

Reliable Inference at Scale using Graph Structure

15/04/2026 @ IISc/CNI Seminar



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MIT LIDS

PhD, ECE @CMU
B. Tech, M. Tech, IITB

A.G. Jordan Award for *Outstanding PhD Thesis* '25

Info Theory & Applications Graduation Day Award '24



Laboratory for
Information and
Decision Systems



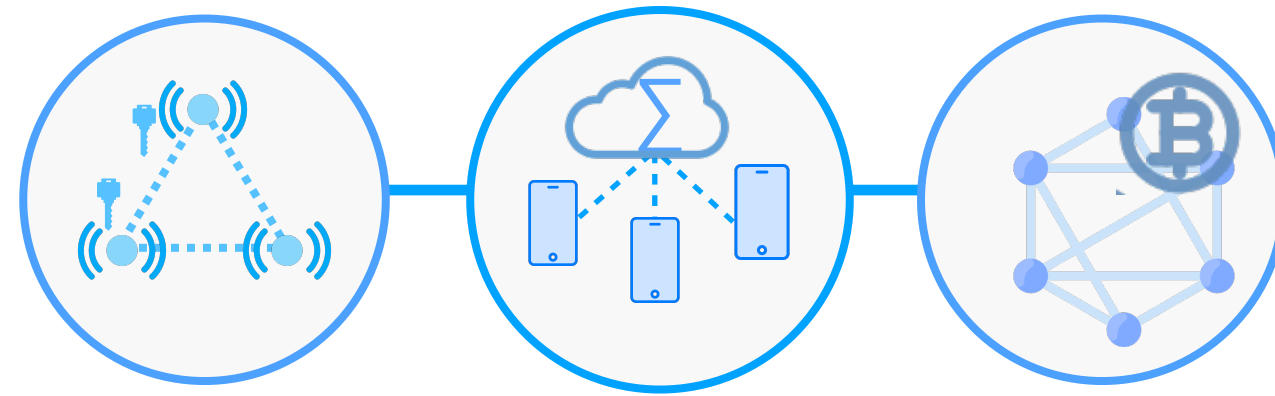
Networks in context: How representation informs what we can answer?



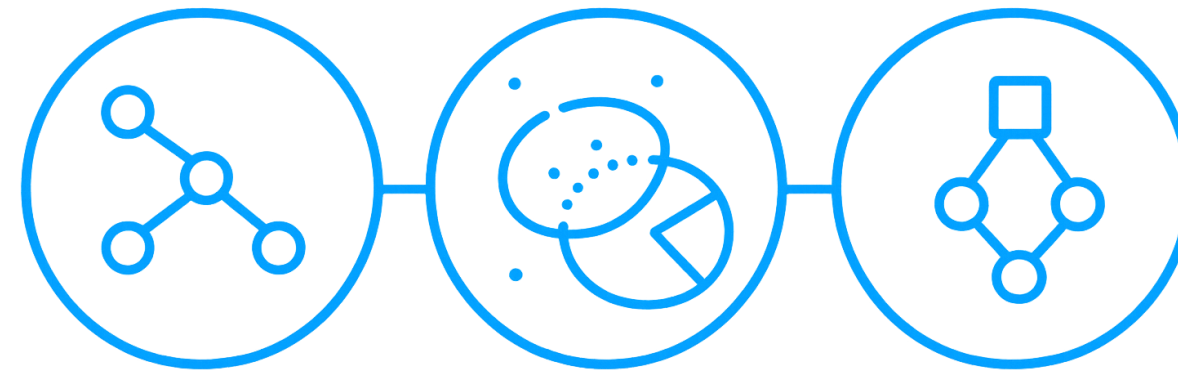
What are the nodes and edges?

Networks in context: How representation informs what we can answer?

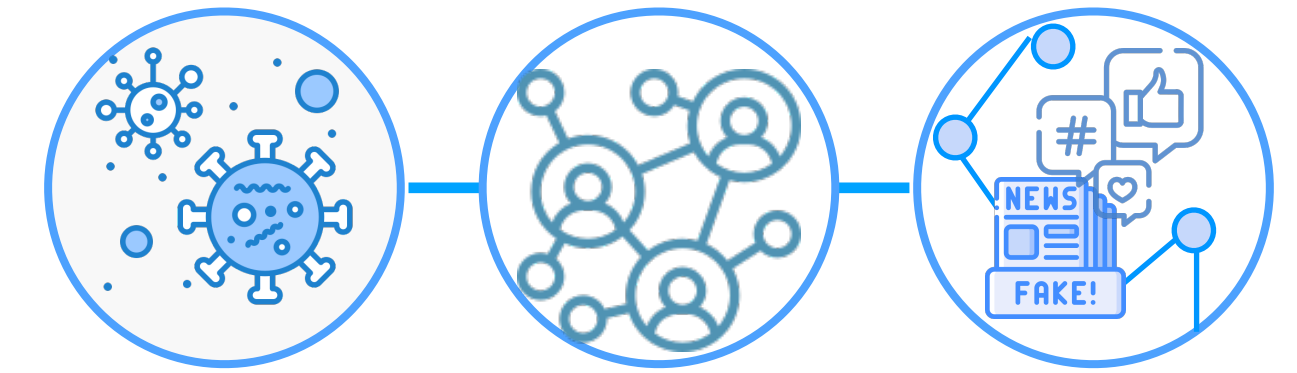
Distributed Systems



Probabilistic Graphical Models

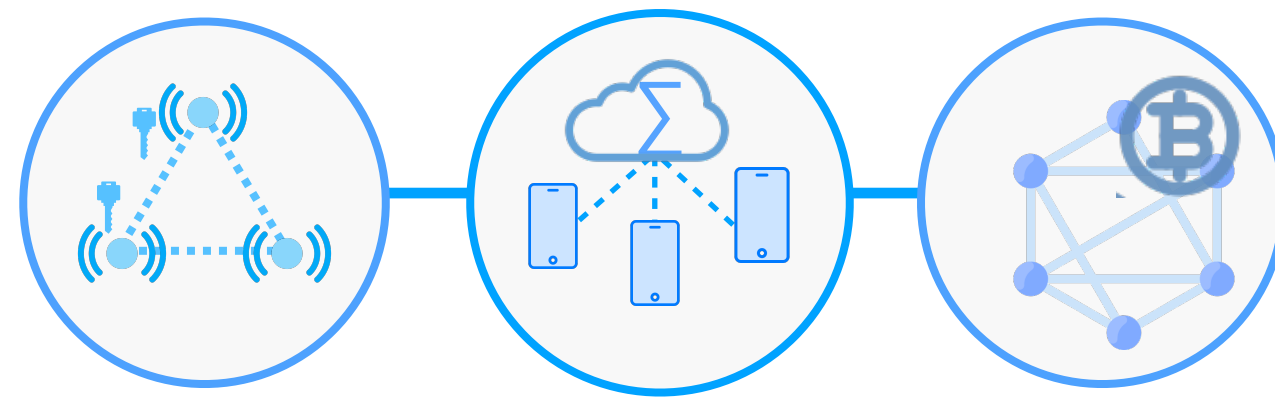


Social Networks



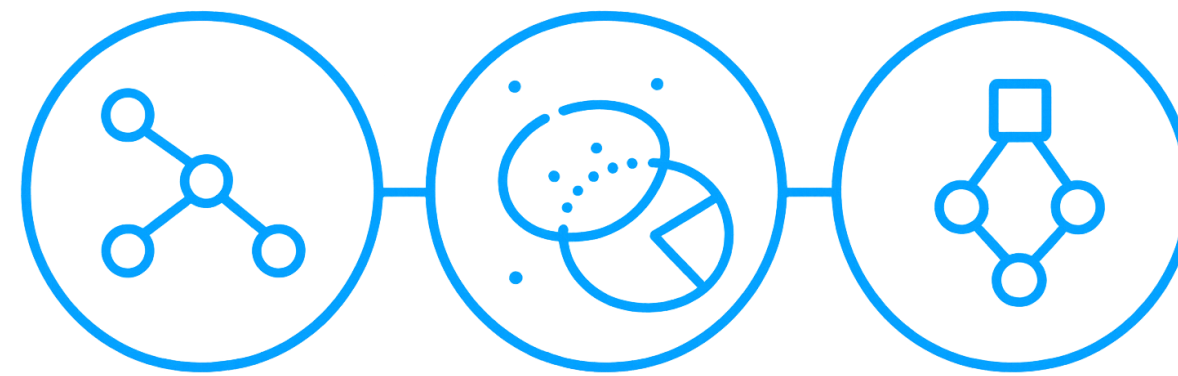
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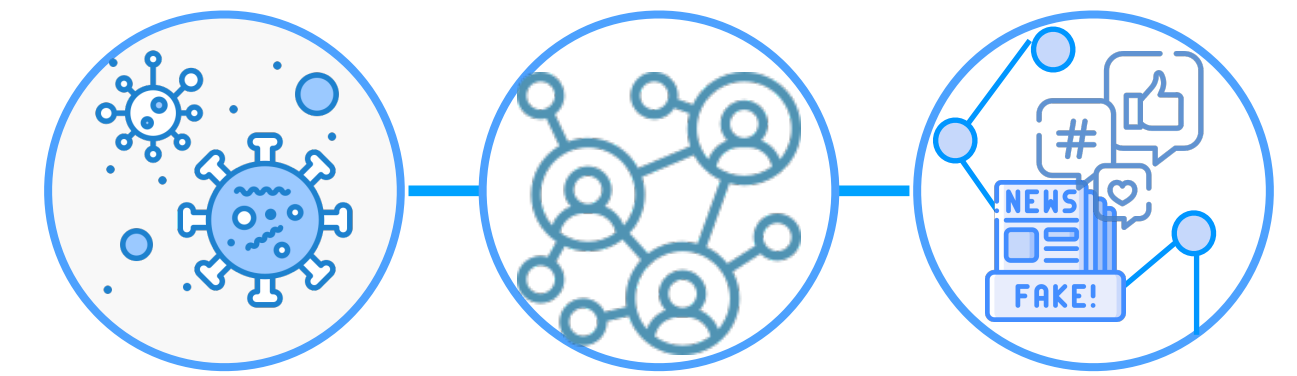
'secure' communication channel
between devices

Probabilistic Graphical Models



conditional dependencies
in observational data

Social Networks

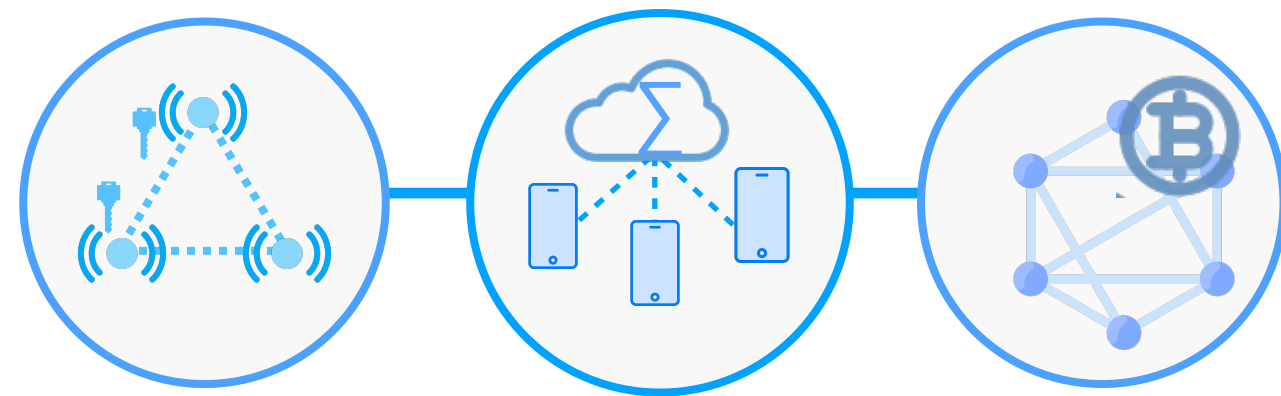


pathway for contagion to travel
between people

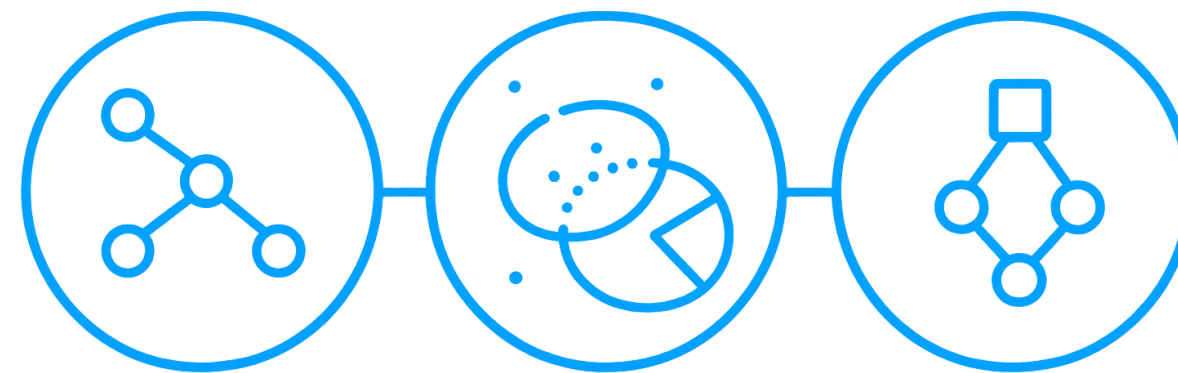
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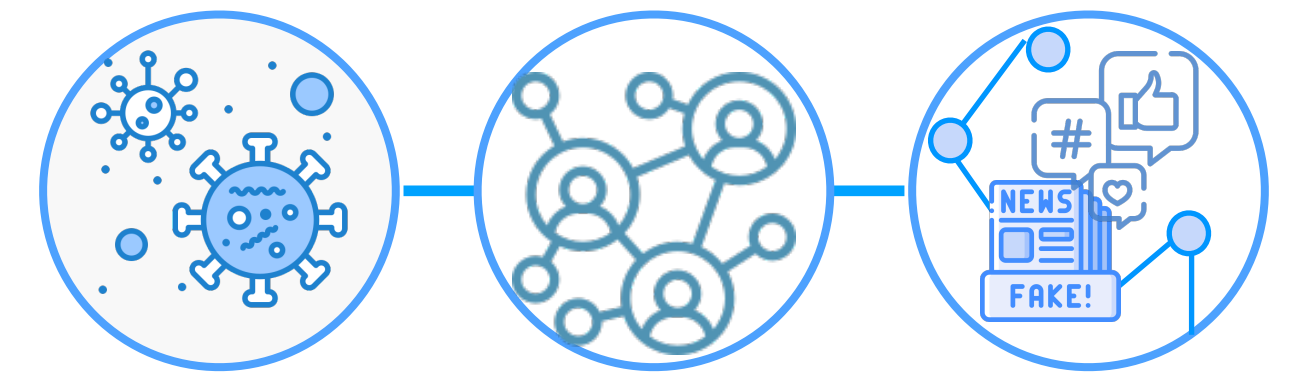
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Question:

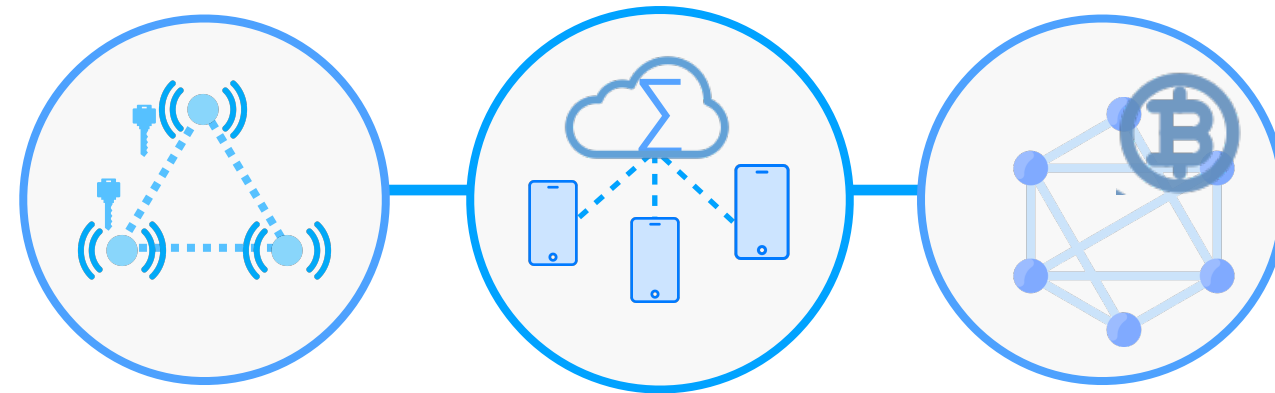
[network design]

[distribution learning]

[dynamical processes]

Networks in context: How representation informs what we can answer?

Distributed Systems



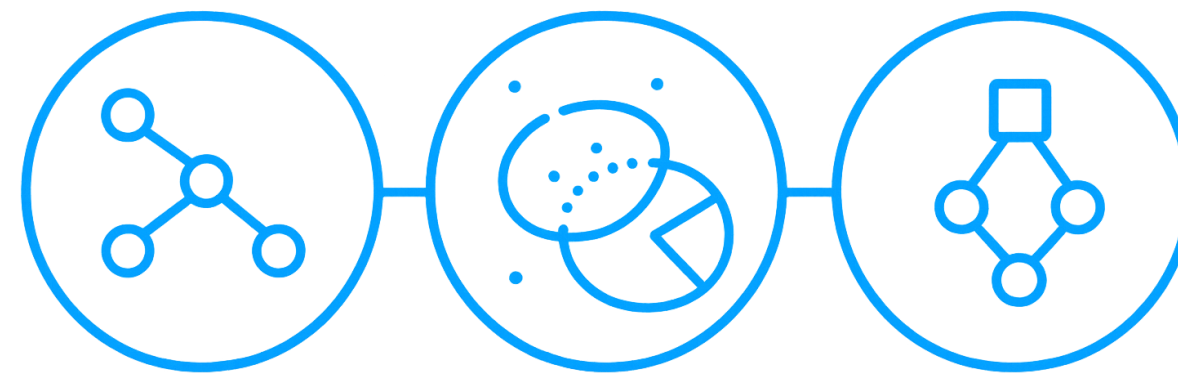
'secure' communication channel
between devices

[network design]

M.S., O.Y., *IEEE Trans. on Information Theory* '23
M.S., O.Y., *IEEE Trans. on Information Theory* '21
M.S., O.Y., *IEEE ICC '21 (Best Paper Award)*
+IEEE ISIT '21, ISIT '20, CDC '20, Globecom '19

+ [arXiv:2508.11863](https://arxiv.org/abs/2508.11863)

Probabilistic Graphical Models



conditional dependencies
in observational data

[distribution learning]

M.S. D.S., to appear at *ISIT* '26
M.S., D.S., *Allerton*, '25

Social Networks



pathway for contagion to travel
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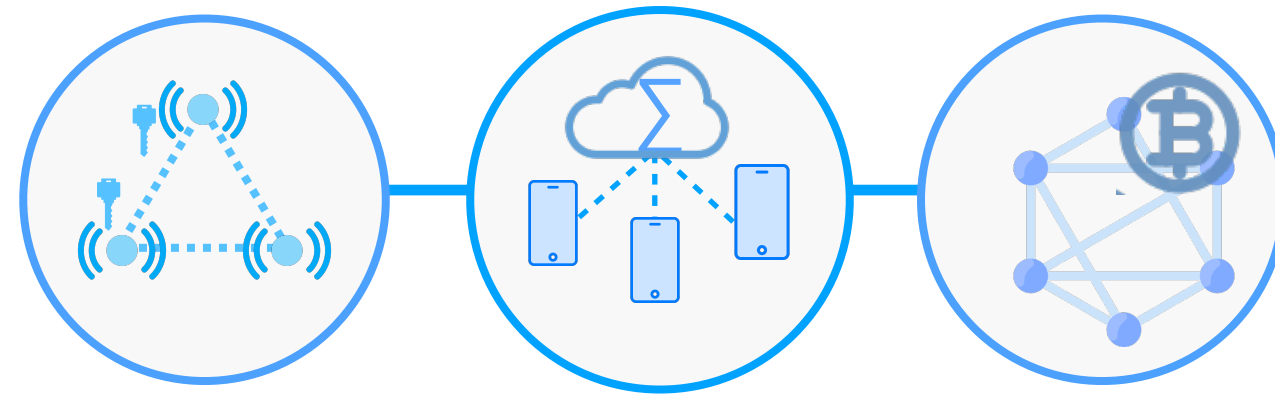
[dynamical processes]

M.S., et al., *Proceedings of the National
Academy of Sciences*, '23
+IEEE ICC '23, *Netsci/Networks* '21

+ [arXiv:2409.17352](https://arxiv.org/abs/2409.17352)

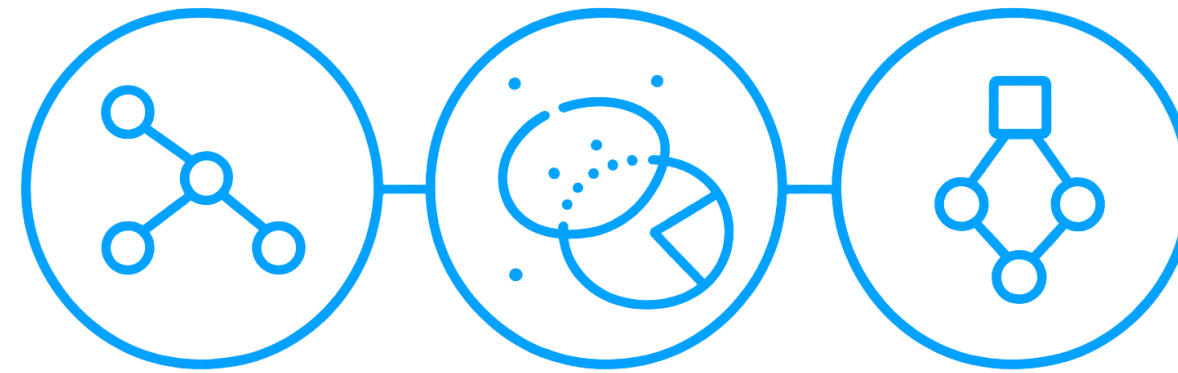
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Distributed Systems



'secure' communication channel
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Probabilistic Graphical Models

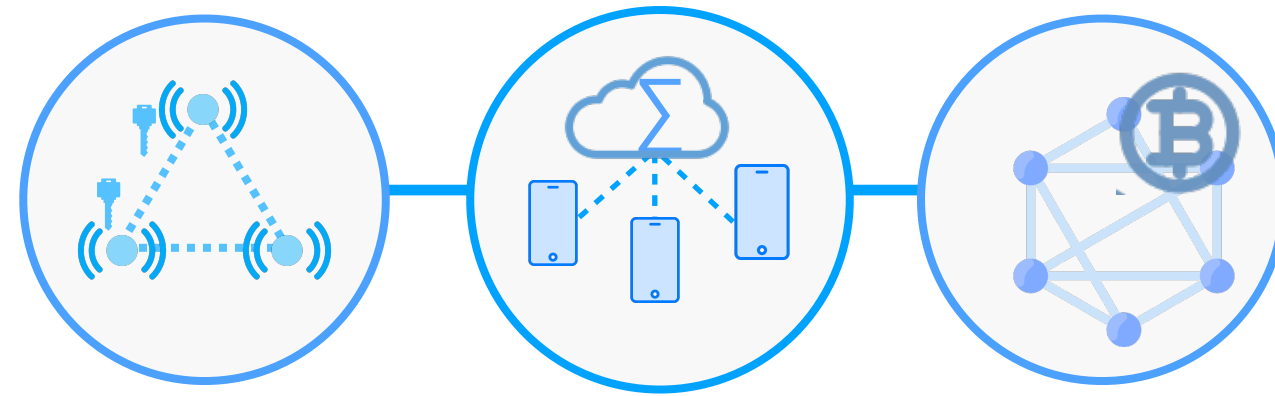


conditional dependencies
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Reliable Inference at Scale Using Graph Structure

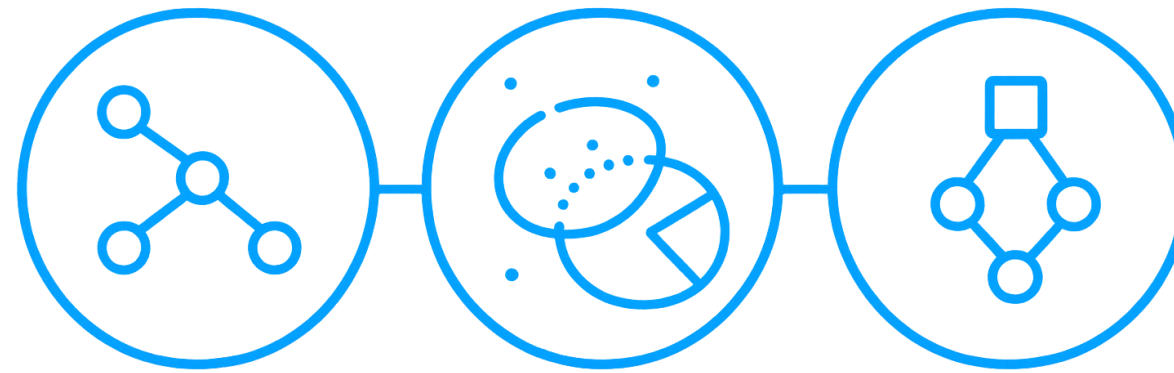
notions of connectivity

Distributed Systems



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Probabilistic Graphical Models



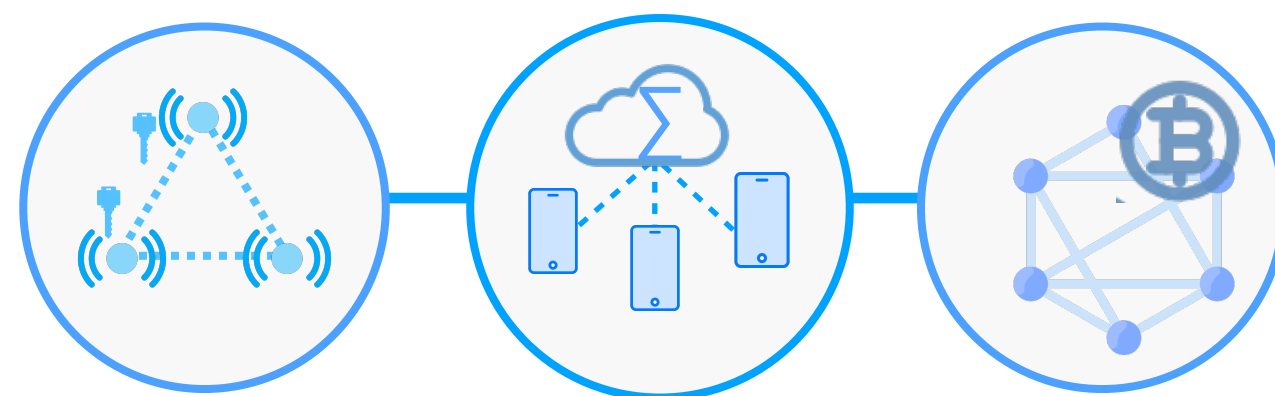
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efficiency

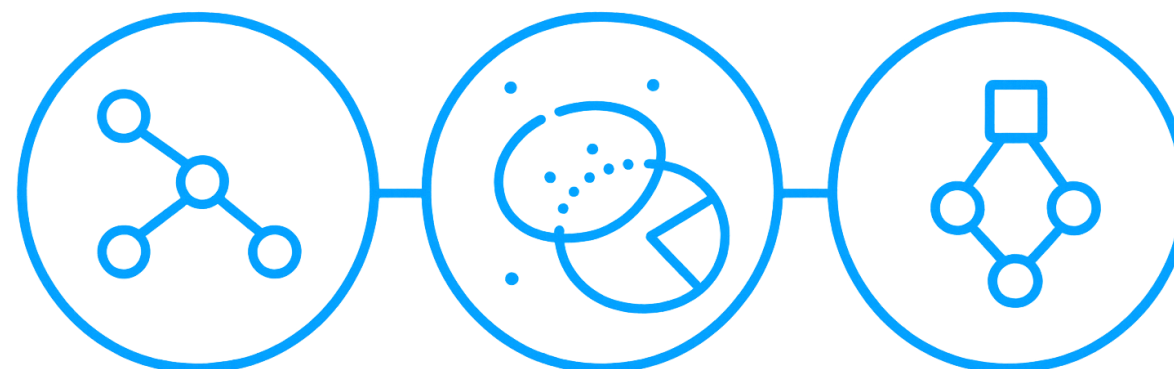
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notions of connectivity

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Probabilistic Graphical Models



'secure' communication channel
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communication



conditional dependencies
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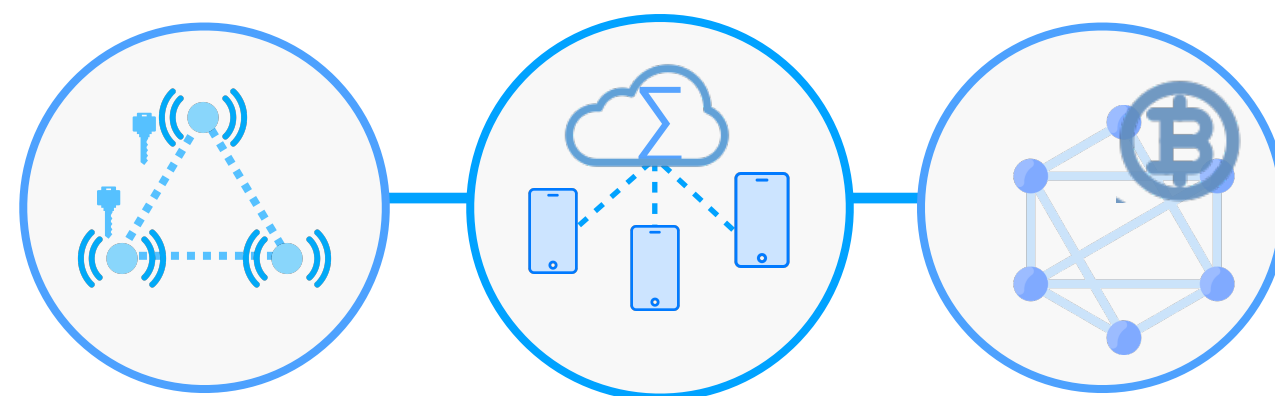
computation

efficiency

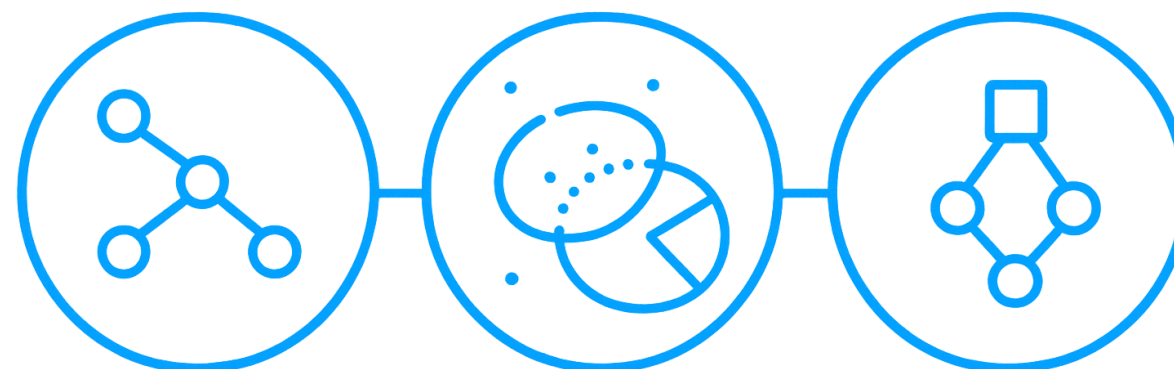
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Probabilistic Graphical Models



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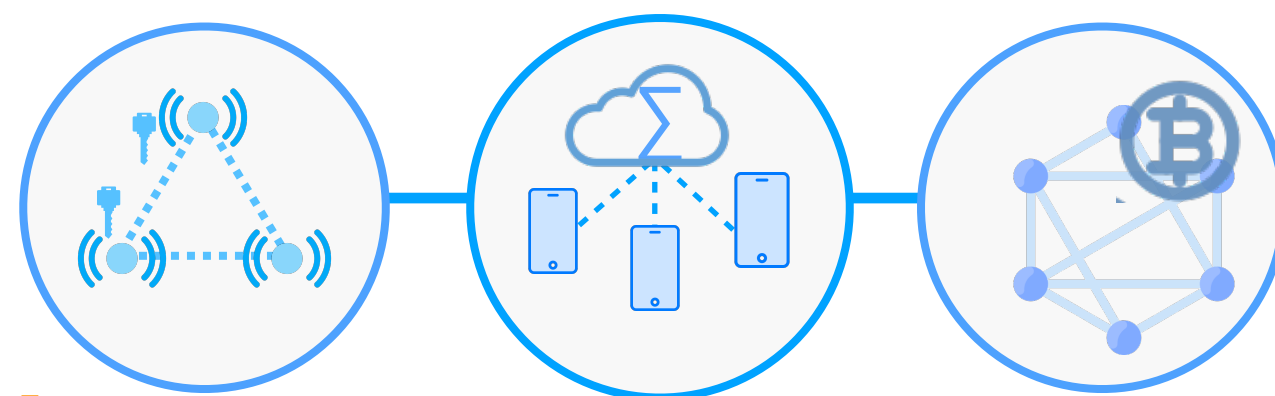
efficiency

heterogeneity

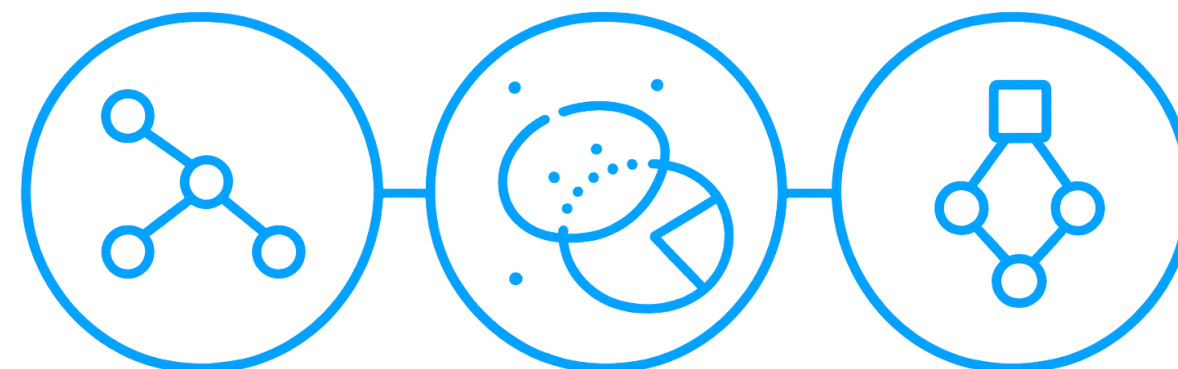
Reliable Inference at Scale Using Graph Structure

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Distributed Systems



Probabilistic Graphical Models



Today



'secure' communication channel
between devices



conditional dependencies
in observational data

communication

computation

efficiency

heterogeneity

Acknowledgements



Devavrat Shah
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IBM Research



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Princeton



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Princeton



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Intel



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NJIT

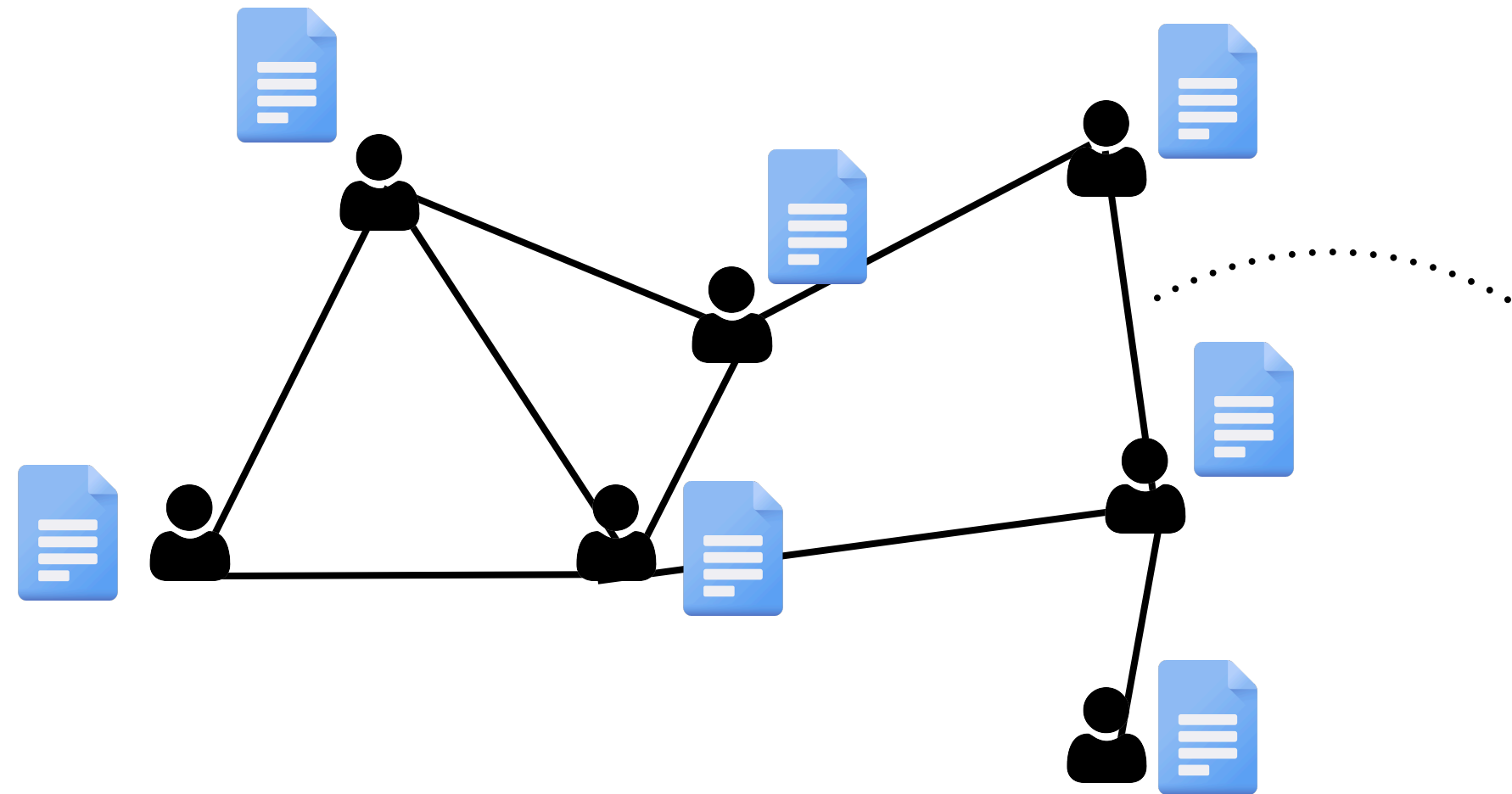


Rashad Eletreby
Walmart Labs



Hejin Gu
CMU

Part 1: Road-map



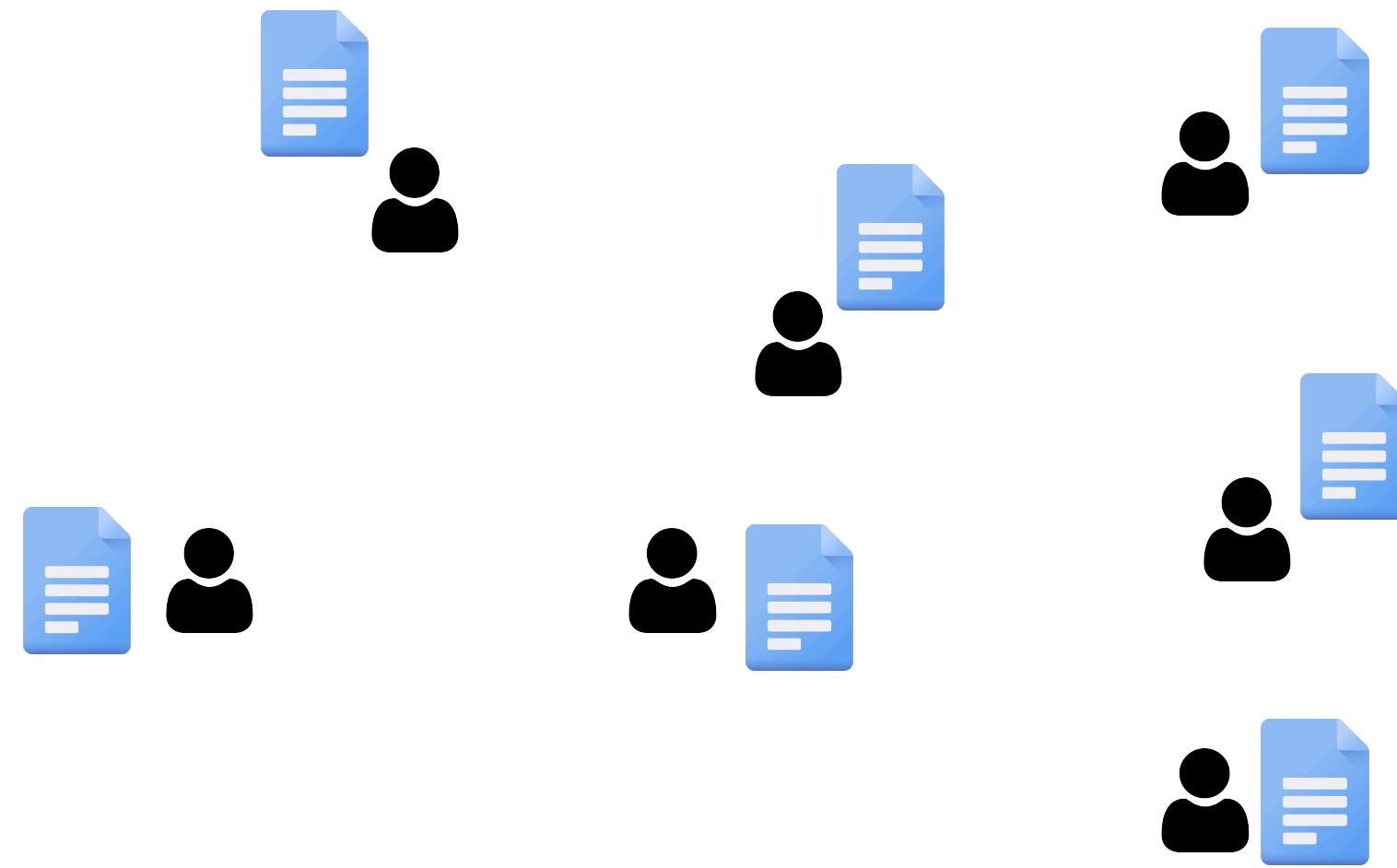
How to securely aggregate data?



