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Giulia Calignano Filippo Gambarota

Department of Developmental Psychology and Socialization, University of Padova

Exploratory Multiverse Analysis (EMA)

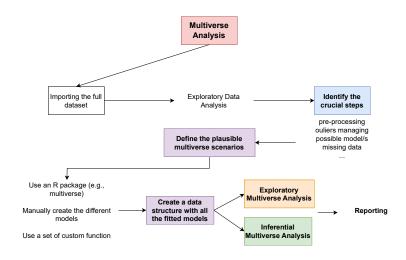
An example, Statistics and Math Anxiety

McCaughey et al. (2022) explored the relationship between self-efficacy anxiety sensitivity and perfectionism would be related to math/statistics anxiety controlling for gender, university program, and education level.

We used the dataset available at https://osf.io/nzhq6.

We are going to do crazy stuff with this dataset that are not related to the original paper and research question! :)

The big picture



Importing

We did a little bit of pre-processing. The ms_anxiety.rds file contains the cleaned version of the original dataset.

```
dat <- readRDS(here("data/ms_anxiety.rds"))
vars <- names(dat)
ys <- vars[grepl("^stat.anx|^math", vars)]
ys
## [1] "stat.anx.tc" "stat.anx.i" "stat.anx.ah" "stat.anx.ws"
## [5] "stat.anx.fst" "stat.anx.sc" "math.anx" "stat.anx.TOT"
## [9] "stat.anx.ANX" "stat.anx.FEEL"

xs <- vars[!vars %in% ys]
xs
## [1] "self.efficacy" "asi" "frost.com"
## [4] "frost.da" "faculty" "program.type"
## [7] "gender.category"</pre>
```

Exploring

Let's see the type of variables of the dataset:

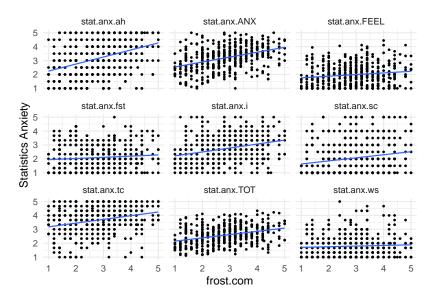
```
sapply(dat[ys], class)
##
    stat.anx.tc stat.anx.i stat.anx.ah stat.anx.ws stat.anx.fst
##
      "numeric" "numeric" "numeric" "numeric"
                                                    "numeric"
##
  stat.anx.sc math.anx stat.anx.TOT stat.anx.ANX stat.anx.FEEL
##
      "numeric" "numeric" "numeric" "numeric" "numeric"
sapply(dat[xs], class)
##
    self.efficacy
                                 frost.com frost.da
                         asi
       "numeric" "numeric"
                                  "numeric"
                                               "numeric"
##
        faculty program.type gender.category
##
##
        "factor"
                     "factor" "factor"
```

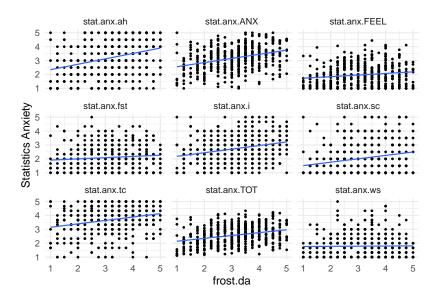
Main research questions

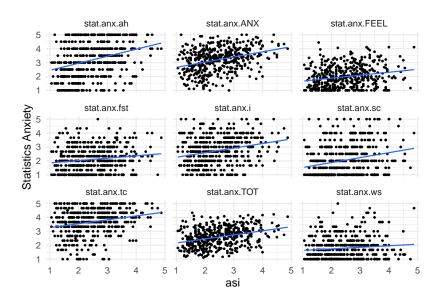
The main idea of the authors is predicting **math** and **statistics** anxiety with self-efficacy and perfectionism. In particular they pre-registered (see https://osf.io/b3g7s):

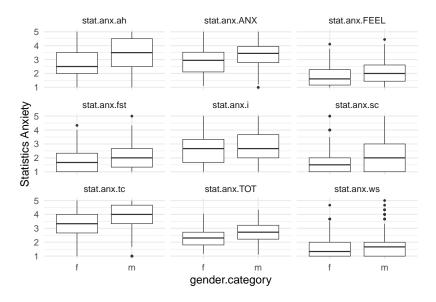
- self-efficacy will be negatively related to math/statistics anxiety
- anxiety sensitivity will be positively related to math/statistics anxiety.
- self-critical perfectionism will be positively related to math/statistics anxiety.
- 4. the relationships described above will remain when statistically adjusting for gender, university program (arts vs. science) and student status (undergraduate vs. graduate).

