

# A Poincaré Inequality and Consistency Results for Signal Sampling on Large Graphs

Thien Le, in joint work with Luana Ruiz and Stefanie Jegelka



November 17th. DeepMath 2023.

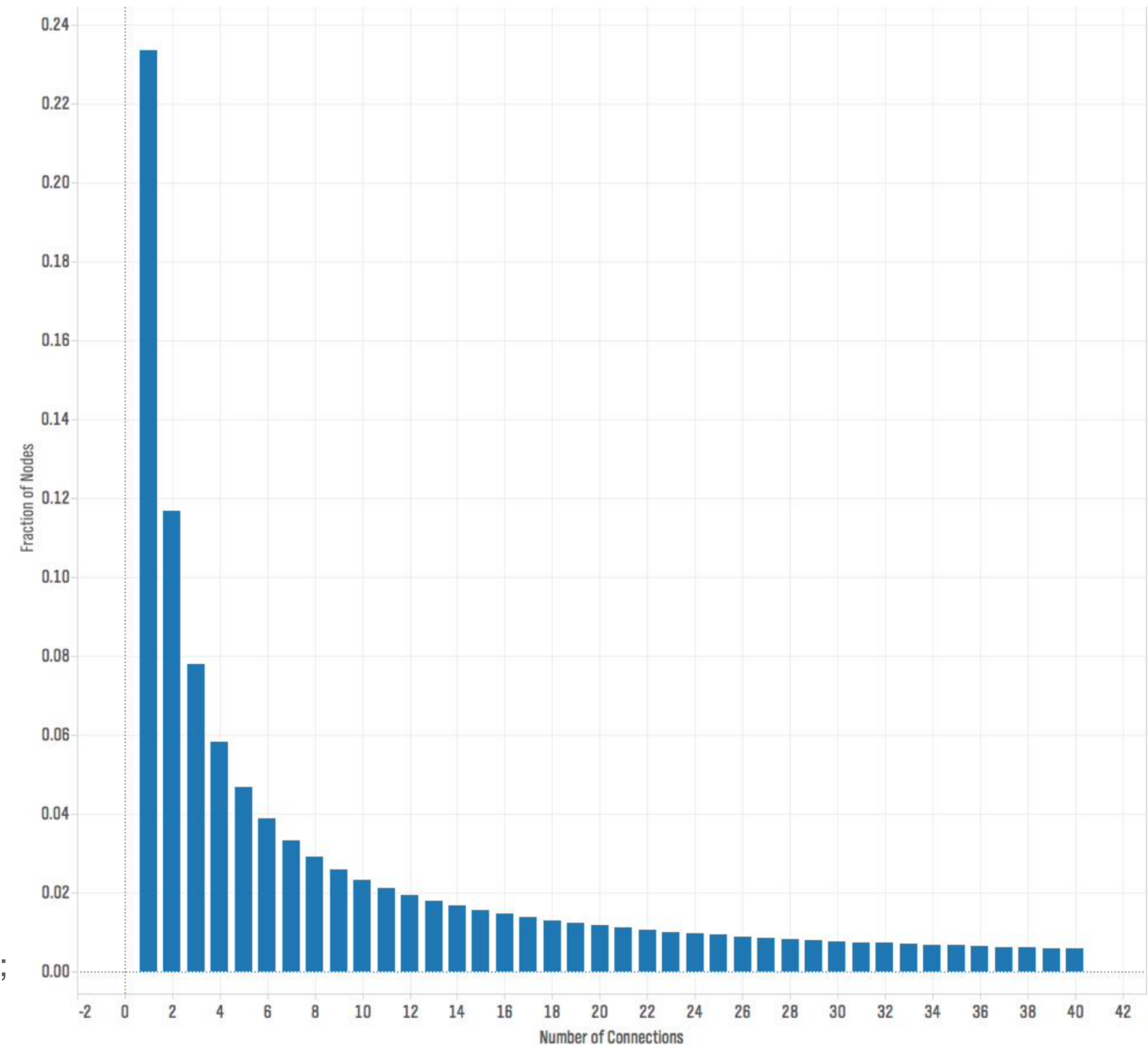
# Motivation

# Graph algorithms scale with **number of vertices**

- Important data analysis algorithms scale with **number of vertices  $n$**  in a graph:
  - Spectral decomposition:  $\Omega(n^2)$  (widely believed:  $\Omega(n^{2.376\dots})$ )
  - Graph neural networks (e.g. graph convolutional network):  $\Omega(n^2)$
- In most graph-based task, complexity of the task does not scale with  $n$ 
  - $n$  represents resolution of dataset, not complexity.

# Realistic graphs demonstrate **intrinsic simplicity**

- ‘Small world phenomenon’.
- Scale-free/power-law graphs.



Reference: Kleinberg 2004, The small world phenomenon and decentralized search;  
Milgram 1967, “The small world problem”;  
Barabasi, Albert 1999, Emergence of scaling in random networks.

