# Structural Deep Learning in Conditional Asset Pricing

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Structural Deep Learning in CAP



# **Outlines**

#### Introduction

- 2 Interpretable Asset Pricing model
- Methods of Estimation
- Asymptotic Theory

#### Empirical Application



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- 2 Interpretable Asset Pricing model
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- Sempirical Application



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# Introduction

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- Returns are noisy
- Understanding expected returns and volatility is all we can do
- Understanding expected returns is still really hard!

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# Why so hard?

**High-dim** set of possible signals (firm characteristics).

★ Theory is silent of how signals relate to returns

- Unknown functional forms
- Unknown dynamics (risks can change over time)
- Unknown interpretation (risk vs. mispricing)

★ Curse of dimensionality of nonparametric modeling

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# **Classical Solutions**

- ★ Additive model:  $E[y|x_1, ..., x_d] = \sum_{i=1}^d f_i(x_i)$  rate:  $N^{-2/5}$ ★ Single index models  $E[y|X] = f(X^T \beta)$  rate:  $N^{-2/5}$
- ★ Structural rather than algorithmic solutions.

#### Statistical Machine Learning such as **Neural networks** come to rescue

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# Why Deep Neural Networks?

★ Univ. approx: any sup-smooth function can be appr. by an NN (Barron, 93):

(x) Inv Fourier 
$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^d} \exp(i\omega^T x) \tilde{f}(\omega) d\omega = E_{\omega \sim g} \exp(i\omega^T x) \frac{f(\omega)}{g(\omega)}$$
$$\approx N^{-1} \sum_{j=1}^N \underbrace{\exp(i\omega_j^T x)}_{\sigma(\omega_j^T x)} \underbrace{\frac{\tilde{f}(\omega_j)}{g(\omega_j)}}_{\text{weight } \beta_j} + \underbrace{O_P(N^{-1/2})}_{\text{no curse-of-dim.}}, \quad \text{if } E_{\omega \sim g} \left| \frac{\tilde{f}(\omega)}{g(\omega)} \right|^2 < C.$$

 $\star$  A tooth function w/  $\mathcal{O}(2^k)$  oscillations (Telgarsky, 16) is

- •a ReLU-DNN with depth  $\mathcal{O}(k)$  and width  $\mathcal{O}(1)$ ,
- •a one-layer ReLU-DNN but with  $\Omega(2^k)$  nodes
- •extendable to Lipchitz functions.

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# Adapt to unknown comp: Compositions

From Bauer and Kohler, 2019, AOS

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# What neural networks can do



- ML can explain more expected returns
- Produce good estimates of

 $\hat{y}_{it} = \mathbb{E}[\text{excess return}|\text{high dimensional info}]$ 

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# Understanding source of returns



- Provide an interpretation of  $\widehat{y}_{i,t+1|t}$
- Decomposition into compensation for risk and mispricing
- Evolution of return components over time

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- ★ Impose mild economic structure
- ★ Expected returns from deep neural network
- **†** In-sample Expected return: mispricing + risk premium + factor realization
- ★ Out-of-sample prediction: mispricing + risk premium + factor innovation
- ★ Provide novel methods to estimate each of 3 component
- ★ Derive rigorous asymptotic theory
- **★** Factor accounts 95% (riskP: 1/5) and mispricing 5% (Sharpe: 1.23,  $\downarrow$  in t)

Predictions in asset pricing are very noisy due to factor realizations;
 should be removed for predictions.

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#### ★ Machine Learning in Finance

Freyberger et al. (2020), Gu et al. (2020) Bali et al. (2021), Bianchi et al. (2021), , Avramov et al. (2021), Chen et al. (2020), Cong et al. (2021), DeMiguel et al. (2020), Bryzgalova et al. (2020), Rossi and Utkus (2020), Li and Rossi (2020)

#### ★ (Conditional) Factor pricing models

- Giglio and Xiu (2021); Giglio et al. (2021); Kim et al. (2021)
- Shanken (1990); Ferson and Harvey (1999); Lettau and Ludvigson (2001); Ghysels (1998); Gagliardini et al. (2016); Kelly et al. (2019, 2020); Gu et al. (2019)

