Combining Ordinal Preferences by Boosting

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National Taiwan University/California Institute of Technology

Preference Learning Workshop, September 12, 2009

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http://www.hotornot.com

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by a finite **ordered** set of labels $\mathcal{Y} = \{1, 2, \cdots, K\}$

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- ranks represent **order** information
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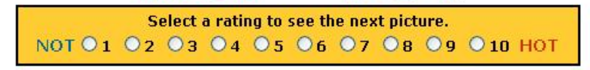

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Ordinal Ranking Setup

Given

N examples (input x_n, rank y_n) $\in \mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{Y}$

- `hotornot`: $\mathcal{X}$ = encoding(human pictures), $\mathcal{Y} = \{1, \cdots, 10\}$
- `netflix`: $\mathcal{X}$ = encoding(movies/users), $\mathcal{Y} = \{1, \cdots, 5\}$

Goal

an ordinal ranker $r(x)$ that "closely predicts" the ranks y associated with some **unseen** inputs x

no numerical information: how to say "close"?

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Formalizing (Non-)Closeness: Cost

- artificially quantify the **cost** of being wrong

- cost vector $\mathbf{c}$ of example $(x, y, \mathbf{c})$:
  $\mathbf{c}[k]$ = cost when predicting (x, y) as rank k

- or use general cost vectors:

$\mathbf{c}[k] = [\![y \neq k]\!]$	$\mathbf{c}[k] = \lvert y - k \rvert$
classification	absolute
$(1, 0, 1, 1, 1)$	$(1, 0, 1, 2, 3)$

closely predict: small cost during testing

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Combining Ordinal Rankers

- some simple ordinal rankers that predict your preference on movies:
  - $r_1(x) =$ a ranker based on actor performance
  - $r_2(x) =$ a ranker based on actress performance
  - $r_3(x) =$ a ranker based on an expert opinion
  - $r_4(x) =$ a ranker based on box reports
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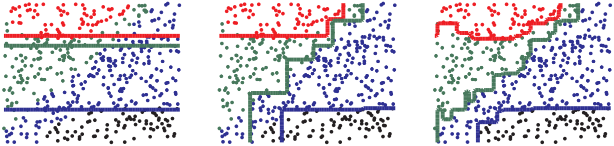

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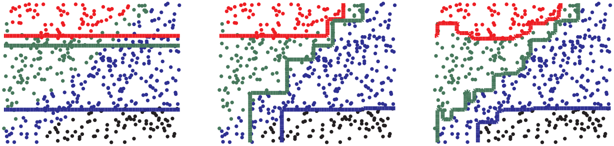

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Our Contributions

an algorithmic and theoretical development on ensemble learning for ordinal ranking, which ...

- extends AdaBoost to ordinal ranking: can construct ordinal ensemble from **any** (possibly application-specific) cost
- introduces **new theoretical guarantee** on the performance of ordinal ensemble
- leads to **good experimental results**

algorithm	base ranker	final ranker
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From Ordinal Ranking to Binary Classification (and Back)

original problem

What is the rank of the movie x? ($r(x) = ?$)

reduced problems (Li and Lin, NIPS '06)

Is the rank of movie x greater than k? ($r(x) > k$?)

- traditional: combine probabilistic outputs (Frank and Hall, ECML '01)
- ours: use counting of deterministic binary outputs

- **simple** and **efficient**
- **good theoretical guarantee**:
  1. absolutely good binary classifier $\Longrightarrow$ absolutely good ranker (Li and Lin, NIPS '06)
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Ordinal Ensemble: Prediction (1/2)

Goal

rankers $r_1(x) = 1$, $r_2(x) = 6$, $r_3(x) = 5$;
what does ensemble $R = \{r_1, r_2, r_3\}$ say on x?

Possible Solutions

- majority? $R(x) = 1$ or 5 or 6
- mean? $R(x) = 4$
- median? $R(x) = 5$
- ...?

