

Out-of-distribution Generalization with Causal Invariant Transformations

Inspiration: 能否想办法直接分出causal和non-causal feature, 然后用causal feature训练? (或, 在测试时, 想办法分出causal feature并用其做预测) (本文给出的结果是, causal feature很难找, 但是寻找使causal feature保持不变的变换较为容易)

Invariant Causal Mechanism

此类方法的主要假设是因果机制在不同domain不变。 *Elements of causal inference: foundations and learning algorithms.*

其中一类方法: 恢复causal structure。限制: linear structural model/足够多的domain。

但: [ICLR2022]Invariant causal representation learning for Out-of-Distribution Generalization提出了非线性情况下的

本文提出的不变因果机制:

$$Y = m(g(X), \eta), \eta \perp\!\!\!\perp g(X) \text{ and } \eta \sim F,$$

where X, Y are respectively the observed input and outcome, $g(X)$ denotes the causal feature, η is some random noise, and $m(\cdot, \cdot)$ represents the unknown structural function. The relationship $\eta \perp\!\!\!\perp g(X)$ means that the noise η is independent of the causal feature $g(X)$, and $\eta \sim F$ indicates that it follows a distribution F that can be unknown.

该机制中的spurious correlation:

1. X 可能和噪声 η 相关联 (尽管causal feature $g(x)$ 独立于 η)
2. causal feature $g(X)$ 可能与背景相关联

spurious correlation会随着domain变化。

本文的创新点:

1. 现有的很多方法中采取的假设是: $g(X)$ 是线性的, 且噪声是加性的。本文不需要这两个假设。
2. 不需要显式地学出 $g(X)$, 因此不需要处理可辨识性的问题。

Theorem 1: **Theorem 1.** If $P_s \in \mathcal{P}$, then $\mathcal{H}_s \subseteq \mathcal{H}_*$.

其中: $\mathcal{P} = \{P_{(X,Y)} \mid (X,Y) \sim P_{(X,Y)} \text{ under structural model (1)}\}$,

$h^*(\cdot) \in \mathcal{H}_* := \arg \min_h \sup_{P \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_P[\mathcal{L}(h(X), Y)]$, 是最优模型;

$\mathcal{H}_s = \left\{ \phi \circ g \mid \phi(w) \in \arg \min_z \mathbb{E}_{P_s}[\mathcal{L}(z, Y) \mid g(X) = w] \right\}$, 是在 \mathcal{S} 上训练出的基于causal feature $g(X)$ 的最优模型。

Theorem 1的证明过程补充:

按原文记号, 设噪声 η 的支撑集是 \mathcal{U}

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_Q[L(h(X), Y) \mid X = x] &= \int_{\mathcal{U}} L(h(x), m(g(x), \eta)) p(x, \eta \mid x) d\eta \\ &= \int_{\mathcal{U}} L(h(x), m(g(x), \eta)) p(x \mid x) p(\eta \mid x) d\eta \\ &= \int_{\mathcal{U}} L(h(x), m(g(x), \eta)) p_{\eta}(\eta) d\eta \end{aligned}$$

第三个等号用到了 x 和 η 的独立性。

Theorem 1告诉我们: 只要能找到causal feature, 只用一个domain的数据就能学到最优模型。但是, 显式地找出 $g(X)$ 在实际中是很难的。不过, 形状等特征不随旋转/翻转等变换变化。这种变化是比causal feature 好找的。

Theorem 2. If $P_s \in \mathcal{P}$, then for \mathcal{H}_s defined in Eq. (3)

Theorem 2:

$$\mathcal{H}_s \subseteq \arg \min_h \sup_{T \in \mathcal{T}_g} \mathbb{E}_{P_s}[\mathcal{L}(h(T(X)), Y)].$$

说明了: 只要知道不变变换集: $\mathcal{T}_g = \{T(\cdot) : (g \circ T)(\cdot) = g(\cdot)\}$, 就能学出source domain上的最优预测器。

Let $\mathcal{P}_{\text{aug}} = \{P_{(X', Y)} \mid (X, Y) \sim P_s, X' = T(X), T \in \mathcal{T}_g\}$, then we can rewrite the minimax problem in (4) as

Theorem 2的等效形式:

$$\min_h \sup_{P \in \mathcal{P}_{\text{aug}}} \mathbb{E}_P[\mathcal{L}(h(X), Y)], \quad (5)$$

弄成(5)的意义: 相比于 $h^*(\cdot) \in \mathcal{H}_* := \arg \min_h \sup_{P \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_P[\mathcal{L}(h(X), Y)]$, (2), (5)的sup条件更好实现, 因为只需要在 \mathcal{P}_{aug} 里边找max就行了。但是, 计算 \mathcal{P}_{aug} 的上确界计算量也很大。比如, 旋转角度可以是0~360°的任何度数。

Causal Essential Set: 是不变变换集的一个子集, 满足对于 $g(X)$ 相同的输入 x_1, x_2 , 这个causal essential set里存在有限多的变换使得 x_1 经过这有限个变换后和 x_2 相同。

Definition 2 (Causal Essential Set). For $\mathcal{I}_g \subseteq \mathcal{T}_g$, \mathcal{I}_g is a causal essential set if for all x_1, x_2 satisfying $g(x_1) = g(x_2)$, there are finite transformations $T_1(\cdot), \dots, T_K(\cdot) \in \mathcal{I}_g$ such that $(T_1 \circ \dots \circ T_K)(x_1) = x_2$.

Theorem 3. If $P_s \in \mathcal{P}$, then for any \mathcal{I}_g that is a causal essential set of $g(\cdot)$ and \mathcal{H}_s defined in (3)

Theorem 3:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{H}_s &= \arg \min_h \mathbb{E}_{P_s}[\mathcal{L}(h(X), Y)], \\ &\text{subject to } h(\cdot) = (h \circ T)(\cdot), \forall T(\cdot) \in \mathcal{I}_g. \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$