

Introduction to Data Privacy

CMSC 23200/33250, Winter 2021, Lecture 21

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Outline

1. Problem setting
2. Basic approaches to data privacy, and how to they fail
3. More advanced approaches, and how they also fail
4. A very interesting idea: Randomized Response

Privacy?

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the Facebook Help Center page. The browser's address bar shows the URL `facebook.com/help/325807937506242`. The page header includes the Facebook logo, 'Help Center', and navigation tabs for 'Using Facebook', 'Managing Your Account', 'Privacy and Safety', and 'Policies and Reporting'. A search bar and a language selector set to 'English' are also visible. The left sidebar lists various help topics, with 'Using Facebook' selected. The main content area is titled 'Basic Privacy Settings & Tools' and contains several sub-sections with questions:

- Using Facebook**
 - Creating an Account
 - Friending
 - Your Home Page
 - Messaging
 - Stories
 - Your Photos and Videos
 - Videos on Watch
 - Pages
 - Groups
 - Events
 - Fundraisers and Donations
 - Payments
 - Marketplace
 - Apps
 - Facebook Mobile Apps
- Basic Privacy Settings & Tools**
 - Selecting an Audience for Stuff You Share**
 - When I post something on Facebook, how do I choose who can see it?
 - How can I use lists to share to a specific group of people?
 - How do I change the audience of a post I've shared on my Facebook timeline?
 - How do I control who can see what's on my Facebook profile and timeline?
 - How do I choose who can see previous posts on my timeline on Facebook?
 - Manage Settings for How You Connect**
 - How can I adjust my Facebook privacy settings?
 - What is Facebook's Privacy Shortcuts and how do I find it?
 - What's Privacy Checkup and how can I find it on Facebook?
 - How do I change who can add me as a friend on Facebook?
 - Who can see my Facebook profile picture and cover photo?
 - Reviewing Stuff Others Tag You In**

Data Privacy

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the page 'How the Census Bureau Protects Your Data' on the 2020 Census website. The browser's address bar shows the URL '2020census.gov/en/data-protection.html'. The page features a blue header with the 'United States Census 2020' logo on the left and navigation links for 'Partners', 'Educators', 'News', and 'Help' on the right. Below the header, there are three main navigation options: 'Get the Facts', 'Why Your Answers Matter', and 'Privacy and Security'. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: '2020CENSUS.GOV > How the Census Bureau Protects Your Data'. The title of the page is 'How the Census Bureau Protects Your Data'. The introductory text states: 'The U.S. Census Bureau is bound by law to protect your answers and keep them strictly confidential. In fact, every employee takes an oath to protect your personal information for life.' At the bottom left, there is a 'SHARE:' button with icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. At the bottom right, there is a feedback box asking 'Is this page helpful?' with 'YES' and 'NO' options.

United States
Census
2020

Partners Educators News Help

Get the Facts Why Your Answers Matter Privacy and Security

// 2020CENSUS.GOV > How the Census Bureau Protects Your Data

How the Census Bureau Protects Your Data

The U.S. Census Bureau is bound by law to protect your answers and keep them strictly confidential. In fact, every employee takes an oath to protect your personal information for life.

SHARE: [f](#) [t](#) [in](#)

Is this page helpful? YES | NO

Privacy vs Security

- *Privacy* is about individuals controlling how their personal data are collected, used, and published.