#### ★ Panel data / factor estimation

 Connor and Korajczyk (1986); Bai (2003); Stock and Watson (2002b); Connor et al. (2012); Fan et al. (2016)

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# **Interpretable Asset Model**

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# **Conditional factor model:**

$$y_{i,t} = \alpha_{i,t-1} + \beta'_{i,t-1} \lambda_t + \beta'_{i,t-1} (\mathsf{f}_t - \mathbb{E}\mathsf{f}_t) + u_{it}$$

- $\alpha$  potential mispricing
- $\beta$  risk exposure
- $\lambda_t$  factor risk premia
- $f_t$  factor realization

#### ■all time-varying

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## **Impact of Firm Characteristics**

 $\mathbf{I}_{x_{i,t}}$  carry information about alphas and betas:

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha_{i,t-1} &= g_{\alpha,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}) + \gamma_{\alpha,i,t-1} \\ \beta_{i,t-1} &= g_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}) + \gamma_{\beta,i,t-1} \end{aligned}$$

• 
$$g_{\alpha,t}$$
 – mispricing function

- $g_{\alpha,t}(\cdot)$  and  $g_{\beta,t}(\cdot)$  can change over time
- $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  may vary in high-frequency due to  $\gamma_t$

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# Structural machine learning predictions

★ Obtain  $\widehat{m}_t(\cdot)$  by DNN on  $\{(y_{i,t}, x_{i,t-1})\}_{i=1}^N$  for each t, estimating

$$m_t^0(x_{i,t-1}) = \mathbb{E}(y_{i,t}|x_{i,t-1}, f_t), \qquad y_{i,t} = m_t^0(x_{i,t-1}) + e_{i,t}.$$

★ Predict out-of-sample by "pluging in new data"

$$\widehat{y}_{i,t+1|t} = \widehat{m}_t(\mathsf{x}_{i,t})$$

★ Little interpretation about source of predictability.

# Aim to open the black box

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# Aim to open the black box

★ In-sample decomposition: Spot expected return

$$\widehat{m}_{t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}) \approx \underbrace{g_{\alpha,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1})}_{\text{mispricing}} + \underbrace{g_{riskP,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1})}_{g_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{x})'\boldsymbol{\lambda}_{t}} + g_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1})'(\mathsf{f}_{t} - \mathbb{E}\mathsf{f}_{t})$$

-Enable us to asset contributions of each component.

• Out-of-sample decomposition: plug-in the "new" x<sub>i,t</sub>:

$$\widehat{m}_{t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t}) \approx g_{\alpha,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t}) + g_{riskP,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t}) + \underbrace{g_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t})'(\mathsf{f}_{t} - \mathbb{E}\mathsf{f}_{t})}_{\text{factor realization}}$$

$$y_{i,t+1} \approx g_{\alpha,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t+1}) + g_{riskP,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t}) + \underbrace{g_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t})'(\mathsf{f}_{t+1} - \mathbb{E}\mathsf{f}_{t+1})}_{\text{factor innovation}} + e_{i,t+1}$$

-Enable us to understand/improve predictability.

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# Methodology

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$$\begin{split} & \mathbb{E}(\mathsf{Y}_{s}|\mathsf{X}_{s-1},\mathsf{f}_{s}) - \mathbb{E}\left(\mathbb{E}(\mathsf{Y}_{s}|\mathsf{X}_{s-1},\mathsf{f}_{s}) \middle| \mathsf{X}_{s-1}\right) \\ &\approx \quad \mathsf{G}_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{X}_{t-1})(\mathsf{f}_{s} - \mathbb{E}\mathsf{f}_{s}), \quad \text{for } s \approx t. \end{split}$$

**Locally**,  $G_{\beta,t}(X_{t-1})$  is the eigenvector.

#### **Estimation Steps**:

- **(**) Apply DNN **cross-sectionally** to estimate  $\mathbb{E}(Y_s|X_{s-1}, f_s)$ .
- **2** Apply **time-domain** kernel smoothing to estimate  $\mathbb{E}(Y_s|X_{s-1})$ .
- **3** Apply **local PCA** to estimate  $G_{\beta,t}(X_{t-1})$  and  $f_t$

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- Solution Apply local PCA to estimate  $G_{\beta,t}(X_{t-1})$  and  $f_t$

Apply period-by-period DNN

$$\widehat{m}_t = \arg\min_{m \in DNN} \sum_{i=1}^{N} (y_{i,t} - m(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}))^2$$

- Captures nonlinearity
- 2 adapts to low-dim structure, avoiding curse of dim.
- Solution behavior is insensitive to tuning

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★ We use period-by-period DNN, so it can be overfitting.

