

# Individual Fairness for Graph Neural Networks: A Ranking based Approach

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# Outline

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**Background Introduction**

**Previous Works**

**Existing Problems & Challenges**

**Our Solutions**

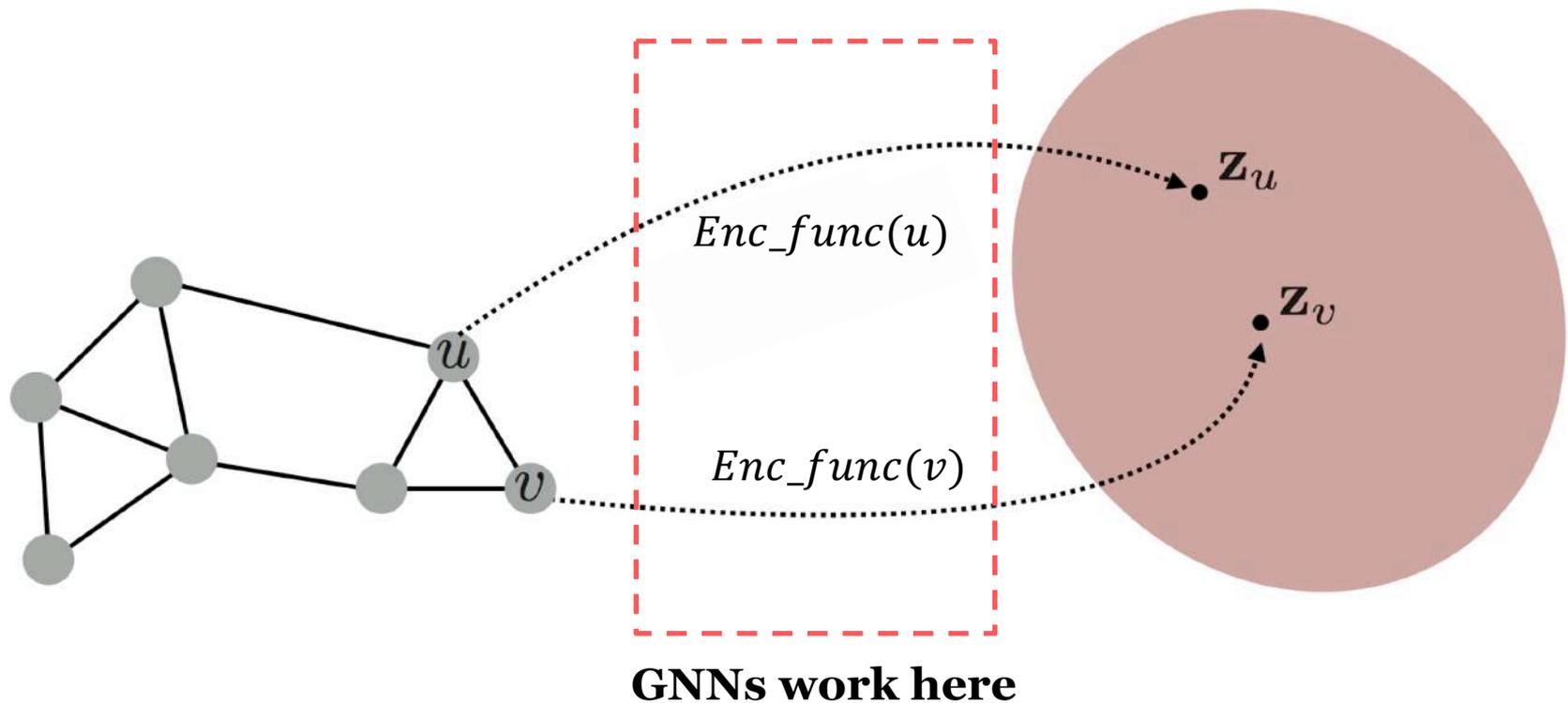
**Experiments & Conclusion**

**Future Works**



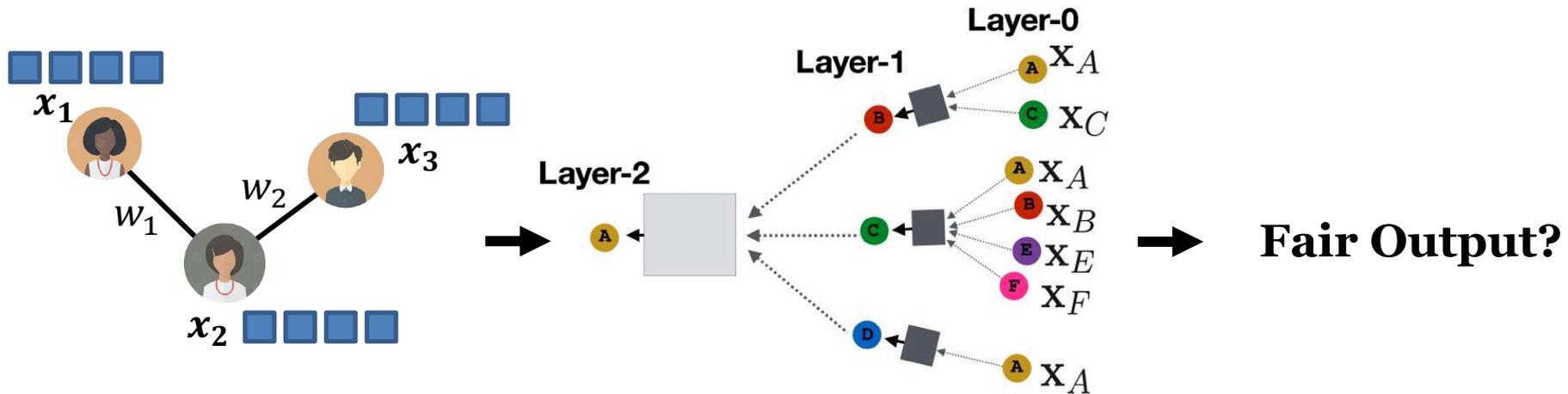
# Background Introduction: Graph Neural Networks

**Goal of Graph Neural Networks (GNNs):** to encode nodes so that **similarity in the embedding space** (e.g., dot product) approximates **similarity in the original network**.



# Background Introduction: Different Fairness Notions

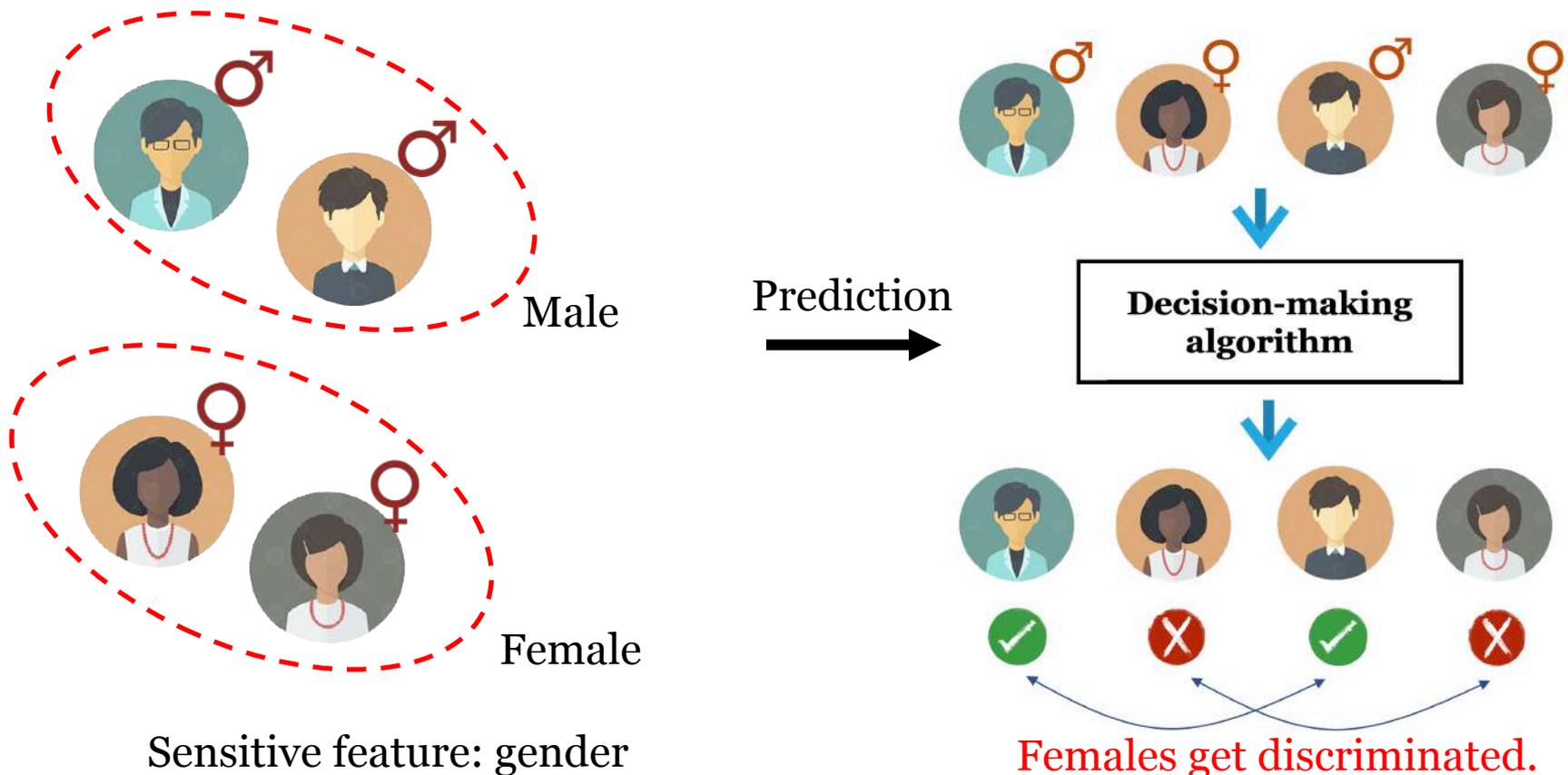
- Traditional GNNs usually **lack fairness** consideration.
- Introducing different fairness notions to graphs and promoting fairness for GNNs become urgent needs.
- So what are common fairness notions?