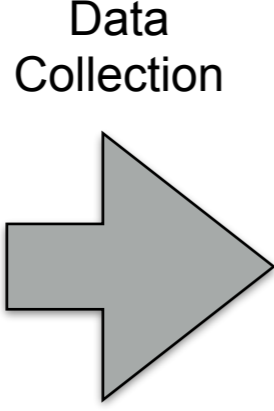
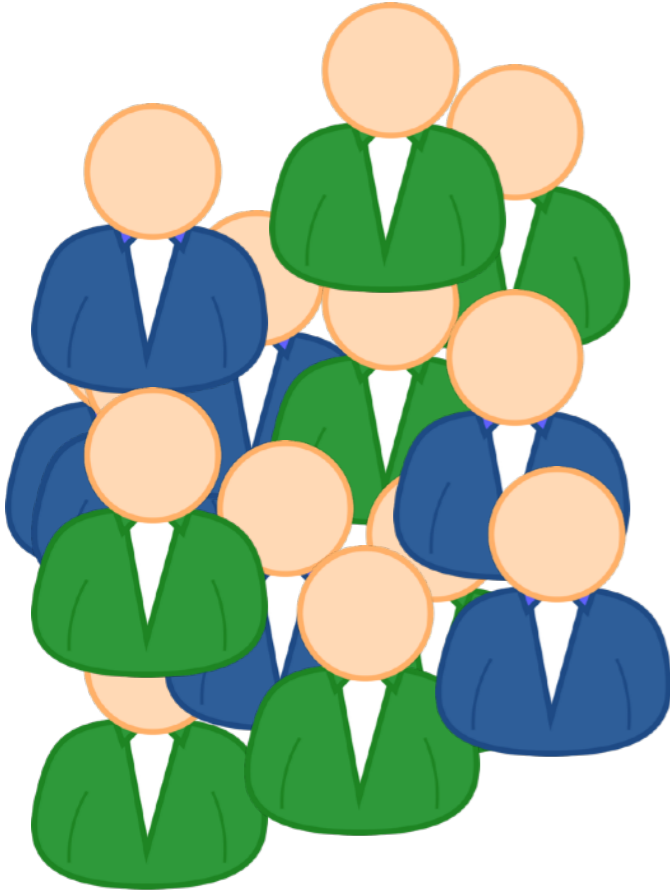
[Personal data is] any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person.

- General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union

- *Security* is part of it. Confidentiality, authentication, authorization, and availability are ingredients.

Modern Data Privacy: Problem Setting in this Lecture

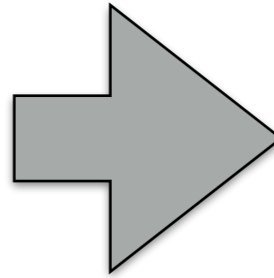
Individuals



Database

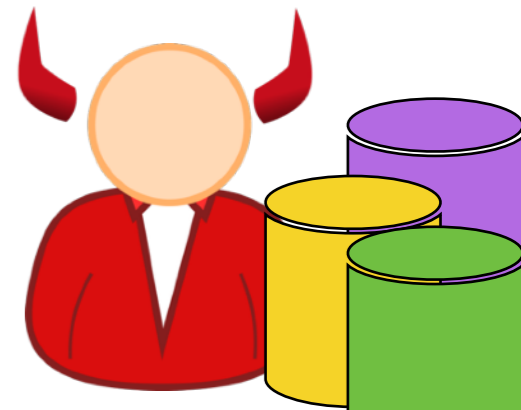
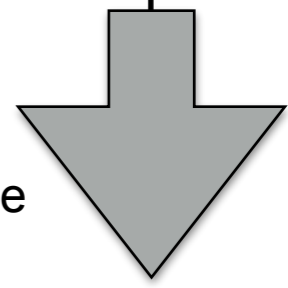
<i>name</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>zip</i>	<i>income</i>
Fatma	33	60637	25k
Hong	14	60638	35k
Roger	21	60637	60k

Publish



<i>ID No.</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>zip</i>	<i>income</i>
1	33	60637	25k
2	14	60638	35k
3	21	60637	60k

Analyze



Examples

- Governments
- Medical research
- Financial/insurance companies
- Tech companies
- Universities
- More?

Basic Data Privacy Mechanisms

- Simply enforce rules regulating data sharing and collection
- *De-identification*: Remove names, unique id numbers, addresses, etc
 - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)
 - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)
- *Segmentation*: Chop tables up vertically before publishing

<i>name</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>zip</i>	<i>income</i>
Fatma	33	60637	25k
Hong	14	60638	35k
Roger	21	60637	60k

Notable Privacy Failure #1: Mass. Grp Insurance (90s)

- Group Insurance Commission published info researchers (left circle)
- Sweeney purchased voter registration info from local government (right circle)
- "87% of the U.S. Population are uniquely identified by {date of birth, gender, ZIP}."