- ★ DNN performs well in the overfitting regime.
- ★ Pred risks admit a double descent curve as complexity increases. (Belkin et al., 2020; Mei and Montanari, 2019; Belkin et al., 2020; Hastie et al., 2019)
- ★ Illustrate using factor regression (Stock and Watson (2002a)).

$$R_t = b'f_t + e_t, \quad X_{t,p} = B'f_t + u_t$$

predicted by overparatermized linear model

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# **Illustration of Double Decent**

- Simulation DGP is calibrated using actual monthly returns.
- Evaluate out-sample risk  $Risk(p) = \frac{1}{25} \sum_{s=1}^{25} (R_{T+s} X'_{T+s,p} \widehat{\theta}_p)^2$ .



• Interpretations: diversification effect

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## Step 2 - Time-domain Kernel Smoothing

• With bandwidth  $h \rightarrow 0$ , local kernel weight is

$$w_{s,t} = \frac{1}{h} \mathcal{K}\left(\frac{s-t}{Th}\right) / \frac{1}{Th} \sum_{k=1}^{T} \frac{1}{h} \mathcal{K}\left(\frac{k-t}{Th}\right).$$

Kernel smoothing:

$$E(\widehat{y_{it}|\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}}) = \frac{1}{T} \sum_{s=1}^{T} \underbrace{\mathbb{E}(\widehat{y_{is}|\mathsf{x}_{i,s-1}},\mathsf{f}_s)}_{\text{from DNN}} w_{s,t}$$

$$\approx g_{\alpha,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}) + g_{\textit{riskP},t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}).$$

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$$\mathbb{E}(y_{is}|\mathsf{x}_{i,s-1},\mathsf{f}_s) - \mathbb{E}(y_{is}|\mathsf{x}_{i,s-1}) \approx g_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1})'(\mathsf{f}_s - \mathbb{E}\mathsf{f}_s), \quad \forall \frac{s}{T} \approx \frac{t}{T}$$

• At each t, estimate  $g_{\beta,t}(x_{i,t-1})$  as the eigenvectors of

$$\frac{1}{T}\sum_{s=1}^{T} \Delta_{s} \Delta'_{s} w_{s,t}, \qquad \Delta_{s} = \mathbb{E}(\widehat{y_{is}|x_{i,s-1}}) - \mathbb{E}(\widehat{y_{is}|x_{i,s-1}}, f_{s})$$
  
and  $\widehat{f}_{t} = \widehat{G}'_{\beta,t-1}(\widehat{m}_{t}(X_{t-1}) - \overline{m}_{t}).$ 

• Conventional Fama-MacBeth type regression

$$\widehat{\lambda}_t = \frac{1}{N} \widehat{\mathsf{G}}_{\beta,t-1}' \overline{\mathsf{m}}_t, \quad \widehat{\mathsf{G}}_{\alpha,t-1} \coloneqq \overline{\mathsf{m}}_t - \widehat{\mathsf{G}}_{\beta,t-1} \widehat{\lambda}_t.$$

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$$\mathbb{E}(y_{is}|\mathsf{x}_{i,s-1},\mathsf{f}_s) - \mathbb{E}(y_{is}|\mathsf{x}_{i,s-1}) \approx g_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1})'(\mathsf{f}_s - \mathbb{E}\mathsf{f}_s), \quad \forall \frac{s}{T} \approx \frac{t}{T}$$

