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THE EFFECTS OF DATA SNOOPING AND SPURIOUS REGRESSION

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Asset Pricing Models with Conditional Betas and Alphas: The Effects of Data Snooping and Spurious Regression

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the estimation of asset pricing model regressions with conditional alphas and betas, focusing on the joint effects of data snooping and spurious regression. We find that the regressions are reasonably well specified for conditional betas, even in settings where simple predictive regressions are severely biased. However, there are biases in estimates of the conditional alphas. When time-varying alphas are suppressed and only time-varying betas are considered, the betas become biased. Previous studies overstate the significance of time-varying alphas.

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I. Introduction

Regression models for stock or portfolio returns on market-wide factors have long been a staple of financial economics. Such factor models are used in event studies (e.g., Fama, Fisher, Jensen and Roll, 1969), in tests of asset pricing theories such as the Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM, Sharpe, 1964) and in other applications. For example, when the market return r_m is the factor, the regression model for the return r_{t+1} is:

$$r_{t+1} = \alpha + \beta r_{m,t+1} + u_{t+1}, \quad (1)$$

where $E(u_{t+1})=E(u_{t+1}|r_{m,t+1})=0$. The slope coefficients are the “betas,” which measure the market-factor risk. When the returns are measured in excess of a reference asset like a risk-free Treasury bill return, the intercepts are the “alphas,” which measure the expected abnormal return. For example, when r_m is the market portfolio excess return, the CAPM implies that $\alpha=0$, and the model is evaluated by testing that null hypothesis.

Recent work in conditional asset pricing allows for time-varying betas modeled as linear functions of lagged predictor variables, following Maddala (1977). Prominent examples include Shanken (1990), Cochrane (1996), Ferson and Schadt (1996), Jagannathan and Wang (1996) and Lettau and Ludvigson (2001). The time-varying beta coefficient is $\beta_t = b_0 + b_1 Z_t$, where Z_t is a lagged predictor variable. In some cases the intercept or conditional alpha is also time-varying, as $\alpha_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Z_t$ (e.g. Christopherson, Ferson and Glassman, 1998). This results in the following regression model:

$$r_{t+1} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Z_t + b_0 r_{m,t+1} + b_1 r_{m,t+1} Z_t + u_{t+1}, \quad (2)$$

where $E(u_{t+1})=E(u_{t+1}Z_t)=E(u_{t+1}r_{m,t+1})=E(u_{t+1}[Z_t r_{m,t+1}])=0$. The conditional CAPM implies that $\alpha_0=0$ and $\alpha_1=0$.

This paper studies the sampling properties of regressions like Equation (2). We focus on the joint affects of two important issues. The first is naive data mining and the second is spurious regression. Naive data mining in this context refers to the practice of searching the data for predictor variables, perhaps collectively by a group of researchers through a series of studies, and then effectively using the same data to evaluate the model without accounting for the number of searches. Spurious regression arises when the persistence or high autocorrelation of a predictor variable tricks the standard test statistics into finding a “significant” relation where none exists. These two issues have been studied separately in many previous papers. However, in spite of the large number of studies that rely on regressions like (2), none of the work of which we are aware addresses the effects of data mining and spurious regression on these regressions. That is the goal of this paper.

Ferson, Sarkissian and Simin (2003) study the combined effects of data mining and spurious regression in the context of simpler models where the only variable on the right-hand side is the lagged predictor:

$$r_{t+1} = \delta_0 + \delta_1 Z_t + v_{t+1}. \quad (3)$$

They focus on the slope coefficient and find that the effects of data mining and spurious regression interact and reinforce each other. The more persistent variables which generate spurious regressions are more likely to be discovered by data mining, so the spurious regression problem is worse in the presence of data mining. At the same time, standard corrections for data mining are inadequate in the presence of persistent lagged variables, so persistence magnifies the impact of data mining.