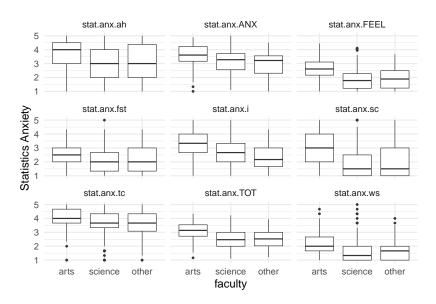


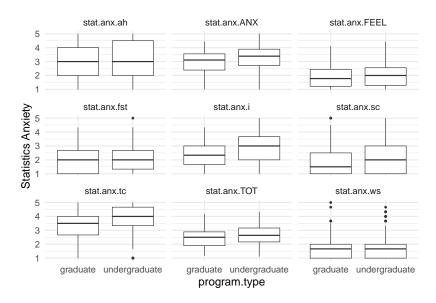


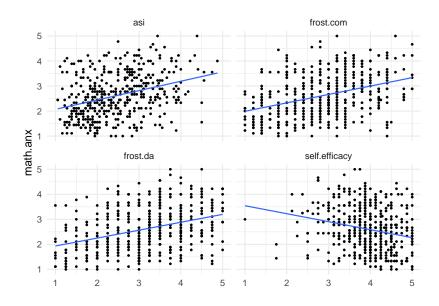


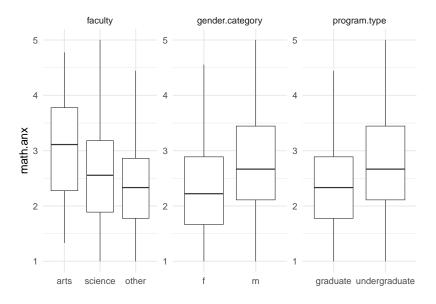












Selecting a sub-sample

For the purpose of the example, we select a subsample of the dataset to increase the variability and simulate a more uncertain scenario with a lower sample size.

```
N <- 100
selected <- sample(1:nrow(dat), size = N, replace = TRUE)
dat <- dat[selected, ]</pre>
```

Data structure for specifications

When conducting a multiverse in R (or in whatever language) the data structure is very important.

- how to create and organize the different models?
- how to easily extract all the informations such as coefficients, standard errors, p-values, etc.
- ...

A (named) list is flexible, easy to index and can be accessed by other functions to extract information and create other list.

A list in R can be easily transformed into a $\mathtt{data.frame}$ for other models, plots, tables, etc.

You can use the *apply family (sapply, lapply, etc.) to compute complex operations on lists.

For example, assuming that I have some regression models within a named list:

```
fit1 <- lm(math.anx ~ gender.category + asi, data = dat)
fit2 <- lm(math.anx ~ gender.category + asi + faculty, data = dat)
fit3 <- lm(math.anx ~ gender.category + faculty, data = dat)
fit4 <- lm(math.anx ~ gender.category + asi + program.type, data = dat)
# ... and other thousands of (plausible) models :)
mods <- list(fit1, fit2, fit3, fit4)
names(mods) <- paste0("mod", 1:length(mods))</pre>
```

Then, I want to extract all the asi coefficients and put into a data.frame:

```
get_coef <- function(x, coef = NULL){
  x <- broom::tidy(x, conf.int = TRUE)
  if(!is.null(coef)){
    filter(x, term %in% coef)
  } else{
     x
  }
}
get_coef(mods$mod1, "asi")</pre>
```