# Different Fairness Notions: Group v.s. Individual

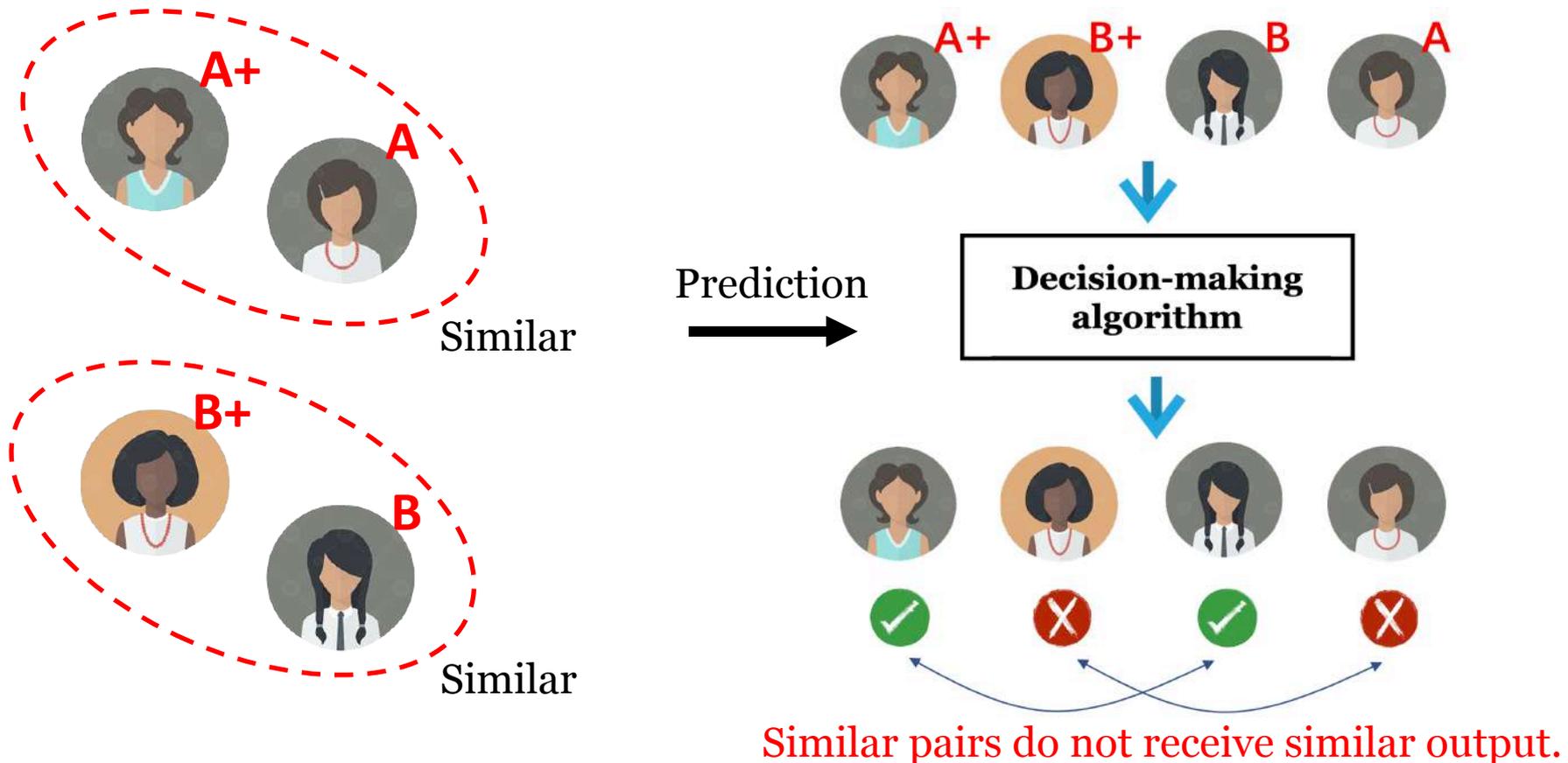
- **Group Fairness**

- Decision-making algorithm should not make biased prediction towards people with certain **sensitive feature**.



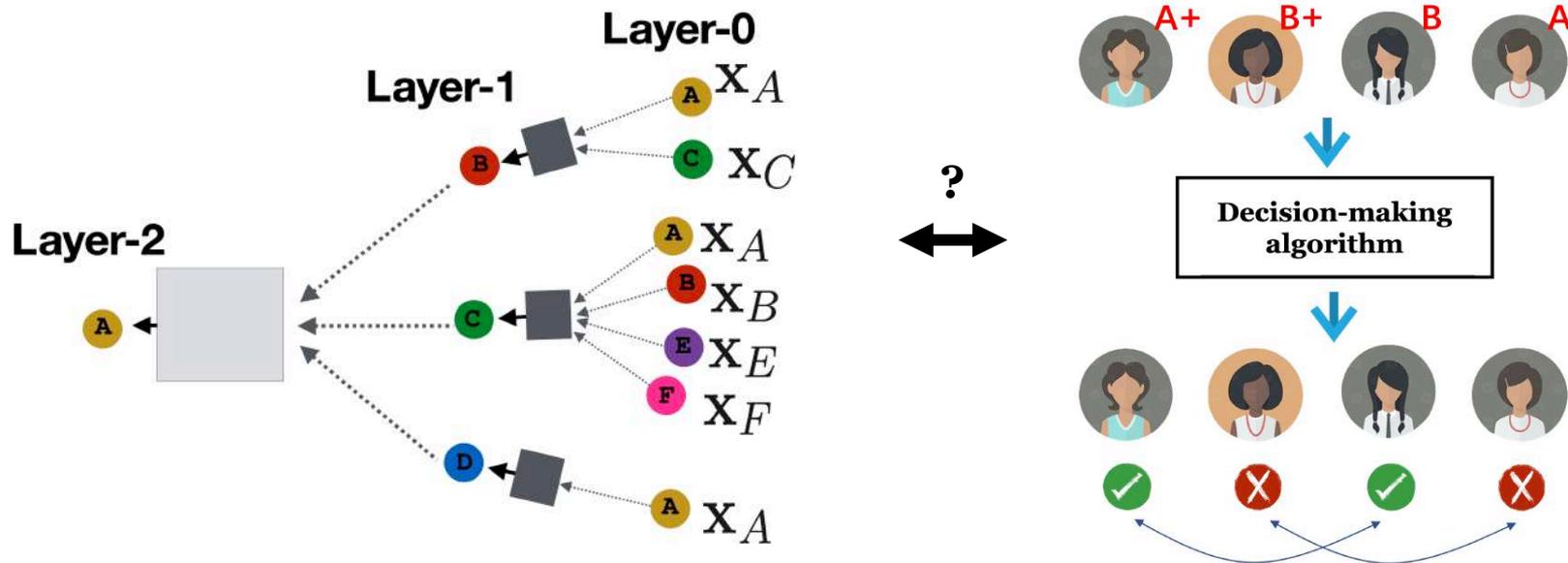
# Different Fairness Notions: Group v.s. Individual

- **Individual Fairness: higher granularity**
  - Similar people should be **treated similarly**.



# Goal of this work

- Up to now, group fairness has been thoroughly explored in GNNs.
- As a **more granular** fairness notion, individual fairness has not been studied in GNNs.



**Goal: Promoting individual fairness in GNNs.**

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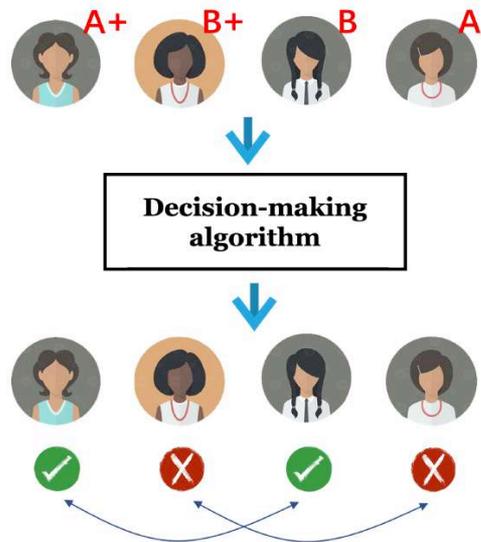
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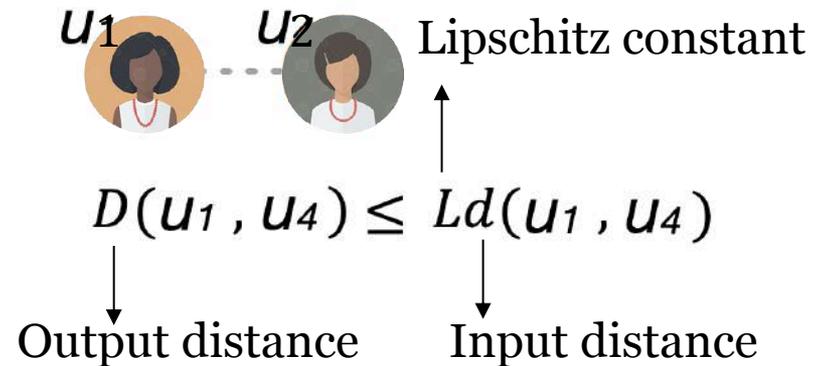


# Previous works

- [Kang et al., 2020] formulate the individual fairness optimization problem in graphs based on *Lipschitz condition*.
- Output distance between pairs  $\leq$  scaled input distance between pairs : similar people are treated similarly.



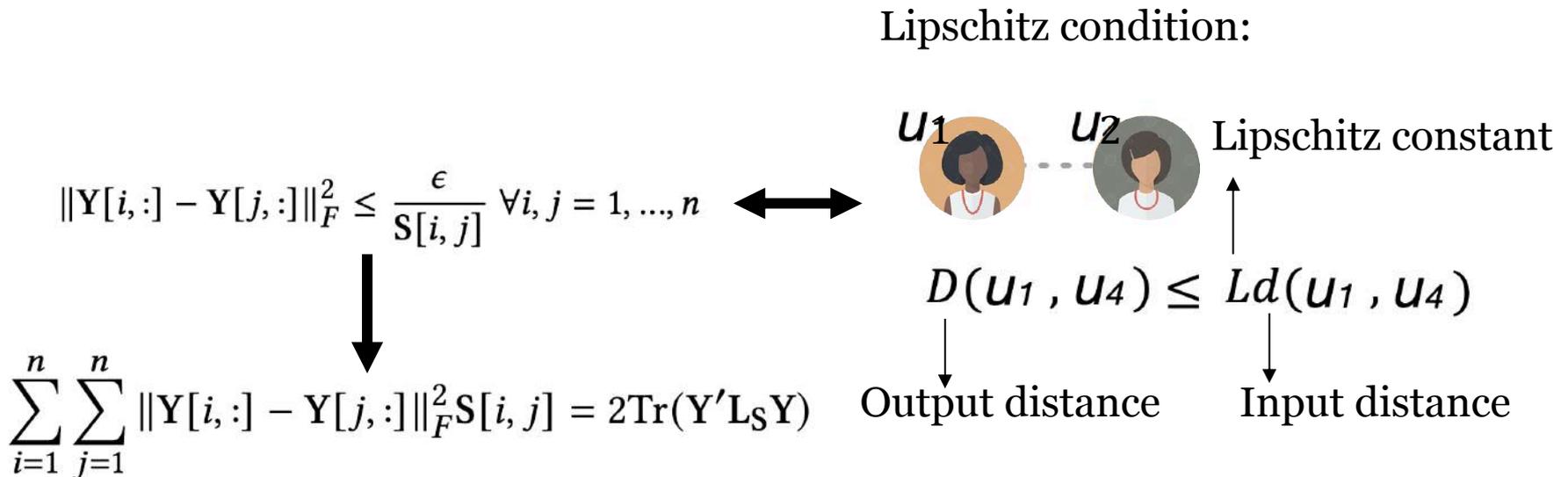
Lipschitz condition:



[Kang et al., 2020] Kang J, He J, Maciejewski R, et al. InFoRM: Individual Fairness on Graph Mining[C]//Proceedings of the 26th ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery & Data Mining. 2020: 379-389.

# Previous works

- Here the oracle similarity matrix  $\mathbf{S}$  is given as side information.
- Output distance :  $\ell_2$  distance between output vectors;
- Input distance: inverse of similarity between individual pairs;



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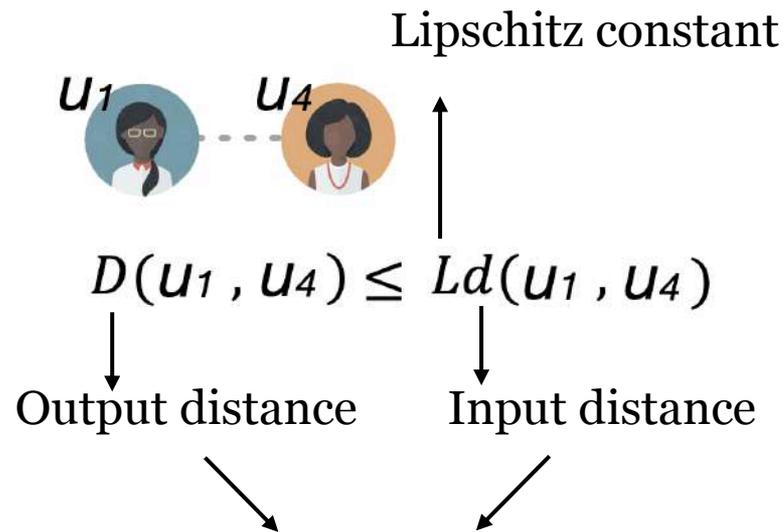
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# Existing Problems & Challenges

- **Constraint Formulation.**



From different domains and different distance metrics.