These results have profound potential implications for asset pricing regressions like (2) because the

conditional asset pricing literature using the regression (2) has, for the most part, used variables that were discovered based on predictive regressions like (3). This motivates our study of how data mining and spurious regression biases influence the asset pricing regressions. We make the assumption -- which characterizes the existing literature well -- that the lagged variables are mined on the basis of their performance in the predictive regression (3). The lagged instruments may be mined to predict the market factor or to predict the test asset returns; we study both cases. We assume that the market factor comes from theory and is not mined from data.¹

Our results indicate that the conditional betas estimated from the conditional asset pricing regressions are relatively robust to the effects of spurious regression and data mining for lagged predictors. The estimates of the average of the conditional alphas over time also are reasonably well specified. However, the estimates of time variation in alpha are subject to biases. If the model is estimated without the time-varying alpha term, the conditional betas are mildly biased. Our results help justify the use of regressions like (2) in asset pricing studies, and suggest some refinements and caveats in their interpretation.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section II briefly reviews the effects of data mining and spurious regression in the simple predictive regressions. Section III further motivates our analysis of the conditional asset pricing regressions. Section IV describes our simulation design and Sections V and VI present the results. Section VII offers concluding remarks.

II. Spurious Regression and Data Mining

The lagged predictor variables identified in the asset pricing literature frequently are highly persistent. Short term Treasury bill yields, monthly book-to-market ratios, the market dividend yield and some yield

¹ There may be some debate about this if the factors are taken to be those of Fama and French (1993, 1996); see Lo and MacKinlay (1990), Ferson, Sarkissian and Simin (1999) or Conrad, Cooper, and Kaul (2003).

spreads have first-order autocorrelations of 0.97 or higher in the monthly data commonly used. This suggests that spurious regression problems may arise when these variables are the predictors.

The problem of spurious regression in simple predictive models like Equation (3) was perhaps first studied by Yule (1926), who observed that two trending series that are actually independent of each other are likely to appear to be related in given sample. Granger and Newbold (1974) study the problem in the context of the levels of macroeconomic variables. Following Granger and Newbold, we interpret a spurious regression as one in which the “t-ratios” in the regression are likely to indicate a significant relation when the variables are really independent. The problem may come from the numerator or the denominator of the t-ratio: the coefficient or its standard error may be biased. Ferson, Sarkissian and Simin (2003) show that the problem in the predictive regression (3) lies with the standard errors. When the null hypothesis that the regression slope $\delta_1=0$ is true, the error term v_{t+1} of the regression (3) inherits its autocorrelation from the dependent variable. If the asset return on the left hand side consists of a persistent expected return plus noise, the return has some degree of persistence. Assuming stationarity, the slope coefficient is consistent, but standard errors that do not account for the serial dependence correctly are biased and inconsistent.

Many studies of spurious regression examine nonstationary models, where the autocorrelation of the regressor is equal to 1.0 (e.g. Phillips (1986), Campbell and Shiller (1988) or Marmol, 1998), or where the process is local to unity, such that the autocorrelation approaches 1.0 as the sample size, T , gets large (e.g. Phillips (1998), Valkanov (2003) or Campbell and Yogo, 2006). In such cases the sampling distributions for simple predictive regressions like (3) can often be described by functions of integrals of Brownian motions. It may be possible to extend this kind of analysis to regressions like (2) with data mining in future work. We focus on stationary data, allowing for realistically high autocorrelations, in our analysis. This is largely for tractability, but it also reflects a view that local-to-unity approximations are most appropriate when overlapping, longer horizon returns are measured. Most of the asset pricing

literature that motivates this study uses monthly, non-overlapping returns data.

The theoretical foundations for spurious regression bias with stationary but close-to-unit-root regressors is provided by Phillips (1986, 1998), Marmol (1998), Tsay and Chung (2000), Granger, Hyung, and Jeon (2001), and Jansson and Moreira (2006). Lanne (2002) and Boudoukh, Richardson, and Whitelaw (2005) study regressions to predict long-horizon returns. Spurious regression bias is also observed in models for stock returns using dummy variables as the predictors (see Powell, Shi, Smith, and Whaley 2006), in error-correction regressions (see Berkowitz and Giorgianni, 1996), and in predictive models for the variance of stock returns (see Paye, 2006). Phillips (2001) studies problems using bootstrap methods in the presence of spurious regressions.

