Interpretable Machine Learning

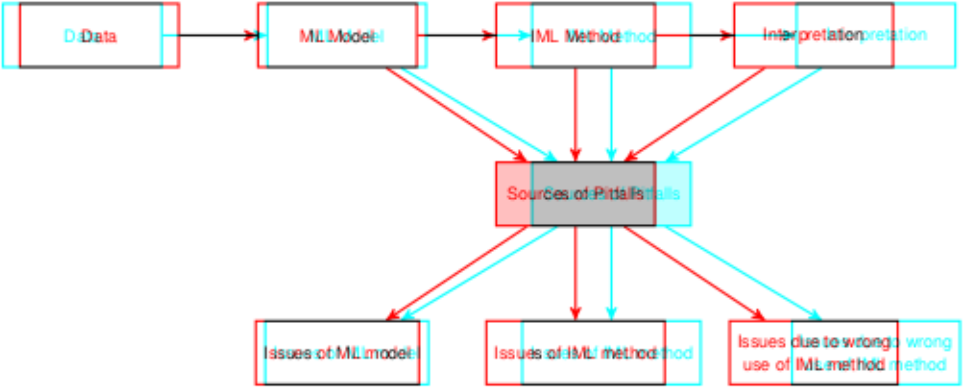
Pitfalls and Best Practices

Learning goals

- General pitfalls of interpretation methods
- Practices to avoid pitfalls

SOURCES OF PITFALLS

▶ Molnar et al. (2021)

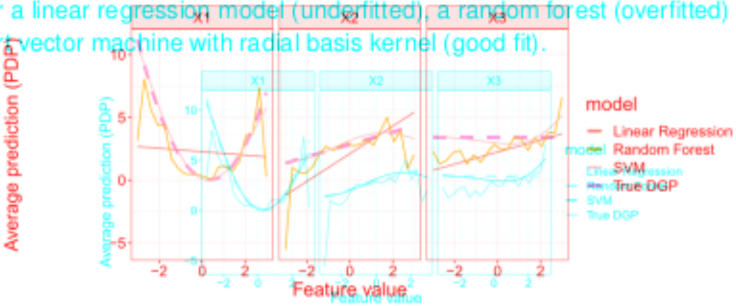


ISSUES OF ML MODEL ▸▸ Molnar et al. (2021)

- **Proper training and evaluation**: To gain insights into DGP, deployed model should generalize well to unseen data (garbage in, garbage out)

ISSUES OF ML MODEL ▸▸ Molnar et al. (2021)

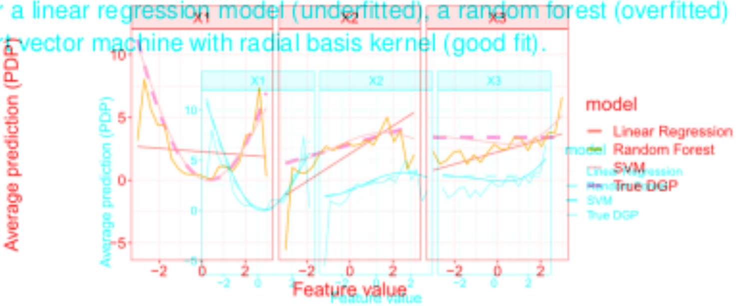
- **Proper training and evaluation**: To gain insights into DGP, deployed model should generalize well to unseen data (garbage in, garbage out)
  Example: $X_1, X_2, X_3 \sim Unif(-3,3)$ with $Y = X_1^2 + X_2 - 5X_1X_2 + \epsilon$, $\epsilon \sim \mathcal{N}(0,5)$
  Figure: PDP of DGP (true effect), linear regression model (underfitted), random forest (overfitted), and SVM with radial basis kernel (good fit).



ISSUES OF ML MODEL

Molnar et al. (2021)

- **Proper training and evaluation**: To gain insights into DGP, deployed model should generalize well to unseen data (garbage in, garbage out)
  Example: $X_1, X_2, X_3 \sim Unif(-3, 3)$ with $Y = X_1^2 + X_2 - 5X_1X_2 + \epsilon$, $\epsilon \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 5)$
  Figure: PDP of DGP (true effect), linear regression model (underfitted), random forest (overfitted), and SVM with radial basis kernel (good fit).



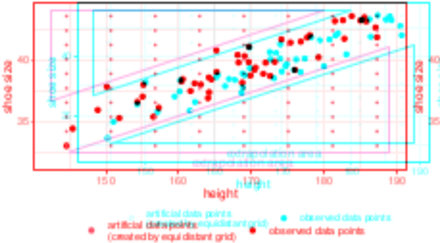
- **Avoid unnecessary complexity**: Prefer simple interpretable models and use them as baseline, move to more complex models if performance not sufficient

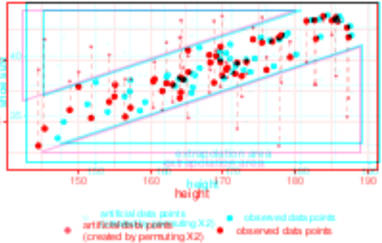
ISSUES OF IML METHOD ▸▸ Molnar et. al (2021)

- **Consider dependencies**: Some interpretation methods have issues in case of dependent features
  ⇝ Check presence of dependencies and use suitable interpretation methods

ISSUES OF IML METHOD ▸ Molnar et. al (2021)

