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# Maximum Mean Discrepancy Test is Aware of Adversarial Attacks

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## Abstract

The *maximum mean discrepancy* (MMD) test could in principle detect any distributional discrepancy between two datasets. However, it has been shown that the MMD test is unaware of *adversarial attacks*—the MMD test failed to detect the discrepancy between *natural* and *adversarial data*. Given this phenomenon, we raise a question: are natural and adversarial data really from different distributions? The answer is affirmative—the previous use of the MMD test on the purpose missed three key factors, and accordingly, we propose three components. Firstly, *Gaussian kernel* has limited *representation power*, and we replace it with an effective *deep kernel*. Secondly, *test power* of the MMD test was neglected, and we maximize it following *asymptotic statistics*. Finally, adversarial data may be *non-independent*, and we overcome this issue with the *wild bootstrap*. By taking care of the three factors, we verify that *the MMD test is aware of adversarial attacks*, which lights up a novel road for adversarial data detection based on two-sample tests.

## 1. Introduction

The *maximum mean discrepancy* (MMD) aims to measure the closeness between two distributions  $\mathbb{P}$  and  $\mathbb{Q}$ :

$$\text{MMD}(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; \mathcal{F}) := \sup_{f \in \mathcal{F}} |\mathbb{E}[f(X)] - \mathbb{E}[f(Y)]|, \quad (1)$$

where  $\mathcal{F}$  is a set containing all continuous functions (Gretton et al., 2012a). To obtain an analytic solution regarding the

sup in Eq. (1), Gretton et al. (2012b) restricted  $\mathcal{F}$  to be a unit ball in the *reproducing kernel Hilbert space* (RKHS) and obtain the kernel-based MMD defined in the following.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{MMD}(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; \mathcal{H}_k) &:= \sup_{f \in \mathcal{H}, \|f\|_{\mathcal{H}_k} \leq 1} |\mathbb{E}[f(X)] - \mathbb{E}[f(Y)]| \\ &= \|\mu_{\mathbb{P}} - \mu_{\mathbb{Q}}\|_{\mathcal{H}_k}, \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where  $k$  is a bounded kernel regarding a RKHS  $\mathcal{H}_k$  (i.e.,  $|k(\cdot, \cdot)| < +\infty$ ), and  $X \sim \mathbb{P}$ ,  $Y \sim \mathbb{Q}$  are two random variables, and  $\mu_{\mathbb{P}} := \mathbb{E}[k(\cdot, X)]$  and  $\mu_{\mathbb{Q}} := \mathbb{E}[k(\cdot, Y)]$  are kernel mean embeddings of  $\mathbb{P}$  and  $\mathbb{Q}$ , respectively (Gretton et al., 2005; 2012b; Jitkrittum et al., 2016; 2017; Sutherland et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2020b). According to Eq. (1), it is clear that MMD equals zero *if and only if*  $\mathbb{P} = \mathbb{Q}$  (Gretton et al., 2008). As for the MMD defined in Eq. (2), Gretton et al. (2012b) also prove this property. Namely, we could *in principle* use the MMD to show whether two distributions are the same, which drives researchers to develop the MMD-based two-sample test (Gretton et al., 2012b).

In the MMD test, we are given two samples observed from  $\mathbb{P}$  and  $\mathbb{Q}$  and aim to check whether two samples come from the same distribution. Specifically, we first *estimate* MMD value from two samples, and then compute the  $p$ -value corresponding to the estimated MMD value (Sutherland et al., 2017). If the  $p$ -value is above a given threshold  $\alpha$ , then two samples are from the same distribution. In the last decade, MMD test has been used to detect the distributional discrepancy within several real-world datasets, including high-energy physics data (Chwialkowski et al., 2015), amplitude modulated signals (Gretton et al., 2012c), and challenging image datasets, e.g., the *MNIST* and the *CIFAR-10* (Sutherland et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2020b).

However, it has been empirically shown that the MMD test, as one of the most powerful two-sample tests, is unaware of *adversarial attacks* (Carlini & Wagner, 2017a). Specifically, Carlini & Wagner (2017a) input adversarial and natural data into the MMD test, then the MMD test outputs a  $p$ -value that is greater than the given threshold  $\alpha$  with a high probability. Namely, the MMD test agrees that adversarial and natural data are from the same distribution. Given the success of MMD test in many fields (Liu et al., 2020b), this phenomenon seems a *paradox* regarding the homogeneity between nature and adversarial data.

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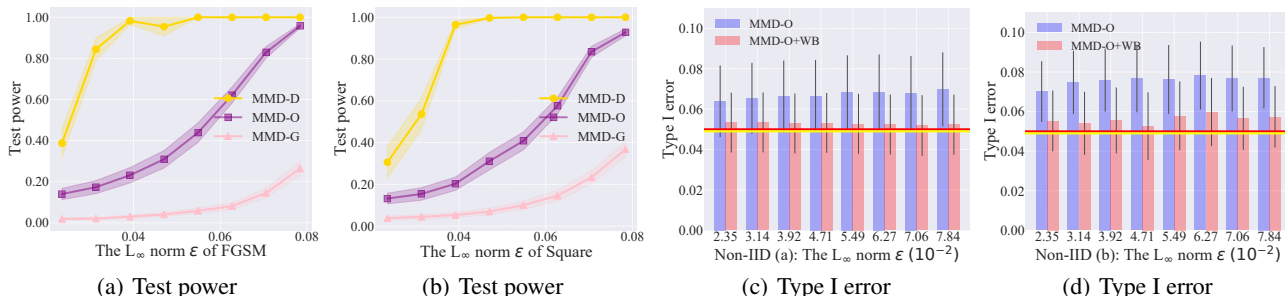


Figure 1. Consequences of missing the three key factors when using the MMD on adversarial data detection. The subfigure (a) and (b) illustrate the test power of the MMD test with deep kernel (MMD-D test (Liu et al., 2020b)), the MMD test with optimized Gaussian kernel (MMD-O test (Sutherland et al., 2017)) and the MMD test with Gaussian kernel (MMD-G test), respectively. Adversarial data is generated by a white-box attack *fast gradient sign method* (FGSM) (Goodfellow et al., 2015) and a black-box attack *Square attack* (Square) (Andriushchenko et al., 2020) with different  $L_\infty$ -norm bounded perturbation  $\epsilon \in [0.0235, 0.0784]$  (following (Madry et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020a)). Clearly, MMD-D and MMD-O tests perform much better than MMD-G test (previously used by (Grosse et al., 2017) and (Carlini & Wagner, 2017a)). The failure of MMD-G test takes root in Factors 1 and 2 in Section 1. The (c) and (d) show type I error within two typical non-IID adversarial data (see detailed generation in Section 5), where type I error of MMD-O test is abnormal (higher than the red line that  $\alpha = 0.05$ , while the type I error within natural data is the yellow line). The main reason is the Factor 3 in Section 1. If we apply the *wild bootstrap* (WB) process to MMD-O test, it brings type I error to normality (MMD-O+WB).