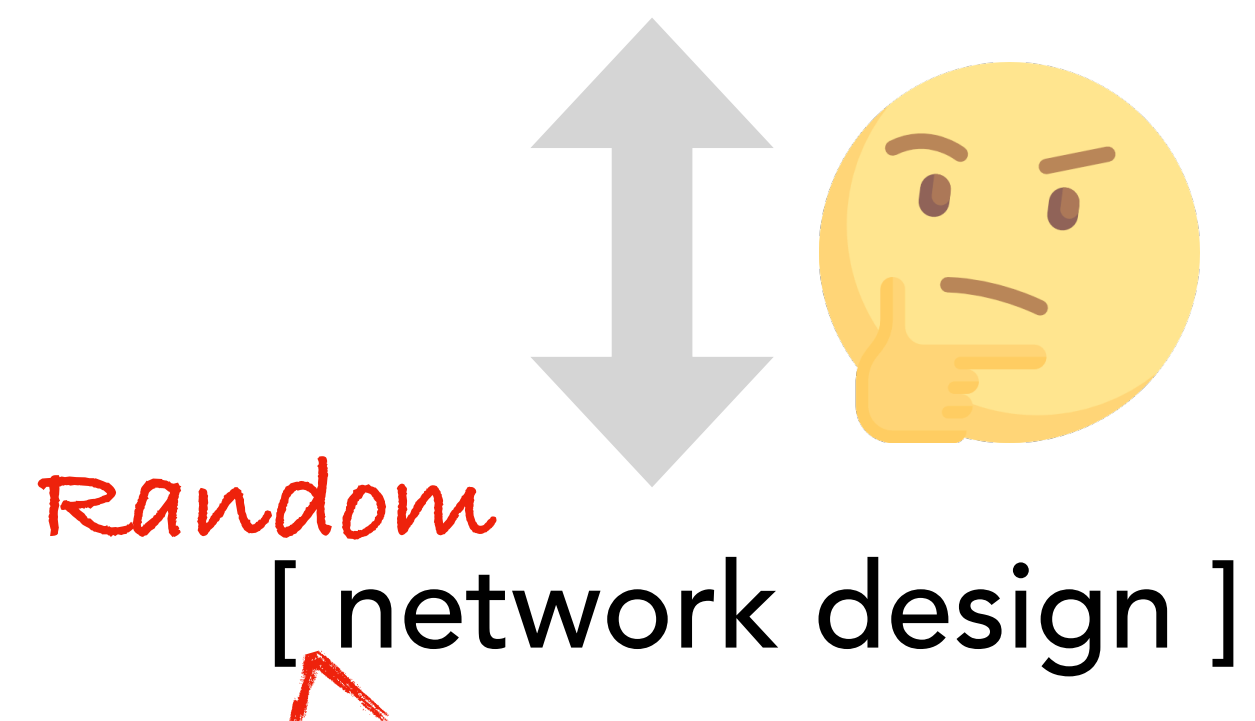
Random
[network design]

- From distributed systems to random graphs
The sparsity connectivity trade-off
- What are random K-out graphs?
What makes them a useful design tool?
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- Review: Notions of Connectivity
- Preview of contributions
Key proof techniques

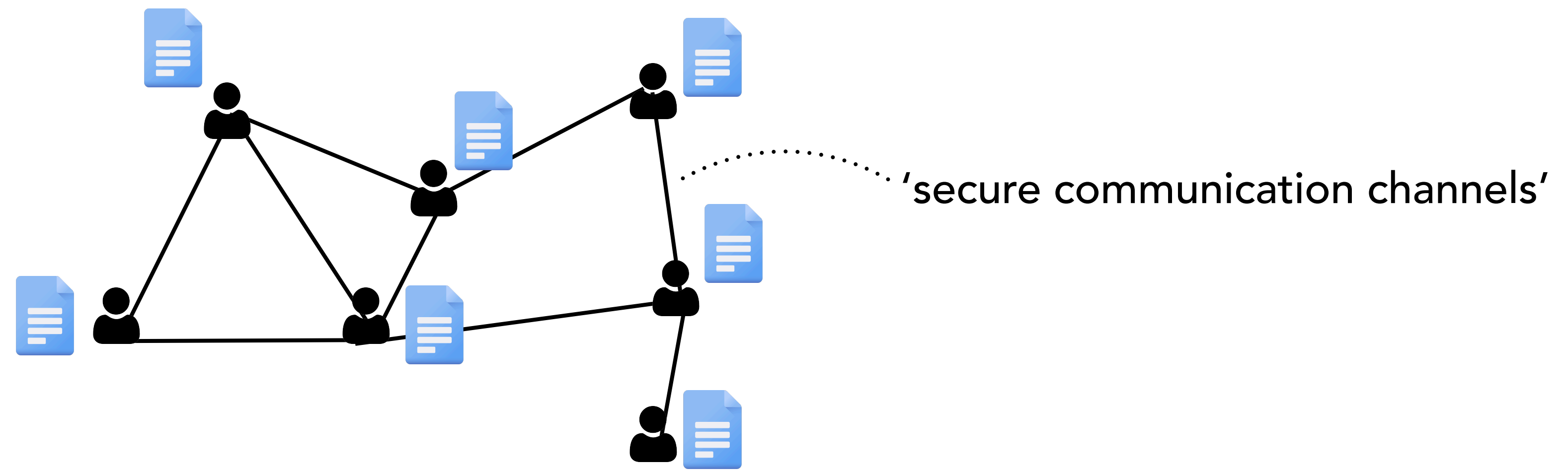
From distributed systems to random graphs...



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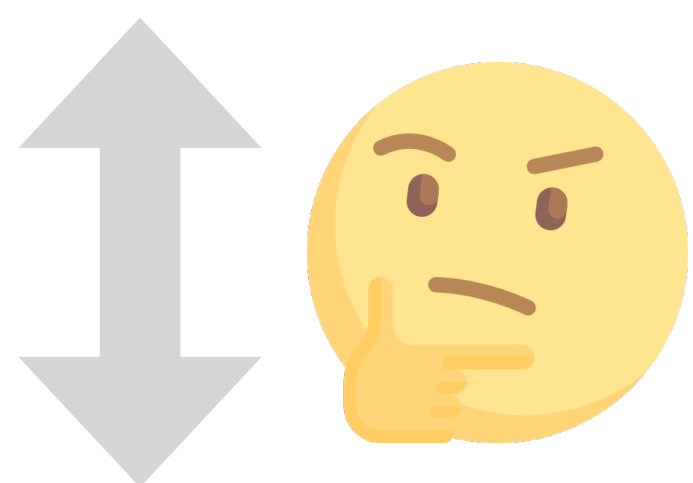


From distributed systems to random graphs...



How to securely aggregate data?

Random
[network design]



Securely aggregating information over a network

Setting:

Edge: communication channels

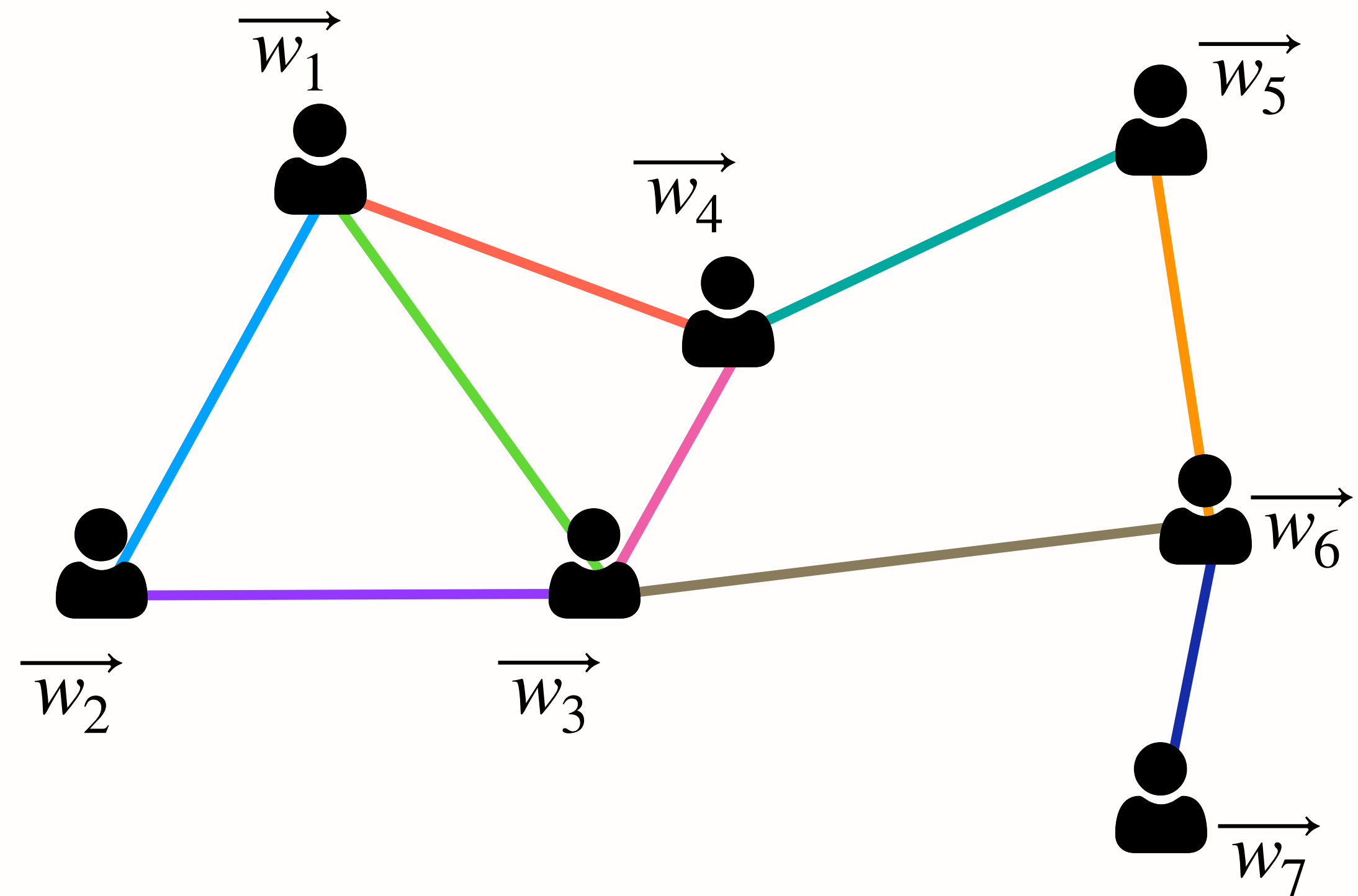
Node: private high-dim feature

No trusted orchestrator

Goal:

Learn $\sum_i w_i$

without revealing w_i



Securely aggregating information over a network

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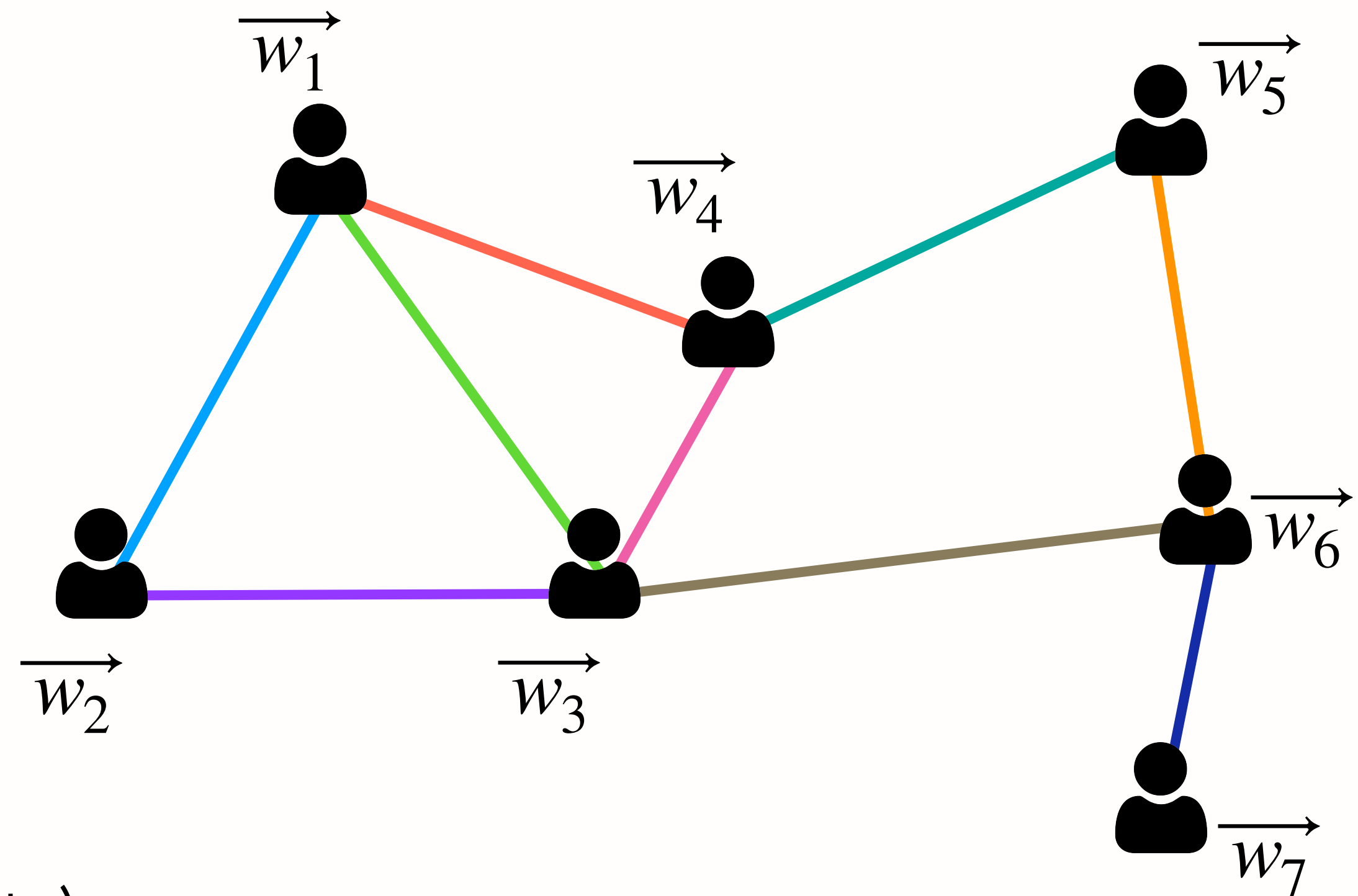
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Approach:

add pairwise masks (that cancel in aggregate)



[Sabater et al. '22],

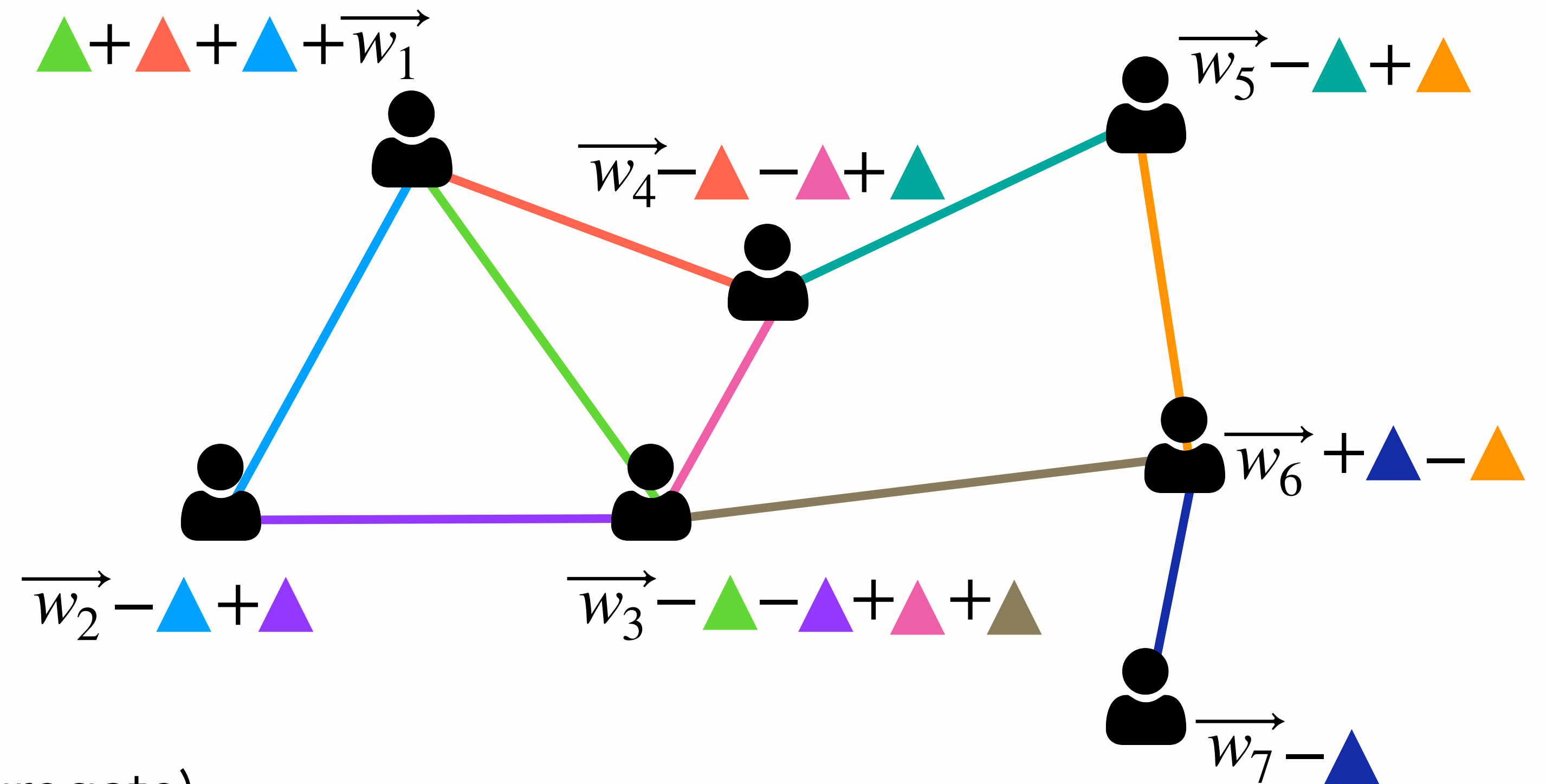
[Bell et al. '20],

[Bonawitz et al. '17]

⋮

[Chaum '88]

Securely aggregating information over a network



Goal:

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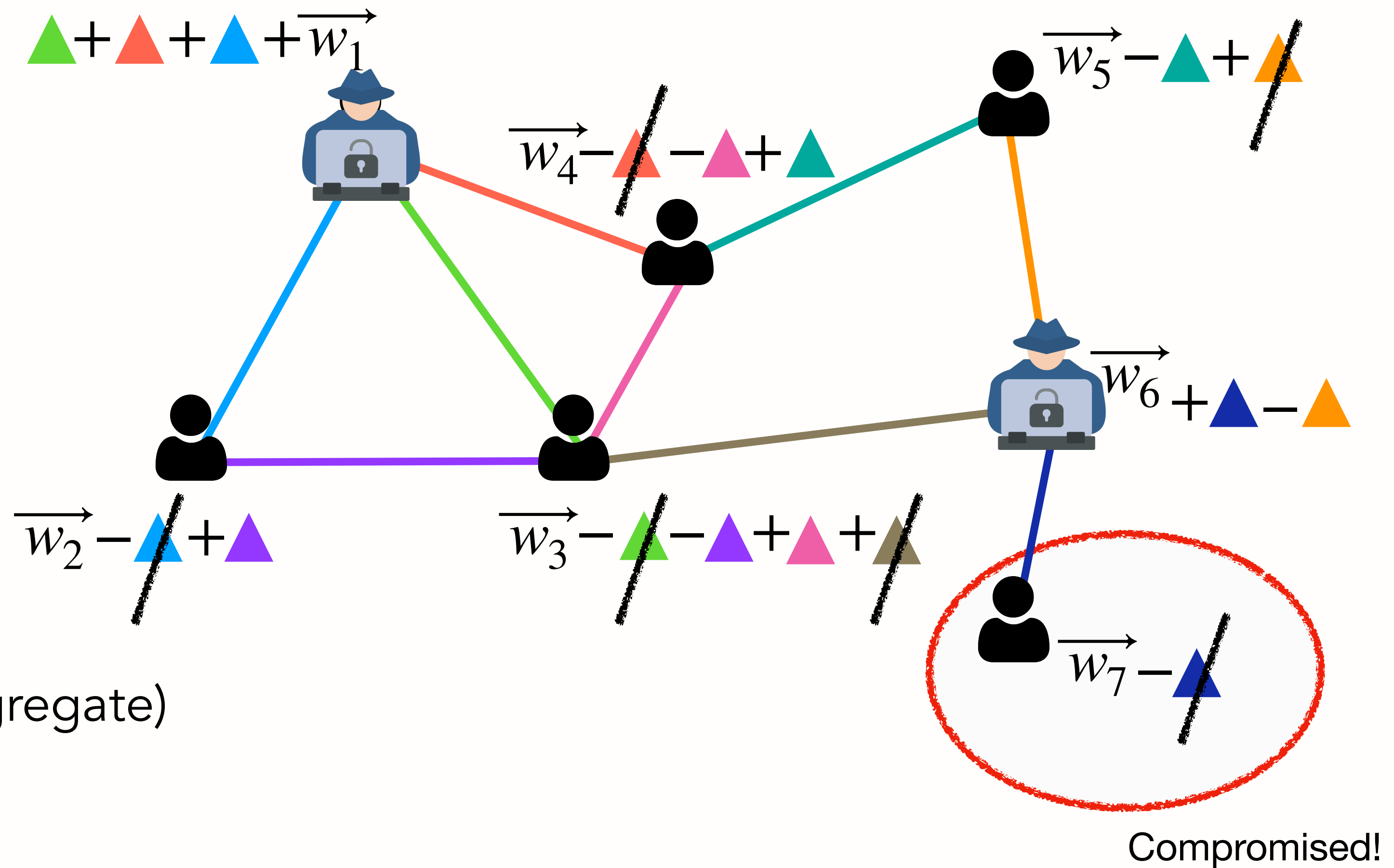
Approach:

add pairwise masks (that cancel in aggregate)

broadcast masked features to network

[Sabater et al. '22], ...

Securely aggregating information over a network



Goal:

Learn $\sum_i w_i$
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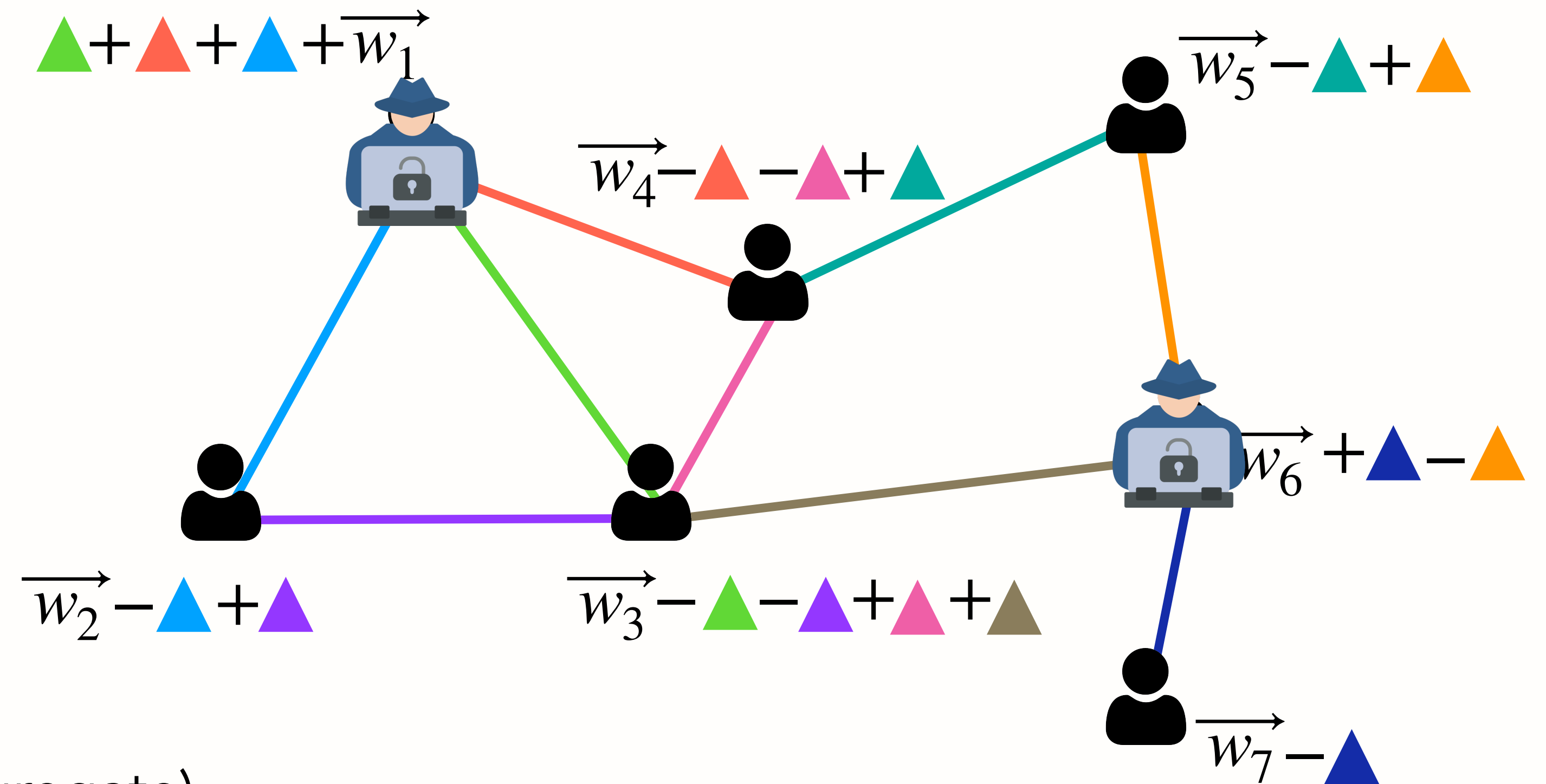
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Challenge:

What if some nodes collude, i.e.,
Share masks for their neighbors?

Securely aggregating information over a network



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Securely aggregating information over a network

Performance trade-off:

better connectivity \implies better masking
but raises communication costs!

Goal:

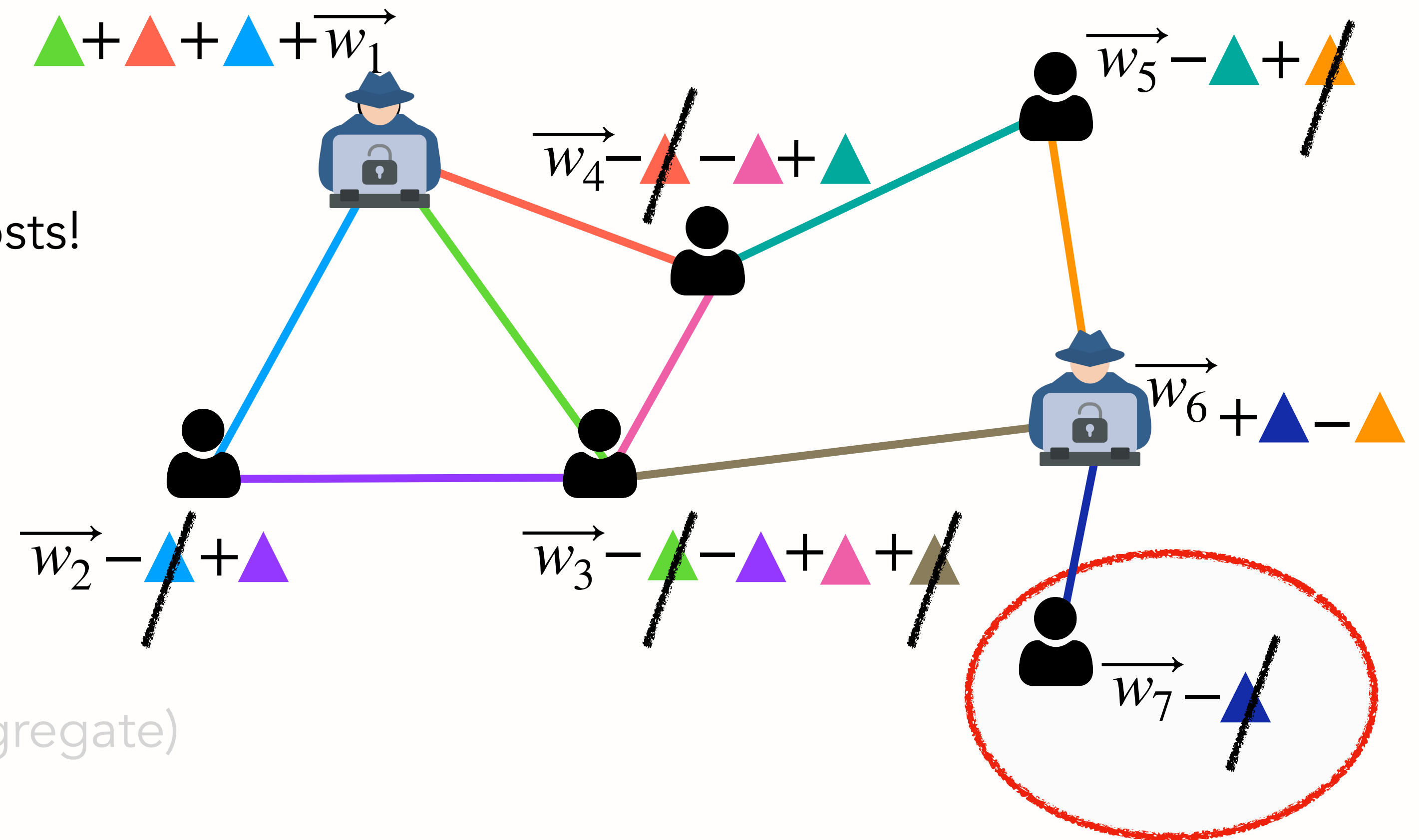
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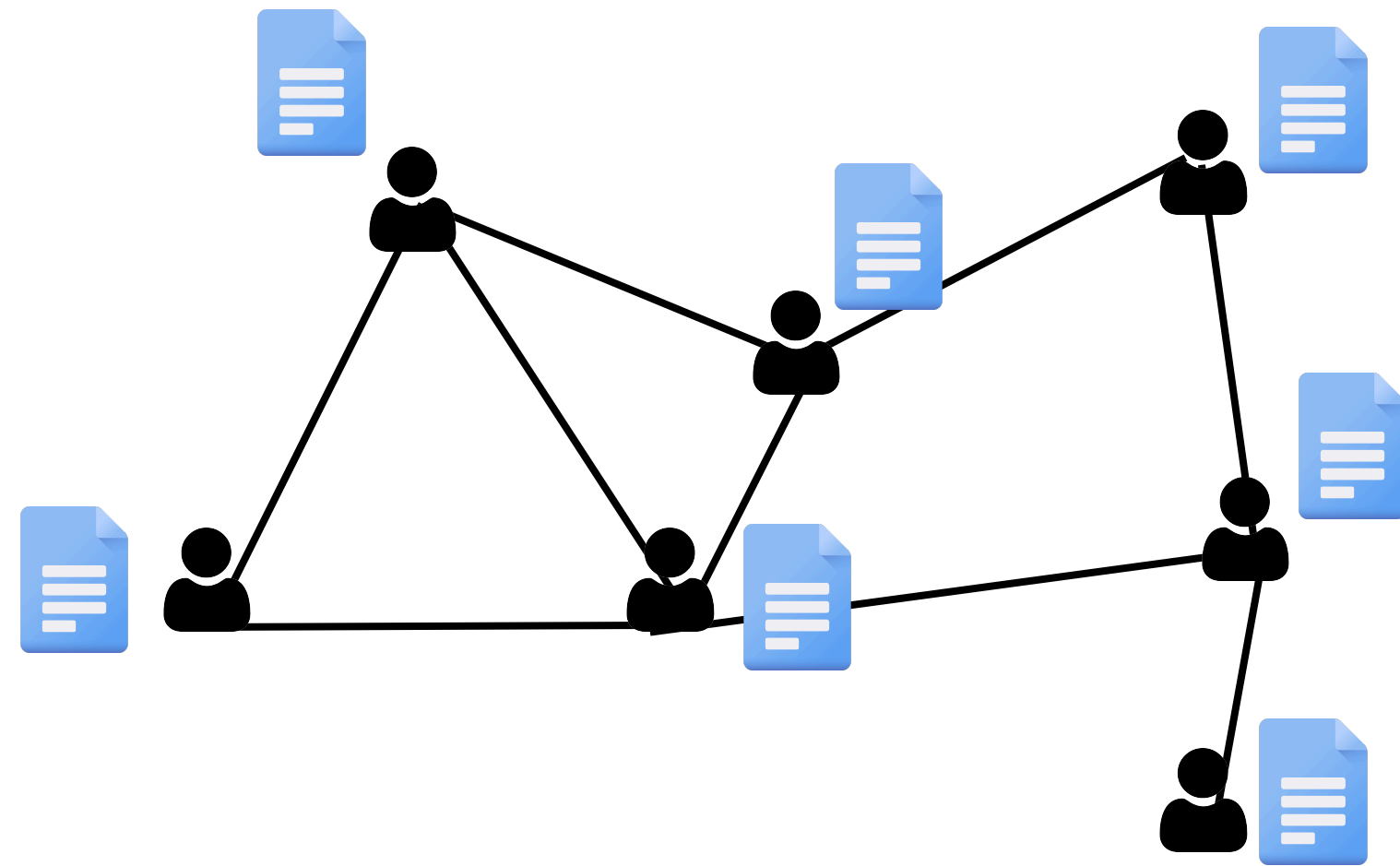
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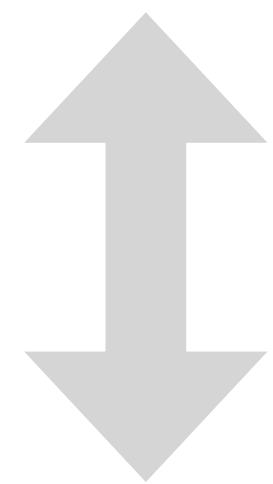
From distributed systems to random graphs...



Performance trade-off:

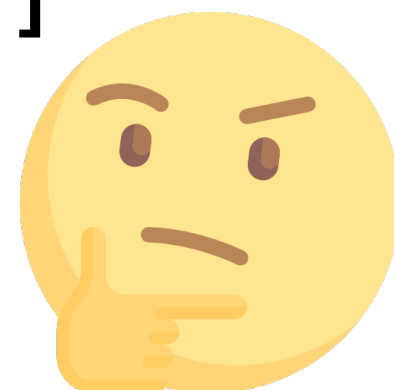
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How to securely aggregate data?

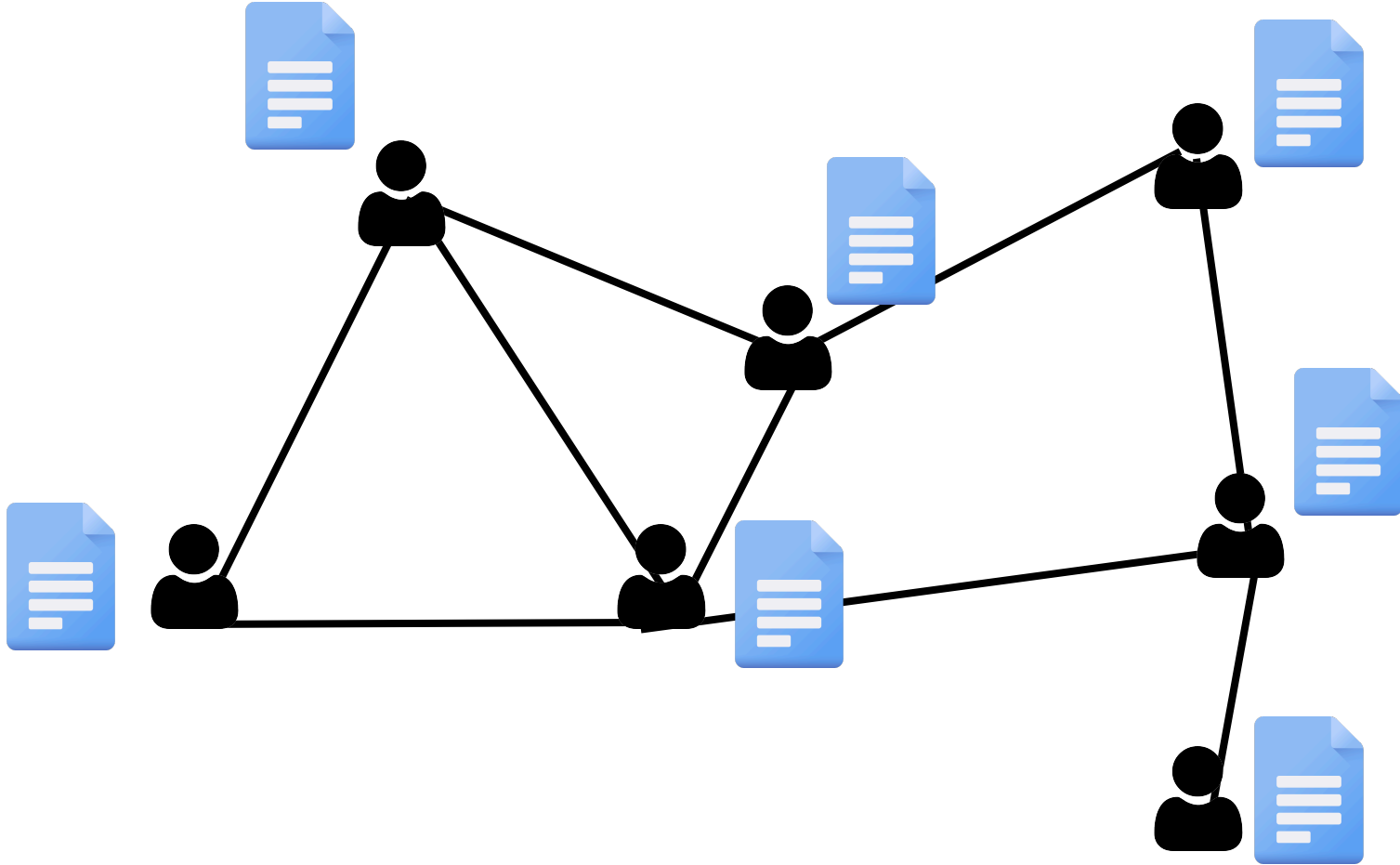


Random

[network design]



From distributed systems to random graphs...



