

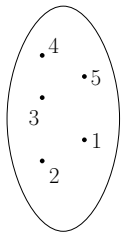
Learning Distributions using Lie Groups

E. Mehmet Kiral

August 2025, IJCAI tutorial
AI meets Algebra¹

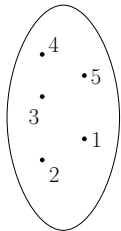
¹<https://algebra4ai.github.io>

Objects

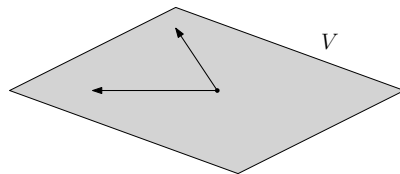


Collection of n letters.

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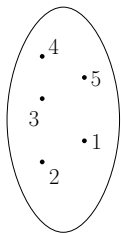


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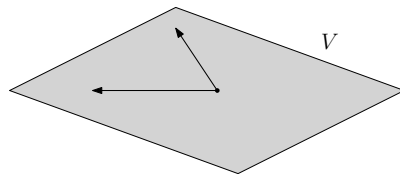


Vector Spaces

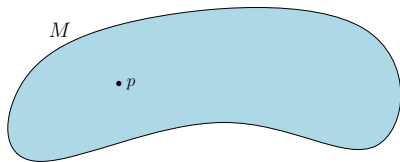
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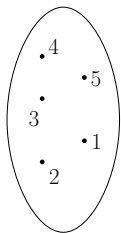


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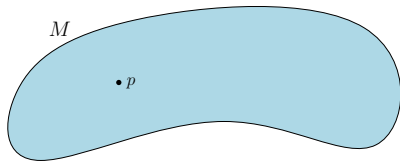


Manifolds

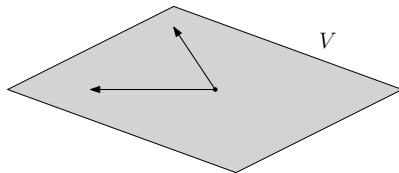
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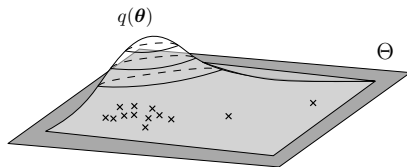
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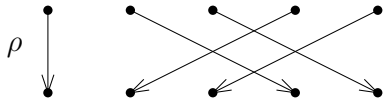
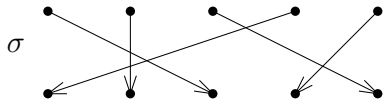
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Distributions on a space Θ .

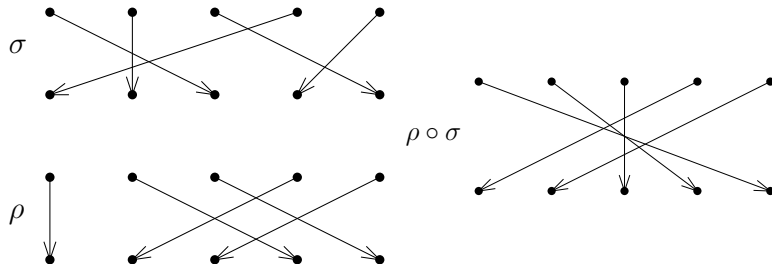
Transformations of objects. Groups, arise!

Permutations on n letters. This preserves the distinctness of elements of the set.
Given two permutations you can apply one after the other.



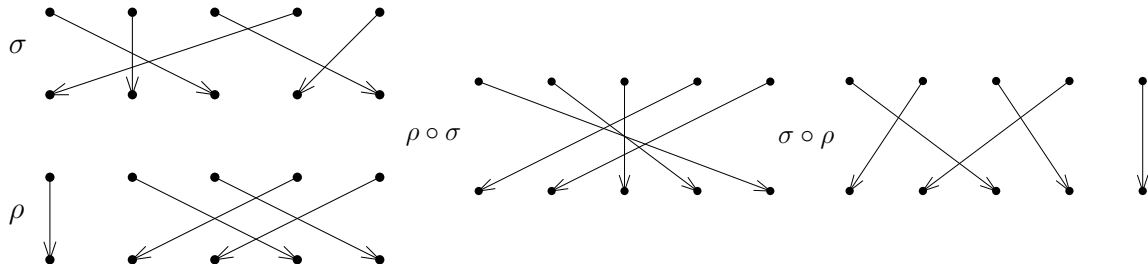
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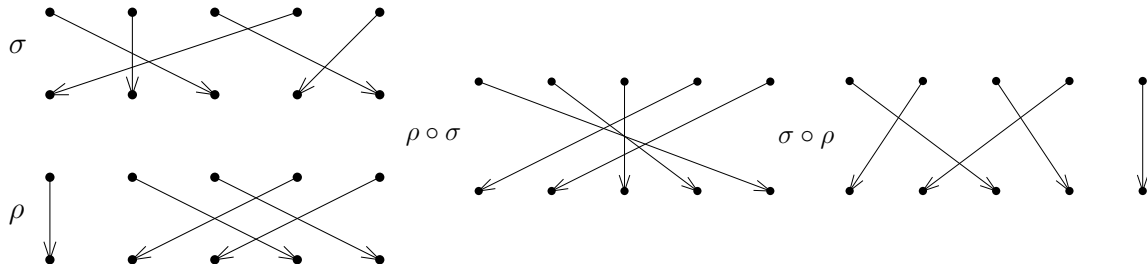
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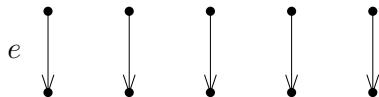