In this paper, we raise a question regarding this paradox: *are natural data and adversarial data really from different distributions?* The answer is affirmative, and we find the previous use of MMD missed *three* factors. As a result, previous MMD-based adversarial data detection methods not only have a low detection rate when detecting attacks (due to the first two factors), but also are invalid detection methods (due to the third factor).

**Factor 1.** The Gaussian kernel (used by previous MMD-based adversarial data detection methods) has *limited* representation power and cannot measure the similarity between two multidimensional samples (e.g., images) well (Wenliang et al., 2019). Although MMD( $\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}$ ) is a perfect statistic to see if  $\mathbb{P}$  equals  $\mathbb{Q}$ , test power (i.e., the detection rate when detecting adversarial attacks) of its empirical estimation (Eq. (3)) depends on the form of used kernels (Sutherland et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2020b). Since a Gaussian kernel only looks at data uniformly rather than focuses on areas where two distributions are different, it requires many observations to distinguish the two distributions (Liu et al., 2020b). As a result, the test power of the MMD test with a Gaussian kernel (MMD-G test used by Grosse et al. (2017) and Carlini & Wagner (2017a)) is *limited*, especially when facing complex data (Sutherland et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2020b).

We replace the Gaussian kernel with a simple and effective semantic-aware deep kernel to take care of the first factor. We call this semantic-aware deep kernel based MMD as *semantic-aware MMD* (SAMMD). The SAMMD is motivated by the recent advances in nonparametric two-sample tests, i.e., the MMD test with deep kernel (MMD-D). In MMD-D, the kernel is parameterized by deep neural nets (Liu et al., 2020b) and measures the distributional discrepancy between two sets of images using raw features (i.e.,

pixels in images). Compared to the deep kernel used in MMD-D, semantic-aware deep kernel uses *semantic features* extracted by a well-trained classifier on natural data. Figure 2 (see Section 6) shows that natural and adversarial data are quite different in the view of semantic features, showing that semantic features can help distinguish between natural and adversarial data, taking care of the first factor.

**Factor 2.** Previous MMD-based adversarial data detection methods overlook the optimization of parameters of the used kernel. In MMD-G test, its test power is related to the choice of the bandwidth of the Gaussian kernel (Sutherland et al., 2017). Once we overlook the optimization of the kernel bandwidth, the test power of MMD-G test will *drop significantly* (Gretton et al., 2012c; Sutherland et al., 2017). Furthermore, recent studies have shown that Gaussian kernel with an optimized bandwidth still has limited representation power for complex distributions (e.g., multimodal distributions used in (Wenliang et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2020b)). Namely, it is important to take care of Factor 1 and Factor 2 simultaneously, which is verified in Figures 1a-1b.

To take care of the second factor, we analyze the asymptotics of the SAMMD when detecting adversarial attacks. According to the asymptotics of SAMMD, we can compute the approximate test power of SAMMD using two datasets and then optimize the parameters of the deep kernel by maximizing the approximate test power.

**Factor 3.** The adversarial data are probably not *independent and identically distributed* (IID) due to their unknown generation process, which breaks a basic assumption of the MMD tests used by (Grosse et al., 2017; Carlini & Wagner, 2017a). Once there exists dependence within the observations, the type I error of ordinary MMD tests will surpass the given

threshold  $\alpha$ . Note that, type I error is the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis ( $\mathbb{P} = \mathbb{Q}$ ) when the null hypothesis is true. If the type I error of a test is much higher than  $\alpha$ , this test will always reject the null hypothesis. Namely, for two datasets that come from the same distribution, the test will always show that they are different, which means that the test is *meaningless* (Chwialkowski et al., 2014).

To take care of the third factor, the wild bootstrap is used to resample the value of SAMMD (with the optimized kernel), which ensures that we can get correct  $p$ -values in non-IID/IID scenarios (Figures 1c-1d). Here, we show two scenarios where the dependence within adversarial data exists: 1) the adversary attacks the data used for training the target model, where the target model depends on the attacked data. Thus, generated adversarial data are highly dependent (the Non-IID (a) in Figure 1c); and 2) the adversary attacks one instance many times to generate many adversarial instances (the Non-IID (b) in Figure 1d).

The above study is not of purely theoretical interest; it has also practical consequences. The considered detection problem is also known as *statistical adversarial data detection* (SADD). In SADD, we care about how to find out a dataset that only contains natural data. That will bring benefits to users who are *only* interested in a model that has high accuracy on the *natural data*. For example, as an artificial-intelligence service provider, we need to acquire a client by modeling his/her task well, such as modeling the risk level of a factory. In this task, the client only cares about the accuracy on the natural data. Thus, we need to use MMD test to ensure that our training data only contain natural data. In Appendix B, we have demonstrated SADD in detail.

## 2. Preliminary

This section presents four concepts used in this paper.

**Two-sample test.** Let  $\mathcal{X} \subset \mathbb{R}^d$  and  $\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}$  be Borel probability measures on  $\mathcal{X}$ . Given IID samples  $S_X = \{\mathbf{x}_i\}_{i=1}^n \sim \mathbb{P}^n$  and  $S_Y = \{\mathbf{y}_j\}_{j=1}^m \sim \mathbb{Q}^m$ , in the two-sample test problem, we aim to determine if  $S_X$  and  $S_Y$  come from the same distribution, i.e., if  $\mathbb{P} = \mathbb{Q}$ .

**Estimation of MMD.** We can estimate MMD (Eq. (2)) using the  $U$ -statistic estimator, which is unbiased for MMD<sup>2</sup> and has nearly minimal variance among unbiased estimators (Gretton et al., 2012b):

$$\widehat{\text{MMD}}_u^2(S_X, S_Y; k) = \frac{1}{n(n-1)} \sum_{i \neq j} H_{ij}, \quad (3)$$

$$H_{ij} = k(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) + k(\mathbf{y}_i, \mathbf{y}_j) - k(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{y}_j) - k(\mathbf{y}_i, \mathbf{x}_j),$$

where  $\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j \in S_X$  and  $\mathbf{y}_i, \mathbf{y}_j \in S_Y$ .

