# Interpretable Sparse Proximate Factors for Large Dimensions 

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## Motivation: What are the factors?

## Statistical Factor Analysis

- Factor models are widely used in big data settings
- Summarize information and reduce data dimensionality
- Problem: Which factors should be used?
- Statistical (latent) factors perform well
- Factors estimated from Principle Component Analysis (PCA)
- Weighted averages of all cross-section units
- Problem: Hard to interpret


## Goals of this paper:

Create interpretable sparse proximate factors

- Shrink most small cross section units' weights to zero to get proximate factors
$\Rightarrow$ More interpretable


## Contribution of this paper

## Contribution

- This Paper: Estimation of interpretable proximate factors
- Key elements of estimator:
(1) Statistical factors instead of pre-specified (and potentially miss-specified) factors
(2) Uses information from large panel data sets: Many cross section units with many time observations
(3) Proximate factors approximate latent factors very well with a few cross section units without sparse structure in population loadings
(3) Only $5-10 \%$ of the cross-sectional observations with the largest exposure are needed for proximate factors


## Contribution

## Theoretical Results

- Asymptotic probabilistic lower bound for generalized correlations of proximate factors with population factors
- Guidance on how to construct proximate factors


## Empirical Results

- Very good approximation to population factors with 5-10\% cross-section units, measured by generalized correlation and variance explained
- Interpret statistical latent factors for
- 370 single-sorted anomaly portfolios
- 128 macroeconomic variables


## Literature (partial list)

- Large-dimensional factor models with PCA
- Bai and Ng (2002): Number of factors
- Bai (2003): Distribution theory
- Fan et al. (2013): Sparse matrices in factor modeling
- Fan et al. (2016): Projected PCA for time-varying loadings
- Pelger (2017), Aït-Sahalia and Xiu (2015): High-frequency
- Kelly, Pruitt and Su (2017): IPCA
- Factor models with penalty term
- Bai and Ng (2017): Robust PCA with ridge shrinkage
- Lettau and Pelger (2018): Risk-Premium PCA with pricing penalty
- Zhou et al. (2006): Sparse PCA (low dimension)


## Single-sorted Portfolios

## Portfolio Data

- Monthly return data from $07 / 1963$ to $12 / 2016(T=638)$ for $N=370$ portfolios
- Kozak, Nagel and Santosh (2017) data: 370 decile portfolios sorted according to 37 anomaly characteristics, such as momentum, volatility, turnover, size and volume.
- Estimate a 5-factor model similar as Lettau and Pelger (2018)


## Single-sorted Portfolios: Fourth Factor

- Hard to interpret...


Figure: Financial single-sorted portfolios: Portfolio weights of 4th PCA factor.

## Single-sorted Portfolios: Fourth Factor

- The fourth factor is a long-short momentum factor
$\Rightarrow$ Long-short extreme portfolios sorted by Industry Mom. Reversals, Momentum ( 6 m ), Momentum (12m), Value-Momentum, Value-Momentum-Prof. characteristics


Figure: Financial single-sorted portfolios: Portfolio weights of 4th proximate factor. The sparse loading has 30 nonzero entries.

## The Model

## Approximate Factor Model

- Observe panel data of $N$ cross-section units over $T$ time periods:

$$
X_{i, t}=\underbrace{\Lambda_{i}{ }^{1 \times K}}_{\text {loadings }} \underbrace{\top}_{\text {factors }} F_{i}^{K \times 1}+\underbrace{e_{i, t}}_{\text {idiosyncratic }} \quad i=1, \ldots, N t=1, \ldots, T
$$

- Matrix notation

$$
\underbrace{X}_{N \times T}=\underbrace{\wedge}_{N \times K} \underbrace{F^{\top}}_{K \times T}+\underbrace{e}_{N \times T}
$$

- $N$ assets (large)
- $T$ time-series observation (large)
- K systematic factors (fixed)
- $F, \wedge$ and $e$ are unknown


## The Model

## Approximate Factor Model

- Systematic and non-systematic risk ( $F$ and $e$ uncorrelated):

$$
\operatorname{Var}(X)=\underbrace{\wedge \operatorname{Var}(F) \Lambda^{\top}}_{\text {systematic }}+\underbrace{\operatorname{Var}(e)}_{\text {non-systematic }}
$$