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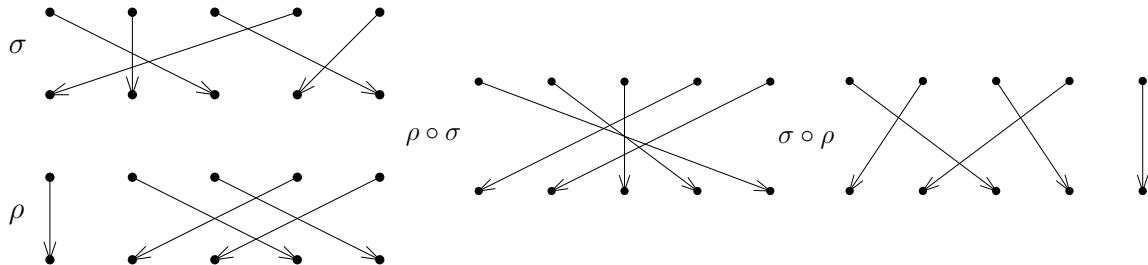


The identity permutation:

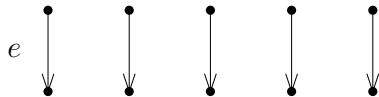


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The identity permutation:



The resulting object is the symmetric group on n letters, denoted by S_n or Sym_n .

Matrix Groups

Invertible linear maps also preserve the linear structure of vectors. It is a group.

$$\mathrm{GL}(V) = \left\{ A : V \rightarrow V \left| \begin{array}{l} A(\mathbf{v} + \mathbf{w}) = A\mathbf{v} + A\mathbf{w}, \\ A(\alpha\mathbf{v}) = \alpha A\mathbf{v} \end{array} \right. , A^{-1} \text{ exists} \right\}.$$

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If preserve extra structure such as inner product $\langle \mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w} \rangle = \mathbf{v}^\top \mathbf{w}$ then obtain a subgroup

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What does this set of matrices preserve?

Groups

A group is a set G together with a binary operation

$$\begin{aligned} * : G \times G &\longrightarrow G \\ (g, h) &\longmapsto g * h \end{aligned}$$

satisfying

- ① (associativity) $(g * h) * k = g * (h * k)$ for every $g, h, k \in G$.
- ② (existence of identity) There is an $e \in G$ such that $e * g = g$ and $g * e = g$ for every $g \in G$.
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The *closure property of the group operation* is simply that $a * b \in G$ if $a, b \in G$.

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Another way to realize this group is as a subgroup of $(n+1) \times (n+1)$ matrices.

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Elements of the symmetric group S_3 can be represented as matrices: $\pi((12)(3)) = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$.

Group Actions

A group G *acts* on a set X if there is a map

$$\cdot : G \times X \rightarrow X$$

satisfying

- ① $(gh) \cdot x = g \cdot (h \cdot x)$ for all $g, h \in G$ and $x \in X$
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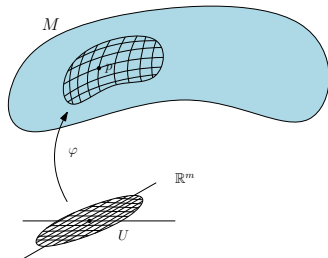
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Another example, $(A, \mathbf{b}) \in \text{Aff}(n, \mathbb{R})$ acting on $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ by

$$(A, \mathbf{b}) \cdot \mathbf{x} = A\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{b}.$$

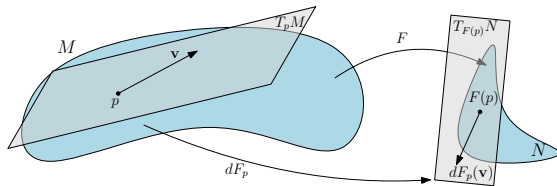
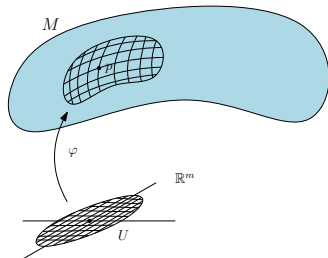
A bit on manifolds

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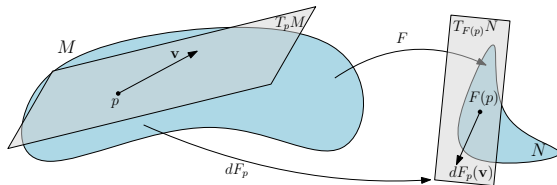
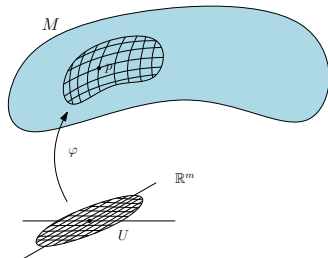
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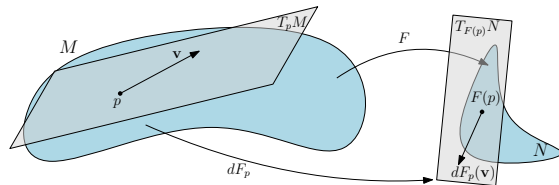
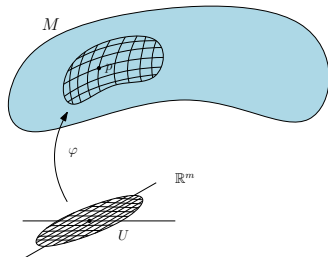
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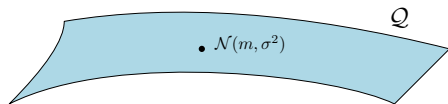
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If we have two maps $F : M \rightarrow N$ and $G : N \rightarrow P$ then the chain rule is

$$d(G \circ F)_p = dG_{F(p)} dF_p$$

On the right hand side, we have a composition of two linear maps, written multiplicatively.