Figure by PJ Lamberson - UCLA

# Solution: Sample small subset of nodes!

## Two criteria

- Subsampling a small subset of  $k$  vertices,  $k \ll n$ , scales graph algorithms:

1. Find an “informative” subset.

Strategy: optimal sampling

2. Find a “transferable” subset that is robust when the graph grows in size.

Strategy: graph limit

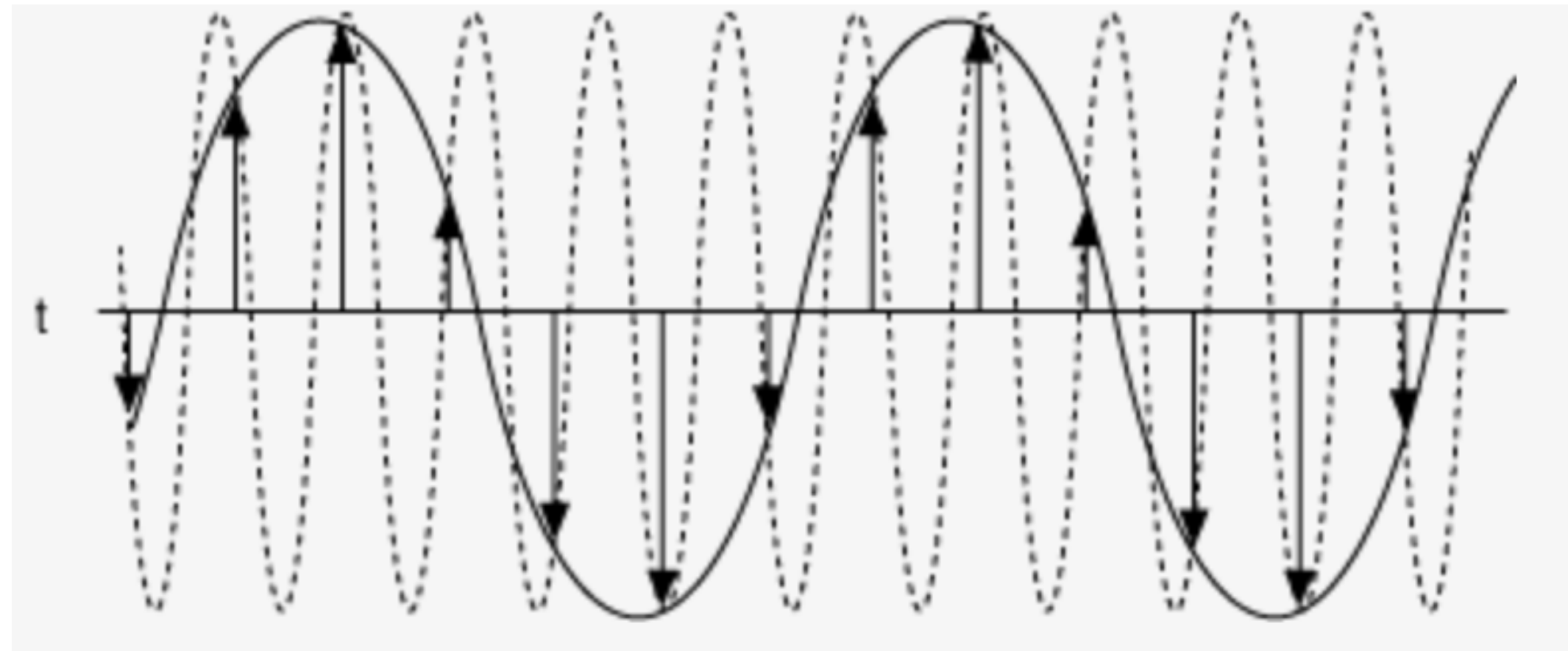
# Look ahead: What can we do with such a **subset**?

- Faster existing algorithms:
  - Spectral decomposition (e.g. eigenvector positional encoding):  
 $\cancel{\Omega(n^2)} \gg \Omega(k^2)$
  - Graph neural networks (e.g. graph convolutional network):  $\cancel{\Omega(n^2)} \gg \Omega(k^2)$
- Theory: consistency/transferability results implies small decay in performance
- Empirical: node classification on citation network datasets

# Informative subset: Sampling theory

Warm up:  $L^1(\mathbb{R})$

*Theorem (Shannon-Nyquist theorem): An analog signal  $f \in L^1(\mathbb{R})$  with bandwidth in  $(0, 2k)$  is uniquely determined by uniform discrete samples at rate  $k$ .*



Reference: Shannon, C.E., 1949. Communication in the Presence of Noise.  
Figure by National Instruments