$\Rightarrow$ Systematic factors should explain a large portion of the variance
$\Rightarrow$ Idiosyncratic risk can be weakly correlated

## Estimation: PCA (Principal Component Analysis)

- Apply PCA to the sample covariance matrix: $\frac{1}{T} X X^{\top}-\bar{X} \bar{X}^{\top}$ with $\bar{X}=$ sample mean of asset excess returns
- Eigenvectors of largest eigenvalues estimate loadings $\hat{\Lambda}$
- $\hat{F}$ estimator for factors: $\hat{F}=X \hat{\Lambda}^{\top}\left(\hat{\Lambda}^{\top} \hat{\Lambda}\right)^{-1}=\frac{1}{N} X^{\top} \hat{\Lambda}$


## Method to Construct Sparse Proximate Factors

## Proximate Factors

- Estimate loadings $\hat{\Lambda}$ by applying PCA to $\frac{1}{T} X X^{\top}-\bar{X} \bar{X}^{\top}$
- Sparse loadings $\tilde{\Lambda}$ are obtained from
- Select finitely many $m$ loadings with largest absolute value from $\hat{\Lambda}_{k}$ for all $k$
- Shrink estimated loadings $\hat{\Lambda}$ to 0 except for $m$ largest values
- Divide by column norms, i.e. $\tilde{\lambda}_{k}^{\top} \tilde{\lambda}_{k}=1$
- Proximate factors $\tilde{F}=X^{\top} \tilde{\Lambda}\left(\tilde{\Lambda}^{\top} \tilde{\Lambda}\right)^{-1}$


## Asymptotic results

- Proximate factors $\tilde{F}$ are in general not consistent.
- Consider one-factor model

$$
\tilde{F}=X^{T} \tilde{\Lambda}=F \Lambda^{T} \tilde{\Lambda}+e^{T} \tilde{\Lambda}
$$

- Idiosyncratic component not diversified away
- Assume $e_{i, t} \stackrel{i i d}{\sim}\left(0, \sigma_{e, t}^{2}\right)$, then each element in $e^{T} \tilde{\Lambda}$ has

$$
\operatorname{Var}\left(\sum_{i=1}^{m} \tilde{\lambda}_{1,1_{i}} e_{1, t}\right)=\sum_{i=1}^{m} \tilde{\lambda}_{1,1_{i}}^{2} \sigma_{e,, t}^{2}=\sigma_{e,, l}^{2} \nrightarrow 0
$$

## Closeness between Proximate Factors and Latent Factors

## Closeness measure

- For 1-factor model: Correlation between $\tilde{F}$ and $F$.
- Problem for multiple factors: Factors are only identified up to invertible linear transformations $\Rightarrow$ Need measure for closeness between span of two vector spaces
- For multi-factor model: The "closeness" between $\tilde{F}$ and $F$ is measured by generalized correlation:
- Total generalized correlation measure:

$$
\begin{aligned}
& \rho=\operatorname{trace}\left(\left(F^{T} F / T\right)^{-1}\left(F^{T} \tilde{F} / T\right)\left(\tilde{F}^{T} \tilde{F} / T\right)^{-1}\left(\tilde{F}^{T} F / T\right)\right) \\
& \text { - } \rho=0: \tilde{F} \text { and } F \text { are orthogonal } \\
& \text { - } \rho=K: \tilde{F} \text { and } F \text { span the same space }
\end{aligned}
$$

## Intuition: Why does picking largest elements in $\hat{\Lambda}$ work?

- Consider one factor and one nonzero element in $\tilde{\Lambda}$ :

$$
F=\left[f_{1 t}\right] \in \mathbb{R}^{T \times 1}, \Lambda=\left[\lambda_{1, i}\right] \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times 1}
$$

- $\tilde{\Lambda}=\left[\tilde{\lambda}_{1, i}\right]$ is sparse. Assume nonzero element in $\tilde{\lambda}_{1, i}$ is $\tilde{\lambda}_{1,1}=1$, so $\tilde{\Lambda}^{\top} \tilde{\Lambda}=l$.

$$
\begin{aligned}
\tilde{F} & =X^{T} \tilde{\Lambda}=F \Lambda^{T} \tilde{\Lambda}+e^{T} \tilde{\Lambda} \\
& =f_{1} \lambda_{1,1}+e_{1}
\end{aligned}
$$