Manifolds of distributions: more than one chart is possible

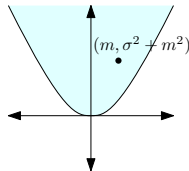
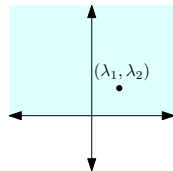


The 1-d Gaussian distributions form a two dimensional manifold with a single chart. But there can be more than one parametrization. One with natural parameters

$$(\lambda_1, \lambda_2) \mapsto q(x) \propto e^{-\lambda_1 x - \lambda_2 x^2}$$

or on the other hand, the expectations of x and x^2 are also enough to characterize

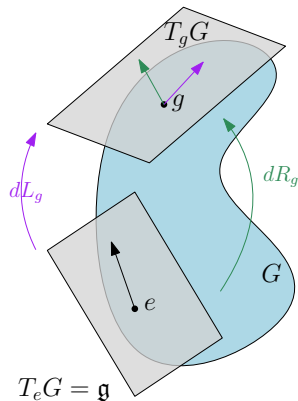
$$q(x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma}} e^{-\frac{(x-m)^2}{2\sigma^2}}.$$



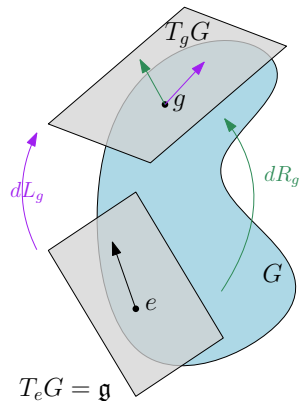
The Euclidean inner product w.r.t. (λ_1, λ_2) or w.r.t. $(\mu_1, \mu_2) = (m, \sigma^2 + m^2)$ gives different angles between tangent vectors to $T_q Q$.

Lie groups: Multiplication connects tangent planes.

Lie groups are groups which are also manifolds.
Multiplication and inversion maps are smooth.



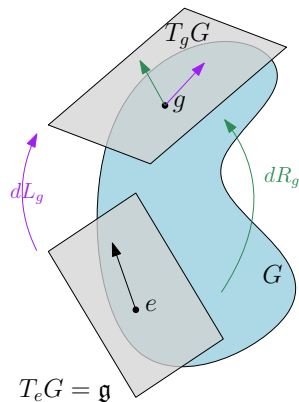
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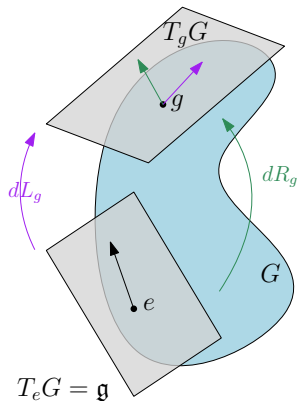
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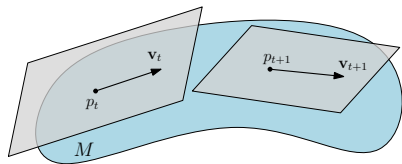


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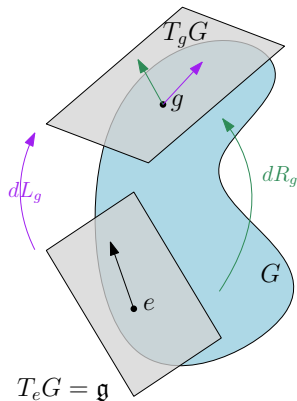
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If learning on a general manifold, then vectors at different points are in totally different vector spaces. How to add them, like in momentum accumulation?



Lie groups: Multiplication connects tangent planes.

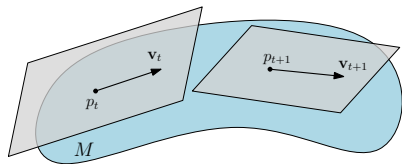


Lie groups are groups which are also manifolds. Multiplication and inversion maps are smooth.

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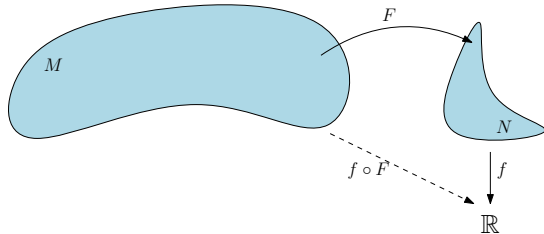


$R_{g^{-1}} \circ L_g : e \mapsto e$, its differential is the adjoint map $\text{Ad}_g : \mathfrak{g} \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}$. Identity for commutative groups.

Pushforwards and Pullbacks

Given $F : M \rightarrow N$, a map between manifolds, for every (real valued) function $f : N \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ we can pull it back to a function $f \circ F : M \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$.

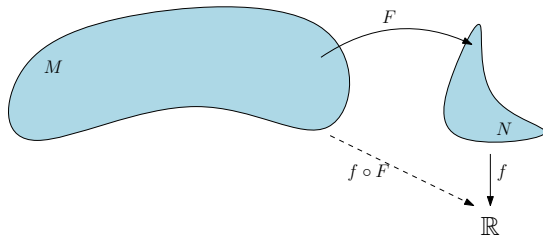
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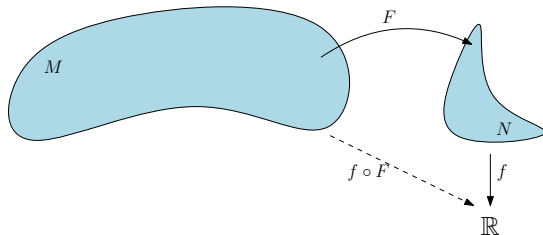
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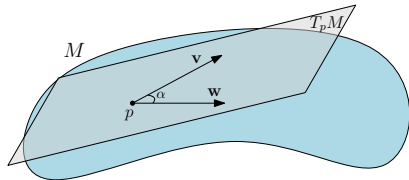
Another way to see this is on a measurable set $E \subseteq N$ the measure of the pushforward distribution is $(F_*\mu)(E) = \mu(F^{-1}(E)) = \mu(\{p \in M : F(p) \in E\})$.

