

Dynamics of Feedback-induced Packet Delay in Power-law Networks

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Abstract—Measurement studies of the Internet topology revealed that the degree distributions of the Internet topologies follow a power law. That is, existing probability of nodes having k links is proportional to $k^{-\gamma}$. However, only the power-law degree distribution does not determine network-level performance of networking methods. That is, the structural characteristics of topologies other than the degree distribution are essential to discuss the behavior of networking methods.

In this paper, we investigate traffic dynamics on ISP's router-level topology where the degree distribution exhibits power-law attribute and each of the nodes interacts via end-to-end flow control functionality. We show packet delay dynamics on the BA topology generated by the BA model and the ISP's router-level topology. Simulation results show that the end-to-end packet delay distributions exhibit a heavy tail by the TCP model. Moreover, the number of links that are highly fluctuated is more than twice comparing to the results of the stop-and-wait model. Even in this case, the modularity structure of the ISP topology reduces the number of highly fluctuated link comparing to the results of the BA topology.

Keywords-Power-law Networks; ISP's Router-level Topology; Traffic Dynamics; Stop and Wait; TCP.

I. INTRODUCTION

Dynamic interactions of various network-related protocols induced by the functional partition make the Internet to be complicated systems; details are hardly captured because of large-scale and heterogeneous structure. One of complex behaviors of the Internet is traffic dynamics. For example, flow control and congestion control performed by end host can show short-range and long-range dependence of traffic [1]. The Internet is facing with ever-changing networking technologies and applications, thus understanding and controlling the complex behaviors of the Internet are important for designing future networks.

Although the statistical property of network traffic is hard to capture, measurement studies of the Internet topology revealed that the degree distributions of the Internet topologies follow a power law. That is, existing probability of nodes having k links is proportional to $k^{-\gamma}$. Barabási et al. propose the BA model to generate power-law topologies having power-law degree distribution [2]. However, structures of topologies are not determined only by the degree

distribution, but also by other factors. Li et al. shows several topologies that have different structures but have the same degree distribution [3]. They pointed out that differences in structures leads to differences in the amount of traffic that the network accommodates. Moreover, structures of power-law topologies also affect the performance of some networking mechanisms such as the routing mechanisms [4]. These works indicate that only the power-law degree distribution does not determine network-level performance. That is, the structures of topologies other than the degree distribution are essential to discuss the behavior of some networking methods.

In this paper, we investigate traffic dynamics on ISP's router-level topology where the degree distribution exhibits power-law attribute and each of the nodes interacts via end-to-end flow control functionality. In previous studies, it has discussed about the relationship between statistical properties of the Internet traffic and end-to-end flow control. In Refs. [5], [6], it is revealed that the Internet traffic exhibits long-range dependence (LRD) where the traffic fluctuation appears independent from time scale of measuring. Various studies have investigated the reason to cause the LRD traffic in the Internet. One of reasons is flow control on the transport layer, such as TCP [7]–[9]. However, these researches deal with simple and small topologies. We therefore investigate how structure of topologies impacts on traffic dynamics. More specifically, we investigate traffic dynamics on ISP's router-level topology where the degree distribution exhibits power-law attribute and each of the nodes interacts via end-to-end flow control functionality. We first show packet delay dynamics and compare it with the BA topology generated by the BA model and the ISP's router-level topology. We then discuss how structure of topologies and flow controls affect the end-to-end packet delay distribution and the appearance of long-range dependence in queue length for each link. The results show that increased traffic caused by TCP makes queue length of links in the network fluctuate. However, we show that the queue length does not fluctuate against traffic caused by TCP in the ISP topology.

This paper is organized as follows. We introduce related

work of this paper in Section II. Section III shows the network model that we use for the simulations. In Section IV, we evaluate the influence of the power-law topologies and TCP flow control. Finally, Section V concludes this paper and mentions the future work.

II. RELATED WORK

A. Structural Properties of Power-law Networks

Recently, considerable numbers of studies have investigated power-law networks whose degree distribution follows a power law. Barabási et al. introduced the BA model as a power-law topology generating method in Ref. [2]. The BA model generates power-law topology based on two rules, one is incremental growth and the other is preferential attachment. The resulting power-law networks have two main characteristics. First, many nodes have a few links and a few nodes so-called hub nodes have many links. Second, the average length of the shortest paths between nodes is small.