- Assume

$$
\begin{aligned}
& f_{1, t} \sim\left(0, \sigma_{f}^{2}\right), \quad e_{1, t} \stackrel{i i d}{\sim}\left(0, \sigma_{e}^{2}\right) \\
& \frac{f_{1}^{T} f_{1}}{T} \rightarrow \sigma_{f}^{2}, \quad \frac{e_{1}^{T} e_{1}}{T} \rightarrow \sigma_{e}^{2}
\end{aligned}
$$

- Define signal-to-noise ratio $s=\frac{\sigma_{f}}{\sigma_{e}}$


## Intuition: Why pick the largest elements in $\hat{\Lambda}$ ?

$$
\begin{aligned}
\rho & =\operatorname{tr}\left(\left(F^{T} F / T\right)^{-1}\left(F^{T} \tilde{F} / T\right)\left(\tilde{F}^{T} \tilde{F} / T\right)^{-1}\left(\tilde{F}^{T} F / T\right)\right) \\
& =\left(\frac{f_{1}^{T}\left(f_{1} \lambda_{1,1}+e_{1}\right) / T}{\left(f_{1}^{T} f_{1} / T\right)^{1 / 2}\left(\left(f_{1} \lambda_{1,1}+e_{1}\right)^{T}\left(f_{1} \lambda_{1,1}+e_{1}\right) / T\right)^{1 / 2}}\right)^{2} \\
& \rightarrow \frac{\lambda_{1,1}^{2}}{\lambda_{1,1}^{2}+1 / s^{2}}
\end{aligned}
$$

- (Generalized) correlation increases in size of loading $\left|\lambda_{1,1}\right|$.
- (Generalized) correlation increases in signal-to-noise ratio $s$.
- No sparsity in population loadings assumed!
$\Rightarrow$ We provide probabilistic lower bound for (generalized) correlation $\rho$ given a target correlation level $\rho_{0}$ :

$$
P\left(\rho>\rho_{0}\right)
$$

## Assumptions

## Assumptions

Similar assumptions as in Bai and $\operatorname{Ng}$ (2002)
(1) Factors: $E\left\|f_{t}\right\|^{4} \leq M<\infty$ and $\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^{T} f_{t} f_{t}^{T} \xrightarrow{P} \Sigma_{F}$ for some $K \times K$ positive definite matrix $\Sigma_{F}=\operatorname{diag}\left(\sigma_{f_{1}}^{2}, \sigma_{f_{2}}^{2}, \cdots, \sigma_{f_{r}}^{2}\right)$.
(2) Loadings: Random variables max $\left\|\lambda_{j, i}\right\|=O_{p}(1)$ and $\Lambda^{\top} \Lambda / N \rightarrow \Sigma_{\Lambda}$, independent of factors and errors
(3) Systematic factors: Eigenvalues of $\Sigma_{\Lambda} \Sigma_{F}$ bounded away from 0 and $\infty$

4 Residuals: Weak Dependency

- Bounded eigenvalues and sparsity of $\Sigma_{e}$
- e weakly dependent with $F$
- Light tails
$\Rightarrow$ Uniform convergence result for loadings $\forall i, \exists H$,

$$
\max _{i \leq N}\left\|\hat{\lambda}_{(i)}-H \lambda_{(i)}\right\|=O_{p}\left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{N}}+\frac{N^{1 / 4}}{\sqrt{T}}\right)
$$

## One Factor Case

## One factor case: Extreme value theory

## Theorem 1: Distribution of correlation

Assume: $K=1$ factor and there exists sequences of constants $\left\{a_{1, N}>0\right\}$ and $\left\{b_{1, N}\right\}$ such that

$$
P\left(\left(\left|\lambda_{1,(1)}\right|-b_{1, N}\right) / a_{1, N} \leq z\right) \rightarrow G_{1}(z),
$$

Then for $N, T \rightarrow \infty$

$$
\begin{aligned}
P\left(\rho \geq \rho_{0}\right) & \geq 1-G_{1, m}(z)+o_{p}(1) \\
\rho_{0} & =\frac{\sigma_{f_{1}}^{2}\left(a_{1, N} z+b_{1, N}\right)^{2}}{\frac{1+h(m)}{m} \sigma_{e}^{2}+\sigma_{f_{1}}^{2}\left(a_{1, N} z+b_{1, N}\right)^{2}}
\end{aligned}
$$

