

Robust Nonparametric Inference for Stochastic Interventions Under Multi-Stage Sampling

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Nima Hejazi

Group in Biostatistics
University of California, Berkeley
stat.berkeley.edu/~nhejazi



nimahejazi.org
[twitter/@onshejazi](https://twitter.com/onshejazi)
[github/nhejazi](https://github.com/nhejazi)

[slides](https://goo.gl/Vq6v5o): goo.gl/Vq6v5o



Preview: Summary

- ▶ The evaluation of vaccine efficacy is a high-impact scientific problem that leads to numerous statistical challenges.
- ▶ Stochastic interventions provide a flexible framework through which these statistical problems may be viewed from the perspective of causal inference.
- ▶ Standard targeted minimum loss-based estimation may be augmented to handle multi-stage sampling designs, like those common in efficacy trials.
- ▶ Statistical software is now readily available for deploying these types of techniques in a number of settings. We apply these methods in efficacy trials.

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Motivation: Let's meet the data

- ▶ HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) 505 HIV-1 vaccine efficacy trial.
- ▶ 2504 participants, with all observed cases matched to controls after collection of endpoints of interest.
- ▶ Background quantities (W): sex, age, BMI, etc.
- ▶ Variables of interest (A): biomarkers of immune response (e.g., T-Cell response).
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Preventive Vaccines for HIV

- ▶ Substantial heterogeneity is present in the genetic characteristics of HIV.
- ▶ Preventive HIV vaccines constructed using only several antigens (out of a great many).
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Sieve Analysis: A Brief History

- ▶ The study of whether and how the efficacy of a vaccine varies with the virus' characteristics.
- ▶ Why “sieve”? Vaccine as a barrier against select strains, but dissimilar strains break through.
- ▶ Identification of sieve effects guides decisions for future development of multivalent vaccines.
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Immune Reponse and Vaccine Efficacy

- ▶ *Goal:* Evaluate the immune response variables among vaccine recipients as predictors of HIV-1 infection.
- ▶ Cox proportional hazard models that account for case-control sampling design and adjust for the baseline covariates.
- ▶ $\lambda(t; Z = z) = \lambda_0(t) \exp(\beta^T z)$, $t \geq 0$.
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Motivation: Science Before Statistics

- ▶ Cox model: assumption of proportional hazards.
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Interlude: Causal Inference

1. Motivation: “We do not have knowledge of a thing until we have grasped its why, that is to say, its cause.” –Aristotle
2. Our question of interest concerns the manner in which changes in a given immune response profile affect risk of HIV-1 infection.
3. But how do we go about thinking about intervening on continuous quantities (e.g., immune response profile measures)?
4. Classical causal parameters (e.g., ATE) are not well suited for answering these sorts of questions.

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Causal Inference and Vaccine Efficacy

- ▶ Consider observing n individuals in a data structure of the form specified above.
- ▶ To formalize, consider $O = (W, A, Y) \sim P_0 \in \mathcal{M}$, where we make no assumptions on the statistical model containing P_0 .
- ▶ For the treatment A , we would normally be limited to thinking about counterfactual means (i.e., $\mathbb{E}Y_a$ for $A = a$) or similar quantities.
- ▶ This requires specifying a particular value of the treatment (i.e., $A = a$) under which to evaluate the outcome.

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Stochastic Treatment Regimes

- ▶ Rather than a deterministic intervention, consider a shift of the treatment (i.e., instead of $A = a$, consider $A = a + \delta$).
- ▶ This is a far more flexible approach. We need not specify a given value of the treatment but rather a shift (δ) of the treatment.
- ▶ In this setting, the effect of the intervention appears as $\mathbb{E}Y_{a+\delta} - \mathbb{E}Y_a$, where $A = a$ is simply the observed value of treatment.
- ▶ To compare with the linear model, the shift δ may be thought of as analogous to shifts in the slope of the regression line.

