

Bivariate Thin-plate Splines Models for Nonparametric Covariance Estimation with Longitudinal Data

Tayler A. Blake*

Yoonkyung Lee†

November 7, 2017

The theoretical foundations of the thin-plate spline was laid in the seminal work of ?. For a bivariate function $f(x_1, x_2)$, the usual thin-plate spline functional ($d = m = 2$) is given by

$$J_2(f) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (f_{x_1 x_1}^2 + f_{x_1 x_2}^2 + f_{x_2 x_2}^2) dx_1 dx_2 \quad (1)$$

and in general,

For $d = 2$, define the inner product of functions f and g as follows:

$$\langle f, g \rangle = \sum_{\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 = m} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left(\frac{\partial^m f}{\partial x_1^{\alpha_1} \partial x_2^{\alpha_2}} \right) \left(\frac{\partial^m g}{\partial x_1^{\alpha_1} \partial x_2^{\alpha_2}} \right) dx_1 dx_2. \quad (2)$$

We suppose that $f \in \mathcal{X}$, the space of functions with partial derivatives of total order m belong to $\mathcal{L}_2(E^2)$. We endow \mathcal{X} with seminorm $J_m^2(f)$; for such \mathcal{X} to be a reproducing kernel Hilbert space, i.e. for the evaluation functionals to be bounded in \mathcal{X} , if it necessary and sufficient that $2m > d$. For $d = 2$, we require $m > 1$.

The data model for a random vector $y_i = (y_{i1}, \dots, y_{i, M_i})'$ is given by

$$y_{ij} = \sum_{k < j} \phi^*(v_{ijk}) y_{ik} + \sigma(v_{ijk}) e_{ij} \quad (3)$$

where $v_{ijk} = (t_{ij} - t_{ik}, \frac{1}{2}(t_{ij} + t_{ik})) = (l_{ijk}, m_{ijk})$. We assume that $\phi^* \in \mathcal{X}$ and $e_{ij} \stackrel{\text{i.i.d.}}{\sim} N(0, 1)$. If we have a random sample of observed vectors y_1, \dots, y_N available for estimating ϕ^* , then we take $\hat{\phi}^*$ to be the minimizer of

$$Q_\lambda(\hat{\phi}^*) = \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=2}^{n_i} \sigma_{ij}^{-2} \left(y_{ij} - \sum_{k < j} \hat{\phi}^*(v_{ijk}) y_{ik} \right)^2 + \lambda J_m^2(\hat{\phi}^*) \quad (4)$$

*The Ohio State University, 1958 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43201

†The Ohio State University, 1958 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43201

where $\sigma_{ij}^2 = \sigma^2(t_{ij})$. The null space of the penalty functional $J_m^2(\phi^*)$, denoted \mathcal{H}_0 , corresponds to the $d_0 = \binom{2+m-1}{2}$ -dimensional space spanned by the polynomials in two variables of total degree $< m$. For example, for $d = m = 2$, we have that $d_0 = 3$, and the null space of J_2^2 is spanned by η_1, η_2 , and η_3 where

$$\eta_1(v) = 1, \quad \eta_2(v) = l, \quad \eta_3(v) = m.$$

In general, we let $\eta_1, \dots, \eta_{d_0}$ denote the d_0 monomials of total degree less than m .

? showed that if the $\{v_{ijk}\}$ are such that the least squares regression of $\{y_{ijk}\}$ on $\eta_1, \dots, \eta_{d_0}$ is unique, then there exists a unique minimizer of 4, ϕ_λ^* , which has the form

$$\phi_\lambda^*(v) = \sum_{\nu=0}^{d_0} d_\nu \eta_\nu(v) + \sum_{v_i \in \mathcal{V}} c_i E_m(v, v_i) \quad (5)$$

where \mathcal{V} denotes the set of unique within-subject pairs of observed $\{v_{ijk}\}$. E_m is a Green's function of the m -iterated Laplacian. Let

