Statistical Computing (36-350)
Lecture 9: More Design, and Scoping

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The scope of names: what they mean where
Example: Not passing lots of arguments
Looking Up Names

When R sees a variable name, it needs to look up what value goes with that name.
It consults the environment, a list of name/value pairs.
If the name isn’t in the current environment, it looks in the larger, parent environment, and so on to the global environment.
The global environment is what we interact with at the terminal.
# Generate a random multinomial sequence (a "multinoulli")
# Inputs: length of sequence (n), vector of probabilities (prob)
# alphabet size is automatically computed from probs
# normalization of probs is handled by sample()
# Outputs: a vector of integers
multinoulli <- function(n, prob) {
  k <- length(prob)
  return(sample(1:k, size=n, replace=TRUE, prob=prob))
}

# Test:
# table(multinoulli(1000, c(1/2, 1/3, 1/6)))
# Should give proportions around 1/2, 1/3, 1/6
# Count sub-sequence length vs. num. unique values
# Named for "Heaps's Law" in linguistics, which relates the number
# of unique words in a document to its length
# Input: a vector, vector of lengths to calculate counts at
# default: 30 lengths equally spaced logarithmically

Description

matrix creates a matrix from the given set of values.

as.matrix attempts to turn its argument into a matrix.

is.matrix tests if its argument is a (strict) matrix.

Usage

matrix(data = NA, nrow = 1, ncol = 1, byrow = FALSE, dimnames = NULL)

as.matrix(x, ...)  
## S3 method for class 'data.frame'
as.matrix(x, rownames.force = NA, ...)

is.matrix(x)

Arguments

data an optional data vector (including a list or 
expression vector). Other R objects are coerced 
by as.vector.

Scope

Example

Example

Scope

Example

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>c(1,2,3,4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cats</td>
<td>a data frame with three columns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psi</td>
<td>function(x,c=1) {ifelse(abs(x)&gt;c,2<em>c</em>abs(x)-c^2,x^2)}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent</td>
<td>a pointer telling R where to look in its memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Scope of Names

Because R “goes up the chain”, if this environment and its parent share a name, R uses the local name — that’s the scope of the assignment.
Assignment with <- or = only affects the current environment.
Changes in this environment do not affect its parents.
Changes in the parents affect this one, unless over-ridden locally.
Inside a function definition, we have a new, internal environment. The new environment starts with just the named arguments of the function. Names in this environment *locally* over-ride those outside. Changing/creating variables does not affect other environments. The parent of the function’s internal environment is the one it was defined in, not the one it was called in.
Examples:

```r
> f <- function(x) {
+   f <- x^2*exp(-x^2)
+   return(f)
+ } # Assigns this function the name "f"
> f # What value goes with the name "f"?
function(x) {
    f <- x^2*exp(-x^2)
    return(f)
}
> x <- 3 # Assigns x the value 3, globally
> f(7) # Assigns x the value 7, INSIDE f
[1] 2.569014e-20
> f(x) # Did not change x globally
[1] 0.001110688
> f # Also did not change the global value of "f"
function(x) {
    f <- x^2*exp(-x^2)
    return(f)
}
```
More examples:

```r
g <- function(x) {
  gamma <- 2*x*exp(-x^2)
  kappa <- -2*x^3*exp(-x^2)
  eta <- gamma + kappa
  return(eta)
}

h <- function(y) {
  return(eta*sin(y))
}
```

Q: what happens if we run `g(3)` `h(pi)`
A: Depends on what `eta` was in the parent environment, before we ran these!
More examples:

```r
g <- function(x) {
  gamma <- 2*x*exp(-x^2)
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  eta <- gamma + kappa
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```

Q: what happens if we run