Many researches investigate topological properties appeared by the BA model or its variant models. However, when router-level topologies are concerned, the BA model where links are attached based on a preferential probability does not emulate the structure of the ISP’s router-level topologies. We have compared the structural differences of the AT&T topology measured by Rocketfuel tool [10] and the topology generated by BA model in Ref. [11]. The results indicate that design principles of networks greatly affect the structure of the ISP topologies. Design principles determine a node functionality, which in turn determines the connectivity of nodes.

In [12], Guimera et al. have proposed the classification method of node functions. The method divides a network to multiple modules and defines the within-module degree Z_i , and the participation-coefficient, P_i , for each node i . Assuming that the node i belongs to a module s_i , the within-module degree Z_i of node i is defined as,

$$Z_i = \frac{k_i - \langle k_{s_i} \rangle}{\sigma_{s_i}}, \quad (1)$$

where k_i is the degree of nodes, $\langle k_{s_i} \rangle$ represents the average degree in module s_i , and σ_{s_i} is the variance of the degree distribution of nodes in module s_i . The participation coefficient P_i of node i is also defined as,

$$P_i = 1 - \sum_{s=1}^{N_m} \left(\frac{k_{is}}{k_i} \right)^2, \quad (2)$$

where k_{is} represents the fraction of links connecting with nodes in module s_i . That is, when all the links of node i connect with nodes belonging to the same module of s_i , P_i becomes 0. Figure 1 shows that the roles of nodes are categorized by the value of Z_i and P_i .

Figure 2(a) and Figure 2(b) show the result of the Guimera’s method to the BA topology and the AT&T

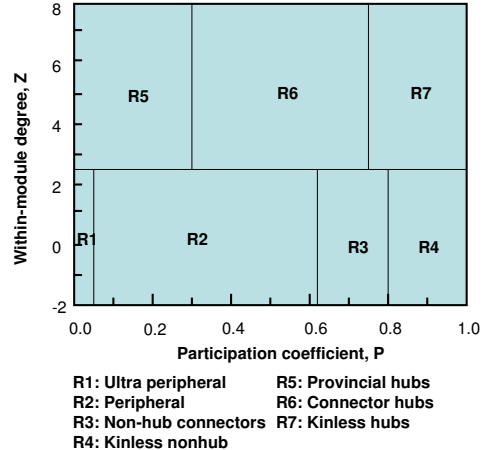


Figure 1. Classification of node function by participation coefficient and within-module degree

topology. The module is calculated from the method in [13]. In Figure 2, the horizontal axis indicates within-module degree Z and the vertical axis the participation coefficient P . Depending on the values of P and Z , the role of node is categorized into several classes. For example, when Z_i is large and P_i is relatively large, the node i has many links connecting to other modules. Thus, the node i is categorized into the “Connector hub(s)”. “Provincial hub(s)” also takes the larger Z_i but smaller P_i ; the node i has many links connecting with nodes in the same module.

Looking at Figure 2(a), we observe that the BA topology has many “Connector hub” nodes that connect between modules. However, Figure 2(b) shows that there is no “Connector hub” in the AT&T topology. This means that the AT&T topology has a few inter-module links that connect different modules.

B. Traffic Dynamics in Power-law Networks

Some papers investigate traffic-level behaviors in topologies having power-law degree distributions [14], [15]. Reference [14] demonstrates that the congestion spreads easily over the topologies in the BA topologies because of the low-diameter of topologies. The low-diameter effects also appear in the queuing delay distribution of topologies. They show that the queuing delay distribution of the BA topology has a long-tail. The effect of end-to-end flow control is also investigated on the topology obtained by the BA model [15]. The authors examined TCP control with long range dependence (LRD) input traffic and Poisson input traffic, and revealed that average of end-to-end packet delay sharply increases for both input traffic since packets more concentrate on the hub nodes in the BA topology.