Latanya Sweeney
Source: Wikipedia

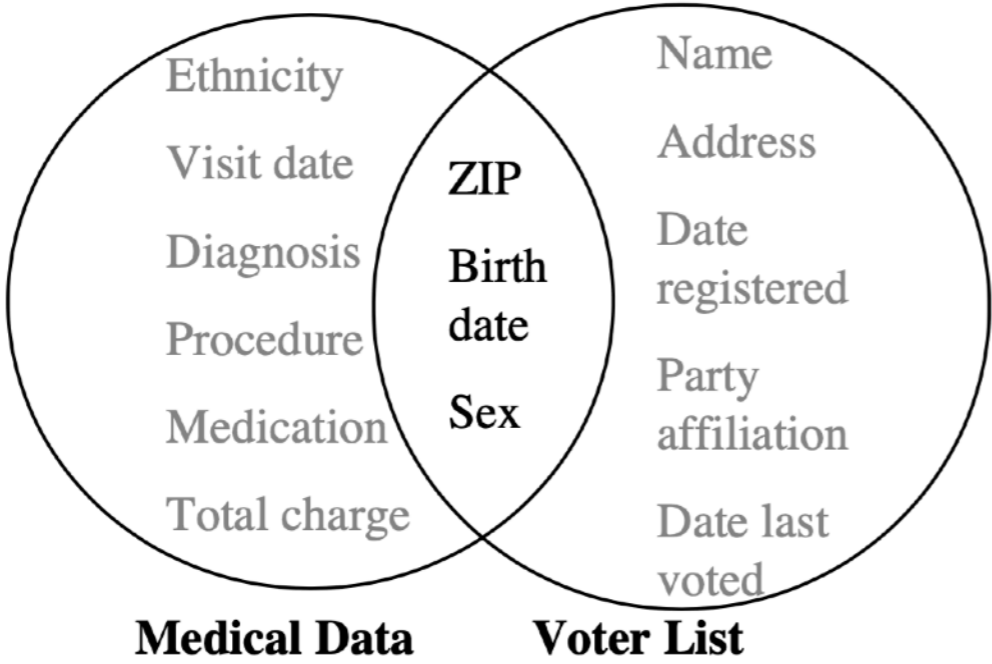


Figure 1 Linking to re-identify data

Source: L. Sweeney. *k-anonymity: a model for protecting privacy.* International Journal on Uncertainty, Fuzziness and Knowledge-based Systems, 10 (5), 2002; 557-570.

Notable Privacy Failure #2: AOL (2006)

- AOL publishes 20M search queries from 650k users.
- Names deleted, but query histories still associated with individuals

AOL Proudly Releases Massive Amounts of Private Data

Michael Arrington

@arrington?lang=en / 8:17 PM CDT • August 6, 2006

 Comment

Yet Another Update: [AOL: "This was a screw up"](#)



— IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE MANY AOL USERS WHOSE OFTEN EMBARRASSING WEB SEARCHES WERE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC, I OFFER A SAMPLE OF MY OWN SEARCH HISTORY:

GOOGLE

Web [Images](#) [Video](#) ^{New!} [News](#) [Maps](#) [more »](#)

[Advanced Search](#)
[Preferences](#)
[Language Tools](#)

velociraptors
site:imdb.com "jurassic park"
raptors
dromaeosaurids
utahraptor
"home depot" deadbolts
security home improvement
surviving a raptor attack
robert bakker paleontologist
robert bakker "possible raptor sympathizer"
site:en.wikipedia.org surviving a raptor attack
learning from mistakes in jurassic park
big-game rifles
tire irons
treating raptor wounds
do raptors fear fire
how to make a molotov cocktail
do raptors fear death
can raptors pick locks
how to tell if my neighbors are raptors

Notable Privacy Failure #2: AOL (2006)

A Face Is Exposed for AOL Searcher No. 4417749



By Michael Barbaro and Tom Zeller Jr.

Aug. 9, 2006

Buried in a list of 20 million Web search queries collected by AOL and recently released on the Internet is user No. 4417749. The number was assigned by the company to protect the searcher's anonymity, but it was not much of a shield.

- Several individuals were identified. How?

Notable Privacy Failure #2: AOL (2006)

User No. 4417749

landscapers in Lilburn, Ga
John Arnold
numb fingers
Jenny Arnold
school supplies for Iraq children
60 single men
hand tremors
nicotine effects on the body
dog that urinates on everything
tea for good health
the best season to visit Italy
bipolar
safest place to live
...

Notable Privacy Failure #3: Netflix Prize (2006-2009)

<i>name</i>	<i>Star Wars</i>	<i>Casablanca</i>	<i>Jurassic Park</i>	<i><other movie></i>
Fatma	☆☆☆	☆☆	☆	☆☆☆☆
Hong	☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆
Roger	☆☆☆☆☆	☆	☆☆☆☆	☆

- Cross-reference with IMDB?
- Arvind+Vitaly: Knowing 8 ratings (w/dates) identifies 90% of users
- People rated movies on Netflix that they did not rate on IMDB.

