

# Lecture 23: Who knows what about who?

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Sociology 204: Social Networks  
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2/2 Secrets



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Why do we care?

- ▶ important for scale-up method
- ▶ interesting
- ▶ impacts social influence
- ▶ potentially creates social stasis

Cowan: secrets and self-fulfilling illusions



Contact hypothesis: when individuals come into contact with a stigmatized outgroup, prejudice decreases

What if secrets prevent us from realizing that we are already in contact with stigmatized outgroups?

Survey of random sample of Americans to measuring hearing and telling about two outcomes

- ▶ having an abortion
- ▶ having a miscarriage

Hypothesis 1: Among concealable characteristics, the less stigmatized the characteristic the more people will hear about it

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- ▶ 50% of Americans report knowing someone who had an abortion

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- ▶ 75% of Americans report knowing someone who has had a miscarriage
- ▶ 50% of Americans report knowing someone who had an abortion
- ▶ Estimated that nearly 20% of recognized pregnancies end in abortion
- ▶ Estimated that 13% of recognized pregnancies end in miscarriage

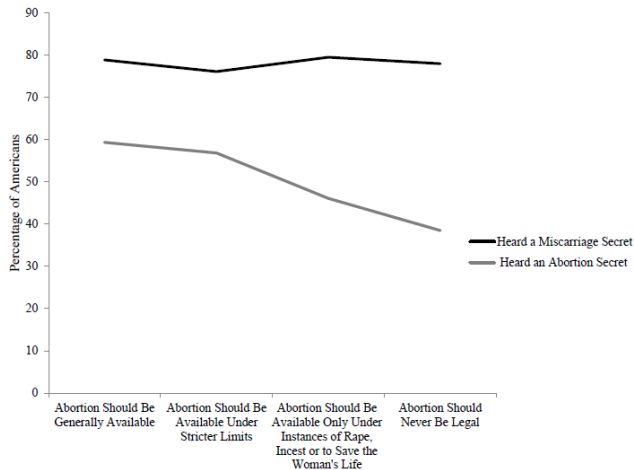
**Table 1:** Frequency and Magnitude of Secret Telling and Secret Keeping for Own and Others' Miscarriages and Abortions, AMACS 2012

	Respondent or Partner Has Had:			Respondent Has Heard of Someone Else's:		
	Miscarriage	Abortion	Diff.	Miscarriage	Abortion	Diff.
Secret telling						
Respondent disclosed secret (%)	77.31	66.00	+	31.14	15.85	+
If disclosed, mean number of people told	2.63	1.24	†	2.73	2.22	+
Total people told per event	2.03	0.82	†	0.85	0.35	†
Secret keeping <sup>a</sup>						
Respondent kept secret (%)	7.36	31.01	†	12.71	24.68	†
If kept, mean number of people kept from	2.61	2.63		3.66	3.01	*
Total people secret kept from per event	0.20	0.82	†	0.47	0.74	†
N	278	179		1275	856	

- Difference in hearing is because miscarriage secrets are told to more people and concealed from fewer people

Hypothesis 2: Among concealable characteristics, people who hold positive attitudes toward the characteristics are more likely to hear about it

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- ▶ Comparison between abortion and miscarriage is key here
- ▶ Cowen thinks attitude change is unlikely to explain this pattern



Hypothesis 3: Among concealable characteristics, the more stigmatized the more likely to be disclosed to those who are accepting

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Supported by:

- ▶ open-ended responses to survey
- ▶ intake data from abortion clinic

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Information ends up where it will have the least effect leading to social stasis

Goel et al: Real and perceived attitude homophily

Not assigned

homophily: “love of the same” (offline filter bubble)

People tend to be connected to people who are similar to them:

- ▶ sociodemographic homophily
- ▶ attitude homophily

Maybe our attitudes are not as similar as we think to our friends?

“Would you go to a One Direction concert if you were given free tickets?”


Alice and Bob are friends:

- ▶ Alice answers question about Alice
- ▶ Alice answers question about Bob
- ▶ Bob answers question about Bob
- ▶ Bob answers question about Alice

From patterns, we can estimate actual agreement and perceived agreement

Facebook app used “social graph”; kind of like a social quiz

Friend Sense



Guesses About Me

My Answers

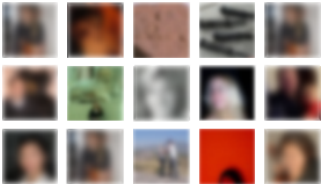
Settings

Would **Sharad Goel** go see the Spice Girls reunion tour if given free tickets?