Pullbacks and pushforwards, II

The tangent vectors are pushed out to the range by the differential, a linear map

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Metrics, are bilinear forms on tangent spaces $\omega : T_p M \otimes T_p M \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ which measure the length of the vectors and the angle between the vectors, just like the Euclidean dot product.

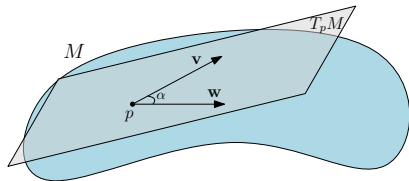


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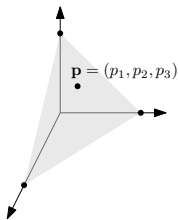
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A Riemannian manifold is a choice of bilinear form at every tangent plane $T_p M$ on M . The vectors go forward, and a metric ω on N can be pulled back via

$$F^*(\omega)(\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w}) = \omega(dF_p \mathbf{v}, dF_p \mathbf{w}).$$

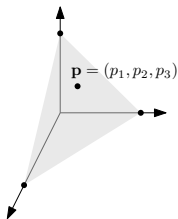
Group acting on distributions



The group $(\mathbb{R}^r, +)$ acts on finite probability distributions on r points by

$$\mathbf{x} \cdot \mathbf{p} = \text{Norm}(e^{\mathbf{x}} \odot \mathbf{p}) = \left(\frac{e^{x_i} p_i}{\sum_j e^{x_j} p_j} \right)_{i=1, \dots, r}$$

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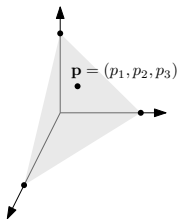


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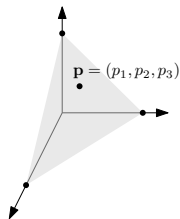
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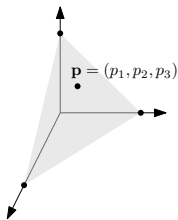
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The pushforward of distributions $q d\nu$ are given by $g_*(q d\nu) = q^g d\nu$ where

$$q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \frac{1}{\chi(g)} q(g^{-1} \cdot \boldsymbol{\theta}).$$

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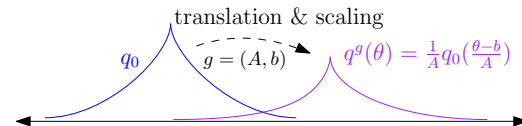
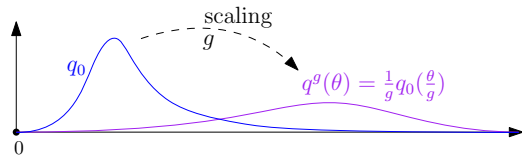
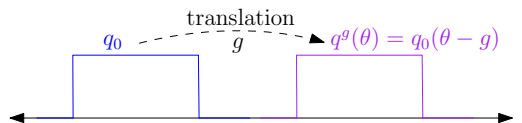
$$\mathcal{Q} = \{q^g d\nu : g \in G\}. \quad \text{where recall} \quad q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \frac{1}{\chi(g)} q_0(g^{-1} \cdot \boldsymbol{\theta}).$$

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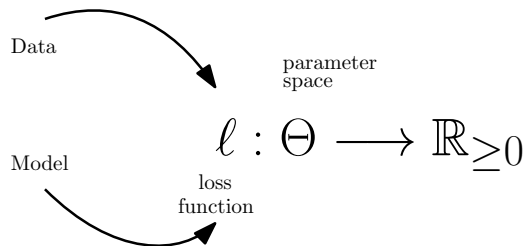


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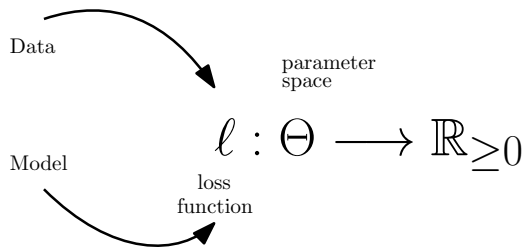
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The classical and Bayesian learning setups (what we learn!)



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Classically: find $\theta^* \in \Theta$ minimizing ℓ .

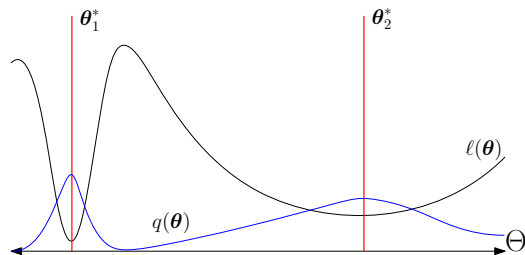
Bayesian : find a distribution $q \in \mathcal{P}_\nu(\Theta)$
....

Classical vs. Bayesian learning

The loss function is highly nonconvex. Usually

$$\ell(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \sum_{i=1}^N \ell_i(\boldsymbol{\theta}) + R(\boldsymbol{\theta})$$

where $\ell_i(\boldsymbol{\theta})$ is the loss contribution from the i^{th} data point and $R(\boldsymbol{\theta})$ regularizer.