# Informative subset: Sampling theory

Corollary: 1D-CNN, path graph

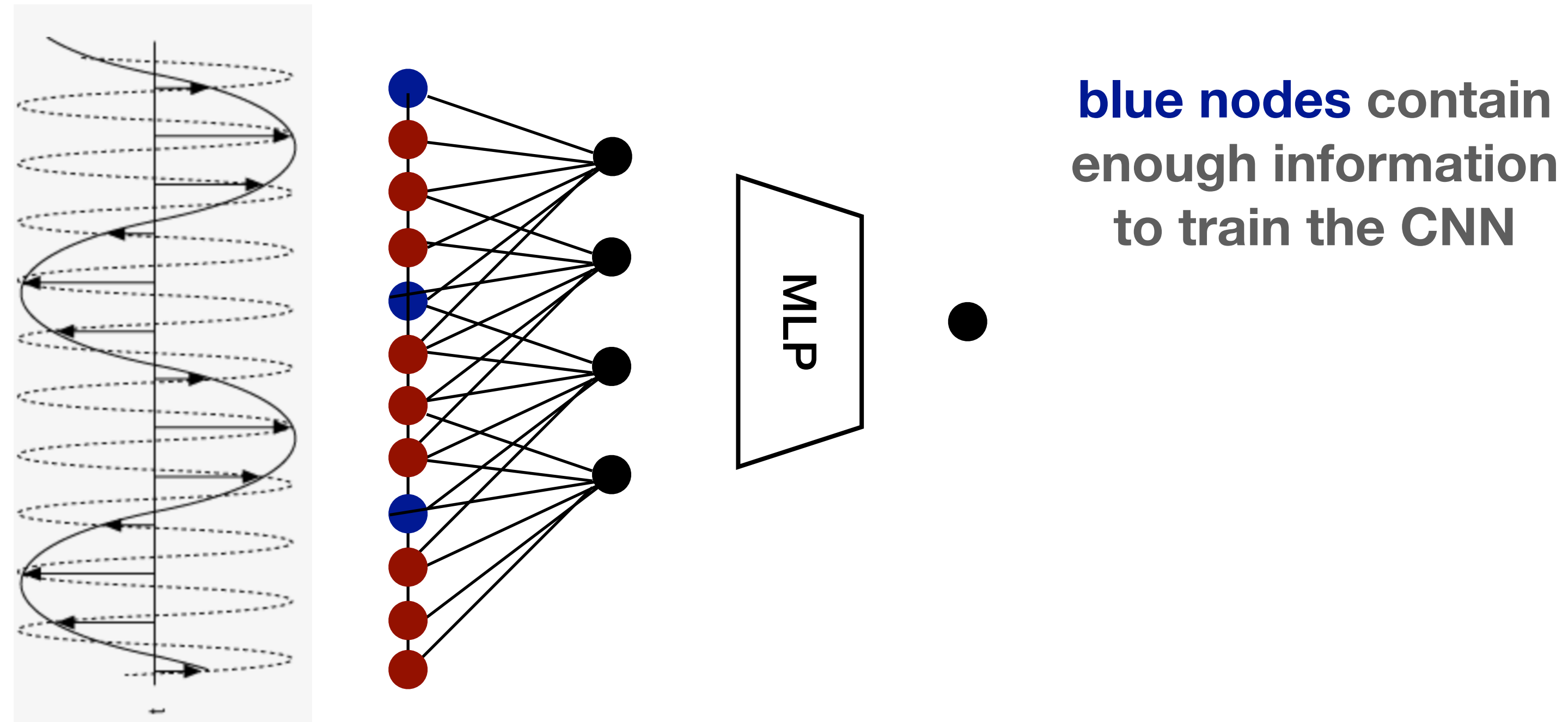
*Theorem (Shannon-Nyquist theorem): An analog signal  $f \in L^1(\mathbb{R})$  with bandwidth in  $(0, 2k)$  is uniquely determined by uniform discrete samples at rate  $k$ .*

*Corollary (Sampling for 1D-CNN): Given an analog 1D-image  $f \in L^1([0, 1])$  with bandwidth in  $(0, 2k)$  and  $n$  uniform pixels, only  $k \ll n$  pixels is needed to uniquely determine  $f$ .*



# Informative subset: Sampling theory

Corollary: 1D-CNN, path graph



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# Informative subset: Sampling theory

Finite graph  $G = (V, E)$  sampling

$$f: V \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$$

*Theorem (Pesenson, 2008, informal): A graph signal  $f \in \ell^2(G)$  with limited bandwidth  $\lambda$  is uniquely determined by a uniqueness set  $U \subseteq V$*