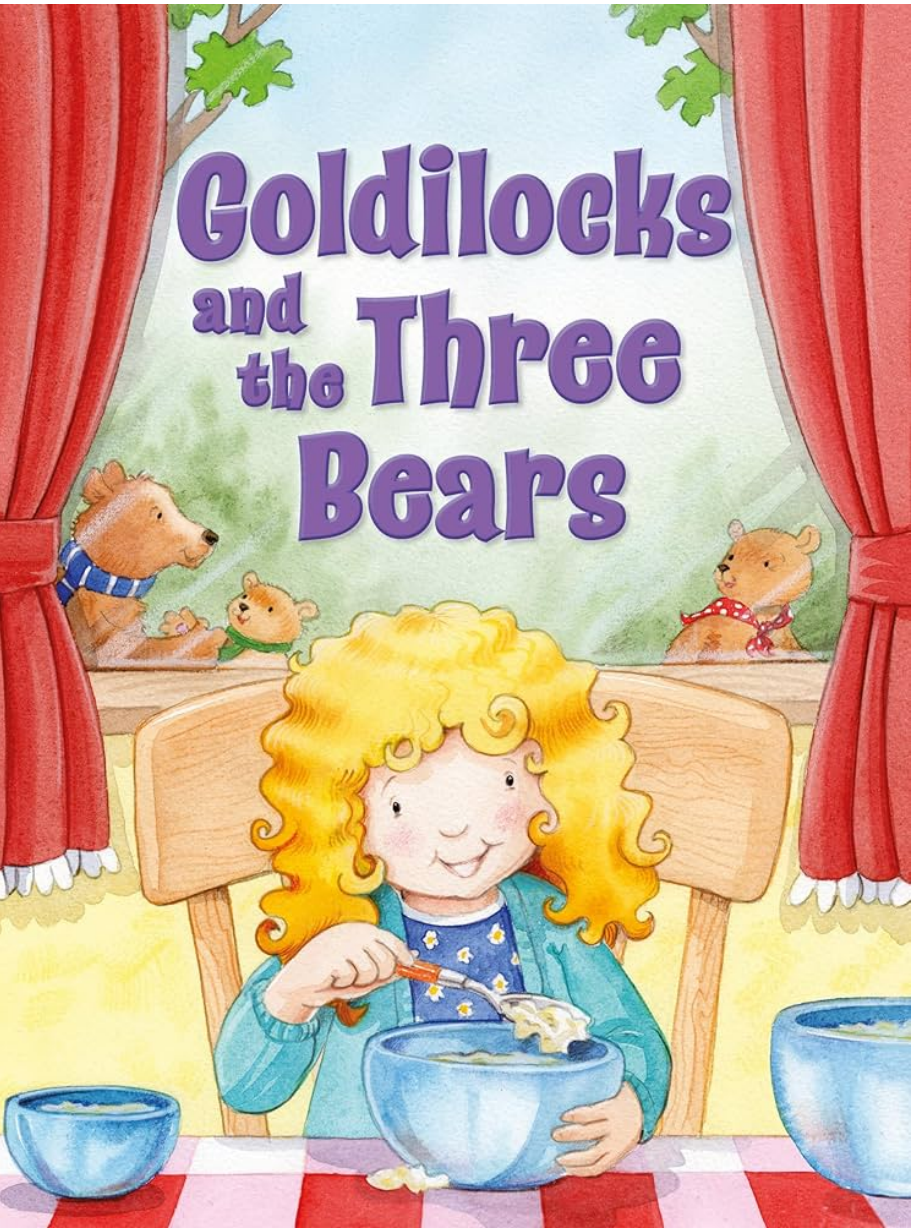
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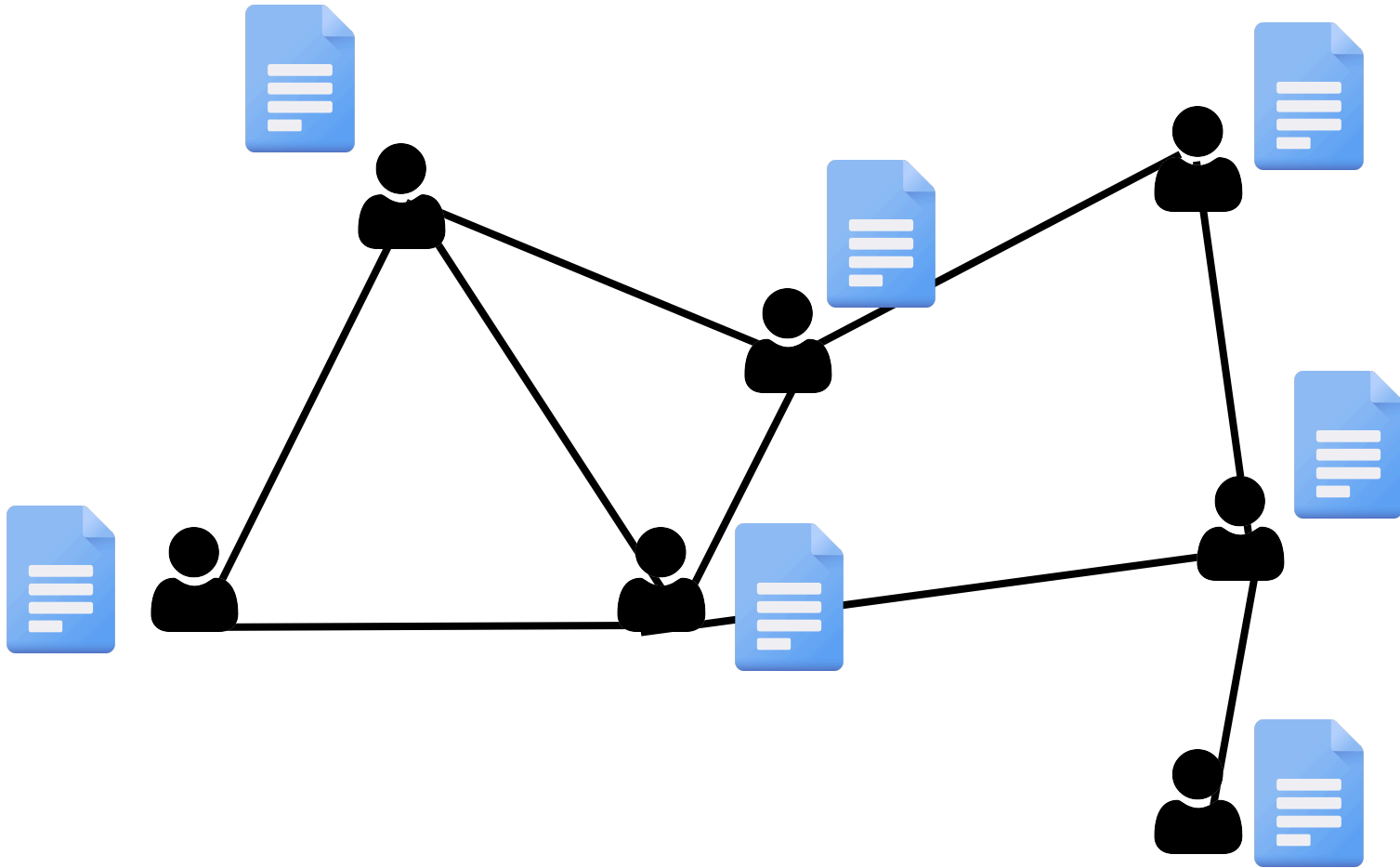
Random [network design]

A double-headed vertical arrow is positioned above the text. Below the text is a thinking face emoji (🤔).

A network that is just right!
well-connected yet sparse,
allows distributed, lightweight construction...

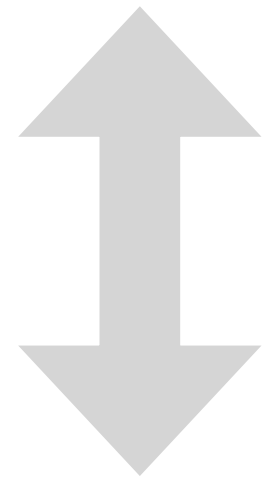


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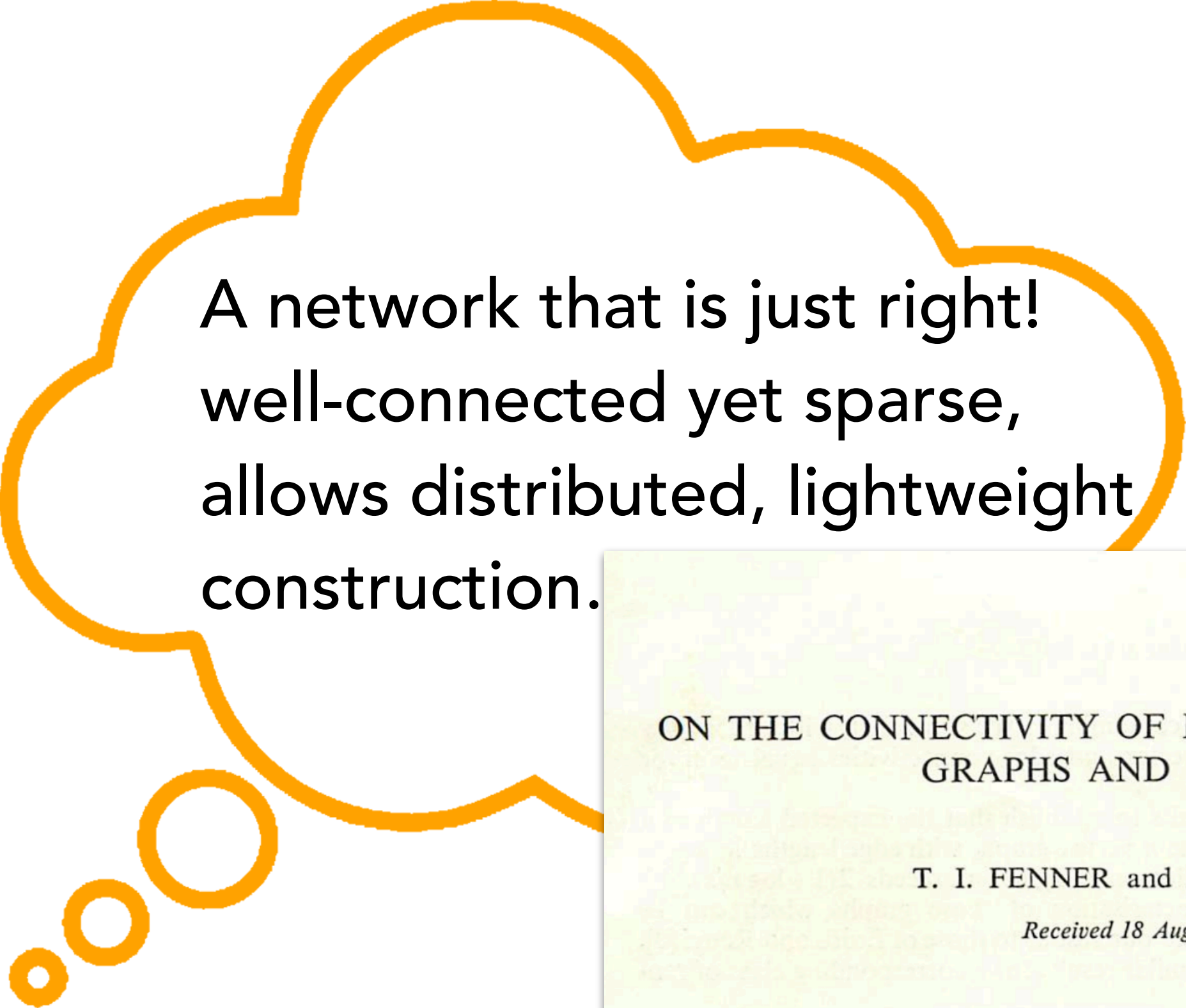
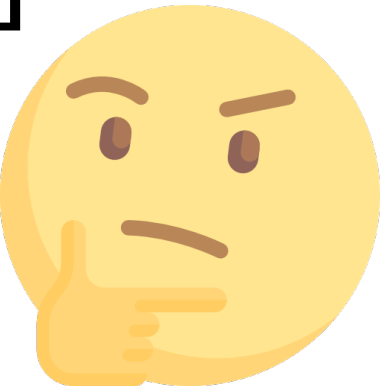


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How to securely aggregate data?



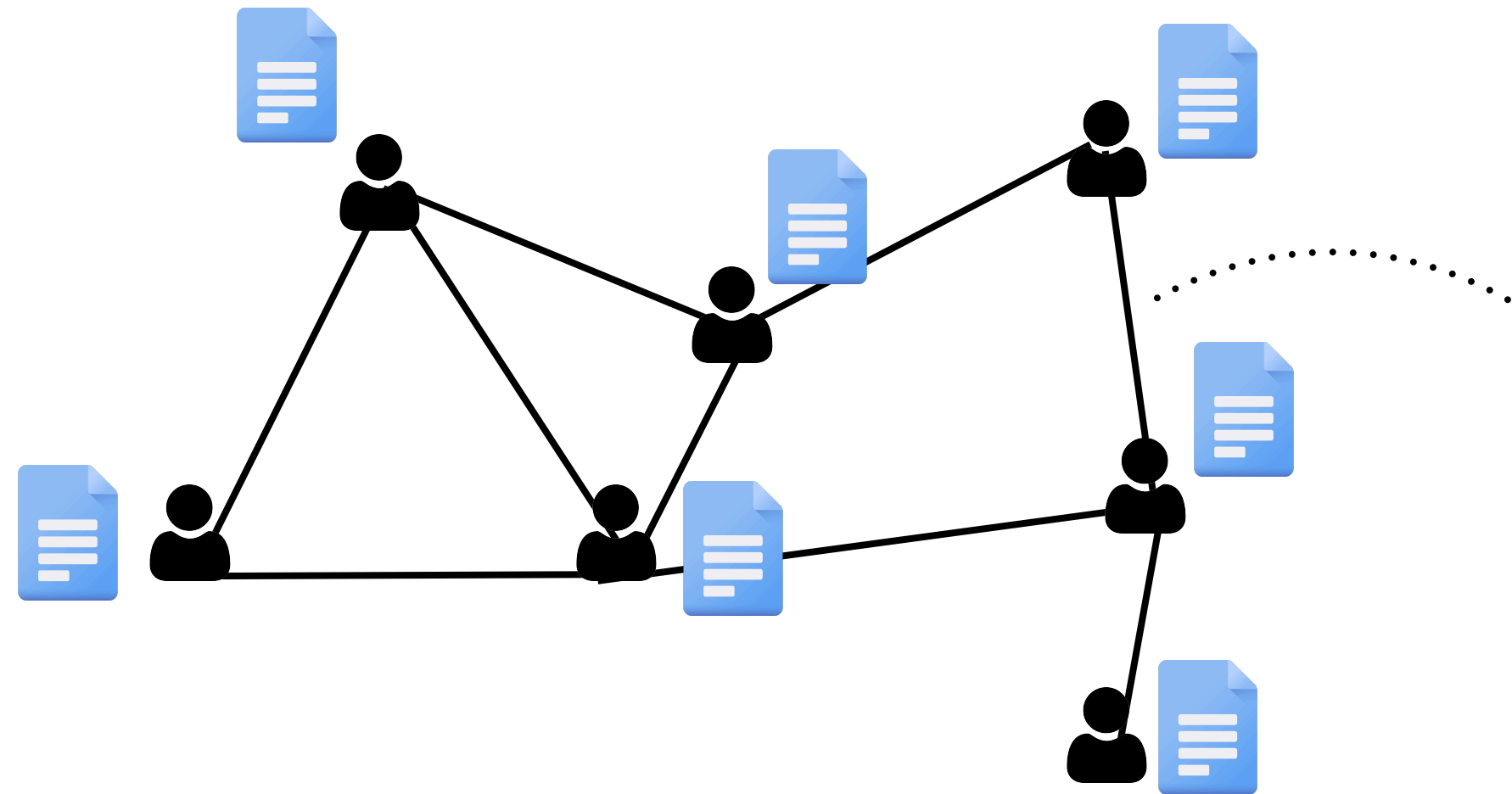
Random
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COMBINATORICA 2(4) (1982) 347—359
ON THE CONNECTIVITY OF RANDOM m -ORIENTABLE GRAPHS AND DIGRAPHS
T. I. FENNER and A. M. FRIEZE
Received 18 August 1981

Part 1: Road-map



How to securely aggregate data?

Random
[network design]

- From distributed systems to random graphs
The sparsity connectivity trade-off
- What are random K-out graphs?
What makes them a useful design tool?
- Random K-out graphs in action
What graph properties matter?
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Key proof techniques

Random K -out Graphs

$\mathbb{H}(n, K)$

Each node selects K neighboring nodes
chosen uniformly at random from all $n-1$ nodes

Edge (i, j) exists if

node i selects node j

or

node j selects node i

Random K -out Graphs

$\mathbb{H}(n, K)$

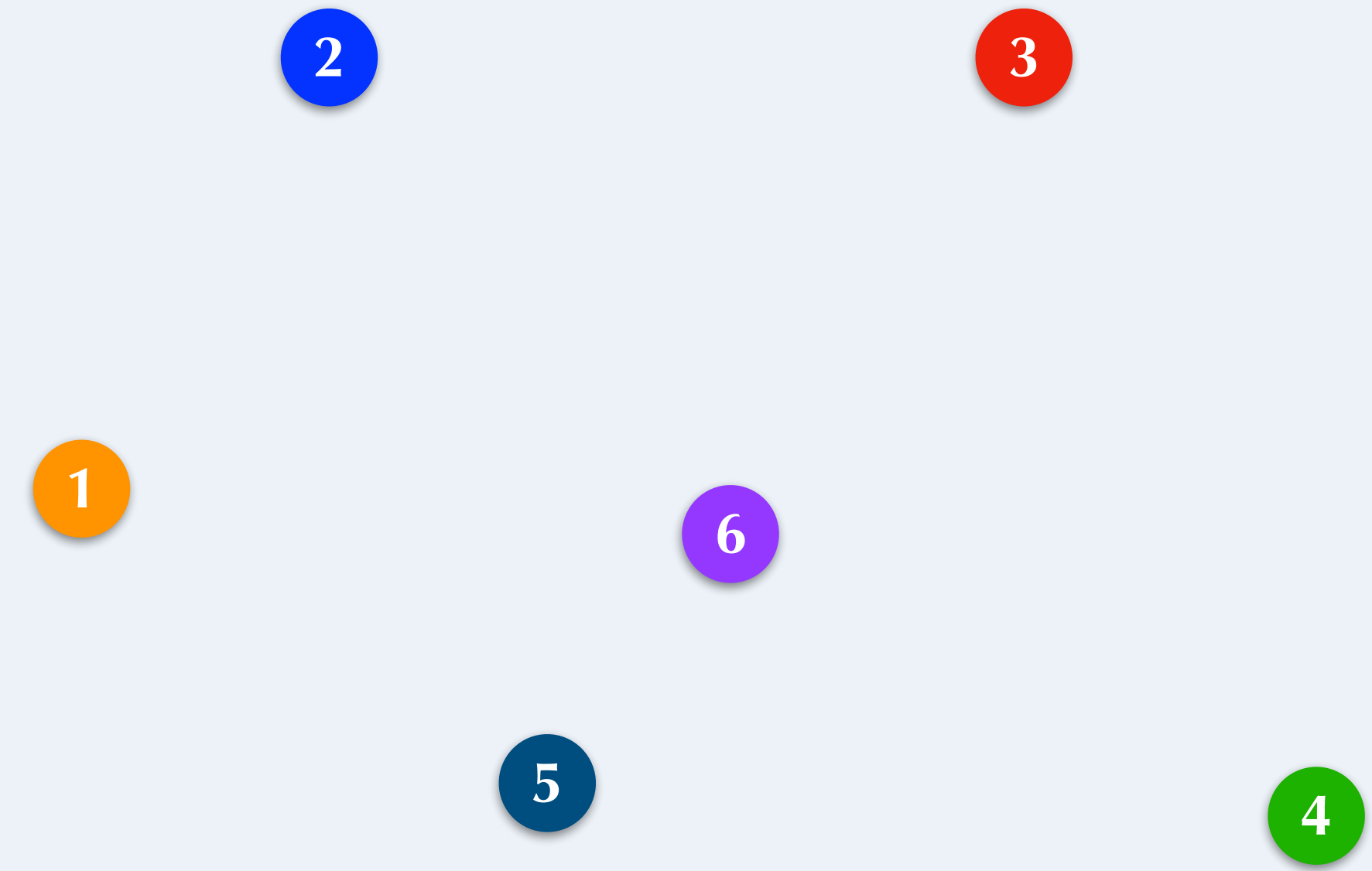
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Random 2-out graph on 6 nodes

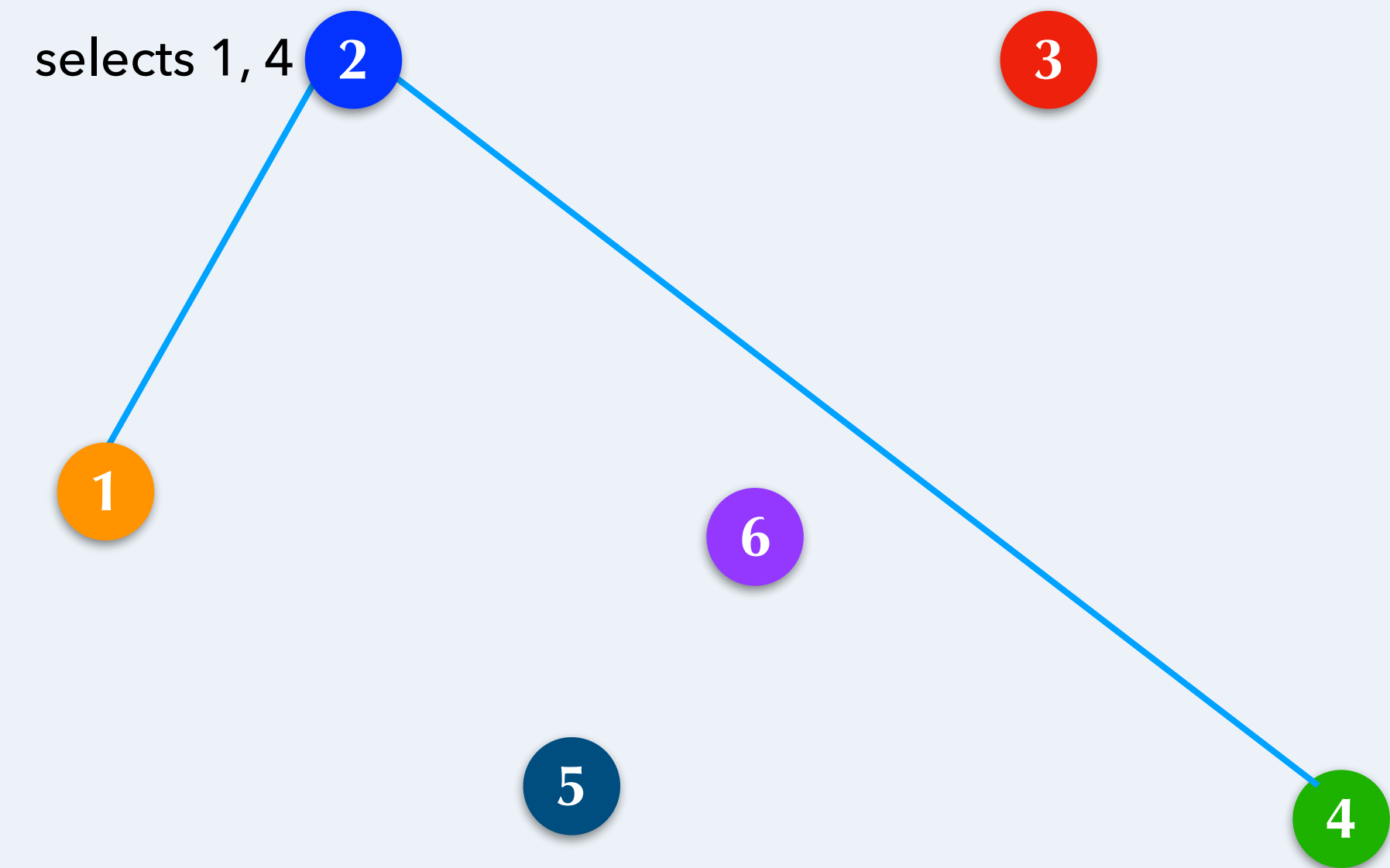
$(K = 2, n = 6)$

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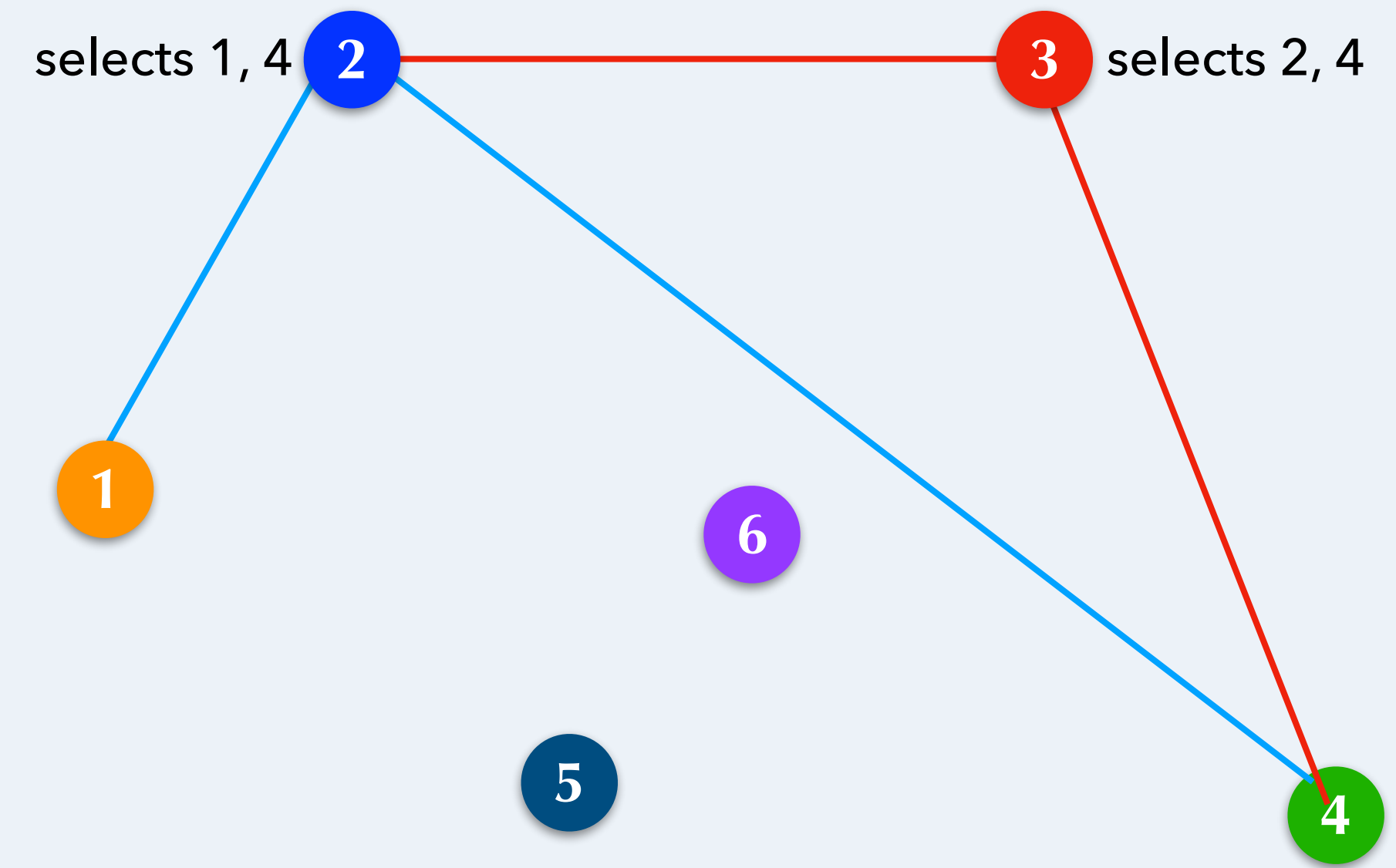
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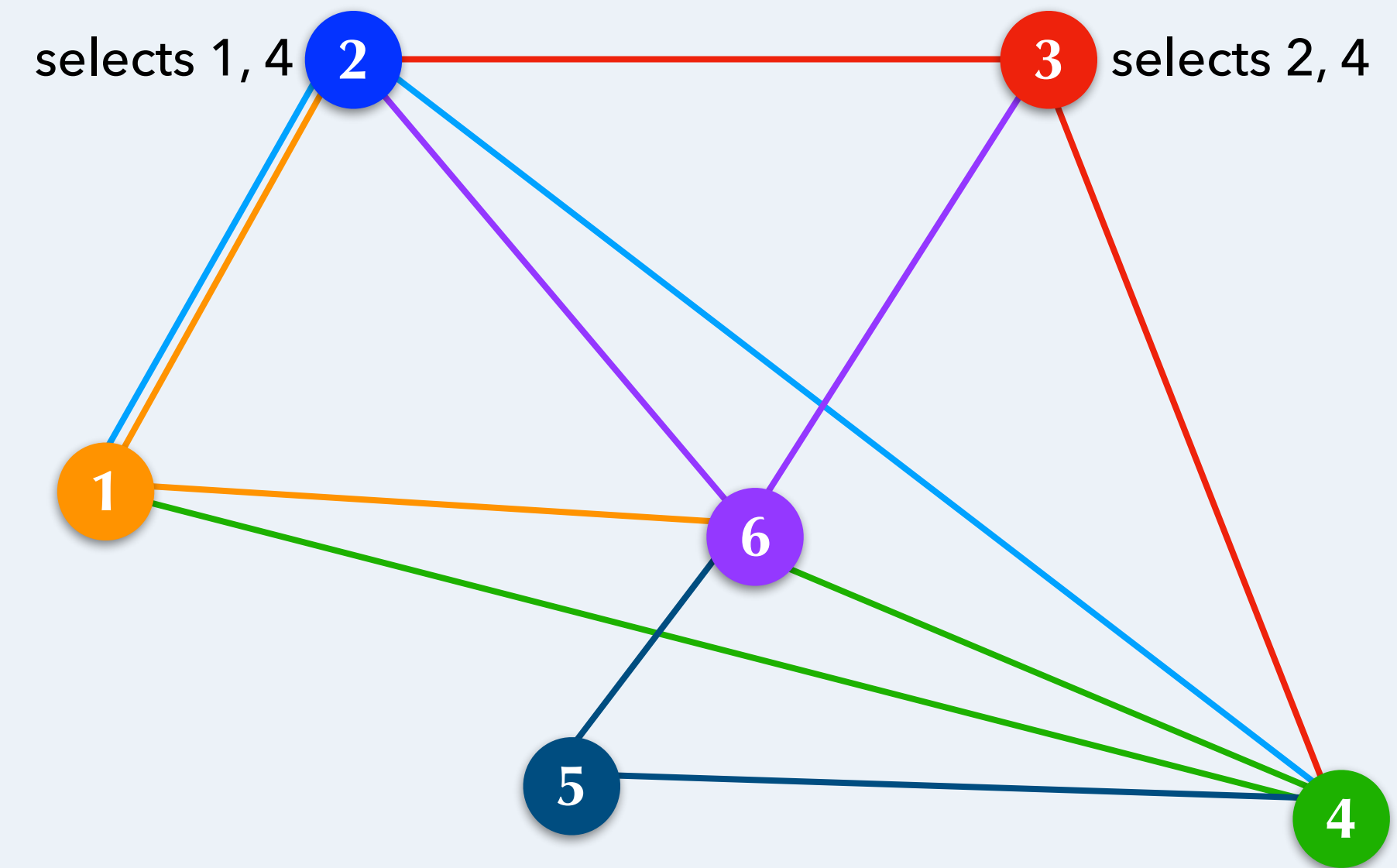
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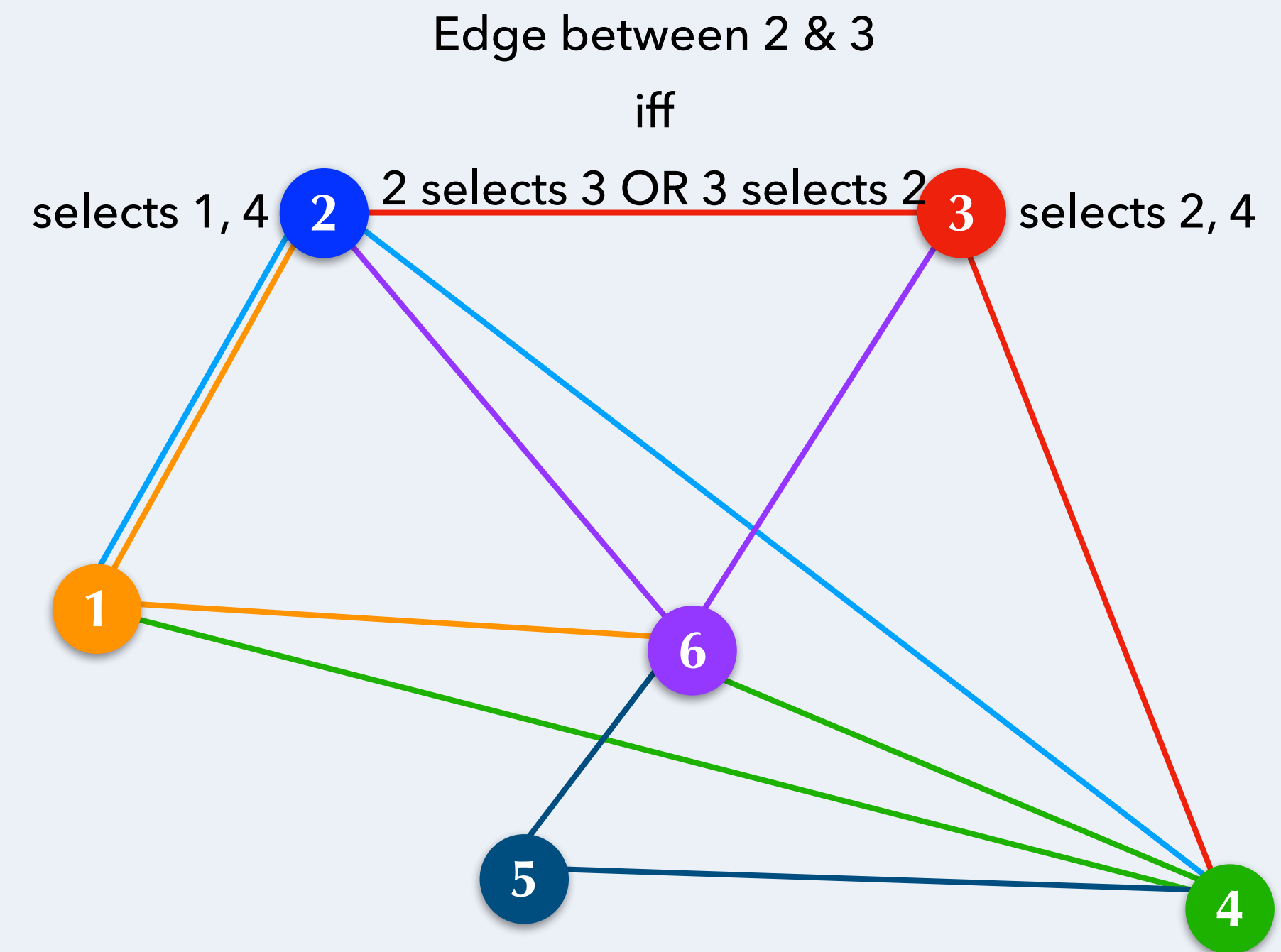
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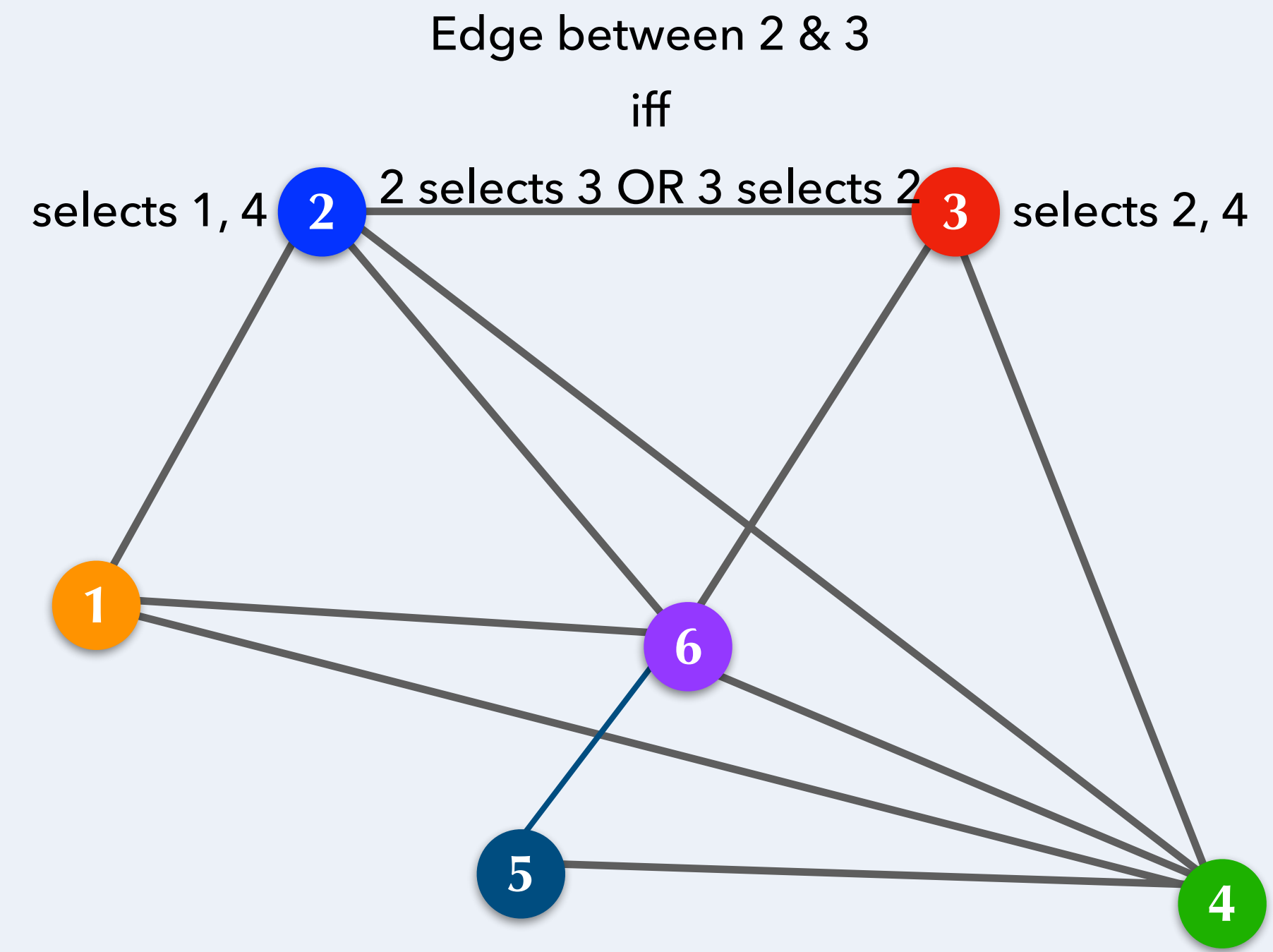
Random 2-out graph on 6 nodes
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Random K -out Graphs

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Random 2-out graph on 6 nodes
($K = 2, n = 6$)

Connectivity

[Fenner and Frieze '82]

Random K -out
Graphs $\mathbb{H}(n, K)$

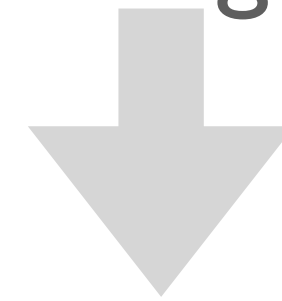
For $K \geq 2$, *connected* with high probability (with probability $\rightarrow 1$ as # nodes $\rightarrow \infty$).
(for $K = 1$, disconnected with high probability)

Connectivity

[Fenner and Frieze '82]

Random K -out
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With average degree ~ 4 , we get connectivity whp

$$\mathbf{P} [\text{edge between } i \text{ and } j] = 1 - \left(1 - \frac{K}{n-1}\right)^2$$

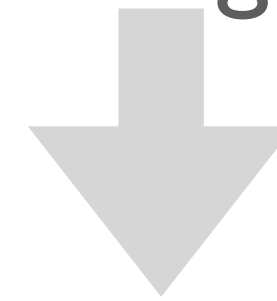
$$\text{Average node degree} = 2K - \left(\frac{K^2}{n-1}\right)$$

Connectivity

[Fenner and Frieze '82]

Random K -out
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With average degree ~ 4 , we get connectivity whp

Erdos Renyi
Random Graphs
 $\mathbb{G}(n, p)$

In contrast Erdos Renyi random graphs
require average degree $\sim \underline{\log n}$ for connectivity whp

↑
└── scales with n

Connectivity

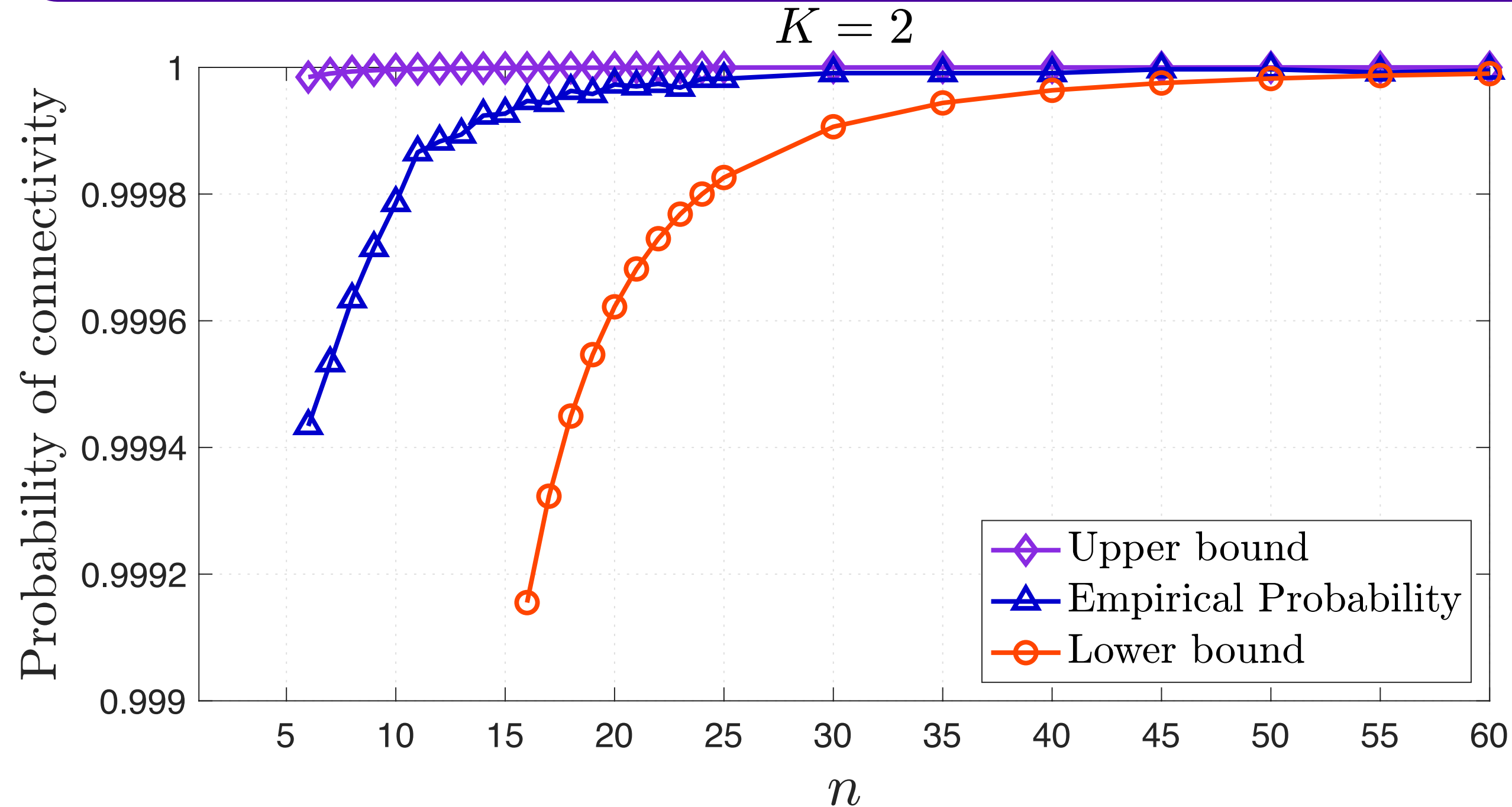
[Fenner and Frieze '82]

Random K -out
Graphs $\mathbb{H}(n, K)$

For $K \geq 2$, *connected* with high probability (with probability $\rightarrow 1$ as # nodes $\rightarrow \infty$).
(for $K = 1$, *disconnected* with high probability)

Theorem [Sood and Yagan, ICC'21*]

$$\mathbb{P}[\mathbb{H}(n, K) \text{ is } \textit{connected}] = 1 - \Theta(1/n^{K^2-1}), K \geq 2$$



*ICC' 21 Best Paper Award,
Communication Theory

What if K is not same for all nodes?