The previous works have used topologies generated by the BA model or its variant models. However, even if the degree distributions of some topologies are the same, more

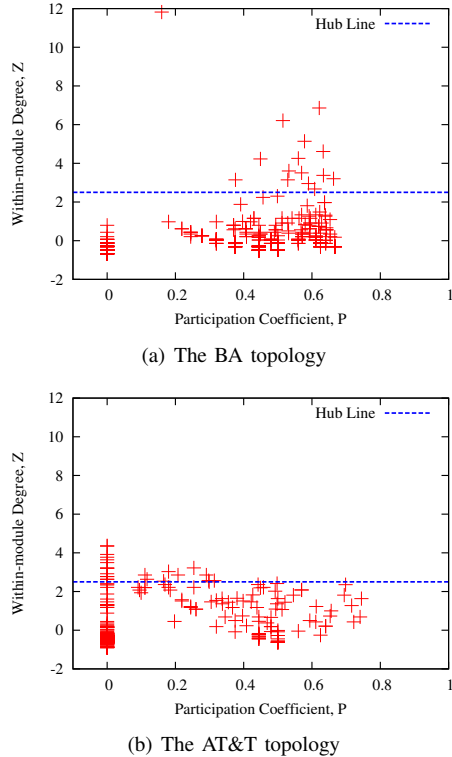


Figure 2. Classification of node function in each topology

detailed characteristics are often quite different. As discussed in Section II-A, the BA model does not adequately model the structure of the ISP’s router-level topologies. This fact clearly indicates that the power-law degree distribution alone does not determine traffic-level behaviors in router-level topologies.

The traffic dynamics has received great interest from the networking research community. In the Internet, it has revealed that the Internet wide-area and local-area traffic can have the long-range dependence or self-similarity [5]. That is, network traffic exhibits a large variability even at a wide range of time scales. Recently, these statistical properties has again observed in Peer-to-Peer traffic [6]. In Ref. [7], [8], TCP flow control is considered to be cause of long-range dependence in the Internet traffic. Simulation results of Ref. [9] show that long-range dependence is caused by feedback flow control functionality only, because when stop-and-wait protocol is used instead of TCP, long-range dependence is still observed in traffic. However, these studies deal with simple small topologies, we therefore investigate how structure of topologies impacts on traffic dynamics.

III. SIMULATION MODEL

A. Network Topologies

We use the AT&T topology measured by Rocketfuel tool [10] as ISP’s router-level topology. For comparison purpose,

we use the BA topology generated by the BA model. The BA topology is generated such that the numbers of nodes and links of it are the same as that of the AT&T topology.

B. Packet Processing Model at Node

Each node has limited buffers at each out-going links. When a packet arrives at a given node and when the node is the packet’s destination, the node removes the packet from the network. Otherwise, the node selects the next node based on a minimum hop routing algorithm, and forwards the packet to a buffer of an out-going link connecting to the next node based on FIFO and a drop-tail queuing discipline, and delivers n packets per unit of time. Here, we do not use the dynamic routing, i.e., each packet traverses the shortest path calculated beforehand. When multiple shortest paths to reach the destination are found, the next node is determined based on a packet’s source node.

C. Flow Control between End Hosts

1) *Stop-and-Wait Model*: In this model, when a source node sends a DATA packet to its destination node, the source node stops sending a new packet until the source node receives the acknowledgement (ACK) packet from the destination node. If a source node does not receive the ACK packet longer than retransmission time out (RTO), the source node thinks the packet loss has occurred and resends a packet. Time-out period is defined based on round trip time (RTT) and doubled every time out.

2) *TCP Model*: In this model, source nodes control the amount of DATA packets based on the slow start and congestion avoidance algorithms. The slow start and congestion avoidance algorithms are basic flow-control functions of TCP. If the slow start threshold is lower than slow start threshold, the source node uses the slow start algorithm. When the source node receives an ACK packet, it extends the congestion window ($cwnd$) by one packet size (= segment size, sms) and sends two new DATA packets to the destination node. If window size exceeds the slow start threshold ($ssthresh$), the source node uses the congestion avoidance algorithm. When the source node receives an ACK packet, it extends the congestion window by $1/cwnd$, and it sends the adequate number of DATA packets to the destination node. In our model, congestion window size does not exceed the pre-decided maximum window size. If the source node does not receive any ACK packet longer than RTO, the source node detects serious congestion and recognizes serious congestion has occurred. The source node resends the lost DATA packet, and reduces the congestion window to one packet size. Time-out period is defined in the same way as the stop-and-wait model.