With lapply (or purr::map()) and combining the results, you can easily create a nice dataframe with your coefficients:

```
lapply(mods, get_coef, "asi") |>
dplyr::bind_rows(.id = "mod")
```

```
# A tibble: 3 x 8
            estimate std.error statistic p.value conf.low conf.high
 mod
       term
 <chr> <chr>
                        <dbl>
                                 <dbl>
                                         <dbl>
                                                 <dbl>
               <dbl>
                                                          <dbl>
1 mod1 asi
               0.353
                       0.0483
                                 7.32 1.20e-12
                                                 0.258
                                                          0.448
                       0.0475 7.48 4.13e-13
                                                 0.262
                                                          0.449
2 mod2 asi
               0.355
3 mod4 asi
               0.377
                       0.0478
                                  7.88 2.51e-14
                                                 0.283
                                                          0.471
```

There are multiple ways of creating the specifications in practice. You can do it from scratch:

```
mod1 <- lm(y ~ x1 + x2)
mod2 <- lm(y ~ log(x1) + log(x2))
mod3 <- lm(y ~ x1 + x2) # removing outliers

mods <- list(mod1 = mod1, mod2 = mod2, mod3 = mod3)
# ...</pre>
```

The multiverse R Package and the related paper (?) provides a very flexible and complex syntax to define different specifications.

For this example we can use some custom functions, in particular the create_multi() function. There are no wrong solutions if the results is correct.

```
devtools::load_all()
slog <- function(x) {</pre>
  if(any(x == 0)){
    x < -x + 1
 log(x)
multi <- create multi(
  math.anx ~ asi + faculty + stat.anx.TOT, # full model formula
  focal = "asi", # focal predictor, never removed
  nfuns = c("slog"), # functions for the numeric variables
  data = dat
```

```
$X
      fun
                          type focal .id_fun .id_x
1 identity
                   asi numeric TRUE
2 identity faculty factor FALSE
3 identity stat.anx.TOT numeric FALSE
                                                 3
      slog stat.anx.TOT numeric FALSE
5
               call
                asi
            faculty
       stat.anx.TOT
5 slog(stat.anx.TOT)
$calls
[1] "~ asi"
[2] "~ asi + faculty"
[3] "~ asi + stat.anx.TOT"
[4] "~ asi + slog(stat.anx.TOT)"
[5] "~ asi + faculty + stat.anx.TOT"
[6] "~ asi + faculty + slog(stat.anx.TOT)"
```

Whatever the method we used, we need:

- a list of models
- a way to easily extract the coefficients or other quantities
- a way to extract a summary of the specifications i.e. if a variable is included or not, the type of tranformation, etc.

Pay attention with interactions!

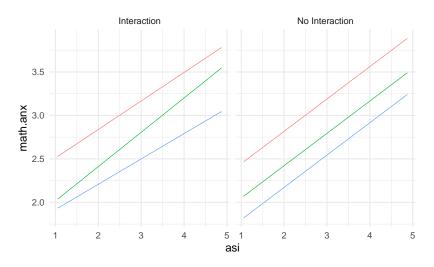
When an interaction is included in the model, the interpretation of the model coefficients completely change, especially if the interaction is consistent. You cannot compare a focal coefficients directly for models with and without interactions.

Let's assume that asi is the focal coefficient and we include in the multiverse these two models:

```
fit_int <- lm(math.anx ~ faculty + asi + faculty:asi, data = dat)
fit_no_int <- lm(math.anx ~ faculty + asi, data = dat)</pre>
```

Pay attention with interactions!

The asi effect in one case is the overall effect (i.e., main effect) controlling for faculty. In the other case is the asi effect of the reference value.



Pay attention with interactions!

One should adjust the contrasts coding of factors and/or the centering of numeric variables.

```
# sum to zero contrasts i.e. estimating the main effect of asi
update(fit_int, contrasts = list(faculty = contr.sum(3)))
Call:
lm(formula = math.anx ~ faculty + asi + faculty:asi, data = dat,
   contrasts = list(faculty = contr.sum(3)))
Coefficients:
 (Intercept) faculty1 faculty2
                                               asi faculty1:asi
    1.80967
                 0.37244
                             -0.18831
                                           0.33809
                                                        -0.01002
faculty2:asi
    0.05680
# with emmeans
emmeans::emtrends(fit int, ~1, var = "asi")
        asi.trend SE df lower.CL upper.CL
overall 0.338 0.0639 438
                              0.212
                                       0.464
```

Results are averaged over the levels of: faculty

Confidence level used: 0.95

Why exploring is important?