Robust De-anonymization of Large Sparse Datasets

Arvind Narayanan and Vitaly Shmatikov
The University of Texas at Austin

Source: Wikipedia

RYAN SINGEL SECURITY 03.12.2010 02:48 PM

NetFlix Cancels Recommendation Contest After Privacy Lawsuit

Netflix is canceling its second \$1 million Netflix Prize to settle a legal challenge that it breached customer privacy as part of the first contest's race for a better movie-recommendation engine. Friday's announcement came five months after Netflix had announced a successor to its algorithm-improvement contest. The company at the time said it intended to [...]

Notable Privacy Failure #4: NYC Taxi Data (2014)

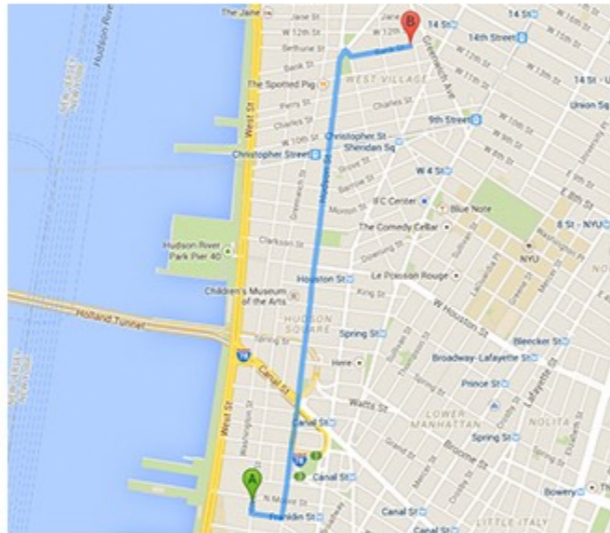

- NYC releases “anonymized” records of 173M taxi trips to researcher in response to Freedom of Information Act request
- Included start end location and time

10-02-14 | FAST FEED

NYC Taxi Data Blunder Reveals Which Celebs Don't Tip—And Who Frequents Strip Clubs

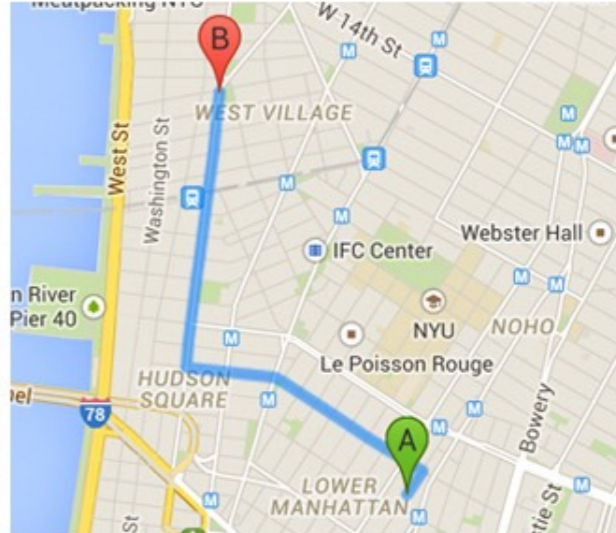

By cross-referencing de-anonymized trip data with paparazzi photos, a privacy research could tell how much Bradley Cooper paid his driver.

Notable Privacy Failure #4: NYC Taxi Data (2014)