```r
g(3)
h(pi)
```
More examples:

\[
g <- \text{function}(x) \{ \\
gamma <- 2x^2\text{exp}(-x^2) \\
kappa <- -2x^3\text{exp}(-x^2) \\
eta <- \gamma + \kappa \\
\text{return}(\eta)
\}
\]

\[
h <- \text{function}(y) \{ \\
\text{return}(\eta \sin(y))
\}
\]

Q: what happens if we run

\[
g(3) \\
h(\pi)
\]

A: Depends on what \eta was in the parent environment, before we ran these!
Scope Example

Environment of definition vs. execution

> wheel <- function(r) {2*pi*r}
> wheel.inside.wheel <- function(r,pi) { return(wheel(r)) }
> wheel(1)                        # Acts naturally
[1] 6.283185
> wheel.inside.wheel(1,3)         # Will not be 2*3*1
[1] 6.283185

VS.

> wheel.inside.wheel <- function(r,pi) {
+   wheel <- function(r) { 2*pi*r }
+   return(wheel(r))
+ }
> wheel.inside.wheel(1,pi)        # Acts naturally
[1] 6.283185
> wheel.inside.wheel(1,3)         # Will be 2*3*1
[1] 6
No interference between the insides of separate functions
∴ no restrictions on naming arguments, or on using other people’s
code, whatever their internal names
Looking to larger environments is a convenience: share information
by nesting functions, and allow global constants
Making the parent the environment of definition lets us preserve
functions easily (e.g., statistical models) — will see more when we
look at functions as objects
Design Implications

Compartmentalize information
Sometimes encourages nested functions
Example: The last homework

First sketch of parts:

my.nls <- function(first_guess_at_parameters, data, controls) {
    until we run out of time
    find the gradient at the current parameter guess
    if the gradient is small, stop,
    otherwise move the parameters against the direction of the gradient
    gather up return values
}

(not really code!)
Translate into code:

```r
my.nls <- function(params, N=gmp$pop, Y=gmp$pcgmp, stopping.deriv,
                    max.iterations, step.scale, deriv.increments) {
  for (iteration in 1:max.iterations) {
    gradient <- mse.grad(params, deriv.increments)
    if(all(abs(gradient)) < stopping.deriv) { break() }
    params <- params - step.scale*gradient
  }
  fit <- list(params=params, gradient=gradient, iterations=iteration,
              converged=(iteration < max.iterations))
  return(fit)
}

needs an `mse.grad` function
```
Skipping preliminary analysis:

```r
mse.grad <- function(params, deriv.increments) {
  p <- length(params)
  stopifnot(p == length(deriv.increments))
  # Matrix with 1 row per tweaked parameter value
  new.params <- matrix(rep(params, p), nrow=p, byrow=TRUE) + diag(deriv.increments)
  new.mse <- apply(new.params, 1, mse)
  return(((new.mse - mse(params))/deriv.increments)
}
```

Needs an `mse()` function
Finally, the \texttt{mse} function:

\begin{verbatim}
mse <- function(params,N=gmp$pop,Y=gmp$pcgmp) {
    predictions <- params[1]*N^params[2]
    mse <- mean((Y-predictions)^2)  # Why doesn't this clobber the function?
    return(mse)
}
\end{verbatim}
Problem: how to get `mse.grad` to notice if the data changes?
Solution 1: change arguments to `mse.grad`, to include data, which it passes to `mse` (solutions)
Solution 2: manipulate scope, remembering environment of definition is what matters
Solution 3: functions as arguments (a later lecture)
Let’s look at solution 2
All together:

```r
my.nls.2 <- function(params, N=gmp$pop, Y=gmp$pcgmp, stopping.deriv, max.iterations, step.scale,deriv.increments) {
  mse <- function(params) { return(mean((Y-params[1]*N^params[2])^2)) }
  mse.grad <- function(params) {
    p <- length(params)
    stopifnot(p==length(deriv.increments))
    new.params <- matrix(rep(params,p),nrow=p,byrow=TRUE)+diag(deriv.increments)
    new.mse <- apply(new.params,1,mse)
    return((new.mse - mse(params))/deriv.increments)
  }
  for (iteration in 1:max.iterations) {
    gradient <-mse.grad(params)
    if(all(abs(gradient) < stopping.deriv)) { break() }
    params <- params - step.scale*gradient
  }
  fit <- list(params=params,mse=mse(params),gradient=gradient, iterations=iteration,converged=(iteration < max.iterations))
  return(fit)
}
```
Summary

1. Environments control the values of names
2. Values and assignments in local environments over-rule more global ones
3. “Local” goes by definition, not execution
4. Use scoping to control information sharing between functions