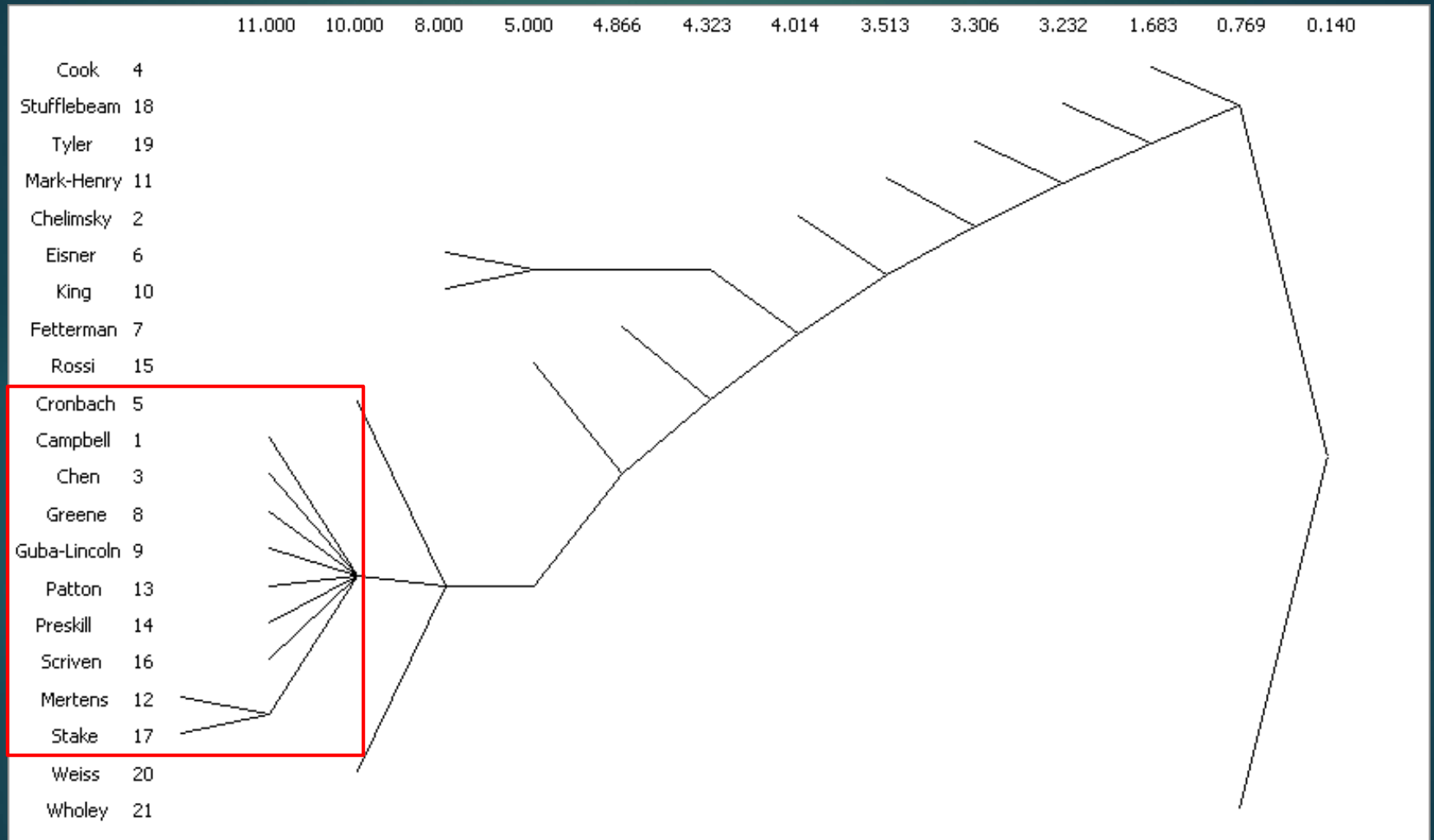
Grouping the authors

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[illegible]