$$E_m(\tau) = \begin{cases} \theta_{m,d} |\tau|^{2m-d} \log |\tau| & 2m-d \text{ even} \\ \theta_{m,d} |\tau|^{2m-d} & 2m-d \text{ odd} \end{cases} \quad (6)$$

$$\theta_{md} = \begin{cases} \frac{(-1)^{\frac{d}{2}+1+m}}{2^{2m-1} \pi^{\frac{d}{2}} (m-1)! (m-\frac{d}{2})!} & 2m-d \text{ even} \\ \frac{\Gamma(\frac{d}{2}-m)}{2^{2m} \pi^{\frac{d}{2}} (m-1)!} & 2m-d \text{ odd} \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

Defining $|v - v_i| = \left[(l - l_i)^2 + (m - m_i)^2 \right]^{1/2}$, then we can write

$$E_m(v, \tilde{v}) = E_m(|v - \tilde{v}|)$$

Formally, we have that

$$\Delta^m E_m(\cdot, v_i) = \delta_{v_i},$$

so

$$\Delta^m \phi_\lambda^*(v) = 0 \text{ for } v \neq v_i, \quad i = 1, \dots, n$$

where $n = |\mathcal{V}|$.

The kernel E_m is not positive definite, but rather *conditionally positive definite*....

Stack the N observed response vectors y_1, \dots, y_N less their first element y_{i1} into a single vector Y of dimension $n_y = \left(\sum_i M_i \right) - N$. Let S denote the $n \times d_0$ matrix with i - ν^{th} element $\eta_\nu(v_i)$, which we assume has full column rank; let Q denote the $n \times n$ kernel matrix with i - j^{th} element

$E_m(v_i, v_j)$, and let D denote the $n_y \times n_y$ diagonal matrix of innovation variances σ_{ijk}^2 . The ϕ^* minimizing 4 corresponds to the coefficient vectors c, d minimizing

$$\begin{aligned} Q_\lambda(c, d) &= -\ell(Y|c, d) + \lambda J_m^2(\phi^*) \\ &= (Y - W(Bd + Kc))' D^{-1} (Y - W(Bd + Kc)) + \lambda c' Q c \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

where W is the matrix of autoregressive covariates constructed so that 4 and 8 are equivalent.

Differentiating Q_λ with respect to c and d and setting equal to zero, we have that

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial Q_\lambda}{\partial c} &= Q W' D^{-1} [W(Sd + Kc) - Y] + \lambda K c = 0 \\ \iff W' D^{-1} W [Bd + Kc] + \lambda c &= W' D^{-1} Y \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial Q_\lambda}{\partial d} &= S' W' D^{-1} [W(Sd + Kc) - Y] = 0 \\ \iff -\lambda S' c &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

So, the coefficients satisfy the normal equations

$$Y = W \left[Bd + \left(Q + \lambda (W' D^{-1} W)^{-1} \right) c \right] \quad (10)$$

$$S' c = 0 \quad (11)$$

Let

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{Q} &= (W' D^{-1} W) Q (W' D^{-1} W) \\ \tilde{c} &= (W' D^{-1} W)^{-1} c \\ \tilde{S} &= (W' D^{-1} W) S \\ \tilde{d} &= d \\ \tilde{Y} &= W' D^{-1} Y \end{aligned}$$

then, the system defined by 10 and 11 may be written

$$\tilde{Y} = \tilde{S}\tilde{d} + \left(\tilde{Q} + \lambda(W'D^{-1}W)\right)\tilde{c} \quad (12)$$

$$\tilde{S}'\tilde{c} = 0 \quad (13)$$

Using the QR decomposition of \tilde{S} , we may write

$$\tilde{S} = FR = \begin{bmatrix} F_1 & F_2 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} R \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} = F_1 R$$

where F is an orthogonal matrix; F_1 has dimension $n \times d_0$, and F_2 has dimension $n \times (n - d_0)$. Since $\tilde{S}'\tilde{c} = 0$, \tilde{c} must belong to the subspace spanned by the columns of F_2 , so

$$\tilde{c} = F_2 \gamma$$

for some $\gamma \in \mathbb{R}^{n-d_0}$. Letting $M = W'D^{-1}W$ premultiplying 12 by F_2' , it follows that

$$\tilde{c} = F_2 \left[F_2' \left(\tilde{Q} + \lambda M \right) F_2 \right]^{-1} F_2' \tilde{Y} \quad (14)$$