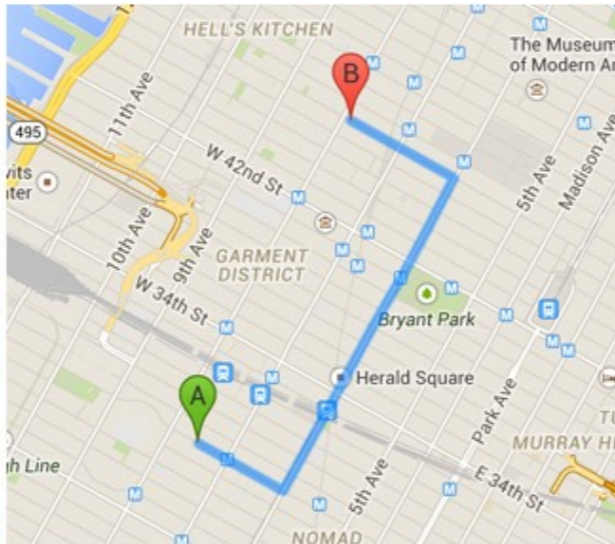

BRADLEY COOPER

JULY 8, 2013 • 7:34 PM - 7:44 PM
376 GREENWICH ST. TO 13 BANK ST.
\$9.00 FARE • CASH; UNKNOWN TIP • ©SPLASH



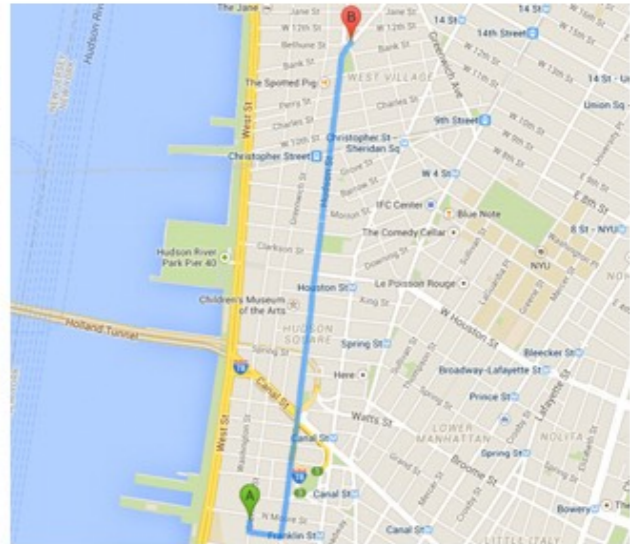

ASHLEE SIMPSON

JANUARY 6, 2013 • 3:29 PM - 3:38 PM
78 CROSBY ST. TO 580 HUDSON ST.
\$7.50 FARE • \$2 TIP • ©SPLASH



AMANDA BYNES

APRIL 11, 2013 • 5:43 PM - 6:02 PM
229 W 28TH ST. TO 271 W 47TH ST.
\$13 FARE • CASH; UNKNOWN TIP • ©SPLASH



**JUDD APATOW
LESLIE MANN**

JUNE 21, 2013 • 11:28 AM - 11:35 AM
376 GREENWICH ST. TO 1 ABINGDON SQUARE
\$7.00 FARE • \$2.10 TIP • ©SPLASH

Source: <https://gawker.com/the-public-nyc-taxicab-database-that-accidentally-track-1646724546>

- Also: Dataset had taxi ID replaced with md5(taxiID)...

c.f. <https://tech.vijayp.ca/of-taxis-and-rainbows-f6bc289679a1>

Privacy Failures: Why is this so hard?

- Hard to know what information might be harmful
- Hard to know what side information is available for linking
- Hard to know what adversarial analysis is capable of



Latanya Sweeney

Source: Wikipedia

- Sweeney: Take a principled approach!

Towards Modern Protection: k-Anonymity

Definition: A table is *k-anonymous with respect to columns C_1, \dots, C_n* if whenever a value (v_1, \dots, v_n) appears for those columns in *some* row, it appears in at least k rows.

	Race	Birth	Gender	ZIP	Problem
t1	Black	1965	m	0214*	short breath
t2	Black	1965	m	0214*	chest pain
t3	Black	1965	f	0213*	hypertension
t4	Black	1965	f	0213*	hypertension
t5	Black	1964	f	0213*	obesity
t6	Black	1964	f	0213*	chest pain
t7	White	1964	m	0213*	chest pain
t8	White	1964	m	0213*	obesity
t9	White	1964	m	0213*	short breath
t10	White	1967	m	0213*	chest pain
t11	White	1967	m	0213*	chest pain

Figure 2 Example of *k*-anonymity, where $k=2$ and $QI=\{Race, Birth, Gender, ZIP\}$

Processing Data/Queries for k-Anonymity

- Aggregate numerical columns. Generalize or redact others.