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$$\frac{1}{T}\sum_{s=1}^{T}\Delta_{s}\Delta'_{s}w_{s,t}, \qquad \Delta_{s} = \mathbb{E}(\widehat{y_{is}|\mathsf{x}_{i,s-1}}) - \mathbb{E}(\widehat{y_{is}|\mathsf{x}_{i,s-1}},\mathsf{f}_{s})$$

and 
$$\widehat{\mathsf{f}}_t = \widehat{\mathsf{G}}_{\beta,t-1}'(\widehat{\mathsf{m}}_t(\mathsf{X}_{t-1}) - \overline{\mathsf{m}}_t).$$

• Conventional Fama-MacBeth type regression

$$\widehat{\boldsymbol{\lambda}}_t = \frac{1}{N} \widehat{\mathsf{G}}_{\beta,t-1}' \overline{\mathsf{m}}_t, \quad \widehat{\mathsf{G}}_{\alpha,t-1} \coloneqq \overline{\mathsf{m}}_t - \widehat{\mathsf{G}}_{\beta,t-1} \widehat{\boldsymbol{\lambda}}_t.$$

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For predictions, we need to know how alphas and risks depend on  $x_{i,T}$  by use DNN:

$$\widehat{g}_{riskP,T}(\cdot) = \arg \min_{r \in DNN} \sum_{i=1}^{N} (\underbrace{g_{\beta,t}(\widehat{x_{i,T-1}})'\lambda_{T}}_{\widehat{g}_{riskP,T,i}} - r(x_{i,T-1}))^{2}$$

$$\widehat{g}_{\alpha,T}(\cdot) = \arg \min_{g \in DNN} \sum_{i=1}^{N} (\underbrace{g_{\alpha,T}(\widehat{x_{i,T-1}})}_{\widehat{g}_{\alpha,T,i}} - g(x_{i,T-1}))^{2}$$

**\star** Not only can predict returns, but also can predict  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ .

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# Theory

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| Theorem 1. Under some 🕩 technical cond. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Spot E-return:                          | $\mathbb{E}[\widehat{m}_t(x_{i,t-1}) - \mathbb{E}(y_{it} x_{i,t-1},f_t)]^2 = O_P(\delta_T^2 + \varphi_T^2).$ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| long-term:                              | $\mathbb{E}[\bar{m}_{i,t} - \mathbb{E}(y_{it} x_{i,t-1})]^2 = O_P(\delta_T^2 + \varphi_T^2 + \eta_T^2).$     |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Aapproximation error of DNN:

Details about DNN

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$$\varphi_{\mathcal{T}} = \max_{t} \inf_{r \in DNN} \|g_{\alpha,t} - r\| + \max_{t} \inf_{r \in DNN} \|g_{\beta,t} - r\|$$

(a) Complexity of the DNN:  $\delta_T = \sqrt{\frac{\log(NT)p(DNN)}{N}}$ 

Smoothing error:  $\eta_T = \frac{1}{\sqrt{Th}} + h^2$ 

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Approximation error of DNN:

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• Complexity of the DNN:  $\delta_T = \sqrt{\frac{\log(NT)p(DNN)}{N}}$ 

Smoothing error:  $\eta_T = \frac{1}{\sqrt{Th}} + h^2$ 

# Statistical errors in function estimation

#### Theorem 2. For each *t*,

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} [\widehat{g}_{\alpha,t-1,i} - g_{\alpha,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1})]^2 &= O_P(\delta_T^2 + \varphi_T^2 + \eta_T^2), \\ \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} [\widehat{g}_{\mathsf{riskP},t,i} - g_{\mathsf{riskP},t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1})]^2 &= O_P(\delta_T^2 + \varphi_T^2 + \eta_T^2) \\ \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} [\widehat{g}_{\mathsf{factor},t,i} - g_{\mathsf{factor},t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1})]^2 &= O_P(\delta_T^2 + \varphi_T^2 + \eta_T^2). \end{aligned}$$

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Theorem 3. For the new observations 
$$x_{i,T}$$
  
 $\mathbb{E}(\xi_{i,T+1}|\mathcal{F}_T) = 0$ , where  $\mathcal{F}_T = \sigma(X_1, ..., X_T)$ ,  
 $y_{i,T+1} = \widehat{g}_{\alpha,T}(x_{i,T}) + \underbrace{\widehat{g}_{riskP,T}(x_{i,T})}_{g'_{\beta}\lambda} + \xi_{i,T+1} + O_P(a_{NT})$ ,

• We estimate both "g" functions that have predictive power

2  $a_{NT} = \delta_T + \varphi_T + \eta_T$  is the "statistical error".