$G_{1}$ is the Generalized Extreme Value (GEV) distribution function,

$$
G_{1}=\exp \left\{-\left[1+\xi\left(\frac{z-\mu}{\sigma}\right)\right]^{-1 / \xi}\right\}
$$

## One factor case: Extreme value theory

A few examples for $G_{1}$ and $a_{1, N}$ and $b_{1, N}$ for $\lambda_{1, i}$ :
(1) $G_{1} \sim$ Gumbel distribution:

- Standard normal distribution $\left(\lambda_{i} \sim N(0,1)\right): a_{1, N}=\frac{1}{N \phi\left(b_{1, N}\right)}$ and $b_{1, N}=\Phi^{-1}(1-1 / N)$, where $\phi(\cdot), \Phi(\cdot)$ are pdf and cdf of standard normal.
- Exponential distribution $\left(\lambda_{i} \sim \exp (1)\right): a_{1, N}=1, b_{1, N}=N$
(2) $G_{1} \sim$ Frechet distribution:
- $F_{\lambda}(x)=\exp (-1 / x): a_{1, N}=N, b_{1, N}=0$.
(3) $G_{1} \sim$ Weibull distribution:
- Uniform: distribution $\left(\lambda_{i} \sim \operatorname{Uniform}(0,1)\right)$ : $a_{1, N}=1 / N, b_{1, N}=1$.
$\Rightarrow$ allows $\lambda_{1, i}$ to be cross-sectionally dependent, characterized by an extremal index $\theta$, appeared in $G_{1}$


## One factor case: Extreme value theory

For a target probability $p=1-G_{1, m}(z)$ ( $z$ can be calculated), the threshold $\rho_{0}=\frac{\sigma_{f_{1}}^{2}\left(a_{1, N} z+b_{1, N}\right)^{2}}{\frac{1+m}{m} \sigma_{e}^{2}+\sigma_{f_{1}}^{2}\left(a_{1, N}+b_{1, N}\right)^{2}}$ such that $P\left(\rho \geq \rho_{0}\right) \geq p+o_{p}(1)$ has

- $\rho_{0}$ increases in signal-to-noise ratio $s=\sigma_{f_{1}} / \sigma_{e}$
- $\rho_{0}$ increases in the dispersion of loadings' distribution
- $\rho_{0}$ increases in \# nonzeros $m$ and $N$ (from simulation)
- $\rho_{0}$ decreases in $h(m)(h(m)$ measures how correlated idiosyncratic errors are)


## Multi Factors

## Challenges

- Thresholded loadings/Proximate factors are in general not orthogonal to each other
- Generalized correlation take this into account


## Additional Assumptions

(1) Each cross section unit can only have very large exposure to one factor
(2) Tail distributions for each factor loading are asymptotically independent
$\Rightarrow$ Only for theoretical derivation, not needed for this approach to work in simulation and empirical applications
$\Rightarrow$ Assumption 1 can be relaxed: some cross section units only have large exposure to one factor after rotated by some matrix

## Multi Factors

## Theorem 2: Distribution of generalized correlation

The asymptotic lower bound equals

$$
\begin{aligned}
\lim _{N, T \rightarrow \infty} P\left(\rho \geq \rho_{0}\right) & \geq \prod_{j=1}^{K}\left(1-G_{j, m}^{*}(\tau)\right)-\lim _{N \rightarrow \infty} P\left(\sigma_{\min }(B)<\underline{\gamma}\right) \\
\rho_{0} & =K-\frac{(1+h(m)) \sigma_{e}^{2}}{m \underline{\gamma}^{2}} \sum_{j=1}^{K} \frac{1}{s_{j} u_{j, N}^{2}(\tau)},
\end{aligned}
$$

where $S=\operatorname{diag}\left(s_{1}, s_{2}, \cdots, s_{K}\right)$ are the eigenvalues of $\Sigma_{F} \Sigma_{\Lambda}$ in decreasing order and $0<\underline{\gamma}<1$.
$\Rightarrow \prod_{j=1}^{K}\left(1-G_{j, m}^{*}(\tau)\right)$ : product of loadings' tail distributions (asymptotically independent)
$\Rightarrow B \propto S^{1 / 2} \Lambda^{\top} \tilde{\Lambda} . P\left(\sigma_{\min }(B)<\underline{\gamma}\right): \sigma_{\min }(B)$ measures how correlated one thresholded loading is to other population factor loadings

## Empirical Results

## Single-sorted Portfolios

## Portfolio Data

- Monthly return data from $07 / 1963$ to $12 / 2016(T=638)$ for $N=370$ portfolios
- Kozak, Nagel and Santosh (2017) data: 370 decile portfolios sorted according to 37 anomaly characteristics, such as momentum, volatility, turnover, size and volume.