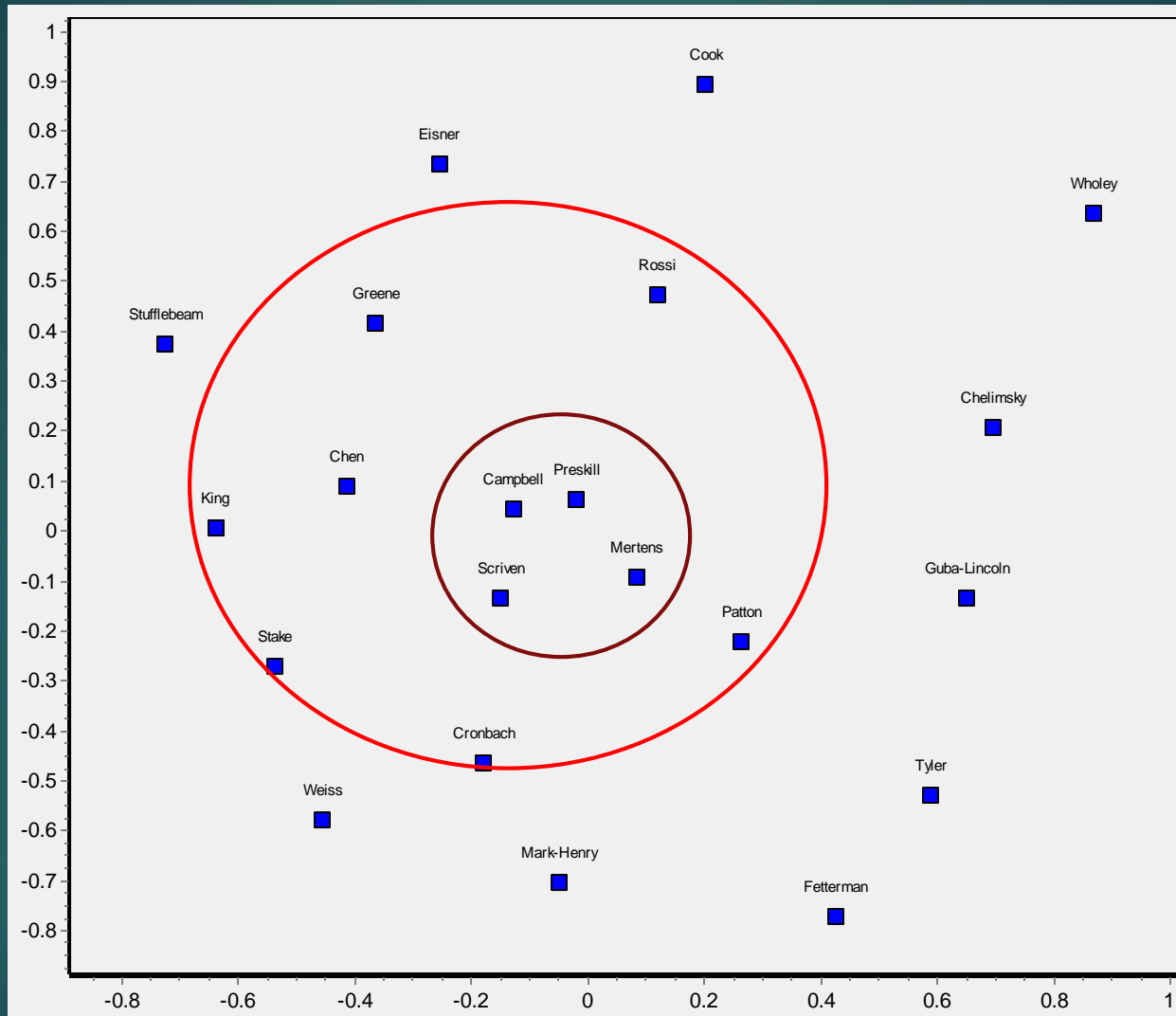
Cliques

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MDS authors similarity