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# **Empirical Analysis**

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- ★ 62 firm characteristics from CRSP and Compustat (Freyberger et al., 2020)
- ★ Sample Period: 1965 2018, 648 months, 4261 firms on ave.
  - ★ Characteristics: market cap, book-to-market, profitability, investment, beta, idiosyncratic volatility, turnover, bid-ask spread, short-term reversal, momentum, intermediate momentum, long-run reversal, total assets, cash over assets, D&A over assets, fixed costs to assets, capex to assets, operating leverage, price-to-cost margin, return-on-equity, operating accruals, free-cash flow to book value of equity, Tobin's Q, net payout ratio, assets-to-market cap, total assets, capital turnover, capital intensity, change in PP&E, earnings to price, and others

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- 60 months estimation window
- FNN with 3 layers (32-16-8),
- Bandwidth for kernel h = 0.75.
- Choose 5 factors from eigen-ratios to be safe



• Out-of-sample: 1970 - 2018, one-month ahead pred.

| 1970 - 2018       |                  |                    |   | 1970 - 1999       |                  |                    | 2000 - 2018   |                   |                  |                    |   |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|---|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|---|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|---|
| $R_{\rm total}^2$ | $R_{\rm risk}^2$ | $g'_{\alpha,t}y_t$ | $\frac{g_{\alpha,t}'y_t}{\sigma(g_{\alpha,t}'y_t)}$ | $R^2_{\rm total}$ | $R_{\rm risk}^2$ | $g'_{\alpha,t}y_t$ | $\frac{g_{\alpha,t}'y_t}{\sigma(g_{\alpha,t}'y_t)}$ | $R^2_{\rm total}$ | $R_{\rm risk}^2$ | $g'_{\alpha,t}y_t$ | $\frac{g_{\alpha,t}'y_t}{\sigma(g_{\alpha,t}'y_t)}$ |
| All Firm          | s                |                    |   |                   |                  |                    |   |                   |                  |                    |   |
| 11.89             | 95.86            | 2.04               | 1.23  | 11.43             | 95.40            | 2.03               | 1.40  | 12.78             | 96.75            | 2.08               | 1.02  |
| Large Fi          | rms              |                    |   |                   |                  |                    |   |                   |                  |                    |   |
| 16.00             | 95.38            | 1.92               | 0.78  | 14.84             | 94.89            | 1.80               | 0.91  | 18.28             | 96.32            | 2.15               | 0.66  |
| Small Firms       |                  |                    |   |                   |                  |                    |   |                   |                  |                    |   |
| 11.08             | 95.59            | 2.08               | 1.05  | 10.55             | 95.05            | 2.08               | 1.24  | 12.14             | 96.65            | 2.06               | 0.83  |

★ Large firms: top 20% market CAP

★ Most of the explained variation in returns due to risk ( $\geq$  95%)

**\star** Mispricing economically meaningful (2% monthly, Sharpe ratio > 1)

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## **Risk Premia vs. Factor Shock**

$$\widehat{y}_{it} = \beta_{\mathsf{rp}} \widehat{r}_{\mathsf{risk},t,i} + \beta_{\mathsf{factor}} \widehat{g}_{\mathsf{factor},t,i} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

| 1970 -               | 2018                         | 1970 -                                   | 1999  | 2000 - 2018          |                            |  |
|----------------------|------------------------------|--|-------|----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| etarisk premium      | $eta_{	extsf{factor shock}}$ | or shock $eta_{risk}$ premium $eta_{fa}$ |       | $eta_{risk}$ premium | $eta_{	ext{factor shock}}$ |  |
| All Firms            |                              |  |       |                      |                            |  |
| 0.172                | 0.973                        | 0.180                                    | 0.968 | 0.157                | 0.984                      |  |
| Large Firms<br>0.127 | 0.972                        | 0.126                                    | 0.967 | 0.129                | 0.981                      |  |
| Small Firms<br>0.170 | 0.973                        | 0.175                                    | 0.968 | 0.161                | 0.983                      |  |