## Single-sorted Portfolios


(a) Generalized Correlation

(b) Variance Explained

Figure: Financial single-sorted portfolios: Generalized correlation between $\tilde{F}$ and $\hat{F}$ normalized by $K$ and proportion of variance explained by $\tilde{F}$ and $\hat{F}$ as a function of non-zero loading elements $m$, where $K$ varies from 3 to 7. $(N=370, T=638)$

## Empirical Results

## Single-sorted Portfolios

| m | $\hat{F}_{1}$ | $\hat{F}_{2}$ | $\hat{F}_{3}$ | $\hat{F}_{4}$ | $\hat{F}_{5}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| 10 | 0.993 | 0.992 | 0.771 | 0.918 | 0.837 |
| 20 | 0.995 | 0.948 | 0.883 | 0.949 | 0.890 |
| 30 | 0.996 | 0.965 | 0.935 | 0.966 | 0.910 |
| 40 | 0.997 | 0.971 | 0.958 | 0.975 | 0.923 |

Table: Financial single-sorted portfolios: Generalized correlation between each $\hat{F}_{j}$ and all $\tilde{F}$ for $K=5$. These generalized correlations correspond to $R^{2}$ from a regression of each $\hat{F}_{j}$ on all $\tilde{F}$.

## Empirical Results

## Macroeconomic data

## Macroeconomic Data

- Monthly data from $01 / 1959$ to $02 / 2018$ for $N=128$ variables:
(1) output and income
(2) labor market
(3) housing
(9) consumption, orders and inventories
(5) money and credit
(6) interest and exchange rates
(3) prices
(8) stock market


## Empirical Results

## Macroeconomic data


(a) Generalized Correlation

(b) Variance Explained

Figure: Macroeconomic data: Generalized correlation between $\tilde{F}$ and $\hat{F}$ normalized by $K$ and proportion of variance explained by $\tilde{F}$ and $\hat{F}$, where $K$ varies from 4 to $20 .(N=128, T=707)$

## Macroeconomic data

| m | $\hat{F}_{1}$ | $\hat{F}_{2}$ | $\hat{F}_{3}$ | $\hat{F}_{4}$ | $\hat{F}_{5}$ | $\hat{F}_{6}$ | $\hat{F}_{7}$ | $\hat{F}_{8}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| 10 | 0.953 | 0.959 | 0.949 | 0.953 | 0.961 | 0.799 | 0.833 | 0.767 |
| 15 | 0.967 | 0.970 | 0.958 | 0.956 | 0.964 | 0.857 | 0.867 | 0.837 |
| 20 | 0.977 | 0.974 | 0.957 | 0.963 | 0.961 | 0.905 | 0.919 | 0.891 |
| 25 | 0.983 | 0.980 | 0.961 | 0.979 | 0.973 | 0.937 | 0.943 | 0.929 |

Table: Macroeconomic data: Generalized correlation between each $\hat{F}_{j}$ and $\tilde{F}$, where $K=8$. These generalized correlations correspond to $R^{2}$ from a regression of each $\hat{F}_{j}$ on all $\tilde{F}$.