	Non-Sensitive			Sensitive
	Zip Code	Age	Nationality	Condition
1	13053	28	Russian	Heart Disease
2	13068	29	American	Heart Disease
3	13068	21	Japanese	Viral Infection
4	13053	23	American	Viral Infection
5	14853	50	Indian	Cancer
6	14853	55	Russian	Heart Disease
7	14850	47	American	Viral Infection
8	14850	49	American	Viral Infection
9	13053	31	American	Cancer
10	13053	37	Indian	Cancer
11	13068	36	Japanese	Cancer
12	13068	35	American	Cancer

Fig. 1. Inpatient Microdata

	Non-Sensitive			Sensitive
	Zip Code	Age	Nationality	Condition
1	130**	< 30	*	Heart Disease
2	130**	< 30	*	Heart Disease
3	130**	< 30	*	Viral Infection
4	130**	< 30	*	Viral Infection
5	1485*	≥ 40	*	Cancer
6	1485*	≥ 40	*	Heart Disease
7	1485*	≥ 40	*	Viral Infection
8	1485*	≥ 40	*	Viral Infection
9	130**	3*	*	Cancer
10	130**	3*	*	Cancer
11	130**	3*	*	Cancer
12	130**	3*	*	Cancer

Fig. 2. 4-Anonymous Inpatient Microdata

- NP-Hard to do “optimally”

Problems with k-Anonymity: Homogeneity Attack

- If I know your Zip Code is 13053 and that you are in your 30s....

	Non-Sensitive			Sensitive
	Zip Code	Age	Nationality	Condition
1	130**	< 30	*	Heart Disease
2	130**	< 30	*	Heart Disease
3	130**	< 30	*	Viral Infection
4	130**	< 30	*	Viral Infection
5	1485*	≥ 40	*	Cancer
6	1485*	≥ 40	*	Heart Disease
7	1485*	≥ 40	*	Viral Infection
8	1485*	≥ 40	*	Viral Infection
9	130**	3*	*	Cancer
10	130**	3*	*	Cancer
11	130**	3*	*	Cancer
12	130**	3*	*	Cancer

Fig. 2. 4-Anonymous Inpatient Microdata

Problems with k-Anonymity: Background Knowledge

- If I know your Zip Code is 13068, that you're 21 years old, and that you seem pretty healthy generally...

	Non-Sensitive			Sensitive
	Zip Code	Age	Nationality	Condition
1	130**	< 30	*	Heart Disease
2	130**	< 30	*	Heart Disease
3	130**	< 30	*	Viral Infection
4	130**	< 30	*	Viral Infection
5	1485*	≥ 40	*	Cancer
6	1485*	≥ 40	*	Heart Disease
7	1485*	≥ 40	*	Viral Infection
8	1485*	≥ 40	*	Viral Infection
9	130**	3*	*	Cancer
10	130**	3*	*	Cancer
11	130**	3*	*	Cancer
12	130**	3*	*	Cancer

Fig. 2. 4-Anonymous Inpatient Microdata

Another attempt: L-Diversity

- Ensure that sensitive columns are “well represented” to defeat both attacks (details omitted)

	Non-Sensitive			Sensitive
	Zip Code	Age	Nationality	Condition
1	1305*	≤ 40	*	Heart Disease
4	1305*	≤ 40	*	Viral Infection
9	1305*	≤ 40	*	Cancer
10	1305*	≤ 40	*	Cancer
5	1485*	> 40	*	Cancer
6	1485*	> 40	*	Heart Disease
7	1485*	> 40	*	Viral Infection
8	1485*	> 40	*	Viral Infection
2	1306*	≤ 40	*	Heart Disease
3	1306*	≤ 40	*	Viral Infection
11	1306*	≤ 40	*	Cancer
12	1306*	≤ 40	*	Cancer

Fig. 4. **3-Diverse** Inpatient Microdata

Attacking L-Diversity

- Correlations still lead to violations even with diversity

	ZIP Code	Age	Salary	Disease
1	47677	29	3K	gastric ulcer
2	47602	22	4K	gastritis
3	47678	27	5K	stomach cancer
4	47905	43	6K	gastritis
5	47909	52	11K	flu
6	47906	47	8K	bronchitis
7	47605	30	7K	bronchitis
8	47673	36	9K	pneumonia
9	47607	32	10K	stomach cancer

Table 3. Original Salary/Disease Table

	ZIP Code	Age	Salary	Disease
1	476**	2*	3K	gastric ulcer
2	476**	2*	4K	gastritis
3	476**	2*	5K	stomach cancer
4	4790*	≥ 40	6K	gastritis
5	4790*	≥ 40	11K	flu
6	4790*	≥ 40	8K	bronchitis
7	476**	3*	7K	bronchitis
8	476**	3*	9K	pneumonia
9	476**	3*	10K	stomach cancer