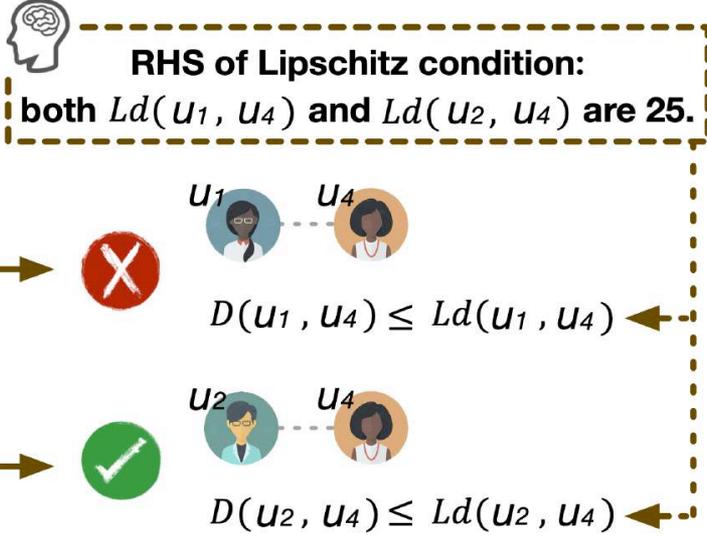
**How can we achieve individual fairness without specifying such a constant and avoid distance comparison across domains?**

# Existing Problems & Challenges

- Distance Calibration.

	 U1	 U2	 U3	 U4	 U5	 U6
 U1	0	90	85	30	95	90
 U2	90	0	1	20	3	2
 U3	85	1	0	70	20	2
 U4	30	20	70	0	50	50
 U5	95	3	20	50	0	5
 U6	90	2	2	50	5	0

(a) Outcome distance matrix from distance metric  $D$

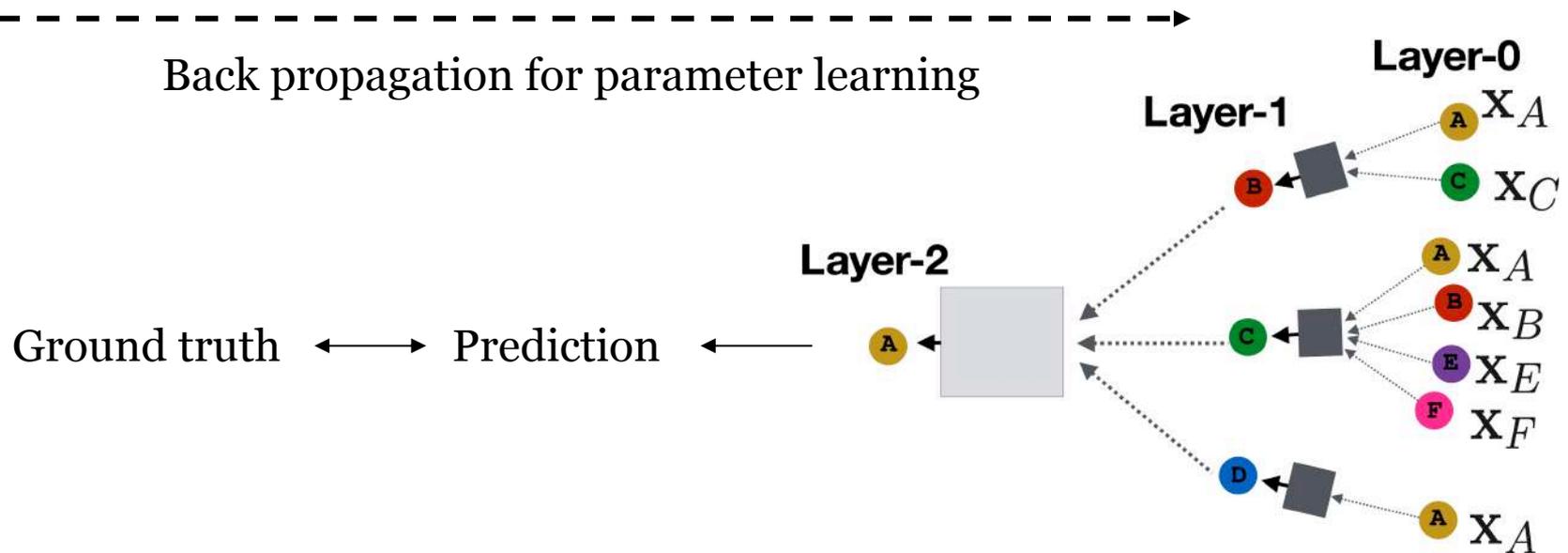


(b) Lipschitz condition judgement based on human knowledge

How can we achieve individual fairness with natural calibration across different individuals?

# Existing Problems & Challenges

- **End-to-End Learning Paradigm.**



An important advantage of GNN is its end-to-end learning\* paradigm. **How can we achieve individual fairness without jeopardizing such advantage?**

\*End-to-end learning usually refers to omitting any hand-crafted intermediary algorithms and directly learning the solution of a given problem from the sampled dataset.

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# Our Solutions: Outline

- **Constraint Formulation.**

- **Distance Calibration.**

- **End-to-End Learning Paradigm**

New individual fairness definition  
from a ranking perspective.



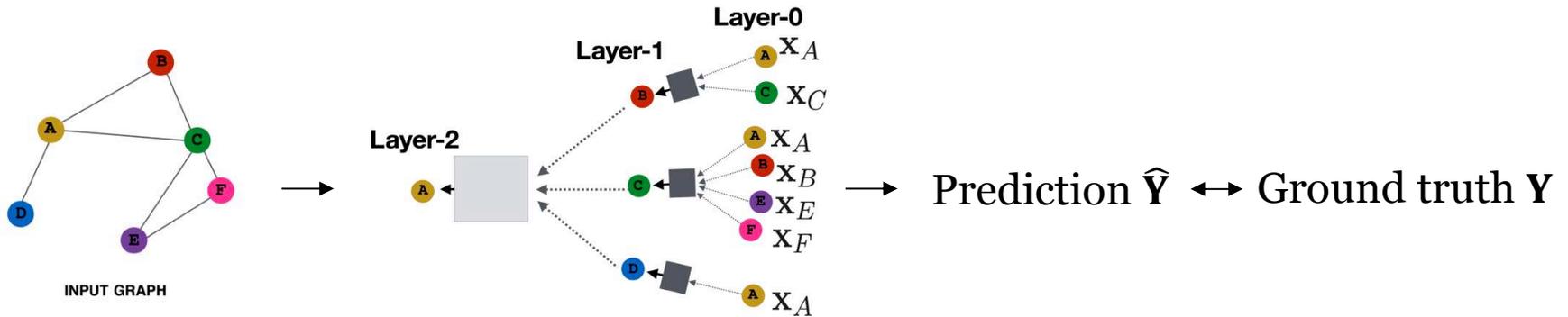
Problem formulation.



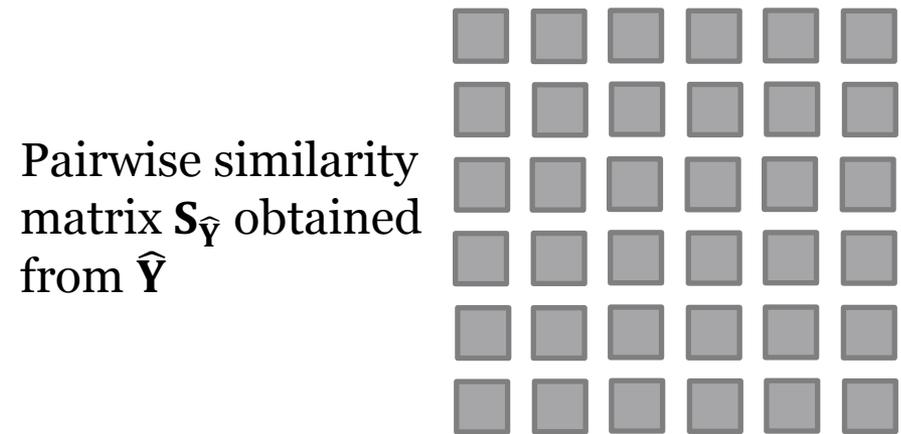
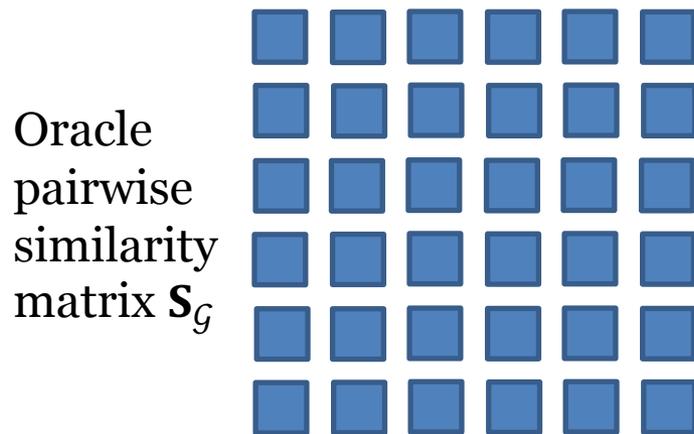
→ REDRESS framework.