So far...

For (homogeneous) random K -out graphs, $p_{\text{connectivity}} = 1 - \Theta(1/n^{K^2-1})$, $K \geq 2$

What if some nodes make fewer than 2 selections?

Inhomogeneous Random K -out Graphs

- Each node is assigned a type which determines the number of selections
- Nodes can make fewer than 2 selections

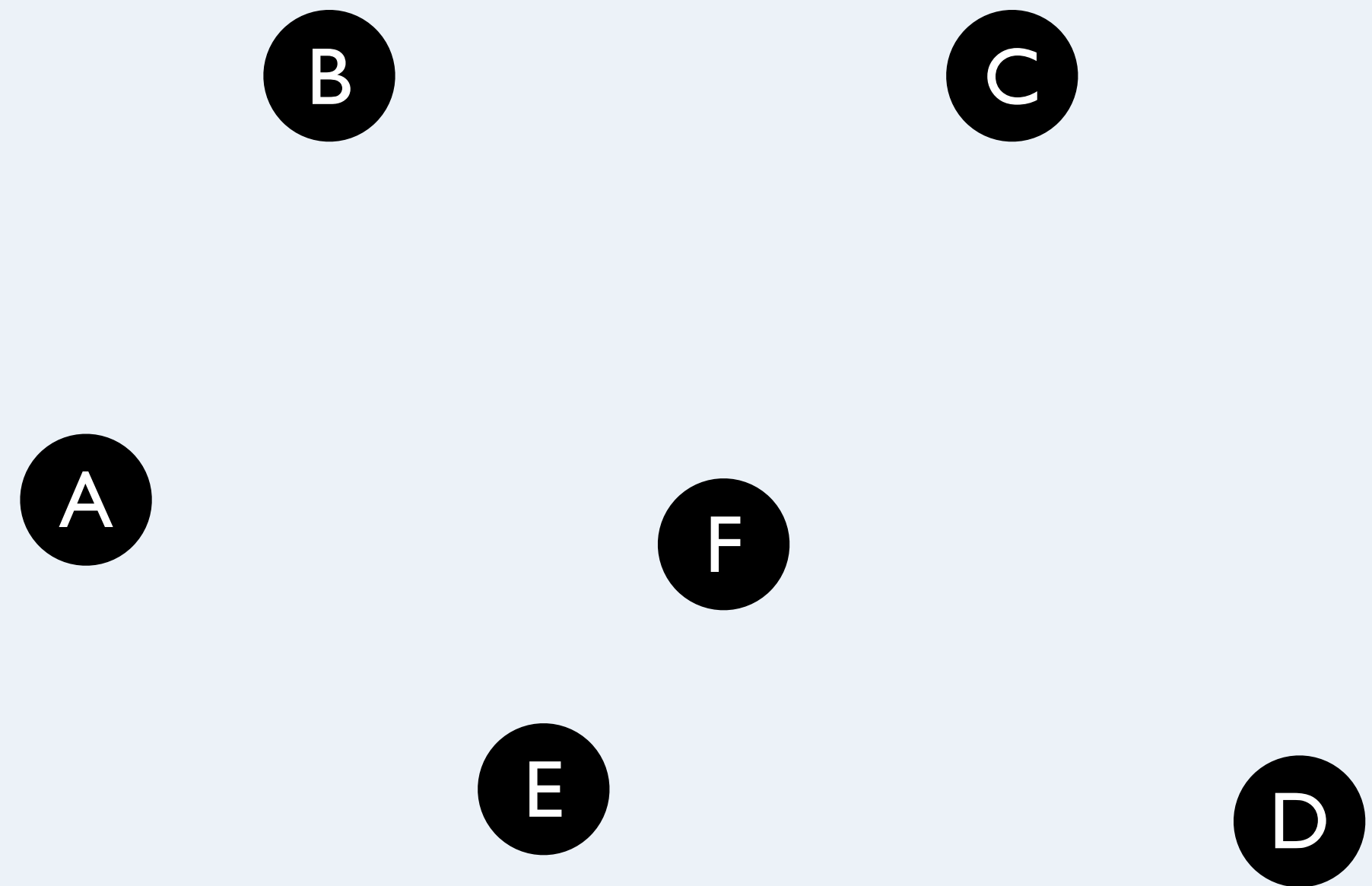
Inhomogeneous Random K -out Graphs

$$\mathbb{H}(n, \mu, K_n)$$

n : number of nodes

Label nodes independently as

Type-I wp μ (>0), Type-II wp $1-\mu$



Inhomogeneous K -out Random graph ($n = 6, K_n = 3$)

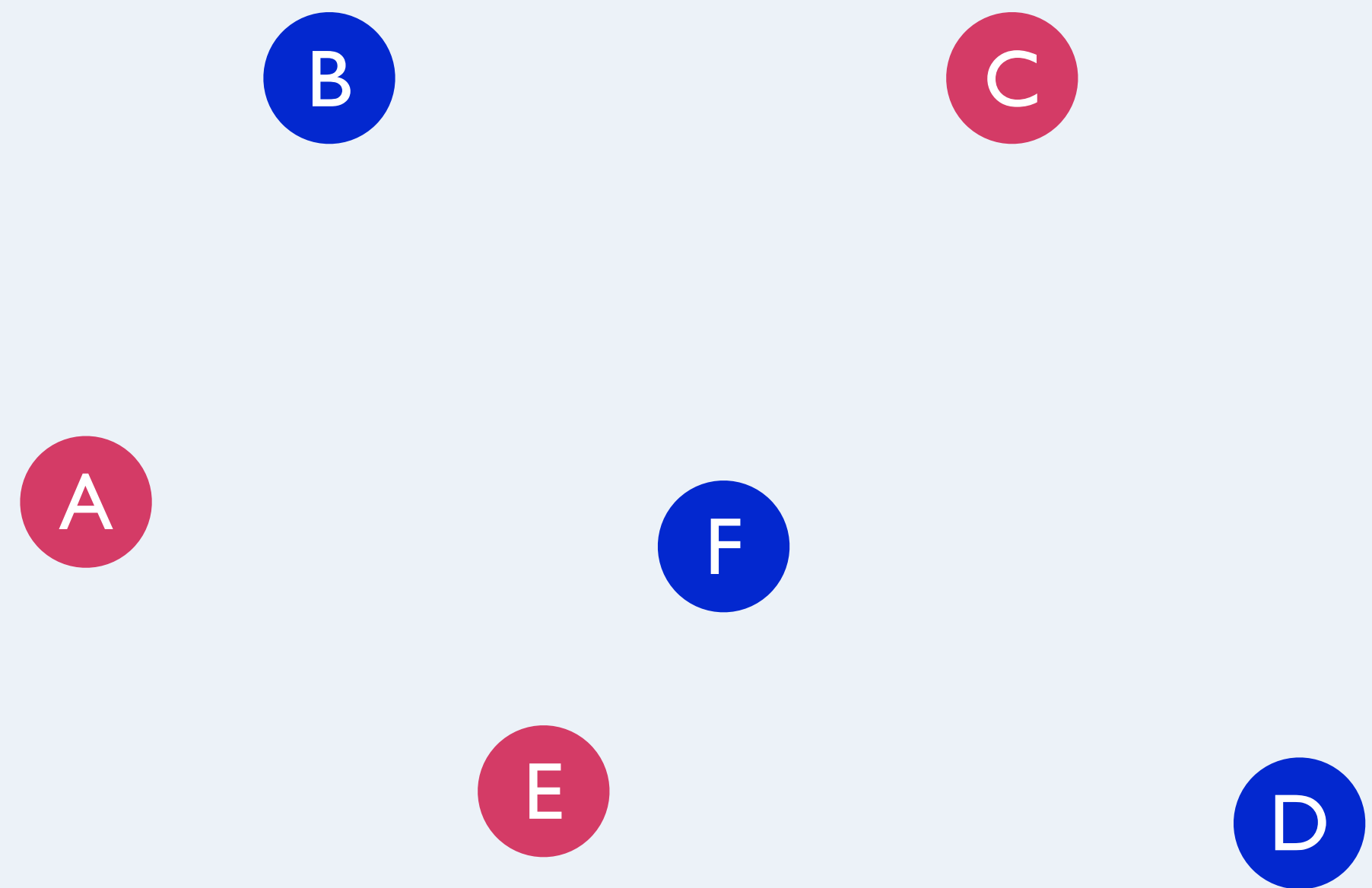
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$$\mathbb{H}(n, \mu, K_n)$$

n : number of nodes

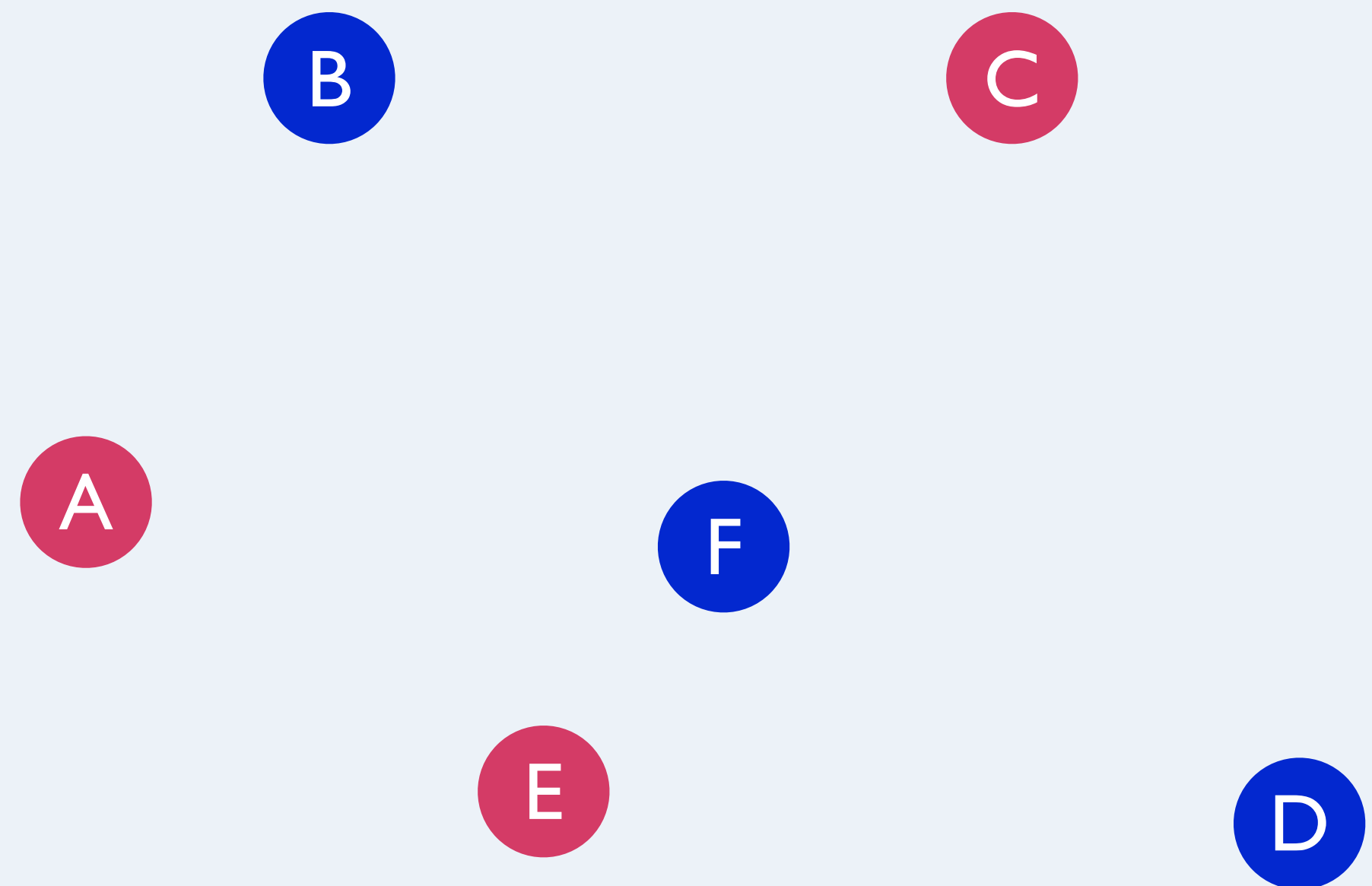
Label nodes independently as

Type-I wp μ (>0), **Type-II** wp $1-\mu$

Type-I nodes select **1** node,

Type-II nodes select K_n (≥ 2) nodes

(uniformly at random from all $n-1$ nodes)



Inhomogeneous K -out Random graph ($n = 6$, $K_n = 3$)

Inhomogeneous Random K -out Graphs

$$\mathbb{H}(n, \mu, K_n)$$

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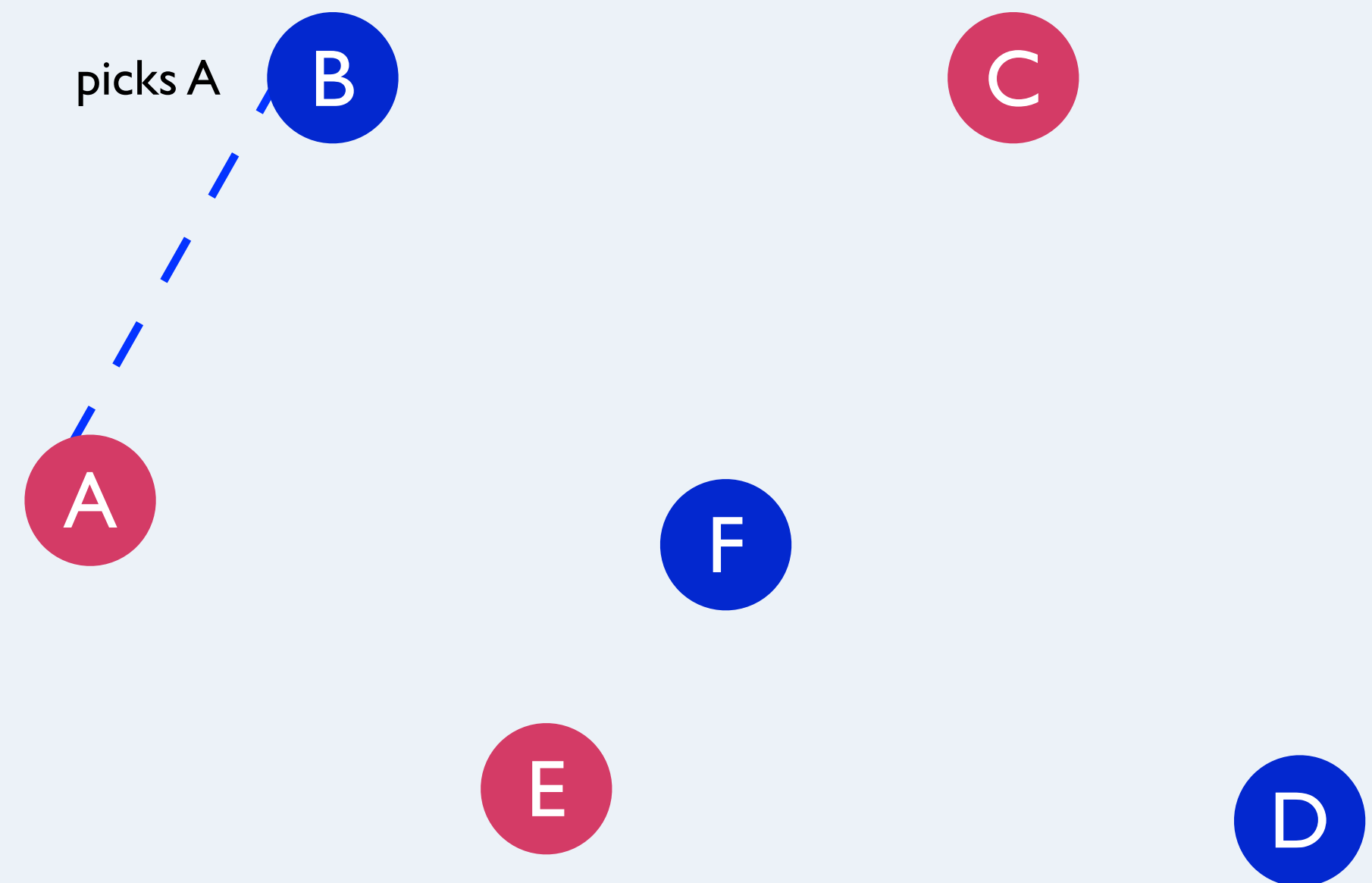
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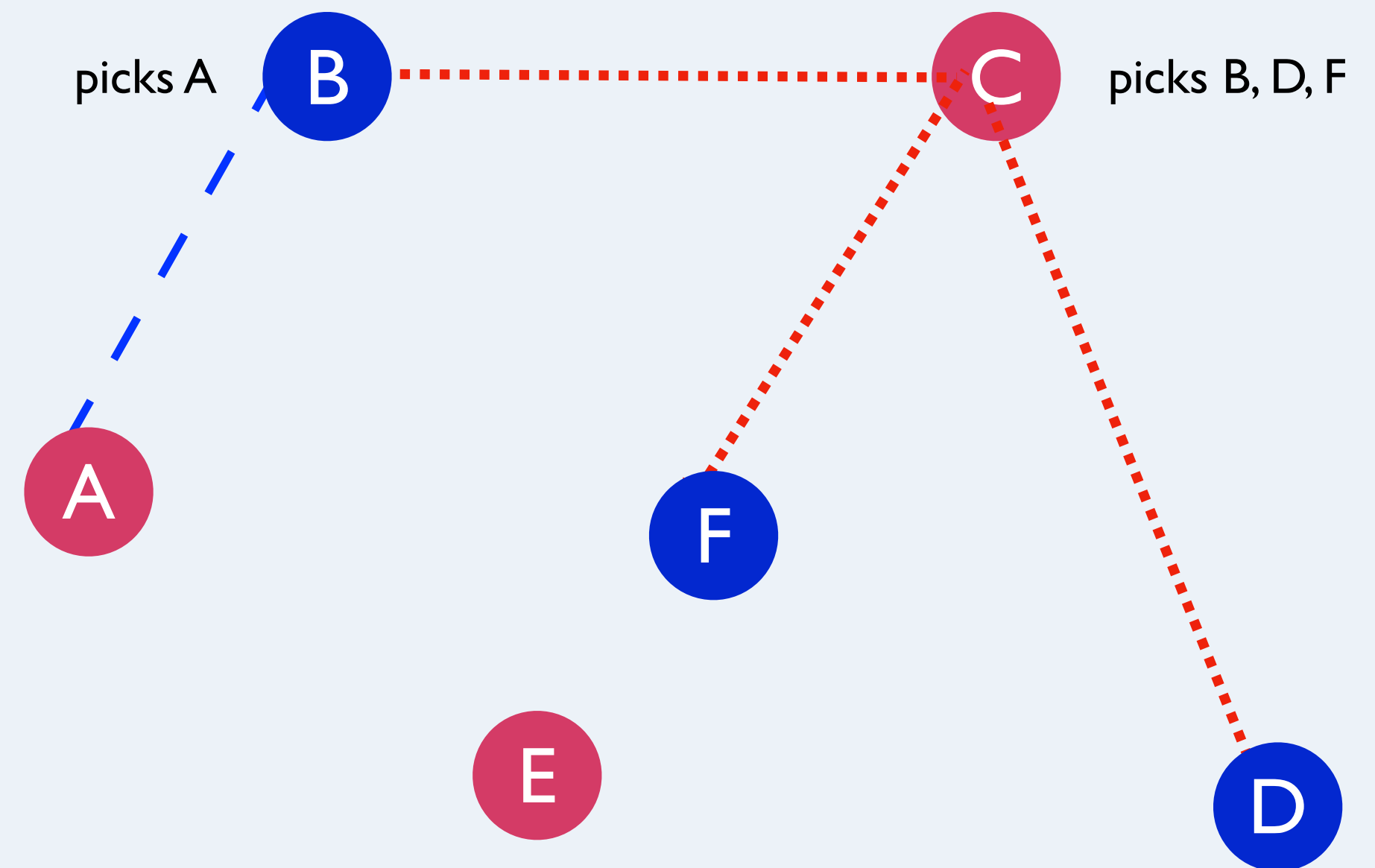
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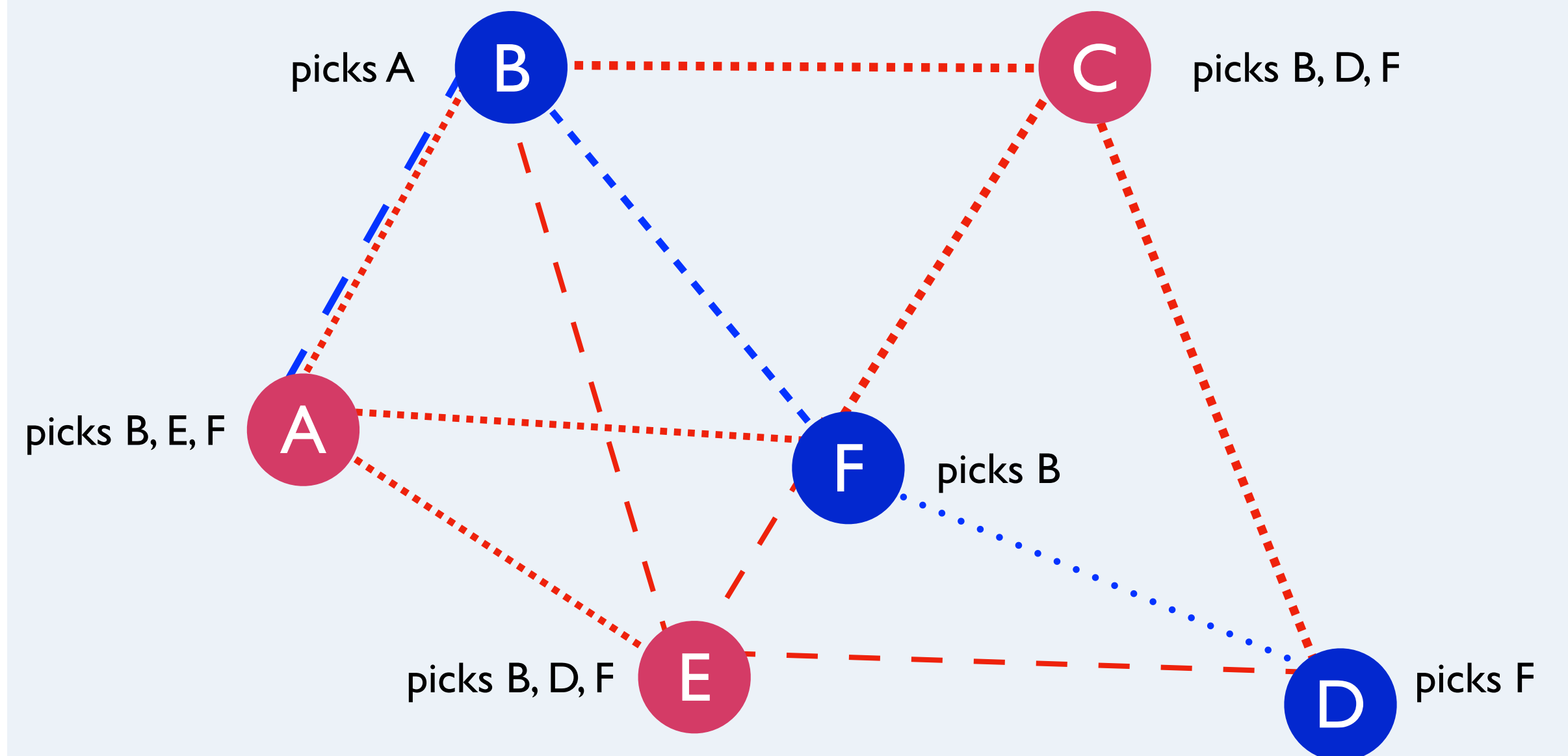
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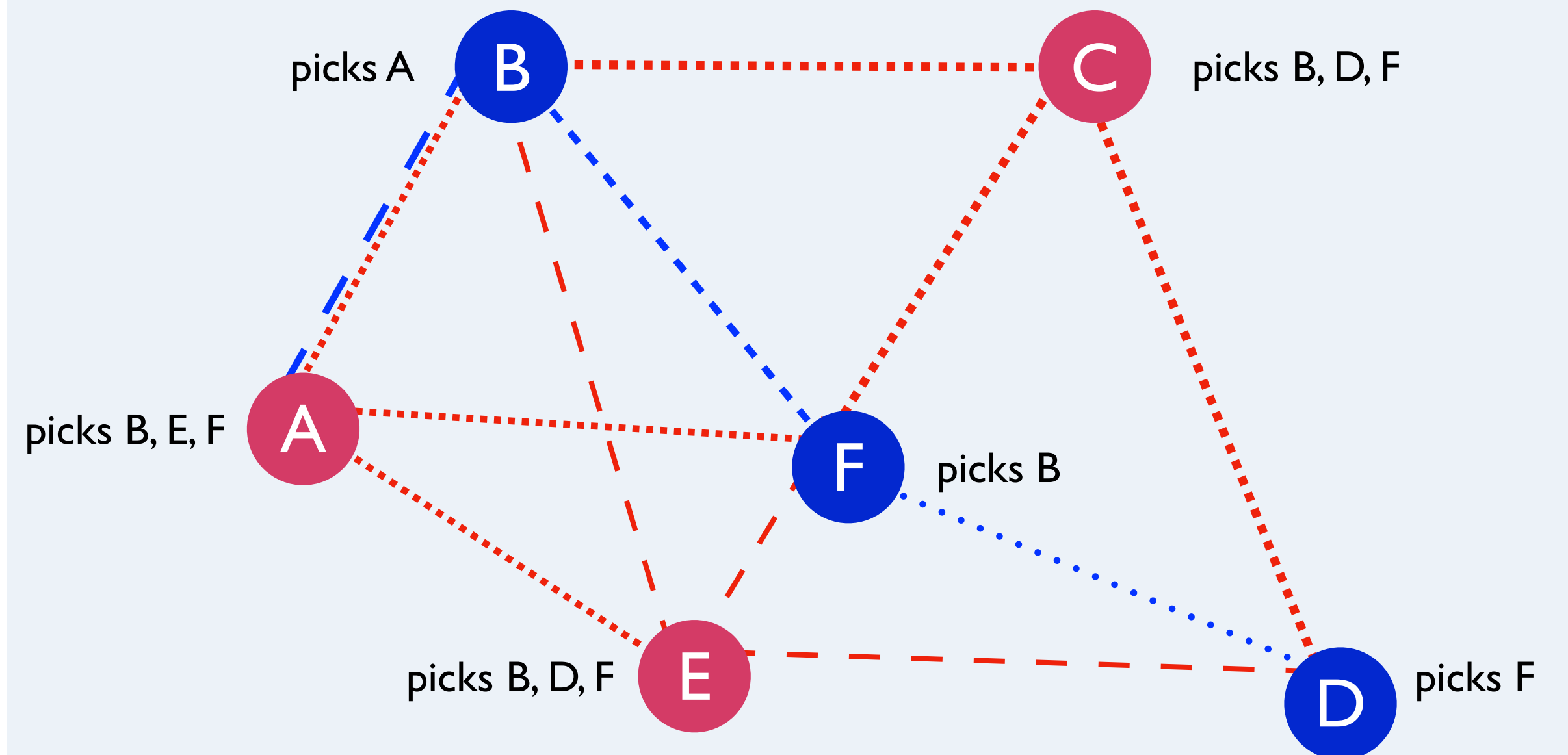
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Edge (i, j) exists if

node i selects node j

or

node j selects node i



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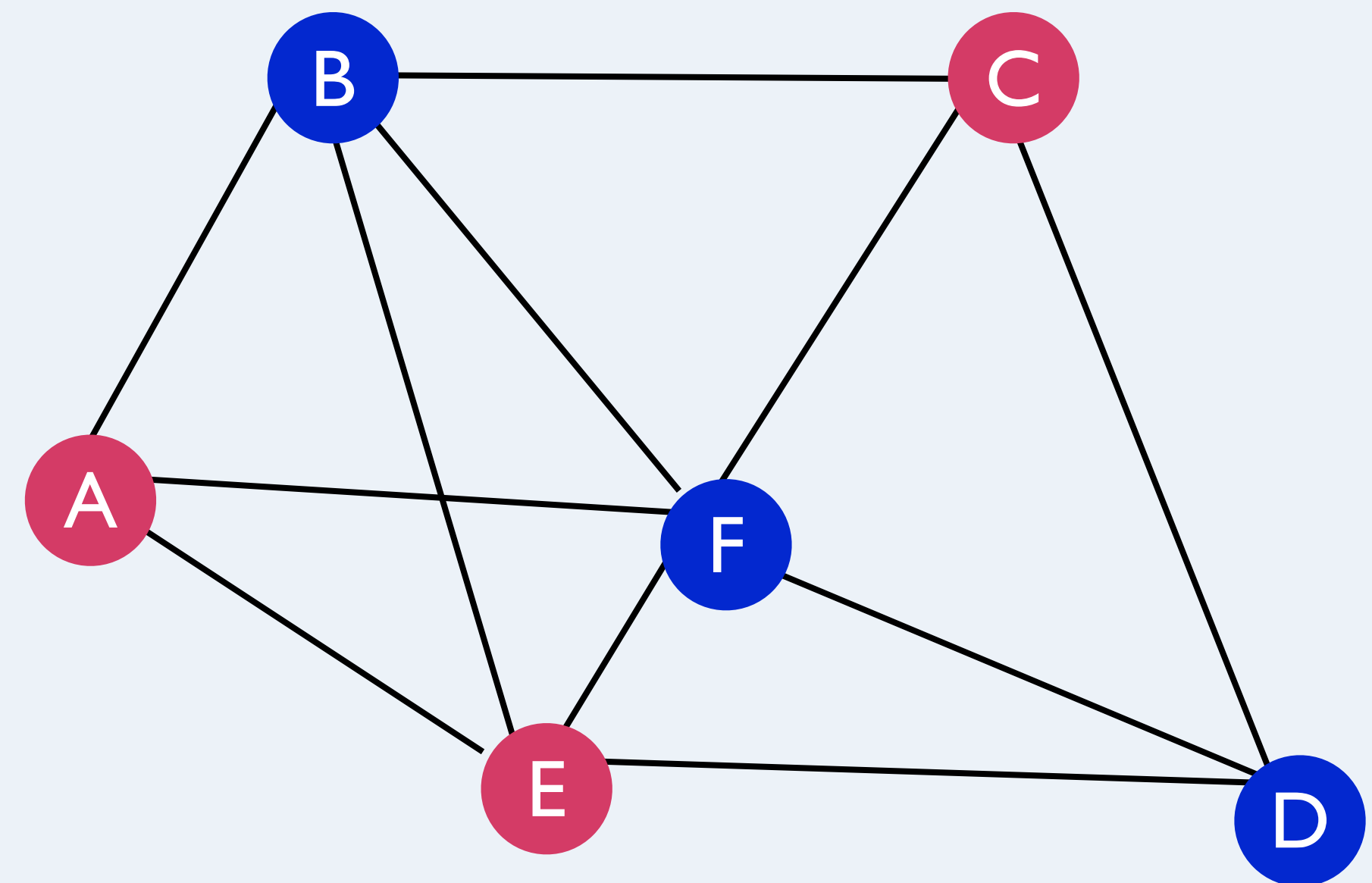
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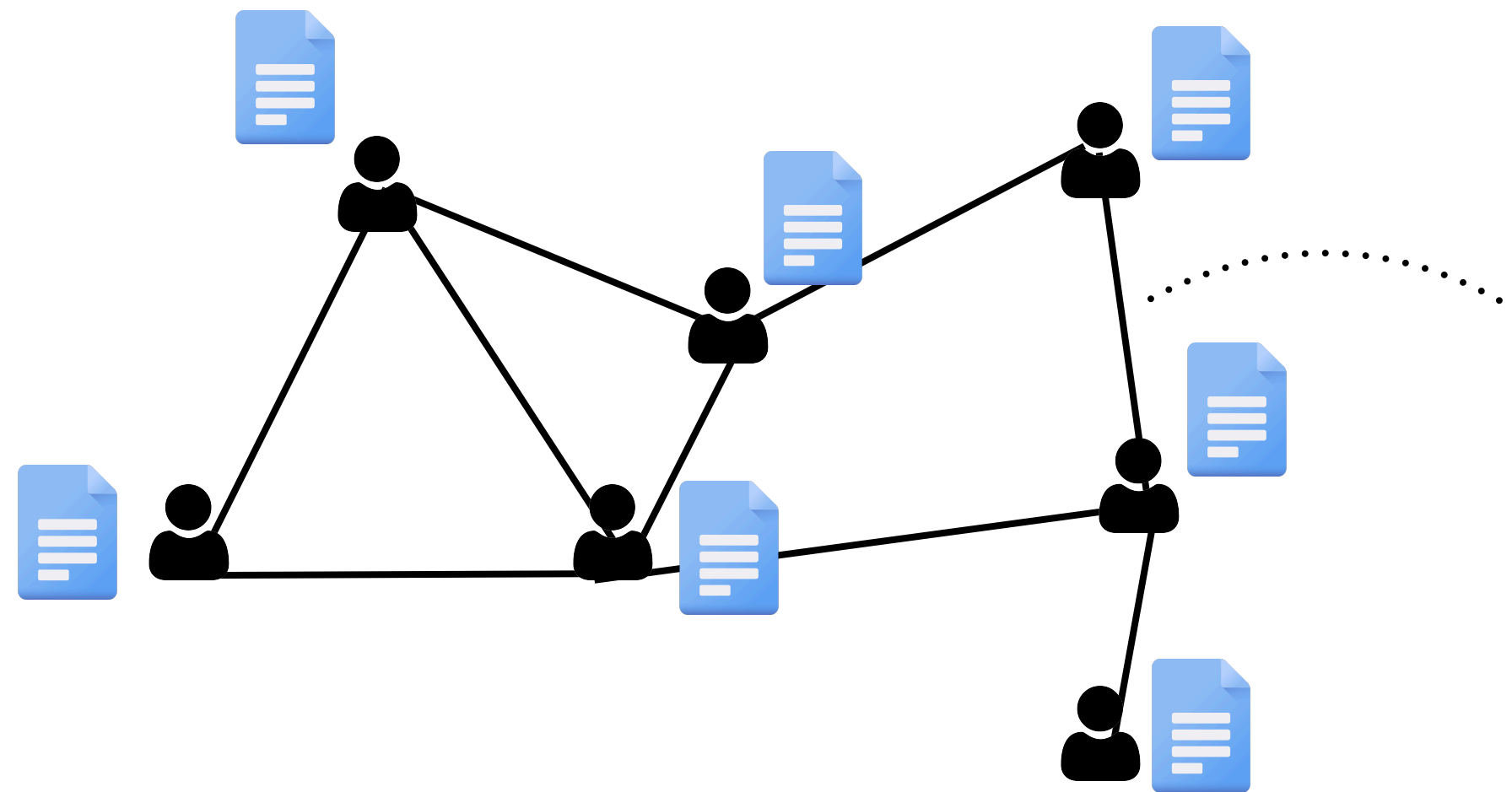
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Inhomogeneous K -out Random graph ($n = 6$, $K_n = 3$)

Part 1: Road-map



How to securely aggregate data?



Random
[network design]

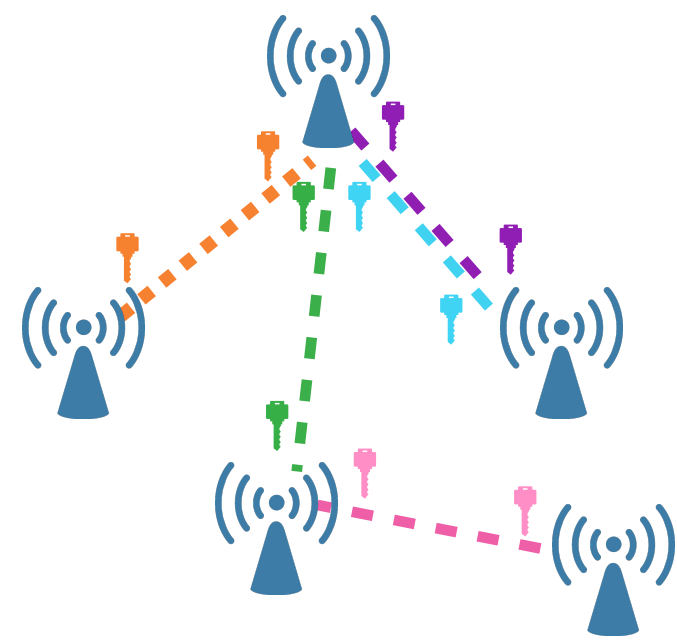
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Balancing sparsity with connectivity in distributed systems



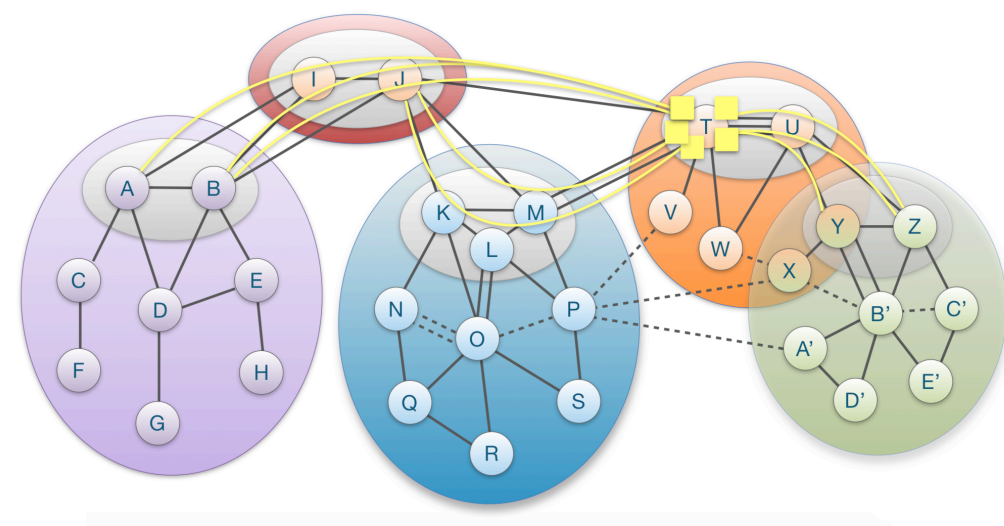
'Random K-out graphs'

well-connected yet sparse, allows distributed construction...