In addition, we use the fast retransmit and fast recovery algorithms defined by RFC 2581 [16]. The source node uses the fast retransmit algorithm when it detects packet loss and

Table I
THE SIMULATION PARAMETERS USED IN THE TCP MODEL

Buffer size	1,000 packets
Session arrival rate	1 session / unit of time
Maximum window size	10 packets
Link capacity	3 packets / unit of time
Simulation time	300,000 units of time

light congestion by arrival of three duplicate ACKs. When the source node receives the third duplicate ACK, it reduces the congestion window to half and resends the lost DATA packet. After the retransmission, the source node extends the congestion window based on the fast recovery algorithm. The source node extends the congestion window by one packet size as long as it receives the same duplicate ACKs.

IV. DYNAMICS OF TCP IN POWER-LAW NETWORKS

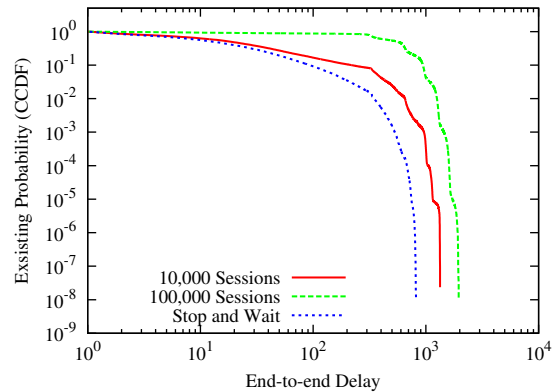
In this section, we show the results of simulation by the TCP and discuss the end-to-end delay and its fluctuation in detail. In the simulation, each link can transfer three packets for each unit of time. The other parameters are summarized in Table I.

A. End-to-End Packet Delay Distribution

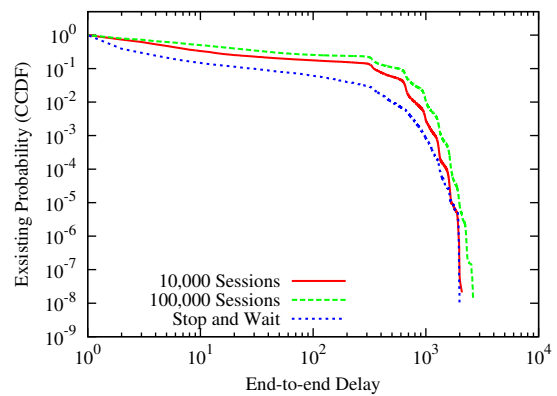
Figure 3 shows the end-to-end packet delay distribution of the BA topology and the AT&T topology. In this figure, the end-to-end packet delay distribution by the stop-and-wait model (the number of sessions is 100,000) is also plotted. In the AT&T topology, when the number of sessions is 10,000, packets spend longer time to reach their destination than the time in the BA topology. In contrast, when the number of sessions is 100,000, end-to-end packet delay distribution of the BA topology changes drastically. It has a long-tail distribution, i.e., many packets take a long time to go to their destination. End-to-end delay under 500 time units is hardly observed in the BA topology. However, end-to-end delay distribution of the AT&T topology does not change widely when the number of sessions increases.

The reason comes from that congestion tends to occur in the BA topology when TCP is applied. The term “congestion” means that a buffer is occupied by packets and cannot receive more packets. We confirm the frequency of congestion in the BA topology is about 4 times larger than the frequency in the AT&T topology (but not presented due to space restriction). Since packets concentrate in a variety of places and queuing delay gets longer, the end-to-end packet delay distribution of the BA topology exhibits a long tail.