$$\text{Normalized Laplacian } I - (D^\dagger)^{1/2} A (D^\dagger)^{1/2}$$

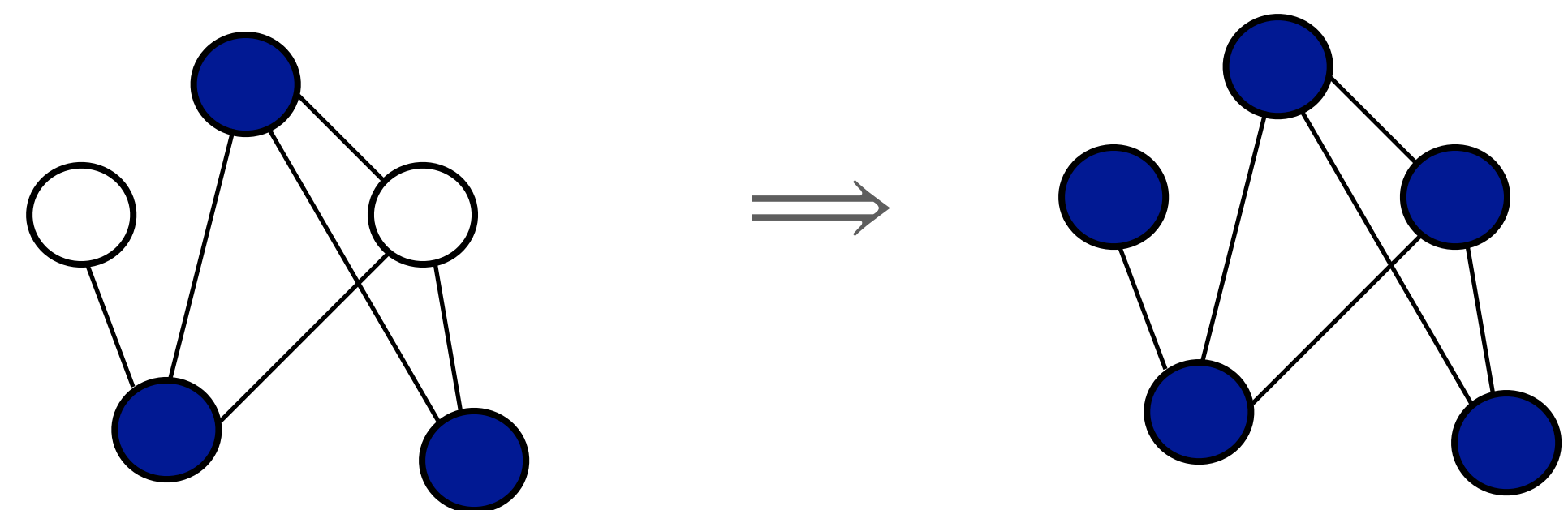
Graph Fourier transform

$$\text{Eigenvalues/frequencies } \lambda_1 \leq \lambda_2 \leq \dots \leq \lambda_n$$

Bandwidth cutoff at  $\lambda$

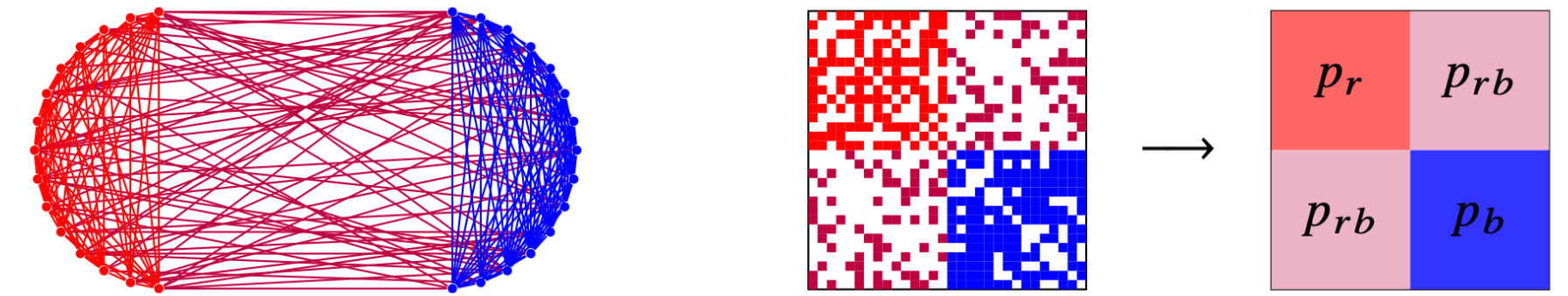
$$\text{Paley-Wiener space } PW_\lambda(G)$$

$$\|f_1 - f_2\|_{\ell^2(U)} = 0 \implies \|f_1 - f_2\|_{\ell^2(G)} = 0$$



# Towards transferable subset: graph limit

## Graphons and limit of dense graphs



- Graphons are symmetric, measurable functions  $\mathbf{W} : [0,1] \times [0,1] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$
- Interpretation:
  1.  $(V = [0,1], E = \{(u, v) : \mathbf{W}(u, v) \neq 0\})$  (informal)
  2. Finite graph sampler:
    1. Given number of nodes  $n$ , sample  $v_1, \dots, v_n \stackrel{\text{iid}}{\sim} \text{Unif}[0,1]$
    2. For each  $i < j \in [n]$ , sample  $(v_i, v_j) \stackrel{\text{iid}}{\sim} \text{Bern}(\mathbf{W}(v_i, v_j))$

Reference: Lovasz, 2012, Large network and graph limits;

Borgs, Chayes, Lovasz, Sos and Vesztergombi 2006 - 2008: Convergent sequences of dense graphs I, II: Subgraph frequencies, metric properties and testing,

Figure: Zhao, Graph Theory and Additive Combinatorics pg 134

# Towards transferable subset: graph limit

## Transferability of graphs sampled from graphons

sampled from same  $\mathbf{W}$

- Transferability between graphs with **similar structures**: for some rate  $c > 0$ ,

$$d_{\gamma}(\text{GNN}(\cdot, G_n, \theta), \text{GNN}(\cdot, G_m, \theta)) \leq O(1/m^c + 1/n^c)$$

appropriate metric

learnable parameter

input graph:  $n$  nodes

input node features  $\mathbb{R}^n$

**Theorem (Ruiz et al. 2023; informal):** RHS = small number +  $O(1/m + 1/n)$

# Transferable subset: graph limit

## Putting together...

- Uniqueness set for a finite graph = informative subset
- Finite graphs sampled from the same limit graphons are structurally similar

⇒ Study how to sample informative subset from limit graphon and get transferability for free