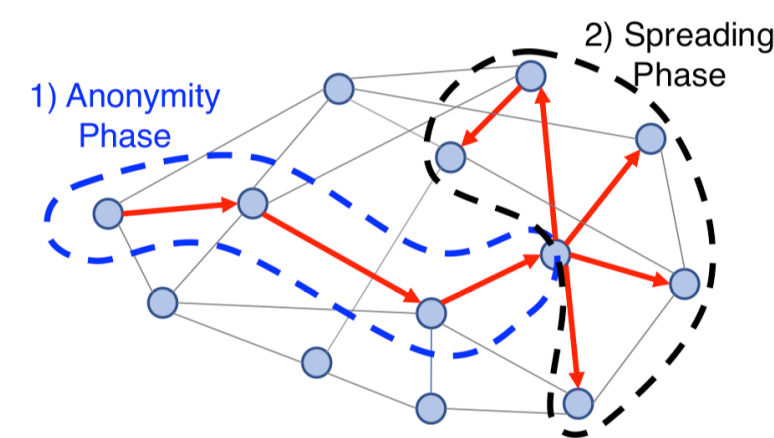
Key Predistribution in Wireless Sensor Networks

Chan et al., 2003



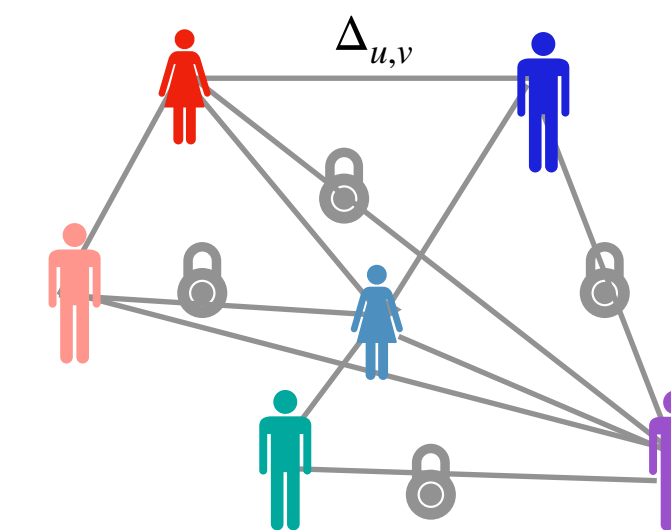
Next Generation Internet Architectures

Perrig et al., 2017



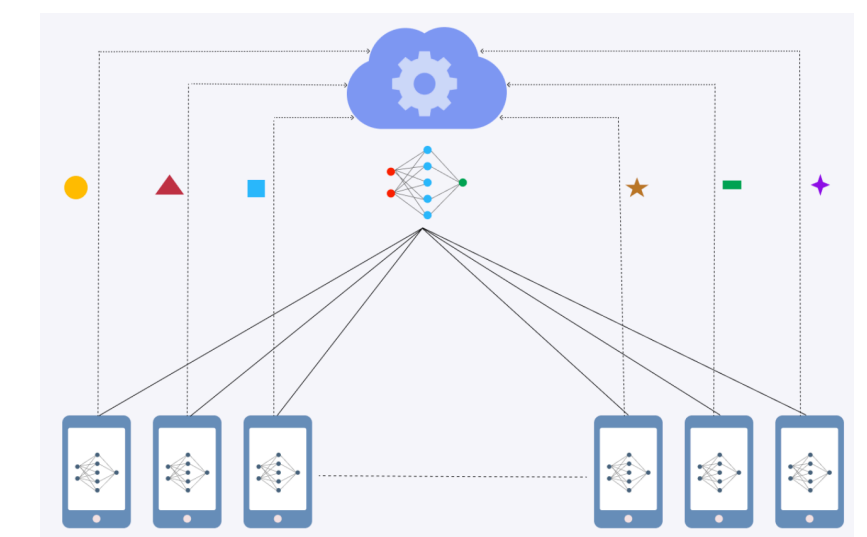
Cryptocurrency Networks

Bojja et al., 2017



Distributed Differential Private Averaging

Sabater et al., 2022



Secure Aggregation

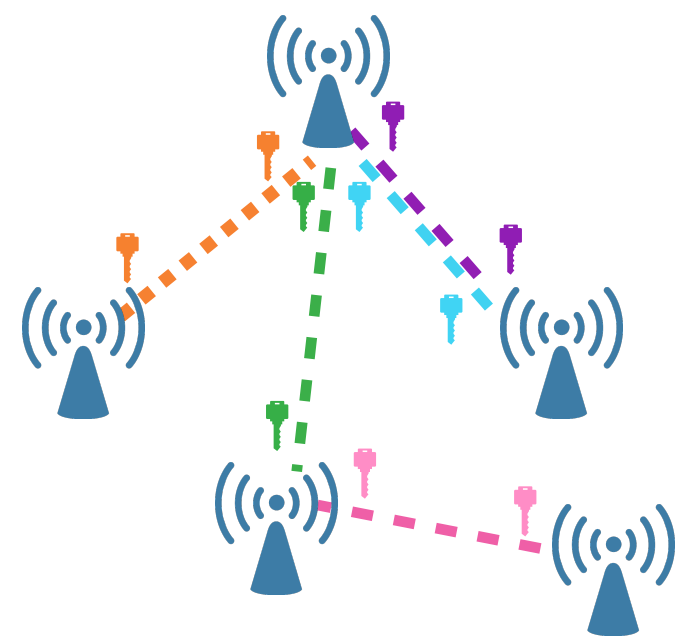
Bonawitz et al., Bell et al., 2020

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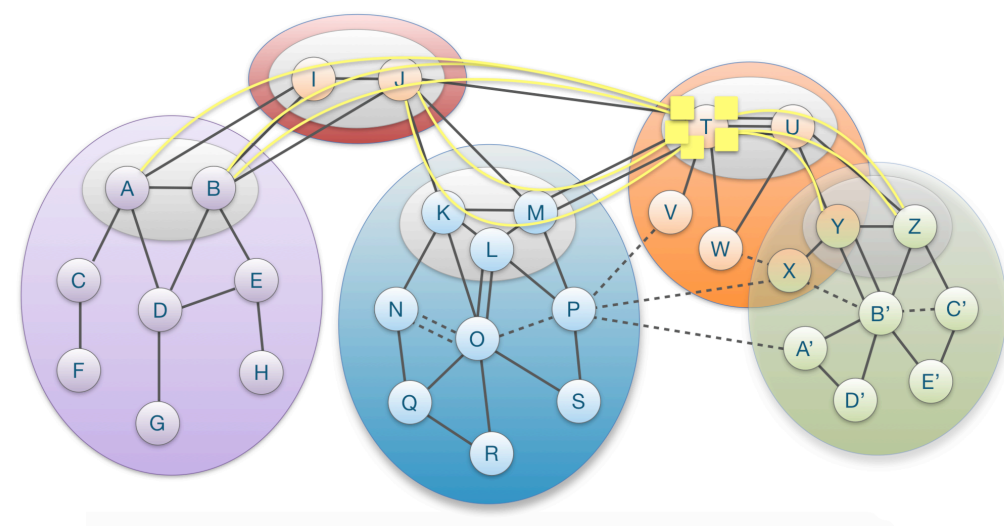
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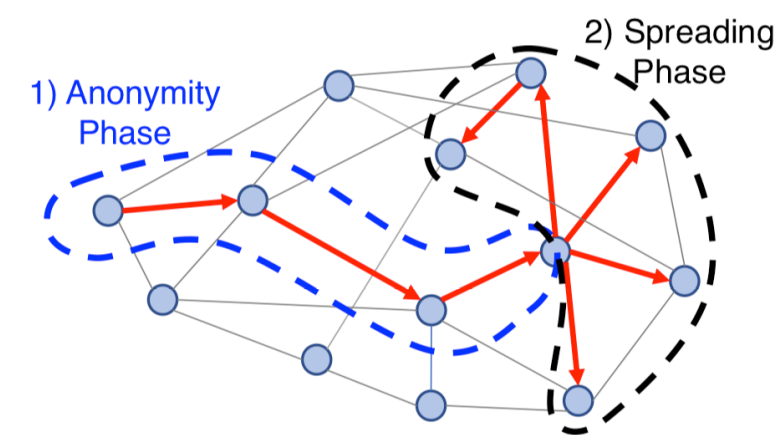
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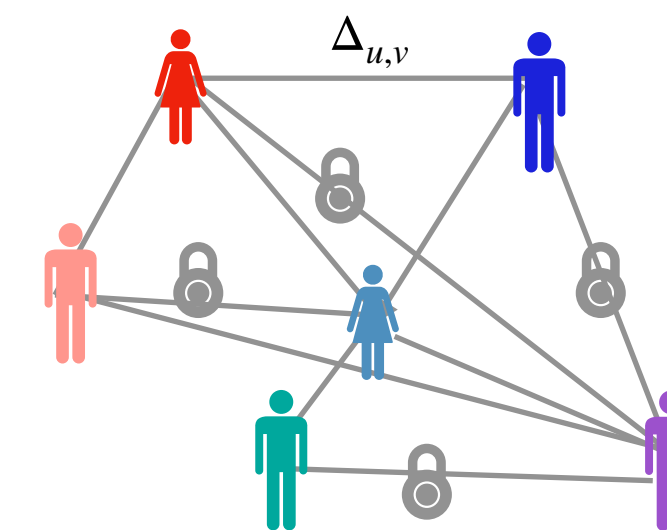
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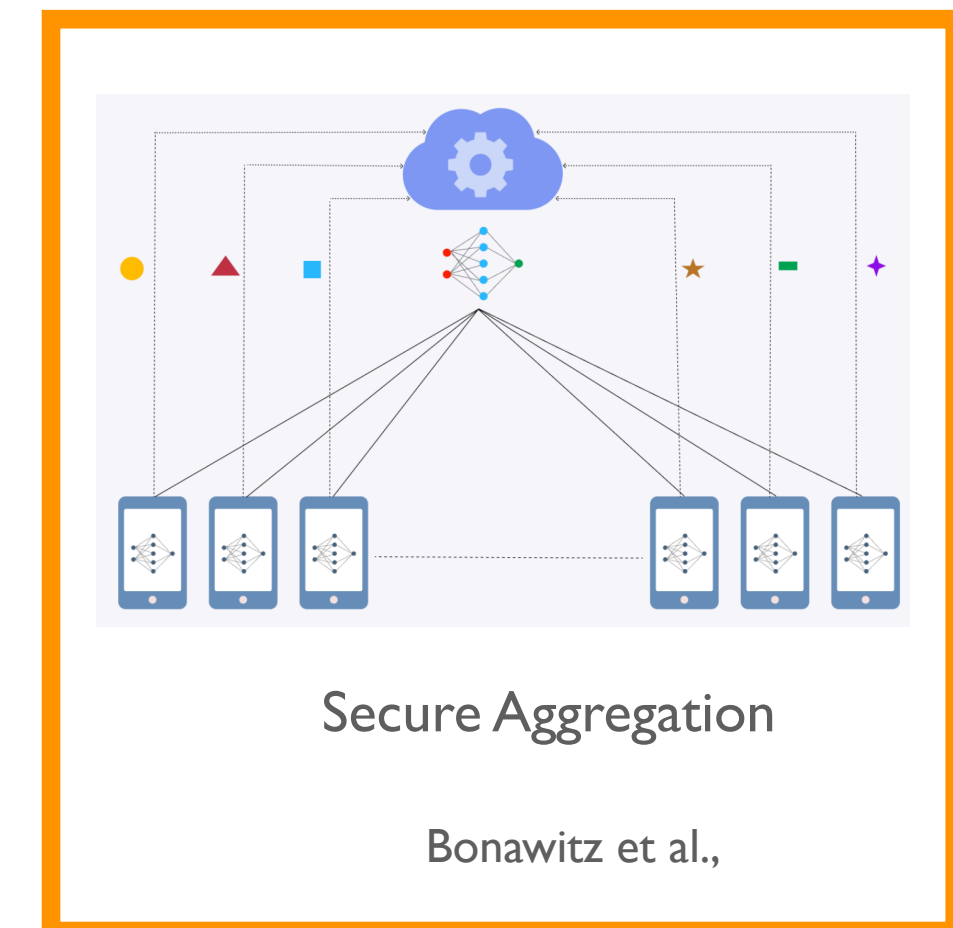
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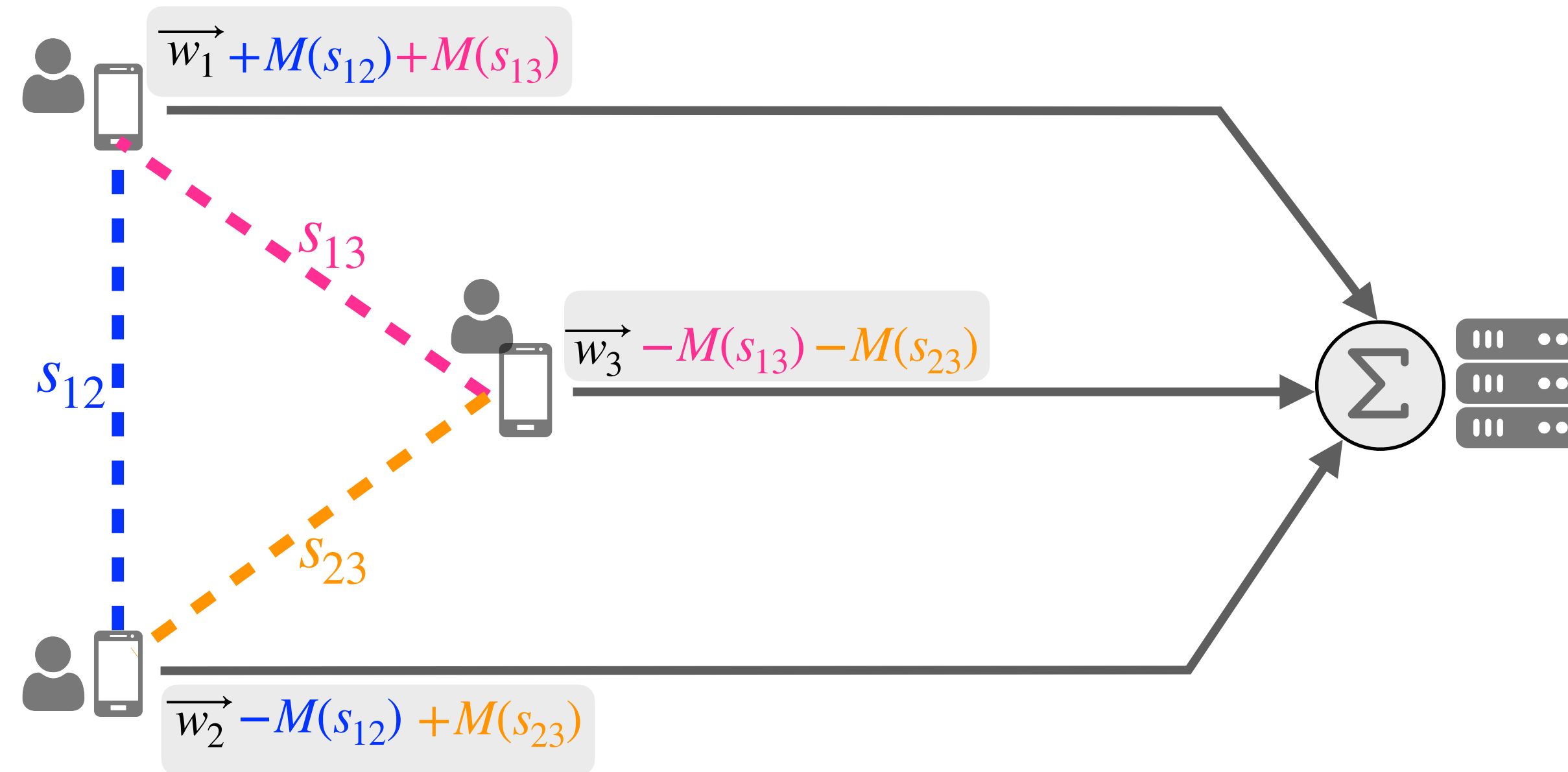
Sabater et al., 2022



Secure Aggregation

Bonawitz et al.,

Balancing sparsity with connectivity in distributed systems



Flamingo: Multi-Round Single-Server Secure Aggregation with Applications to Private Federated Learning

Yiping Ma* Jess Woods* Sebastian Angel*† Antigoni Polychroniadou‡ Tal Rabin*
 *University of Pennsylvania †Microsoft Research ‡J.P. Morgan AI Research & AlgoCRYPT CoE

Secure Single-Server Aggregation with (Poly)Logarithmic Overhead

James Bell
 The Alan Turing Institute
 London, UK
 jbell@turing.ac.uk

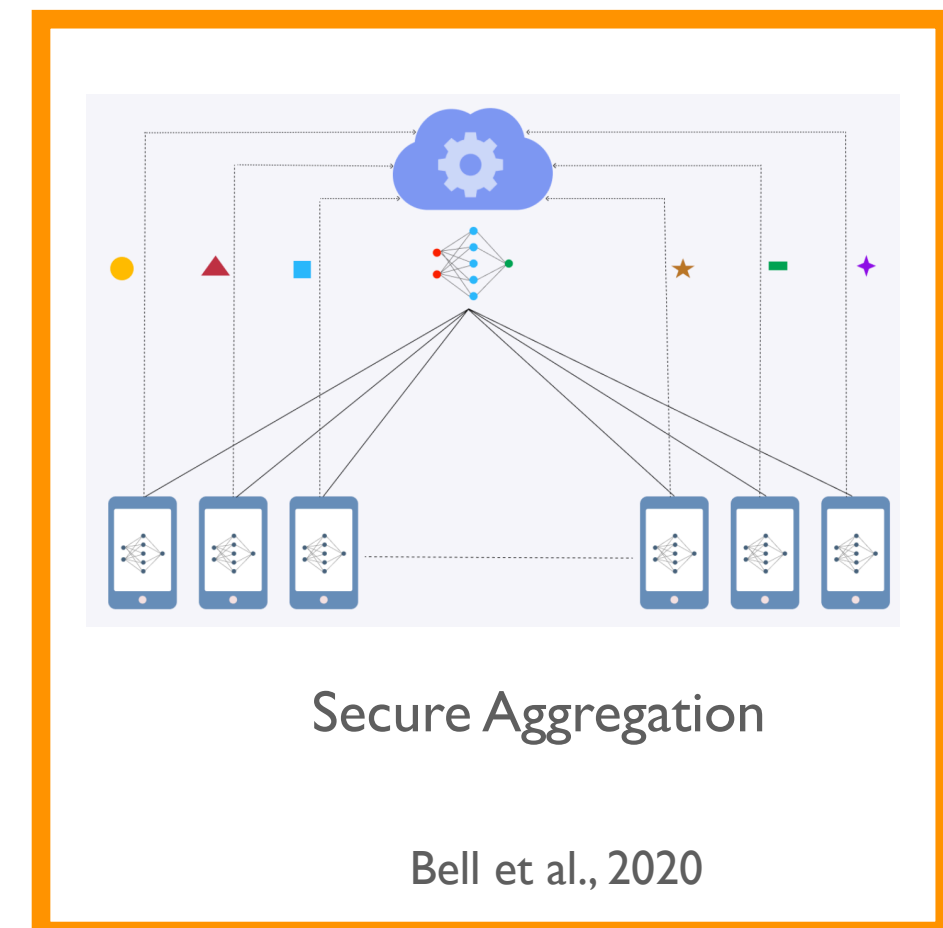
K. A. Bonawitz
 Google
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 bonawitz@google.com

Adrià Gascón
 Google
 London, UK
 adriag@google.com

Tancrede Lepoint
 Google
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Mariana Raykova
 Google
 New York, US
 marianar@google.com

In the second step, the graph is established as follows. Each client $i \in [n]$ randomly chooses γ other clients in $[n]$ as its neighbors, and tells the server about their choices. After the server collects all the clients' choices, it notifies each client of their neighbors indexes in $[n]$ and public keys. The neighbors of client i , denoted as $A(i)$, are those corresponding to vertices that have an edge with i (i.e., i chose them or they chose i).



Balancing sparsity with connectivity in distributed systems

communication ↔
computation ↔

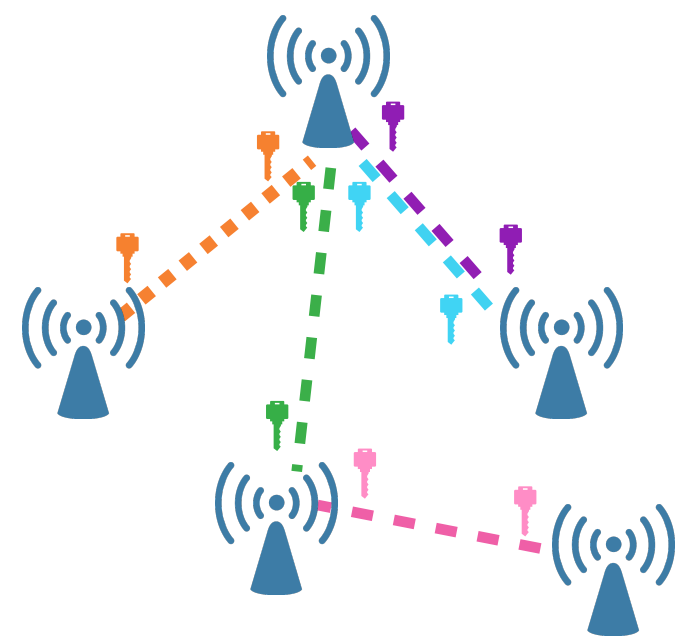
Sparsity

Reliable
Connectivity

↔ privacy guarantees
↔ convergence

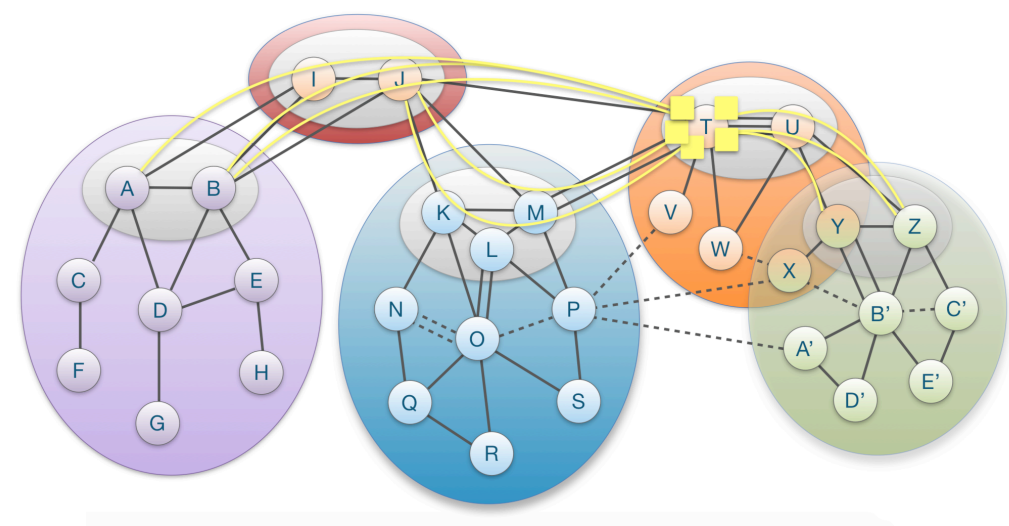
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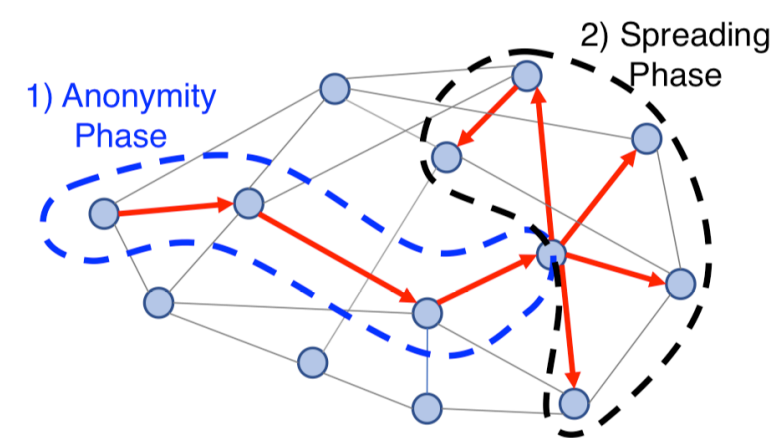
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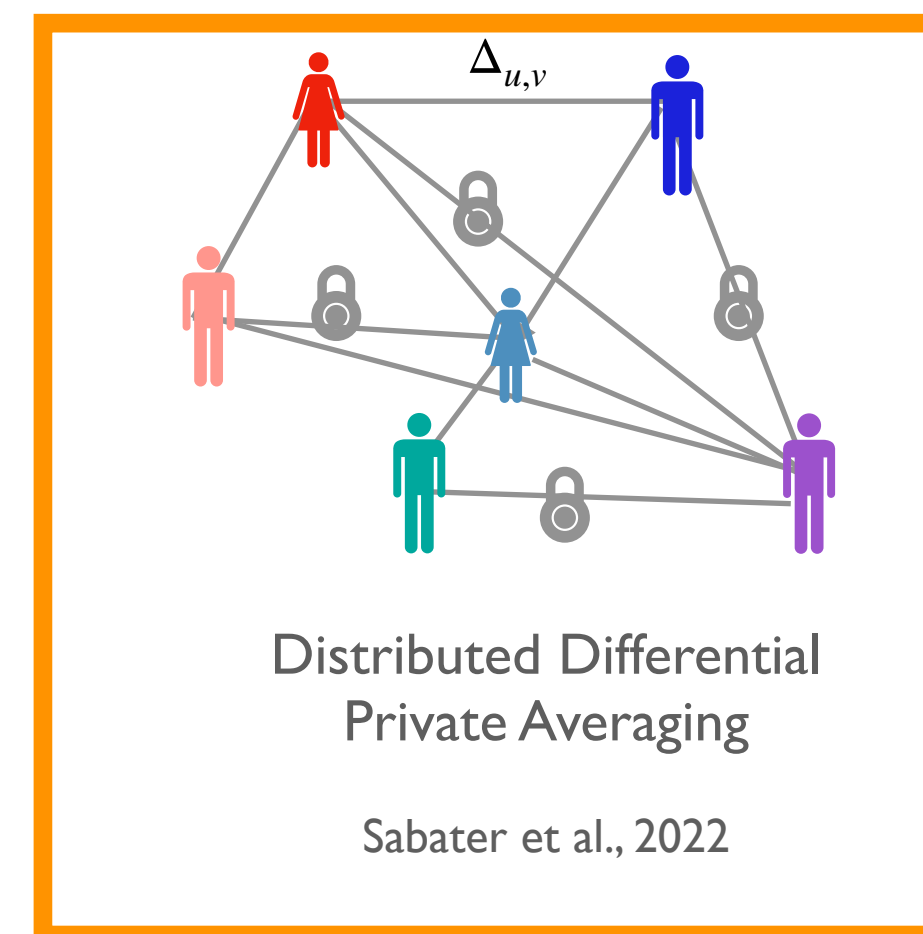
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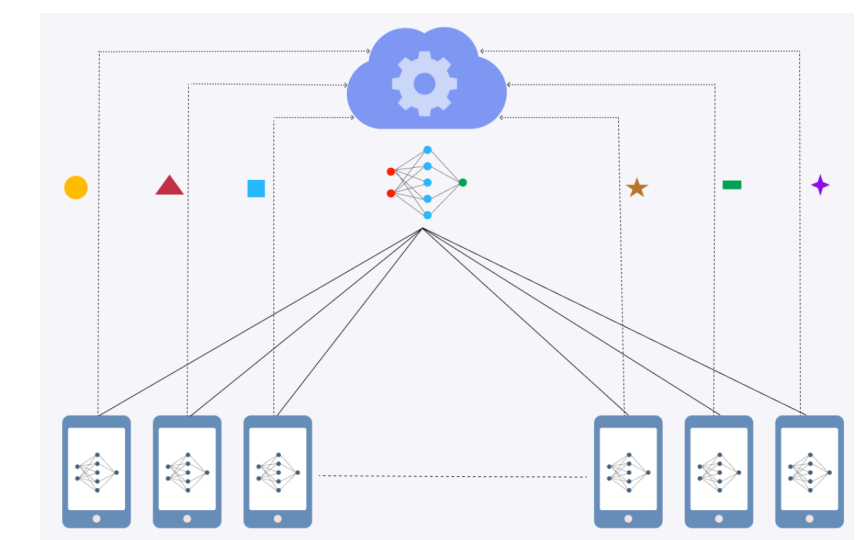
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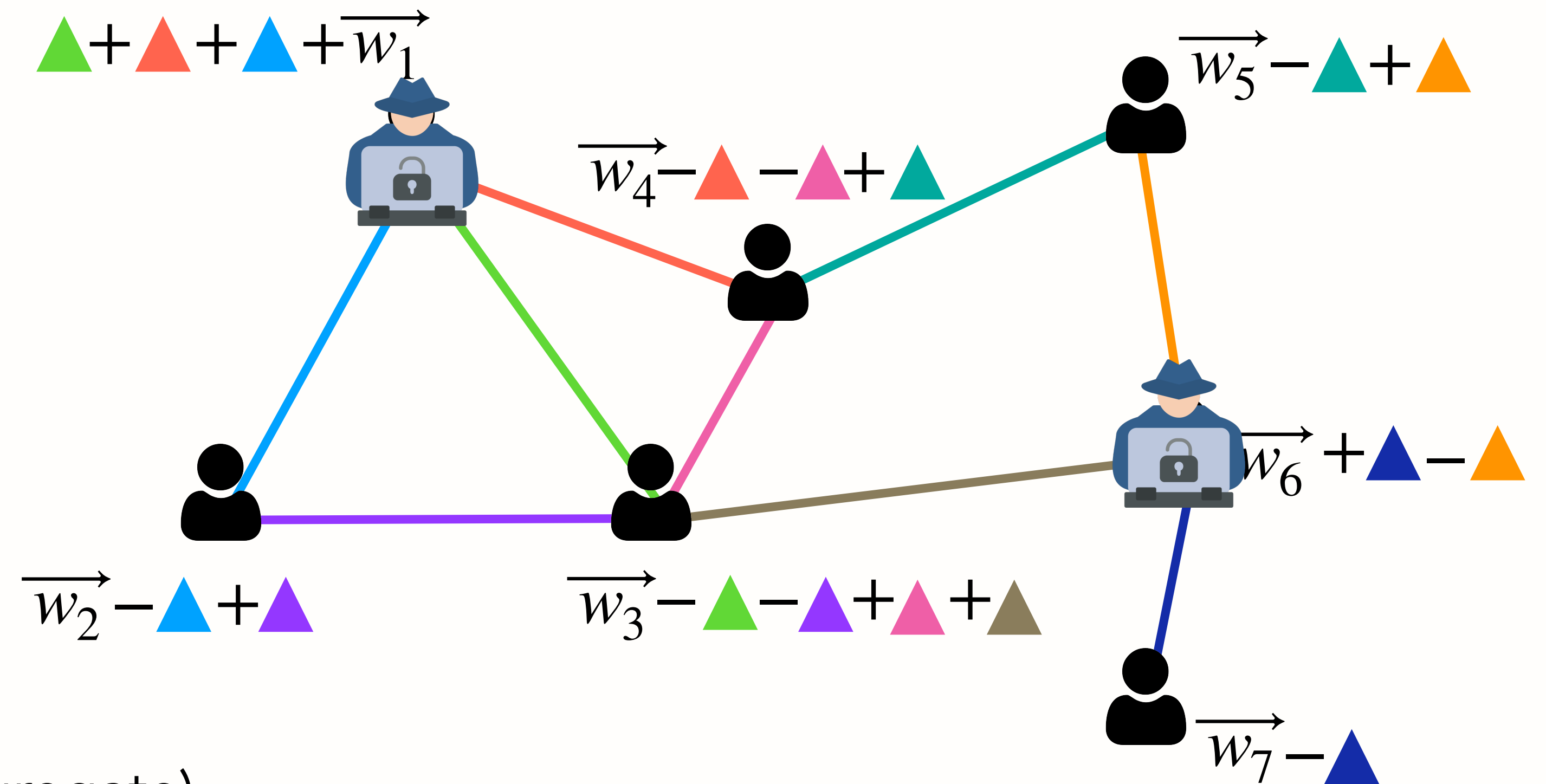
Sabater et al., 2022



Secure Aggregation

Bonawitz et al.,
Bell et al., 2020

Securely aggregating information over a network



Goal:

Learn $\sum_i w_i$
without revealing w_i

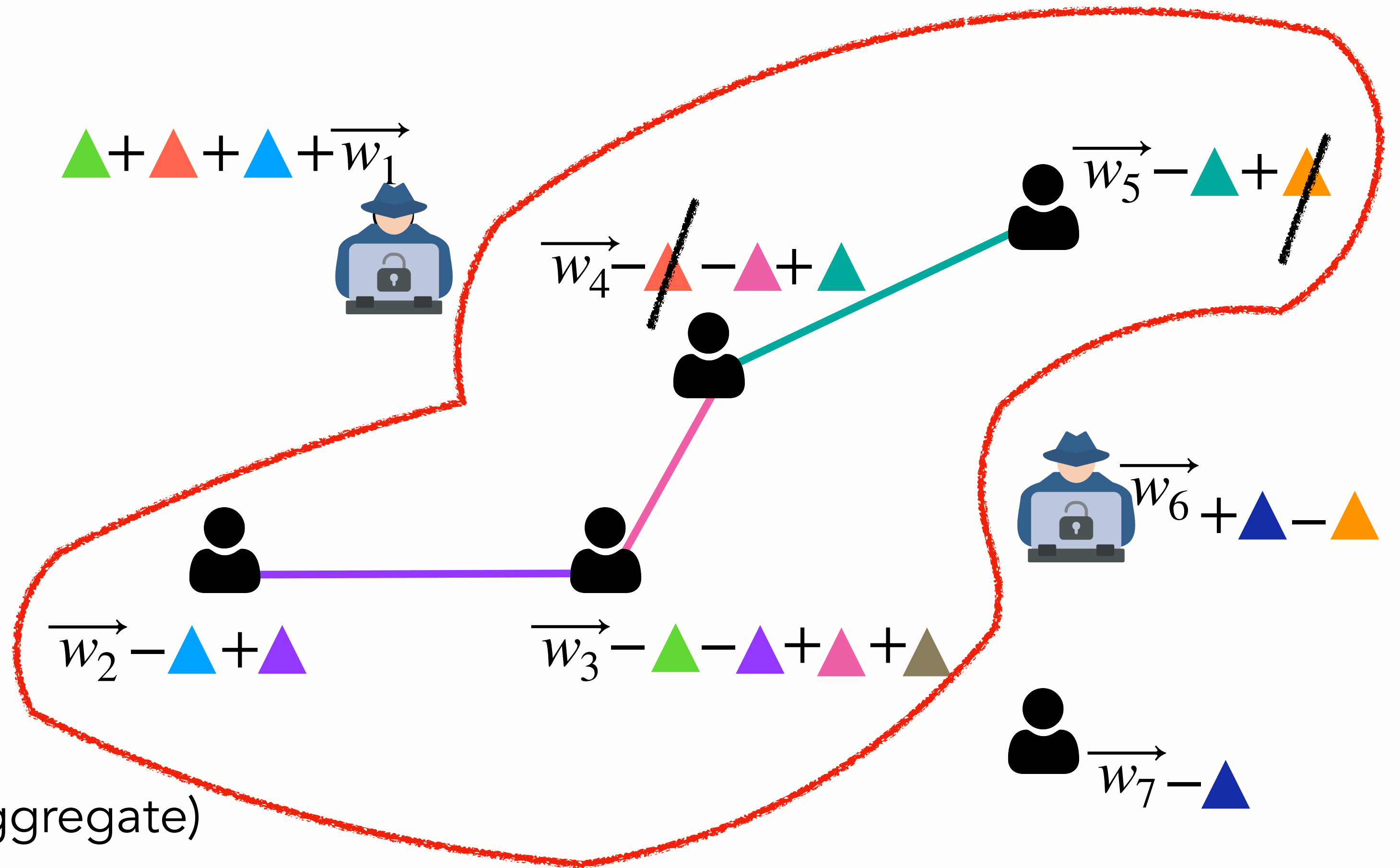
Approach:

add pairwise masks (that cancel in aggregate)

Challenge:

What if some nodes collude, i.e.,
Share masks for their neighbors?

Securely aggregating information over a network



Goal:

Learn $\sum_i w_i$
without revealing w_i

Approach:

add pairwise masks (that cancel in aggregate)

Challenge:

What if there are multiple corrupt nodes? → Model corruptions as deletions

How to set K for reliable connectivity after node deletions?

Secure information aggregation → Graph properties?

Connectivity after node failures/corruptions

What if there are multiple corrupt nodes? → Model corruptions as deletions

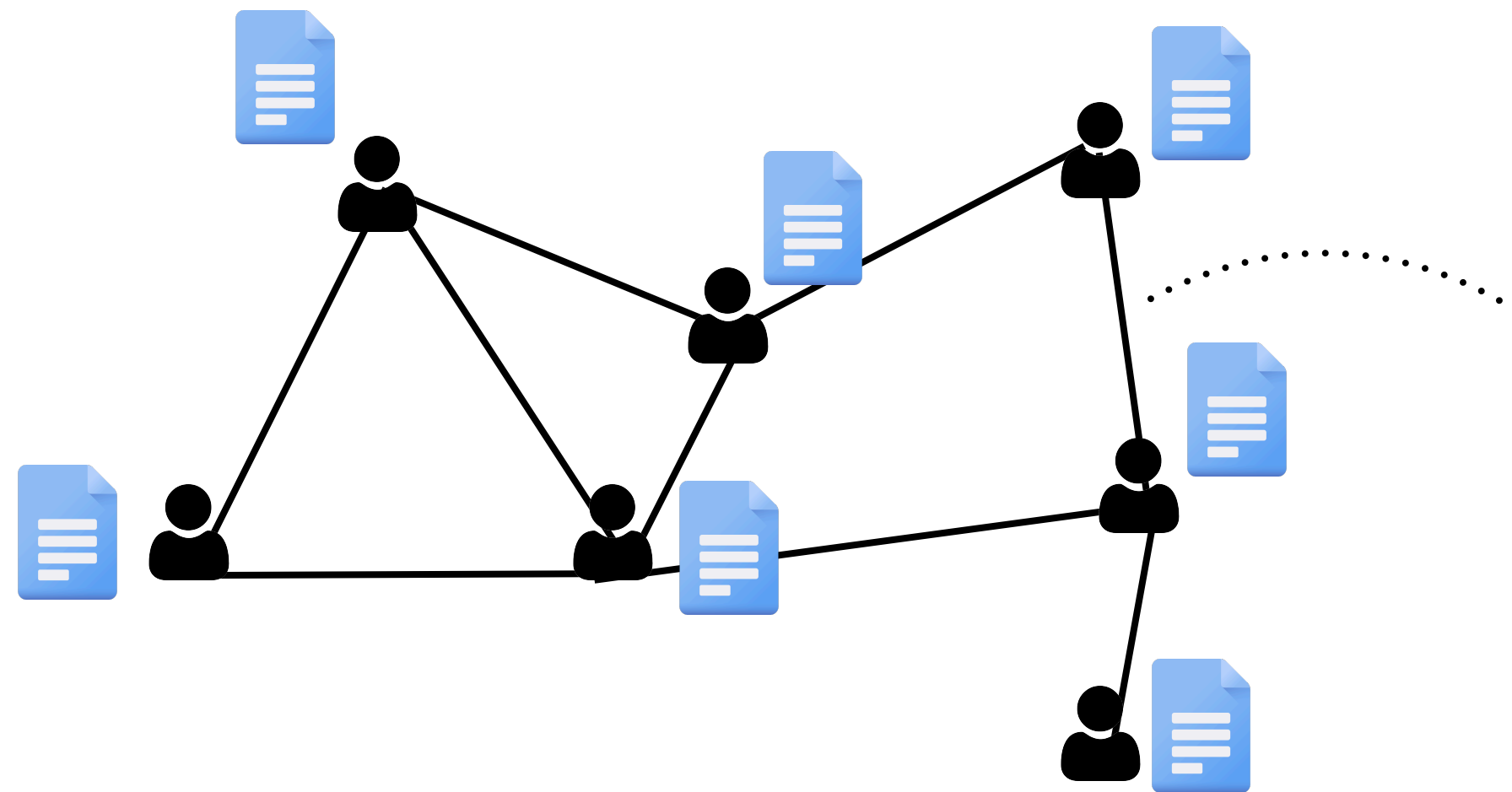
How to set K for reliable connectivity after node deletions?

Select K so that connectivity persists after node deletions
(if connectivity is not feasible, quantify size of connected subgraphs after deletions)

targeted subset
of nodes

random subset
of nodes


Part 1: Road-map



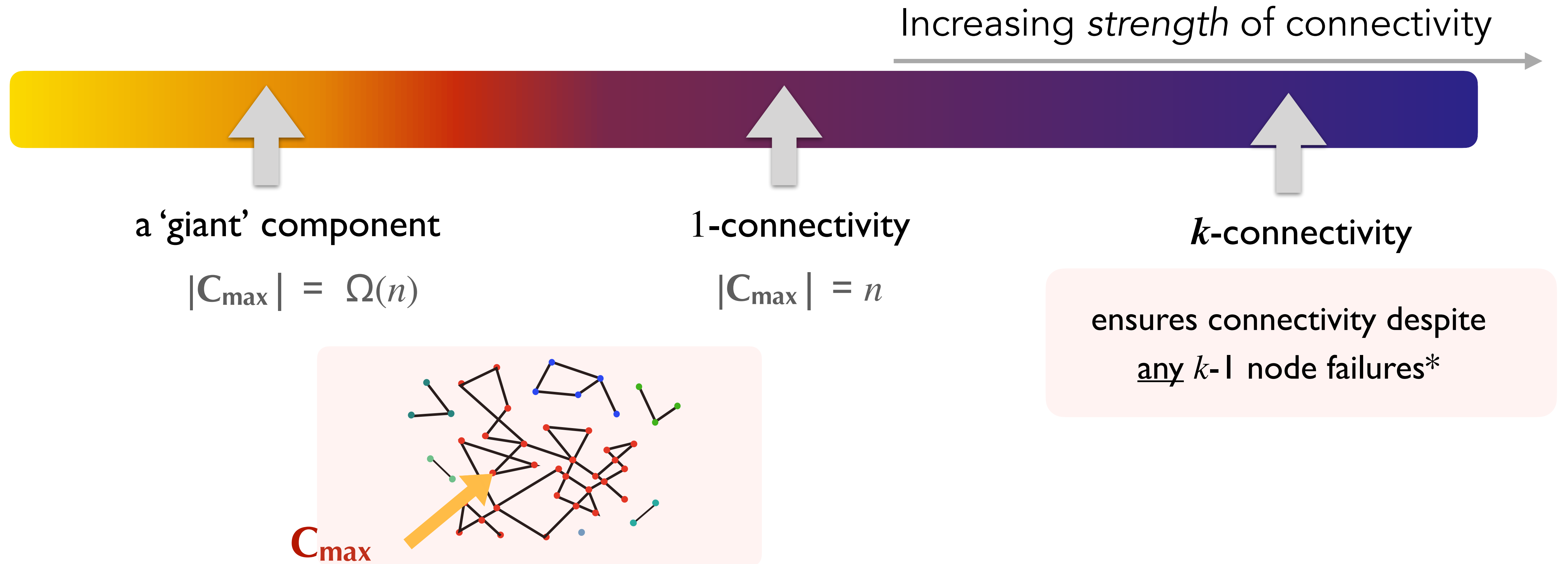
How to securely aggregate data?