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Problems with Stochastic Interventions

- ▶ Even though we employ a more flexible type of intervention, the common assumptions (and problems!) of causal inference still arise.
 - Randomization: $Y_{d(a,w)} \perp\!\!\!\perp A \mid W$
 - Positivity: $0 < P(A \mid W) < 1$ everywhere. The propensity score is bounded in $(0, 1)$.
- ▶ To protect against positivity violations, a clever shifting mechanism: $d(a, w) = a + \delta$, if $a + \delta < u(w)$ and $d(a, w) = a$ otherwise.
- ▶ The shift $d(A, W)$ is now a function of the observed data, and the shift intervention $(a + \delta)$ is only applied when there is support in the observed data.

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Parameters for Treatment Shifting

- ▶ Let's consider a simple statistical target parameter:

$$\Psi(P) = \mathbb{E}_P \bar{Q}(d(A, W), W)$$

- ▶ Assume *piecewise smooth invertibility* of $d(a, w)$ in order to obtain a pathwise differentiability of the parameter.
- ▶ This makes semiparametric-efficient estimation in the nonparametric model possible when relying on stochastic interventions.
- ▶ The parameter now corresponds to our scientific question of interest: How does shifting immune response by an amount δ affect the risk of HIV-1 infection?

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- ▶ The parameter now corresponds to our scientific question of interest: How does shifting immune response by an amount δ affect the risk of HIV-1 infection?

Parameters for Treatment Shifting

- ▶ Let's consider a simple statistical target parameter:

$$\Psi(P) = \mathbb{E}_P \bar{Q}(d(A, W), W)$$

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Semiparametric-Efficient Estimation

- ▶ Recall that our statistical parameter of interest is

$$\Psi(P) = \mathbb{E}_P \bar{Q}(d(A, W), W)$$

- ▶ For which the efficient influence function (EIF) is

$$D(P)(o) = H(a, w)y - \bar{Q}(a, w) + \bar{Q}(d(a, w), w) - \Psi(P)$$

- ▶ The auxiliary covariate introduced (i.e., $H(a, w)$) may be expressed

$$H(a, w) = I(a < u(w)) \frac{g_0(a - \delta | w)}{g_0(a | w)} + I(a \geq u(w) - \delta)$$

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Target Minimum Loss-Based Estimation

- ▶ TMLEs provide semiparametric-efficient estimation and robust inference in nonparametric models.
- ▶ **Asymptotic linearity:**

$$\Psi(P_n^*) - \Psi(P_0) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n IC(O_i) + o_P\left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{n}}\right)$$

- ▶ **Limiting distribution:**

$$\sqrt{n}(\Psi_n - \Psi) \rightarrow N(0, \text{Var}(D(P_0)))$$

- ▶ **Statistical inference:**

$$\Psi_n \pm z_\alpha \cdot \frac{\sigma_n}{\sqrt{n}}$$

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- ▶ Asymptotic distribution of TML estimators has been studied thoroughly:

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- ▶ Have a *Gaussian limiting distribution*

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Complication: Multi-Stage Sampling

- ▶ In the 505 HIV-1 trial, all infected individuals are matched to pairs using a complex mechanism.
- ▶ Using our observed data structure $O = (W, A, Y)$, let us introduce $V = (W, Y)$, where V is the set of variables used to define the sampling mechanism.
- ▶ Thus, the observed data structure is now represented $O = (W, \Delta A, Y)$ wrt to the full data structure.
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Multi-Stage Sampling with TMLEs

- ▶ Rose & van der Laan (2011) introduce an IPCW-TMLE to be used when the data structure takes the form $O = (V, \Delta, \Delta X)$, for multi-stage sampling designs.
- ▶ How? Use an IPC-weighted loss function:

$$\mathcal{L}(P_X)(O) = \frac{\Delta}{\Pi_n(V)} \mathcal{L}^F(P_X)(X)$$

- ▶ The IPCW-TMLE solves the full-data efficient influence function (EIF) equation:

$$0 = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{\Delta_i}{\Pi_n(V_i)} D^F(P_{X,n}^*)(X_i).$$

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Efficiency Under Multi-Stage Sampling