# Our results

# Finite graph $G = (V, E)$ sampling

## Informative subset: Sampling theory

$$f: V \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$$

**Theorem (Pesenson, 2008, informal):** A *graph signal*  $f \in \ell^2(G)$  with limited *bandwidth*  $\lambda$  is uniquely determined by a *uniqueness set*  $U \subseteq V$

$$\text{Normalized Laplacian } I - (D^\dagger)^{1/2} A (D^\dagger)^{1/2}$$

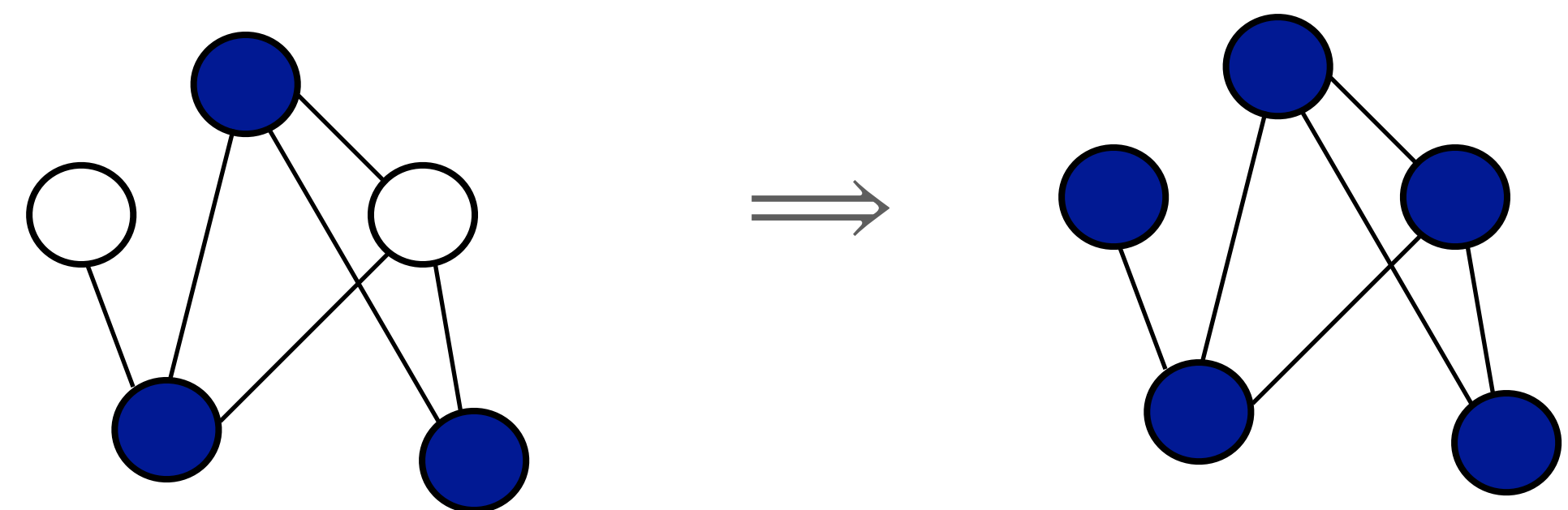
Graph Fourier transform

$$\text{Eigenvalues/frequencies } \lambda_1 \leq \lambda_2 \leq \dots \leq \lambda_n$$

Bandwidth cutoff at  $\lambda$

$$\text{Paley-Wiener space } PW_\lambda(G)$$

$$\|f_1 - f_2\|_{\ell^2(U)} = 0 \implies \|f_1 - f_2\|_{\ell^2(G)} = 0$$



# Graphon $W : [0,1]^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ sampling (via Poincaré inequality)

## Informative subset: Sampling theory

$$f : [0,1] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$$

**Theorem 2,3 (L., Ruiz, Jegelka, 2023; informal):** A *graphon signal*  $f \in L^2([0,1])$  with limited **bandwidth**  $\lambda$  is uniquely determined by a msrbl **uniqueness set**  $s$