Table 4. A 3-diverse version of Table 3

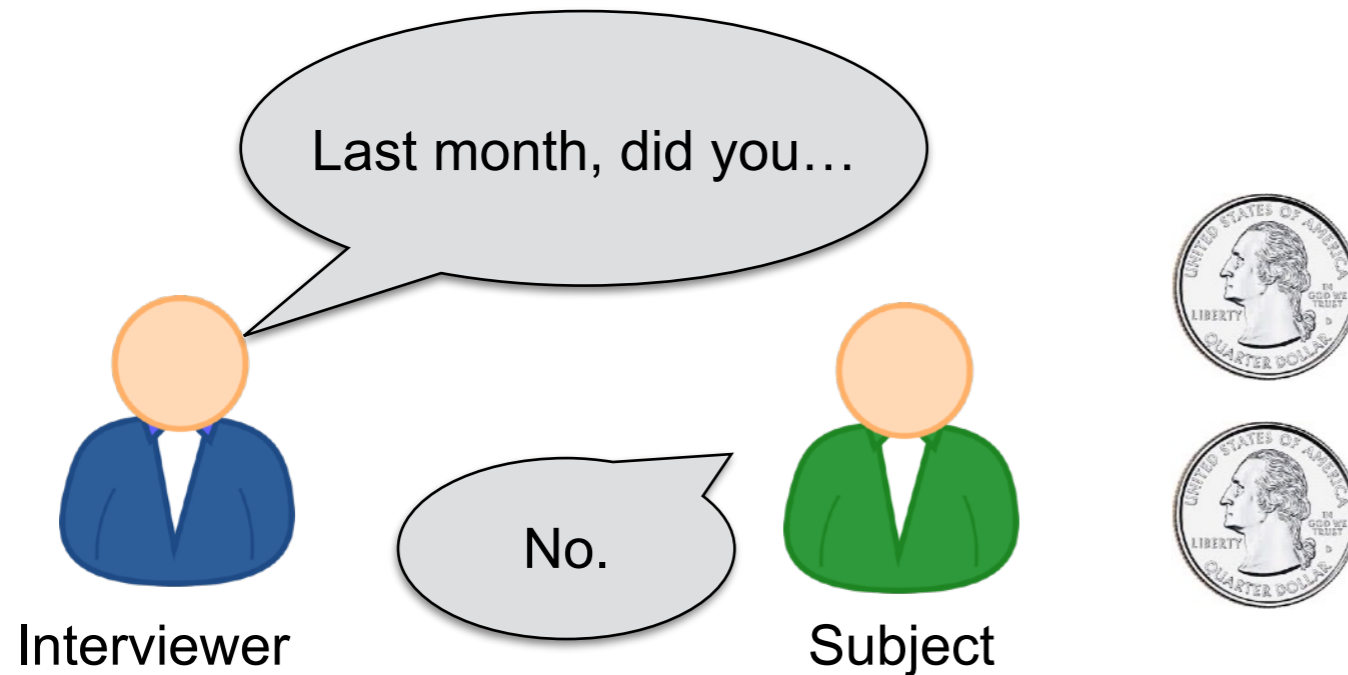
- Another patch suggested: t-Closeness, but conclusion is unclear

Back to the 1960's (and then to the '00s next lecture)

- Want to survey a population about engaging in an embarrassing or illegal behavior X (e.g. X =drug use, X =cheating, ...)
- Not interested in individuals. Only want to know fraction of the population.
- Discussion: what's wrong with just interviewing people and asking

“Did you engage in X in the last month?”

Profound Idea: Randomized Response



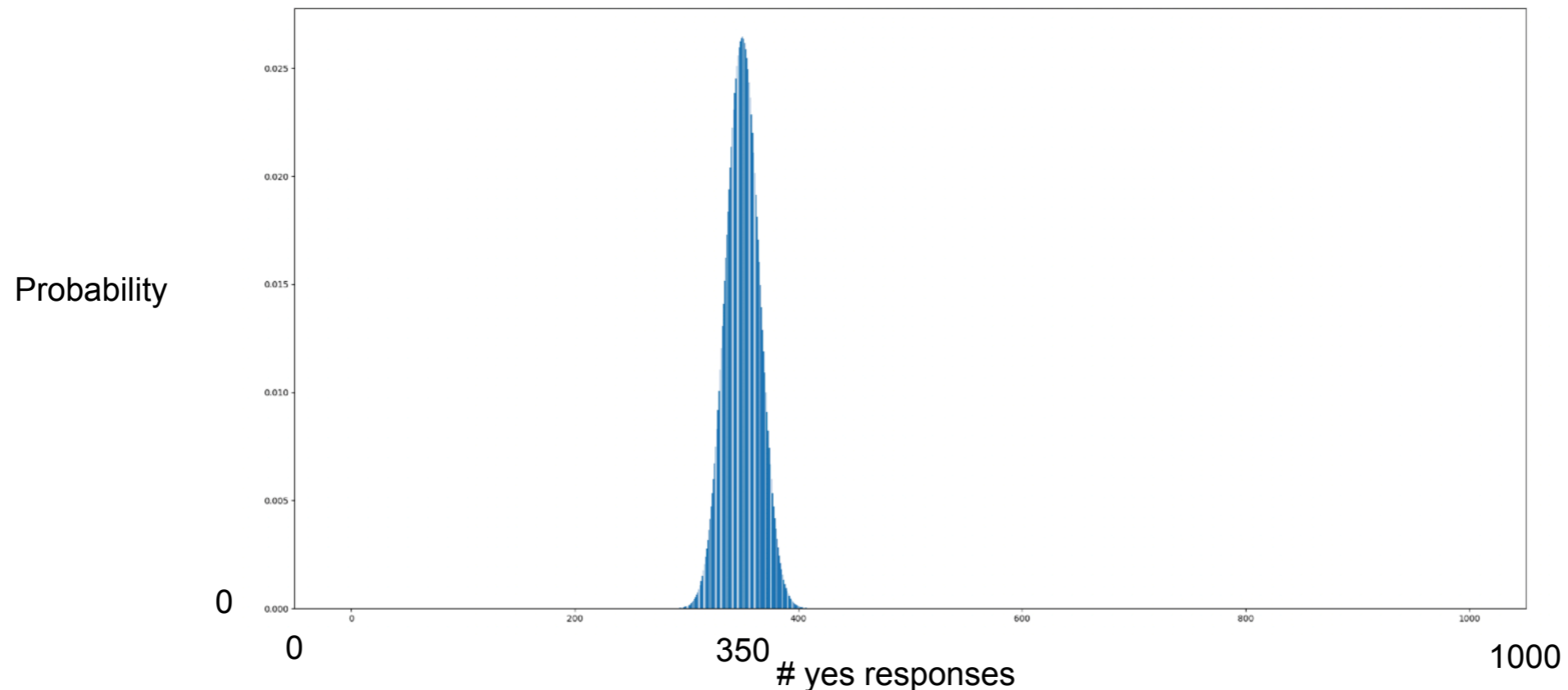
Instructions for subject:

1. Privately flip coins C_A and C_B
2. If $C_A = \text{Heads}$: Answer truthfully
3. Else: Answer randomly (use C_B)

Randomized Response: Example

- Suppose population is 1000.
- 200 engage in behavior and 800 do not.
- Expect to get 350 “yes” answers:

$$0.25 \cdot 800 + 0.50 \cdot 200 + 0.25 \cdot 200 = 350$$



Analyzing Randomized Response Data

Claim: If p -fraction of population engages in behavior ($0 \leq p \leq 1$), then expected proportion that say “Yes” is

$$y = 0.25(1 - p) + p(0.50 + 0.25)$$

- Measure y , then solve: $p = 2(y - 0.25)$

Randomized Response and Plausible Deniability

- High school students surveyed on drug use.
- Higher reported use on all drugs except hallucinogens (?)

Drug category	Combined "6 + 1 item"		Randomized response procedure	
	μ	SE	μ	SE
All subjects				
Alcohol	10.63	3.697	18.79	13.019
Cannabis	3.68	0.779	3.04	1.329
Hallucinogens	0.35	0.174	0.26	0.134
Amphetamines ("speed")	0.11	0.048	0.43	0.200
Tranquilizers	0.26	0.097	0.81	0.232
Heroin	0.06	0.031	0.33	0.145
Excluding responses in excess of 100^a				
Alcohol	5.19	0.420	10.98	3.393
Cannabis	3.01	0.618	3.51	1.244

^a Hallucinogens, amphetamines ("speed"), tranquilizers and heroin were unaffected by this transformation.

The End