- ▶ When working in a nonparametric model, it is necessary to use a nonparametric estimator of the missingness mechanism to obtain full efficiency.
- ▶ In many practical settings, this further complicates the efficient influence function estimating equation

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Putting It Together: Multiple Robustness

- ▶ We now have a semiparametric-efficient and robust procedure for assessing the effect of the intervention $d(a, w) = a + \delta$ even in the presence of multi-stage sampling.
- ▶ Due to the nature of the IPCW-TMLE, we have a form of multiple double robustness — in terms of combinations of (g, Q) and $(\Pi, \mathbb{E}_0(D^F(P^F) | V))$.
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Software package: R/txshift

R/ txshift

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Targeted Learning of Continuous Intervention Effects with Stochastic Treatment Regimes

Authors: Nima Hejazi and David Benkeser

What's txshift ?

The `txshift` R package is designed to provide facilities to compute targeted maximum likelihood estimates (TMLE) of the population-level causal effect of interventions based on stochastic mechanisms for treatment assignment (Muñoz and van der Laan (2012)). As opposed to the original algorithm given for computing such a TMLE, `txshift` implements and builds upon subsequent work by Díaz and van der Laan (2018), who reveal a simplified algorithm for computing the TML estimator of the shift intervention causal effect parameter.

Figure: <https://github.com/nhejazi/txshift>

- ▶ Variable importance for continuous interventions.
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Software Ecosystem: The tlverse!

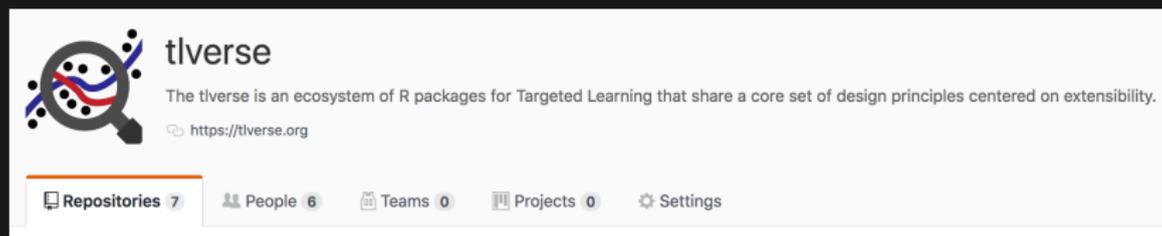


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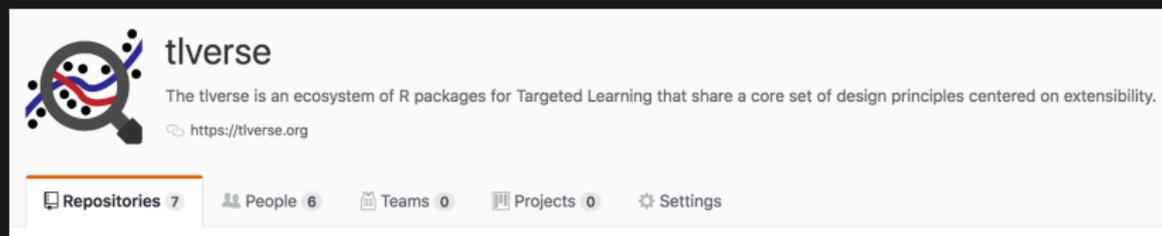


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Future Work

- ▶ Exploration of different forms of stochastic treatment shifts — EH Kennedy provides a shift in propensity score space in a recent JASA manuscript currently in press (collaboration in progress).
- ▶ Further refinement of the available software, explore how to provide a more efficient and extensible system, including stronger integration with the tIverse.
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Review: Summary

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David C. Benkeser

Emory University

Mark J. van der Laan

University of California, Berkeley

Peter B. Gilbert

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

Holly E. Janes

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Thank you.

Slides: goo.gl/LAoDUJ



Notes: goo.gl/Vq6v5o

stat.berkeley.edu/~nhejazi

nimahejazi.org

[twitter/@nshejazi](https://twitter.com/nshejazi)

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