Using $\tilde{S} = F_1 R$, we can write

$$\tilde{d} = R^{-1} F_1' \left[\tilde{Y} - \left(\tilde{Q} + \lambda M \right) \tilde{c} \right] \quad (15)$$

1 Estimating the smoothing parameter

1.1 Cross Validation

Let $\phi_{[kl]}^*$ be the minimizer of

$$\sum_{\substack{i,j \\ (i,j) \neq (k,l)}} \sigma_{ij}^{-2} \left(\tilde{y}_{ij} - \sum_{j' < j} \phi^*(v_{ijj'}) \tilde{y}_{ij'} \right)^2 + \lambda \tilde{J}_m^2(\phi^*), \quad (16)$$

where \tilde{J}_m is the penalty term reparameterized according to the transformation defining \tilde{c} :

$$\tilde{J}_m^2(\phi^*) = \tilde{c}' Q \tilde{c}. \quad (17)$$

The *ordinary cross validation function* $V_0(\lambda)$ is given by

$$\sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=2}^{n_i} \tilde{\sigma}_{ij}^{-2} \left(\tilde{y}_{ij} - \hat{y}_{[ij]} \right)^2. \quad (18)$$

where $\hat{y}_{[ij]} = \sum_{k < j} \phi_{[ij]}^* (v_{ijk}) \tilde{y}_{ik}$. The value of λ minimizing $V_0(\lambda)$ is the OCV estimate.

Indexing the \tilde{y}_{ij} using a single integer $k = 1, \dots, n_y$, when the innovation variances are known, it can be shown that $V_0(\lambda)$ can be written

$$V_0(\lambda) = \sum_{k=1}^{n_y} \left(\tilde{\sigma}_k^{-1} \left(\tilde{y}_k - \hat{y}_k \right) \right)^2 / (1 - \tilde{a}_{kk}(\lambda))^2 \quad (19)$$

where $\{\tilde{a}_{kk}(\lambda)\}$ are the diagonal elements of the smoothing matrix $\tilde{A}(\lambda)$ which satisfies

$$\hat{\tilde{Y}} = \tilde{A}(\lambda) \tilde{Y}.$$

The *generalized cross validation function* $V(\lambda)$ is obtained by replacing a_{kk} by

$$\bar{a}(\lambda) = n^{-1} \sum_{j=1}^n \tilde{a}_{jj}(\lambda) = n^{-1} \text{tr} \tilde{A}(\lambda).$$

The GCV function is defined

$$\begin{aligned} V(\lambda) &= \sum_{k=1}^n \left(\tilde{\sigma}_k^{-1} \left(\tilde{y}_k - \hat{y}_k \right) \right)^2 / (1 - \bar{a}(\lambda))^2 \\ &= \frac{\|\tilde{D}^{-1/2} (I - \tilde{A}(\lambda))\|^2}{\left[\text{tr} (I - \tilde{A}(\lambda)) \right]^2}, \end{aligned} \quad (20)$$

where \tilde{D} is the diagonal matrix with k^{th} diagonal element $\tilde{\sigma}_k^2$:

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{D} &= \text{Cov}(\tilde{e}) = \text{Cov}(\tilde{Y} - \tilde{S}\tilde{d} - \tilde{Q}\tilde{c}) \\ &= \text{Cov}(W'D^{-1}e) \\ &= W'D^{-1}W \end{aligned} \quad (21)$$