#### ★ Factor shock takes lions share

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| 1970 - 2018  |                    |                     |                          | 1970 - 1999     |                    |                     | 2000 - 2018              |                 |                      |                     |                          |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| $R_{\hat{y}}^2$  | $R_{g_{lpha}}^{2}$ | $R_{g_{\beta}}^{2}$ | $R^2_{g_\beta,g_\alpha}$ | $R_{\hat{y}}^2$ | $R_{g_{lpha}}^{2}$ | $R_{g_{\beta}}^{2}$ | $R^2_{g_\beta,g_\alpha}$ | $R_{\hat{y}}^2$ | $R_{g_{\alpha}}^{2}$ | $R_{g_{\beta}}^{2}$ | $R^2_{g_\beta,g_\alpha}$ |
| All Firms  |                    |                     |                          |                 |                    |                     |                          |                 |                      |                     |                          |
| 1.619  | 0.826              | 1.801               | 2.376                    | 1.520           | 0.620              | 1.627               | 2.027                    | 1.778           | 1.154                | 2.079               | 2.931                    |
| Large Fi   | rms                |                     |                          |                 |                    |                     |                          |                 |                      |                     |                          |
| 3.106  | 1.132              | 3.746               | 4.571                    | 2.608           | 0.926              | 3.066               | 3.768                    | 3.900           | 1.460                | 4.829               | 5.849                    |
| Small Firms  |                    |                     |                          |                 |                    |                     |                          |                 |                      |                     |                          |
| 1.485  | 0.743              | 1.557               | 2.087                    | 1.386           | 0.525              | 1.355               | 1.708                    | 1.643           | 1.091                | 1.880               | 2.690                    |
| ★ Greater predictive accuracy by focusing only on the risk-premium and |                    |                     |                          |                 |                    |                     |                          |                 |                      |                     |                          |
| mispricing, than plugging in new data                                  |                    |                     |                          |                 |                    |                     |                          |                 |                      |                     |                          |
|  |                    |                     | - ( )                    |                 | ,                  |                     |                          | 1.0             |                      |                     |                          |

$$y_{i,t+1} \approx \widehat{g}_{\alpha,t}(\mathbf{x}) + \widehat{r}_{risk,t}(\mathbf{x}_{i,t}) + g_{\beta,t}(\mathbf{x}_{i,t})'(\mathbf{f}_{t+1} - \mathbb{E}\mathbf{f}_{t+1}) + e_{i,t+1}$$

$$\widehat{y}_{i,t+1|t} \approx \widehat{g}_{\alpha,t}(\mathbf{x}) + \widehat{r}_{risk,t}(\mathbf{x}_{i,t}) + g_{\beta,t}(\mathbf{x}_{i,t})'(\mathbf{f}_{t} - \mathbb{E}\mathbf{f}_{t})$$

# **Temporal Evolution of Pricing error**



- Smallest 80% firms, pricing error decays in recent sample
- Evidence of allowing time-varying  $g_{\alpha,t}(x)$ :

$$\frac{1}{N_t}g'_{\alpha}\widehat{y}_t \to^P \int_0^1 g_{\alpha,t}(x)^2 dx$$

• Economic interpretation: "learn and arbitrage away"

# **Simulation model**

• Generate five characteristics: for each *i*, *t*,

$$x_{i,t,k} = \frac{1}{N+1} \operatorname{rank}(\bar{x}_{i,t,k}), \quad \bar{x}_{i,t,k} = 0.98^k \bar{x}_{i,t,k-1} + \epsilon_{x,i,t,k},$$

• Set 
$$g_{\alpha,t}(\mathsf{x}) = [\phi_1(\mathsf{x}), ..., \phi_5(\mathsf{x})] \boldsymbol{\theta}_{\alpha,t}$$
, where:

$$\min_{\boldsymbol{\theta}_t} \sum_{i=1}^N (g_{\alpha,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}) - \widehat{a}_i)^2, \qquad \sum_{i=1}^N g_{\alpha,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}) g_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}) = 0$$

#### $\widehat{a}_i$ is the alpha from Fama-French-5.

•  $g_{\alpha,t}(x_{i,t-1})$  explains 20% variations in  $\mathbb{E}(y_{it}|x_{i,t-1})$  at each period.