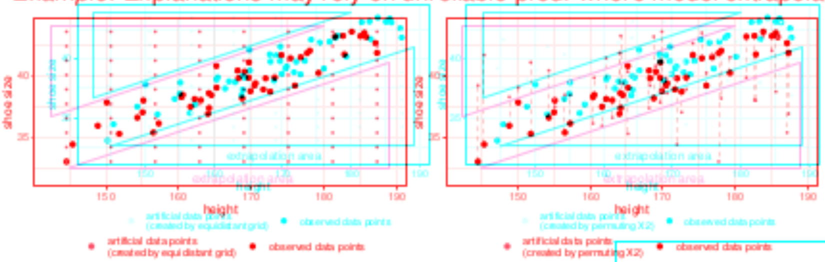
- **Consider dependencies**: Some interpretation methods have issues in case of dependent features
  ⇝ Check presence of dependencies and use suitable interpretation methods
  Example: Explanations may rely on unreliable pred. where model extrapolated



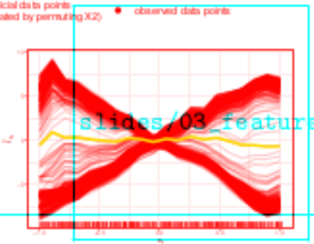


ISSUES OF IML METHOD (Molnar et al. (2021))

- **Consider dependencies**: Some interpretation methods have issues in case of dependent features
  ⇝ Check presence of dependencies and use suitable interpretation methods
  Example: Explanations may rely on unreliable pred. where model extrapolated



- **Beware of simplifications**: Mapping of complex models to low-dim. explanations
  ⇝ Information loss, e.g., some interpretation methods hide interactions or heterogeneous effects (Figure: PDP and ICE Curves)



INTERPRETATIONS WITH DEPENDENT FEATURES

METHOD ‣ Molnar et. al (2021)

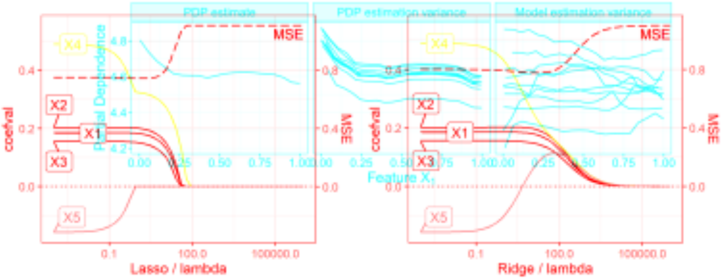
- Highly correlated features contain similar information
  - ⇝ Model might pick only 1 feat. (regularization), even if it is causally irrelevant
  - ⇝ Produced explanations can be misleading (true to model, but not to data)
  - ⇝ E.g., different interpretable models produce different results

⇝ Beware of uncertainty, we may need confidence intervals

INTERPRETATIONS WITH DEPENDENT FEATURES

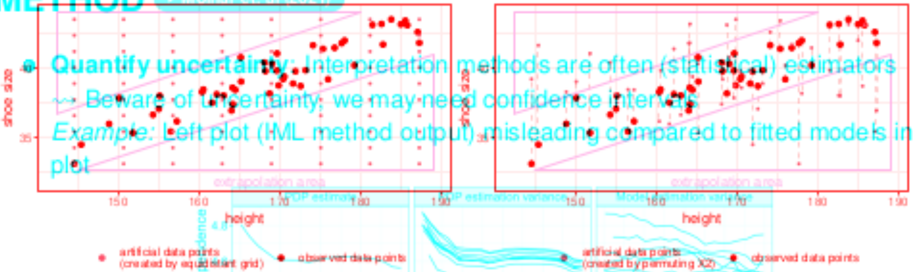
METHOD ▸ Molnar et. al (2021)

- Highly correlated features contain similar information
  - ⇝ Model might pick only 1 feat. (regularization), even if it is causally irrelevant
  - ⇝ Produced explanations can be misleading (true to model, but not to data)
  - ⇝ E.g., different interpretable models produce different results
- **Example:** Simulate 100 obs. from DGP $Y = 0.2(X_1 + \cdots + X_5) + \epsilon, \epsilon \sim N(0,1)$



- $X_1, \ldots, X_4 \sim N(0, 2)$ (uncorrelated)
- $X_5 = X_4 + \delta, \delta \sim N(0, 0.3) \Rightarrow \rho(X_4, X_5) = 0.98$ (highly correlated)
- LASSO: Shrinks coef. of X_5 to zero, coef. of X_4 about $1.5\times$ higher
- Ridge: Similar coef. for X_4 and X_5 for higher lambda

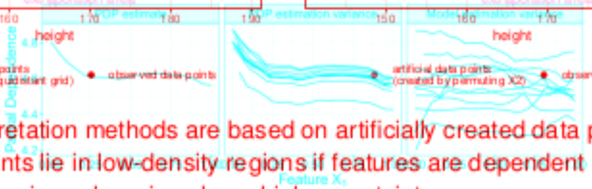
EXTRAPOLATION DUE TO DEPENDENCIES



- Many interpretation methods are based on artificially created data points
  ⇝ Many points lie in low-density regions if features are dependent
  ⇝ Predictions in such regions have high uncertainty
  ⇝ Explanations can be biased if they rely on pred. where model extrapolated

METHOD ▸ Molnar et. al (2021)

- **Quantify uncertainty:** Interpretation methods are often (statistical) estimators
  ⇝ Beware of uncertainty, we may need confidence intervals
  Example: Left plot (IML method output) misleading compared to fitted models in right plot



- **Careful with causality:** Do you want to understand the model or the nature of DGP?
  ⇝ Your goal should guide the choice of interpretation method