**Adversarial data generation.** Let  $(\mathcal{X}, d_\infty)$  be the input feature space  $\mathcal{X}$  with the infinity distance metric  $d_{\text{inf}}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') = \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}'\|_\infty$ , and

$$\mathcal{B}_\epsilon[\mathbf{x}] = \{\mathbf{x}' \in \mathcal{X} \mid d_{\text{inf}}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') \leq \epsilon\} \quad (4)$$

be the closed ball of radius  $\epsilon > 0$  centered at  $\mathbf{x}$  in  $\mathcal{X}$ . Let  $D = \{(\mathbf{x}_i, l_i)\}_{i=1}^n$  be a dataset, where  $\mathbf{x}_i \in \mathcal{X}$ ,  $l_i \in \mathcal{C}$  is ground-truth label of  $\mathbf{x}_i$ , and  $\mathcal{C} = \{1, \dots, C\}$  is a label set. Then, adversarial data regarding  $\mathbf{x}_i$  is

$$\mathcal{G}_{\ell, \hat{f}}(\mathbf{x}_i) = \arg \max_{\tilde{\mathbf{x}} \in \mathcal{B}_\epsilon[\mathbf{x}_i]} \ell(\hat{f}(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}), l_i), \quad (5)$$

where  $\tilde{\mathbf{x}}$  is a sample within the  $\epsilon$ -ball centered at  $\mathbf{x}$ ,  $\hat{f}(\cdot) : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$  is a well-trained classifier on  $D$ , and  $\ell : \mathcal{C} \times \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}$  is a loss function.

There are many methods to solve Eq. (5) and generate adversarial data, e.g., white-box attacks including *fast gradient sign method* (FGSM) (Goodfellow et al., 2015), *basic iterative methods* (BIM) (Kurakin et al., 2017), *project gradient descent* (PGD) (Madry et al., 2018), *AutoAttack* (AA) (Croce & Hein, 2020), *Carlini and Wagner attack* (CW) (Carlini & Wagner, 2017b) and a score-based black-box attack: *Square attack* (Square Andriushchenko et al. (2020)).

**Wild bootstrap process.** The wild bootstrap process has been proposed to resample observations from a stochastic process  $\{Y_i\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$  (Shao, 2010), where  $\mathbb{E}(Y_i) = 0$  for each  $i \in \mathbb{Z}$ . Through multiplying the given observations with random numbers from the wild bootstrap process, we can obtain new samples that can be regarded as resampled observations from  $\{Y_i\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$  (Leucht & Neumann, 2013; Chwialkowski et al., 2014). After resampling observations many times, we can use such resampled observations to estimate the distribution of statistics regarding the random process  $\{Y_i\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$ , such as the null distribution of MMD over two time series (Chwialkowski et al., 2014). Following (Chwialkowski et al., 2014) and (Leucht & Neumann, 2013), this paper uses the following wild bootstrap process:

$$W_t = e^{-1/l} W_{t-1} + \sqrt{1 - e^{-2/l}} \epsilon_t, \quad (6)$$

where  $W_0, \epsilon_0, \dots, \epsilon_t$  are independent standard normal random variables.

## 3. Problem Setting

Following Grosse et al. (2017), we aim to address the following problem (i.e., SADD mentioned in Section 1).

**Problem 1 (SADD).** Let  $\mathcal{X}$  be a subset of  $\mathbb{R}^d$  and  $\mathbb{P}$  be a Borel probability measure on  $\mathcal{X}$ , and  $S_X = \{\mathbf{x}_i\}_{i=1}^n \sim \mathbb{P}^n$  be IID observations from  $\mathbb{P}$ , and  $f(\cdot) : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$  be the ground-truth labeling function on observations from  $\mathbb{P}$ , where  $\mathcal{C} = \{1, \dots, C\}$  is a label set. Assume that attackers can obtain a well-trained classifier  $\hat{f}$  on  $S_X$  and

Table 1. Average values of dependence scores (HSIC) within natural data ( $\epsilon = 0$ ) and non-IID adversarial data (the  $L_\infty$ -norm bounded perturbation  $\epsilon \in [0.0235, 0.0784]$ ). The adversarial data of the Non-IID (a) are generated by FGSM on the training set of *CIFAR-10*. The Non-IID (b) consists of the adversarial data generated by Square on *CIFAR-10*'s testing set (for each natural image, Square generates four different adversarial images). We can see that the dependence within non-IID adversarial data is stronger than that within IID natural data.

Perturbation bound $\epsilon$	0.0000	0.0235	0.0314	0.0392	0.0471	0.0549	0.0627	0.0706	0.0784
Non-IID (a) (10e-5)	2.1948	2.2214	2.2409	2.2650	2.3067	2.3320	2.3727	2.4234	2.4805
Non-IID (b) (10e-5)	2.1948	2.2146	2.2346	2.2614	2.2952	2.3359	2.3835	2.4381	2.4998

IID observations  $S'_X$  from  $\mathbb{P}$ , we aim to determine if the upcoming data  $S_Y = \{\mathbf{y}_i\}_{i=1}^m$  come from the distribution  $\mathbb{P}$ , where  $S_X$  and  $S'_X$  are independent, and we do not have any prior knowledge regarding the attacking methods. Note that, in SADD,  $S_Y$  may be IID data from  $\mathbb{P}$  or non-IID data generated by attackers.

In Problem 1, if  $S_Y$  are IID observations from  $\mathbb{P}$ , given a threshold  $\alpha$ , we aim to accept the null hypothesis  $H_0$  (i.e.,  $S_X$  and  $S_Y$  are from the same distribution) with the probability  $1 - \alpha$ . If  $S_Y$  contains adversarial data (i.e.,  $S_X$  and  $S_Y$  are from different distributions), we aim to reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$  with a probability near to 1. Please note that, an invalid test method could be “rejecting all upcoming data”, which can perform very well when  $S_X$  and  $S_Y$  being from different distributions but fail when  $S_Y$  being from  $\mathbb{P}$ .

#### 4. Failure of Gaussian-kernel MMD Test for Adversarial Data Detection

We reimplement the experiment in (Carlini & Wagner, 2017a) and (Grosse et al., 2017) to test the performance of MMD-G test on *CIFAR-10* dataset. Adversarial data with different perturbation bound  $\epsilon$  are generated by FGSM, BIM, PGD, AA, CW and Square. Figure 4 shows how test power changes as the  $\epsilon$  value increases in each attacking method. Through our implementations, we draw the same conclusion with Carlini & Wagner (2017a). Namely, MMD-G test (the pink line) fails to detect adversarial data.

As demonstrated in Section 1, MMD-G test has the following issues: 1) the limited representation power of the Gaussian kernel (Wenliang et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2020b); and 2) the overlook of optimization of the kernel bandwidth (Liu et al., 2020b); and 3) the non-IID property of adversarial data (Shao, 2010; Leucht & Neumann, 2013; Chwialkowski et al., 2014). Since the third issue is crucial, we first analyze whether there exists dependence within adversarial data in the following section and then propose a novel test to address the above issues simultaneously (see Section 6).

#### 5. Dependence in Adversarial Data

As discussed in Section 4, this section investigates whether there is dependence within adversarial data.