From 12, $\tilde{A}(\lambda) \tilde{Y} = \tilde{Q}\tilde{c} + \tilde{S}\tilde{d}$, we can derive a simple expression for $I - \tilde{A}(\lambda)$:

$$\begin{aligned} (I - \tilde{A}(\lambda)) \tilde{Y} &= \lambda (W'D^{-1}W) \tilde{c} \\ &= \lambda M F_2 \left[F_2' (\tilde{Q} + \lambda M) F_2 \right]^{-1} F_2' \tilde{Y}, \end{aligned} \quad (22)$$

so that

$$I - \tilde{A}(\lambda) = \lambda M F_2 \left[F_2' (\tilde{Q} + \lambda M) F_2 \right]^{-1} F_2'.$$

1.2 Unbiased Risk Estimate

$$U(\lambda) = \frac{(D^{-1/2}Y)'(I - A(\lambda))(D^{-1/2}Y)}{[\det^+(I - A(\lambda))]^{1/(n-d_0)}}$$

where $\det^+(\cdot)$ denotes the product of the non-zero eigenvalues.

1.3 Generalized Maximum Likelihood

See pg. 68 of SS Anova Models.

$$M(\lambda) = n_y^{-1} \|(I - A(\lambda))D^{-1/2}Y\|^2 + 2\text{tr}A(\lambda)$$

2 Computation

The minimization of XXXXX lies within a space $\mathcal{H} \subseteq \{\phi^* : J(\phi^*) < \infty\}$ in which $J(\phi^*)$ is a square (semi) norm, or a subspace therein. The evaluation functional $[v]\phi^*$, which appears in the first term in XXXXX, is assumed to be continuous in \mathcal{H} . A space in which the evaluation functional is continuous is called a reproducing kernel Hilbert space (RKHS) endowed with reproducing kernel (RK) $Q(\cdot, \cdot)$, a non-negative definite function satisfying

$$\langle Q(v, \cdot), \phi^* \rangle$$

$\forall \phi^* \in \mathcal{H}$, where $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ is an inner product in \mathcal{H} . The norm and RK determine each other uniquely.

Let $\mathcal{N}_J = \{\phi^* : J(\phi^*) = 0\}$ denote the null space of J , and consider the tensor sum decomposition

$$\mathcal{H} = \mathcal{N}_J \oplus \mathcal{H}_J.$$

The space \mathcal{H}_J is a RKHS having $J(\phi^*)$ as the squared norm. The minimizer of XXXX has form

$$\phi^*(v) = \sum_{\nu=1}^{d_0} d_\nu \eta(v) + \sum_{i=1}^n c_i Q(v_i, v), \quad (23)$$

where $\{\eta_\nu\}$ is a basis for \mathcal{N}_J , and Q_J is the RK in \mathcal{H}_J .

For $v \in \mathcal{X}$ where \mathcal{X} is a product domain, ANOVA decompositions can be characterized by

$$\mathcal{H} = \bigoplus_{\beta=0}^g \mathcal{H}_\beta$$

and

$$J(\phi^*) = \sum_{\beta=0}^g \theta_\beta^{-1} J_\beta(\phi_\beta^*),$$

where $\phi_\beta^* \in \mathcal{H}_\beta$, J_β is the square norm in \mathcal{H}_β , and $0 < \theta_\beta < \infty$. This gives

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{H}_0 &= \mathcal{N}_J \\ \mathcal{H}_J &= \bigoplus_{\beta=1}^g \mathcal{H}_\beta, \text{ and} \\ Q &= \sum_{\beta=1}^g \theta_\beta Q_\beta,\end{aligned}$$

where Q_β is the RK in \mathcal{H}_β . The $\{\theta_\beta\}$ are additional smoothing parameters, which may or may not appear explicitly in notation to follow. The penalized likelihood is given by

$$\ell_\lambda(c, d) = \left[Y - W(Sd + Qc) \right]' D^{-1} \left[Y - W(Sd + Qc) \right] + \lambda c' Q c. \quad (24)$$

Letting $\tilde{Y} = D^{-1/2}Y$, $\tilde{S} = D^{-1/2}WS$, and $\tilde{Q} = D^{-1/2}WQ$, this may be written

$$\ell_\lambda(c, d) = \left[\tilde{Y} - \tilde{S}d - \tilde{Q}c \right]' \left[\tilde{Y} - \tilde{S}d - \tilde{Q}c \right] + \lambda c' Q c. \quad (25)$$