$\boldsymbol{\theta}_1^*$ and $\boldsymbol{\theta}_2^*$ are both equally valid explanations of the same data.

A distribution over the data considers both explanations “*at the same time*”.

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Say two dice are thrown and I tell you that the sum is greater than 7.

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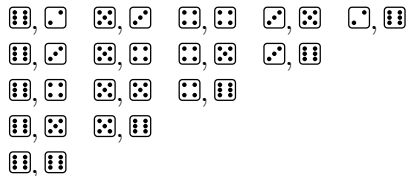
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Betting it all on one outcome

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We could say the result was definitely .

But there are a total of 15 possibilities



It is much more sensible to say it is one of these 15 outcomes, with equal probability.

(principle of indifference, principle of maximum entropy)

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$\ell(\boldsymbol{\theta})$, a loss function on model parameters $\boldsymbol{\theta} \in \Theta$. Pick a base measure ν on Θ .

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for some family of distributions $\mathcal{Q} \subseteq \mathcal{P}_\nu(\Theta) = \{q(\boldsymbol{\theta})d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta})\}$ on the parameters.

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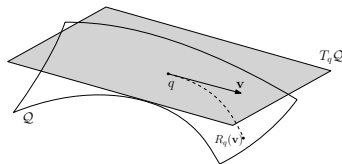
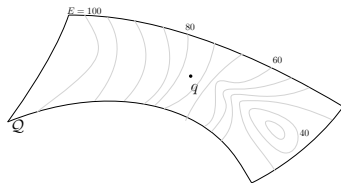
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- The temperature $\tau > 0$ is a balancing term.

Gradient Descent on Manifolds

Gradient descent for $\mathcal{E}(q)$ on the manifold $\mathcal{Q}$ has three components.

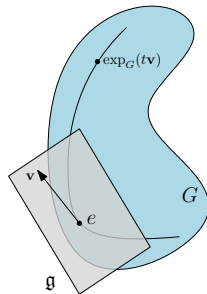
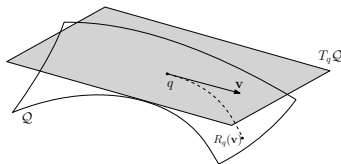
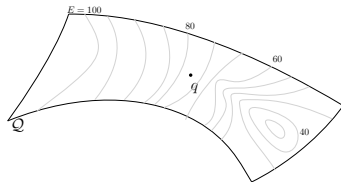
- 1 Calculate the differential $d\mathcal{E}|_q : T_q\mathcal{Q} \mapsto \mathbb{R}$.
- 2 Find a way to turn the covector $d\mathcal{E}|_q \in T_q^*\mathcal{Q}$ into a vector $\mathbf{v} \in T_q\mathcal{Q}$.
- 3 A choice of retraction brings us back onto the manifold $R_q(\mathbf{v}) \in \mathcal{Q}$.



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On every Lie group there is an exponential map

$$\exp_G : \mathfrak{g} \rightarrow G$$

provides a canonical retraction.

Optimization on the group: calculating the differential

We now solve

$$\arg \min_{g \in G} \mathcal{E}(q^g) = \arg \min_{g \in G} \int_{\Theta} q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \ell(\boldsymbol{\theta}) + \tau q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \log q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta})$$

Given $X \in \mathfrak{g} = T_e G$ the differential in the direction of X is

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$$\arg \min_{g \in G} \mathcal{E}(q^g) = \arg \min_{g \in G} \int_{\Theta} q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \ell(\boldsymbol{\theta}) + \tau q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \log q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta})$$

Given $X \in \mathfrak{g} = T_e G$ the differential in the direction of X is

$$\left. \frac{d}{dt} \mathcal{E}(q^{g^{etX}}) \right|_{t=0} = \underbrace{\left. \frac{d}{dt} \int_{\Theta} q^{g^{etX}}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \ell(\boldsymbol{\theta}) d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \right|_{t=0}}_{\text{data contribution}} + \underbrace{\left. \tau \int_{\Theta} q^{g^{etX}}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \log q^{g^{etX}}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \right|_{t=0}}_{\text{entropy contribution}}$$

The data contribution can be rewritten as

$$\left. \frac{d}{dt} \int_{\Theta} q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \ell(g e^{tX} g^{-1} \cdot \boldsymbol{\theta}) d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \right|_{t=0}$$

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The data contribution can be rewritten as

$$\int_{\Theta} q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \nabla \ell(g e^{\mathbf{0}} g^{-1} \cdot \boldsymbol{\theta})^\top \frac{d}{dt} ((ge^{tX} g^{-1}) \cdot \boldsymbol{\theta}) \Big|_{t=0} d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta})$$

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$$\int_{\Theta} q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \nabla \ell(\boldsymbol{\theta})^\top (\text{Ad}_g(X) \cdot \boldsymbol{\theta}) d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \approx \frac{1}{K} \sum_{\substack{i=1 \\ \boldsymbol{\theta}_i \sim q^g}}^K \nabla \ell(\boldsymbol{\theta}_i)^\top (\text{Ad}_g(X) \cdot \boldsymbol{\theta}_i)$$

The metric determines the *fastest direction of descent*.

Which descent direction is *fastest* depends on how we measure distances in the tangent space.