**Dependence within adversarial data.** In the real world, since we do not know the attacking strategies of attackers, the dependence within adversarial data probably exists. For example, if attackers use one natural image to generate many adversarial images, the adversarial data is obviously not independent (the Non-IID (b) in Table 1). To empirically show the dependence within adversarial data, we use HSIC (Gretton et al., 2005) as the statistic to represent the dependence score within adversarial data (Appendix C presents detailed procedures to compute the HSIC values between two datasets). The larger value of HSIC represents the stronger dependence.

We generated two typical non-IID adversarial datasets that the Non-IID (a) and the Non-IID (b). Given natural images from the *CIFAR-10* training set, we generated the Non-IID (a) using FGSM with the  $L_\infty$ -norm bounded perturbation  $\epsilon \in [0.0235, 0.0784]$ . Given natural images from the *CIFAR-10* testing set, we used Square with the  $L_\infty$ -norm bounded perturbation  $\epsilon \in [0.0235, 0.0784]$  to generate the adversarial data four times and mixed them into the Non-IID (b). For each dataset, we randomly selected two disjoint subsets (containing 500 images) and compute the HSIC value over the two subsets. Repeating the above process 100 times, we obtained the average value of the 100 HSIC values in Table 1. Since the HSIC value of adversarial data is higher than that of natural data (i.e.,  $\epsilon = 0$ ), the dependence within adversarial data is stronger than that within IID natural data.

**Dependence meets MMD tests.** Grosse et al. (2017) and Carlini & Wagner (2017a) used the permutation based bootstrap (Odén et al., 1975) to implement MMD-G test (i.e., the ordinary MMD test). Specifically, they initialize  $a$  by  $\text{MMD}(S_X, S_Y)$ . Then, they shuffle the elements of  $S_X$  and  $S_Y$  into two new sets  $G_X$  and  $G_Y$ , and let  $b = \text{MMD}(G_X, G_Y)$ . Repeating the shuffling process  $K$  times, they can obtain a sequence  $\{b_k\}_{k=1}^K$ . If  $a$  is greater than the  $1 - \alpha$  quantile of  $\{b_k\}_{k=1}^K$ , then the null hypothesis is rejected (Grosse et al., 2017; Carlini & Wagner, 2017a). Namely, the adversarial attacks are detected.

However, the permutation-based MMD-G test only works when facing IID data (Chwialkowski et al., 2014). Since adversarial data may not be IID, according to Chwialkowski et al. (2014), the permutation based MMD-G (previously

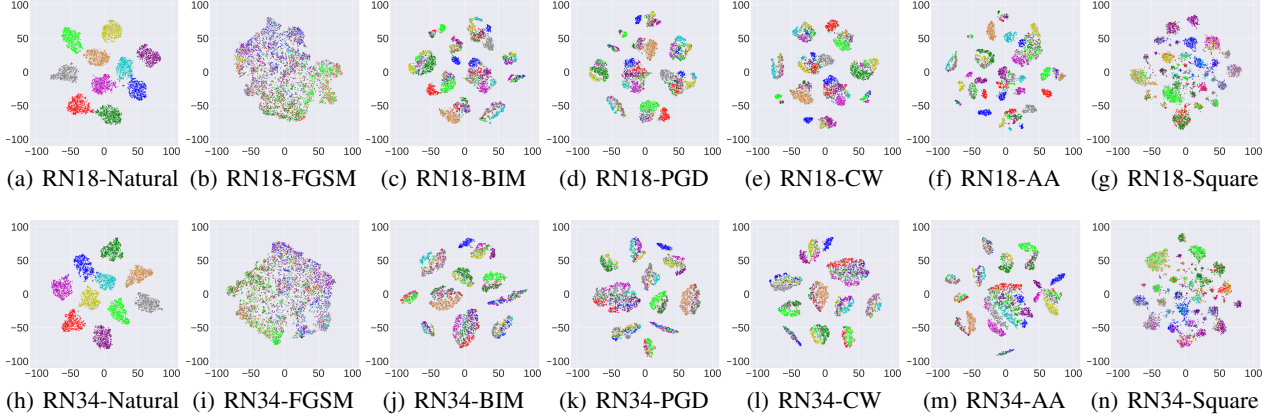


Figure 2. Visualization of outputs using t-SNE. This figure visualizes outputs of the second to last layers in ResNet-18 and ResNet-34. Different colors represent different semantic meanings (i.e., different classes in the testing set of the *CIFAR-10*). Apparently, semantic information contained in natural data is lost in adversarial data. This phenomenon can help us distinguish adversarial data and natural data.

used by Grosse et al. (2017) and Carlini & Wagner (2017a)) could be invalid to detect adversarial data.

## 6. A Semantic-aware MMD Test

To take care of three factors missed by previous studies (Grosse et al., 2017; Carlini & Wagner, 2017a), we design a simple and effective test motivated by the most important characteristic of adversarial data. Namely, semantic meaning of adversarial data (in the view of a well-trained classifier on natural data) is very different from that of natural data. Based on this characteristic, *semantic-aware MMD* (SAMMD) is proposed to measure the discrepancy between natural and adversarial data in this section.

**Semantic features.** As mentioned above, the semantic meaning of data plays an important role to distinguish between natural and adversarial data. Thus, we will first introduce how to represent the semantic meaning of each image, i.e., to construct *semantic features* of images, in this part. Since the success of deep learning mainly takes roots in its ability to extract features that can be used to classify images well, outputs of the layers of a well-trained deep neural network have already contained semantic meaning. Namely, we can construct semantic features of images using outputs of the layers of the well-trained network.

Figure 2 visualizes outputs of the second to last full connected layers of a well-trained ResNet-18 and ResNet-34 using t-SNE (Maaten & Hinton, 2008), showing that these outputs indeed contain clear semantic meanings (in the view of natural data). Thus, we use these outputs as semantic features in this paper. This figure also shows that natural data and adversarial data are quite different in the view of semantic features. In addition, we also show the MMD

values between semantic features of natural and adversarial data in Figure 3. Results show that, in the second to last full connected layer of ResNet-18, outputs of natural and adversarial data have the largest distributional discrepancy. Thus, the semantic features we constructed can help us distinguish adversarial data and natural data well.