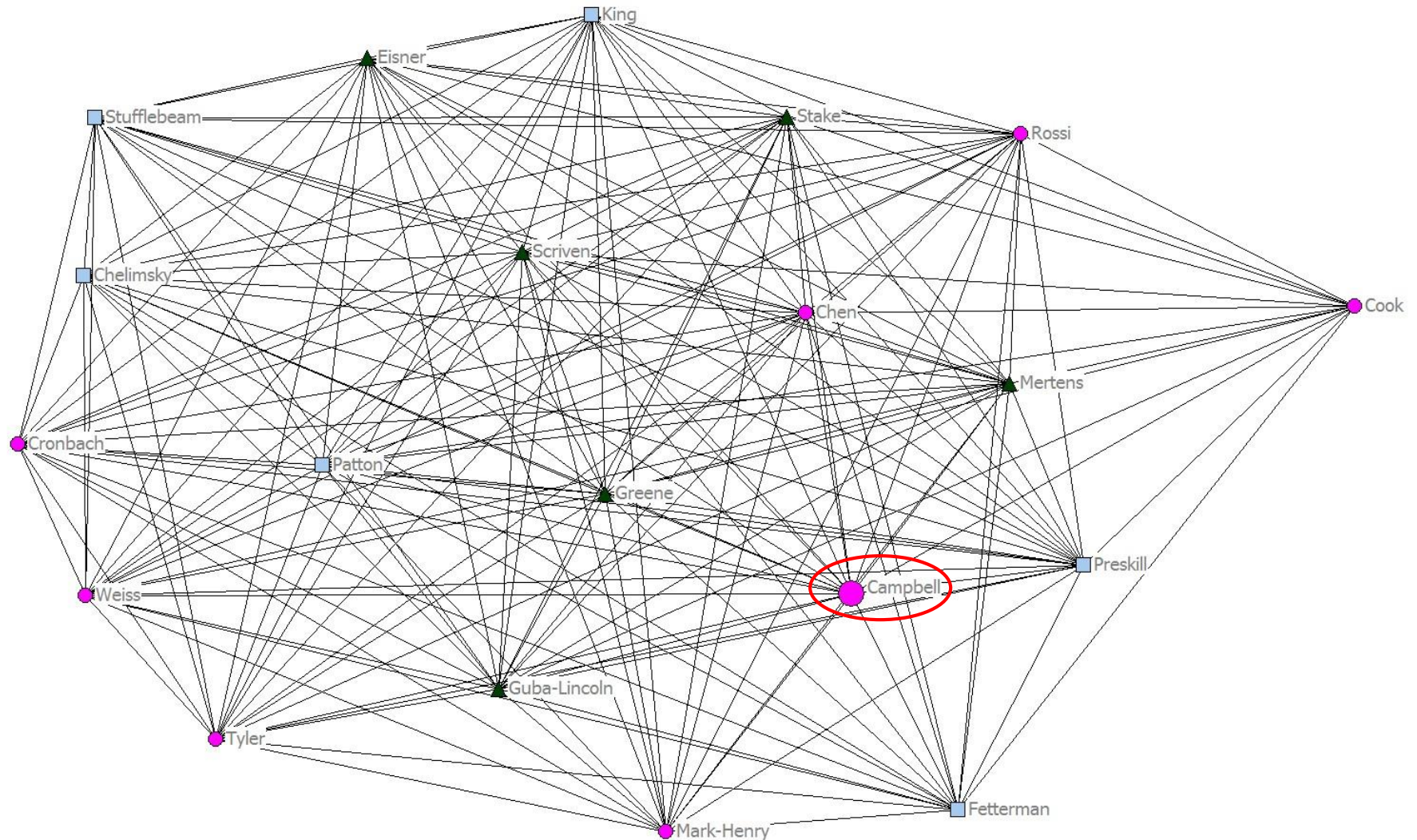
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Ego networks