A multiverse analysis increase the complexity of the data analysis. There is no longer a single dataset and result to discuss.

Let's create some scenarios :)

Firstly, we use variable transformations directly within the model formula. In this way it is easier to extract the conditions. Thus we define some wrappers:

```
# safe version of log() with 0 variables
slog <- function(x){</pre>
  if(anv(x == 0)){
    x < -x + 1
  log(x)
# function factories, see https://adv-r.hadley.nz/function-factories.html
polyN <- function(degree = 1){</pre>
  function(x) poly(x, degree = degree)
poly2 <- polyN(2)
poly3 <- polyN(3)
```

Let's create some scenarios :)

More wrappers:

```
cutN <- function(breaks){
  function(x){
    cut(x, breaks = breaks)
  }
}
cut2 <- cutN(2)
cut4 <- cutN(4)</pre>
```



Then we can identify some univariate/multivariate outliers or some observations that we may consider removing for some reasons.

Let's create some scenarios :)

```
focal <- "self.efficacy"

multi <- create_multi(
    #math.anx ~ self.efficacy + faculty + asi + gender.category + program.type +
    math.anx ~ self.efficacy + faculty + asi,
    focal = "self.efficacy",
    nfuns = c("slog", "cut2", "poly2", "poly3"),
    data = dat
)</pre>
```

Let's fit the models

```
# faster than before
get_coef <- function(x, coef = NULL){</pre>
  xs <- data.frame(summary(x)$coefficients)</pre>
  if(!is.null(coef)){
    xs <- xs[coef, ]</pre>
  xs$param <- rownames(xs)</pre>
  return(xs)
fit1 <- vector(mode = "list", length = length(multi$calls))</pre>
for(i in 1:length(multi$calls)){
  form <- paste0("math.anx", multi$calls[i])</pre>
  fitl[[i]] <- glm(form, family = gaussian(link = "identity"), data = dat)
resl <- lapply(fit1, get_coef, focal)
res <- bind rows(resl, .id = "mod")
rownames(res) <- NULL
names(res) <- c("mod", "b", "se", "t", "p", "param")
```

Let's fit the models

Now we have a dataframe with all the model coefficients across the specifications. We can start our multiverse!

head(res)

```
        mod
        b
        se
        t
        p
        param

        1
        1
        -0.3191761
        0.06365938
        -5.013811
        7.738274e-07
        self.efficacy

        2
        2
        -0.2933090
        0.06298999
        -4.656438
        4.266628e-06
        self.efficacy

        3
        3
        -0.2523166
        0.06112503
        -4.127876
        4.379177e-05
        self.efficacy

        4
        -0.2481947
        0.06153825
        -4.033177
        6.484395e-05
        self.efficacy

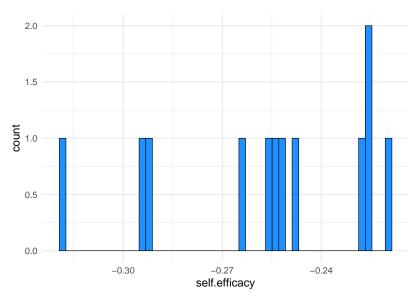
        5
        -0.2914524
        0.06144520
        -4.743291
        2.844147e-06
        self.efficacy

        6
        -0.2546701
        0.06148965
        -4.141675
        4.134768e-05
        self.efficacy
```

Exploratory tools

- ► Marginal/Conditional effects
- Vibration of Effects
- Specification Curve

Overall distribution of regression parameters:



We can combine the model results with a table created by all conditions with the custom get_info_models() function:

```
info <- get_info_models(multi)
head(info)</pre>
```