To clarify the reason why congestion tends to occur in the BA topology, we focus on the difference in the structures between the BA topology and the AT&T topology. As discussed in Section II-A, the BA topology has many “Connector hubs” and the AT&T topology has many “Provincial hub” nodes. In the BA topology, “Connector hub” nodes transfer large amount of packets between modules. However, in the



(a) The BA topology



(b) The AT&T topology

Figure 3. End-to-end packet delay distribution

AT&T topology, packets traveling between two modules, i.e., between two regions are first aggregated at “Provincial hub” nodes and then forwarded via inter-module links. To confirm this assumption, we investigate composition percentages of congested links in each topology. We classify the link function based on function of nodes attached to the link. Table II shows the function of congested links of the BA topology and the AT&T topology. Each value represents the percentages of congested links observed in the simulation period between 290,000 and 300,000 units of time. We classify the link function based on function of two nodes attached to the link. In the table, “Connector” means the ratio of congested links which connect to “Connector hub” nodes, “Provincial” means the ratio of congested links which connect to “Provincial hub” nodes, and “Other” means the ratio of the rest. We observe that the links connecting to “Connector hubs” tend to be congested in the BA topology. Packets concentrate at “Connector hub” nodes. Thus, the links forwarding packets to “Connector hub” nodes tend to be congested. Since congestion tends to occur near “Connector hub” nodes, the end-to-end delay distribution of the BA topology has a long tail.

Table II
COMPONENT OF CONGESTED LINKS

Topology	Connector	Provincial	Other
The BA topology	0.4834	0.1030	0.4199
The AT&T topology	0.0123	0.3158	0.6717

Table III
THE RATIO OF HIGH FLUCTUATED LINKS IN EACH TOPOLOGY

Topology	10,000 sessions		100,000 sessions	
	Total	Inter-module	Total	Inter-module
The BA topology	0.257	0.21	0.26	0.21
The AT&T topology	0.08	0.025	0.11	0.017

B. Queue Length Fluctuation

We next evaluate the fluctuation of queue length. If queue length of a link fluctuates drastically, packets that traverse the link experience non-constant queuing delay, which leads to the performance degradation. We evaluate the fluctuation using the measurement Hurst parameter (H , $0.5 < H < 1$) by applying the R/S plot method [17]. The measurement Hurst parameter represents the degree of strength of long-range dependence. The detail of R/S plot method is as follows. First, we define R_n/S_n value as,

$$R_n/S_n = 1/S_n[\max(0, W_1, W_2, \dots, W_n) - \min(0, W_1, W_2, \dots, W_n)], \quad (3)$$

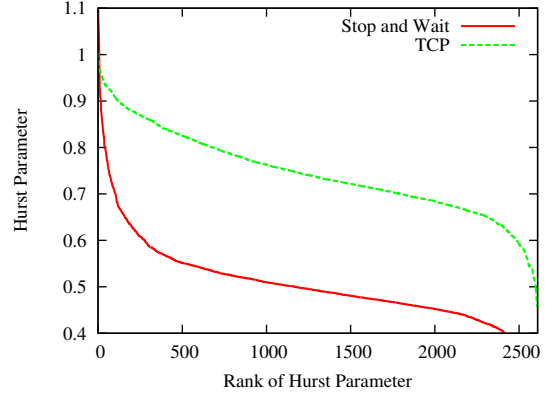
where

$$W_k = (X_1 + X_2 + \dots + X_k) - kX(n),$$

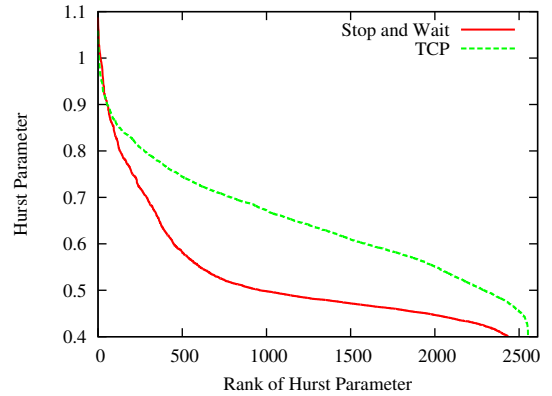
where $(X_k : k = 1, 2, \dots, n)$ is a data set of observation. $X(n)$ represents the mean value and $S(n)$ means standard deviation of the data set X . By estimating R_n/S_n value for a observation scale of n and plotting the correlation between n and R_n/S_n value, we can observe the statistical dependence over time. The slope of fitted curve of correlation function, αn^H , represents the Hurst parameter of a set of X .