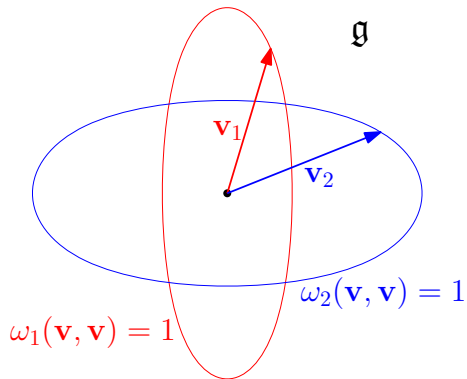
$\mathbf{v}_1$ is fastest if we measure $\|v\|$ using ω_1

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The pullback the Fisher information metric on $T_{q^g} \mathcal{Q}$

$$\omega^{\text{Fisher}}(h_1, h_2) = \mathbb{E}_q [(\partial_{h_1} \log q^g)(\partial_{h_2} \log q^g)]$$

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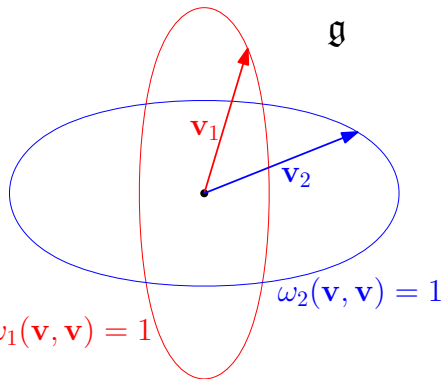
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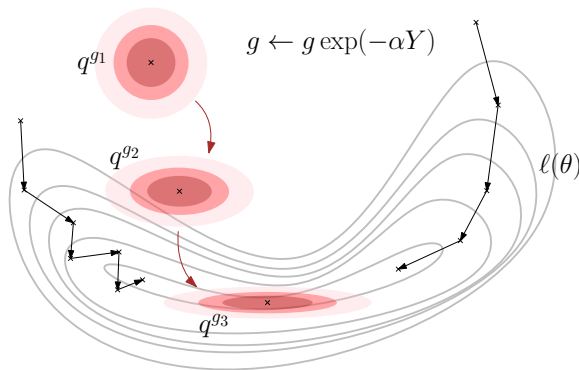


Indeed $h_X^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) := \left. \frac{d}{dt} q^{g e^{tX}}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \right|_{t=0} = \frac{1}{\chi(g)} h_X^e(g^{-1} \cdot \boldsymbol{\theta})$, so a change of variables $\boldsymbol{\theta} \mapsto g \cdot \boldsymbol{\theta}$ shows

$$\omega^g(X, Y) = \int_{\Theta} \frac{h_X^g(\boldsymbol{\theta})}{q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta})} \frac{h_X^g(\boldsymbol{\theta})}{q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta})} q^g(\boldsymbol{\theta}) d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \omega^e(X, Y).$$

Classical Learning vs. Learning via Group

The *point based* gradient descent updates parameters: $\theta \leftarrow \theta - \alpha \nabla \ell(\theta)$
Bayesian Learning Rule(s) update the distribution over the parameters θ .



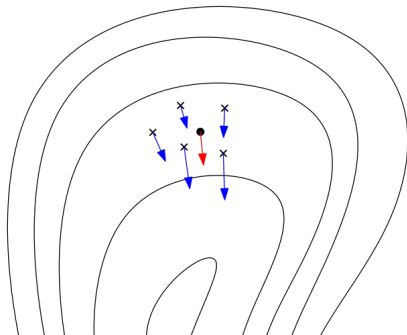
$Y \in T_e G$ is the direction of fastest ascent of $\mathcal{E}(q^g)$ w.r.t. the Fisher metric.

Specific Update Formulas: The Additive Group

$$g \in \mathbb{R}^P \text{ additive} \quad \implies \quad g \longleftarrow g - \alpha \mathbb{E}_{q_g} [\nabla_{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \ell(\boldsymbol{\theta})]$$

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Instead of going in the direction of the derivative at g , the direction is chosen by consensus with at points sampled from q_g .

Multiplicative and Affine Update Formulas

If $g \in (\mathbb{R}_{>0}^P, \times)$ acting on a parameters $\theta \in \mathbb{R}_+^P$:

$$X = \mathbb{E}_{q^g}[\theta \odot \nabla_{\theta} \ell(\theta)] - \tau$$

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For the Affine group the Lie algebra elements (tangent vectors) are of the form $\begin{pmatrix} X & \mathbf{y} \\ \mathbf{0}^\top & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ and the gradient update at q^g is

$$X = \mathbb{E}_{q_0} \left[A^\top \nabla_{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \ell(A\boldsymbol{\theta} + \mathbf{b}) \boldsymbol{\theta}^\top \right] - \tau I \qquad \mathbf{y} = \mathbb{E}_{q_0} \left[A^\top \nabla \ell(A\boldsymbol{\theta} + \mathbf{b}) \right].$$

with a slightly more involved exponential map

$$A \longleftarrow A e^{-\alpha X} \qquad \mathbf{b} \longleftarrow A \frac{e^{-\alpha X} - I}{X} \mathbf{y} + \mathbf{b}$$

Filters of the multiplicative group

Label nodes in a neural network “excitatory” or “inhibitory” like biology.

Magnitudes of the weights (in $\mathbb{R}_{>0}$) are the parameters (signs are fixed).

At each layer the map is $\mathbf{x} \mapsto \sigma(W_+\mathbf{x} - W_-\mathbf{x})$.