Normalized graphon Laplacian

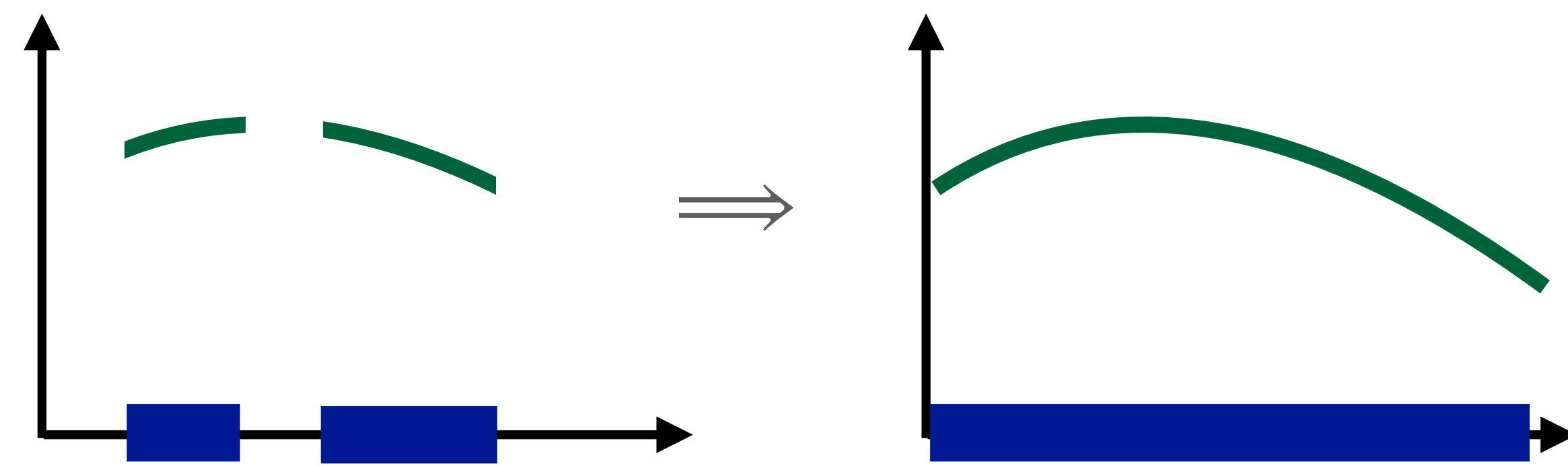
Graphon Fourier transform

Eigenvalues/frequencies  $\lambda_1 \leq \lambda_2 \leq \dots \leq \lambda_{-1}$

Bandwidth cutoff at  $\lambda$

graphon Paley-Wiener space  $PW_\lambda(W)$

$$\|f_1 - f_2\|_{L^2(U)} = 0 \implies \|f_1 - f_2\|_{L^2([0,1])} = 0$$





# Towards a sampling algorithm

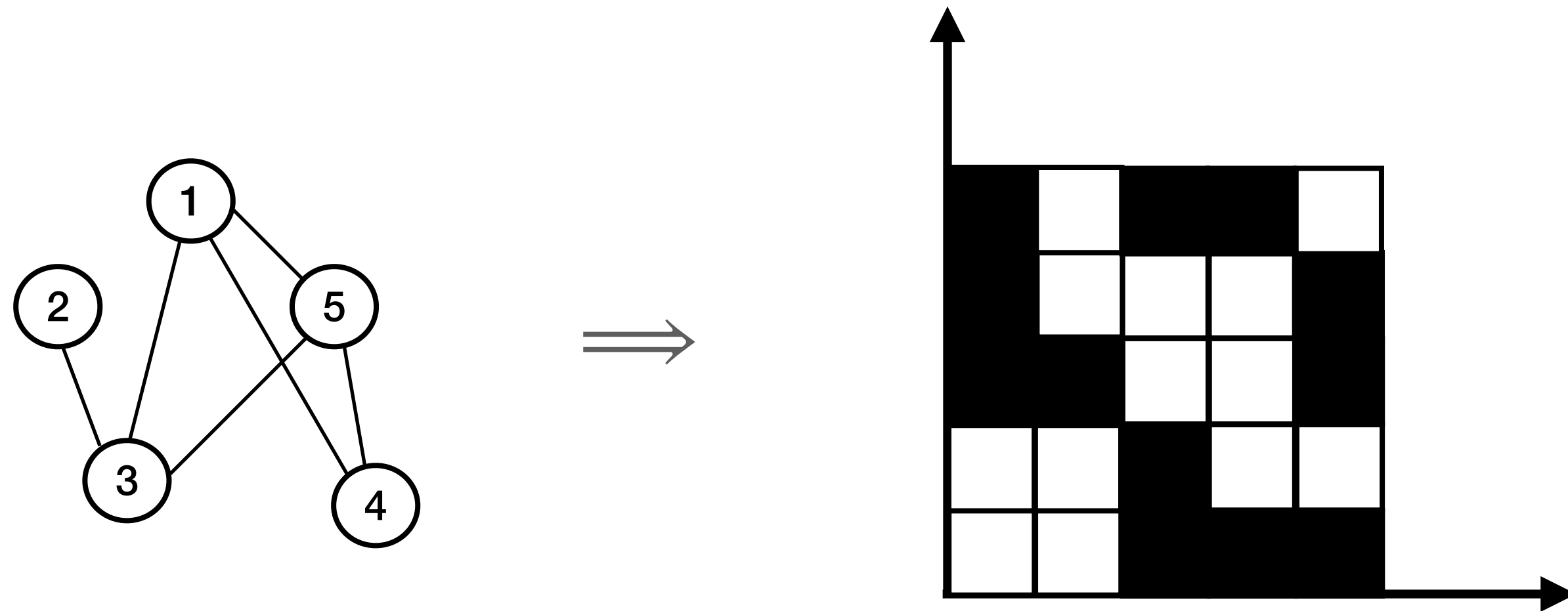
**Input:** large graph  $G_N$ . **Output:** small uniqueness set for all  $G_n, n \geq N$

1. Obtain an approximation of the limit graphon with  $G_N$ .
2. Approximate uniqueness set  $U \subseteq [0,1]$  by  $G_N$  uniqueness set  $U_N \subseteq [N]$ .
3. Map  $U_N \subseteq [N]$  to nodes  $U_n \subseteq [n]$  of finite graph  $G_n, n \geq N$ .

