

1 Thank you for the thoughtful, detailed, and overall very positive feedback. Reviewers agree that the paper is *well written*  
2 (**R1**, **R2**, **R3**), *well motivated* (**R1**), *clear* (**R2**), and *novel* (**R1**, **R2**). They consider the topic *important* (**R2**) and our  
3 methodology *sound* (**R2**, **R3**), *technically as well as practically interesting*, and *of independent interest* (**R1**). Reviewers  
4 find *the experimental evaluation extensive* (**R1**) and *well described* (**R2**), *our empirical evidence clear*, and *claims well*  
5 *supported and correct* (**R2**). We address the main concerns below and will incorporate all reviewers’ feedback.

6 **R1 (+R3)**: *Recourse is a counterfactual query, but the proposed solutions are based on counterfactual as well as*  
7 *interventional queries. Which framing is more appropriate?* We mostly agree that recourse is predominantly a  
8 counterfactual query. This is certainly the case in static environments where any changes result from an individual’s  
9 actions. In dynamic settings, however, the unobserved SCM background variables  $U_r$  can also capture environmental  
10 factors which may change, e.g., between consecutive loan applications, and should thus not be kept fixed as in  
11 the counterfactual approach. Depending on the setting, recourse may thus constitute a mixture of interventional  
12 and counterfactual queries. Independently of this fundamental question, our interventional notion of recourse is  
13 practically motivated by a reluctance to make (parametric) assumptions about the structural equations which are both  
14 untestable but also necessary for counterfactual reasoning (see also Example 1; 1.118–120; 181–186). In such cases,  
15 the subpopulation-based approach can provide a useful alternative. In analogy, in epidemiology one ideally wants to  
16 estimate the individualised (i.e., counterfactual) treatment effect, but (without additional assumptions) has to resort  
17 to the (conditional) average (i.e., interventional) effect instead. Finally, we note that the proposed approaches can be  
18 combined depending on the available domain knowledge since each causal relation is treated separately.

19 **R1, R3**: *Lack of comparison to existing baselines and qualitative assessment of the type of recourse that the model*  
20 *learns.* We compare with an oracle (known SCM) corresponding to [7], as well as with point-based linear and kernel-  
21 ridge regression baselines. A comparison with approaches assuming independent features raises issues such as whether  
22 descendant variables are allowed to change or whether keeping their value constant should incur a cost (and if so how  
23 much), and are thus neither natural nor straight-forward. We therefore restrict ourselves to a comparison with *causal*  
24 *recourse approaches*. For a qualitative assessment of the recommended actions, we refer to Table 5 in Appendix E.

25 **R1**: *Does the learned CVAE respect the causal graph? The procedure of training CVAEs for interventional recourse*  
26 *should be clarified.* Yes, the interventional approaches respect the causal graph: we do not train a single CVAE model,  
27 but—motivated by the identifiability result (11) in Proposition 4—instead learn a separate CVAE/GP for each parent-child  
28 conditional  $p(X_r | \mathbf{X}_{\text{pa}(r)})$ , see also 1.193–201. We apologise for failing to convey this important point.

29 **R1**: *Can the authors clarify the enumeration of feasible actions? There are causal dependencies in the graph which*  
30 *can determine allowable feasible sets.* We agree that feasibility is an essential aspect of recourse. However, our  
31 understanding is that causal dependencies in the graph *do not* determine allowable feasible sets. E.g., consider a mutable  
32 but non-actionable variable BMI (body mass index), a descendant of an actionable variable *weight* and an immutable  
33 variable *gender*. The mutability and actionability constraints above are determined by context-/individual-specific  
34 constraints in the application domain (summarised in  $\mathbb{A}^F$ ), rather than by the mathematical framework of SCMs.

35 **R1**: *The authors do fail to cite an important critique of recourse work [VA20]<sup>1</sup> and contextualize their contributions in*  
36 *terms of issues raised in this work.* Thank you for the pointer. Indeed, concerns as the ones raised in [VA20] were a  
37 primary motivation for our paper. Specifically, [VA20] explore a number of challenges facing algorithmic recourse, and  
38 argue (alongside [BSR20]<sup>2</sup>) that we need to look beyond independently manipulable features; [7] then phrases this as a  
39 *causal problem* within the SCM framework. We apologize for failing to cite [VA20, BSR20] and will correct this.

40 **R2**: *It is not clear whether “action” and “intervention” refer to slightly different concepts or not.* Thank you for  
41 pointing this out; we will revise the wording to clarify that we consider actions and interventions as interchangeable.

42 **R3**: *How do computational complexity of probabilistic and point-based approaches compare?* Their main difference  
43 is the expectation in the constraint whose approximation scales linearly in the number of Monte Carlo samples.

44 **R3**: *Some parts of the results ( $\mathcal{M}_{\text{KR}}$  on nonlinear ANM,  $\text{CATE}_{\text{CVAE}}$  vs  $\mathcal{M}_{\text{CVAE}}$ , non-additive SCM) are not convincing.*  
45 *The paper should include a scenario where subpopulation-based approaches are preferable.* The strong performance  
46 of  $\mathcal{M}_{\text{KR}}$  on the nonlinear ANM is expected as its assumptions are satisfied. Moreover,  $\text{CATE}_{\text{CVAE}}$  indeed outperforms  
47  $\mathcal{M}_{\text{CVAE}}$  on the same. We agree regarding the non-additive SCM (where subpopulation-based approaches should be  
48 preferred) and (i) found a more convincing example by also making  $X_3 | X_1, X_2$  multimodal. In general, misspecified  
49 models tend to intervene on leaf nodes (due to failure to capture causal relations) and thereby can still achieve recourse,  
50 though at higher cost. We also tried (ii) making leaf nodes non-actionable (such as BMI from the example above) and  
51 (iii) reducing the cost of acting on root nodes, both of which also make the advantageous cost-validity trade-off of our  
52 methods more pronounced. We will include these additional findings in the revised version.

53 Overall, we hope that the above will convince all reviewers that *“this is a significant contribution [in] the area of*  
54 *actionable recourse”* (**R1**) and that it *“is definitely relevant to the NeurIPS audience”* (**R1**, **R2**).

<sup>1</sup>[VA20] Venkatasubramanian, Alfano. "The philosophical basis of algorithmic recourse." FAccT 2020.

<sup>2</sup>[BSR20] Barocas, Selbst, Raghavan. "The hidden assumptions behind counterfactual explanations and principal reasons." FAccT 2020.