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Given $g \in \mathbb{R}_{>0}^P$, and q_0 Rayleigh, say, and $\theta_j \sim q_0^P$ for $j = 1, \dots, K$

$$M \leftarrow \beta M + (1 - \beta) \frac{1}{K} \sum_{j=1}^K (g \odot \boldsymbol{\theta}_j) \nabla \ell(g \odot \boldsymbol{\theta}_j) - \tau$$

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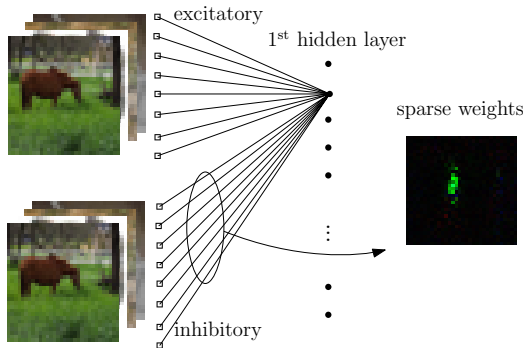
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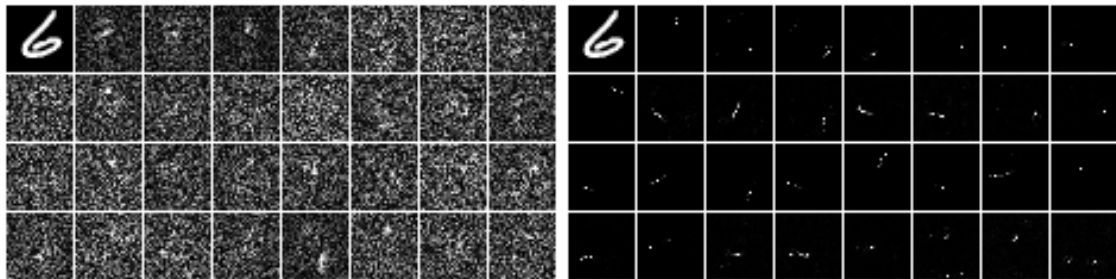
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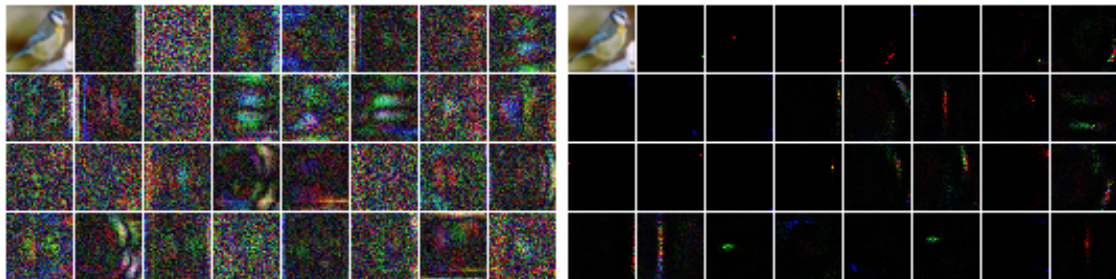
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Multiplicative vs Additive filters



The additive vs multiplicative filters for RGB images



Teşekkürler
ありがとうございます
Vielen Danke
Merci
Thank you.²

²More can be found at my blog-posts via <https://ekiral.github.io/blog/blog-index.html>     

Stiefel Manifold Update

Assume parameters are given as a matrix and want to preserve orthogonality of columns.

$$\Theta = \text{St}(n, m) = \{\theta \in \text{Mat}(n, m) : \theta^\top \theta = I_{m \times m}\}$$

The group $S = \text{SO}(n)$ preserves this manifold. And given a loss function $\ell : \Theta \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}$

$Y \in \mathfrak{so}(n)$ the update direction $Y = \text{Skew}Y_0 = \frac{Y_0 - Y_0^\top}{2} \quad Y_0 = \mathbb{E}_{q_\Lambda}[\nabla \ell \theta^\top]$

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Here the distributions are parametrized by $\Lambda \in \text{Mat}(n, m)$

$$q_\Lambda(\theta) \propto e^{-\text{Tr}(\Lambda^\top \theta)}$$

and the update is given by

$$\Lambda \leftarrow e^{-\alpha Y} \Lambda \quad (\text{actually an efficient variation is used})$$

Koichi Tojo, Taro Yoshino's: *"Harmonic Exponential Families"*.

G a Lie group $H \leq G$. Let ν be a relatively invariant measure on G . $\pi : G \rightarrow \mathrm{GL}(V)$ a representation of G . Let α be a 1-cocycle of π such that $\alpha|_H \equiv 0$. So $\alpha : G \rightarrow V$ satisfies

$$\alpha(gh) = \pi(g)\alpha(h) + \alpha(g) = \alpha(g). \quad \text{So } \underbrace{\alpha : G/H \rightarrow V}_{:=\Theta}$$

Let ν be a relatively invariant measure on Θ , meaning $\nu(gE) = \chi(g)\nu(E)$ for some homomorphism χ . Let $\lambda \in V^\vee$ s.t. $A(\lambda) = \log \int_\Theta e^{-\langle \lambda, \alpha(\theta) \rangle} d\nu(\theta) < \infty$. For such λ

$$q_\lambda(\theta) d\nu(\theta) := e^{-\langle \lambda, \alpha(\theta) \rangle - A(\lambda)} d\nu(\theta)$$

forms an exponential family satisfying

$$\frac{1}{\chi(g)} q_\lambda(g^{-1}\theta) := q_{\pi^\vee(g)\lambda}(\theta) \quad \text{where } \langle \pi^\vee(g)\lambda, v \rangle = \langle \lambda, \pi(g)v \rangle.$$

Constrained maximization: Statistical mechanics interpretation

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Lagrange multiplier $\beta \geq 0$:

$$\arg \min_{q \in \mathcal{P}_\nu(\Theta)} -\mathcal{H}_\nu(q) + \beta(\mathbb{E}_{q \mathrm{d}\nu}[\ell] - E_0) = \arg \min_{q \in \mathcal{P}_\nu(\Theta)} \mathbb{E}_{q \mathrm{d}\nu}[\ell] - \frac{1}{\beta} \mathcal{H}_\nu(q)$$

$\tau = \frac{1}{\beta}$ corresponds to the thermodynamical notion of temperature.