• Fix N = 500 firms and T = 200 periods.

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# In-sample and Out-of-sample RMSE

|                | alı               | oha                         | risk   |                 |  |  |  |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-----------------|--|--|--|
|                | median std ×10    |                             | median | std $\times 10$ |  |  |  |
|                | In-sample         |                             |        |                 |  |  |  |
| DNN-varying    | 0.880             | <b>0.880</b> 0.160 <b>0</b> |        | 0.145           |  |  |  |
| Linear-varying | 1.334             | 0.687                       | 0.657  | 0.175           |  |  |  |
| DNN-mw         | 0.884             | 0.128                       | 0.763  | 0.104           |  |  |  |
| Linear-mw      | 1.420 0.823 0.925 |                             | 0.925  | 0.209           |  |  |  |
|                |                   | Out-of-sample               |        |                 |  |  |  |
| DNN-varying    | 0.893             | 0.200                       | 0.518  | 0.271           |  |  |  |
| Linear-varying | 0.972             | 0.444                       | 0.547  | 0.286           |  |  |  |
| DNN-mw         | 0.946             | 0.199                       | 0.624  | 0.216           |  |  |  |
| Linear-mw      | 1.047             | 0.539                       | 0.717  | 0.385           |  |  |  |

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★ New methods to understand neural network predictions in finance

★ Decompose in- and out-of-sample predictions:
 •risk premium (1:5) •factor exposure •mispricing (5%-R<sup>2</sup>, 2%-mRet.)

★ factor exposure has no pred power; riskP dominates pred

★ Important to model the time-varyingness.

★ First theoretical analysis of neural networks in finance

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# The End





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# **Technical Conditions**

- Cross sectional independence and serial weak dependences.
- Smooth over time:

$$\mathbb{E}(y_{it}|\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}) = m_i\left(\frac{t}{T}\right), \quad g_{\beta,t}(\mathsf{x}_{i,t-1}) = \mathsf{g}_i\left(\frac{t}{T}\right), \forall t = 1, ..., T,$$

where the functions are continuously twice-differentiable.

3 For DNN: (i) functions 
$$m_t^0, g_{\alpha,t}$$
 and  $g_{\beta,t}$  belong to the Hölder ball:

$$\|f\|_{\mathcal{H},q,\gamma} = \sup_{\mathbf{a},\mathbf{b}} \frac{|f^{(q)}(\mathbf{a}) - f^{(q)}(\mathbf{b})|}{\|\mathbf{a} - \mathbf{b}\|^{\gamma}} < L.$$

(ii) Dim of neuralnet satisfies:  $p(\mathcal{M}_{J,L}) \log^{3/2}(NT) = o(N)$ .

Some moment bounds

**5** 
$$\mathbb{E}(\gamma_T | \mathcal{F}_T) = 0, \mathbb{E}(f_{T+1} | \mathcal{F}_T) = \mathbb{E}f_{T+1}.$$

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# More details about DNN

• For DNN approximation to composition of smooth functions

$$f_0 = g_q \circ g_{q-1} \circ \dots \circ g_1$$

 $\blacktriangleright$  (Schmidt-Hieber, 2020): with properly chosen width J and depth L,

 $\varphi_{\mathcal{T}} = N^{-\max_{i \leq q} \frac{\beta_i}{\beta_i + d_i}}, \qquad \beta_i = \text{smoothness of } g_i$ 

•  $d_i$  is the instrinsic dimension, and can be much smaller than dim(x).

e.g., for single index models,  $d_i = 1$ .

- DNN adaptively achieves the fast approximation rate
- Por the complexity:
  - p(DNN) is the VC dimension of the graph  $\{h(x) y : h \in DNN\}$ .
  - · Bartlett et al. (2019): For ReLu networks,

 $p(DNN) \leq CJ^2 L^2 \log(JL).$ 

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