**Semantic-aware MMD.** Based on the semantic features, we consider the following semantic-aware deep kernel  $k_\omega(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$  to measure the similarity between two images:

$$k_\omega(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) = \left[ (1 - \epsilon_0) s_{\hat{f}}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) + \epsilon_0 \right] q(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}), \quad (7)$$

where  $s_{\hat{f}}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) = \kappa(\phi_p(\mathbf{x}), \phi_p(\mathbf{y}))$  is a deep kernel function that measures the similarity between  $\mathbf{x}$  and  $\mathbf{y}$  using semantic features extracted by  $\hat{f}$ ; we use  $\phi_p$ , the second to the last fully connected layer in  $\hat{f}$ , to extract semantic features (according to Figure 3); the  $\kappa$  is the Gaussian kernel (with bandwidth  $\sigma_{\phi_p}$ );  $\epsilon_0 \in (0, 1)$  and  $q(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$  (the Gaussian kernel with bandwidth  $\sigma_q$ ) are key components to ensure that  $k_\omega(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$  is a characteristic kernel (Liu et al., 2020b) (ensuring that, SAMMD equals zero if and only if two distributions are the same (Liu et al., 2020b)). Since  $\hat{f}$  is fixed, the set of parameters of  $k_\omega$  is  $\omega = \{\epsilon_0, \sigma_{\phi_p}, \sigma_q\}$ . Based on  $k_\omega(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$  in Eq. (7), SAMMD( $\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}$ ) is

$$\sqrt{\mathbb{E} [k_\omega(X, X') + k_\omega(Y, Y') - 2k_\omega(X, Y)]},$$

where  $X, X' \sim \mathbb{P}, Y, Y' \sim \mathbb{Q}$ . We can estimate SAMMD( $\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}$ ) using the  $U$ -statistic estimator, which is unbiased for SAMMD<sup>2</sup>( $\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}$ ):

$$\widehat{\text{SAMMD}}_u^2(S_X, S_Y; k_\omega) = \frac{1}{n(n-1)} \sum_{i \neq j} H_{ij}, \quad (8)$$

where  $H_{ij} = k_\omega(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) + k_\omega(\mathbf{y}_i, \mathbf{y}_j) - k_\omega(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{y}_j) - k_\omega(\mathbf{y}_i, \mathbf{x}_j)$ .

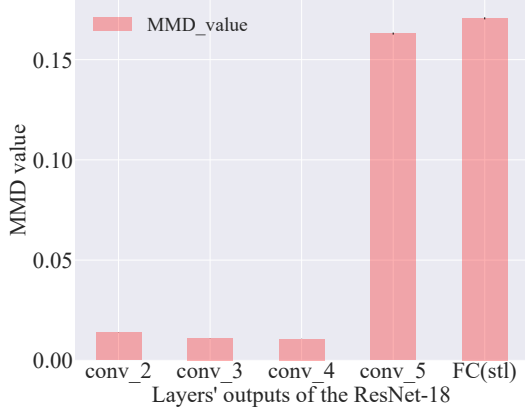


Figure 3. Discrepancy of MMD value between different layers' outputs in  $\hat{f}$ . The figure shows MMD value between outputs of 5 different layers of ResNet-18. It is clear that, in the conv\_5 layers, outputs of natural and adversarial data have larger distributional discrepancy compared to outputs of other 3 convolutional layers. FC(stl) is the second to the last fully-connected layer and also an average pooling layer. Compared to the conv\_5 layer, the FC(stl) layer has fewer dimensions and its outputs can help measure the discrepancy between natural and adversarial data well.

**Asymptotics and test power of SAMMD.** In this part, we analyze the asymptotics of SAMMD when  $S_Y$  are adversarial data. Based on the asymptotics of SAMMD, we can estimate its test power that can be used to optimize the SAMMD (i.e., optimizing parameters in  $k_\omega(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$ ).

**Theorem 1 (Asymptotics under  $H_1$ ).** *Under the alternative  $H_1 : S_Y$  are from a stochastic process  $\{Y_i\}_{i=1}^{+\infty}$ , under mild assumptions, we have*

$$\sqrt{n}(\widehat{\text{SAMMD}}_u^2 - \text{SAMMD}^2) \xrightarrow{d} \mathcal{N}(0, C_1^2 \sigma_{H_1}^2),$$

where  $Y_i = \mathcal{G}_{\ell, \hat{f}}(\mathcal{B}_\epsilon[X_i]) \sim \mathbb{Q}$ ,  $X_i \sim \mathbb{P}$ ,  $\sigma_{H_1}^2 = 4(\mathbb{E}_Z[(\mathbb{E}_{Z'}[h(Z, Z')])^2] - [(\mathbb{E}_{Z, Z'}[h(Z, Z')])^2])$ ,  $h(Z, Z') = k_\omega(X, X') + k_\omega(Y, Y') - k_\omega(X, Y') - k_\omega(X', Y)$ ,  $Z := (X, Y)$  and  $C_1 < +\infty$  is a constant for a given  $\omega$ .

The detailed version of Theorem 1 can be found in Appendix D. Using Theorem 1, we have

$$\Pr_{H_1, r}^{\text{SAMMD}} \rightarrow \Phi\left(\frac{\sqrt{n}\widehat{\text{SAMMD}}^2}{C_1\sigma_{H_1}} - \frac{r}{\sqrt{n}C_1\sigma_{H_1}}\right), \quad (9)$$

where  $\Pr_{H_1, r}^{\text{SAMMD}} = \Pr_{H_1}(n\widehat{\text{SAMMD}}_u^2 > r)$  is the test power of SAMMD,  $\Phi$  is the standard normal CDF and  $r$  is the rejection threshold related to  $\mathbb{P}$  and  $\mathbb{Q}$ . Via Theorem 1, we know that  $r$ ,  $\text{SAMMD}(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q})$ , and  $\sigma_{H_1}$  are constants. Thus, for reasonably large  $n$ , the test power of SAMMD is dominated by the first term (inside  $\Phi$ ), and we can optimize  $k_\omega$  by maximizing

$$J(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; k_\omega) = \text{SAMMD}^2(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; k_\omega) / \sigma_{H_1}(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; k_\omega).$$