The exact posterior.

If $\mathcal{Q} = \mathcal{P}_\nu(\Theta)$ then there is a unique minimizer $p_\tau(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \propto e^{-\frac{1}{\tau}\ell(\boldsymbol{\theta})}$:

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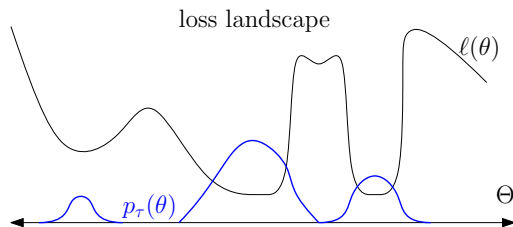
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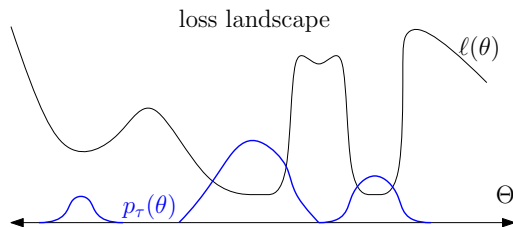


Minimize the objective $\mathcal{E}(q) := \mathbb{D}(q \| p_\tau)$ for $q \in \mathcal{Q}$...

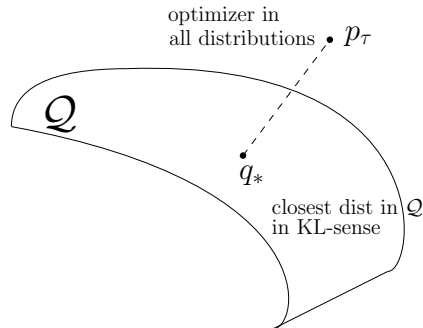
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...an approximate Bayesian solution.

Why call it Bayesian?

Let $\ell(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \sum_{i=1}^N \ell_i(\boldsymbol{\theta}) + R(\boldsymbol{\theta})$. Observe new data $(\mathbf{x}_{\text{new}}, y_{\text{new}})$ with loss contribution ℓ_{new} .

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Bayes' rule is about conditional probabilities, and updating priors:

$$P(\textcolor{blue}{A}|\textcolor{red}{B}) = \frac{P(\textcolor{red}{B}|\textcolor{blue}{A})P(\textcolor{blue}{A})}{P(\textcolor{red}{B})}$$

Interpret $e^{-\ell_i(\boldsymbol{\theta})}$ as the likelihood of **observing label** y_i given the model parameter $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ and $\mathbf{x}_i$.

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This is also the optimizer if we had initially considered the loss function $\ell_{\text{updated}} = \ell + \ell_{\text{new}}$.

Exponential Families

Let $T : \Theta \rightarrow V$, called the sufficient statistic. Call

$$\Omega = \Omega_\nu(T) = \left\{ \lambda \in V^\vee : A(\lambda) := \log \int_{\Theta} e^{-\langle \lambda, T(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \rangle} d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta}) < \infty \right\}.$$

Then $q_\lambda(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = e^{-\langle \lambda, T(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \rangle - A(\lambda)}$ form an exponential family of distributions.

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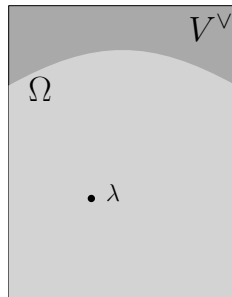
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$$-\frac{\partial A}{\partial \lambda_i} = \int_{\Theta} T_i(\boldsymbol{\theta}) e^{-\langle \lambda, T(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \rangle - A(\lambda)} d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \mathbb{E}_{q_\lambda d\nu}[T_i] =: \mu_i$$

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial^2 A}{\partial \lambda_i \partial \lambda_j} &= \int_{\Theta} (T_i(\boldsymbol{\theta}) - \mu_i)(T_j(\boldsymbol{\theta}) - \mu_j) q_\lambda(\boldsymbol{\theta}) d\nu(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{q_\lambda} \left[\left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda_i} \log q_\lambda \right) \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda_j} \log q_\lambda \right) \right] =: F_{i,j}(\lambda) \quad \text{Fisher Matrix} \end{aligned}$$



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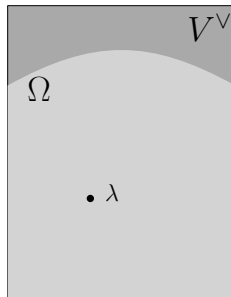
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$$= \mathbb{E}_{q_\lambda} \left[\left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda_i} \log q_\lambda \right) \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda_j} \log q_\lambda \right) \right] =: F_{i,j}(\lambda) \quad \text{Fisher Matrix}$$

Example: If $T(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} \theta \\ \theta^2 \end{bmatrix}$ then we get 1-D Gaussians $q_\lambda(\theta) \propto e^{-\lambda_1 \theta - \lambda_2 \theta^2}$ for $\lambda_2 > 0$.



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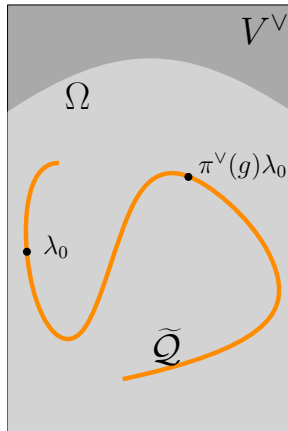
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