CSE702 Week 4B: Main Analyzer Workflow  [Tuesday evening was a full demo.]

The analyzer has been trained with data from in-person chess in 2010--2019. Updating the training---before or after applying the Sonas correction of ratings---is a separate matter. We will be mostly concern just with operating the program with the calibrations given.

For lamentable technical reasons, the calibration is done completely separately for each chess engine---and engine version---used for testing. Thus you have to give the code for the engine version at startup. If the executable is called \texttt{ir} (yours may be \texttt{irw} or \texttt{IRW} on Windows), do

\texttt{ir <engine> [mode]}

\texttt{engine = SF11 or Kom13 or SF7 or Kom10.} (Stockfish 16 still not up.)
\texttt{mode = UW for "unit weights", or EWN for "expectation weights, normalized."}

Once it loads and builds stuff, and you load a set of games, the main workflow items are:

1. Test a player or players at a prescribed competence level. This \texttt{perfTest} does not use regression over the loaded data. The main outputs are \texttt{z-scores} of the abstract form

\[
  z = \frac{(\text{actual}) - (\text{projected})}{(\text{std. dev. } \sigma)}
\]

2. Use regression over loaded data for player(s) \( P \) to determine the corresponding rating level \( IR_P \). The latter is called the \texttt{Intrinsic Performance Rating} (IPR).

The main distinction between these workflows bears repeating:

1. Performance tests are calibrated \texttt{using large data only}. The small data of a player's games in one tournament are used only for tallying the \texttt{(actual)} figures. The \texttt{(projected)} and \texttt{(std. dev.)} components are based on regressions over datasets of 100,000s of positions from 1,000s of games for each rating level 1025,1050,....,2775,2800,2825+.
2. The IPR is obtained by regression over \texttt{the player's own small data}. For this reason, the two-sigma error bars in an IPR output \( IR_P \pm e_p \) are \texttt{error bars of measurement only}.

It is tempting to "\texttt{Studentize}" an IPR measurement against the player's rating \( R_P \) to create something that looks like a \texttt{z-score}:

\[
  \frac{IR_P - R_P}{(e_p / 2)}.
\]

The two sins here are that \( e_p \) is not a population standard deviation as William Sealy Gosset required and that \( e_p \) itself is based on small data with wide potential variation. Whereas, \( \sigma \) in the \texttt{z-score} formula comes from large populations.
Model Parameters and Virtual Players

The only inputs to the model are:

(a) the numerical values of possible chess moves in a given position, as given by the strong chess program used to build (an instance of) the model, and
(b) the model parameters, which fall into multiple ranks from completely fixed to completely free.

The numerical values in (a) are the only elements specific to chess in the entire model. If the numbers came from programs for Shogi or Go or Othello or any other pure game of strategy, the operations of the model would be entirely unchanged. (The training over large sets of recorded games by players of various skill levels would be particular to the game, of course.) Whether the model can be made sharper by incorporating more specific chess knowledge---such as labeling which moves are advancing, capturing, with the Knights, etc.---is a possible open question to pursue.

The two main model parameters---both treated as completely free---are:

• $s$ for sensitivity: how finely the player can react to small differences in the values of moves.
• $c$ for consistency: how well the player can avoid large mistakes.

It has been a longstanding desire to have a third main and freely regressable parameter:

• $d$ for habitual depth of thinking.

However, making $d$ a free parameter causes numerically unstable results. The same held true for a parameter $h$ for "heave"---meaning the tendency to be eager in the sense of a ship riding over the water. The idea is currently applied only in the form of a parameter $e_v$ that governs the relative probability of moves whose final values are equal, but whose values differed at lower depths of search. The program code allows treating $e_v$ as a completely free parameter, but then the fitting method of making it an unbiased estimator fails to "close" for individual players the way it does over large sets of training data. So what I currently do instead is use the mapping $R \mapsto e_v$ given by the training fit to set $e_v$ as a function of $IR_p$ in the IPR workflow. Then only $s$ and $c$ are freely fitted to any player's games.