## Empirical Results

## Macroeconomic data



Figure: Macroeconomic data: 8-factor model, each sparse loading in $\tilde{\Lambda}$ has 10 nonzero entries. Values in this figure represent the number of nonzero entries in a particular group for a particular sparse loading. The 8 groups are: 1. output and income; 2. labor market; 3. housing; 4. consumption, orders and inventories; 5. money and credit; 6 . interest and exchange rates; 7. prices; 8. stock market

## Conclusion

## Methodology

- Proximate factors (portfolios of a few cross-section units) for latent population factors (portfolios of all cross-section units)
- Simple thresholding estimator based on largest loadings
- Proximate factors approximate population factors well without sparsity assumption
- Asymptotic probabilistic lower bound for (generalized) correlation
$\Rightarrow$ A few observations summarize most of the information


## Empirical Results

- Good approximation to population factors with 5-10\% cross-section units


## Multiple Factors

## Multiple Factor: Rotate and threshold

- Assume there exists orthonormal matrix $P$ s.t. large values in columns of $W^{P}=\Lambda H S P$ do not overlap (almost orthogonal)
- $m$ nonzero entries in $\tilde{W}_{j}$ are the largest in $\hat{W}_{j}$ satisfying $\max _{j, k \neq j}\left|\hat{w}_{i, k}^{P} / \hat{w}_{i, j}^{P}\right|<c$ and are standardized by

$$
\tilde{W}^{P}=\left[\begin{array}{cccc}
\frac{\hat{w}_{1}^{P} \odot M_{1}}{\left\|\hat{w}_{1}^{P} \odot M_{1}\right\|} & \frac{\hat{w}_{2}^{P} \odot M_{2}}{\left\|\hat{w}_{2}^{P} \odot M_{2}\right\|} & \cdots & \frac{\hat{w}_{K}^{P} \odot M_{K}}{\left\|\hat{w}_{K}^{P} \odot M_{K}\right\|}
\end{array}\right] .
$$

- The proximate factors are

$$
\tilde{F}^{P}=X^{T} \tilde{W}^{P}\left(\left(\tilde{W}^{P}\right)^{T} \tilde{W}^{P}\right)^{-1}=X^{T} \tilde{W}^{P}
$$

- Generalized Correlation

$$
\rho=\operatorname{tr}\left(\left(F^{T} F / T\right)^{-1}\left(F^{T} \tilde{F}^{P} / T\right)\left(\left(\tilde{F}^{P}\right)^{T} \tilde{F}^{P} / T\right)^{-1}\left(\left(\tilde{F}^{P}\right)^{T} F / T\right)\right)
$$

## Multiple Factors

## Theorem 4: Rotate and threshold

Let $\bar{w}_{(m), j}^{P}$ be the $m$-th order statistic of the entries in $\left|w_{j}^{P}\right|$ that satisfy $\max _{j, k \neq j}\left|w_{i, k}^{P} / w_{i, j}^{P}\right|<c$ and assume that the cumulative density function of $\bar{w}_{(m), j}^{P}$ is continuous. Then for a particular threshold $0<\rho_{0}<K$ and a fixed $m$, we have

$$
\begin{equation*}
\lim _{N, T \rightarrow \infty} P\left(\rho>\rho_{0}\right) \geq \lim _{N \rightarrow \infty} P\left(\sum_{j=1}^{K} \frac{1}{\left(\bar{w}_{(m), j}^{P}\right)^{2}}<\frac{m(1-\gamma)\left(K-\rho_{0}\right)}{(1+f(m)) \sigma_{e}^{2}}\right), \tag{2}
\end{equation*}
$$

where $\gamma=c(2+c(K-2))(K(K-1))^{1 / 2}$.

## Relationship with Lasso

Alternative approach with Lasso:
(1) Estimate factors by PCA, i.e $X^{T} X \hat{F}=\hat{F} V$ with $V$ matrix of eigenvalues.
(2) Estimate loadings by minimizing $\left\|X-\Lambda \hat{F}^{T}\right\|_{F}^{2}+\alpha\|\Lambda\|_{1}$. Divide the minimizer by its column norm (standardize each loading) to obtain $\bar{\Lambda}$
(3) Proximate factors from Lasso approach are $\bar{F}=X^{T} \bar{\Lambda}\left(\bar{\Lambda}^{T} \bar{\Lambda}\right)^{-1}$
$\Rightarrow$ Same selection of non-zero elements (for one factor case) but different weighting
$\Rightarrow$ Under certain conditions worse performance than thresholding approach

- Tuning parameter less transparent


## Simulation

- Compare probabilistic lower bounds with Monte-Carlo simulations
- Factors: $K=1$ or $K=2$ and $F_{t} \sim N\left(0, \sigma_{f}^{2}\right)$
- Loadings: $\lambda_{i} \sim N(0,1)$ i.i.d.
- Residuals: $\sigma_{e}=1$ and $e_{t, i} \sim N(0,1)$ i.i.d.
- Vary signal-to-noise ratio with $\sigma_{f} \in\{0.8,1.0,1.2\}$
- $N=100)$ and $T \in\{50,100,200\}$
- We analyze:
- Probabilistic lower bound for $\rho_{0}=0.95$
- Distribution of lower bound with extreme value distribution