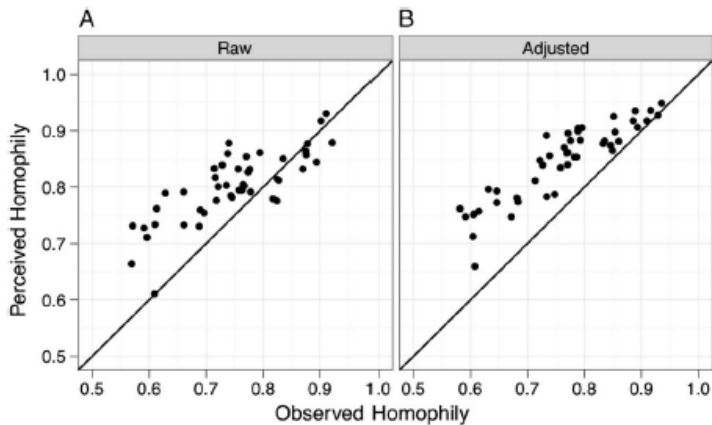
Yes

No

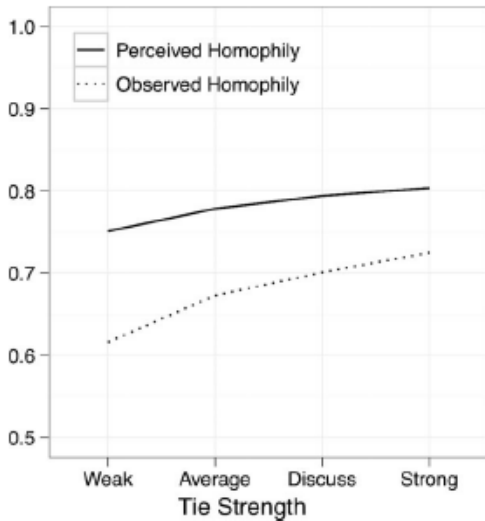
How well do you know your friends?



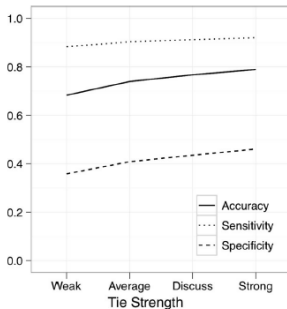




- For almost all questions considered, perceived agreement is higher than observed agreement (although it depends a bit on statistical adjustments)

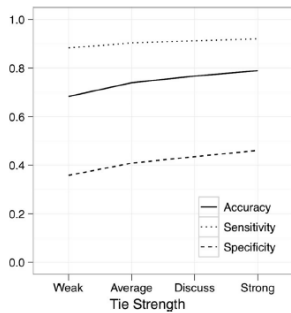


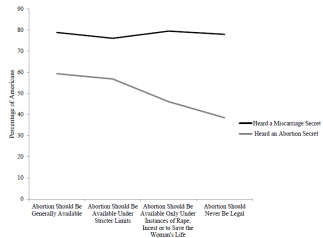
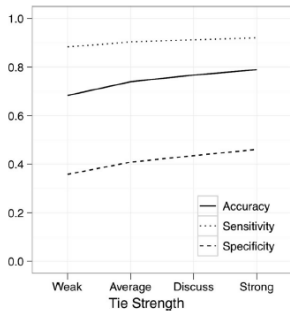
- Perceived agreement is higher than observed agreement for all different tie strengths

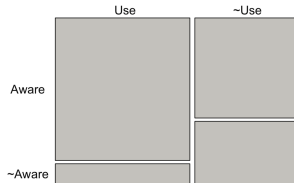
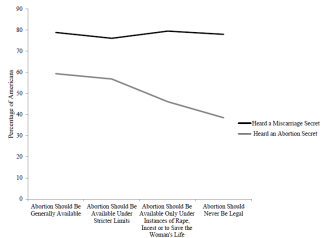
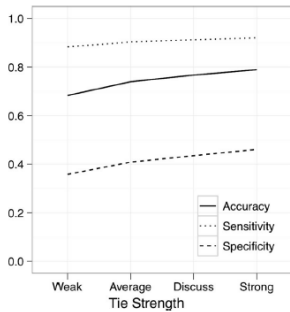


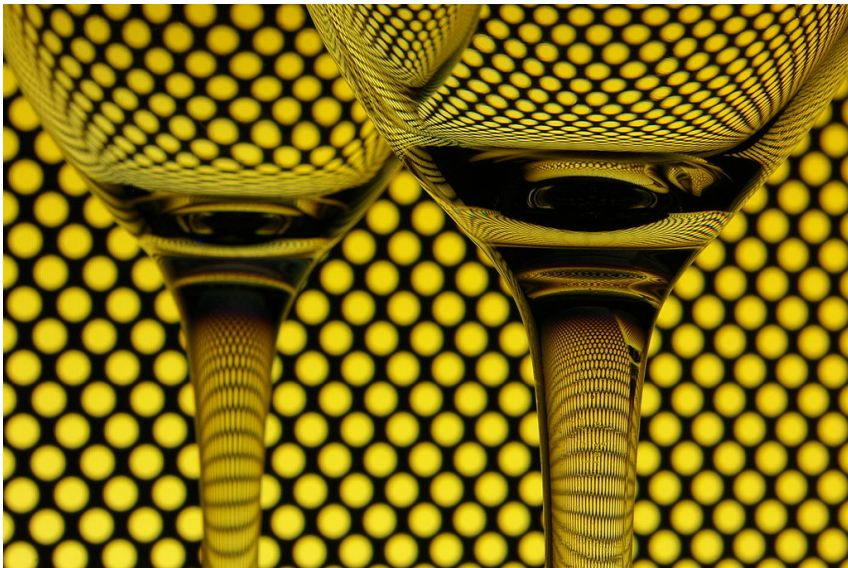
People are bad at detecting disagreement

- ▶ Accuracy =  $p(\text{correct guess})$
- ▶ Sensitivity =  $p(\text{correct guess given agreement})$
- ▶ Specificity =  $p(\text{correct guess given disagreement})$









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- ▶ your beliefs about the attitude of your friends are probably systematically distorted



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- ▶ your beliefs about the attitude of your friends are probably systematically distorted
- ▶ systematic biases in information awareness may promote stability of attitudes
- ▶ systematic biases can mess up scale-up estimates, but these can be measured