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rankers $r_1(x) = 1$, $r_2(x) = 6$, $r_3(x) = 5$;
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Known

binary classifiers $g_1(x) = Y$, $g_2(x) = N$, $g_3(x) = Y$;
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—**majority vote** $G(x) = Y$

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$R(x) = 5$ (**provably**, the median)
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Ordinal Ensemble: Training (1/4)

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locate ordinal rankers $r_1(x), r_2(x), \cdots, r_T(x)$
as well as their importance $v_1, v_2, \cdots, v_T$

Known: AdaBoost

locate binary classifiers $g_1(x), g_2(x), \cdots, g_T(x)$
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- binary classifier ⇔ **ordinal ranker**?
- weighted binary examples ⇔ **cost-sensitive ordinal examples**?

tools: reduction and reverse reduction

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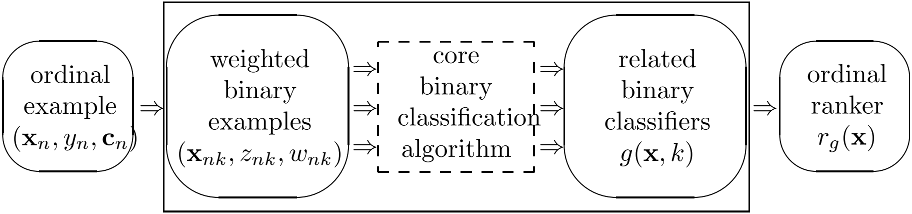

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2. use your favorite algorithm on the weighted binary examples to get a binary classifier g
3. for each new input x, predict its rank using $r_g(x) = 1 + \sum_k [\![g(x,k) = \text{Y}]\!]$

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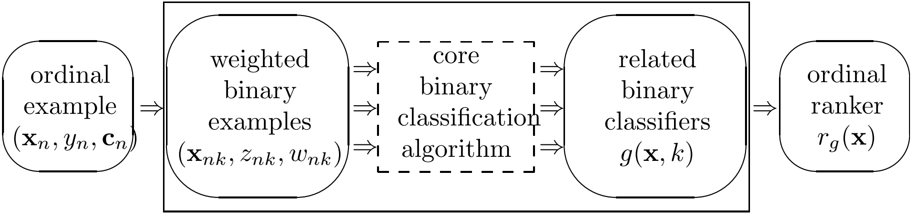

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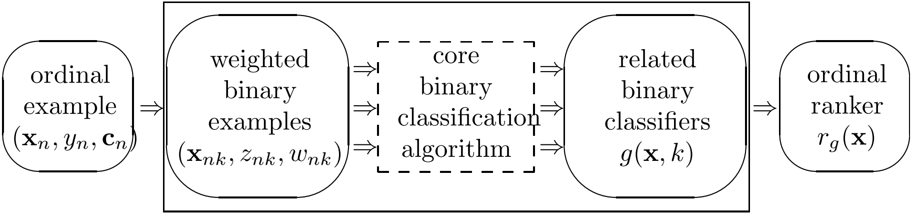

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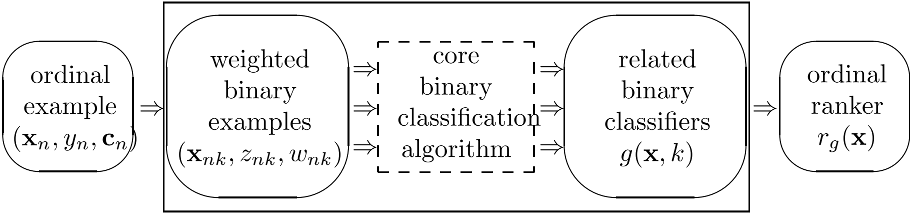

reduction:
apply transforms on ordinal examples and binary classifiers

reverse reduction:
apply inverse transforms on binary examples and ordinal rankers

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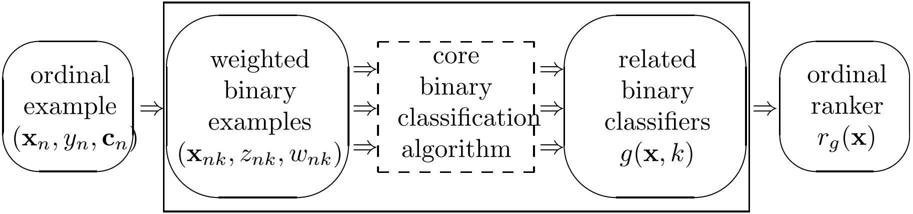