## Simulation

## Simulation: One factor with very strong signal



Figure: Probabilistic lower bound: $\sigma_{f}=1.2, \rho_{0}=0.95$

## Simulation: One factor with weaker signal



Figure: Probabilistic lower bound: $\sigma_{f}=1.0, \rho_{0}=0.95$

## Simulation: One factor with weak signal



Figure: Probabilistic lower bound: $\sigma_{f}=0.8, \rho_{0}=0.95$

## Simulation

## Simulation: One factor with increasing $N$



Figure: Probabilistic lower bound: $\rho_{0}=0.95$

## Simulation

## Simulation: Two Factors



Figure: Probabilistic lower bound: $\rho_{0}=1.9$.

## Empirical Application: Size and Investment Portfolios

- 25 portfolios formed on size and investment (07/1963-10/2017, 3 factors, daily data)


(a) Generalized correlation


(c) RMS pricing error
(d) Max Sharpe Ratio


## Empirical Results

## Empirical Application: Size and Investment Portfolios



Figure: Portfolio weights of 1. statistical factor
$\Rightarrow$ Equally weighted market factor

## Empirical Results

## Empirical Application: Size and Investment Portfolios



Figure: Portfolio weights of 2. statistical factor
$\Rightarrow$ Small-minus-big size factor
$\Rightarrow$ Proximate factor with 4 largest weights correlation 0.97 with size factor

## Empirical Results

## Empirical Application: Size and Investment Portfolios

|  | HilNV | 0.69 | 1.5 | 2 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 1.6 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | INV4 | -0.33 | -0.2 | 0.2 | 0.15 | -0.23 | 0.8 |
|  | INV3 | -0.71 | -0.59 | -0.51 | -0.51 | -0.72 | 0.0 |
|  | INV2 | -0.64 | -0.78 | -0.72 | -0.98 | -1 | -0.8 |
| LoINV |  | 0.018 | -0.19 | -0.2 | -0.93 | -1.6 | -1.6 |
|  |  | SMALL | ME2 | ME3 | ME4 | BIG |  |

Figure: Portfolio weights of 3. statistical factor
$\Rightarrow$ High-minus-low value factor
$\Rightarrow$ Proximate factor with 4 largest weights correlation 0.79 with investment factor

## Single-sorted portfolios

|  | Anomaly characteristics |  | Anomaly characteristics |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| 1 | Accruals - accrual | 20 | Momentum (12m) - mom12 |
| 2 | Asset Turnover - aturnover | 21 | Momentum-Reversals - momrev |
| 3 | Cash Flows/Price - cfp | 22 | Net Operating Assets - noa |
| 4 | Composite Issuance - ciss | 23 | Price - price |
| 5 | Dividend/Price - divp | 24 | Gross Protability - prof |
| 6 | Earnings/Price - ep | 25 | Return on Assets (A) - roaa |
| 7 | Gross Margins - gmargins | 26 | Return on Book Equity (A) - roea |
| 8 | Asset Growth - growth | 27 | Seasonality - season |
| 9 | Investment Growth - igrowth | 28 | Sales Growth - sgrowth |
| 10 | Industry Momentum - indmom | 29 | Share Volume - shvol |
| 11 | Industry Mom. Reversals - indmomrev | 30 | Size - size |
| 12 | Industry Rel. Reversals - indrrev | 31 | Sales/Price - sp |
| 13 | Industry Rel. Rev. (L.V.) - indrrevlv | 32 | Short-Term Reversals - strev |
| 14 | Investment/Assets - inv | 33 | Value-Momentum - valmom |
| 15 | Investment/Capital - invcap | 34 | Value-Momentum-Prof. - valmomprof |
| 16 | Idiosyncratic Volatility - ivol | 35 | Value-Protability -valprof |
| 17 | Leverage - lev | 36 | Value (A) - value |
| 18 | Long Run Reversals - Irrev | 37 | Value (M) - valuem |
| 19 | Momentum (6m) - mom |  |  |