# Our Solutions: Ranking-based Individual Fairness

**Traditional GNN based graph mining data flow without fairness consideration:**



**Extra fairness indicators for input and output data:**

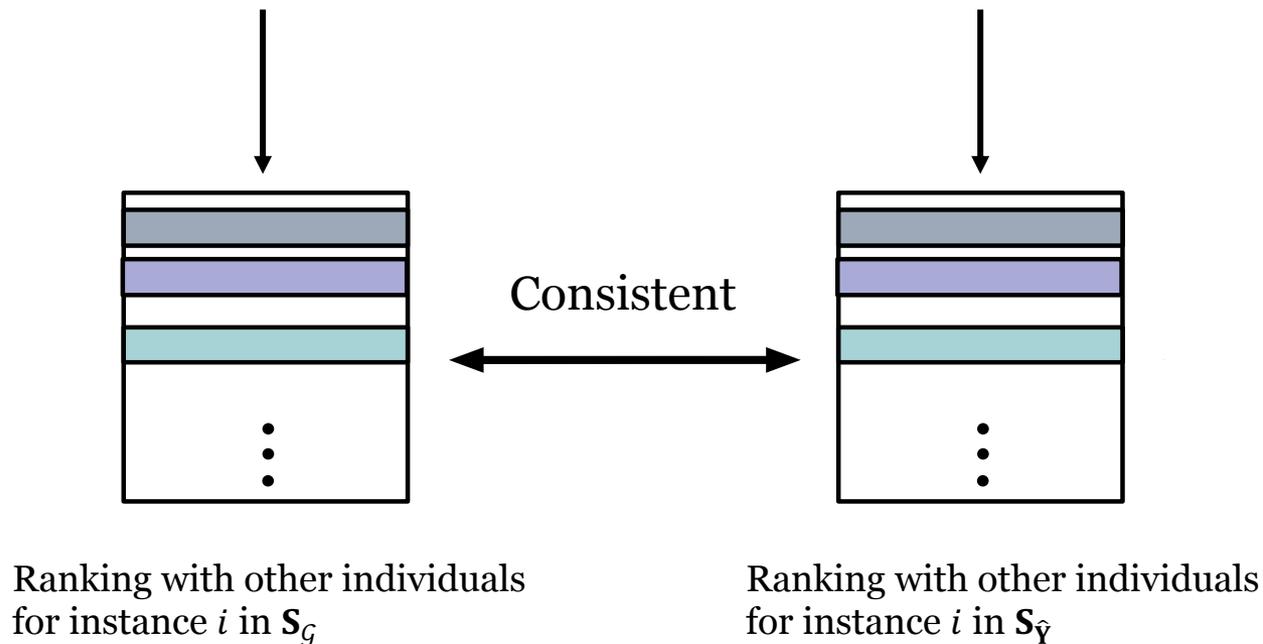


# Our Solutions: Ranking-based Individual Fairness

**Ranking based individual fairness:** for each individual  $i$ , if we have

Similarity matrix  $\mathbf{S}_G$  from human knowledge

Similarity matrix  $\mathbf{S}_{\hat{Y}}$  from prediction  $\hat{Y}$

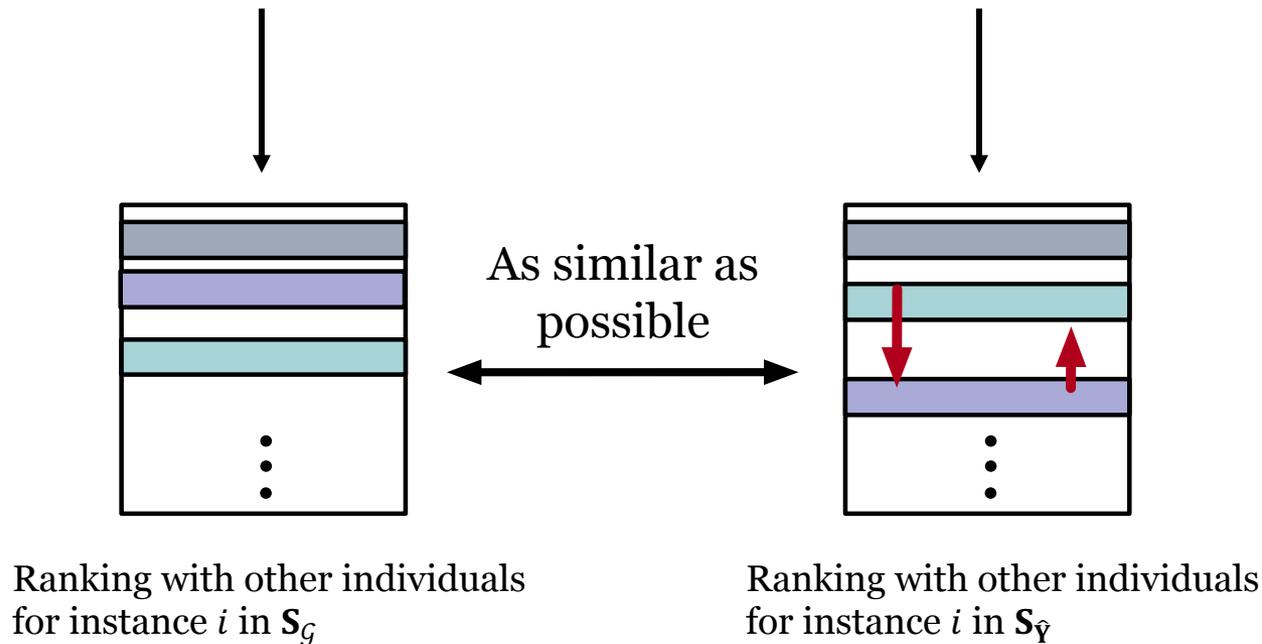


# Our Solutions: Ranking-based Problem Formulation

**Promoting individual fairness from a ranking perspective:** for each individual  $i$ , our goal is to

Similarity matrix  $\mathbf{S}_G$  from human knowledge

Similarity matrix  $\mathbf{S}_{\hat{Y}}$  from prediction  $\hat{Y}$



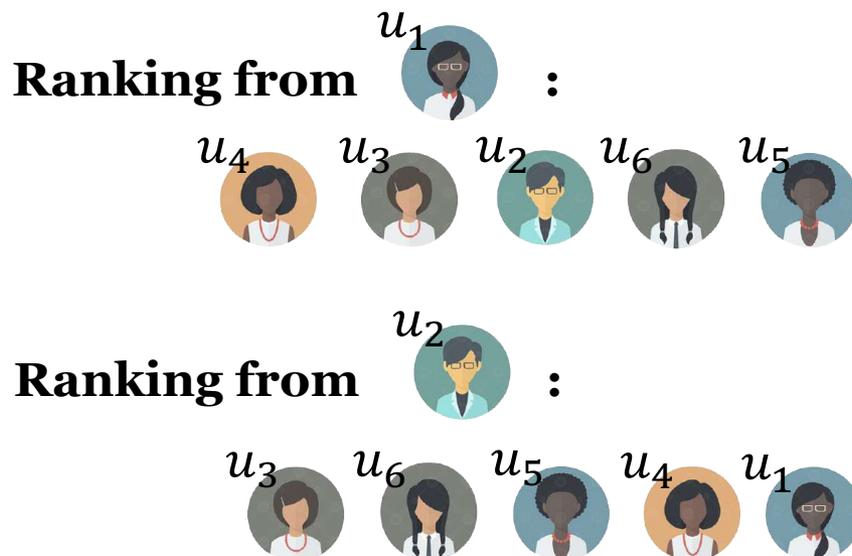
# Our Solutions: Ranking-based Problem Formulation

The newly proposed Ranking-based individual fairness definition & corresponding problem formulation:

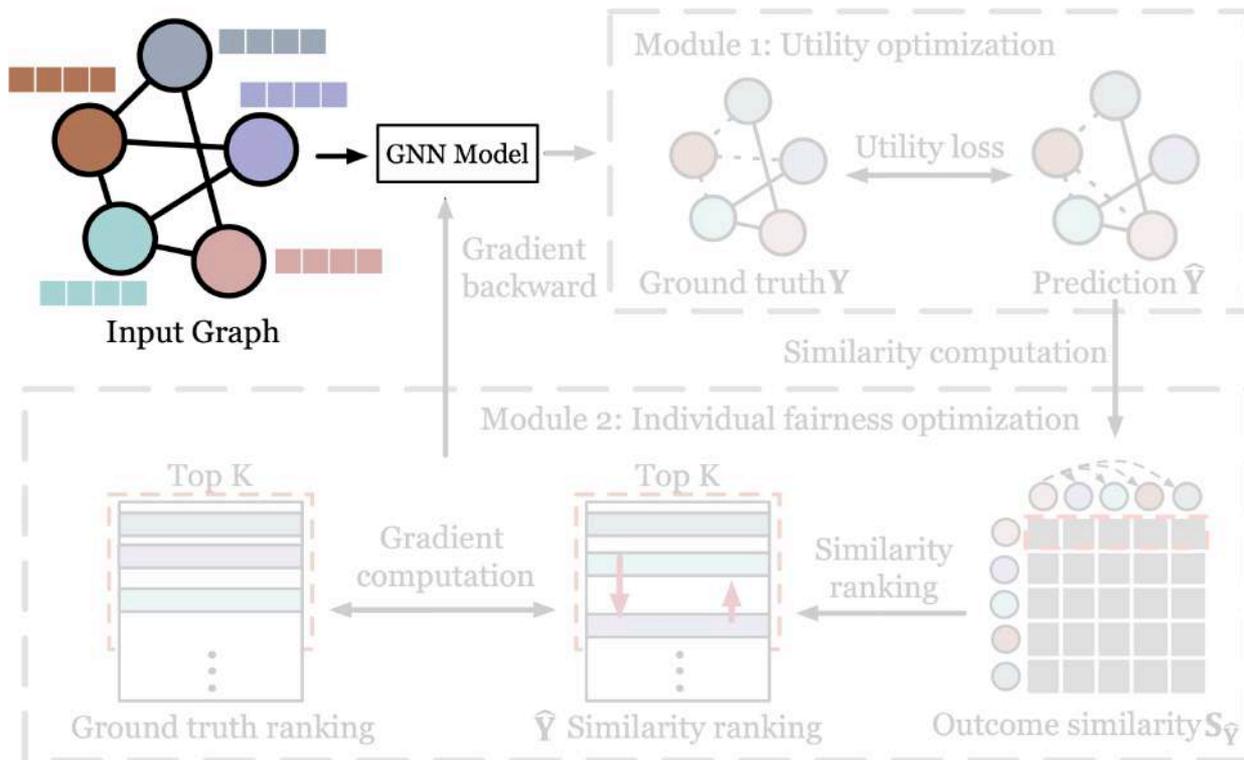
- Naturally calibrate across individuals;
- Provide a new constraint criterion to achieve individual fairness;

	 $u_1$	 $u_2$	 $u_3$	 $u_4$	 $u_5$	 $u_6$
 $u_1$	0	90	85	30	95	90
 $u_2$	90	0	1	20	3	2
 $u_3$	85	1	0	70	20	2
 $u_4$	30	20	70	0	50	50
 $u_5$	95	3	20	50	0	5
 $u_6$	90	2	2	50	5	0

Outcome distance matrix  
from distance metric  $D$

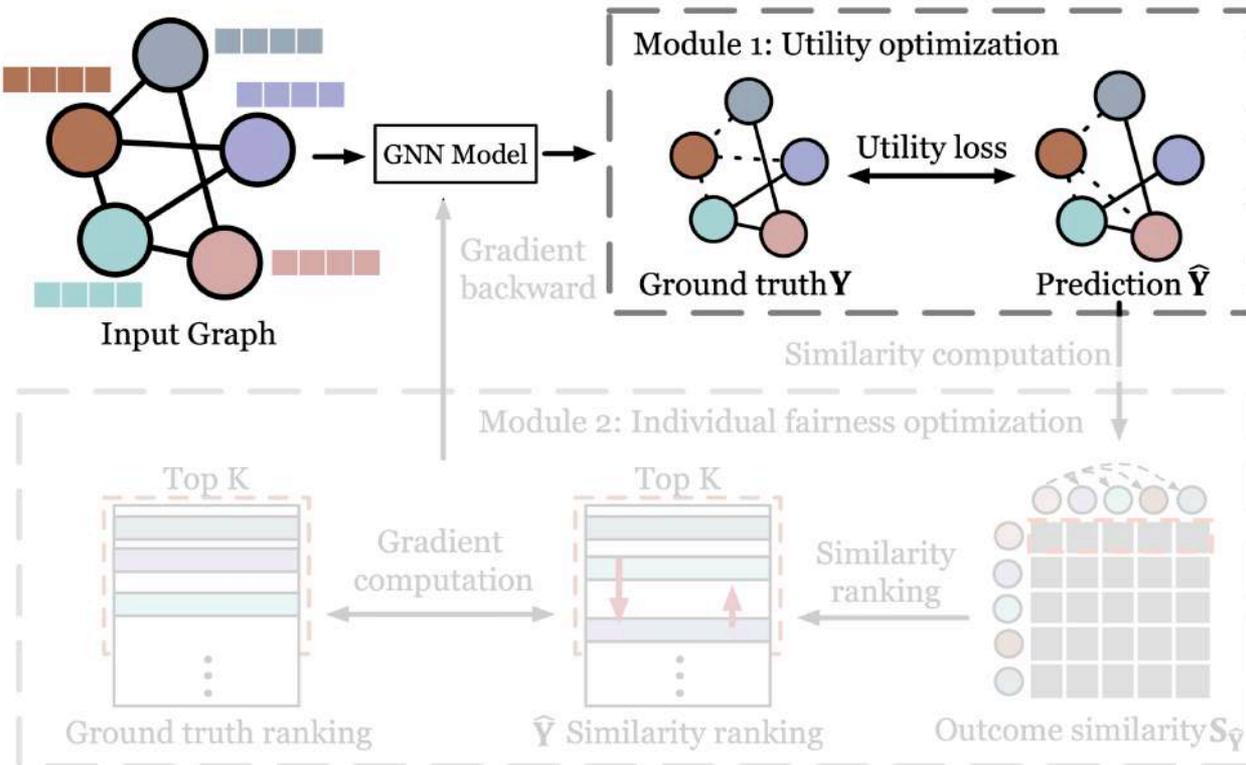


# Our Solutions: Proposed Framework—REDRESS



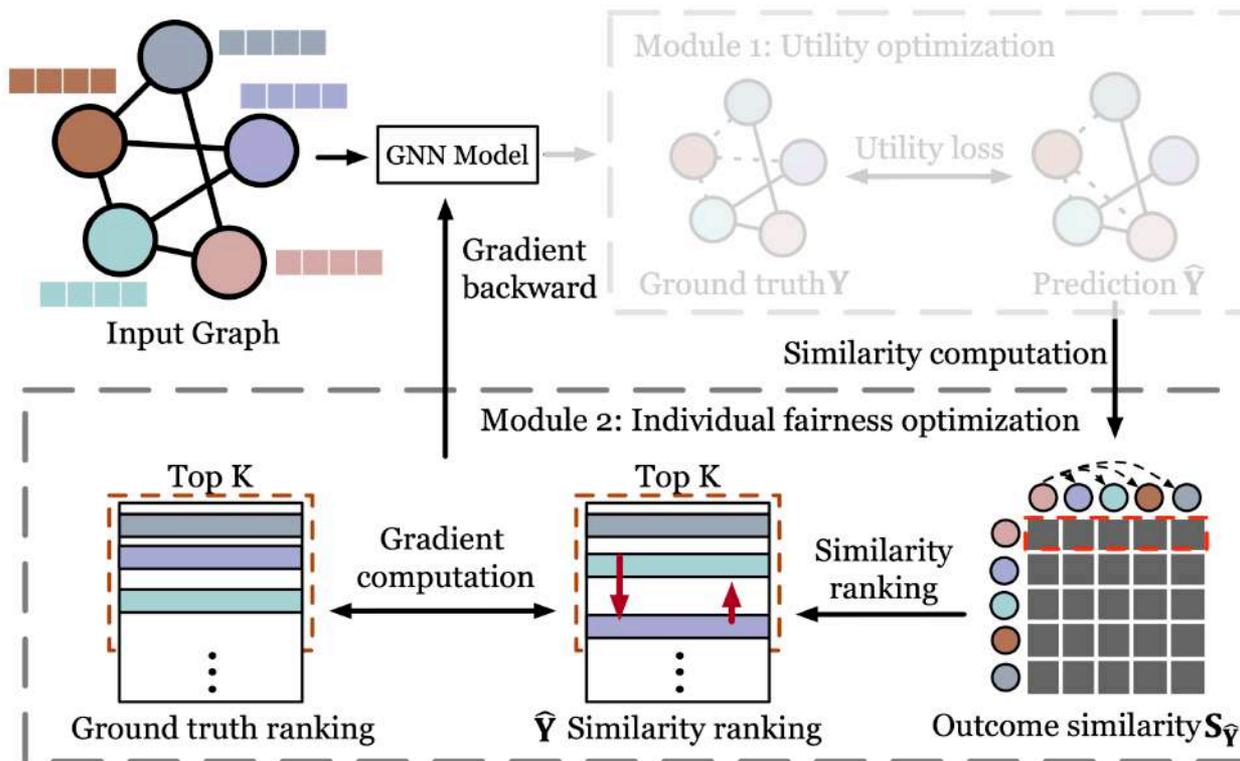
- **GNN backbone model.**  
Basic GNN structure to achieve downstream tasks.
- **Utility maximization.**  
It aims to minimize the downstream task loss.
- **Individual fairness optimization.**  
It aims to enforce the similarity rankings from  $S_{\hat{Y}}$  and  $S_G$  to be similar.

# Our Solutions: Proposed Framework—REDRESS



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Basic GNN structure to make downstream tasks.
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- **GNN backbone model.**  
Basic GNN structure to make downstream tasks.
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**GNN backbone:** The basic operation of GNN between  $l$ -th layer and  $(l + 1)$ -th layer can be summarized as:

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l+1)} = \sigma(\text{COMBINE}(\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}, f(\{\mathbf{h}_u^{(l)} : u \in \mathcal{N}(v)\})))$$

$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l+1)}$ : Embedding of node  $v$  at  $(l + 1)$ -th layer;

$f(\cdot)$  : Information aggregation function;

$\text{COMBINE}(\cdot)$  : Information combine function;

$\sigma(\cdot)$  : Activation function;

$\mathcal{N}(v)$  : Neighborhood set of node  $v$ ;

# REDRESS–Utility Maximization

**Utility maximization:** loss function can be initialized as the cross-entropy between predictions and ground truth.

$$\mathcal{L} = - \sum_{(i,j) \in \mathcal{T}} Y_{ij} \ln \hat{Y}_{ij}$$

Node classification:  $\mathcal{T}$  is the (node, class) tuple set for training nodes.

Link prediction :  $\mathcal{T}$  is the (node, node) tuple set for the vertices of training edges.

# REDRESS–Individual Fairness Optimization

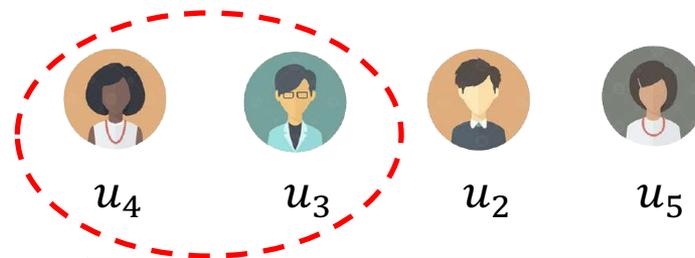
**Individual fairness optimization:** for every node, the two similarity ranking lists with other nodes derived from  $\mathbf{S}_{\hat{Y}}$  and  $\mathbf{S}_{\mathcal{G}}$  should be similar.

**Example: Ranking\*** from 

Ranking in  $\mathbf{S}_{\hat{Y}}$  derived from prediction  $\hat{Y}$



Ground truth ranking from human knowledge  $\mathbf{S}_{\mathcal{G}}$



**Goal:** to make the two ranking lists as similar as possible.

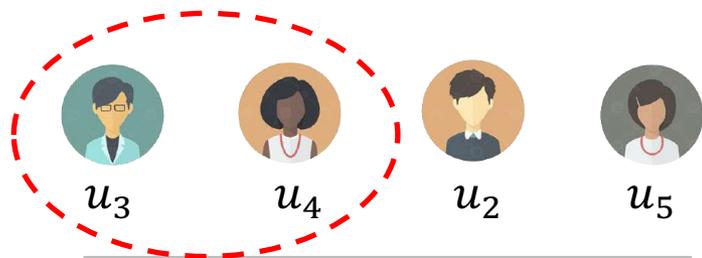
\*We omit  $u_6$  for simplification purpose.

# REDRESS–Individual Fairness Optimization

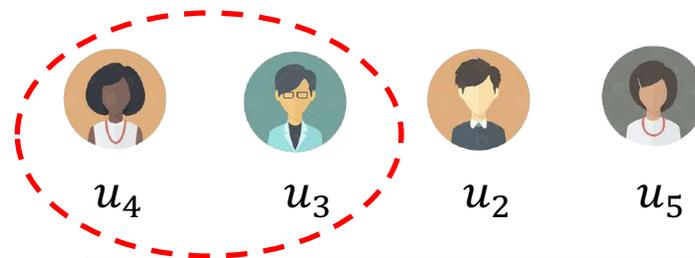
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**Example: Ranking\*** from 

Ranking in  $\mathbf{S}_{\hat{Y}}$  derived from prediction  $\hat{Y}$



Ground truth ranking from human knowledge  $\mathbf{S}_{\mathcal{G}}$



Directly defining a loss between the two ranking lists: **loss is non-differentiable.**

\*We omit  $u_6$  for simplification purpose.

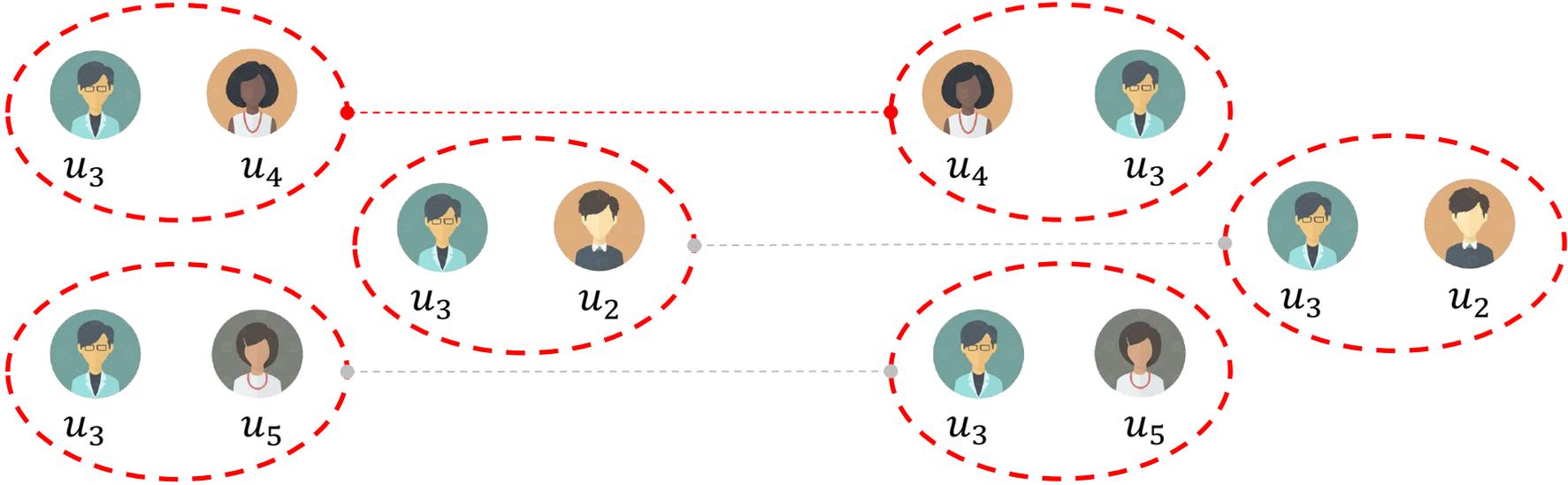
# REDRESS—Individual Fairness Optimization

We turn to make the **relative ranking order of every pair** to be consistent with that in the ground truth ranking.

Take  as an example:  
 $u_3$

Ranking in  $S_{\hat{Y}}$  derived from prediction  $\hat{Y}$

Ground truth ranking from human knowledge  $S_G$



# REDRESS–Individual Fairness Optimization

Ranking in  $\mathbf{S}_{\hat{\mathbf{Y}}}$  derived from prediction  $\hat{\mathbf{Y}}$



Ground truth ranking from human knowledge  $\mathbf{S}_{\mathcal{G}}$



Probability of ‘ $u$  is ahead of  $v$ ’ is modeled as a logistic sigmoid function:

$$\hat{P}_{u,v}(i) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-\alpha(\hat{s}_{i,u} - \hat{s}_{i,v})}}$$

We set the corresponding ground truth as

$$P_{u,v}(i) = \frac{1}{2} (1 + T_{u,v}(i))$$

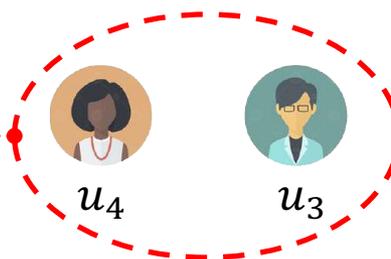
$$T_{u,v}(i) = \begin{cases} +1 & \text{the } u\text{-th one ranks higher} \\ 0 & \text{the } u\text{-th and } v\text{-th one rank same} \\ -1 & \text{the } v\text{-th one ranks higher} \end{cases}$$

# REDRESS–Individual Fairness Optimization

Ranking in  $\mathbf{S}_{\hat{\mathbf{Y}}}$  derived  
from prediction  $\hat{\mathbf{Y}}$



Ground truth ranking from  
human knowledge  $\mathbf{S}_{\mathcal{G}}$



$$\hat{P}_{u,v}(i) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-\alpha(\hat{s}_{i,u} - \hat{s}_{i,v})}} \quad \cdots \quad P_{u,v}(i) = \frac{1}{2}(1 + T_{u,v}(i))$$

**Cross-entropy loss** can be an example:

$$\mathcal{L}_{j,m}(i) = -P_{j,m} \log \hat{P}_{j,m} - (1 - P_{j,m}) \log(1 - \hat{P}_{j,m})$$

# REDRESS–Individual Fairness Optimization

**An example:** Assume ranked  $\hat{\mathbf{s}}_{u_1} = [0.7, 0.3, 0.2, 0.1]$ .

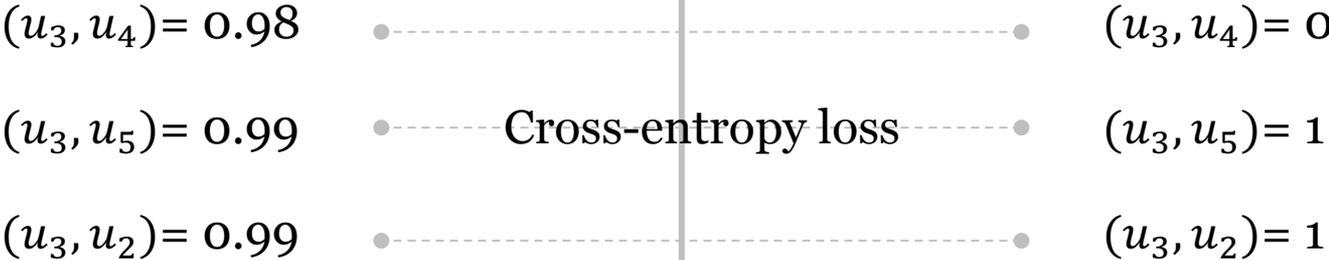
Ranking in  $\mathbf{S}_{\hat{\mathbf{Y}}}$  derived from prediction  $\hat{\mathbf{Y}}$



Ground truth ranking from human knowledge  $\mathbf{S}_{\mathcal{G}}$



For  $u_3$ : 



Assume hyper-parameter  $\alpha = 10$

# REDRESS–Individual Fairness Optimization

An example: Assume **optimized**  $\hat{s}_{u_1} = [0.7, 0.6, 0.2, 0.1]$ .

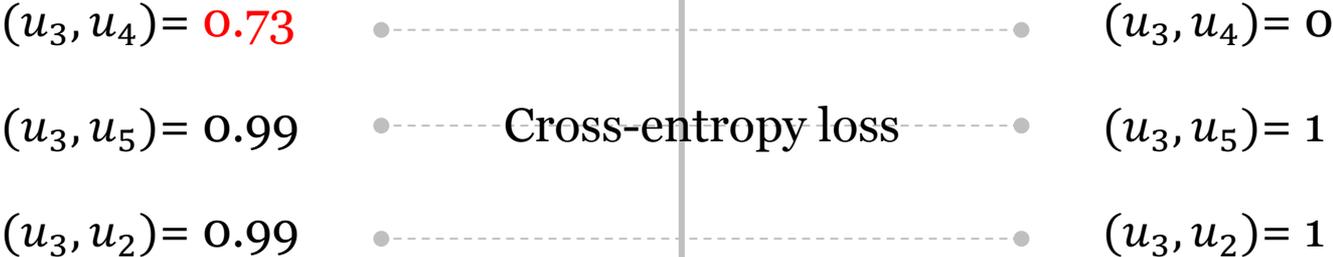
Ranking in  $S_{\hat{Y}}$  derived from prediction  $\hat{Y}$



Ground truth ranking from human knowledge  $S_G$



For  $u_3$ :



Assume hyper-parameter  $\alpha = 10$

# REDRESS–Individual Fairness Optimization

An example: Assume **optimized**  $\hat{s}_{u_1} = [0.4, 0.7, 0.2, 0.1]$ .

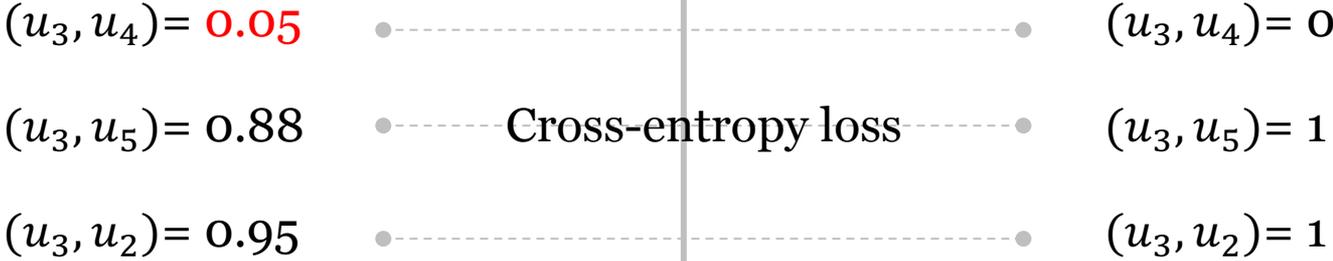
Ranking in  $S_{\hat{Y}}$  derived from prediction  $\hat{Y}$



Ground truth ranking from human knowledge  $S_G$



For  $u_3$ :



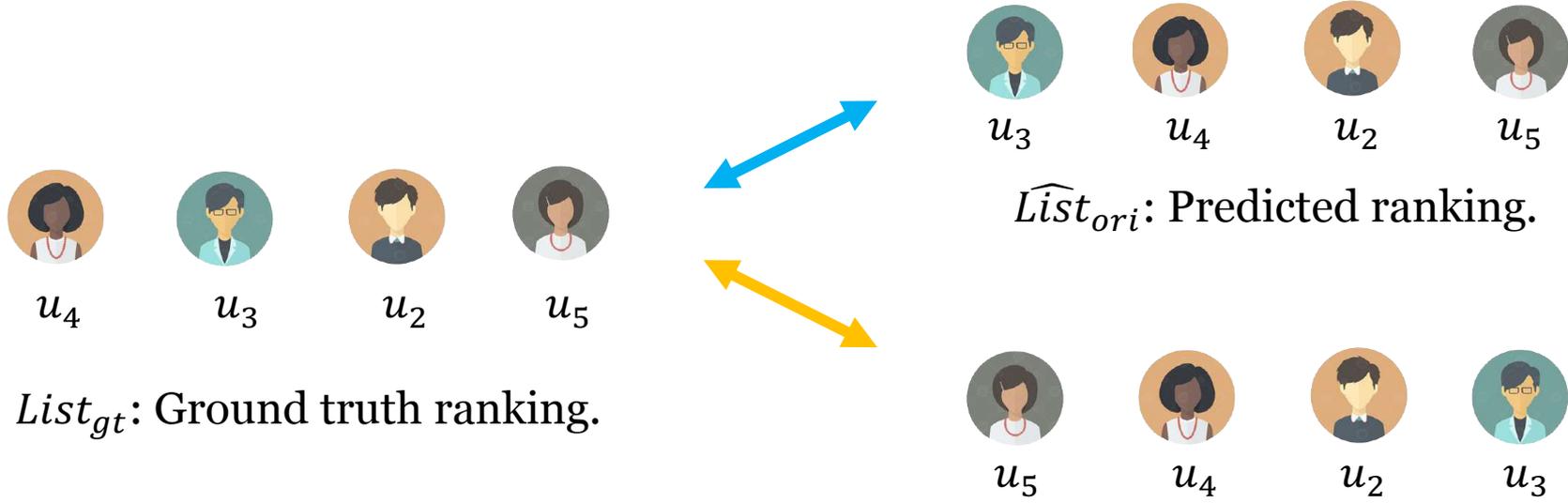
Assume hyper-parameter  $\alpha = 10$

# Total Loss Formulation

**Simple sum of each individual loss:**  $\mathcal{L}_{\text{fairness}}(i) = \sum_{j,m} \mathcal{L}_{j,m}(i)$

**Loss with training facilitation:**  $\mathcal{L}_{\text{fairness}}(i) = \sum_{j,m} \mathcal{L}_{j,m}(i) |\Delta z_{@k}|_{j,m}$

$$|\Delta z_{@k}|_{3,5} = |z_{@k}(List_{gt}, \widehat{List}_{ori}) - z_{@k}(List_{gt}, \widehat{List}_{ori}')|$$



$z_{@k}$  choices: NDCG@K, ERR@K, etc.

# Computational Simplification

**Loss with training facilitation:**  $\mathcal{L}_{\text{fairness}}(i) = \sum_{j,m} \mathcal{L}_{j,m}(i) |\Delta z_{@k}|_{j,m}$

**Disadvantage:** High computational cost when  $n$  (the length of the ranking) is large ( $\mathcal{O}(n^2k)$ ).

**Computational Simplification:** Restrict node  $j$  and  $m$  only within the top- $k$  ranked nodes (reduced from  $\mathcal{O}(n^2k)$  to  $\mathcal{O}(k^3)$ ).

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{fairness}}(i) = \sum_{j,m:j,m \in \mathcal{K}(i)} \mathcal{L}_{j,m}(i) |\Delta z_{@k}|_{j,m}$$

$\mathcal{K}(i)$  is the set of the top- $k$  ranked nodes for node  $i$ .

# Total Loss Formulation

**Utility loss:** cross-entropy loss for model utility (sum of all training nodes);

**Individual Fairness loss:** cross-entropy loss for predicted ranking (sum of all training nodes);

**Total loss formulation:**

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{total}} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{utility}} + \gamma \mathcal{L}_{\text{fairness}}$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{utility}} = - \sum_{(i,j) \in \mathcal{T}} Y_{ij} \ln \hat{Y}_{ij}$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{fairness}} = \sum_i \sum_{j,m: j,m \in \mathcal{K}(i)} \mathcal{L}_{j,m}(i) |\Delta z_{@k}|_{j,m}$$

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# Experimental Settings

## Downstream tasks:

- Node classification;
- Link prediction;

## Datasets:

- ACM [Tang et al., 2008] , Coauthor CS and Coauthor Phy [Shchur et al., 2018] for node classification;
- BlogCatalog [Tang et al., 2009] , Flickr [Huang et al., 2017] and Facebook [McAuley et al., 2012] for link prediction;

Table 1: Statistics of datasets.

	<b>Dataset</b>	<b># Nodes</b>	<b># Edges</b>	<b># Features</b>	<b># Classes</b>
<b>NC</b>	<b>ACM</b>	16,484	71,980	8,337	9
	<b>CS</b>	18,333	81,894	6,805	15
	<b>Phy</b>	34,493	247,962	8,415	5
<b>LP</b>	<b>BlogCatalog</b>	5,196	171,743	8,189	N/A
	<b>Flickr</b>	7,575	239,738	12,047	N/A
	<b>Facebook</b>	4,039	88,234	1,406	N/A

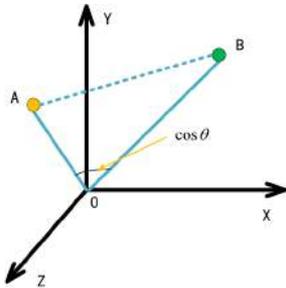
# Experimental Settings

## GNN backbones:

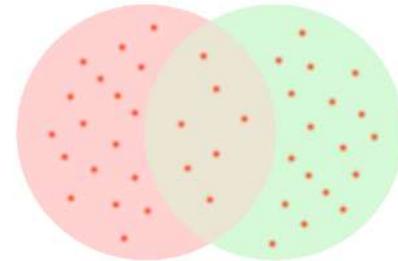
- GCN [Kipf et al., 2016] and SGC [Wu et al., 2019] for node classification;
- GCN [Kipf et al., 2016] and GAE [Kipf et al., 2016] for link prediction;

## Oracle Similarity Matrix:

- Cosine similarity (feature-based);
- Jaccard similarity (structure-based);



Cosine similarity



Jaccard similarity

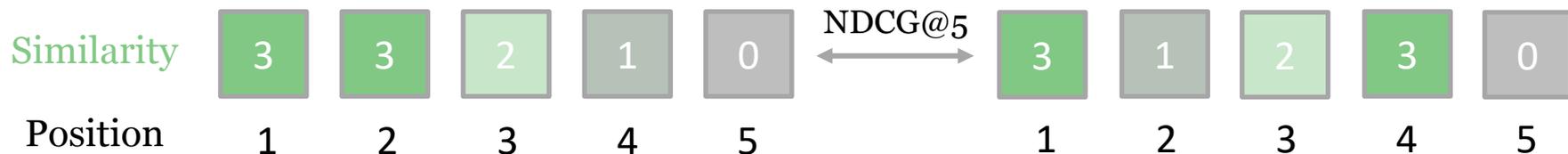
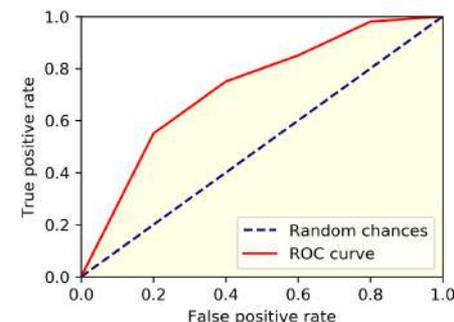
# Experimental Settings

## Baselines:

- PFR [Lahoti et al., 2019] (not specially designed for graphs);
- InFoRM [Kang et al., 2020] (introduced before);

## Evaluation Metrics:

- Model utility:
  - Node classification accuracy (ACC);
  - Area under receiver operating characteristic curve (AUC);
- Individual fairness: NDCG@10 as  $z_{@k}$  ( $k = 10$ ) for ranking similarity evaluation;



NDCG: Normalized Discounted Cumulative Gain

# Research Questions

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- **RQ1:** How well can REDRESS **balance** the GNN model utility and individual fairness compared with other baselines?
- **RQ2:** How will the individual fairness promotion **hyperparameter  $\gamma$**  affect the performance of REDRESS?
- **RQ3:** How will the choice of **parameter  $k$**  affect the performance of REDRESS?

# Experimental Results

**RQ1:** How well can REDRESS balance the GNN model utility and individual fairness compared with other baselines?

- Take performance on ACM as an example.

Our model achieves **comparable** performance on model utility compared with the best ones.

Table 2: **Node classification** results on ACM.

BB	Model	Feature Similarity		Structural Similarity		
		Utility: ACC	Fairness: NDCG@10	Utility: ACC	Fairness: NDCG@10	
ACM	GCN	Vanilla	72.49 ± 0.6 ( — )	47.33 ± 1.0 ( — )	72.49 ± 0.6 ( — )	25.42 ± 0.6 ( — )
		InFoRM	68.03 ± 0.3 (-6.15%)	39.79 ± 0.3 (-15.9%)	69.13 ± 0.5 (-4.64%)	12.02 ± 0.4 (-52.7%)
		PFR	67.88 ± 1.1 (-6.36%)	31.20 ± 0.2 (-34.1%)	69.00 ± 0.7 (-4.81%)	23.85 ± 1.3 (-6.18%)
		REDRESS (Ours)	71.75 ± 0.4 (-1.02%)	49.13 ± 0.4 (+3.80%)	72.03 ± 0.9 (-0.63%)	29.09 ± 0.4 (+14.4%)
ACM	SGC	Vanilla	68.40 ± 1.0 ( — )	55.75 ± 1.1 ( — )	68.40 ± 1.0 ( — )	37.18 ± 0.6 ( — )
		InFoRM	68.81 ± 0.5 (+0.60%)	48.25 ± 0.5 (-13.5%)	66.71 ± 0.6 (-2.47%)	28.33 ± 0.6 (-23.8%)
		PFR	67.97 ± 0.7 (-0.62%)	34.71 ± 0.1 (-37.7%)	67.78 ± 0.1 (-0.91%)	37.15 ± 0.6 (-0.08%)
		REDRESS (Ours)	67.16 ± 0.2 (-1.81%)	58.64 ± 0.4 (+5.18%)	67.77 ± 0.4 (-0.92%)	38.95 ± 0.1 (+4.76%)

# Experimental Results

**RQ1:** How well can REDRESS balance the GNN model utility and individual fairness compared with other baselines?

- Take performance on ACM as an example.

Our model achieves **best** performance on individual fairness.

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ACM	GCN				
	Vanilla	72.49 ± 0.6 ( — )	47.33 ± 1.0 ( — )	72.49 ± 0.6 ( — )	25.42 ± 0.6 ( — )
	InFoRM	68.03 ± 0.3 (-6.15%)	39.79 ± 0.3 (-15.9%)	69.13 ± 0.5 (-4.64%)	12.02 ± 0.4 (-52.7%)
	PFR	67.88 ± 1.1 (-6.36%)	31.20 ± 0.2 (-34.1%)	69.00 ± 0.7 (-4.81%)	23.85 ± 1.3 (-6.18%)
	REDRESS (Ours)	71.75 ± 0.4 (-1.02%)	49.13 ± 0.4 (+3.80%)	72.03 ± 0.9 (-0.63%)	29.09 ± 0.4 (+14.4%)
ACM	SGC				
	Vanilla	68.40 ± 1.0 ( — )	55.75 ± 1.1 ( — )	68.40 ± 1.0 ( — )	37.18 ± 0.6 ( — )
	InFoRM	68.81 ± 0.5 (+0.60%)	48.25 ± 0.5 (-13.5%)	66.71 ± 0.6 (-2.47%)	28.33 ± 0.6 (-23.8%)
	PFR	67.97 ± 0.7 (-0.62%)	34.71 ± 0.1 (-37.7%)	67.78 ± 0.1 (-0.91%)	37.15 ± 0.6 (-0.08%)
	REDRESS (Ours)	67.16 ± 0.2 (-1.81%)	58.64 ± 0.4 (+5.18%)	67.77 ± 0.4 (-0.92%)	38.95 ± 0.1 (+4.76%)

# Experimental Results

**RQ1:** How well can REDRESS balance the GNN model utility and individual fairness compared with other baselines?

- Similar conclusion in link prediction (on Blog as an example).

Our model achieves **comparable** performance on model utility compared with the best ones.

Table 2: **Link prediction** results on BlogCatalog (Blog).

BB	Model	Feature Similarity		Structural Similarity	
		Utility: AUC	Fairness: NDCG@10	Utility: AUC	Fairness: NDCG@10
GCN	Vanilla	85.87 ± 0.1 ( — )	16.73 ± 0.1 ( — )	85.87 ± 0.1 ( — )	32.47 ± 0.5 ( — )
	InFoRM	79.85 ± 0.6 (−7.01%)	15.57 ± 0.2 (−6.93%)	84.00 ± 0.1 (−2.18%)	26.18 ± 0.3 (−19.4%)
	PFR	84.25 ± 0.2 (−1.89%)	16.37 ± 0.0 (−2.15%)	83.88 ± 0.0 (−2.32%)	29.60 ± 0.4 (−8.84%)
	REDRESS (Ours)	<b>86.49 ± 0.8 (+0.72%)</b>	<b>17.66 ± 0.2 (+5.56%)</b>	<b>86.25 ± 0.3 (+0.44%)</b>	<b>34.62 ± 0.7 (+6.62%)</b>
GAE	Vanilla	85.72 ± 0.1 ( — )	17.13 ± 0.1 ( — )	85.72 ± 0.1 ( — )	41.99 ± 0.4 ( — )
	InFoRM	80.01 ± 0.2 (−6.66%)	16.12 ± 0.2 (−5.90%)	82.86 ± 0.0 (−3.34%)	27.29 ± 0.3 (−35.0%)
	PFR	83.83 ± 0.1 (−2.20%)	16.64 ± 0.0 (−2.86%)	83.87 ± 0.1 (−2.16%)	35.91 ± 0.4 (−14.5%)
	REDRESS (Ours)	<b>84.67 ± 0.9 (−1.22%)</b>	<b>18.19 ± 0.1 (+6.19%)</b>	<b>86.36 ± 1.5 (+0.75%)</b>	<b>43.51 ± 0.7 (+3.62%)</b>

# Experimental Results

**RQ1:** How well can REDRESS balance the GNN model utility and individual fairness compared with other baselines?

- Similar conclusion in link prediction (on Blog as an example).

Our model achieves **best** performance on individual fairness.

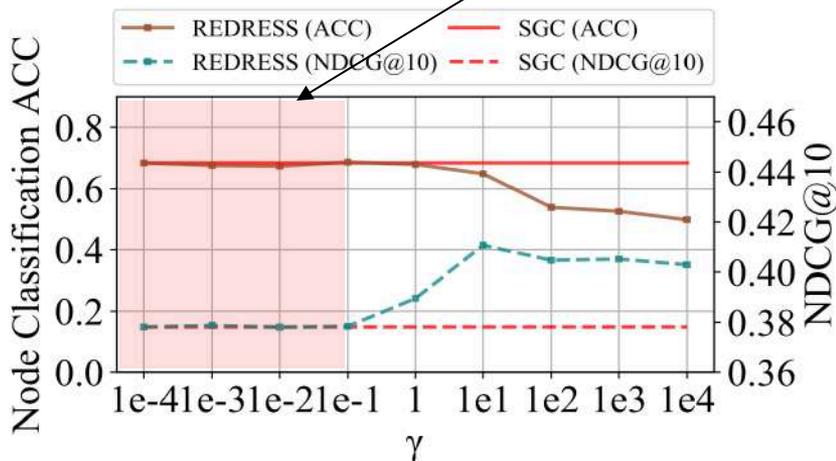
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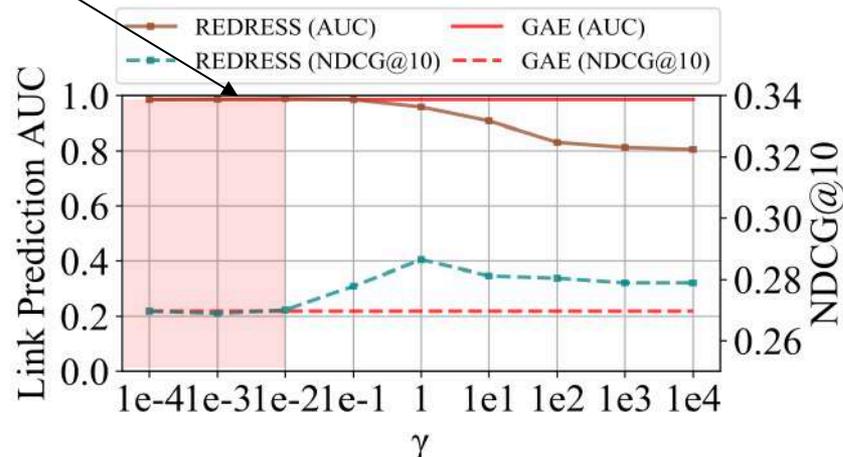
# Experimental Results

**RQ2:** How will the individual fairness promotion hyperparameter  $\gamma$  affect the performance of REDRESS?

**Relatively small:** the individual fairness constraint makes little difference;



(a) ACM

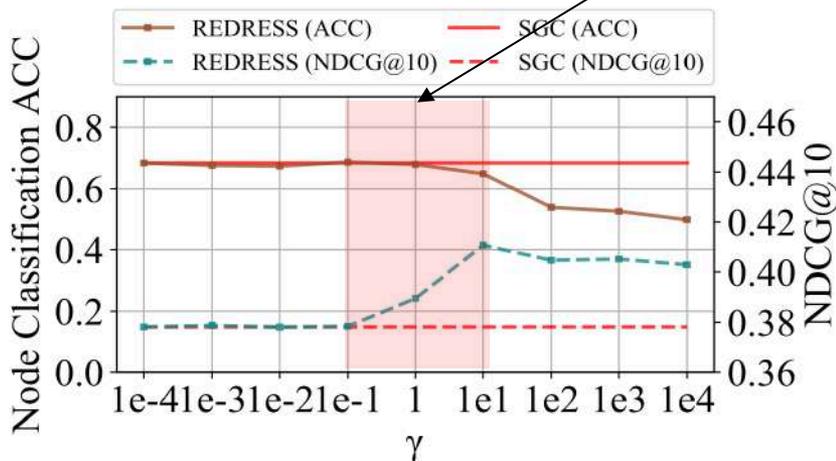


(b) Facebook

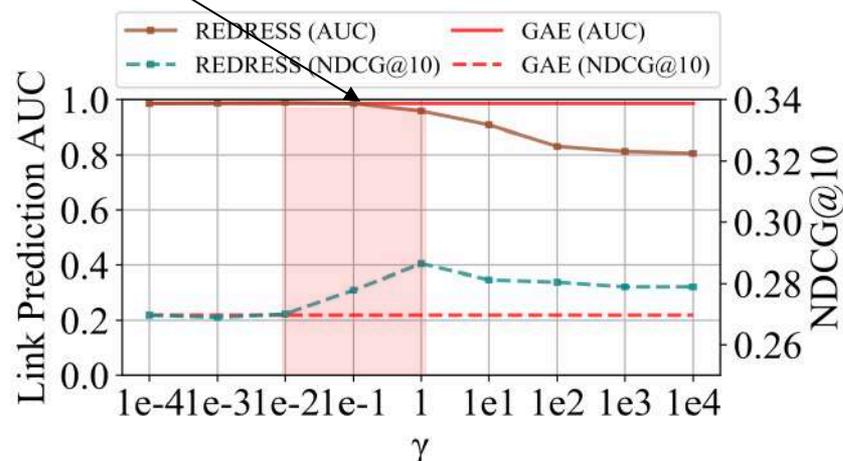
# Experimental Results

**RQ2:** How will the individual fairness promotion hyperparameter  $\gamma$  affect the performance of REDRESS?

**Modest value :** NDCG@10 can be improved with little sacrifice on ACC or AUC;



(a) ACM

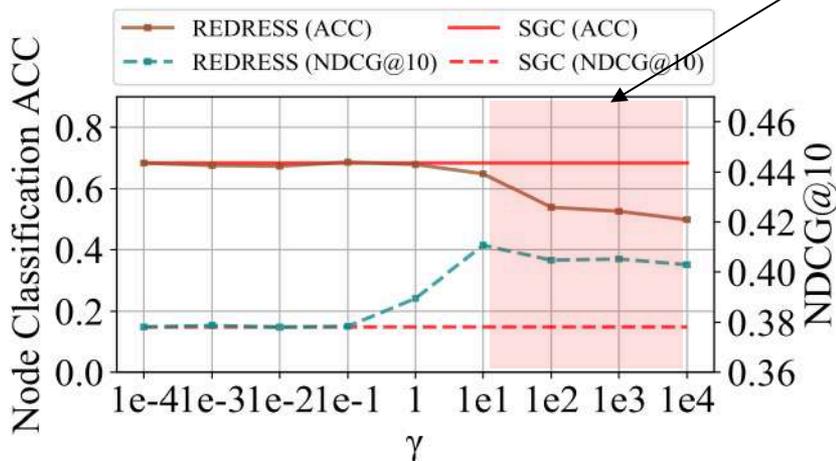


(b) Facebook

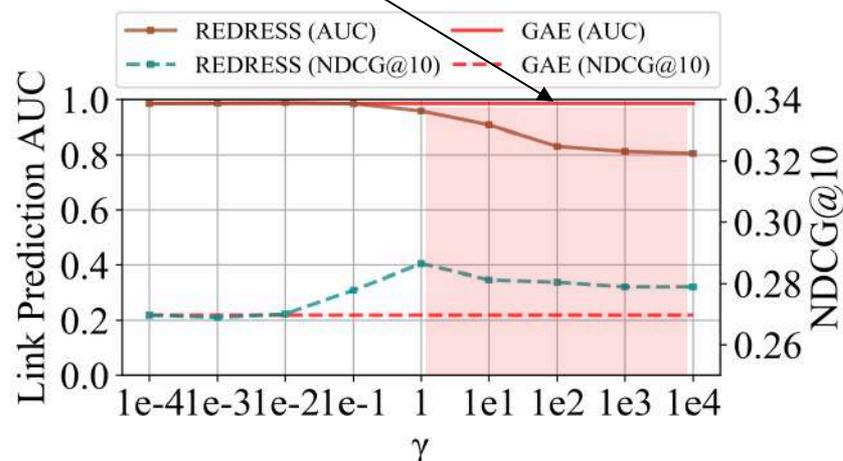
# Experimental Results

**RQ2:** How will the individual fairness promotion hyperparameter  $\gamma$  affect the performance of REDRESS?

**Relatively large:** ACC and AUC will be affected by the strength of individual fairness promotion;



(a) ACM

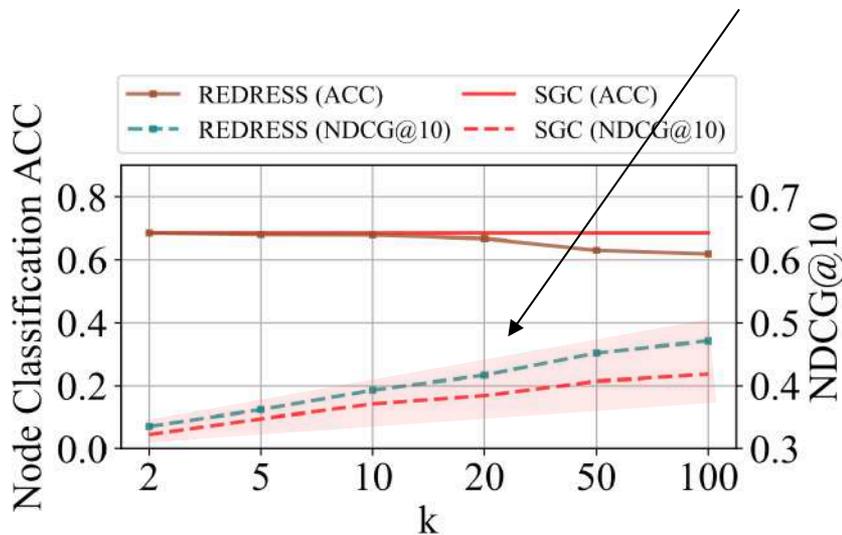


(b) Facebook

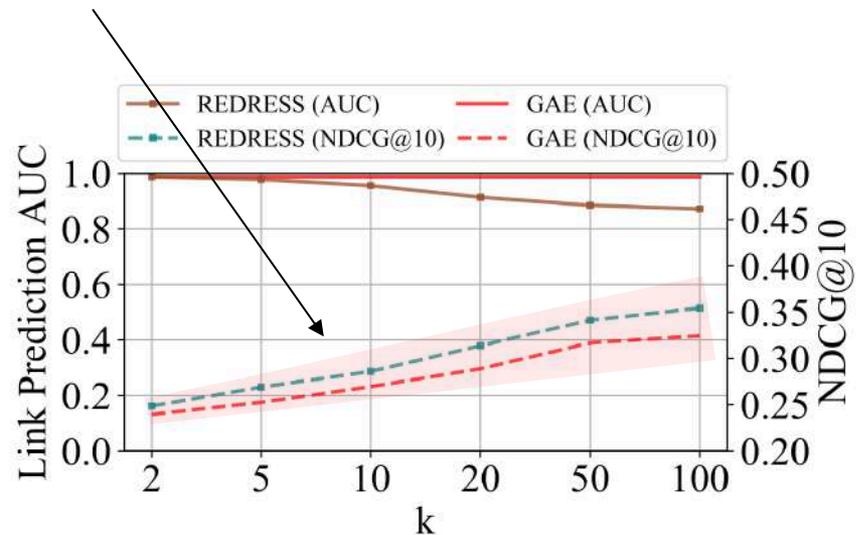
# Experimental Results

**RQ3:** How will the choice of parameter  $k$  affect the performance of REDRESS?

As  $k$  goes **larger**, REDRESS achieves **larger improvement** on NDCG;



(a) ACM

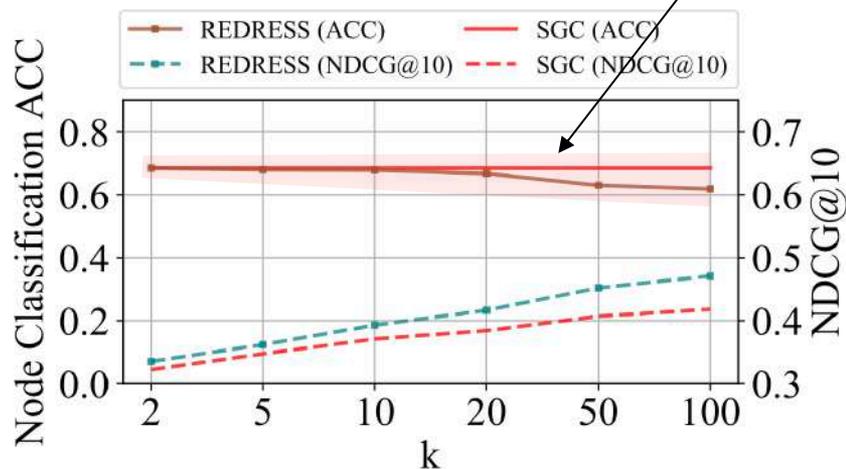


(b) Facebook

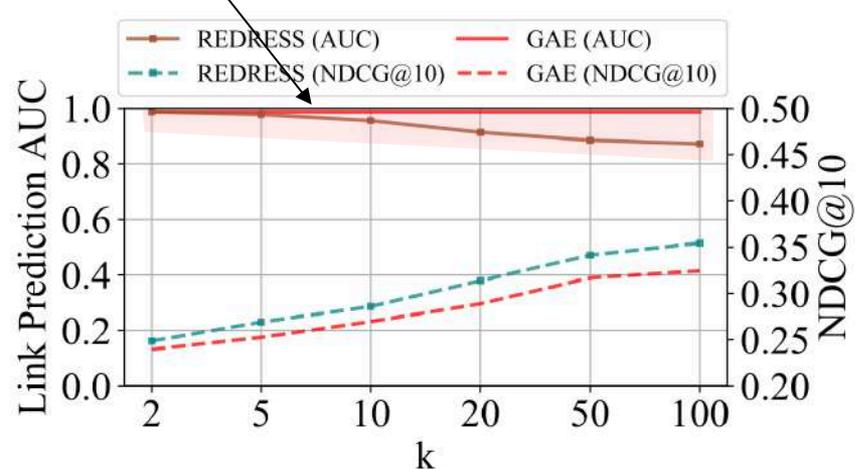
# Experimental Results

**RQ3:** How will the choice of parameter  $k$  affect the performance of REDRESS?

Model utility performance is **barely influenced** when  $k$  gets larger;



(a) ACM



(b) Facebook

# Outline

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**Background Introduction**

**Previous Works**

**Existing Problems & Challenges**

**Our Solutions**

**Experiments & Conclusion**

**Future Works**



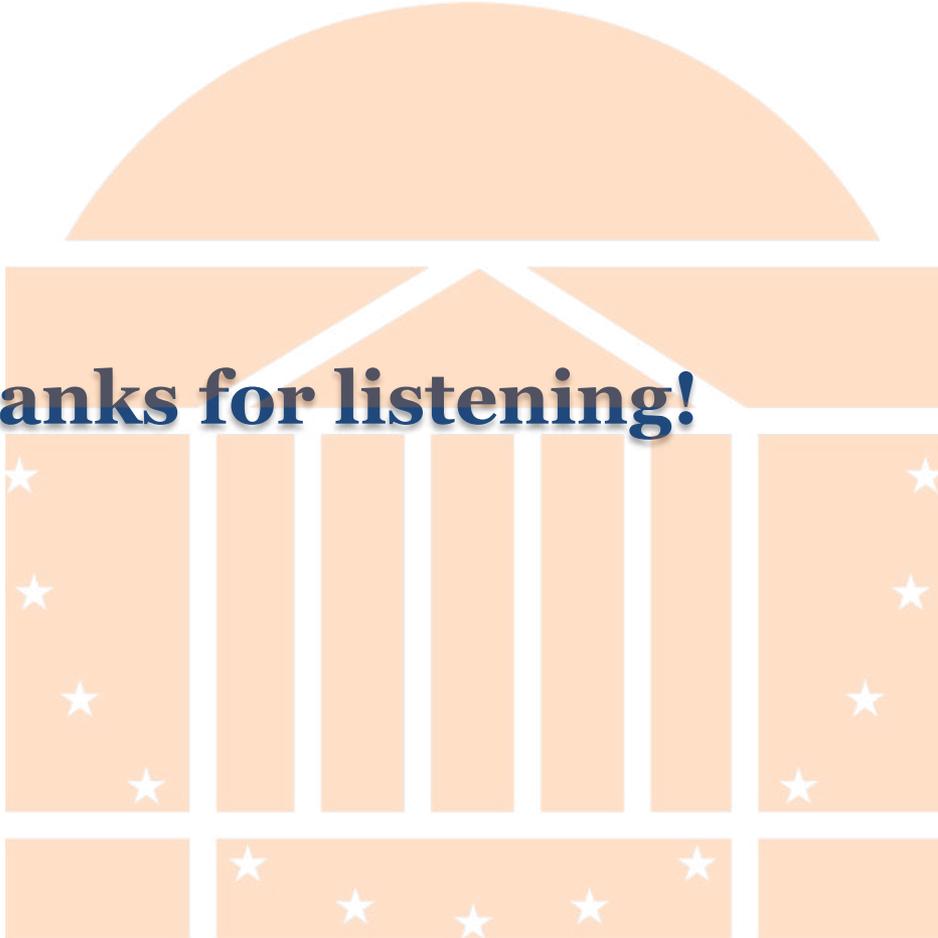
# Future Works

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- **Traditional graph mining algorithm debias;**
- **Generalization on different graphs (i.e., time-series graphs);**
- **Scalability on large graphs;**

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**Thanks for listening!**