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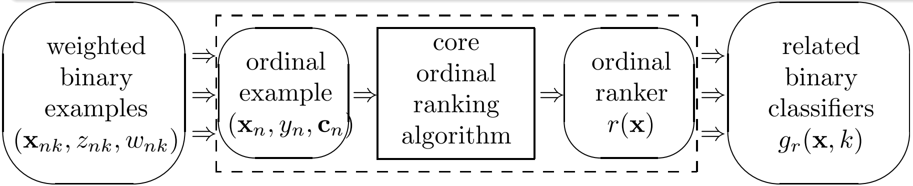
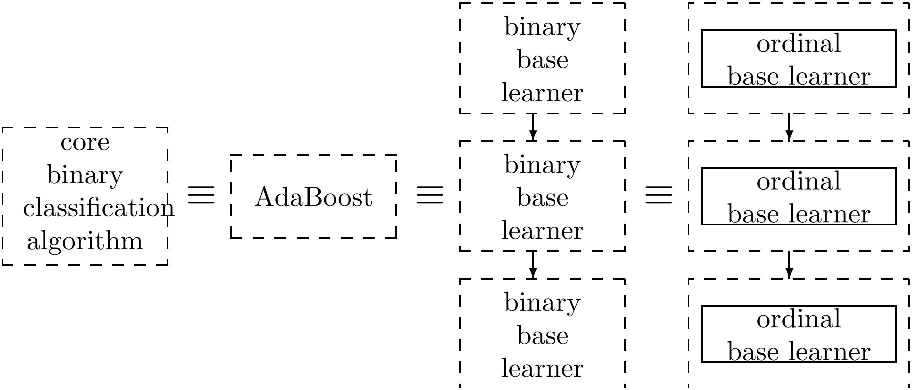


reverse reduction:
apply inverse transforms on binary examples and ordinal rankers

Ordinal Ensemble: Training (4/4)



AdaBoost.OR Derivation in a Nut Shell

1. plug AdaBoost into **reduction**
2. decompose AdaBoost as a series of binary base learners
3. cast ordinal base learner as binary one with **reverse reduction**

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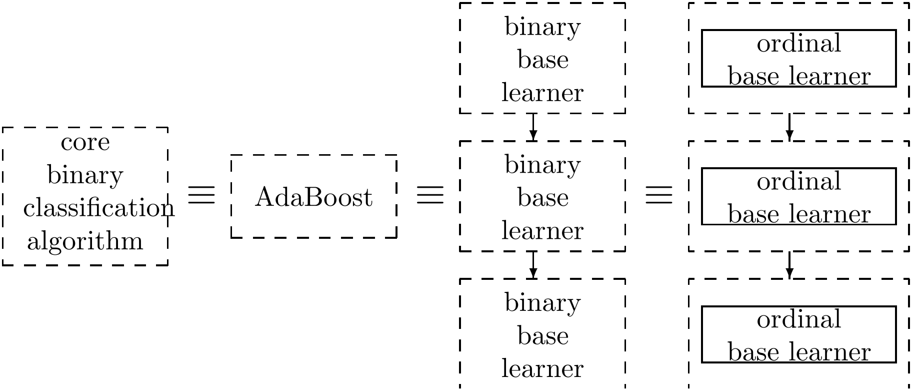

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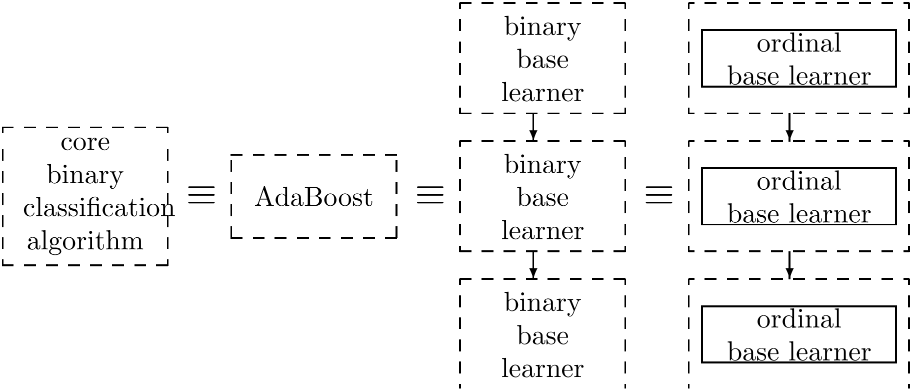

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AdaBoost.OR: Further Simplifications

Reduction + Reverse Reduction

examples		$(x_n, y_n, \mathbf{c}_n)$
(reduction)	$\Longrightarrow$	(x_{nk}, z_{nk}, w_{nk})
(AdaBoost)	$\Longrightarrow$	$(x_{nk}, z_{nk}, w_{nk}^{(t)})$
(rev. red.)	$\Longrightarrow$	$(x_n, y_n, \mathbf{c}_n^{(t)})$