Random
[network design]

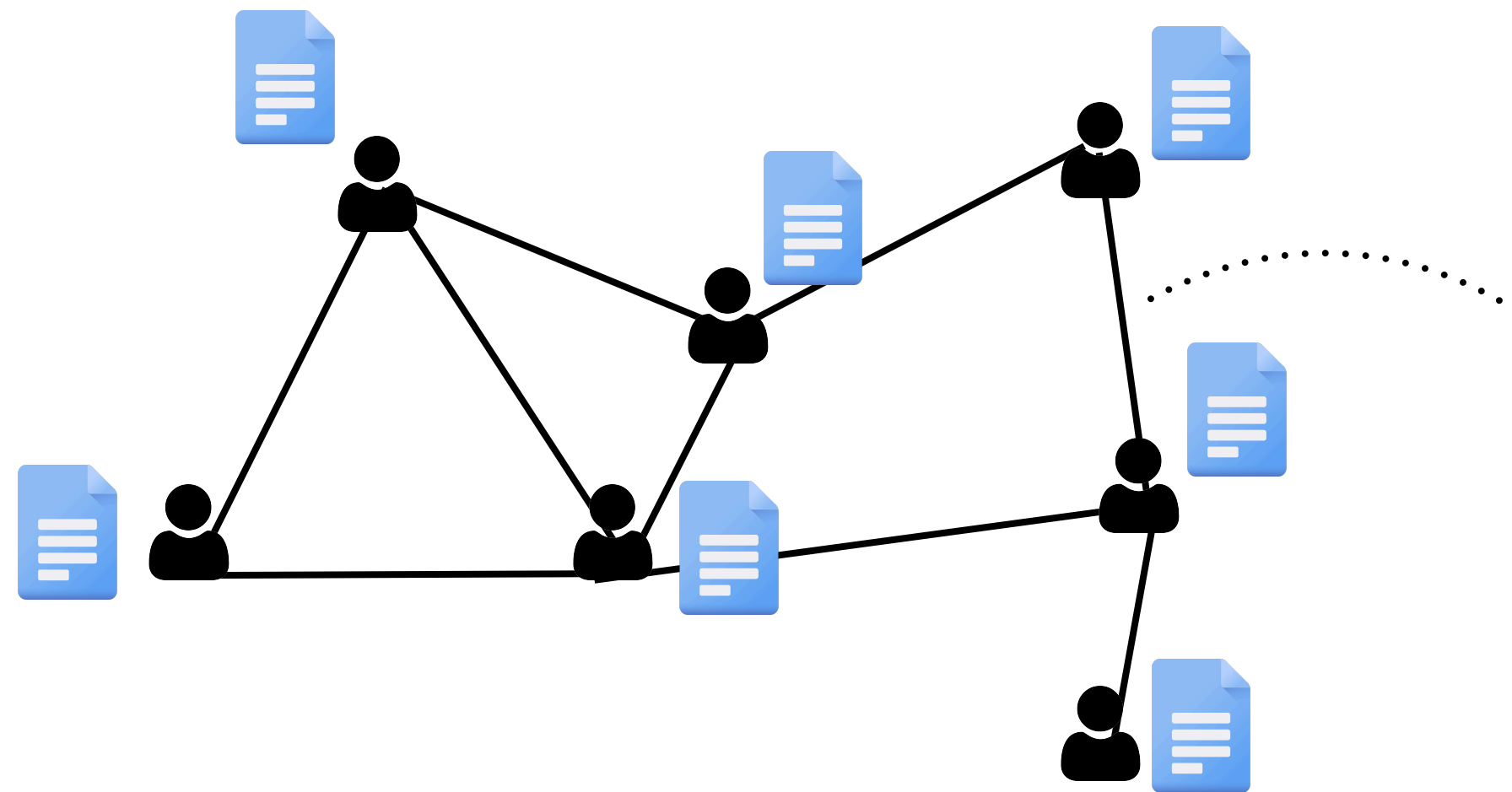
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How to quantify strength of connectivity?



+ whether these properties are retained upon component failures


Part 1: Road-map



How to securely aggregate data?



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[network design]

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Performance metrics

Performance metrics

Increasing *strength* of connectivity (results whp) 



Performance metrics

Increasing *strength* of connectivity (results whp) 



Inhomogeneous Random K -out Graphs

(A node makes
1 selection wp μ ,
else $K_n \geq 2$ selections)

Homogeneous Random K -out Graphs

(All nodes make
 K_n selections)

Performance metrics

Increasing *strength* of connectivity (results whp) 



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[Fenner & Frieze '82]
requires $K_n \geq 2$

[Fenner & Frieze '82]
requires $K_n \geq 2k$

Performance metrics

Increasing *strength* of connectivity (results whp) 

Weaker

Stronger

a 'giant' component

1-connectivity

k -connectivity
($k \geq 2$)

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(A node makes
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[Eletreby & Yagan, '19]

requires K_n unbounded
(no matter how slowly growing)

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?

**Homogeneous
Random K -out
Graphs**

(All nodes make
 K_n selections)

?

what if a random
subset of nodes fail?

[Fenner & Frieze '82]

requires $K_n \geq 2$

Tighter bounds? ?

[Fenner & Frieze '82]

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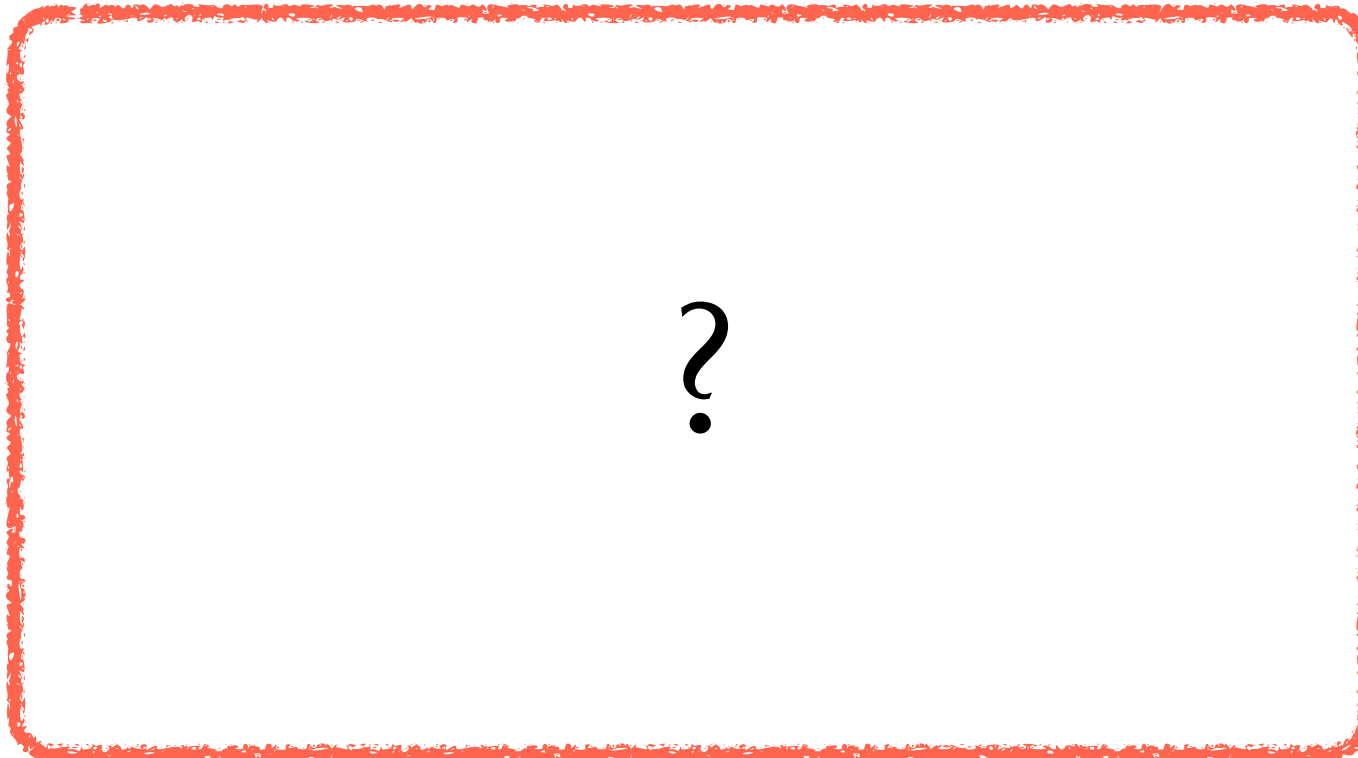
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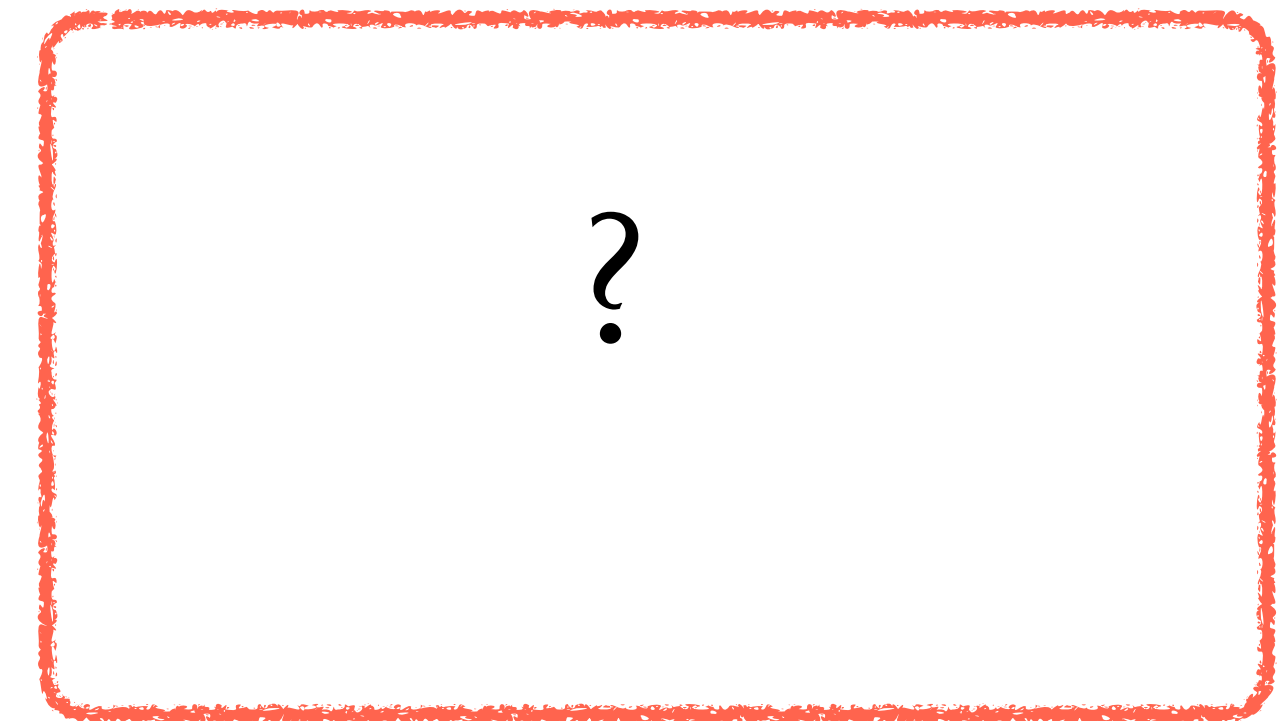
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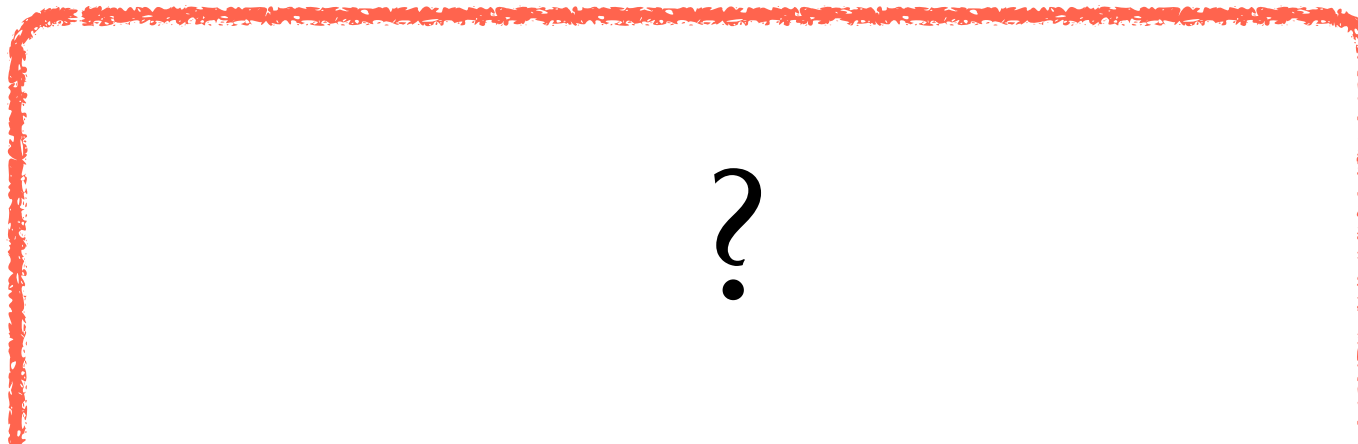
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requires $K_n \geq 2$
Tighter bounds? 

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Note: Rich literature on variants of K -out graphs/distributed constructions and related properties

[Frieze, Karonski '24], [Pirani et al., 23], [Penrose '18], [Frieze, Johansson '15], [Cooper, Frieze '88] and more

Preview of contributions (informal)

Increasing *strength* of connectivity (results whp) 



Inhomogeneous Random K -out Graphs

(A node makes 1 selection wp μ , else $K_n \geq 2$ selections)

Homogeneous Random K -out Graphs

(All nodes make K_n selections)

a 'giant' component

$$|C_{\max}| = n - O(1) \text{ whp}$$

$$|C_{\max}| = n(1 - o(1)) \text{ after } o(n) \text{ nodes fail}$$

IEEE Trans. on Info. Theory '23

Provide K_n required for a given $|C_{\max}|$ whp given the size of (random) node failures

IEEE ISIT '21

1-connectivity

[Eletreby & Yagan, '19]
requires K_n unbounded (no matter how slowly growing)

[Fenner & Frieze '82]
requires $K_n \geq 2$

$$p_{\text{con}} = 1 - \Theta(1/n^{K^2-1})$$

even when $o(n)$ random node failures, $p_{\text{con}} \rightarrow 1$

IEEE ICC'21 (Best Paper)

k -connectivity ($k \geq 2$)

requires K_n of order $\log(n)$

IEEE Trans. on Info. Theory '21

[Fenner & Frieze '82]
requires $K_n \geq 2k$

Preview of contributions (informal)

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IEEE Trans. on Info. Theory '21

Homogeneous Random K -out Graphs

(All nodes make K_n selections)

Provide K_n required for a given $|C_{\max}|$ whp given the size of (random) node failures

IEEE ISIT '21

[Fenner & Frieze '82]
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A closer look

Increasing *strength* of connectivity (results whp) 



Weaker

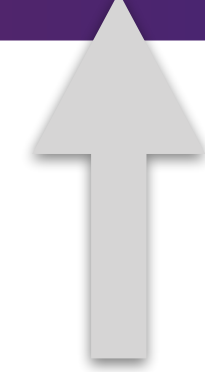
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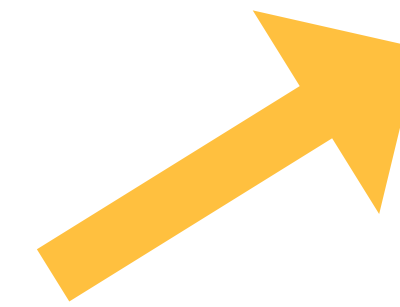
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IEEE Trans. on Info. Theory '21

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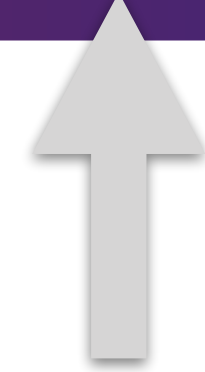
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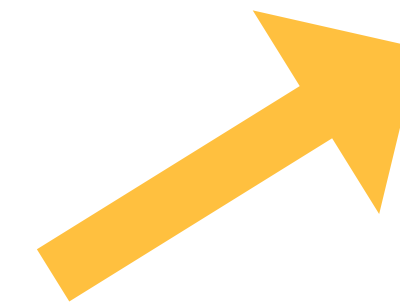
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IEEE Trans. on Info. Theory '21

Threshold for k -connectivity

Recall: Each node is **Type-I** w.p. μ , **Type-II** w.p. $1-\mu$
(pick 1 node) (pick K_n nodes)

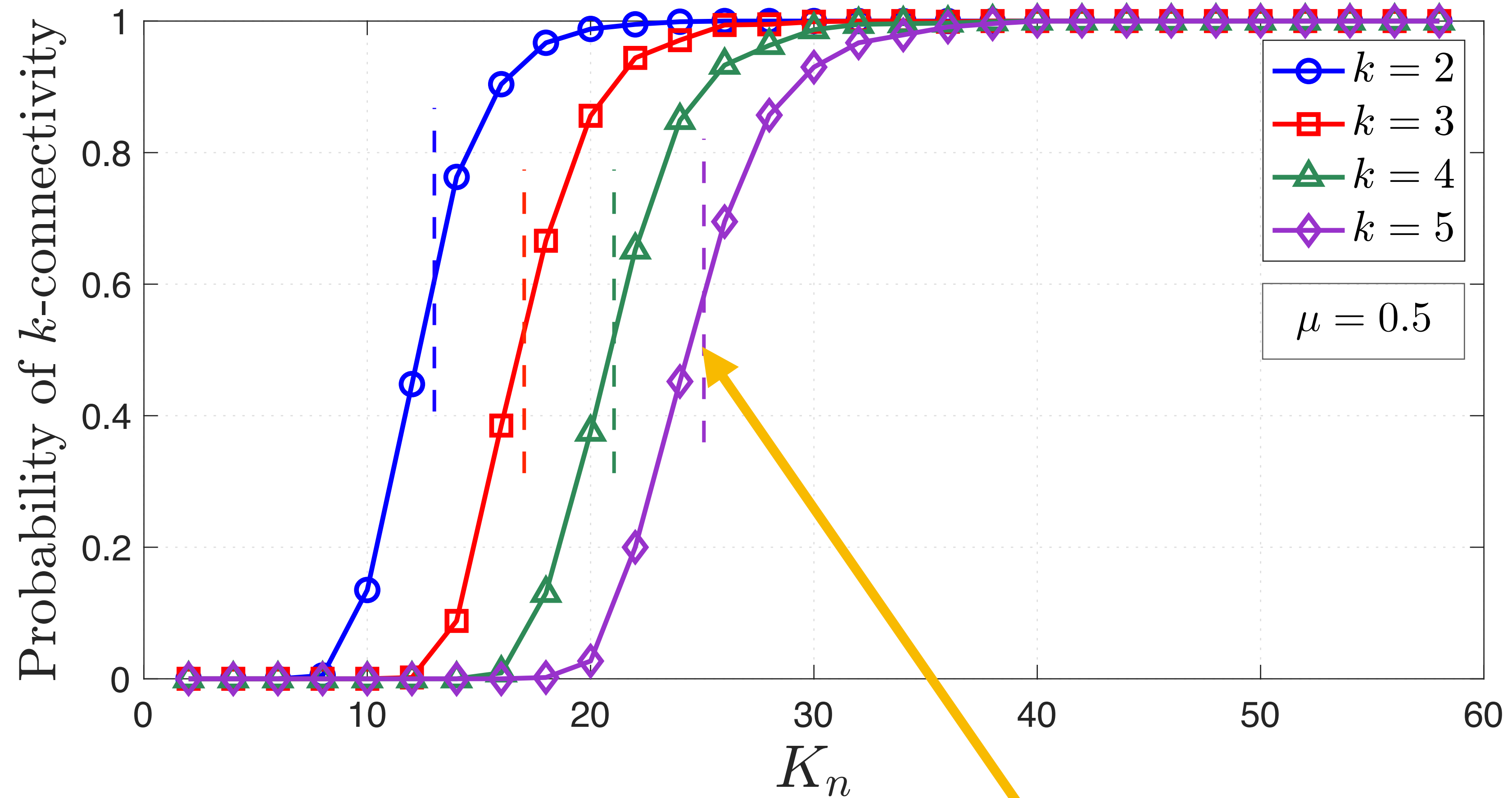
Theorem: k -connectivity

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} P [H(n; \mu, K_n) \text{ is } k\text{-connected}] = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } K_n = \frac{\log n + (k-2) \log \log n}{(1-\mu)} + \omega(1) \\ 0 & \text{if } K_n = \frac{\log n + (k-2) \log \log n}{(1-\mu)} - \omega(1) \end{cases}$$

where $0 < \mu < 1$, $k = 2, 3, \dots$

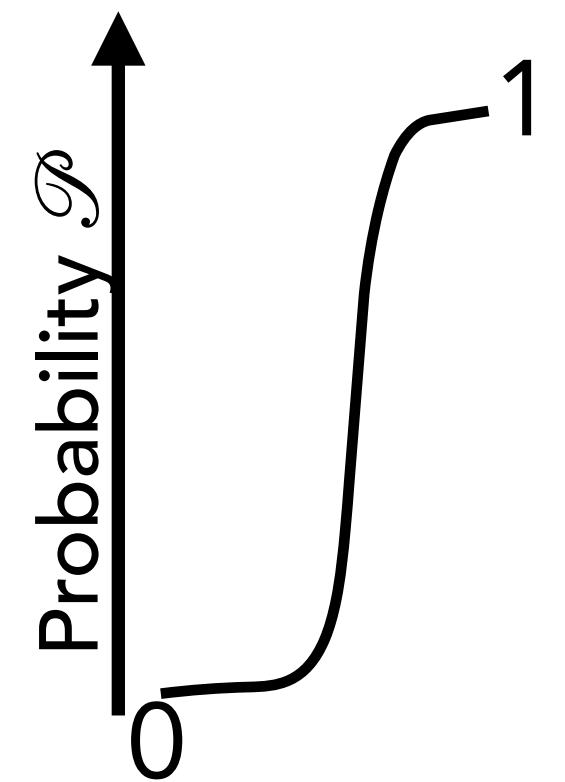
Threshold for k -connectivity

1000 nodes, averaged over 1000 independently generated networks



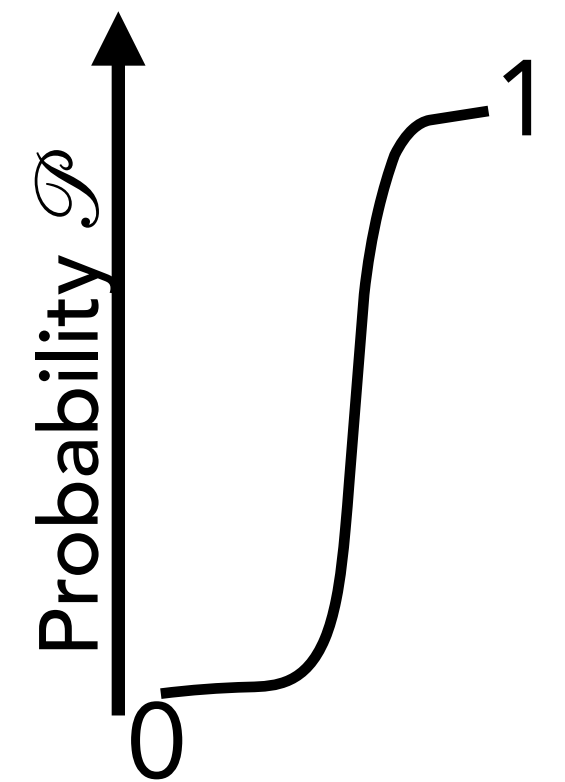
Thresholds (Predicted) in Theorem

Method of moments: a recipe for reasoning about thresholds



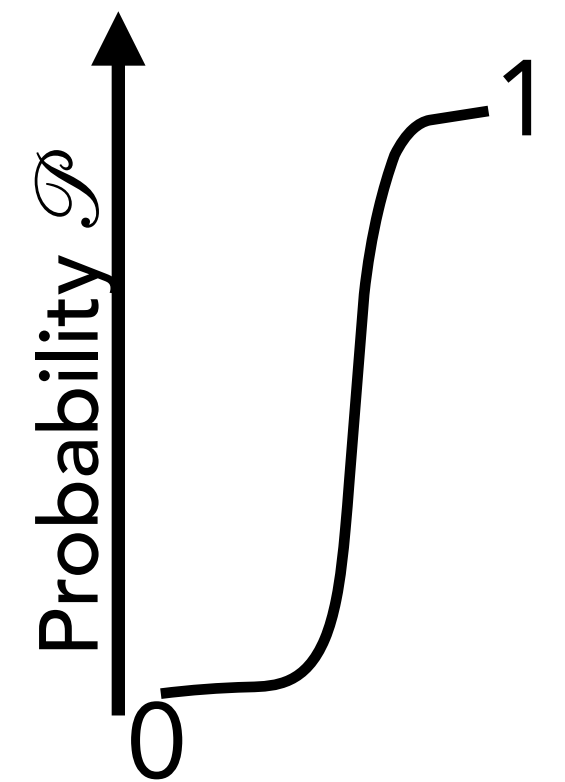
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- **Given:** A random graph $\mathbb{G}(n, \theta_n)$ and a property \mathcal{P} that is *monotone* in edge addition



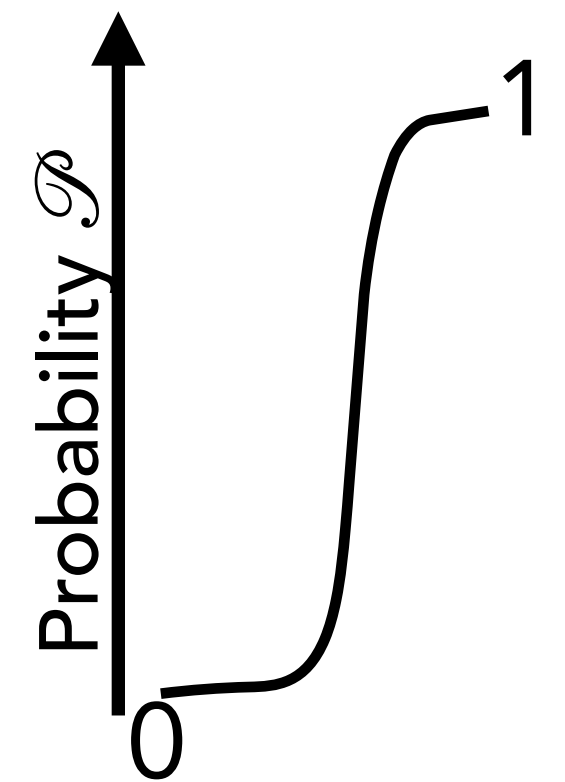
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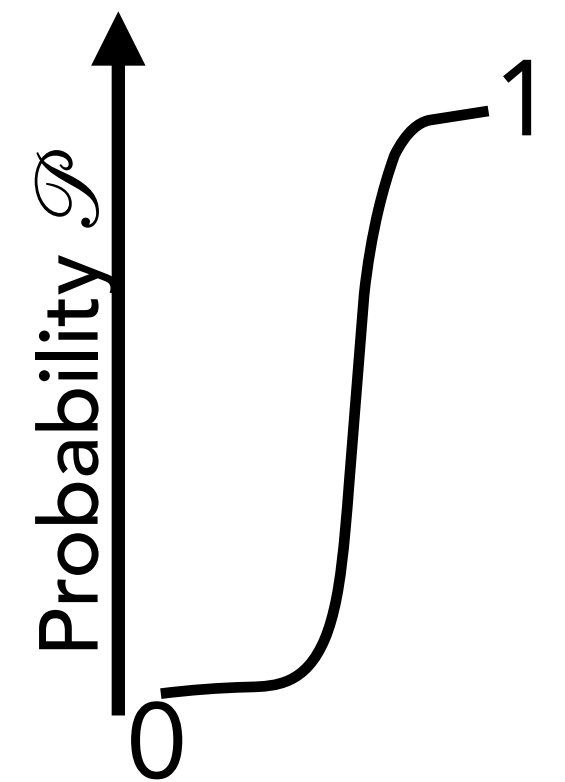
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(Often defined in terms of a θ_n^* 'around which \mathcal{P} abruptly changes from 0 to 1' "Threshold")



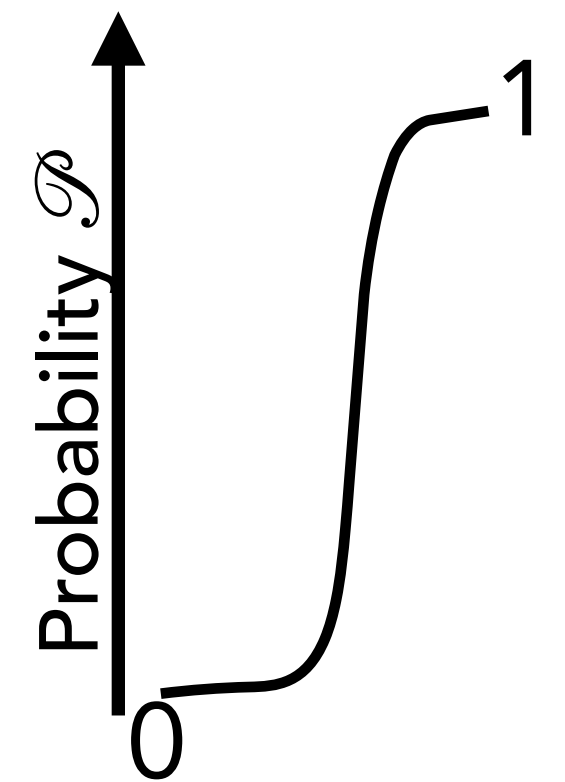
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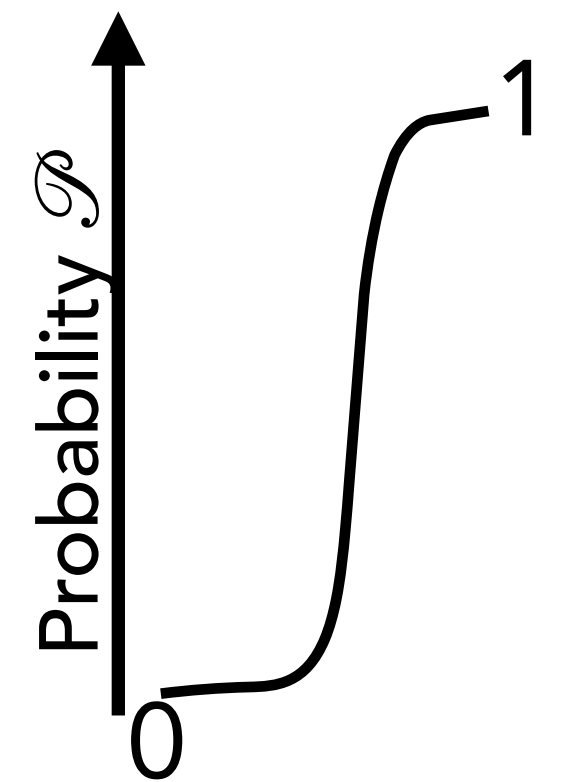
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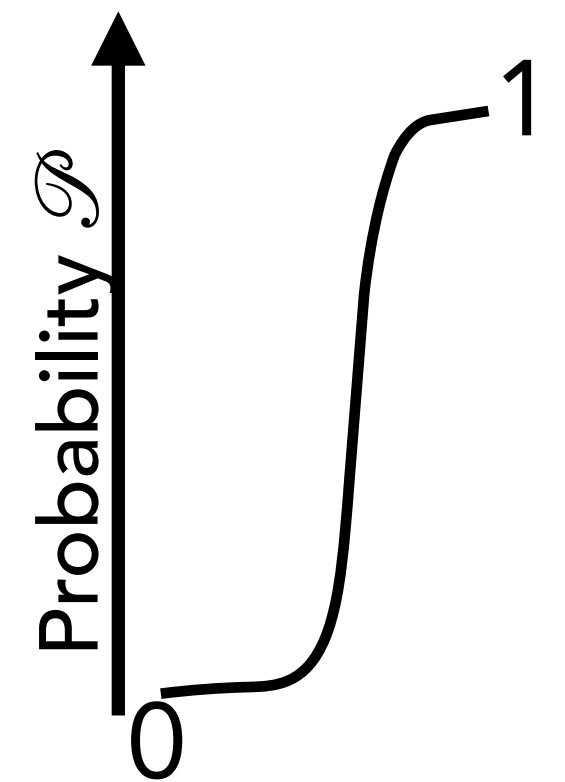


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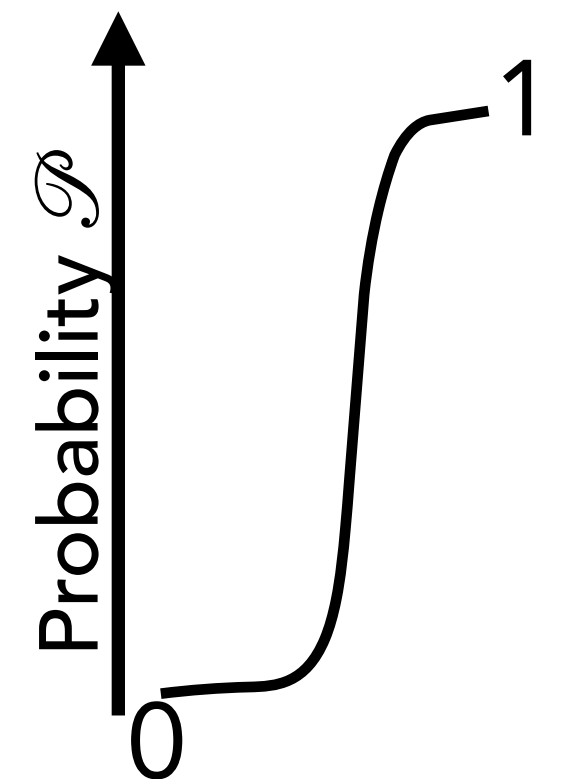
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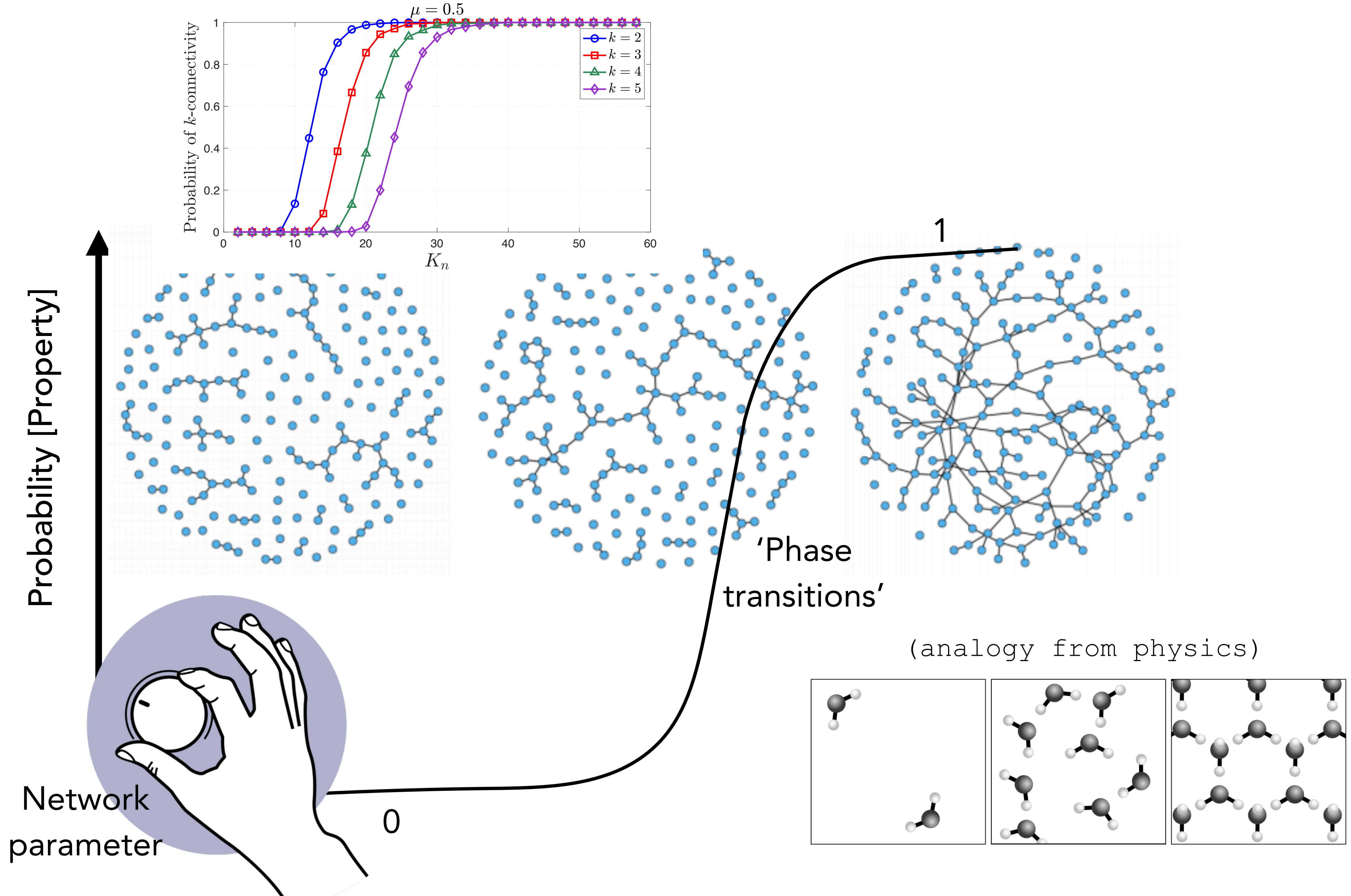
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- In the method of moments, we bound the above two events using moments of Z_i s.