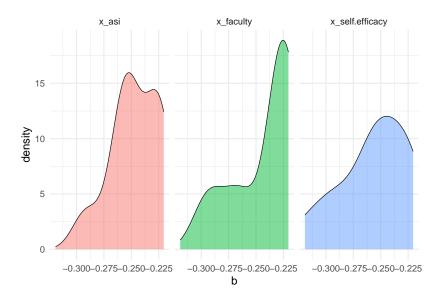
```
# A tibble: 6 x 4
   mod x_self.efficacy x_faculty x_asi
  <int> <chr>
                        <chr>>
                                  <chr>>
                        <NA>
                                  <NA>
      1 self.efficacy
      2 self.efficacy
                        faculty
                                  <NA>
      3 self.efficacv
                        <NA>
                                  asi
4
      4 self.efficacy
                        <NA>
                                  slog(asi)
5
      5 self.efficacy
                        <NA>
                                  cut2(asi)
6
      6 self.efficacy
                        <NA>
                                  poly2(asi)
```

Then we can combine the info table with the coefficients table and we have all the important information.

```
# same type
res$mod <- as.numeric(res$mod)
info$mod <- as.numeric(info$mod)
# merging the two tables
multi_res <- left_join(res, info, by = "mod")
head(multi_res)</pre>
```

```
mod
              b
                        se
                                               р
                                                         param
   1 -0.3191761 0.06365938 -5.013811 7.738274e-07 self.efficacy
  2 -0.2933090 0.06298999 -4.656438 4.266628e-06 self.efficacy
3
  3 -0.2523166 0.06112503 -4.127876 4.379177e-05 self.efficacy
  4 -0.2481947 0.06153825 -4.033177 6.484395e-05 self.efficacy
4
5
   5 -0.2914524 0.06144520 -4.743291 2.844147e-06 self.efficacy
   6 -0.2546701 0.06148965 -4.141675 4.134768e-05 self.efficacy
 x_self.efficacy x_faculty
                               x asi
   self.efficacy
                      <NA>
                                <NA>
   self.efficacy faculty
                                <NA>
3
   self.efficacy
                      <NA>
                                 asi
4
   self.efficacy
                     <NA> slog(asi)
5
   self.efficacy <NA> cut2(asi)
6
   self.efficacy
                     <NA> poly2(asi)
```

Finally we can plot also the distributions of parameters conditioned on the presence/absence of a particular other predictor:



Vibration of Effects (VoE) (Patel et al., 2015)





Journal of Clinical Epidemiology

Journal of Clinical Epidemiology 68 (2015) 1046-1058

Assessment of vibration of effects due to model specification can demonstrate the instability of observational associations

Chirag J. Patela, Belinda Burford, John P.A. Ioannidis a,c,d,e,f,*

⁸Department of Biomedical Informatics, Harvard Medical School, 10 Shattuck St., Room 314A, Boston, MA 02115, USA

⁸Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, Level 4, 207 Bouweie St., The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010, Australia

⁶Department of Medicine, Stanford Prevention Research Center, Stanford University School of Medicine, Medical School Office Building,
Room X306, 1265 Welch Rd. Stanford. CA 94305. USA

^aDepartment of Statistics, Stanford University School of Humanities and Sciences, Stanford, CA 94305, USA 'Department of Health Research and Policy, Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford, CA 94305, USA 'Meta-Research Innovation Center at Stanford (METRICS), Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305, USA Accepted 30 May 2015; Published online 6 June 2015

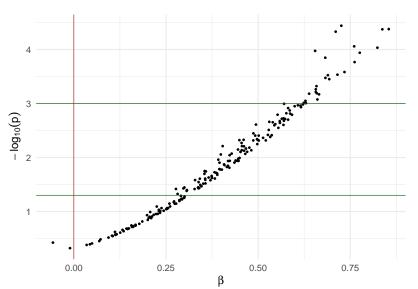
Vibration of Effects (VoE) (Patel et al., 2015)

The VoE is a statistical approach to evaluate the variability in effect estimates and p value due to different sources of variability (i.e., *vibrations*)

- **sampling** vibration: subsets of the full dataset
- **model** vibration: combinations of control variables
- pre-processing vibration: inclusio/exclusion criteria, outliers, etc.

Vulcano Plot

The Vulcano Plot is the graphical tool used in the VoE as a diagnostic tool.



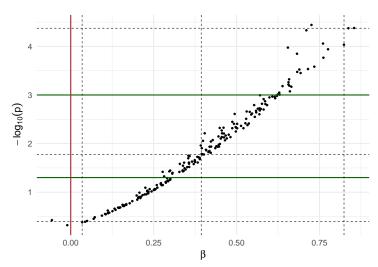
Vulcano Plot

The x axis is the effect size. Usually a regression coefficient of a *focal* parameter. Can be a raw or standardized regression coefficient or whatever effect size measure.