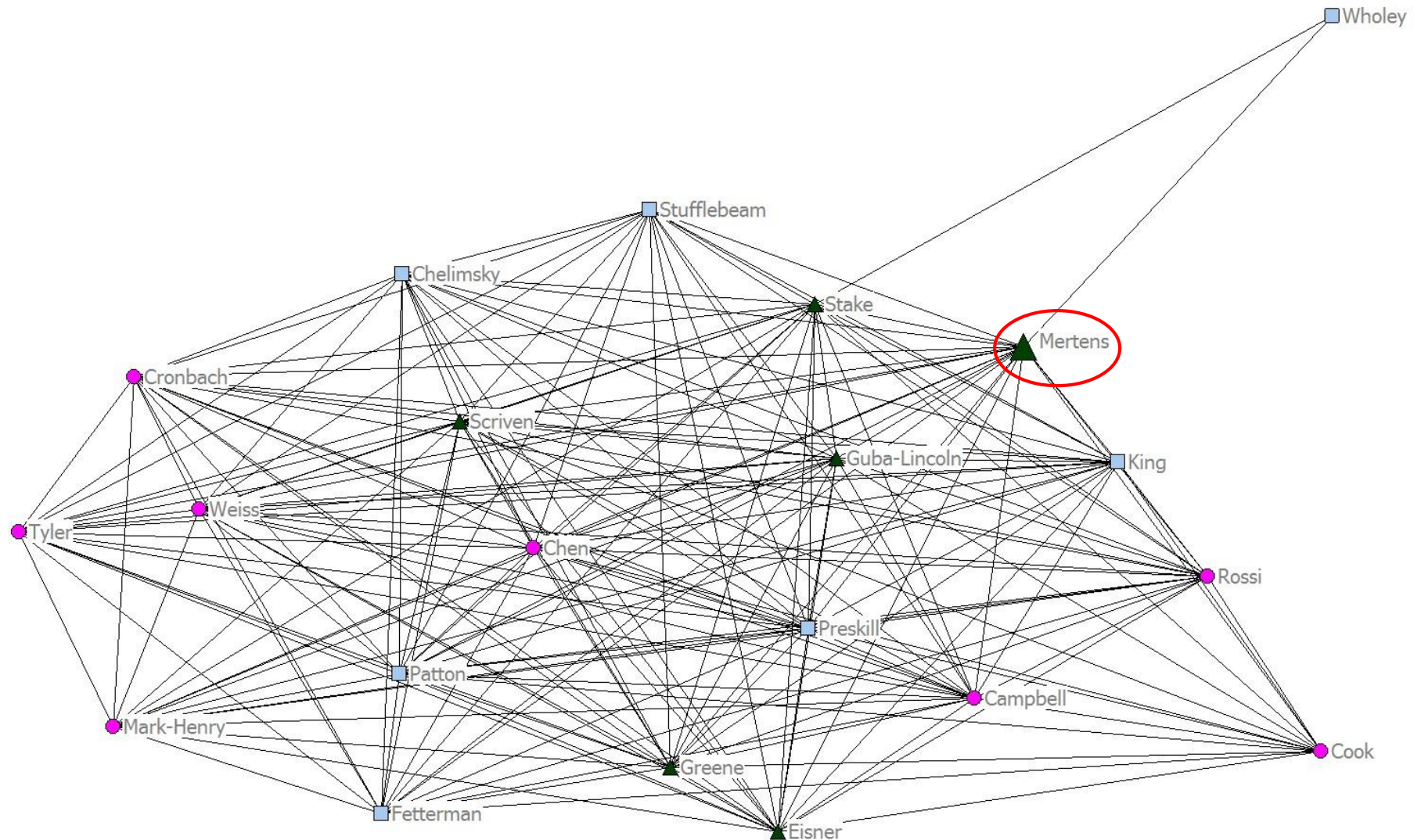
Ego network-Campbell