### Algorithm 1 The SAMMD Test

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**Input:**  $S_X, S_Y, \hat{f}$ , various hyperparameters used below;  
 $\omega \leftarrow \omega_0; \lambda \leftarrow 10^{-8}$ ;  
 Split the data as  $S_X = S_X^{tr} \cup S_X^{te}$  and  $S_Y = S_Y^{tr} \cup S_Y^{te}$ ;  
 # Phase 1: train the kernel parameters  $\omega$  and  $\beta$ ; on  $S_X^{tr}$  and  $S_Y^{tr}$   
**for**  $T = 1, 2, \dots, T_{max}$  **do**  
    $S'_X \leftarrow$  minibatch from  $S_X^{tr}$ ;  
    $S'_Y \leftarrow$  minibatch from  $S_Y^{tr}$ ;  
    $k_\omega \leftarrow$  kernel function with parameters  $\omega$  using Eq. (7);  
    $M(\omega) \leftarrow \widehat{\text{SAMMD}}_u^2(S'_X, S'_Y; k_\omega)$  using Eq. (8);  
    $V_\lambda(\omega) \leftarrow \hat{\sigma}_{H_1, \lambda}^2(S'_X, S'_Y; k_\omega)$  using Eq. (11);  
    $\hat{J}_\lambda(\omega) \leftarrow M(\omega) / \sqrt{V_\lambda(\omega)}$  using Eq. (10);  
    $\omega \leftarrow \omega + \eta \nabla_{\text{Adam}} \hat{J}_\lambda(\omega)$ ;                               # maximize  $\hat{J}_\lambda(\omega)$   
**end for**  
 # Phase 2: testing with  $k_\omega$  on  $S_X^{te}$  and  $S_Y^{te}$   
 $est \leftarrow \widehat{\text{SAMMD}}_b^2(S_X^{te}, S_Y^{te}; k_\omega)$   
**for**  $i = 1, 2, \dots, n_{perm}$  **do**  
   Generate  $\{W_i^X\}_{i=1}^n$  and  $\{W_i^Y\}_{i=1}^m$  using Eq. (6);  
    $\{\tilde{W}_i^X\}_{i=1}^n \leftarrow \{W_i^X\}_{i=1}^n - \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n W_i^X$ ;  
    $\{\tilde{W}_i^Y\}_{i=1}^m \leftarrow \{W_i^Y\}_{i=1}^m - \frac{1}{m} \sum_{i=1}^m W_i^Y$ ;  
    $perm_i \leftarrow \frac{1}{n(n-1)} \sum_{i,j} H_{ij} \tilde{W}_i^X \tilde{W}_j^Y$ ;                               # resample  
**end for**  
**Output:**  $k_\omega, est, p$ -value:  $\frac{1}{n_{perm}} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{perm}} \mathbf{1}(perm_i \geq est)$

---

Note that, we omit  $C_1$  in  $J(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; k_\omega)$ , since  $C_1$  can be upper bounded by a constant  $C_0$  (see Appendix D).

**Optimization of SAMMD.** Although the higher value of criterion  $J(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; k_\omega)$  means higher test power of SAMMD, we cannot directly maximize  $J(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; k_\omega)$ , since  $\widehat{\text{SAMMD}}^2(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; k_\omega)$  and  $\sigma_{H_1}(\mathbb{P}, \mathbb{Q}; k_\omega)$  depend on the particular  $\mathbb{P}$  and  $\mathbb{Q}$  that are unknown. However, we can estimate it with

$$\hat{J}_\lambda(S_X, S_Y; k_\omega) := \frac{\widehat{\text{SAMMD}}_u^2(S_X, S_Y; k_\omega)}{\hat{\sigma}_{H_1, \lambda}(S_X, S_Y; k_\omega)}, \quad (10)$$

where  $\hat{\sigma}_{H_1, \lambda}^2$  is a regularized estimator of  $\sigma_{H_1}^2$  (Liu et al., 2020b):

$$\frac{4}{n^3} \sum_{i=1}^n \left( \sum_{j=1}^n H_{ij} \right)^2 - \frac{4}{n^4} \left( \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n H_{ij} \right)^2 + \lambda. \quad (11)$$

Then we can optimize SAMMD by maximizing  $\hat{J}_\lambda(S_X, S_Y; k_\omega)$  on the training set (see Algorithm 1). Note that, although Sutherland et al. (2017) and Sutherland (2019) have given an unbiased estimator for  $\sigma_{H_1}^2$ , it is much more complicated to implement.

**The SAMMD test.** Since adversarial data are probably not IID, we cannot simply use a permutation-based bootstrap method to simulate the null distribution of the SAMMD test