AdaBoost.OR

examples		$(x_n, y_n, \mathbf{c}_n)$
(AdaBoost.OR)	$\Longrightarrow$	$(x_n, y_n, \mathbf{c}_n^{(t)})$

(maintain $\mathbf{c}_n^{(t)}$ directly)

Reduction + Reverse Reduction

ensemble		$\{(v_t, r_t)\}$
(rev. red.)	$\Longrightarrow$	$\{(v_t, g_t)\}$
(AdaBoost)	$\Longrightarrow$	$G(x, k)$
(reduction)	$\Longrightarrow$	$R_G(x)$

AdaBoost.OR

ensemble		$\{(v_t, r_t)\}$
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AdaBoost.OR versus AdaBoost

AdaBoost

for $t = 1, 2, \cdots, T$,

1. find a simple g_t that matches best with the current "view" of $\{(x_n, y_n)\}$
2. give a larger weight v_t to g_t if the match is stronger
3. update "view" by emphasizing the weights of those (x_n, y_n) that g_t doesn't predict well

prediction:
majority vote of $\{(v_t, g_t(x))\}$

AdaBoost.OR
= reduction + any cost + AdaBoost + derivations

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Boosting Property of AdaBoost.OR

Ordinal Ranking

For AdaBoost.OR, if rankers r_t always achieve normalized training cost $\leq \frac{1}{2} - \gamma$,

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{training cost of ensemble} \\ \leq \quad & \text{constant} \cdot \exp\left(-2\gamma^2 T\right) \end{aligned}$$

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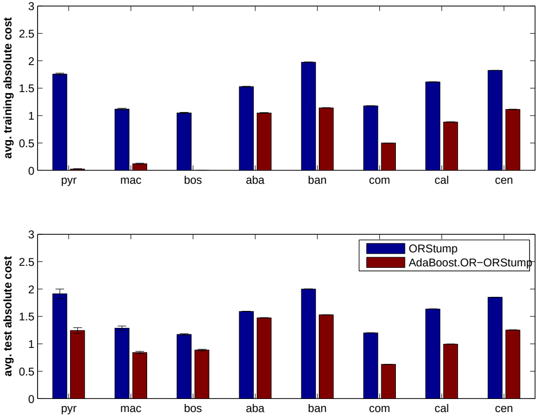
ORStump v.s. AdaBoost.OR + ORStump



- ORStump: a simple algorithm for ordinal ranking
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- boosts ORStump in both training and testing
- efficient and sometimes outperforms benchmark

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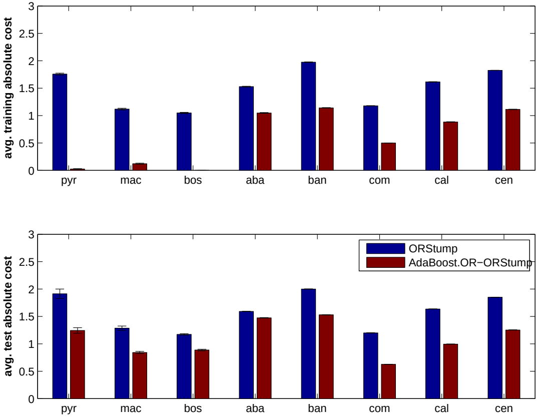

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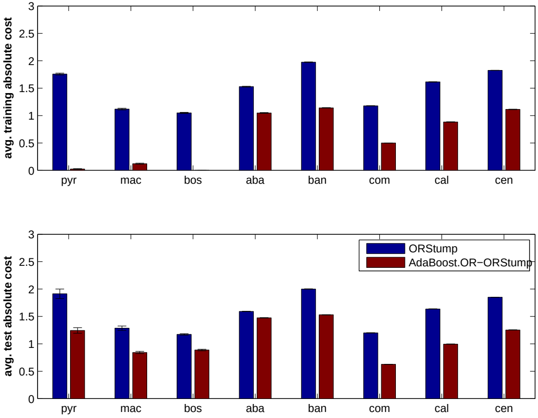

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  - proved: relatively good binary classifier $\Longrightarrow$ relatively good ranker
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    —training: update costs instead of weights
    —prediction: **weighted median** (wider application)
- proved **boosting and generalization properties** of AdaBoost.OR
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more general reduction results:

(H.-T. Lin & L. Li, Reduction from Ordinal Ranking to Binary Classification, 2009)

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