Taking partial derivatives with respect to d and c and setting equal to zero yields normal equations

$$\begin{aligned}\tilde{S}'\tilde{S}d + \tilde{S}'\tilde{Q}c &= \tilde{S}'\tilde{Y} \\ \tilde{Q}'\tilde{S}d + \tilde{Q}'\tilde{Q}c + \lambda Qc &= \tilde{Q}'\tilde{Y},\end{aligned} \quad (26)$$

which is equivalent to solving

$$\begin{bmatrix} \tilde{S}'\tilde{S} & \tilde{S}'\tilde{Q} \\ \tilde{Q}'\tilde{S} & \tilde{Q}'\tilde{Q} + \lambda Q \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} d \\ c \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \tilde{S}'\tilde{Y} \\ \tilde{Q}'\tilde{Y} \end{bmatrix} \quad (27)$$

Fixing smoothing parameters λ and θ_β (hidden in Q and \tilde{Q} if present), assuming that \tilde{Q} is full column rank, 27 can be solved by the Cholesky decomposition of the $(n + d_0) \times (n + d_0)$ matrix followed by forward and backward substitution. See ?. Singularity of \tilde{Q} demands special consideration. Write the Cholesky decomposition

$$\begin{bmatrix} \tilde{S}'\tilde{S} & \tilde{S}'\tilde{Q} \\ \tilde{Q}'\tilde{S} & \tilde{Q}'\tilde{Q} + \lambda Q \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} C'_1 & 0 \\ C'_2 & C'_3 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} C_1 & C_2 \\ 0 & C_3 \end{bmatrix} \quad (28)$$

where $\tilde{S}'\tilde{S} = C_1' C_1$, $C_2 = C_1^{-T} \tilde{S}' \tilde{Q}$, and $C_3' C_3 = \lambda Q + \tilde{Q}' \left(I - \tilde{S} \left(\tilde{S}' \tilde{S} \right)^{-1} \tilde{S}' \right) \tilde{Q}$. Using an exchange of indices known as pivoting, one may write

$$C_3 = \begin{bmatrix} H_1 & H_2 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} H \\ 0 \end{bmatrix},$$

where H_1 is nonsingular. Define

$$\tilde{C}_3 = \begin{bmatrix} H_1 & H_2 \\ 0 & \delta I \end{bmatrix}, \quad \tilde{C} = \begin{bmatrix} C_1 & C_2 \\ 0 & \tilde{C}_3 \end{bmatrix}; \quad (29)$$

then

$$\tilde{C}^{-1} = \begin{bmatrix} C_1^{-1} & -C_1^{-1} C_2 \tilde{C}_3^{-1} \\ 0 & \tilde{C}_3^{-1} \end{bmatrix}. \quad (30)$$

Premultiplying ?? by \tilde{C}^{-T} , straightforward algebra gives

$$\begin{bmatrix} I & 0 \\ 0 & \tilde{C}_3^{-T} C_3^T C_3 \tilde{C}_3^{-1} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \tilde{d} \\ \tilde{c} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} C_1^{-T} \tilde{S}' \tilde{Y} \\ \tilde{C}_3^{-T} \tilde{Q}' \left(I - \tilde{S} \left(\tilde{S}' \tilde{S} \right)^{-1} \tilde{S}' \right) \tilde{Y} \end{bmatrix} \quad (31)$$

where $\begin{pmatrix} \tilde{d}' & \tilde{c}' \end{pmatrix}' = \tilde{C}' \begin{pmatrix} d & c \end{pmatrix}'$. Partition $\tilde{C}_3 = \begin{bmatrix} K & L \end{bmatrix}$; then $HK = I$ and $HL = 0$. So

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{C}_3^{-T} C_3^T C_3 \tilde{C}_3^{-1} &= \begin{bmatrix} K' \\ L' \end{bmatrix} C_3' C_3 \begin{bmatrix} K & L \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} K' \\ L' \end{bmatrix} H' H \begin{bmatrix} K & L \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} I & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}. \end{aligned}$$

If $L' C_3^T C_3 L = 0$, then $L' \tilde{Q}' \left(I - \tilde{S} \left(\tilde{S}' \tilde{S} \right)^{-1} \tilde{S}' \right) \tilde{Q} L = 0$, so $L' \tilde{Q}' \left(I - \tilde{S} \left(\tilde{S}' \tilde{S} \right)^{-1} \tilde{S}' \right) \tilde{Y} = 0$.