Method of moments: a recipe for reasoning about thresholds

- Suppose $Z_i, i = 1, 2, \dots$ are indicator random variables for 'bad' events / substructures

'First-moment' technique:

$$\mathbb{P} [\sum_i Z_i \geq 1] \rightarrow 0 \implies \mathcal{P} \text{ wp } \rightarrow 1$$

$$\leq \mathbb{E}[\sum_i Z_i]$$

suffices to argue that $\mathbb{E}[\sum_i Z_i] \rightarrow 0$
requires only 'first-moment'

'Second-moment' technique:

$$\mathbb{P} [\sum_i Z_i \geq 1] \rightarrow 1 \implies \mathcal{P} \text{ wp } \rightarrow 0$$

$$\mathbb{P}[\sum_i Z_i \geq 1] \geq \frac{\mathbb{E}^2[\sum_i Z_i]}{\mathbb{E}[(\sum_i Z_i)^2]}$$

e.g., argue with CS

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}^2[\sum_i Z_i] &= \mathbb{E}^2[(\sum_i Z_i) \times \mathbb{I}\{\sum_i Z_i \geq 1\}] \\ &\leq \mathbb{E}[(\sum_i Z_i)^2] \times \mathbb{P}[\sum_i Z_i \geq 1] \end{aligned}$$

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K-out graph mechanism induces
dependencies in edge generation

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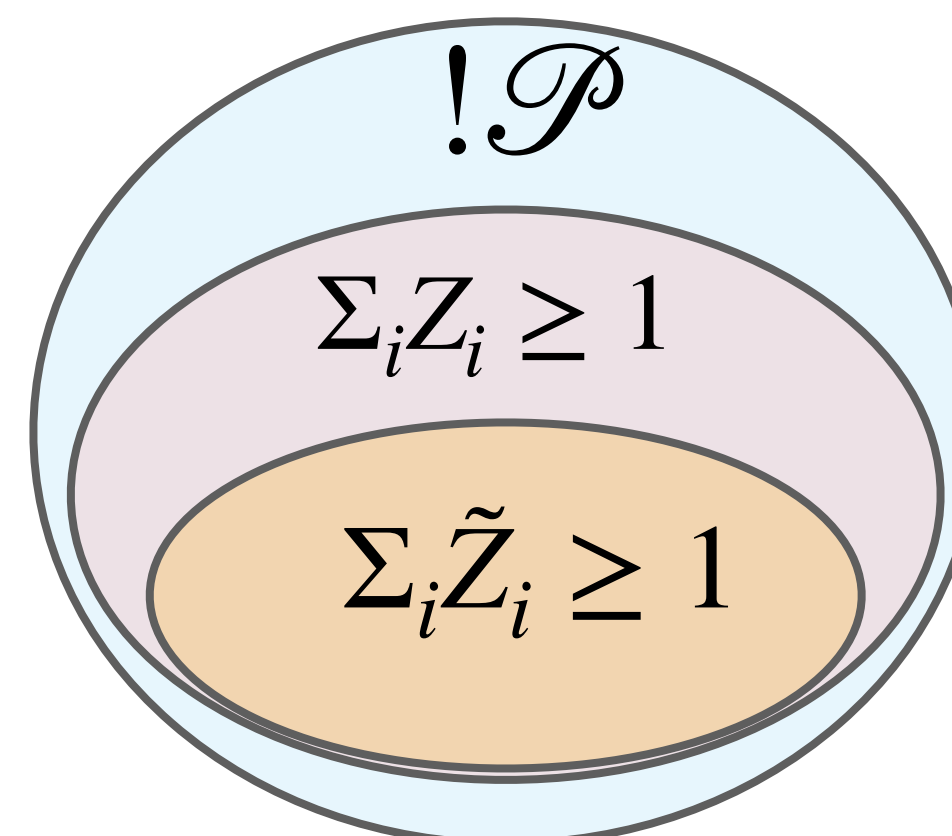
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Often useful to define another bad event
which is a subset, easier to compute, &
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k -vertex connectivity

Minimum node degree (δ)

Minimum no. of **edges** to be deleted to disconnect the network (k_E) (edge connectivity)

Minimum no. of **vertices** to be deleted to disconnect the network (k_V) (vertex connectivity)

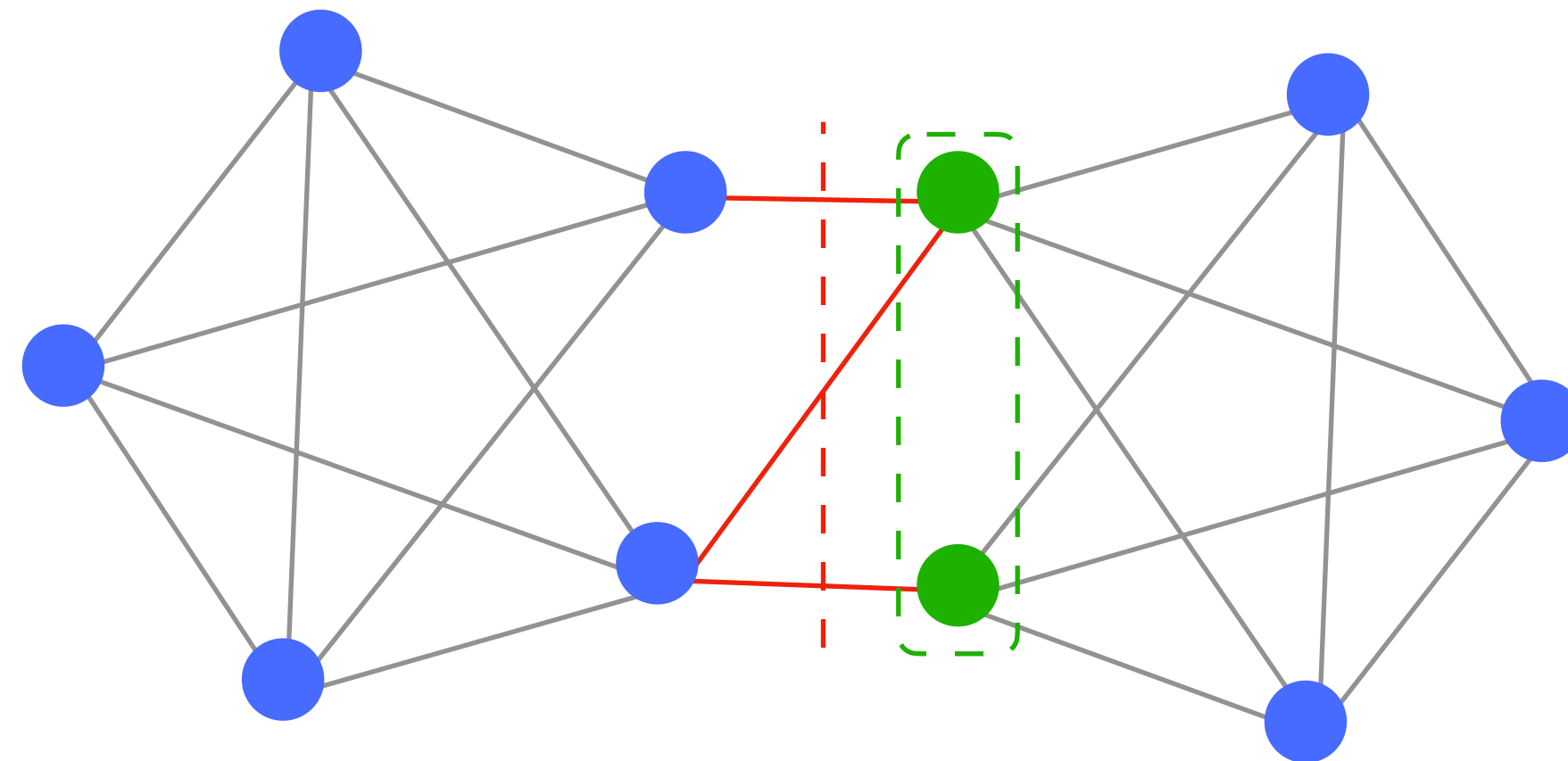
$$k_V \leq k_E \leq \delta$$

$$k_V \geq k \quad \Rightarrow \quad k_E \geq k \quad \Rightarrow \quad \delta \geq k$$

(Strongest)

minimum node degree $\geq k$ does not imply k -connectivity

An illustration $k_V < k_E < \delta$



Minimum node degree (δ) = 4

Minimum no. of **edges** to be deleted to disconnect (k_E) = 3

Minimum no. of **nodes** to be deleted to disconnect (k_V) = 2

Threshold for Minimum node degree $\delta \geq k$

Recall: Each node is **Type-I** w.p. μ , **Type-II** w.p. $1-\mu$
(pick 1 node) (pick K_n nodes)

Theorem: minimum node degree

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} P [H(n; \mu, K_n) \text{ has } \delta \geq k] = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } K_n = \frac{\log n + (k-2) \log \log n}{(1-\mu)} + \omega(1) \\ 0 & \text{if } K_n = \frac{\log n + (k-2) \log \log n}{(1-\mu)} - \omega(1) \end{cases}$$

where $0 < \mu < 1$, $k = 2, 3, \dots$

*Sood and Yagan, IEEE Transactions on Information Theory '21

k -connectivity (zero law)

Minimum node degree $\delta \geq k$ is necessary for k -connectivity

Theorem: minimum node degree*

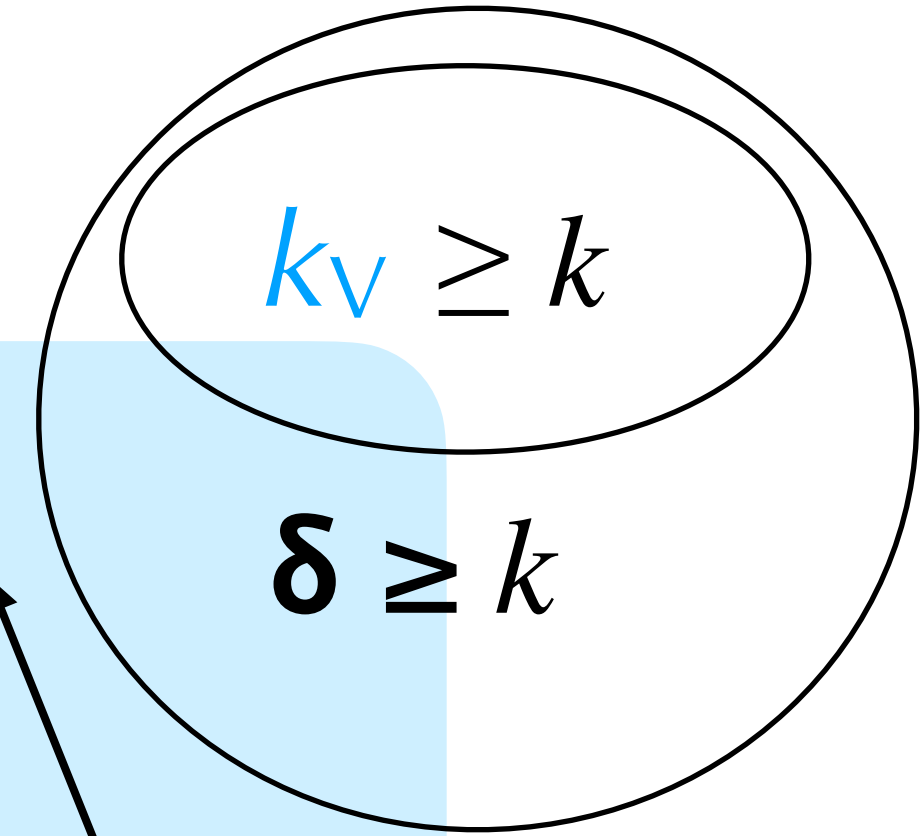
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k -connectivity (one law)

$$0 < \mu < 1, \quad k = 2, 3, \dots \quad \text{if } K_n = \frac{\log n + (k-2) \log \log n + \gamma(n)}{(1-\mu)}$$



$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} P[\delta \geq k] = 1 \quad \kappa_v \leq \delta$$

To show: $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} P[\kappa_v \geq k] = 1$

$$P[\kappa_v \geq k] = P[\delta \geq k] - P[\kappa_v < k, \delta \geq k]$$

Prove that $\rightarrow 0$

Prove that $\rightarrow 0$

$$P[\{\kappa_v = \ell, \delta > \ell\}] \rightarrow 0, \ell = 0, 1, \dots, k-1$$

Focus on sequences $\gamma_n = \omega(1), \gamma_n = O(\log n)$

Use coupling argument to show that the monotone property also holds for the general case

$$0 < \mu < 1, \quad k = 2, 3, \dots \quad \text{if } K_n = \frac{\log n + (k-2) \log \log n + \gamma_n}{(1-\mu)}$$

Show that

$$P[\{\kappa_v = \ell, \delta > \ell\}] \rightarrow 0, \ell = 0, 1, \dots, k-1$$

Step 2: Focus on sequences $\gamma_n = \omega(1), \gamma_n = O(\log n)$

Use coupling argument to show that if the monotone property (k-con) holds for this case, then it also holds for the general case

Necessary condition for $P[\{\kappa_v = \ell, \delta > \ell\}] = B_{UT} \cap C_T \cap D_{UT}$

$$P[\{\kappa_v = \ell, \delta > \ell\}] \rightarrow 0, \ell = 0, 1, \dots, k-1$$

$$|T| \geq 2$$

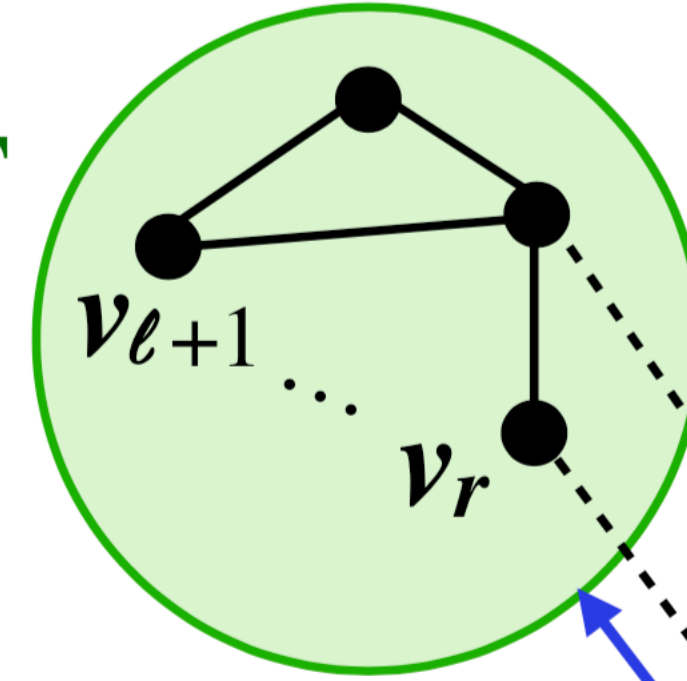
$$(\delta \geq \ell + 1)$$

For $\mathbb{H}(n; \mu, K_n)$, if $\delta > \ell$ and $\kappa_v = \ell$ then $\exists U, T \subset \mathcal{N}$ such that $|U| = \ell$ and $2 \leq |T| \leq \lfloor \frac{n-\ell}{2} \rfloor$ and the following events occur.

1. C_T : $\mathbb{H}(n; \mu, K_n)(T)$ is connected,
2. B_{UT} : All nodes in U have a neighbor in the set T ,
3. D_{UT} : T is isolated in $\mathbb{H}(n; \mu, K_n)(U^c)$; i.e., there are no edges in $\mathbb{H}(n; \mu, K_n)$ between nodes in T and nodes in $U^c \setminus T$.

Connected

C_T

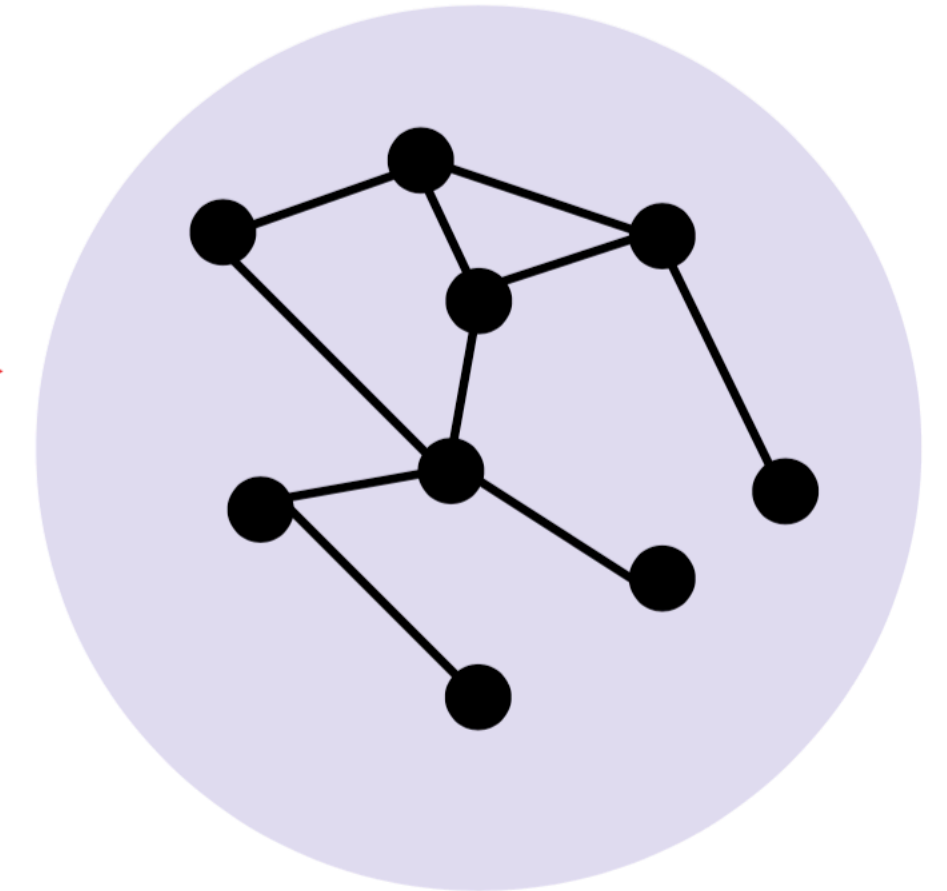


T

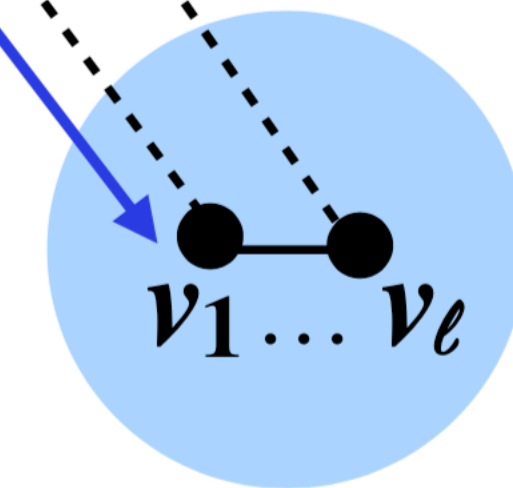
B_{UT}

If not $\kappa_v = \ell - 1$

D_{UT}



$U^c \setminus T$

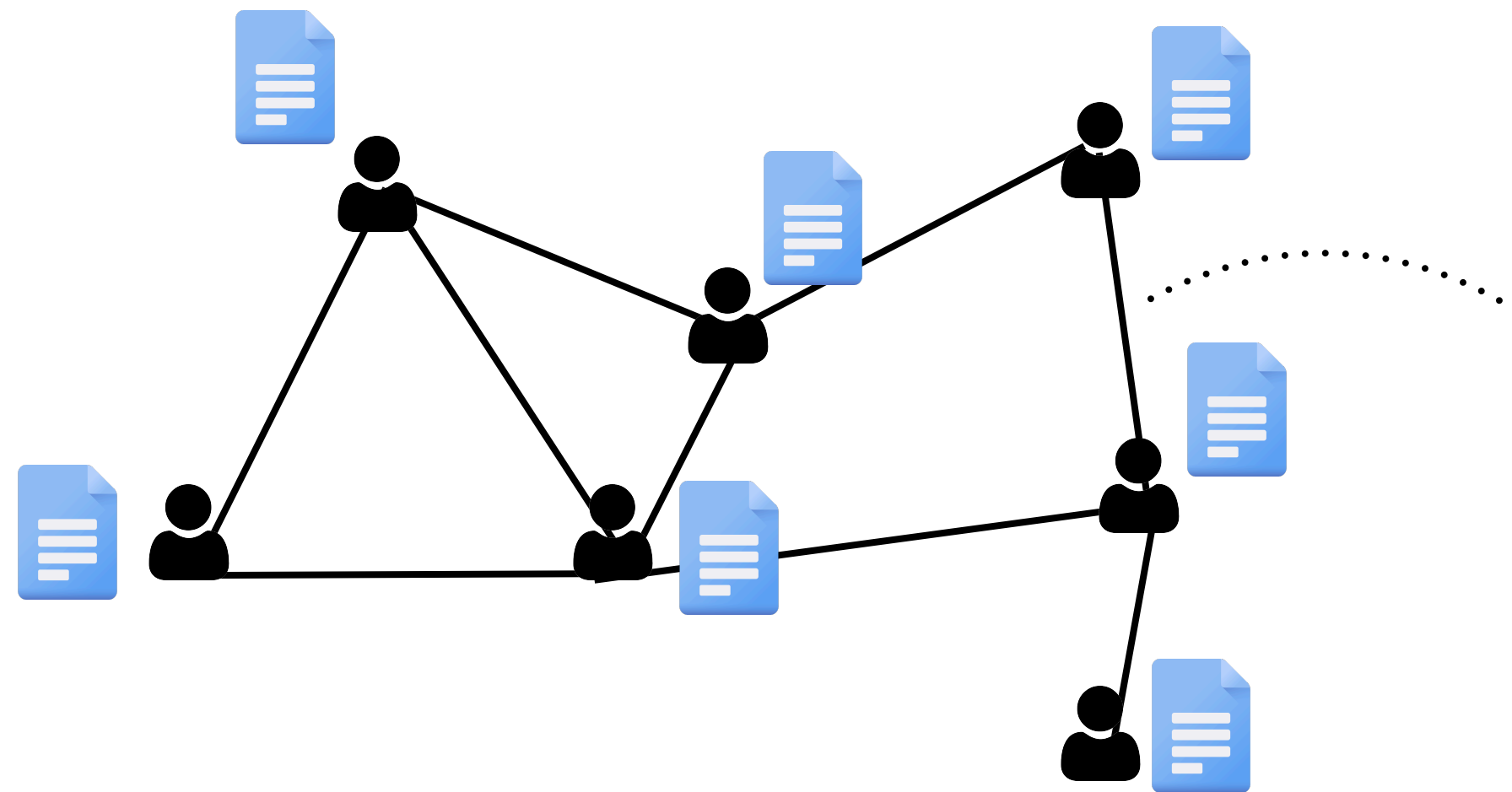


U

$$P[\{\kappa_v = \ell, \delta > \ell\}] \leq P[\bigcup_{U, T} B_{UT} \cap C_T \cap D_{UT}]$$

Goes to 0

Part 1: Road-map



How to securely aggregate data?



Random
[network design]

- ✓ From distributed systems to random graphs
The sparsity connectivity trade-off
- ✓ What are random K-out graphs?
What makes them a useful design tool?
- ✓ Random K-out graphs in action
What graph properties matter?
- ✓ Review: Notions of Connectivity
- ✓ Preview of contributions
Key proof techniques

Sparsity-connectivity in distributed network design

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- Random K-out graphs
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 - order wise comparable efficiency as fundamental limits, more efficient than ER graphs
 - widely appearing heuristic in application such as privacy mechanisms, with privacy \leftrightarrow connectivity
 - analytical tractability to provide finer-grained guarantees against complex adversarial models

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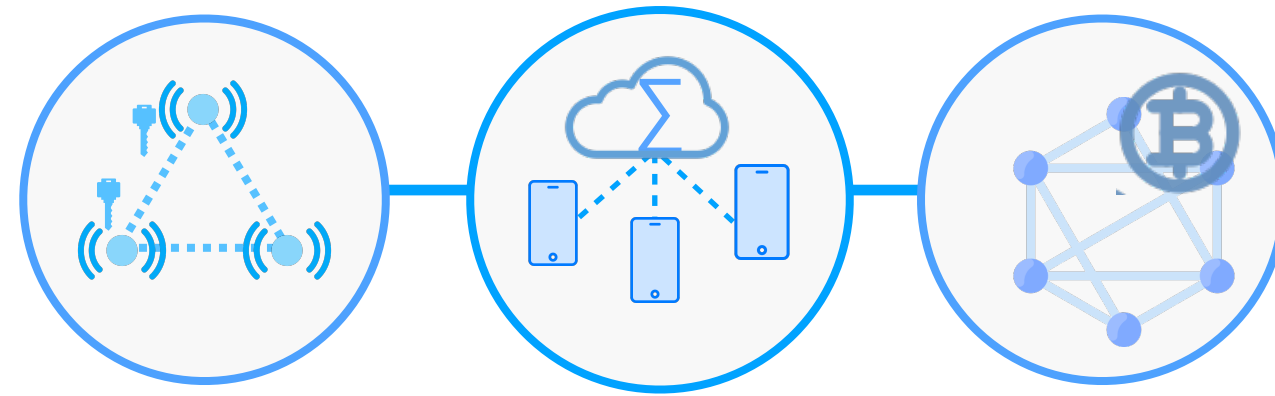
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- Limitations: Other modes of heterogeneity, sharper results for component sizes, dynamic graphs

Reliable Inference at Scale Using Graph Structure

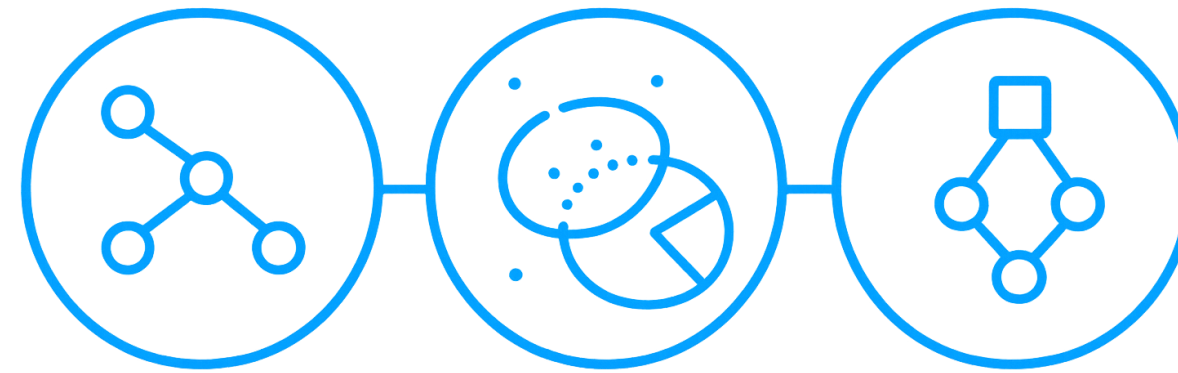
notions of connectivity

Distributed Systems



'secure' communication channel
between devices

Probabilistic Graphical Models



conditional dependencies
in observational data

efficiency

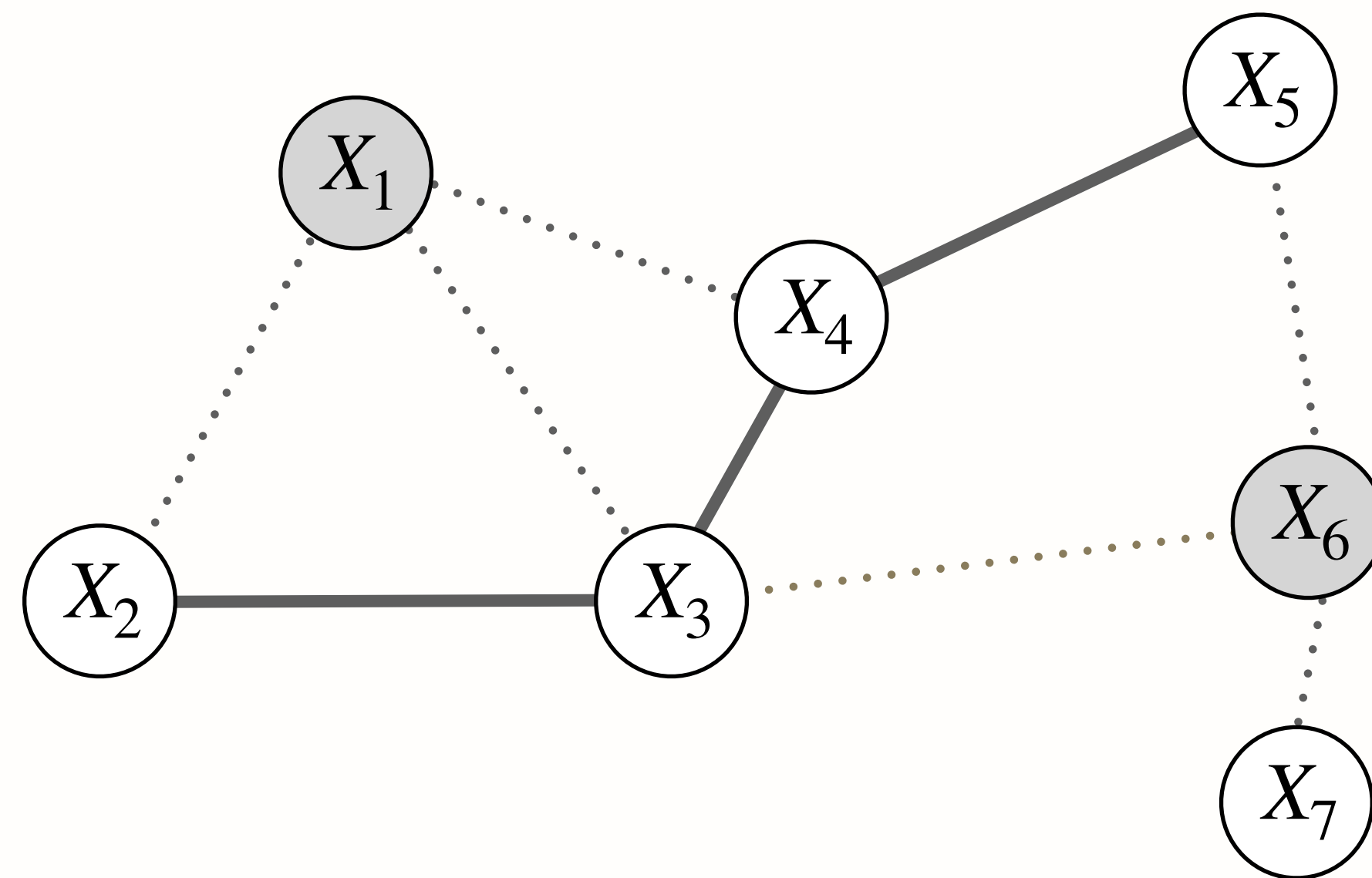
Combinatorics x distribution learning via graphical models

Graph encodes statistical dependencies between system variables

graph over random variables \leftrightarrow family of distributions consistent with combinatorial structure

~ absence of edges as
independence relationships

$$X_{I_1} \perp\!\!\!\perp X_{I_2} \mid X_{I'} \text{ whenever } I' \text{ separates } I_1, I_2$$



↑ edges: ↓ dependency assumptions, but ↑ parameters to learn

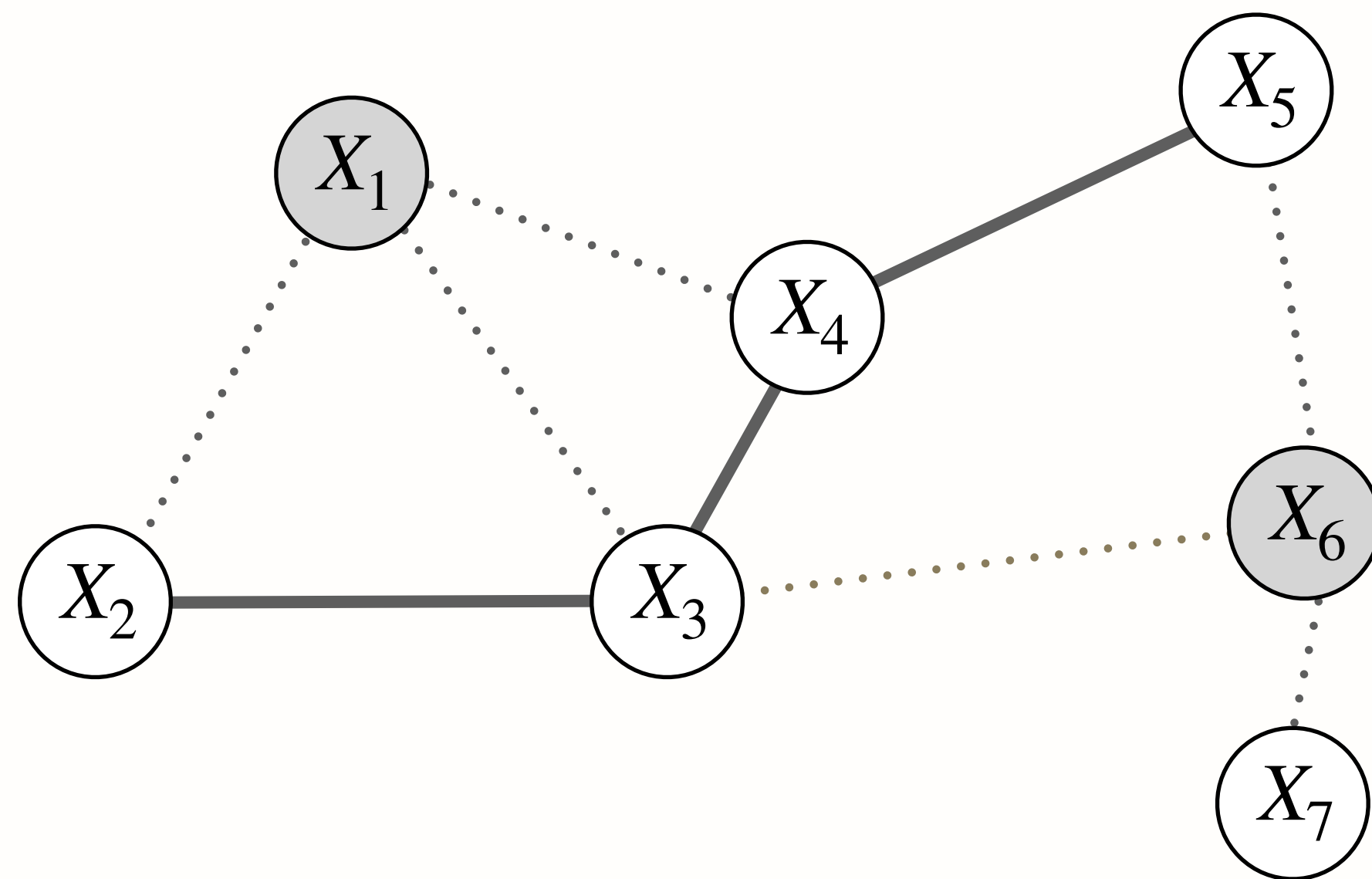
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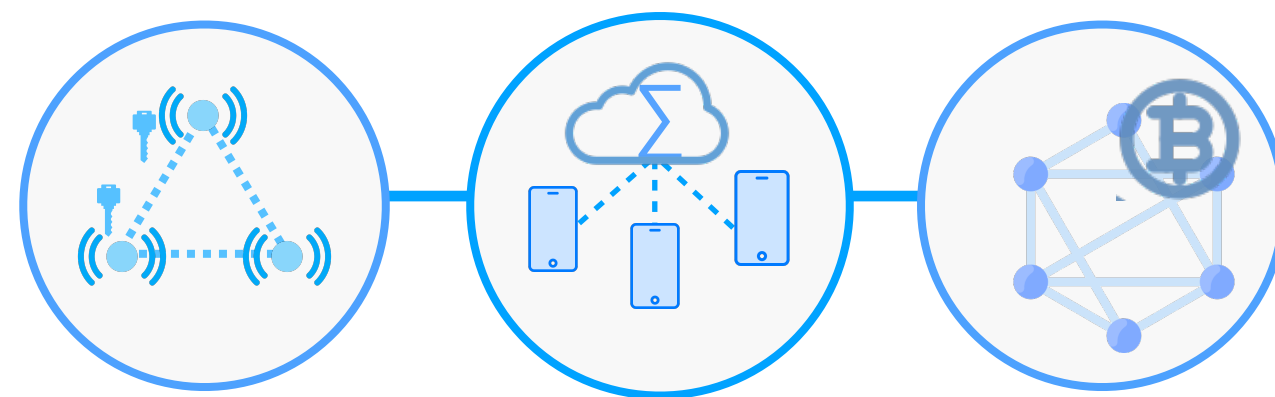
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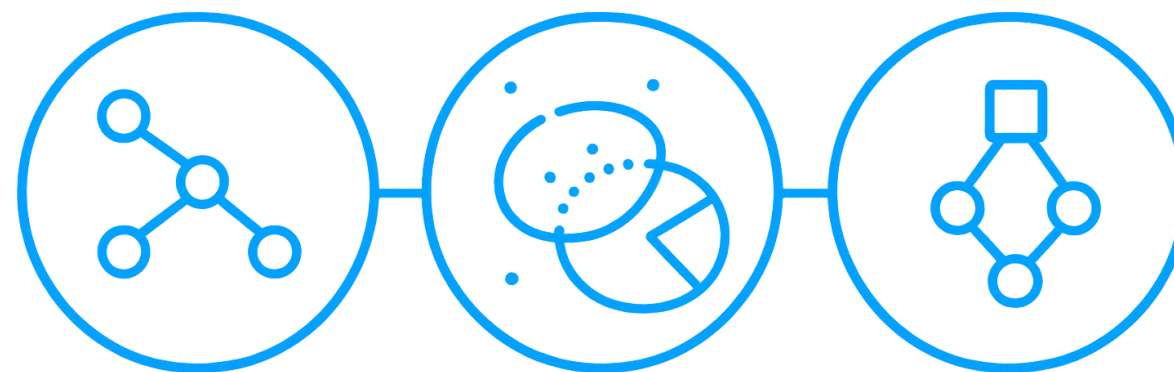
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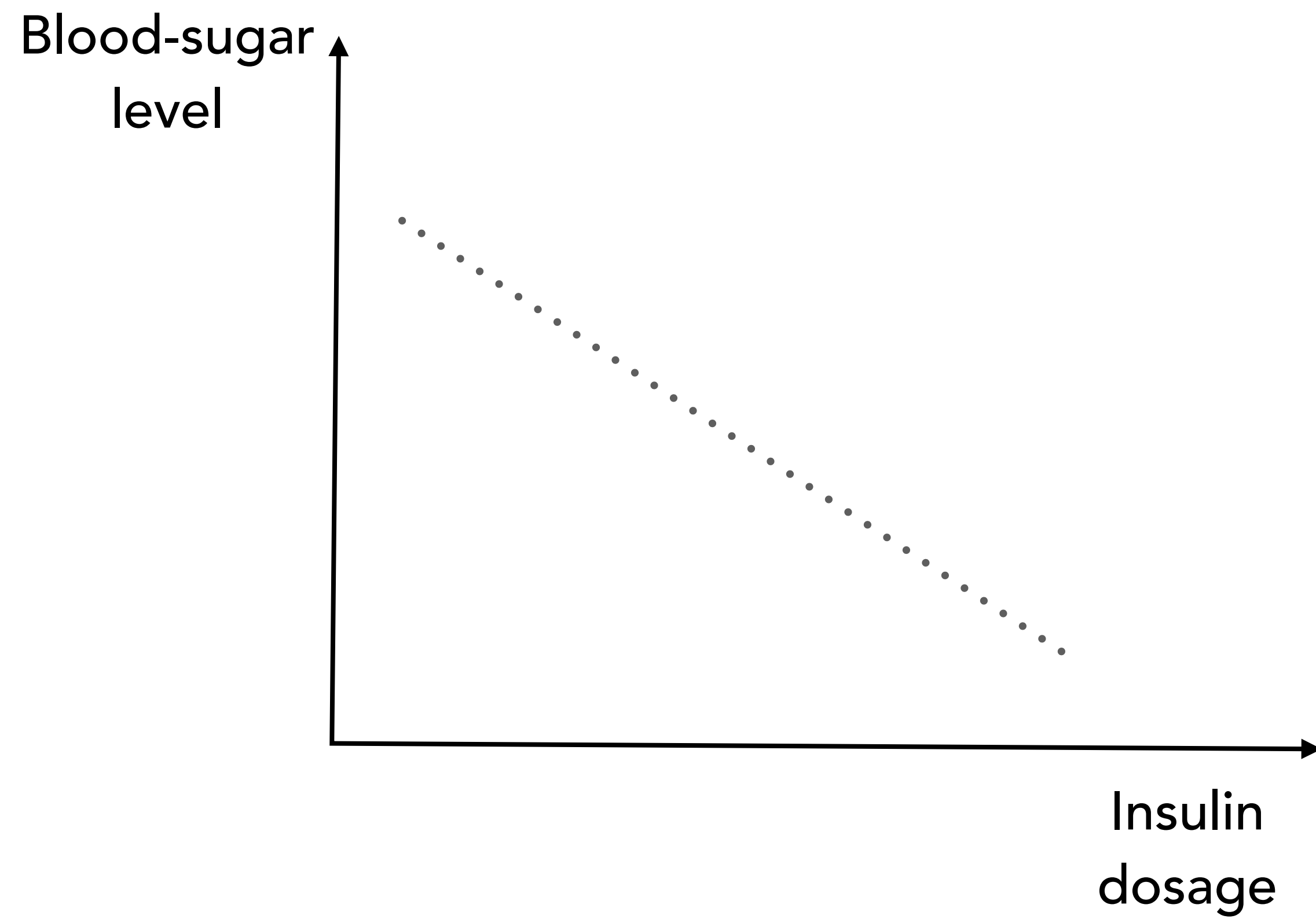
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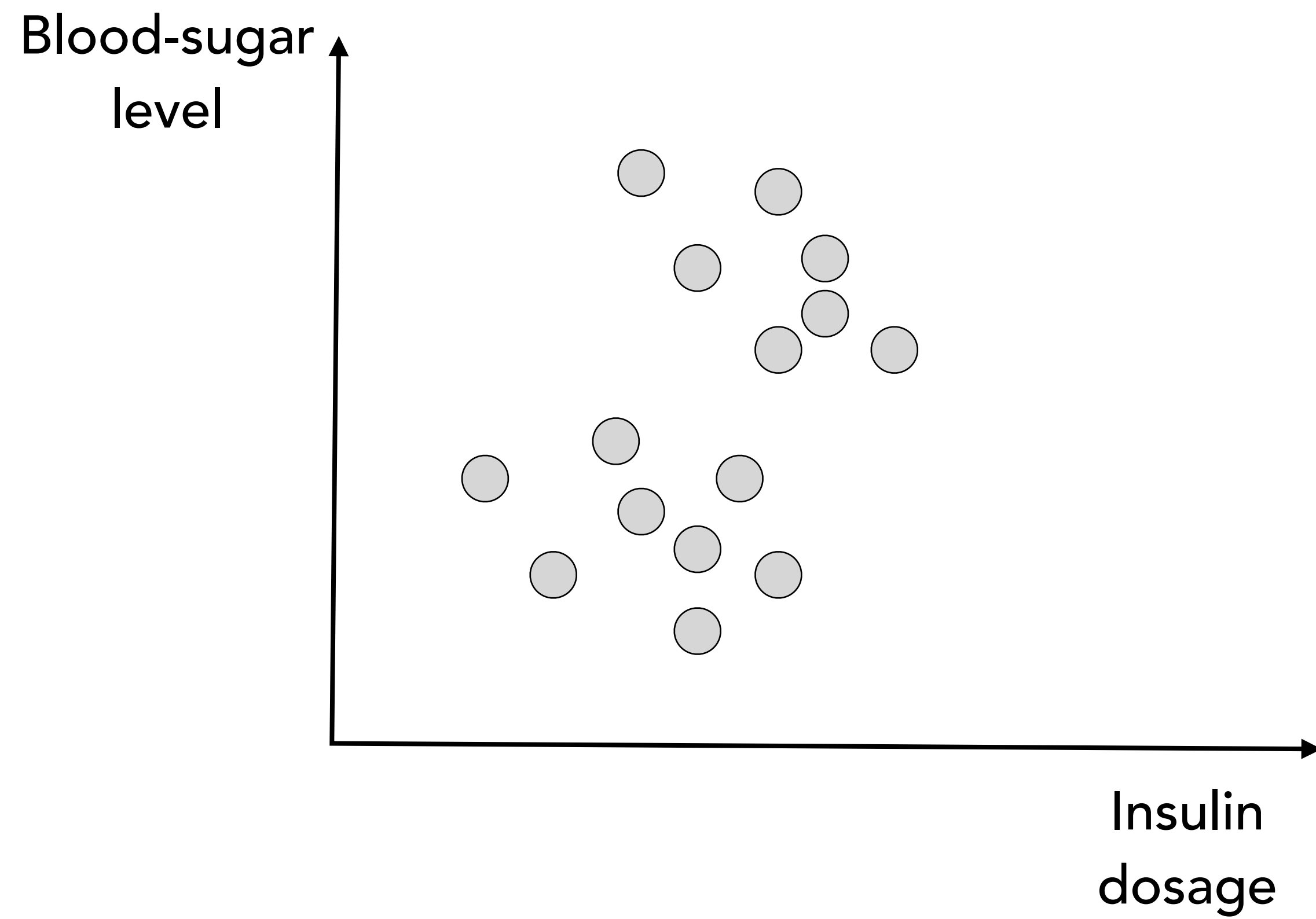