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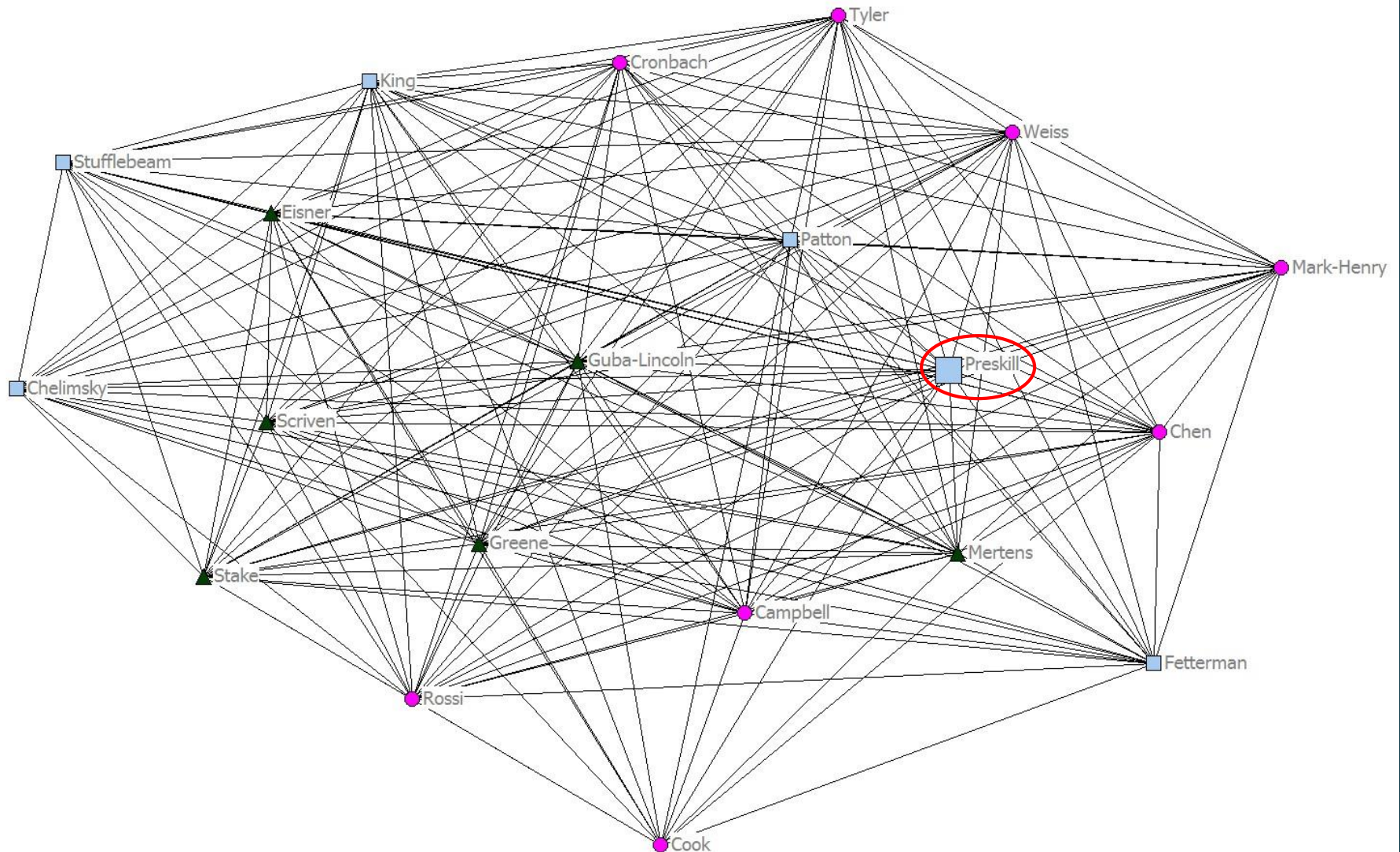
Ego network Mertens