I call a parameter setting $Y = (s, c, \ldots)$ a virtual player. The IPR regression finds the closest virtual player to the given set of games. (My 2013 paper with Tamal Biswas used $Z$ for virtual player or "agent", but that letter might confuse with z-score.)

Important fact: The virtual players obtained by regression for the seventy-three individual training sets of games by Elo 1025, 1050, ..., through Elo 2775, 2800, and 2825+, when plotted in the 2-dimensional $(s, c)$ plane, fall closely into a 1-dimensional curve (which should in turn be rectifiable as a straight line after the Sonas correction). This not only smooths out into a continuous set of values $(s_R, c_R)$ which I call the central fit, it gives individual (close-to-)linear regressions for the $s_R$ and $c_R$ values individually.
The diagrams in my graphic about a hyper-parameter discussed in the next section not only show the individual lines of central fit values, but also how they "collapse" when that hyperparameter is set too aggressively. These are the actual $s_R$ and $c_R$ values, not the ones smoothed by regression:

The upshot is that other aspects of the model are tweaked so that the "Important Fact" holds true to best advantage.

So the perfTest workflow does this:

1. Input: a rating $R$ and the set of games to test.
2. Compute $\hat{s}_R$ and $\hat{c}_R$ from the regressions for the central fit.
3. Do projections for the virtual player $Y(\hat{s}_R, \hat{c}_R, ...)$, where the "..." includes $e_v$ and other player-characteristic parameters that are expressly tied to $s$ and $c$.
4. Compare the player's actual performance against those projections.
Note that only the player's rating $R$ is used for the projections. It is possible that the actual human player $P$ involved has a different tradeoff $(s_P, c_P)$ that produces the same rating $R$---but gives results meaningfully different from those for $Y(\hat{s}_R, \hat{c}_R, \ldots)$. If the player is more positional, then $s_P$ may be lower (which is better) and $c_P$ may be lower too (which is worse). This will generally reduce the z-scores of the T1-match and EV-match tests while raising that of the ASD test. If the player is more adept at navigating tactical positions without large mistakes, then $c_P$ will be higher and $s_P$ lower to compensate (since we are saying the rating $R$ is the same). This is a potential defense in a cheating test. However:

- The difference in the overall results is generally small enough to be covered by the policy of giving 25 Elo slack in the tested rating $R$.
- The z-scores in large tournaments obtained via the central fit conform well to the first and second moments of the standard bell curve.
- The IPR figures are unaffected by the starting values $(s, c, \ldots)$ given.

This is despite the following

**Weird Observation:** The actual $(s_P, c_P)$ values obtained for players $P$ in the IPR regression producing the IPR values $I = IR_P$ are fairly often skewed away from the central fit values $(\hat{s}_I, \hat{c}_I)$ like so:

- For Standard chess, $s_P$ and $c_P$ are higher than $\hat{s}_I$ and $\hat{c}_I$, $s_P$ markedly so.
- For Rapid chess, there is very little skew.
- For Blitz chess, the skew goes the other way: $s_P$ is lower than projected.

There are issues related to Simpson's paradox going on here, as Lipton and I covered in a notorious GLL article. I have not gotten to the bottom of this---resolving this is a possible seminar project. However, because most online chess during the pandemic was played at Rapid pace, I used these observations to justify not building the model separately for Rapid and Blitz chess---nor running through the full millions-of-trials validation process for them.

To summarize, the mapping from $Y$ to the Elo rating denoting the skill of the (virtual!) player is many-to-one. In particular, multiple combinations of $s$ and $c$ correspond to the same Elo rating $R$. It would be interesting to plot "Elo isobars" of the $s$ and $c$ landscape, representing different tradeoffs between strategic and tactical ability that yield the same rated skill.