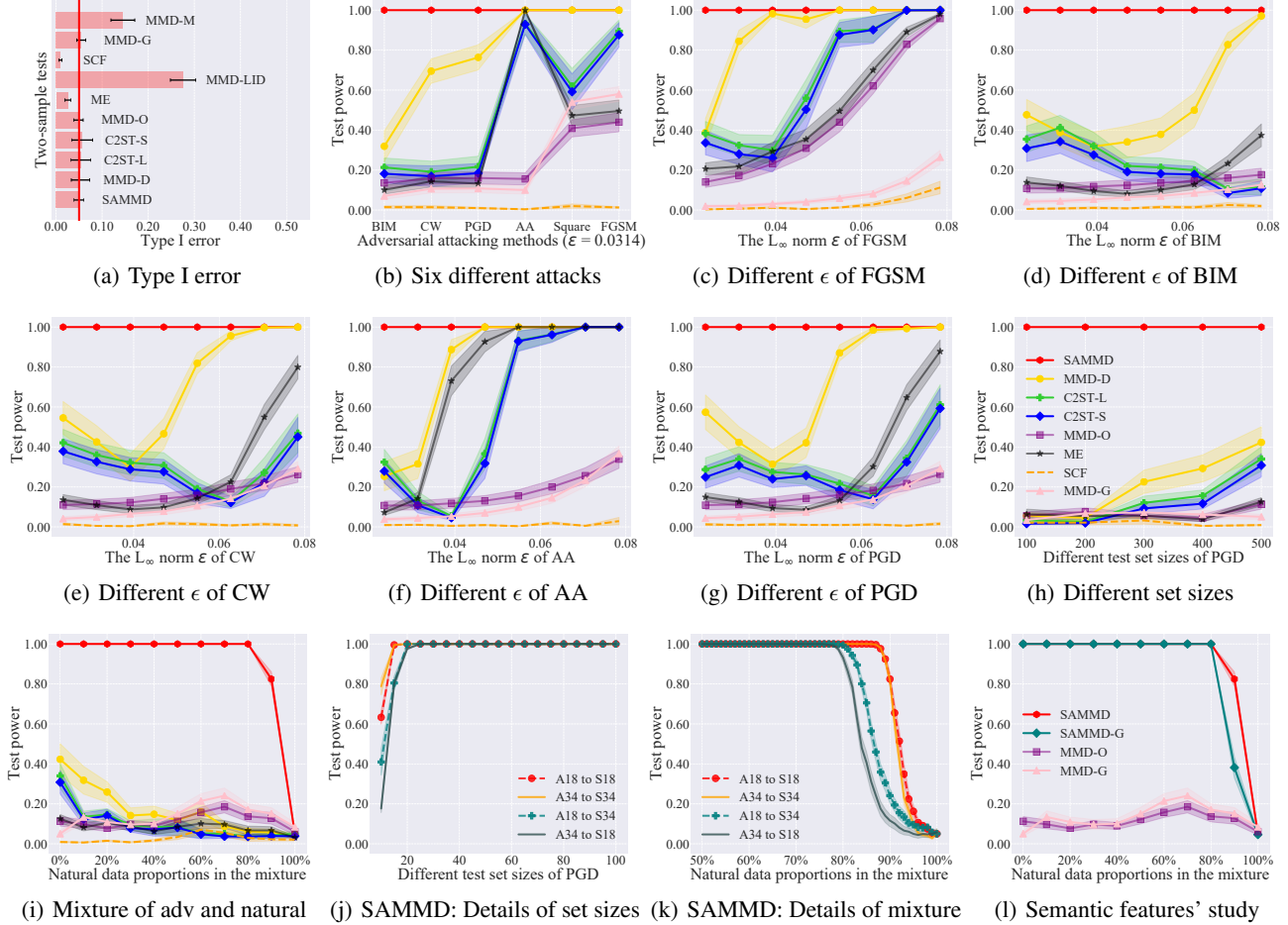


Figure 4. Results of adversarial data detection. Subfigure (a) reports the type I error when  $S_Y$  are natural data. The ideal type I error should be around  $\alpha$  (red line,  $\alpha = 0.05$  in this paper). Subfigures (b)-(l) report the test power (i.e., the detection rate) when  $S_Y$  are adversarial data (or the mixture of adversarial and natural data). The ideal test power is 1 (i.e., 100% detection rate). Subfigures (b) - (i) share the same legend presented in subfigure (h). Details of subfigures are explained in Section 7.

(Chwialkowski et al., 2014). To address this issue, wild bootstrap (Shao, 2010) is used to help simulate the null distribution of SAMMD, then we can test if  $S_Y$  are from  $\mathbb{P}$ . To the end, the Algorithm 1 shows the whole procedure of the SAMMD test. In Appendix D, it has been shown that, under mild assumptions, the proposed SAMMD test is a provably consistent test to detect adversarial attacks.

## 7. Experiments

We verify detection methods on the ResNet-18 and ResNet-34 trained on the *CIFAR-10* and the *SVHN*. We also validate performance of SAMMD on the large network Wide ResNet (WRN-32-10) (Zagoruyko & Komodakis, 2016) and the large dataset *Tiny-Imagenet*. Configuration of all experiments is in Appendix E. Detailed experimental results are presented in Appendix F. The code of our SAMMD test is available at [github.com/Sjtubrian/SAMMD](https://github.com/Sjtubrian/SAMMD).

**Baselines.** We compare SAMMD test with 6 existing two-sample tests: 1) MMD-G test used by (Grosse et al., 2017); 2) MMD-O test (Sutherland et al., 2017); 3) Mean embedding (ME) test (Jitkrittum et al., 2016); 4) Smooth characteristic functions (SCF) test (Chwialkowski et al., 2015); 5) Classifier two-sample test (C2ST) (Liu et al., 2020b; Lopez-Paz & Oquab, 2017); 6) MMD-D test (Liu et al., 2020b).

Besides, we also try to construct two new MMD tests based on features commonly used by adversarial data classification methods: 1) MMD-LID: the MMD with a Gaussian kernel whose inputs are *local intrinsic dimensionality* (LID) features (Ma et al., 2018) of two samples. Then we optimize the Gaussian kernel by maximizing its test power; and 2) MMD-M: the MMD with a Gaussian kernel whose inputs are *mahalanobis distance* based features (Lee et al., 2018) of two samples. Then, we optimize the bandwidth of the Gaussian kernel by maximizing the test power.

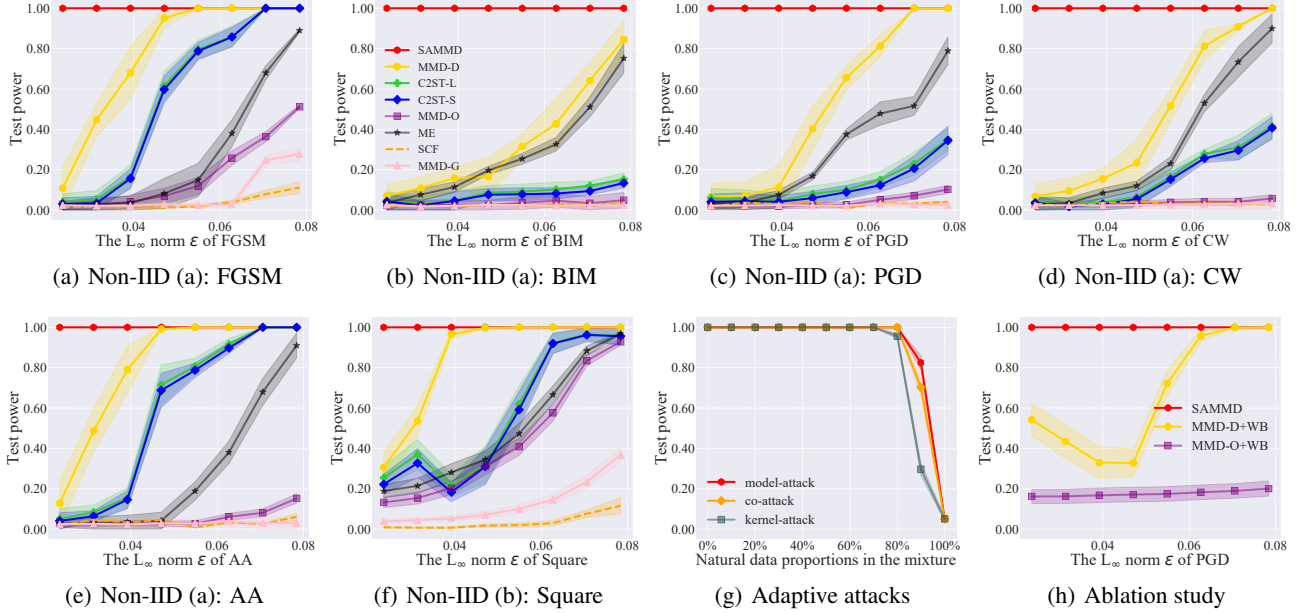


Figure 5. Results of adversarial data detection. Subfigures (a)-(f) report the test power (i.e., the detection rate) when  $S_Y$  are non-IID adversarial data. Subfigure (g) reports the test power when  $S_Y$  are adaptive adversarial data. Subfigure (h) reports an ablation study. Subfigures (a)-(f) share the same legend presented in subfigure (b). Details of subfigures are explained in Section 7.

**Test power on different attacks.** We first report the type I error of our SAMMD test and 9 baselines when  $S_Y$  are natural data in Figure 4a. It is clear that MMD-LID test and MMD-M test have much higher type I error than the given threshold  $\alpha = 0.05$  (the red line in Figure 4a). That is, both baselines are invalid two-sample tests. The main reason is that LID features and mahalanobis-distance features are sensitive to any perturbation. The sensitivity leads to that MMD-LID test and MMD-M test will recognize natural data as adversarial data. Other methods except for SCF maintain reasonable type I errors. Since MMD-LID test and MMD-M test are invalid two-sample tests, we do not validate the test power of them in the remaining experiments.