# 1. Obtain an approximation of limit graphon

Graphon is the closure of graphs (under cut norm)

- Embed  $G_N$  vertices into  $[0,1]$  - induced graphon



*Theorem (Lovász and Szegedy 2007): Graphon space is compact. Finite graphs are dense.*

# Towards a sampling algorithm

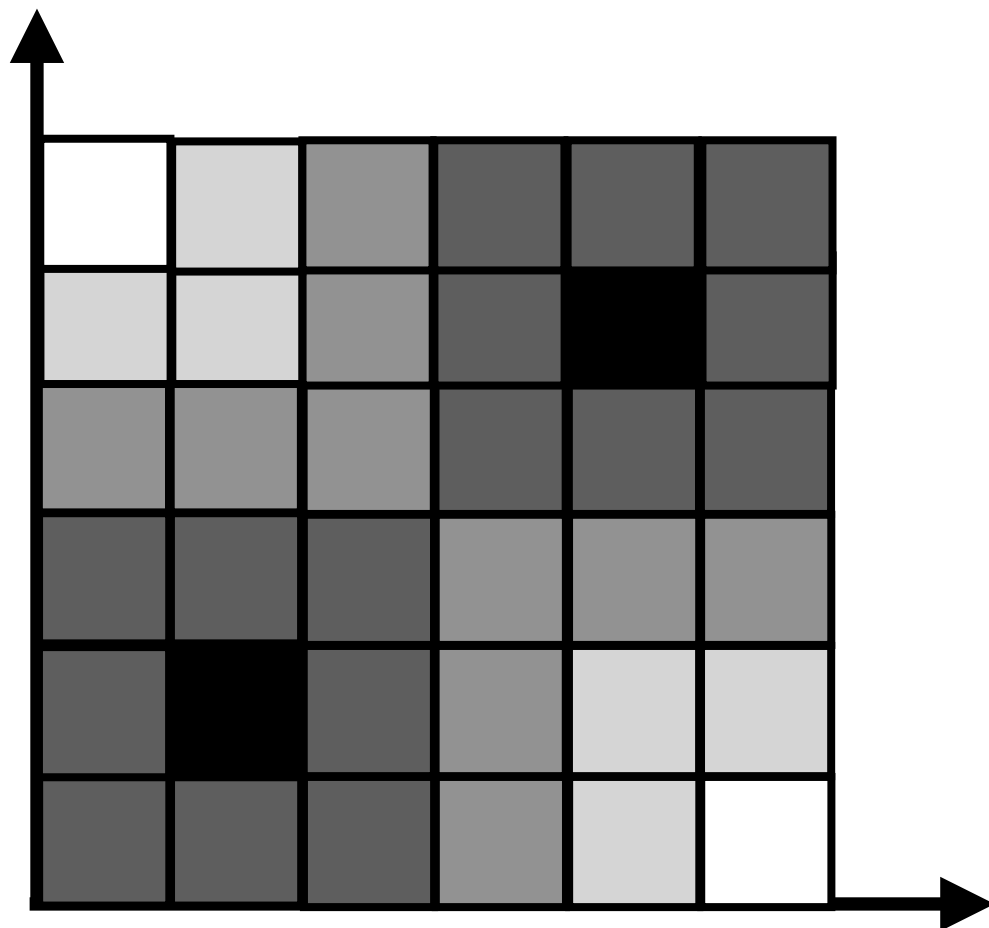
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# 2. Approximate uniqueness set of graphons

Graphon  $\mathbf{W} \equiv$  mixture model of random graphs  $\mathbf{K} = \left( \Omega, \sum_i \mathbb{P}_i, \mathbf{k} \right)$

*Proposition 2 (L., Ruiz, Jegelka, 2023; informal): A graphon random model is equivalent to mixture models of random graphs. Well-fittedness measured by a difficulty function  $\varphi(\mathbf{W}; \mathbf{k}, \mathbb{P}_i)$  (Schiebinger et al. 2015)*



$$\equiv d\mathbb{P} = \frac{P_{\mathcal{N}(0.25, \sigma^2)} + P_{\mathcal{N}(0.75, \sigma^2)}}{2}$$

# 2. Approximate uniqueness set of graphons

Gaussian elimination find uniqueness set with high probability

*Theorem (L., Ruiz, Jegelka, 2023; informal) - Corollary of Theorem 2 (Schiebinger et. al, 2015): If  $\varphi \ll 1$ , GE with pivoting find uniqueness set with high probability.*