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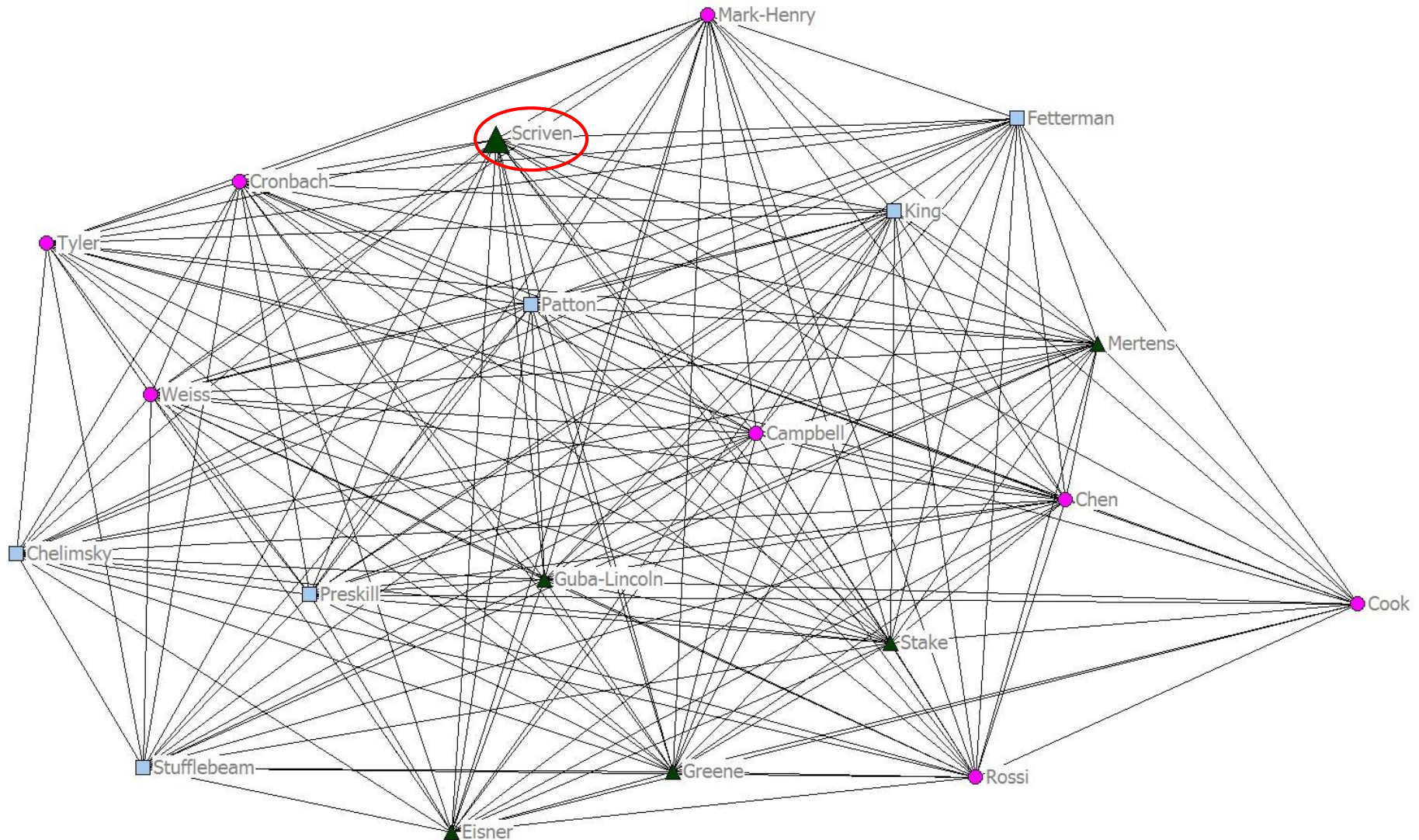
Ego network Preskill

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Ego Network Scriven

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Limitations

- Students were not explicitly asked whether they thought each pair of theorists were “connected.”
- We assume a “comment” = interest or engagement with a theory...
 - Or were students commenting based on other factors? (e.g., which chapter they read)

Preliminary conclusions

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- ▶ The most frequently linked theorists -- Scriven, Mertens, Preskill, & Campbell -- take very different approaches to evaluation.
- ▶ Rather than linking similar theories, students seem drawn to opposing perspectives.

Conclusions

- ▶ **Teaching evaluation theory:** provide more opportunities for students to contrast theories
- ▶ **Evaluation theory & practice refinement:**
Are there “key” theorists who are especially influential because their approaches are most different from others?
- ▶ **Future direction:** create a survey to ask students they perceive connections between the evaluation theories?



Questions?
Comments?