For 6 different attacks, FGSM, BIM, PGD, AA, CW and Square (Non-IID(b)), we report the test power of all tests when  $S_Y$  are adversarial data ( $L_\infty$  norm  $\epsilon = 0.0314$ ; set size = 500) in Figure 4b. Results show that SAMMD test performs the best and achieves the highest test power.

**Test power on different  $\epsilon$ .** In addition to different adversarial attacks, different perturbation bound  $\epsilon$  can also affect the adversarial data generation process. If the adversarial attack is within a small perturbation bound, the generated adversarial data is not sufficient to fool the well-trained natural-data classifier (Tramèr et al., 2020). However, if the adversarial attack is within a big perturbation bound, natural information contained in images will be completely lost (Tramèr et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020a).

Following previous studies (Carlini & Wagner, 2017b; Madry et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019; Tramèr et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020a; Chen et al., 2020a; Wu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020d), we set the  $L_\infty$ -norm bounded perturbation  $\epsilon \in [0.0235, 0.0784]$ . The lower bound of 0.0235 is calculated by  $6/255$ , i.e., the maximum variation of each pixel value is 6 intensities, and the upper bound of 0.0784 is calculated by  $20/255$ . This range covers all possible  $\epsilon$  used in the literature (Madry et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020a).

We report the average test power (with its standard error) on different  $\epsilon$  of FGSM, BIM, CW, AA and PGD (set size = 500) in Figure 4(c)-(g). For the non-IID adversarial data mentioned in Section 5, we also report the average test power on different  $\epsilon$  of the Non-IID (a) and the Non-IID (b) in Figure 5(a)-(f). Given the training set of *CIFAR-10*, we use FGSM, BIM, CW, AA and PGD to generate the Non-IID (a). Given the testing set of *CIFAR-10*, we use Square to generate the adversarial data four times and mix them into the Non-IID (b). Results show that our SAMMD test also achieves the highest test power all the  $\epsilon$ .

**Test power on different set sizes.** The effective of previous kernel non-parametric two-sample tests like C2ST and MMD-D test (Lopez-Paz & Oquab, 2017; Liu et al., 2020b) depends on a large size of data. Namely, they can only measure the discrepancy well when there are a large batch of data. Hence, we evaluate the performance of our SAMMD test and baselines with different set sizes. Experi-



ments results are reported in Figure 4h, which shows that our SAMMD test is suitable to different data sizes.

**Test power on the mixture of adversarial data and natural data.** For practical concerns, it is often that only part of data is adversarial. We analyze test power of the SAMMD test and baselines in this case, with natural data mixture proportion ranging from 0% to 100%. The experimental results of PGD ( $L_\infty$  norm  $\epsilon = 0.0314$ ; set size = 500) are presented in Figure 4i. Results show that the performance of our SAMMD test is much better than all baselines.

**Semantic featurizers meet unknown adversarial data.** In the above setting, the semantic featurizers  $\phi_p(\cdot)$  are also the classifiers subjected to adversarial attacks. In this part, we also consider that a dataset to be tested contains the adversarial data acquired by unknown classifiers. Hence, we analyze the performance when adversarial data and semantic features are acquired by different classifiers. We train two classifiers (ResNet-18 and ResNet-34) on natural data. One is used to acquire adversarial data (A18/A34), and the other is used to acquire semantic features (S18/S34).

Experiments results of our SAMMD test with different set sizes (from 10 to 100) are presented in Figure 4j. Experiments results of our SAMMD test with mixture proportion (from 0% to 100%) are presented in Figure 4k. In Figures 4j and 4k, the attack method is PGD ( $L_\infty$  norm  $\epsilon = 0.0314$ ; set size = 500). Results clearly show that our SAMMD test can also work well in this case. It is the existence of adversarial transferability that can help our SAMMD test defend against such attacks.

**Study of Semantic features.** In order to verify that semantic features are better to help measure the distribution discrepancy between adversarial data and natural data than raw features, we also test the semantic features (the same with the SAMMD test) and the Gaussian kernel of the fixed bandwidth (SAMMD-G in Figure 4l). Experiments in Figure 4l confirms the importance of semantic features.

**The SAMMD test meets adaptive attacks.** In the case where the attacker is aware of our SAMMD kernel, we evaluate our SAMMD test from the security standpoint. Compared to other defenses, the advantage of our method in security is adaptive defense. In our detection mechanism, the semantic-aware deep kernel is trained on part of unknown data (to be tested), that is to say, for each input of data in the test, parameters of our semantic-aware deep kernel can be adaptively trained to be powerful. Therefore, the target of the adaptive attack can only be the SAMMD-G mentioned above which has fixed parameters.

First, we use the PGD white-box attack to minimize the  $M(\omega)/\sqrt{V_\lambda(\omega)}$  in Eq. (10) and obtain examples (kernel-

attack in Figure 5g), and 89.08% of them can fool the pre-trained ResNet-18. Then, we obtain examples using the PGD white-box attack to minimize the  $M(\omega)/\sqrt{V_\lambda(\omega)}$  in Eq. (10) and maximize the cross entropy loss in Eq. (5) (co-attack in Figure 5g), and 61.34% of them can fool the pre-trained ResNet-18. The examples acquired by model attack is the adversarial examples, 100.00% of them can fool the pre-trained ResNet-18. Experiments in Figure 5g show that these examples fail to fool our SAMMD test. And attacking such a statistic test will also reduce the ability of adversarial data to mislead a well-trained classifier.

**Ablation study.** To illustrate the effectiveness of semantic features, we compare our SAMMD test with MMD-O test and MMD-D test after wild bootstrap process (MMD-O+WB, MMD-D+WB). Experiments results are reported in Figure 5h, which verifies that semantic features are better to help measure the distribution discrepancy between adversarial data and natural data than raw features (MMD-O+WB) and the learned features (MMD-D+WB) (Liu et al., 2020b).

## 8. Conclusion

Two-sample tests could in principle detect any distributional discrepancy between two datasets. However, previous studies have shown that the MMD test, as the most powerful two-sample test, is unaware of adversarial attacks. In this paper, we find that previous use of MMD on adversarial data detection missed three key factors, which *significantly* limits its power. To this end, we propose a simple and effective test that is cooperated with a new semantic-aware kernel—*semantic-aware MMD* (SAMMD) test, to take care of the three factors simultaneously. Experiments show that our SAMMD test can successfully detect adversarial attacks.

Thus, we argue that *MMD is aware of adversarial attacks*, which lights up a novel road for adversarial attack detection based on two-sample tests. We also recommend practitioners to use our SAMMD test when they wish to check whether the dataset they acquired contains adversarial data.

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