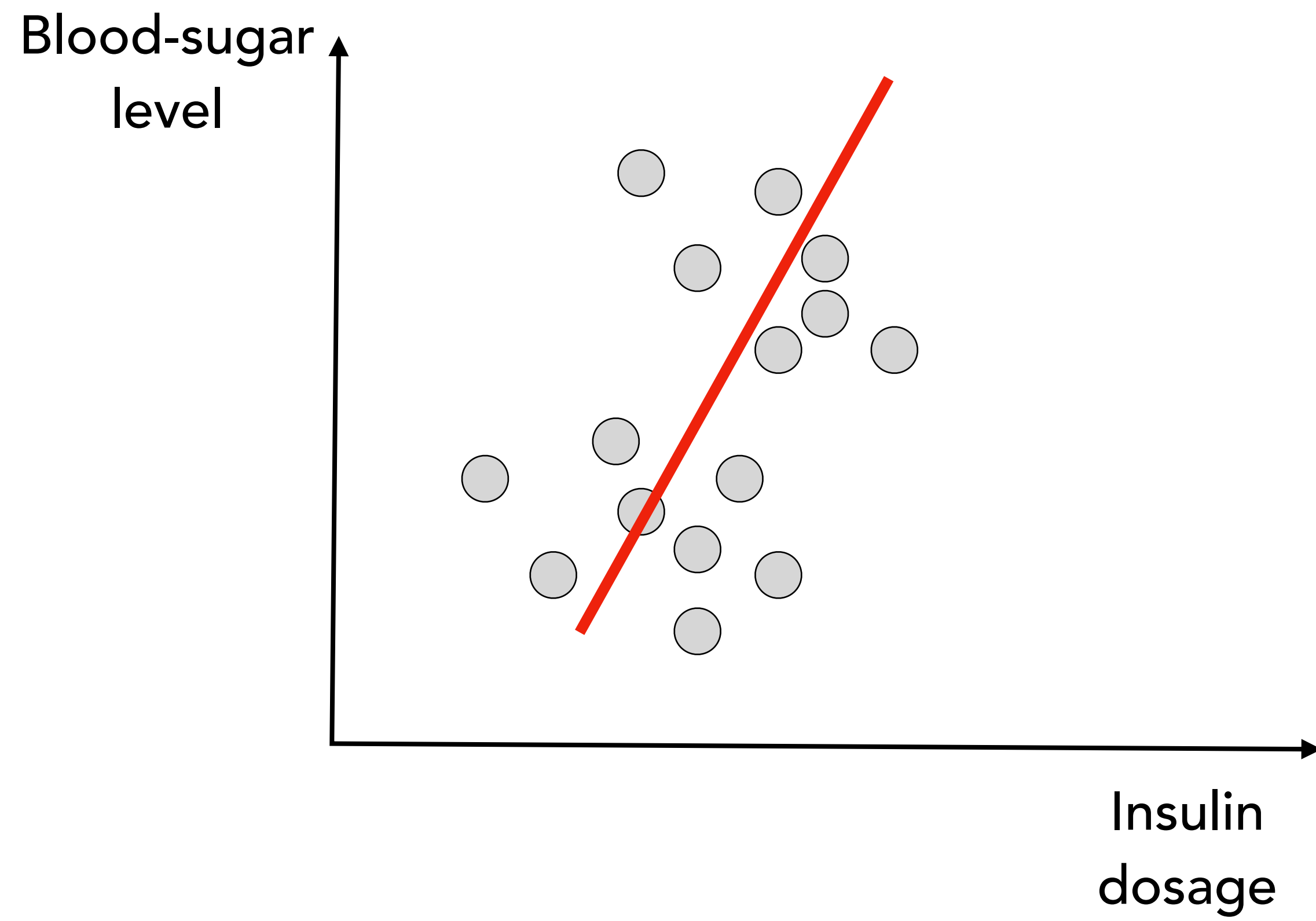
conditional dependencies
in observational data

computation

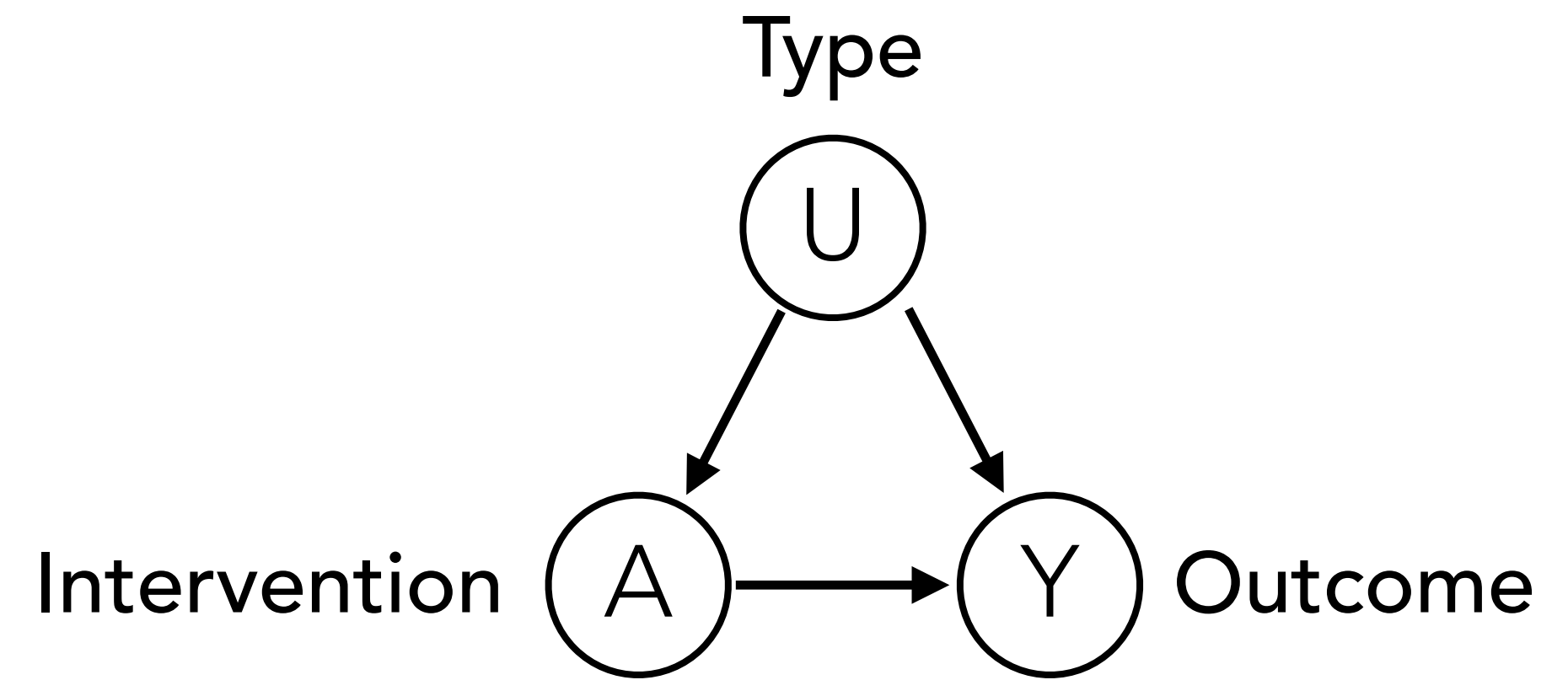
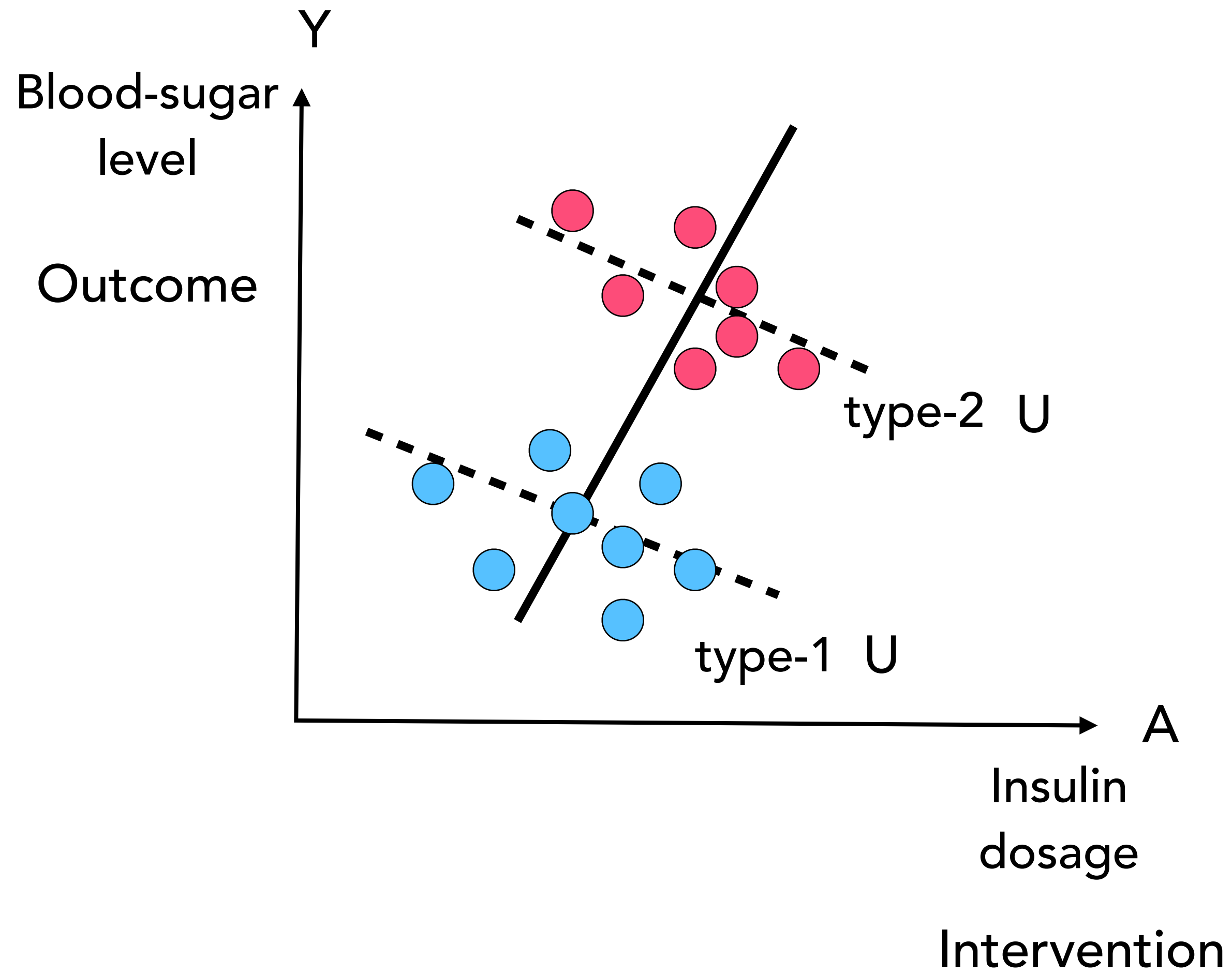
heterogeneity



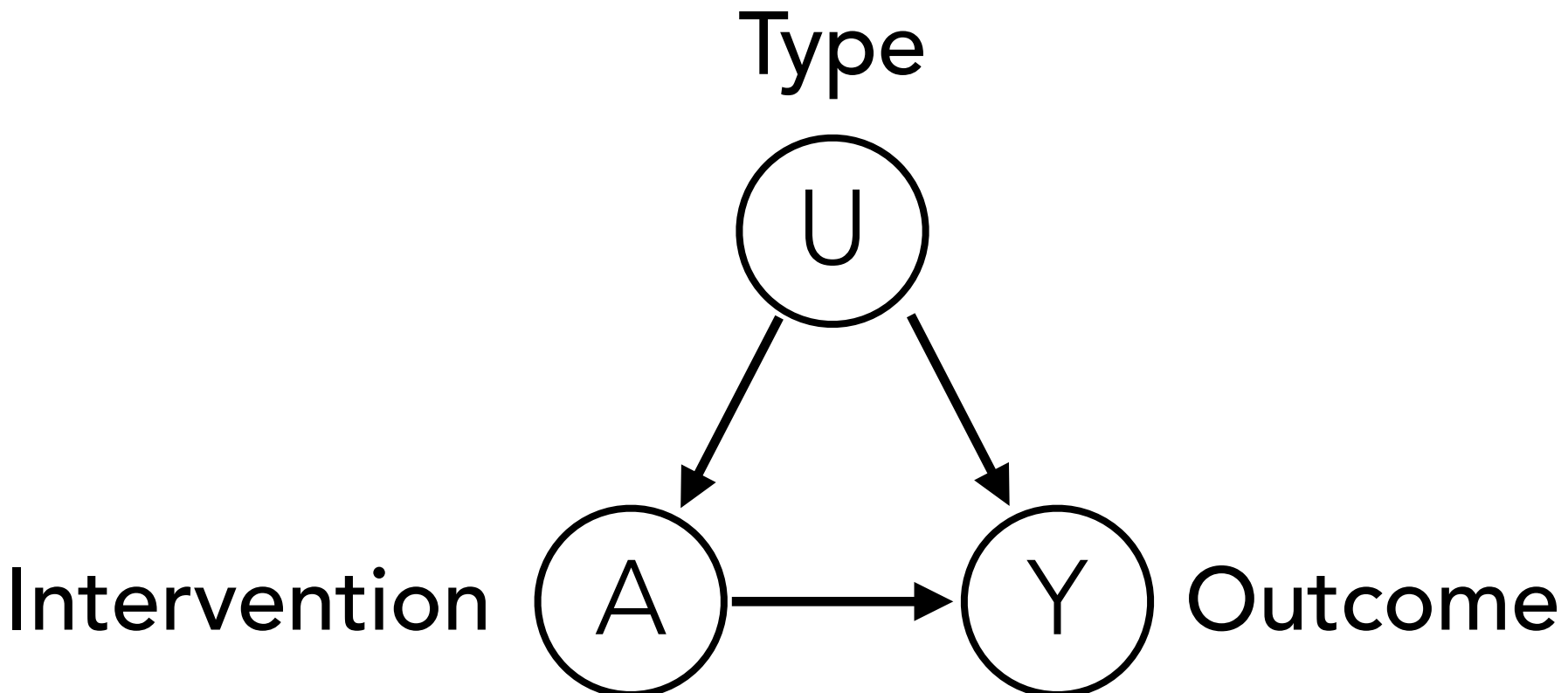
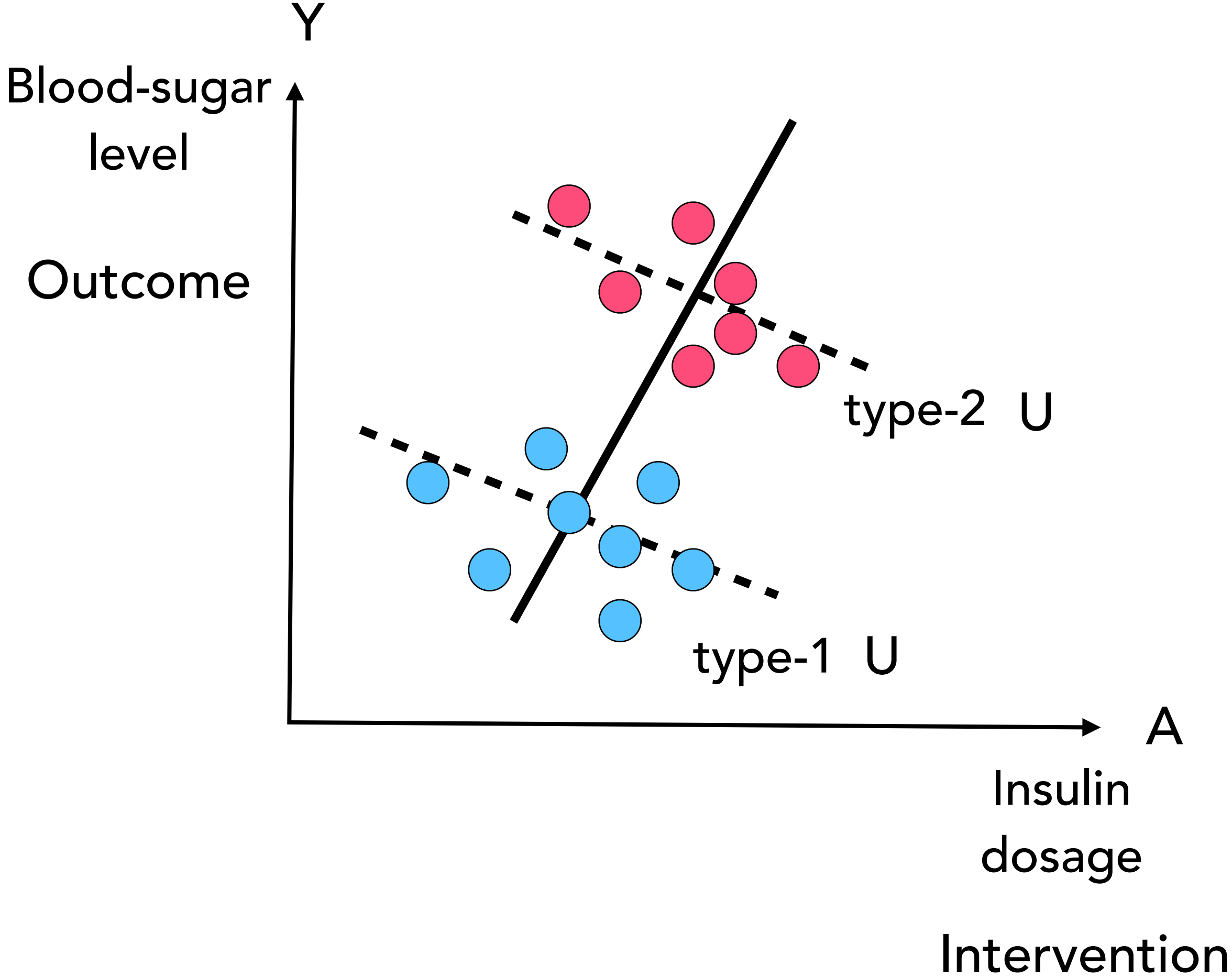




Simpson's Paradox



Simpson's Paradox



Given samples $(a^{(k)}, y^{(k)})_{k=1}^n$ from observational distribution $p(y, a)$,
 Learn interventional distribution $p(y | do(a))$ which factorizes as

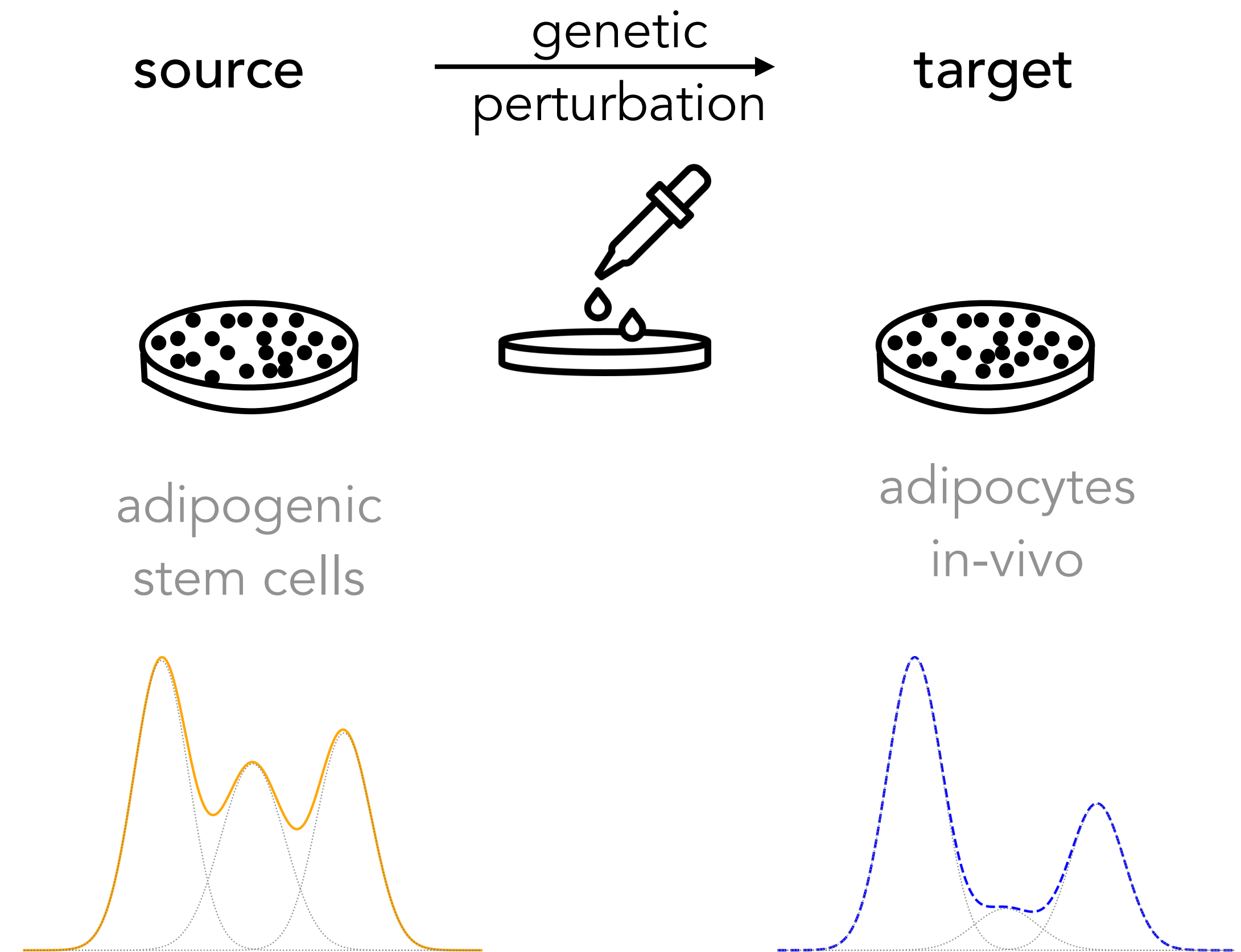
$$\begin{aligned}
 & p(y | a, u = 1) \cdot p(u = 1) \\
 + & p(y | a, u = 2) \cdot p(u = 2)
 \end{aligned}$$

component densities
mixing density

Our observational world is full of mixtures...

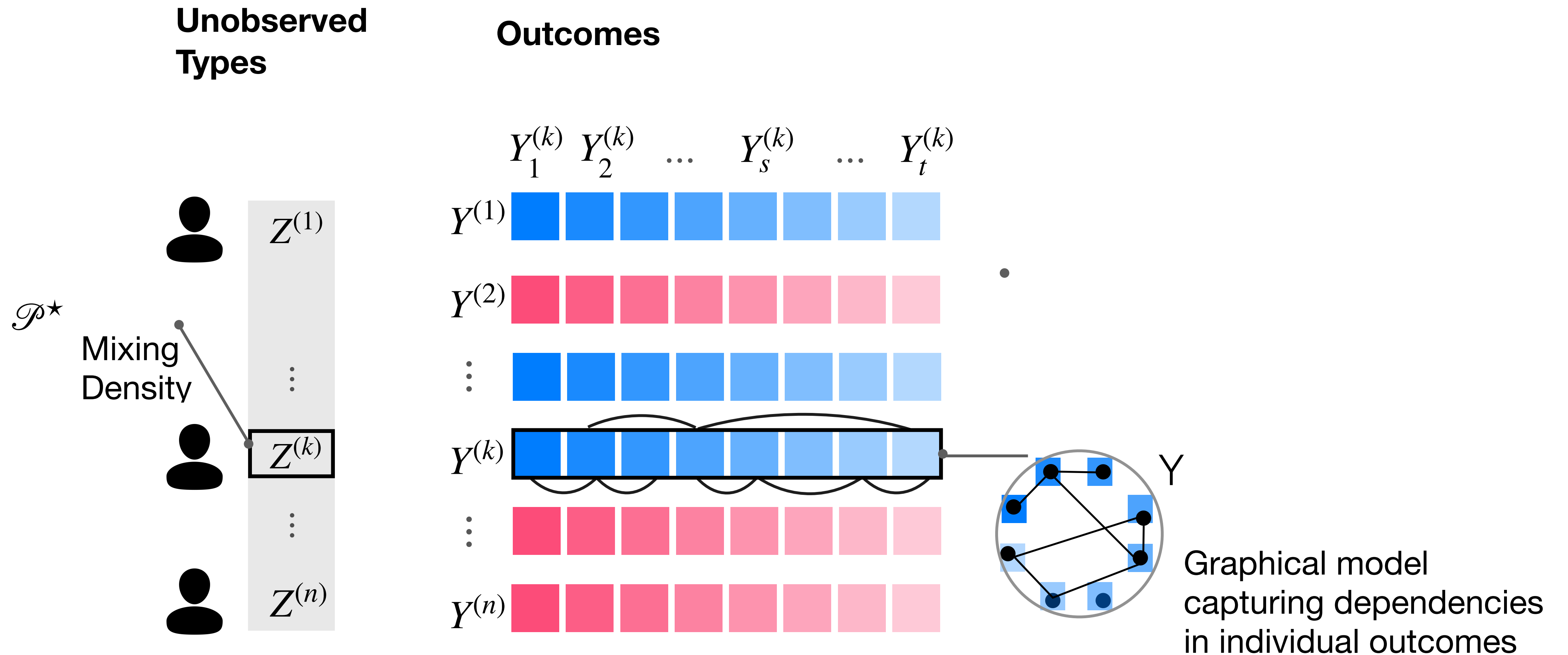
- Cells as vectors of gene expressions ($d \sim 20,000$)
- **Cell-types** described via mixing weights for base distributions

How to go from one cell-type (mixing distribution) to another?



Source and target cell-types as mixtures of few base distributions

Heterogeneity in observational data



Formalizing mixtures

(Log-likelihood)

$$p(y) = \sum_{\theta} \boxed{p(y; \theta)} \boxed{p(\theta)}$$

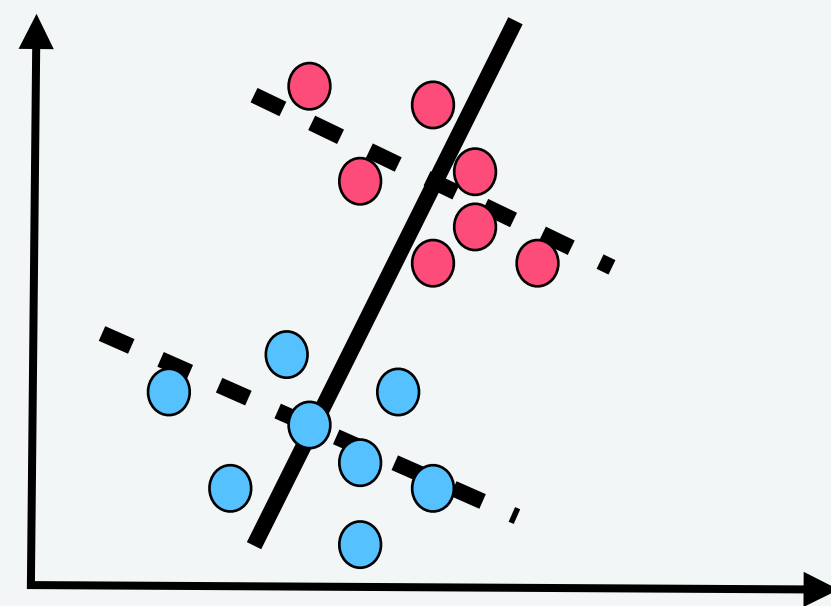
mixture components
(typically parametric)

mixing distribution

$$\sum_{k \in [n]} \log \left(\sum_{\theta} p(y^{(k)}; \theta) p(\theta) \right)$$

- log sum computation
- non convex objective

mixtures x causal



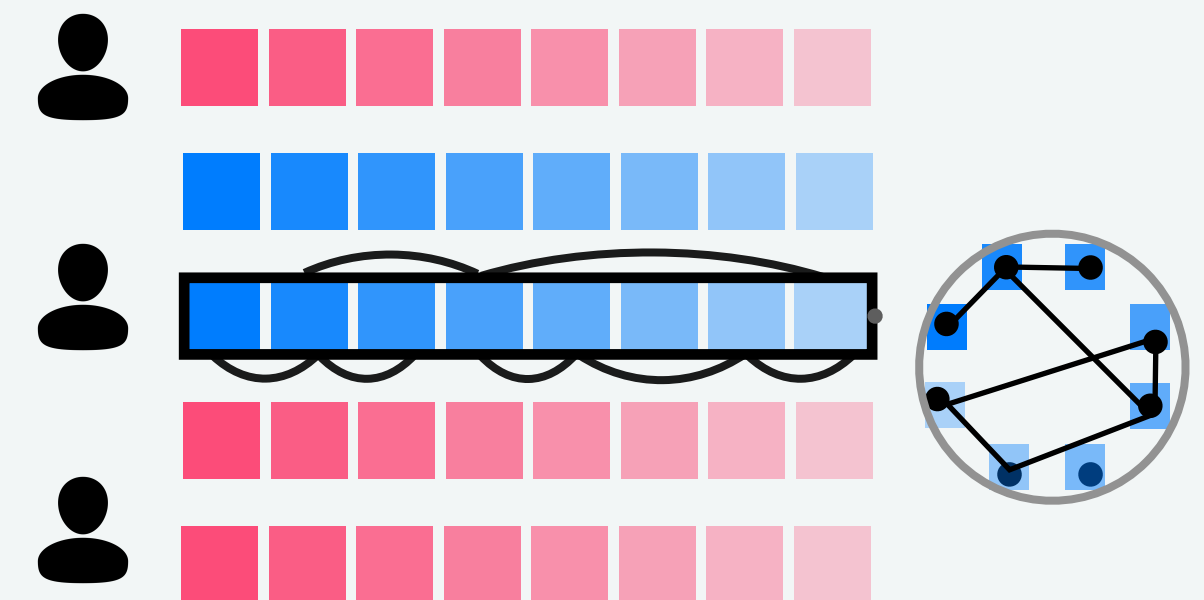
high-dimensions

Stat. Error

Compute

convex loss
exp family geometry

dependencies



Mixtures of
Exponential family

M.S. D.S., to appear at **ISIT '26**

A new lens for learning exponential family mixtures

convex loss minimization \rightarrow clustering

(error rates \leftrightarrow metric entropy of parameter space)

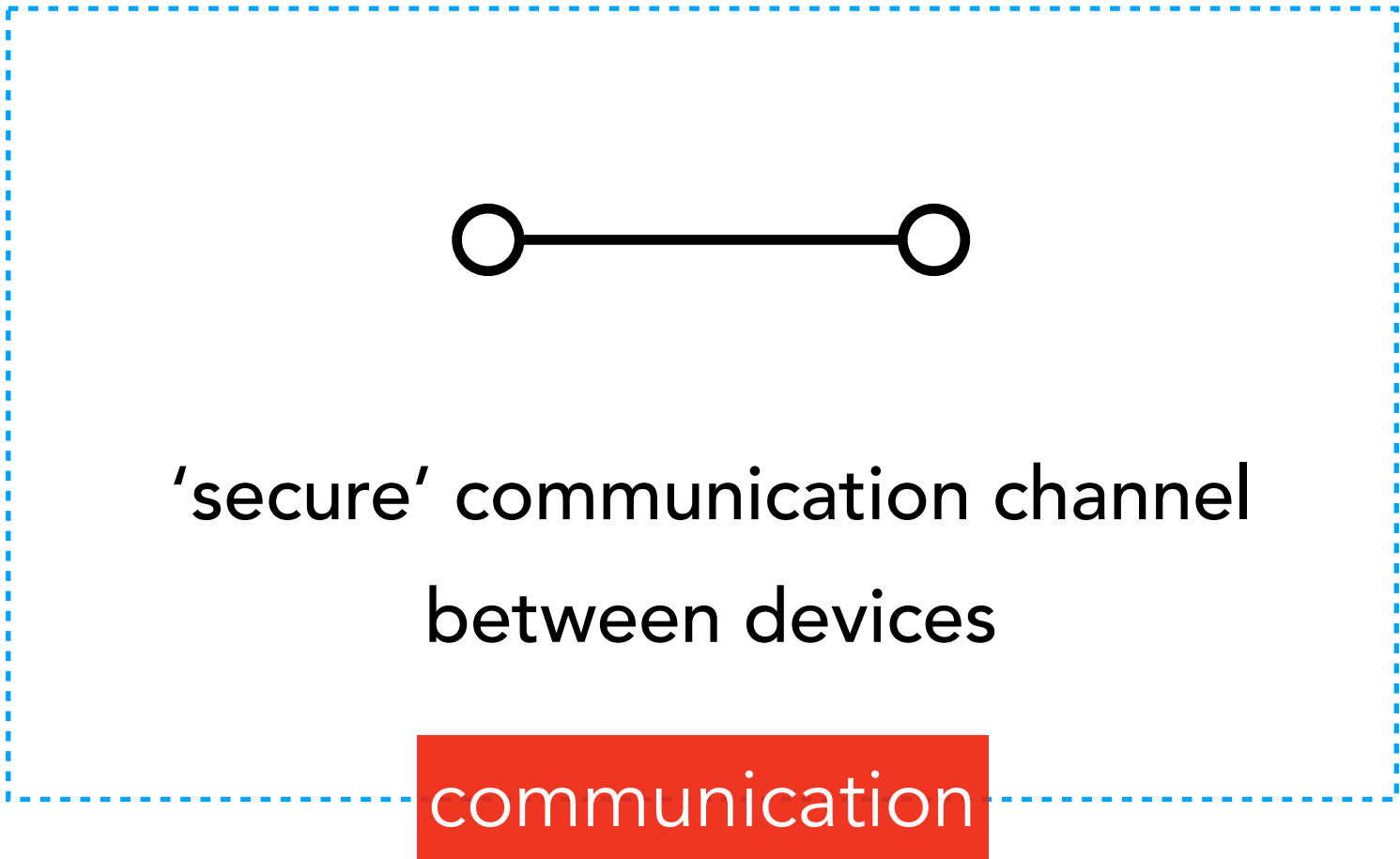
Summing: Reliable Inference at Scale Using Graph Structure

notions of connectivity

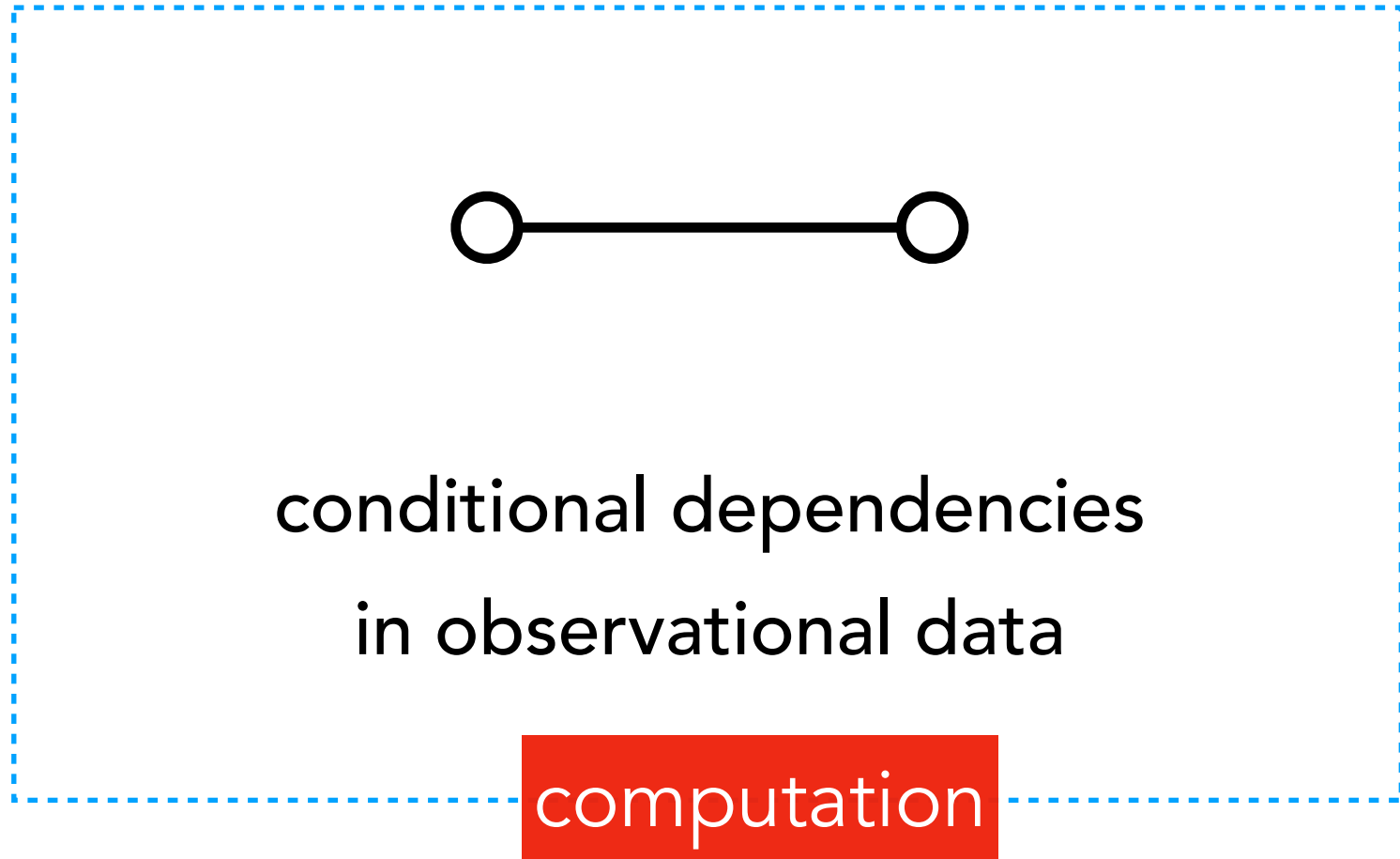
Theme: leverage **structure** (encoded as graphs) to improve **efficiency**
implications of **heterogeneity** for large-scale inference,

Focus: algorithms appearing as canonical subroutines in inference pipelines

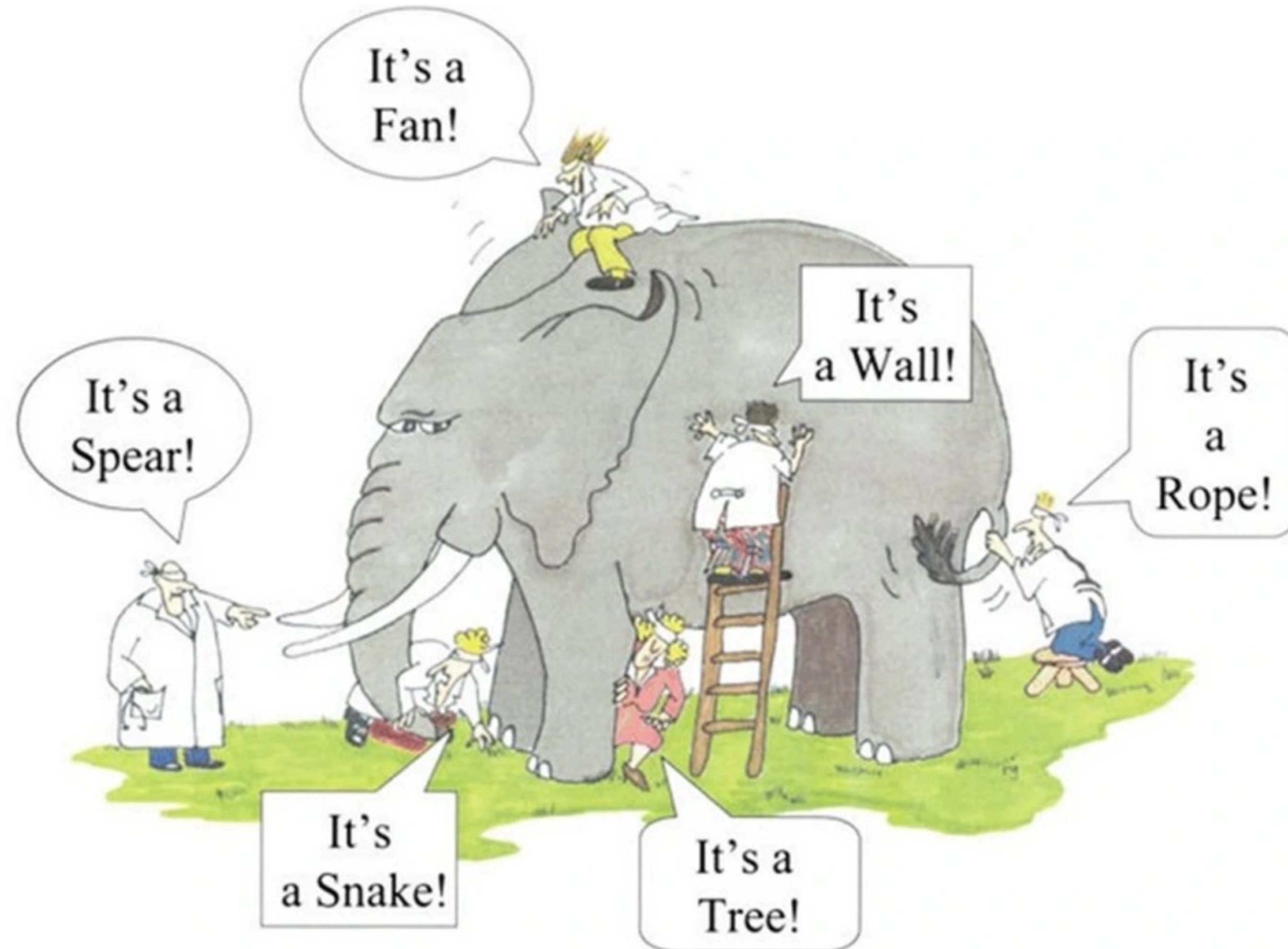
securely aggregating information
over a network of devices



Learning parameters in
graphical models with latent structure



Reasoning about our networked world...



Source: <https://speakingofresearch.com/2017/03/02/understanding-the-animal-not-just-its-parts/>

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<https://arxiv.org/pdf/2508.11863>



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