The y axis is the associated p-value transformed in $-\log_{10}(p)$ for better intepretation and visualization. Higher tranformed p values are smaller raw p values.

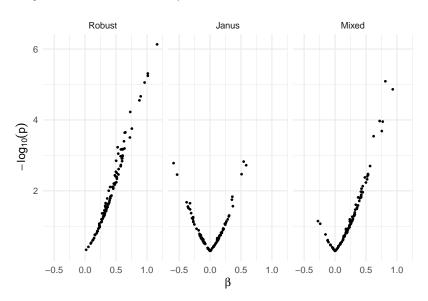
Vibration of Effects (VoE)

The authors proposed to summarise the VoE using the range of effect sizes and p values. In particular the difference between the 99^{th} and 1^{st} percentiles.



Vibration of Effects (VoE)

They identified three usual pattern for a Vulcano Plot:



Vibration of Effects (VoE)

The **Robust** plot suggests a stable pattern across specifications, with the majority if not the total being positive and significant.

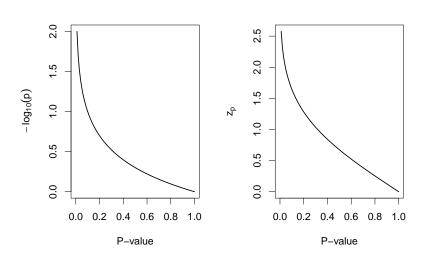
The **Janus**¹ plot suggests the worst scenario where in some conditions the effect is not only not significant but reversed.

The **Mixed** plot suggests a less robust effect with few effect size reversals in rare specifications.

¹Fun fact: Janus comes from the Roman/Greek god with two faces :)

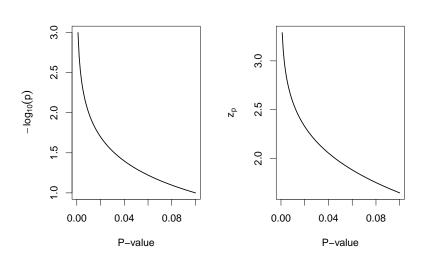
P-values transformation

There are different ways to transform p-values to improve the interpretation and visualization.



P-values transformation

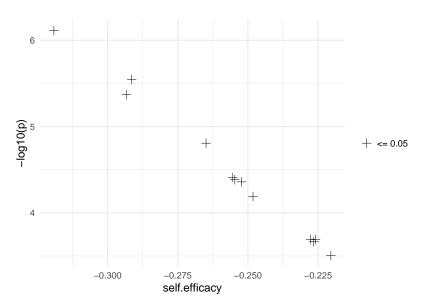
Values higher than ~1.3 (in \log_{10}) or ~2 (z transformation) are significant assuming the traditional $\alpha=0.05$.



Vulcano plot with our data

We can create a basic version of the vulcano plot with our dataset:

Vulcano plot with our data



A way to evaluate the impact of the multiverse scenario could be to use an ANOVA-style way of thinking. We can fit a regression model on the multiverse where the focal coefficient is the response variable and a series of dummy variables to code the inclusion/exclusion of a certain predictor.

Then we can estimate the % of explained variance of each predictor as an index of the impact in the multiverse results.

A more refined version of this approach can be found in Klau et al. (2023)

Decomposing the multiverse variance

We can create a dataset with dummy variables when a specific predictor is included or not. We are ignoring the transformations of the specific variable.

#	# A tibble: 6 x 3		
	b	faculty	asi
	<dbl></dbl>	<dbl></dbl>	<dbl></dbl>
1	-0.319	0	0
2	-0.293	1	0
3	-0.252	0	1
4	-0.248	0	1
5	-0.291	0	1
6	-0.255	0	1

Decomposing the multiverse variance

Then we can fit a linear regression and then evaluate the impact of including/excluding a predictor.

```
fit <- lm(b ~ ., data = multi_fit)
summary(fit)</pre>
```