Thus, the linear system has form

$$\begin{bmatrix} I & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & I & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \tilde{d} \\ \tilde{c}_1 \\ \tilde{c}_2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} * \\ * \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad (32)$$

which can be solved, but with c_2 arbitrary. One may perform the Cholesky decomposition of 27 with pivoting, replace the trailing 0 with δI for appropriate value of δ , and proceed as if \tilde{Q} were of full rank.

It follows that

$$\hat{\tilde{Y}} = \tilde{S} d + \tilde{Q} c = \begin{bmatrix} \tilde{S} & \tilde{Q} \end{bmatrix} \tilde{C}^{-1} \tilde{C}^{-T} \begin{bmatrix} \tilde{S}' \\ \tilde{Q}' \end{bmatrix} \tilde{Y} = \tilde{A}(\lambda) \tilde{Y}. \quad (33)$$

2.1 Minimization of GCV and GML scores with multiple smoothing parameters

The expression in permits the straightforward evaluation of the GCV score

$$V(\lambda, \boldsymbol{\theta}) = \frac{(1/n_y) \left\| \left(I - \tilde{A}(\lambda, \boldsymbol{\theta}) \right) \tilde{Y} \right\|^2}{\left[(1/n_y) \left(I - \tilde{A}(\lambda, \boldsymbol{\theta}) \right) \right]^2} \quad (34)$$

and the GML score

$$M(\lambda, \boldsymbol{\theta}) = \frac{(1/n_y) \tilde{Y}' \left(I - \tilde{A}(\lambda, \boldsymbol{\theta}) \right) \tilde{Y}}{\left[\det^+ \left(I - \tilde{A}(\lambda, \boldsymbol{\theta}) \right) \right]^{1/n_y}}. \quad (35)$$

where $\boldsymbol{\theta} = (\theta_1, \dots, \theta_g)'$ denotes the vector of smoothing parameters associated with each RK. To minimize the functions $V(\lambda, \boldsymbol{\theta})$ and $M(\lambda, \boldsymbol{\theta})$ with respect to $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ and λ , we iterate as follows:

1. Fix $\boldsymbol{\theta}$; minimize $V(\lambda|\boldsymbol{\theta})$ or $M(\lambda|\boldsymbol{\theta})$ with respect to λ .
2. Update $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ using the current estimate of λ .

Executing step 1 follows immediately from the expression for the smoothing matrix. Step 2 requires evaluating the gradient and the Hessian of $V(\boldsymbol{\theta}|\lambda)$ or $M(\boldsymbol{\theta}|\lambda)$ with respect to $\boldsymbol{\kappa} = \log(\boldsymbol{\theta})$. Optimizing with respect to $\boldsymbol{\kappa}$ rather than on the original scale is motivated by two driving factors: first, $\boldsymbol{\kappa}$ is invariant to scale transformations. With examination of V and M and 33, it is immediate that the $\theta_\beta \tilde{Q}_\beta$ are what matter in determining the minimum. Multiplying the \tilde{Q}_β by any positive constant leaves the θ_β subject to rescaling, though the problem itself is unchanged by scale transformations. The derivatives of $V(\cdot)$ and $M(\cdot)$ with respect to $\boldsymbol{\kappa}$ are invariant to such transformations, while the derivatives with respect to $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ are not. In addition, optimizing with respect to $\boldsymbol{\kappa}$ converts a constrained optimization ($\theta_\beta \geq 0$) problem to an unconstrained one.