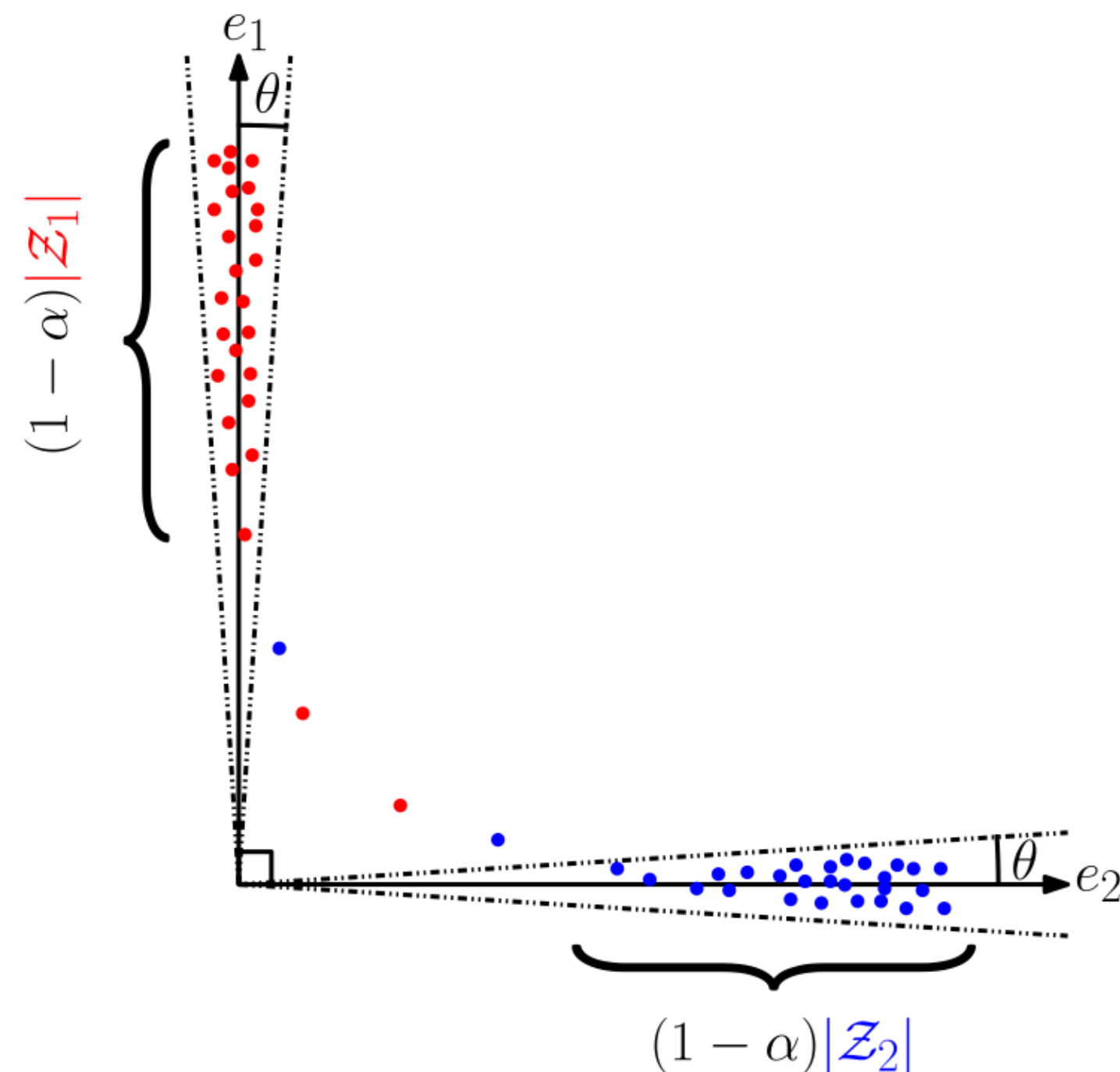


Figure from Schiebinger et al.  
Reference: Schiebinger, Wainwright, Yu 2015. The geometry of kernelized spectral clustering

# Towards a sampling algorithm

**Input:** large graph  $G_N$ . **Output:** small uniqueness set for all  $G_n, n \geq N$

1. Obtain an approximation of the limit graphon with  $G_N$ .
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3. Map  $U_N \subseteq [N]$  to nodes  $U_n \subseteq [n]$  of finite graph  $G_n, n \geq N$ .

# 3. Map graphon uniqueness set to nodes in graph

## Consistency result

*Proposition 6 (L., Ruiz, Jegelka, 2023; informal):* If  $\varphi \ll 1$ , for a sequence of graphs  $G_N \rightarrow \mathbf{W}$ , there exists a number of node  $N$  such that for all  $n > N$ , uniqueness set of  $G_N$  is also a uniqueness set of  $G_n$ .

# Empirical results



# Experiments

## Transferability

Table 2: Classification accuracy on the MalNet-Tiny dataset, (i) w/o positional encodings (PEs), (ii) w/ PEs computed on the full graph, (iii) w/ PEs computed on a graphon-sampled subgraph (removing or not isolated nodes), and (iv) w/ PEs computed on a subgraph with randomly sampled nodes (removing or not isolated nodes).

	no PEs	full graph PEs	graphon sampled PEs		randomly sampled PEs	
			w/ isolated	w/o	w/ isolated	w/o
mean	0.26±0.03	0.43±0.07	<b>0.29±0.06</b>	<b>0.33±0.06</b>	0.28±0.07	0.27±0.07
max	0.30	0.51	<b>0.40</b>	<b>0.42</b>	0.35	0.37

# Conclusion

- Subsampling **a small subset of  $k$  vertices**,  $k \ll n$ , scales graph algorithms:
  - Find an `informative' subset: sampling theory
  - Find a `transferable' subset: graph limit
- We derived a consistent algorithm that approximately samples from the limiting graphon uniqueness set, under theoretical guarantees.
- We tested our approach in real-world datasets, showing improvement over uniformly random sampling.

# Thank you!

## Q&A



- Major thanks to my collaborators Luana Ruiz and Stefanie Jegelka
- Contact: [thienle@mit.edu](mailto:thienle@mit.edu)
- Full paper:

