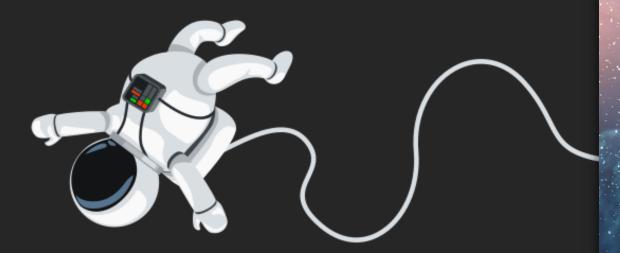


#### Who Are We?



Will Pearce moo\_hax

Nick Landers monoxgas



Work at **Silent Break Security**Research, Dev, Training, Ops, etc.

## What is Machine Learning?

Lots of magic that:

gets investors, goes public, makes \$

- Rebranded if/else statements
- Data Sheet Keywords:

"Analyzes millions of X and adapts"

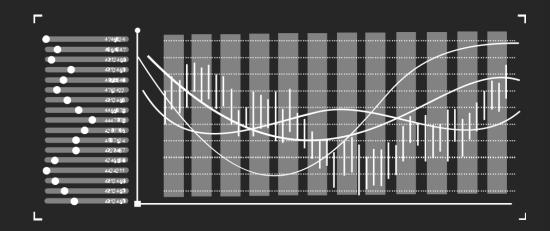
"High degree of confidence"

"Next Generation"

"Scientists"

"Central Cortex"

"Neural Network"



## What **really** is ML?

Set of techniques that aim to:

#### model a problem mathematically

- Stats + Maths + Computers
- Very old discipline 1950's (IBM)
- Predictions without explicit programming
- Growing fast: computing power, data aggregation, etc.

... Still magic ... But mostly math

## Why Do We Care?

- It's coming to a field near you
  - No longer a math problem, it's an engineering problem
  - Our future will be fought with ML
- It can be really **really** awesome
  - Building relationships in non-congruent data
  - Bring out operator 6<sup>th</sup> senses
  - Crush huge amounts of data faster than humans
  - Can be as complex or as simple as you want to make it
  - Optimizing a traditionally "manual" line of work

#### What is "Offensive" ML?

"The application of ML to offensive security problems"

- Abusing control relationships \* [Neo4j/Kegra]
- Obfuscating C2 as English [Markov Obfuscate]
- Detecting sandbox environments \* [Deep Drop]
- Improving social media phishing [SNAP\_R]
- Faster password guessing [PassGan]
- Metasploit exploit selection [Deep Exploit]
- Stealing models for evasion \* [Adversarial ML]
- Automating timing attacks [ParzelSec]



## Starting with ML

Google

"ML [literally anything] tutorial"

"Detecting Cats in Images with OpenCV" "Auto-Generating Clickbait with RNNs"

https://github.com/ujjwalkarn/Machine-Learning-Tutorials/ (320+ links)

https://sgfin.github.io/learning-resources/ (200+ links)

https://github.com/josephmisiti/awesome-machine-learning (200+ links)

https://github.com/awesomedata/awesome-public-datasets (410+ links)

## Starting with ML

- 1. Data is everywhere, what can should we collect?
- 2. What data is used by a human to solve/perform X?
- 3. Process the data and extract useful features.
- Download Python + [ML stuff]. (Might need some GPUs)
   NumPy / Pandas Data processing and matrices
   SciKit-Learn Data analytics + Basic ML
   TensorFlow Full blown ML framework from Google
   Keras High-level wrapper for TensorFlow (also CNTK, Theano)
- 5. Write a 10 line script and ML your heart out.

## Sandbox Detection – Case Study

- Sandboxes are a dangerous place
  - Popularity is rising
  - Preventing analysis is a priority
- Lots of current detection strategies
  - Enumerating host information
  - Automated behavior indicators
  - Network anomalies server and client

• • •

**Need detection using minimal information** 

#### **Data** – The raw information we gather

PID	User	Process
1	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM	smss.exe
236	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM	csrss.exe
120	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM	winlogon.exe
492	Admin-PC\Admin	explorer.exe
940	Admin-PC\Admin	procmon.exe
680	Admin-PC\Admin	dllhost.exe
772	Admin-PC\Admin	winword.exe

#### Features – How we represent data to an algorithm

PID	User	Process		
1	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM	smss.exe	Factoria	Malus
236	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM	csrss.exe	Feature	
120	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM	winlogon.exe	bad_user:	1
492	Admin-PC\Admin	explorer.exe	sysinternals:	1
940	Admin-PC\Admin	procmon.exe	domain_member:	false
680	Admin-PC\Admin	dllhost.exe		
772	Admin-PC\Admin	winword.exe		

#### Features – How we represent data to an algorithm

PID	User	Process		
1	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM	smss.exe		Value
36	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM	csrss.exe	Feature	
312	NT AUTHORITY\SYSTEM	winlogon.exe	proc_count:	/
444	ACME\arthur.dent	explorer.exe	average_pid -	906
452	ACME\arthur.dent	winword.exe	compression:	85%
1972	` ACME\arthur.dent	chrome.exe	proc_per_user:	3.5
2928	ACME\arthur.dent	chrome.exe		

**Inputs** – Our features for each sample

```
data = np.array([
        [33, 4, 8.25],
        [157, 1, 157],
        [195, 1, 195],
        [30, 4, 7.5],
        [34, 4, 8.5],
        [84, 1, 84]
])
```

#### 

**Label** – The thing we are predicting \*

```
data = np.array([
        [33, 4, 8.25, 1],
        [157, 1, 157, 0],
        [195, 1, 195, 0],
        [30, 4, 7.5, 1],
        [34, 4, 8.5, 1],
        [84, 1, 84, 0]
])
```

```
0 = safe1 = sandbox
```

# 

**Classification** – The strategy for assessing outputs

**Binary:** Grouping into 2 fixed categories

**Multi-Label:** Grouping into N categories

**Regression:** Targeting a continuous variable value

(1-999)

**Node** – Smallest unit to carry an activation





**Layer(s)** – A parallel group of nodes







input





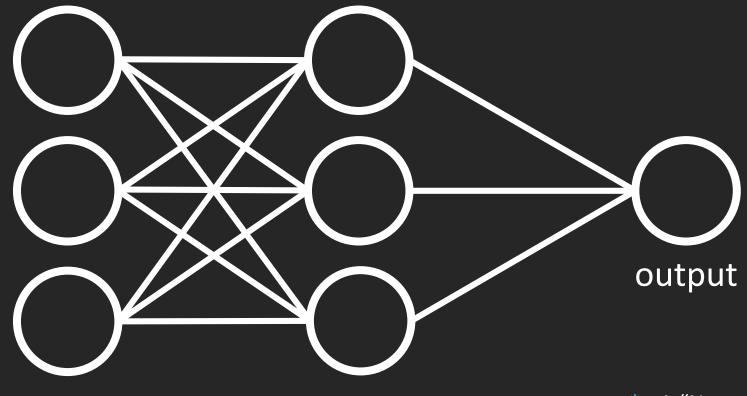


hidden



input

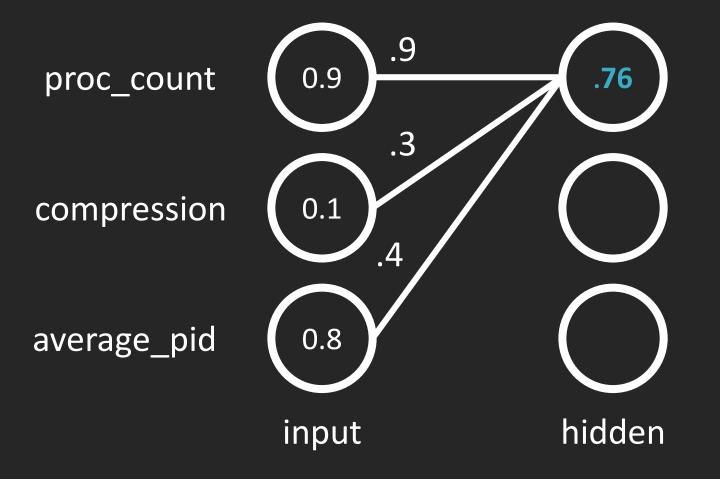
**Network** – A few layers strapped together \*



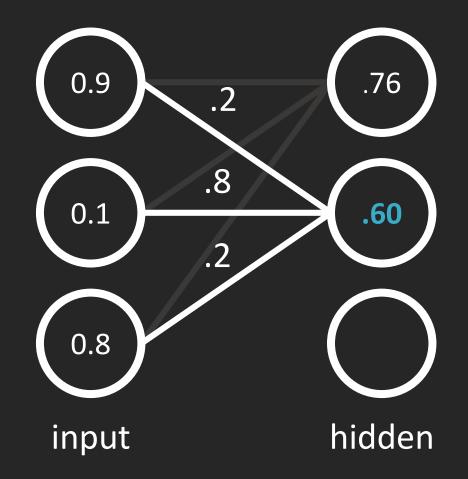
hidden

\* - A "Neural Network" isn't the only type of network

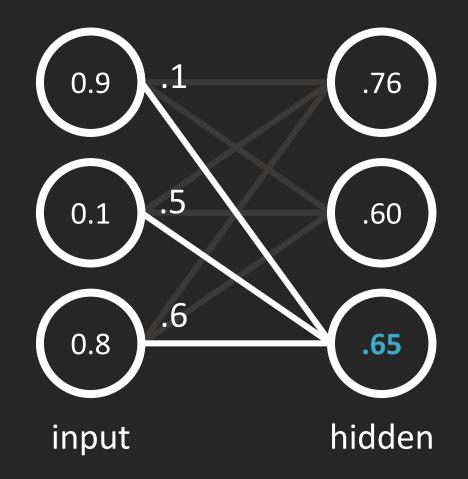
**Feed Forward –** calculate the error of the network



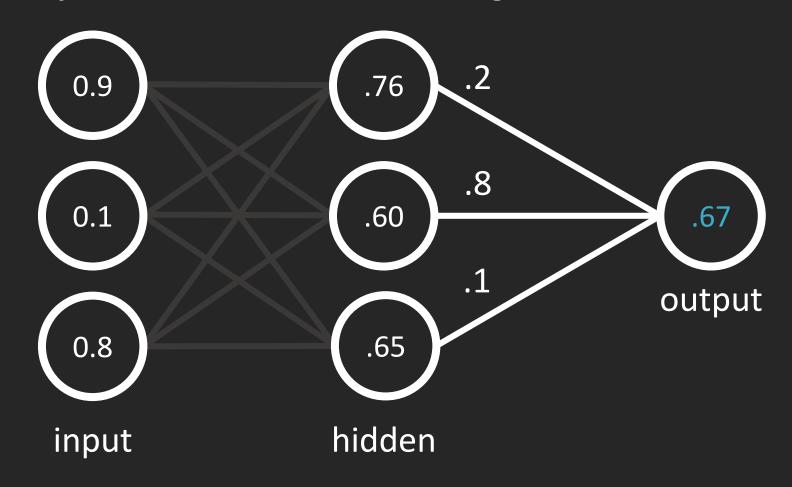
Weighted sum is passed into the activation function



**Activations** become inputs for the next layer

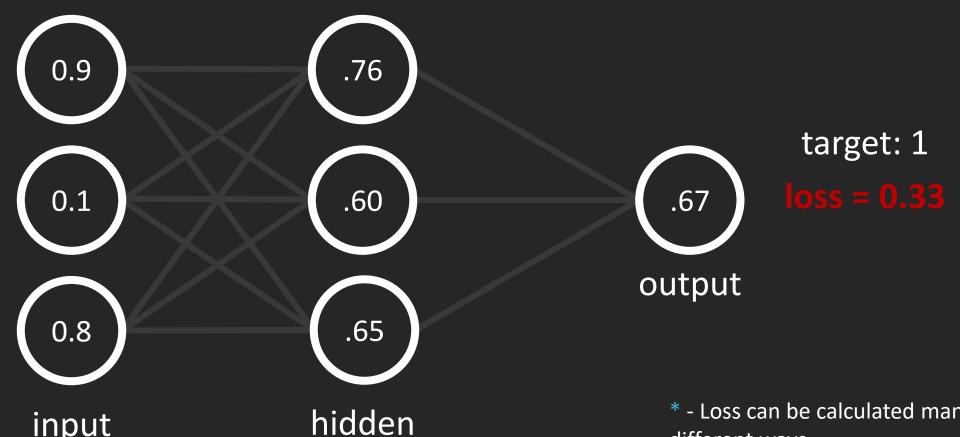


**Output** – Final result of cascading activations



input

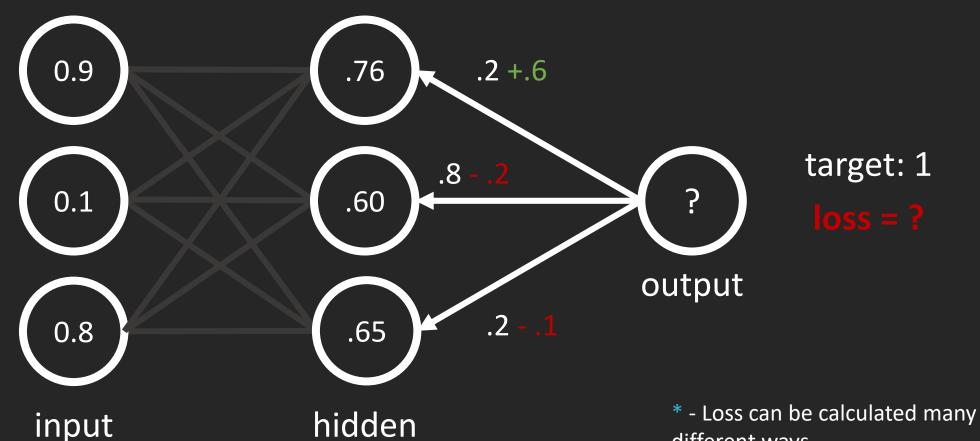
**Loss** - The gap between the target label and output \*



<sup>\* -</sup> Loss can be calculated many different ways

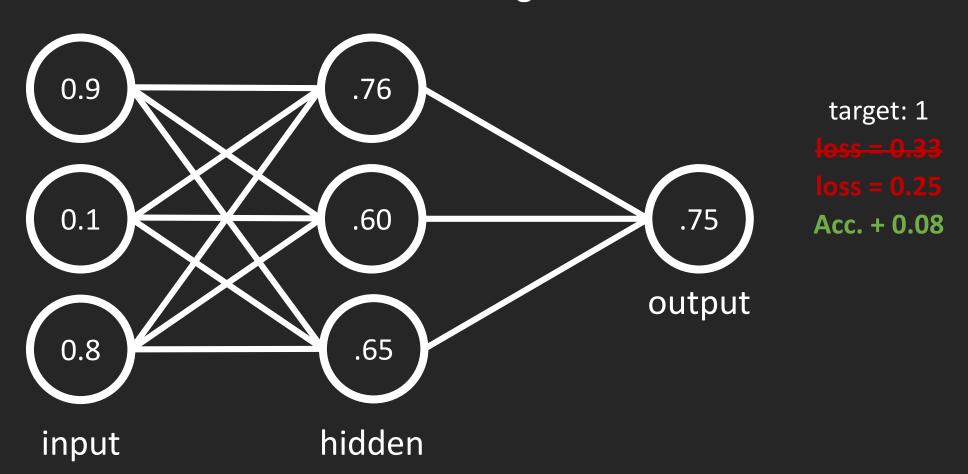
# 

**Backpropagation** – Updating weights to improve \* ("learn")



different ways

**Model** – Network with learned weights



#### Code – Neural Network

```
dataset = np.loadtext(features.txt)
features = dataset[:,0:3]
labels = dataset[:,3]
model = models.Sequential()
model.add(layers.Dense(3, activation "relu" input_dim=3))
model.add(layers.Dense(3, activation="relu"))
model.add(layers.Dense(1, activation="relu"))
model.compile(loss="binary crossentropy", optimizer="adam")
model.fit(features, labels, epochs=10, batch_size=10)
```

#### The Results

Total Samples: 130

Known Sandboxes: 18

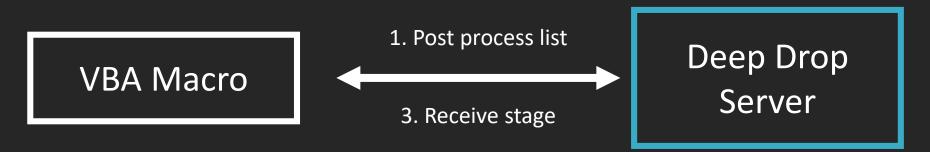
Accuracy: 95%+

- Lots of options for feature combinations
- Ultimately a great problem for ML
- Doc2Vec / Decision Trees performed well too

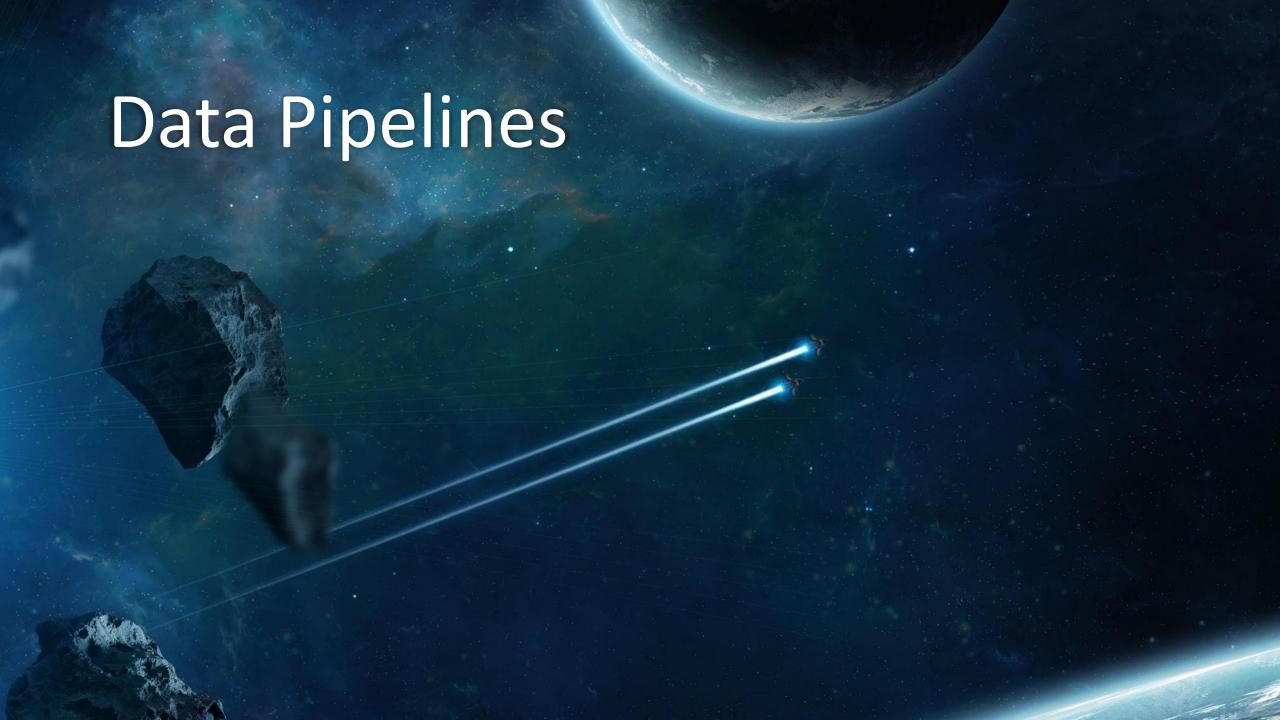
#### Deep Drop - ML-enabled dropper server

https://github.com/MoooKitty/SchemingWithMachines/

- Initially released at BSides LV 19
- Holds a trained model for parsing outputs
- Written in Python + Flask + Keras
- Makes stage delivery decisions based on ML



2. make prediction with data



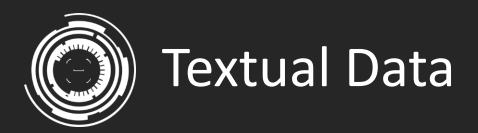


#### Issue: Offenders traditionally don't keep data

- Nobody is talking about this issue
- Should this remain an expectation?
- How can/should we anonymize data?
- Why are vendors allowed to keep data? (then sell it back)
- Would sharing datasets further our field?

#### **Potential Solutions:**

- Keep only model weights
- Hash features for storage
- Use models that don't require previous data



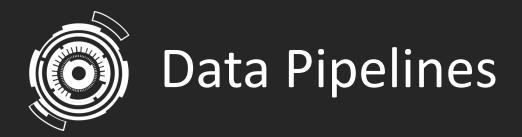
- Defenders already work with parsed data
  - SIEM collection and alerting
  - E-Mail report buttons
  - AMSI integrations
  - Known environments
- Offenders are still in a textual world
  - Command line interfaces
  - Screen/Session logs
  - ASCII art for every tool
  - Reports and narratives



### Feature Engineering

- Target important meta-properties domain knowledge
- Store as much as possible & build features later
- Use data analysis to assist
  - "What does the distribution of commands look like?"
  - Do new features line up with existing labels?
  - Reduce correlated features "noise"
  - Once trained, find features which don't affect outputs

Essentially ... Lots of **basic statistics** 

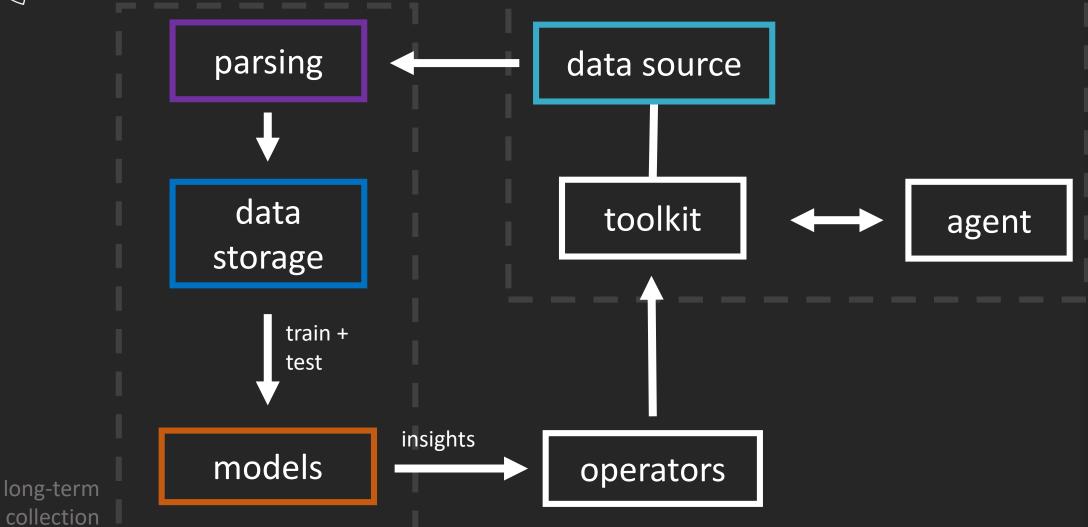


- Need systems for managing our data long / short term
- This processing requires engineering
  - Start early to learn later
  - Implementations will vary by team TTPs
  - Solution will likely tie us down agnosticism
  - Ideally passive not interfering with ops
- Focus on high impact data
- Previous works on the subject:
  - https://github.com/ztgrace/red\_team\_telemetry
  - https://github.com/outflanknl/RedELK
  - https://github.com/SecurityRiskAdvisors/RedTeamSIEM



## Data Pipelines

Op-period processes





- Development is a requirement
  - Helpful if you also have/modify tool source
  - 2019 is the "year of C2" shouldn't be a problem
- Identify isolated jobs to begin delegating
  - Basic classification that a human already does
  - Suggestions that can augment decisions
- Basic statistics for ops
  - Average number of actions per operation
  - Count/distribution of commands and arguments
- Consider trust in the final solution



### State of Attack Paths

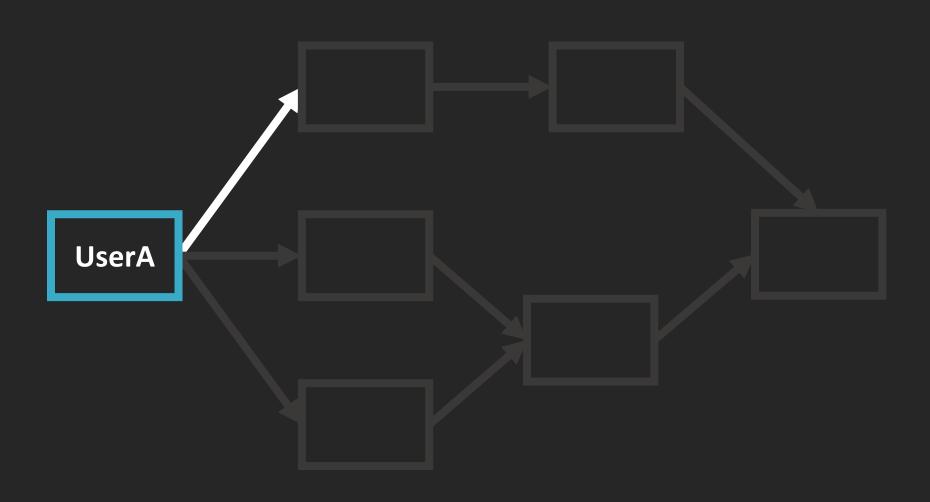
- Path finding with information is solved
   Neo4j + Bloodhound
- However, information will degrade
  - Changes to Active Directory / Windows
  - Growing use of \*nix in business
  - Network segmentation improvements
- Networks are unknown, but discrete
  - We don't know the user names, permissions, etc.
  - We **know** it's not infinite

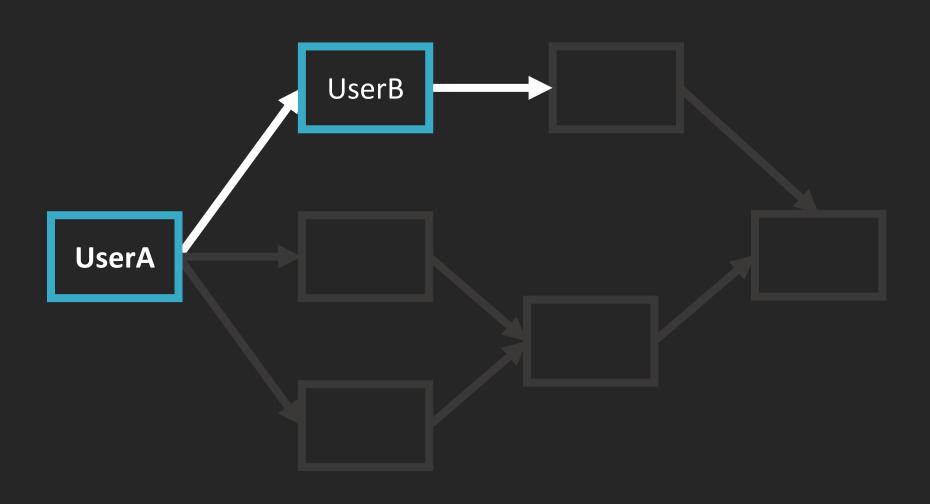
### Data Inference

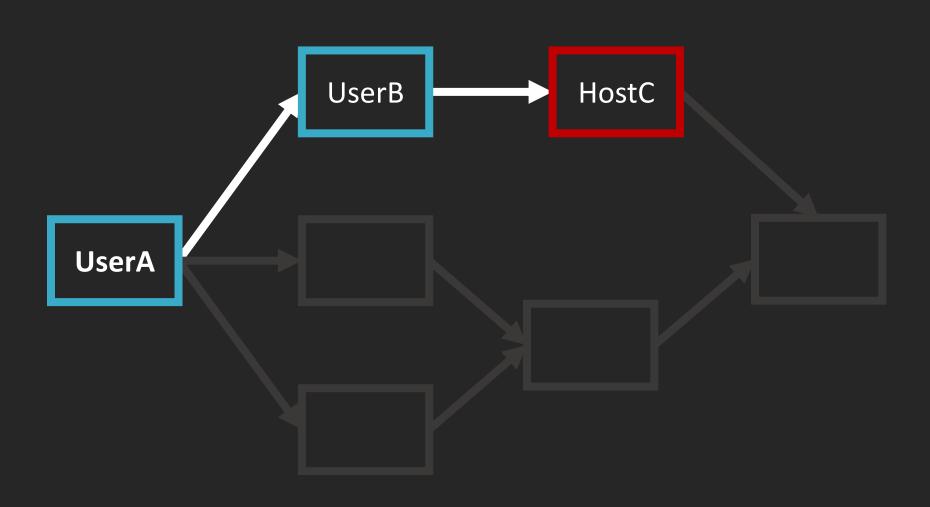
Networks **require** data organization therefore

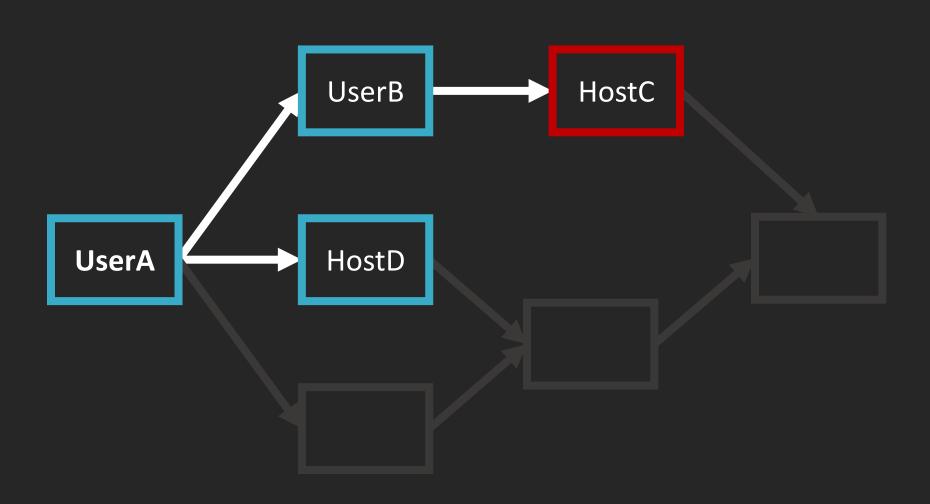
Networks imply data organization

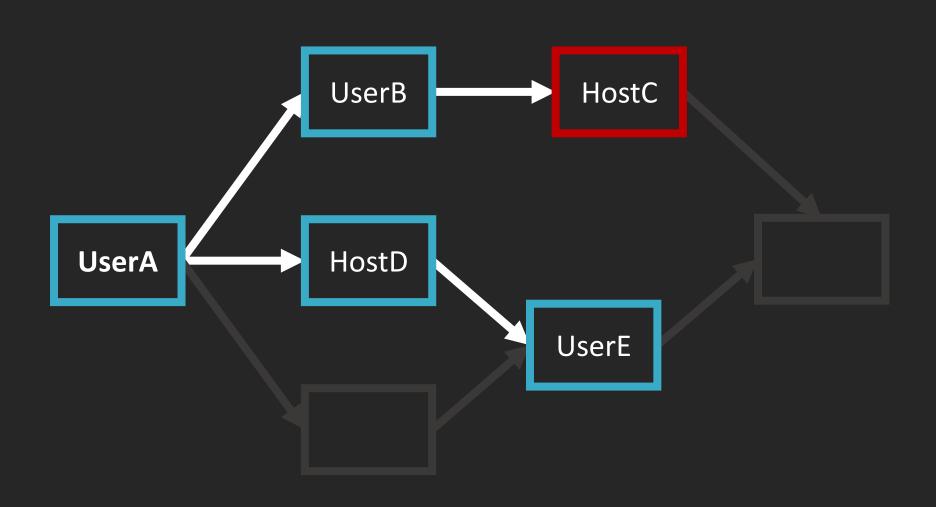
- Networks (AD) generally use text-labeling
  - We're all human, we expect it to be relational
- Can we infer these relationships?
  - Textual similarities
  - Mapped drives, local users, host information
  - LinkedIn, GitHub, public exposure ...

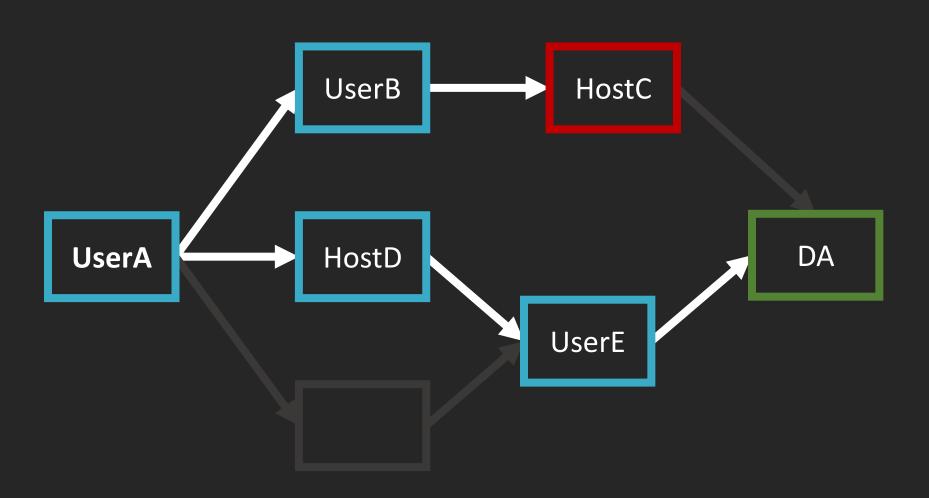












### Mental Models

#### As operators, we build mental network maps

- We assume relationships based on:
  - Standardized textual labels
  - Experiences in the network itself
  - Pattern recognition how has it been configured, how will it
- We act on these assumptions with queries
  - Validate access to a host
  - Verify the group membership of a user
  - Collect new attack surface via enumeration

#### Information creates confidence

### Simulating Mental Models

#### Data + Heuristic Search + Simulation

- Data Information from the current context
- Heuristic Relationships between data points
  - Operator driven flexible
  - We can "assume" relationships, or even new data points
  - Use algorithms to bring up the most relevant data
- Simulation Select actions based on heuristics
  - Could include the "impact" of potential actions
  - Can assist an operator, or **become one** active / passive

### **Data Layer**

- Host/User/Group name information
- Active network connections
- Outbound RDP history
- Network queries
  - Active Directory with limited filters
  - Direct host service access
- Host-based Events
  - Event logs
  - ETW tracing
  - Custom tracking over time

### **Heuristics Layer**

- How can we relate textual data?
- What strategies are used already?
- What would an operator care about?

We need some number to support our simulation

### Heuristic: Simple 'if' Statement

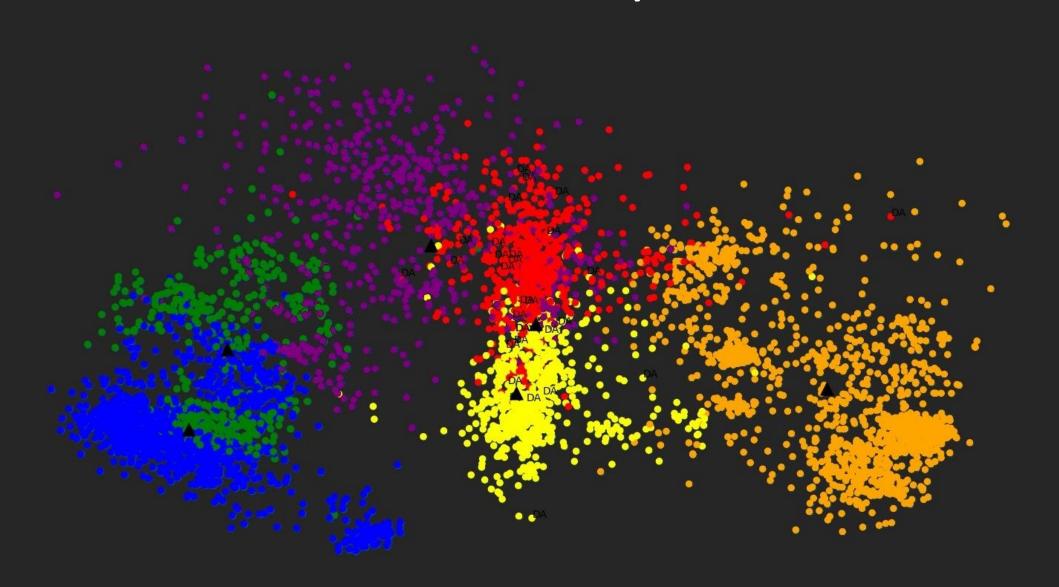
- Operator driven insights
- Doesn't require complexity

```
if <output> in command_output:
    return new_state, reward
else:
    continue
```

### **Heuristic:** Cosine Similarity

```
match (g:Group)
with collect(g) as groups
match (u:User)
with u, algo.ml.oneHotEncoding(groups, [(u)-[:MemberOf]->(memberof) | memberof]) as embedding
with {item:id(u), weights: embedding} as userData
with collect(userData) as data
call algo.similarity.cosine(data, {similarityCutoff: 0.7071, write: true, topK:
100})
yield nodes, p50, p75, p90, p99, p999, p100
match (u:User {name: "<USER>"})-[similar:SIMILAR]->(other)
return other.name as user, similar.score as score
```

## **Heuristic:** Cosine Similarity



### **Heuristic:** Levenshtein Distance

match (c:Computer)

match (g:Group)

with g,c, apoc.text.levenshteinSimilarity(g.name, c.name) as data

return g.name as group, c.name as host, data as score

order by score desc

limit 100

### Heuristic: Levenshtein Distance

Group	Hostname	Score
SQL Developers	SQLDEV01	55
Domain Admins	DOM-PRINS	55
SQL Admins	SQLDEV01	44
VPN Users	DEVPN-B	38

### **Simulation:** Shortest Path

#### Dijkstra's Algorithm

- Shortest distance from A->B
- See their awesome talks the past 5 years
- Useful for map/path finding problems
- Currently what Bloodhound uses not the only one we could use ...

https://github.com/andyrobbins/PowerPath

### Simulation: Shortest Path

#### **A-Star Algorithm**

- Shortest distance from A->B + **Heuristic** 
  - Helps us avoid particular paths
  - Ignore paths which might be unavailable segmentation
  - Punish "noisy" paths

CALL **algo.shortestPath**.astar.stream((startNode:Node, endNode:Node, weightProperty:String, propertyKeyLat:String, propertyKeyLon:String,

{nodeQuery:'labelName', relationshipQuery:'relationshipName', direction:'BOTH', defaultValue:1.0})

YIELD nodeld, cost

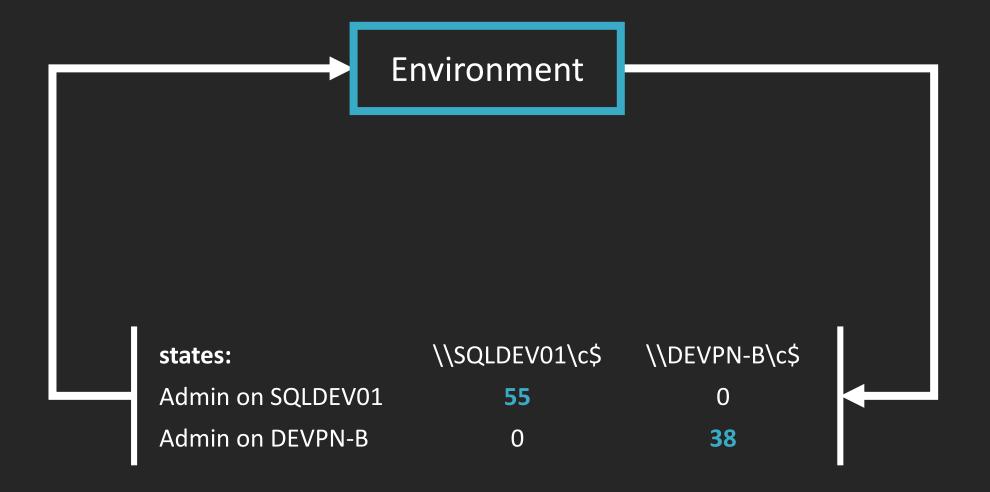
### Q-Learning for Automation

For a given action in a given state, the environment returns a new state, and a reward

- Basic reinforcement learning
- Allows an agent to learn optimal actions
- Strength is through the heuristic you use
- Requires some initial state all weights are 0

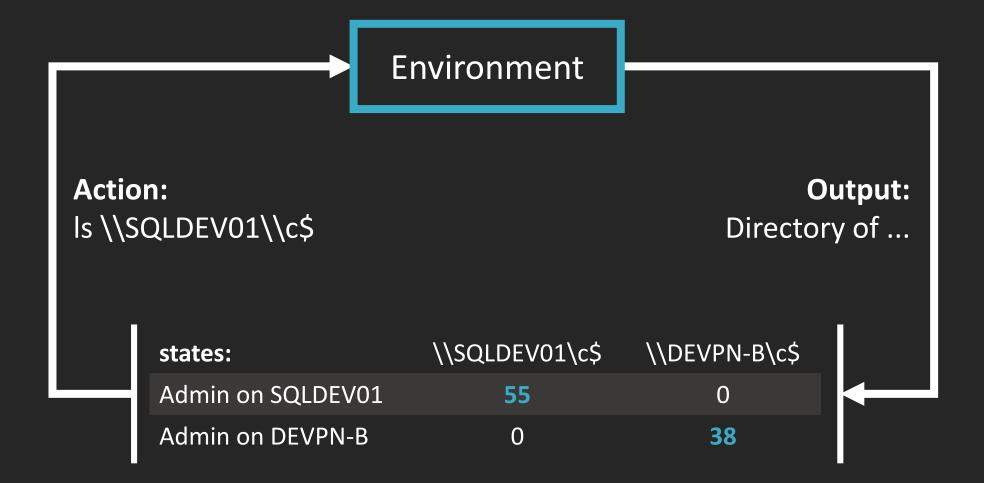
New State: ?

**Reward: ?** 



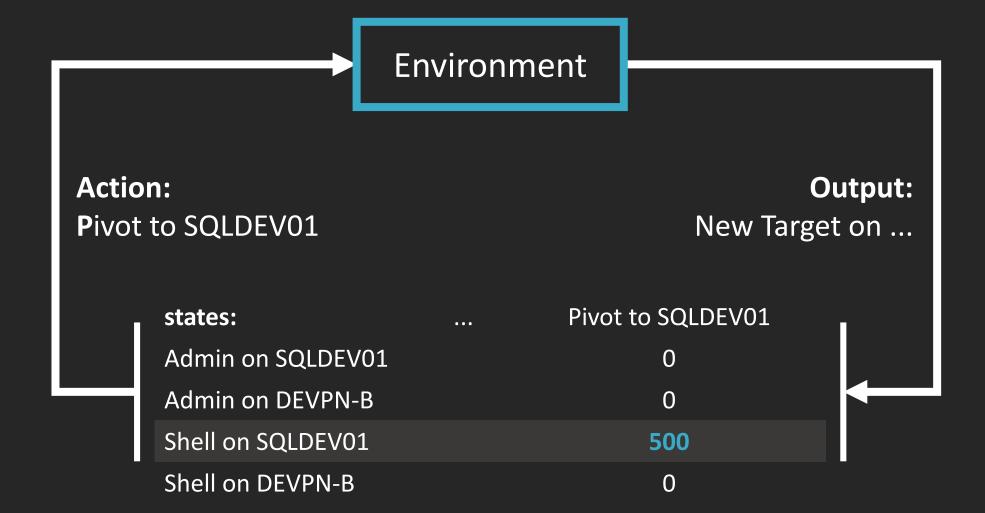
#### New State: Admin on SQLDEV01

Reward: +55

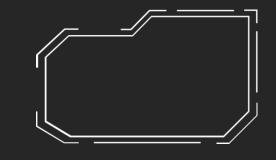


#### **New State:** Shell on SQLDEV01

**Reward: +500** 

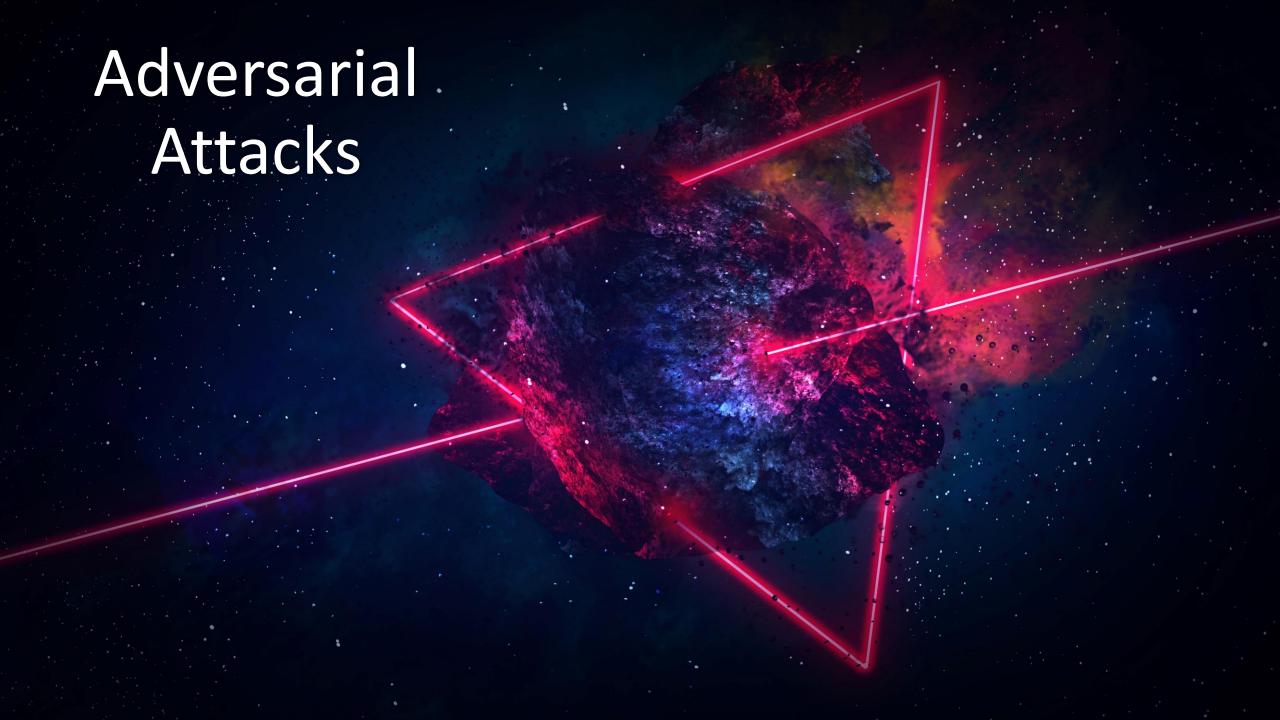


### Back on the radar



#### Goal > Data > Prior > Query > Posterior

- We are all just data processors
- Attack graph theory is the future
  - Bloodhound/resiliency is like white-box code review
  - Heuristic-based cyclic queries are black-box
- With limited knowledge, we work in probabilities
- Given a sufficient process, Q-learning could op



### Adversarial ML

#### "Attacking existing models"

Effective | Efficient vs. Secure | Robust

- Proven mainly in the lab
  - Not theoretical, just hard to build
  - Many demonstrations lack practical use
- Two basic approaches:
  - White: Access to the original model, architecture, etc.
  - Black: Access only to the outputs for a given input

### **Previous Works**

 DeepWordBug - Black-box generation of adversarial text https://github.com/QData/deepWordBug

• **Cylance, I kill you!** - Client-side model reversing https://skylightcyber.com/2019/07/18/cylance-i-kill-you/

Good word attacks on statistical mail filters
 https://ix.cs.uoregon.edu/~lowd/ceas05lowd.pdf

• Robustness Toolbox – Attacks, defenses, etc.

https://github.com/IBM/adversarial-robustness-toolbox

## proofpoint. - Case Study

- E-Mail security company
  - Spam detection
  - Malware sandboxing
  - URL analysis
  - End user training
- Openly promote their use of ML (MLX, CLX)
- Supporting 230k+ domains Rapid7 Sonar DNS data
  - 590 gov domains
  - 2300 edu domains

# proofpoint. - Vulnerability

To: <reciever@domain.com>

From: <sender@domain.com>

Subject: Our Meeting

• • •

X-Proofpoint-Spam-Details: rule=nodigest\_notspam policy=nodigest score=0 malwarescore=0 mlxlogscore=999 mlxscore=0 suspectscore=14 spamscore=0 impostorscore=0 adultscore=0 clxscore=593 priorityscore=0 phishscore=0 bulkscore=97 lowpriorityscore=97 classifier=spam adjust=0 reason=mlx scancount=1 engine=9.1.0-12345000 definitions=main-12345

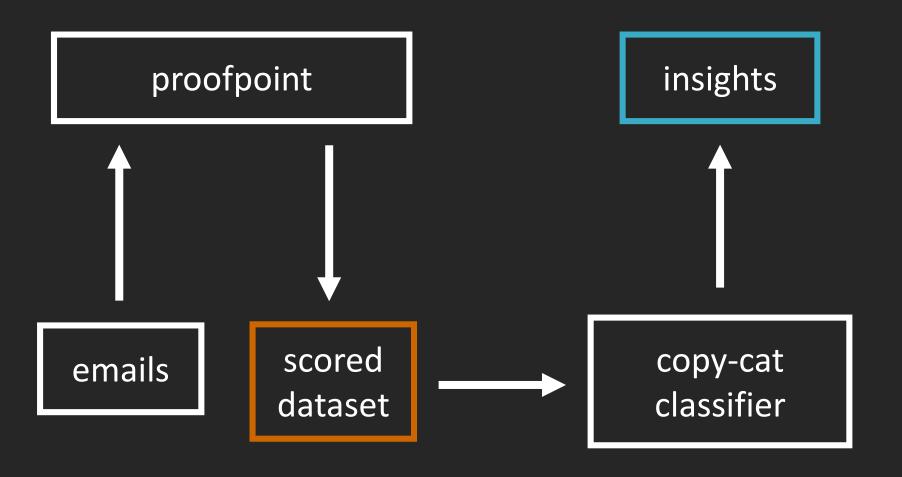
Leaky inputs... tsk tsk

## proofpoint<sub>®</sub> - Attack (a)

- 1. Collect a dataset Send X emails to steal scores
- 2. Copy the model Use their outputs to duplicate
- 3a. Extract information from the model
  - Take N highest/lowest emails, unique the words
  - Toggle inputs to discover the most impactful tokens
  - Invert the model mathematically \*
  - Randomly alter/add content and re-score

(char swaps, homoglyphs, tense)

## proofpoint<sub>®</sub> - Attack (a)



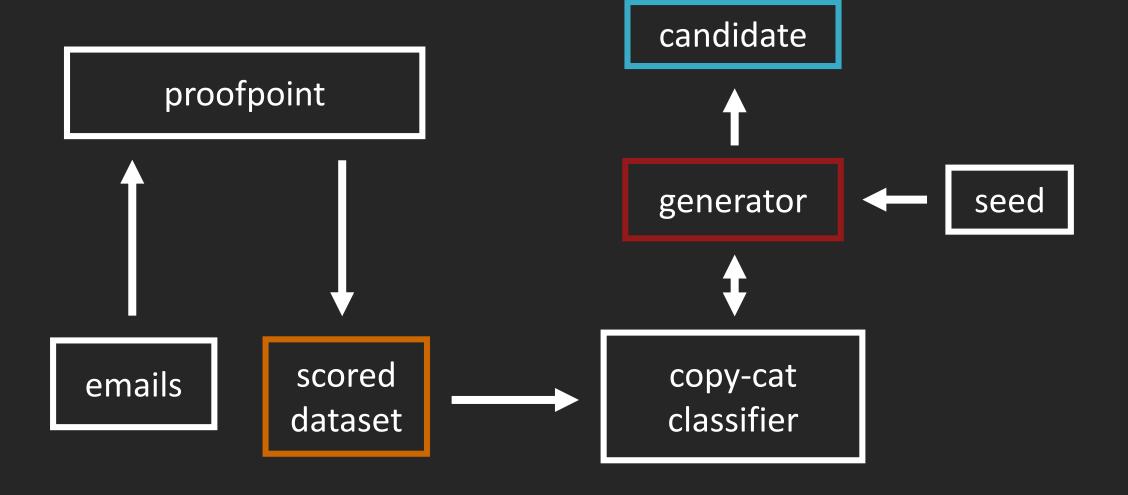
## proofpoint<sub>®</sub> - Attack (b)

- 1. Collect a dataset Send X emails to steal scores
- 2. Copy the model Use their outputs to duplicate
- **3b.** Make a generator Use our copy-cat to train
  - Let it learn useful insights
  - Target maximum score custom loss function

#### 4. Automate improvements

- "Fix" pre-written candidates
- Generate "good" content from scratch

## proofpoint<sub>®</sub> - Attack (b)



## proofpoint. - Challenges

#### Initial email content

- Finding a sufficient dataset
- Links/attachments have large effects on the score

#### Bulk email delivery

- Easy if we have a Proofpoint inbox harder if we don't
- Total emails required for a sufficient dataset
- Extraction process altering the scores

#### Final Outcomes

- Generators will likely create gibberish human intervention
- Bypassing a model is only one part of the "defenses"

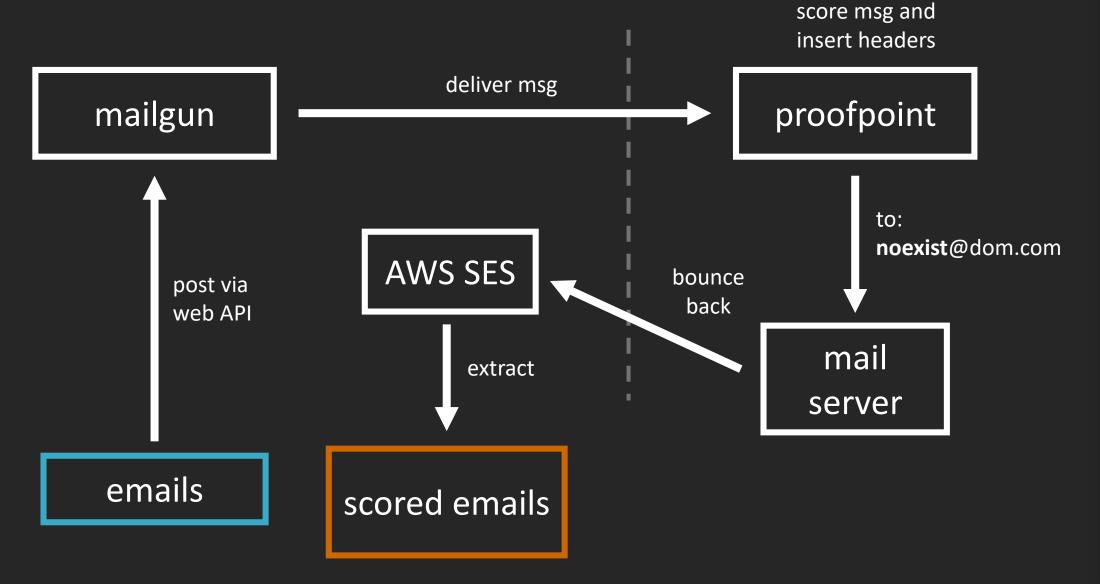
### 1. Collect a dataset

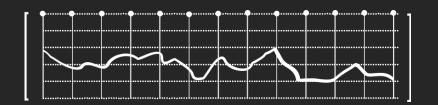
- Needed to gather inputs for scoring (a lot)
  - Enron dataset for text-based candidates
  - ISCX-URL-2016 for link-based candidates
- Use bounce-backs to collect the scores
  - Delivered using Mailgun
  - Received using AWS SES + S3 bucket

#### We ran multiple collection runs:

- 1. 5k pre-processed/scored samples from Enron
- 2. 13k Links inside a generic template
- 3. 15k raw subject + bodies from Enron inboxes

## 1. Collect a dataset



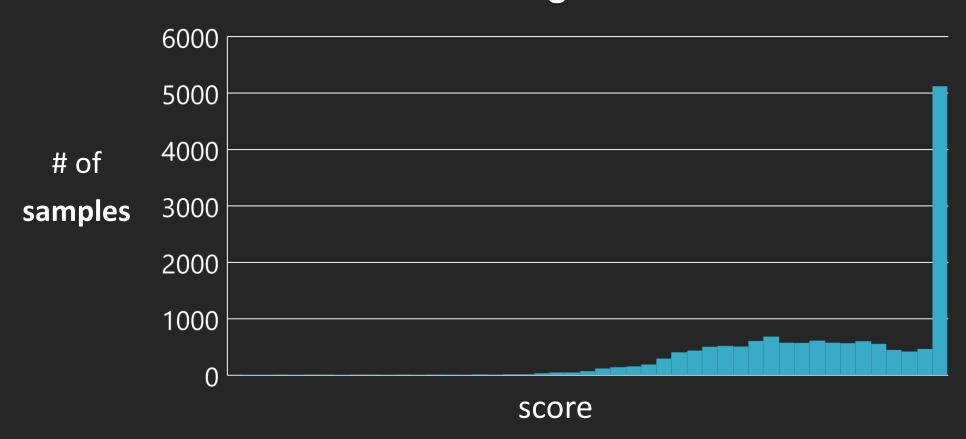


score	bulk	malware	priority	spam	phish	impostor	mlx	mlxlog	low-p	suspect	adult	clx
16	0	0	90	16	0	0	16	73	0	3	0	403
0	0	0	118	0	0	0	0	505	0	8	0	324
0	0	0	118	0	0	0	0	479	0	19	0	303
0	0	0	118	0	0	0	0	489	0	3	0	315
0	0	0	118	0	0	0	0	538	0	3	0	321
0	0	0	90	0	0	0	0	605	0	3	0	437
0	0	0	118	0	0	0	0	455	0	3	0	293
0	0	0	90	0	0	0	0	728	0	3	0	466
0	0	0	118	0	0	0	0	477	0	3	0	299
0	0	0	118	0	0	0	0	483	0	3	0	288
0	0	0	118	0	0	0	0	484	0	3	0	344
0	0	0	90	0	0	0	0	595	0	74	0	432
0	0	0	118	0	0	0	0	329	0	3	0	304

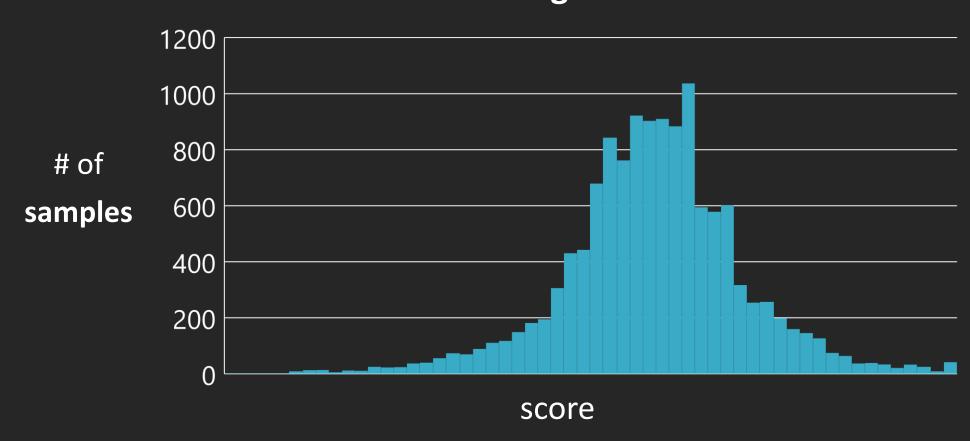
	score	bulk	priority	spam	phish	mlx	mlxlog	low-p	suspect	adult
bulk	-									
priority	-	-								
spam	1	-	-							
phish	-	-	-	-						
mlx	1	-	-	1	-					
mlxlog	2	-	-	2	1	1				
low-p	-	1	-	-	-	-	-			
suspect	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
adult	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
clx	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

<sup>\* -</sup> values < .1 have been omitted

15k **text**-based samples **mlxlogscore** 

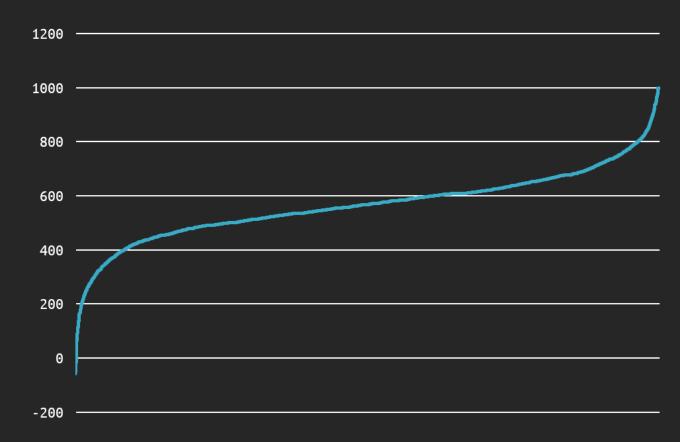


13k link-targeted samples mlxlogscore



10k link-targeted samples mlxlogscore

Activation function baby!



# 2. Copy the Model

- Select a label for training: mlxlogscore
  - Good distribution at least for links
  - Previously scaled / activated
  - Generally between 1 and 999
  - Larger = "safer"
- Select some likely model emulators
  - Neural Network + Bag of Words (BOW) \*
  - **LSTM** + Sequenced Text

# 2. Copy the Model - Results

	Neural Network + BOW	LSTM + Sequences
Text targeted samples	69	91
Link targeted samples	42	96

(we didn't plan this, we swear)

<sup>\*</sup> showing scaled mean absolute error (mean **point** error)

#### 3. Extract Information

- Make text alterations and rescore
  - Take a phishing email: "Click here for cats"

```
Clike here for cats (Swap)
```

Click hare fur cats (Substitute)

Click her for cats (Delete)

Click here for carts (Insert)

- Final outputs need to make sense
- Toggle input tokens and rescore

```
[1,1,1,1] - Click here for cats - 500
```

[0,1,1,1] - here for cats - 490

[1,0,1,1] - Click for cats - 300

Score every possible combination of tokens - fuzzing

#### 3. Extract Information

```
for sample in test_set:
      base = make_prediction(sample)
      for token in sample:
            altered = sample.toggle(token)
            test = make prediction(altered)
            # Record a rolling score movement
            insights[word] += (base - test)
```

## 3. Extract Information - **Texts**

## good

calculation

asset

appreciated

finalized

tyson

difficult

dial

default

lawyers

bids

#### meh

lisa

digest

piano

stems

architectual

living

smells

storms

alcoholic

broccoli

#### bac

software

99

unsub

bridgeline

absolutely

quantities

hydro

proposal

deposit

holden

## 3. Extract Information - Links

## good

movies

category

ecnavi

xml

payment

docs

shop

dest

kitchen

webapps

#### meh

cpanel1

certificate

area2

delores

verify2

struggles

chinas

second

webserver

uniq

#### bad

cool

citi

hc

wp

license

includes

styles

logon

plugins

spreadsheet

## Confirming our insights - Texts

Top 10 **highest** scoring words:

999

Random 10 words from the middle:

640

Top 10 **lowest** scoring words:

• • •

mx0a-000a1001.pphosted.com gave this error: This message looks too much like SPAM to accept.

# Confirming our insights - Links

https://neverexistdomain.com/wp-includes/file Predict: 378 | Real: 300

https://neverexistdomain.com/up-uncludes/file Predict: 600 | Real: 559

https://.../ecnavi/category.xml?movies=payment

Predict: 999 | Real: 999

# Disclosure | Remediation

#### Models are interesting beasts

- Represent learned vectors not always apparent
- Difficult to retrain / rebuild
- Black box with "magic" inside

#### What warrants responsible disclosure?

- What % is considered a viable bypass?
- How does remediation occur?
  - Can't just add a signature
  - General models might work even without leaky outputs



## Real World Talk

#### Application Whitelisting

- Was cool until people realized there were bypasses
- Will be a vendor pitch while it gets sales

#### EndGame ML Competition

- Simple bypasses for static analysis (sRDI, emojis)
- Data scientists solving defensive problems
- Static analysis is only a small part of the battle

"If you don't understand X before ML, you won't understand it after" - Will

## Not All Bad ...

- The next generation of malware
  - Intelligent agents
  - Genetic programming client-side (JIT, variants on the fly)
  - Distributed API calls and hooks
  - Rootkits layered defenses (clothing)
- Securing and hardening models
  - Helping vendors improve their products
  - Ensuring ML isn't the next big security gap

## Fun Projects

- What other defenses leak outputs?
  - Windows defender AMSI sampling
  - URL categorization
- Can we evade other mechanisms?
  - E-Mail attachments in transit
  - HTML content during site inspection
- What other offensive tasks can be offloaded?
  - File & directory enumeration
  - External reconnaissance
  - Chat/E-mail bot for phishing
- Add data extraction to Seatbelt for Neo4j



## Final Thoughts

- Lots of fun work to be done, come play!
- Machine learning is here to stay, don't sleep on it
  - It's all a joke until you get caught
  - "Model bypasses" will become a part of offensive kits
  - ML understanding could quickly become a job requirement

"Might be nothing – could be everything.

Likely somewhere in the middle.

Time will tell." - Will

#### Greetz

- @culteredphish Colleague & all around good guy
- @tyler\_robinson Ex-Colleague & long time friend
- @rharang Answered some helpful questions
- @silentbreaksec Company supporting this research

- Nancy Fulda of BYU
- Will's Mother-in-law for babysitting

All of you for attending the talk

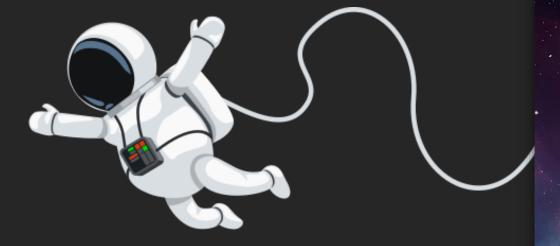
# Find Us After





**Will Pearce** 

@moo\_hax
MooKitty



**Nick Landers** 

@monoxgas



Soon: <a href="http://github.com/MooKitty/FourtyTwo">http://github.com/MooKitty/FourtyTwo</a>

#### Resources

- "Make your own Neural Network" Tariq Rashid
- "3 Blue 1 Brown" YouTube channel
- "Jabrils" YouTube channel

https://www.kaggle.com/

https://silentbreaksecurity.com/machine-learning-for-red-teams-part-1/

https://github.com/MoooKitty/RedML

# So long and thanks for all the phish!