Figure 4 shows Hurst parameters for each link. Y-axis represents Hurst parameters and X-axis represents its rank. In this figure, the result of the stop-and-wait model is also added. Looking at this figure, we observe that the number of links that take high Hurst parameter increases by the TCP model.

To see the relation between the Hurst parameter and topological structure in the AT&T topology clearly, we show the ratio of links that take high H value ($H \geq 0.8$) in Table III. When the number of sessions is small, queue length of the links that connect two regions fluctuates drastically. That is, inter-module links tend to be highly fluctuated. This is because many packets concentrate on inter-module links. As the number of sessions gets higher, queue length of the links that connect inside a region fluctuates while the Hurst parameter of inter-module links decreased. That is, fluctuation spreads to tributary links of bottleneck.



(a) The BA topology



(b) The AT&T topology

Figure 4. Correlations between Hurst parameter and Hurst parameter rank

C. Positive and Negative Effects of TCP

In Section IV-A and IV-B, we discussed about packet delay dynamics in the TCP model. In this section, we explain about the positive and negative effects of TCP. One of positive effects of TCP is improvement of throughput. We compare the results of the stop-and-wait model with that of the TCP model, network throughput is improved in the AT&T topology due to the functionality of TCP that adjusts packet sending rate to network condition (but not presented due to space restriction).

In contrast, when the number of sessions gets larger, TCP become a factor of fluctuation of queue length as depicted in Figure 4, which leads to the high fluctuation in end-to-end delay of packets. Figure 5 shows deviations of RTT for each session in the AT&T topology. Y-axis represents mean deviation of RTT for each session defined as,

$$\text{RTTdev}_{t+1} = (1 - \alpha) * \text{RTTdev}_t + \alpha * |\text{estimatedRTT} - \text{RTT}|, \quad (4)$$

where $\alpha = 0.125$, and X-axis represents its rank. In the figure, the result of the stop-and-wait model is also plotted

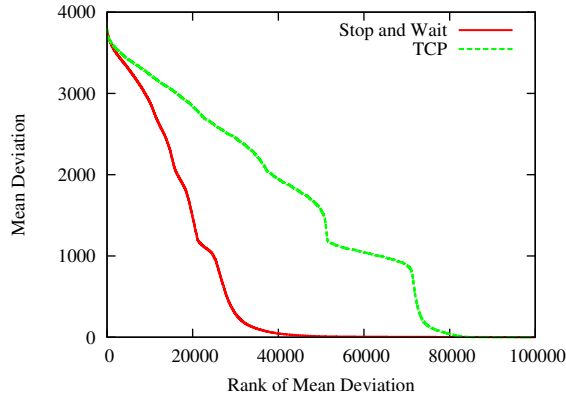


Figure 5. Correlations between deviations of RTT for each session and deviation rank in the AT&T topology: The number of sessions is 100,000

for comparison purpose. In the TCP model, the number of sessions that take large deviation increases.

The above results show that the queue length of the inter-module links fluctuates drastically in the stop-and-wait model, while queue length of the intra-module links does not fluctuate in the AT&T topology. We confirm, but not shown due to the space limitation, that the number of links having high H value in the stop-and-wait model is smaller than the number of links in the TCP model. In the TCP model, 11% of total links are highly fluctuated when the number of sessions is 100,000, while 5% of total links are highly fluctuated in the stop-and-wait model. These results indicate complex functionality of TCP, such as flow control, congestion control, and fast retransmit functionalities, causes fluctuation of queue length. This is one of negative effects of TCP.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we investigated on the interaction between structures of topologies and flow control between end hosts. Comparing with the simulation results of the stop-and-wait model and the TCP model, functionality of TCP improves network throughput in the AT&T topology. On the other hand, functionality of TCP makes the queue length fluctuated. Even in this case, the modularity structure of the AT&T topology reduces the number of highly fluctuated link comparing to the results of the BA topology.

In the future work, we will conduct evaluations of packet delay dynamics on topologies that have heterogeneous link capacity, and evaluation of combination of end-host flow control and traffic engineering in more detail.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was partly supported by Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A) 21240004 of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) in Japan and the National

Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT) of Japan.

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