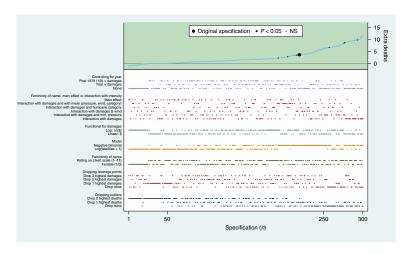
```
Call:
lm(formula = b ~ ., data = multi fit)
Residuals:
     Min
              10 Median
                               30
                                       Max
-0.031722 0.000301 0.005604 0.007450 0.012775
Coefficients:
           Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
faculty 0.027072 0.009691 2.794 0.02093 *
      0.059492 0.013001 4.576 0.00134 **
asi
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1
Residual standard error: 0.01678 on 9 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared: 0.7615, Adjusted R-squared: 0.7086
F-statistic: 14.37 on 2 and 9 DF, p-value: 0.001579
```

Decomposing the multiverse variance

```
car::Anova(fit)
Anova Table (Type II tests)
Response: b
            Sum Sq Df F value Pr(>F)
faculty 0.0021987 1 7.8044 0.020929 *
asi
     0.0058987 1 20.9382 0.001336 **
Residuals 0.0025355 9
Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1
effectsize::eta_squared(fit, partial = FALSE)
# Effect Size for ANOVA (Type I)
Parameter | Eta2 | 95% CI
faculty | 0.21 | [0.00, 1.00]
asi | 0.55 | [0.14, 1.00]
- One-sided CIs: upper bound fixed at [1.00].
```

Specification Curve (Simonsohn et al., 2020)

The specification curve is both an inferential and descriptive tool to summarise the results from a multiverse analysis.



Specification Curve as descriptive tool

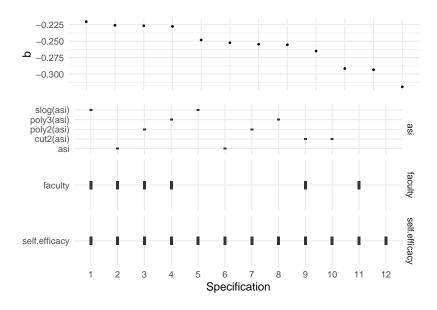
Basically from M specifications we extract the focal coefficient then:

- we sort the coefficients from the lowest to the highest and assign a progressive index
- we plot the index as a function of the coefficient value
- for each scenario we code the corresponding set of conditions/variables
- we combine the previous plot with a tile-plot (or similar) showing for each scenario the set of variables/choices

Specification with the dataset

```
spec_data <- multi_res |>
   # sorting
    arrange(desc(b)) |>
   # index with the order
   mutate(spec = 1:n())
top <- spec_data |>
   # confidence intervals
   mutate(lb = b - se * 2,
           ub = b + se * 2) >
    ggplot(aes(x = factor(spec), y = b)) +
    geom point() +
    #geom_segment(aes(y = lb, yend = ub)) +
    theme(axis.text.x = element blank().
          axis.title.x = element blank())
bottom <- spec_data |>
    pivot_longer(starts_with("x_")) |>
   drop_na() |>
   mutate(name = gsub("x_", "", name)) |>
    ggplot(aes(x = factor(spec), y = value)) +
    geom_tile(width = 0.1, height = 0.2) +
    theme(axis.title.y = element blank()) +
   xlab("Specification") +
   facet_grid(name~., scales = "free")
```

Specification with the dataset



Other descriptive tools

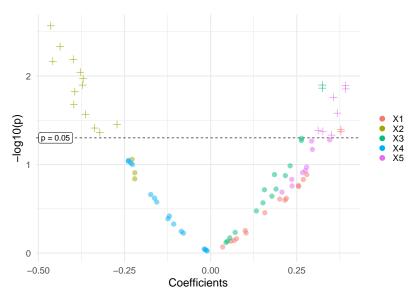
In general, any descriptive statistics can be useful. The main points in a multiverse description are:

- the range of the estimated effects
- the impact of the choices
- the impact on the conclusions (e.g., statistical significance)

Can the EMA be misleading?

Let's have a look to another example

We have a multiverse with 31 scenarios, 50 observations and 5 predictors, this is the vulcano plot. What do you think?



Let's have a look to another example²

From the previous multiverse it is clear that something is going on. Some of the coefficients are significant and other not. There is also a little bit of Janus effect.

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From the previous multiverse it is clear that something is going on. Some of the coefficients are significant and other not. There is also a little bit of Janus effect.

But, the previous example was a simulated multiverse where all the coefficients $\beta_j=0$ (the null hypothesis is true). All the significant scenarios are false positives (type-1 error)!

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Why? multiple testing problem!

A multiverse can be considered as a multiple testing problem because we are testing a set of hypotheses with the same dataset. The type-1 error rate (α) need to be controlled otherwise the actual level is higher than the nominal level.

We can demonstrate this with a simple simulation. We simulate k variables and a one-sample t-test for each variable. The ground truth is that we have $\mu_1,\mu_2,\dots,\mu_k=0$ thus H_0 is true.

We repeat the simulation B times and we count how many times $p \leq \alpha$ for at least one of the k tests. This is our estimated type-1 error rate.

Why? multiple testing problem!

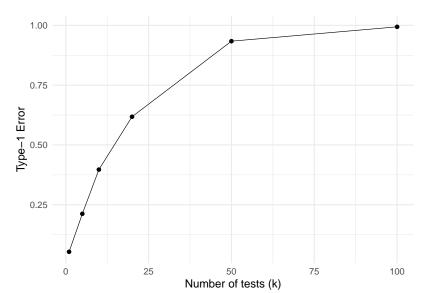
```
k <- 10 # number of variables
n <- 100 # number of observations
R \leftarrow 0 + diag(1 - 0, k) \# correlation matrix
B <- 1e3
PM <- matrix(NA, B, k)
for(i in 1:B){
    X <- MASS::mvrnorm(n, rep(0, k), R)
    p <- apply(X, 2, function(x) t.test(x)$p.value)</pre>
    PM[i, ] <- p
# type-1 error for each variable, ignoring multiple testing
apply(PM, 2, function(x) mean(x \leq 0.05))
```

```
[1] 0.048 0.045 0.055 0.052 0.052 0.061 0.049 0.049 0.056 0.059 # type-1 error considering the k tests (should be alpha) mean(apply(PM, 1, function(x) any(x <= 0.05)))
```

[1] 0.427

Why? multiple testing problem!

To have a better overview, we can repeat the simulation for different number of k. Quite scary right?



So what? No multiverse?

Exploring is fine and is quite important if not fundamental. But, when we explore the p-values thus the **inferential** results from the single scenarios, we are inflating the type-1 error and our **inferential** conclusions are no longer valid.

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Exploring is fine and is quite important if not fundamental. But, when we explore the p-values thus the **inferential** results from the single scenarios, we are inflating the type-1 error and our **inferential** conclusions are no longer valid.

If we want an inferential answer from our multiverse (not always the case) we need a proper inferential framework. This is the role of the **inferential multiverse analaysis**.

Inferential Multiverse Analysis (IMA)

Correcting the p-values

The main problem is the adjustment for multiple testing. The number of tests in a multiverse can be quite large.

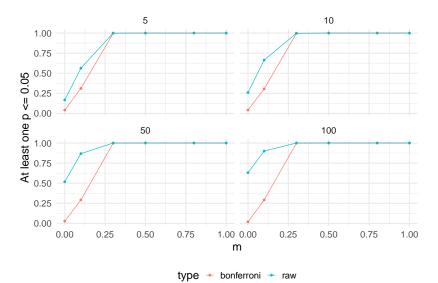
Correcting the p-values

The main problem is the adjustment for multiple testing. The number of tests in a multiverse can be quite large.

As an example, we simulated a series of tests with different effect size to show the impact on the type-1 error rate and the power.

Correcting the p-values

Using a standard method (e.g., Bonferroni) clearly controls the type-1 error but reduces a lot the statistical power.



Inferential Tools

- Specification Curve
- ▶ Post-Selection Inference in Multiverse Analysis (PIMA)

Specification Curve



The PIMA recipe... (Girardi et al., 2024)

For constructing the inferential approach with PIMA we need:

- ▶ a flexible modelling framework: **Generalized Linear Models**
- ▶ a permutation-based inferential approach: Flipscores
- a permutation-based and powerful method for weak and strong FWER control: maxT

Intuition of PIMA

References

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