Besides spurious regression bias, the financial economics literature has examined other statistical issues with predictive regressions for stock returns. Boudoukh and Richardson (1994) provide an overview. Goetzmann and Jorion (1993), Nelson and Kim (1993), Bekaert, Hodrick, and Marshall (1997) and Stambaugh (1999) study biases due to dependent stochastic regressors. Stambaugh (1999) studies a predictive regression where the analyst observes and uses the correct regressor, but a finite sample bias arises because the future value of the regressor is correlated with the left-hand side stock return. Amihud and Hurvich (2004) examine solutions for this bias in a multiple regression context. In our problem, the lagged variable used by the analyst is independent of the correct regressor, so the Stambaugh bias does not arise. The bias in our case is due to the joint effects of data mining and spurious regression bias. Other useful studies of issues that debate the predictability of stock returns with lagged information variables include Kim, Nelson and Startz (1991), Torous, Valkanov and Yan (2003), Lewellen (2004), Ferson, Heuson and Su (2005), Ang and Bekaert (2006), and Chapman, Simin and Yan (2003).

Data mining refers to the practice of searching through the data to find predictor variables. With naïve data mining the same data are effectively used in model estimation, prediction or testing. Searching through 100 independent variables, one expects to find about five that are “significant” at the 5% level.

To conduct correct inference in such a setting, it is necessary to control for the number of searches undertaken. Leamer (1978), Hastie, Tibshirani and Friedman (2001) and White (2000), among others, describe statistical approaches that control for the number of searches. In financial economics the problem is usually complicated by the fact that many researchers use the same data sets. Thus, the data are effectively mined by an unknown number of previous researchers (see, e.g. Lo and MacKinlay, 1990).

Figure 1, taken from simulations described in Ferson, Sarkissian and Simin (2003), illustrates the interaction between data mining and spurious regression. The critical values for significant t-statistics for the δ_1 coefficient increase with the number of variables mined and with the extent of spurious regression. In the presence of spurious regression, persistent variables are likely to be mined, and the two effects reinforce each other. For example, if the expected return accounts for 10% of the stock return variance, we only have to consider mining in a set of 5 to 10 instruments to obtain critical values as high as those obtained with 50 to 100 instruments and no spurious regression. The figure illustrates that, even with a modest amount of data mining, the combined effects have a powerful impact.

III. Regressions with Time-varying Alphas and Betas

The conditional asset pricing literature using regressions like (2) has evolved from the literature on pure predictive regressions. First, studies identified lagged variables that appear to predict stock returns. Later studies, beginning with Gibbons and Ferson (1985), used the same variables to study asset pricing models. Thus, it is reasonable to presume that data mining is directed at the simpler predictive regressions. The question now is: How does this affect the validity of the subsequent asset pricing research that uses these variables in regressions like (2)? That is the central question addressed by this study.

Table 1 summarizes representative studies that use the regression model (2). It lists the sample

period, number of observations and the lagged instruments employed. It also indicates whether the study uses the full model (2), with both time-varying betas and alphas, or restricted versions of the model in which either the time-varying betas or time-varying alphas are suppressed. Finally, the table summarizes the largest t-statistics for the coefficients α_1 and b_1 reported in each study. If we find that the largest t-statistics are insignificant in view of the joint effects of spurious regression and data mining, then none of the coefficients are significant. We return to this table later and revisit the evidence.

Using regression models like Equation (2), the literature has produced a number of “stylized facts.” First, studies typically find that the intercept is smaller in the “conditional” model (2) than in the “unconditional” model (1): $|\alpha| > |\alpha_0|$. The interpretation of these studies is that the conditional CAPM does a better job of “explaining” average abnormal returns than the unconditional CAPM. Examples with this finding include Cochrane (1996), Ferson and Schadt (1996), Ferson and Harvey (1997, 1999), Lettau and Ludvigson (2001) and Petkova and Zhang (2005). Second, studies typically find evidence of time varying betas: The coefficient estimate for b_1 is statistically significant. Third, studies typically find that the conditional models fail to completely explain the dynamic properties of returns: The coefficient estimate for α_1 is significant, indicating a time-varying alpha. Our objective is to study the reliability of such inferences in the presence of persistent lagged instruments and data mining.

IV. The Simulation Design

The data in our simulations are generated according to:

$$r_{t+1} = \beta_t r_{m,t+1} + u_{t+1}, \quad (4)$$

$$\beta_t = 1 + Z_t^*$$

$$r_{m,t+1} = \mu_{sp} + k Z_t^* + w_{t+1}.$$

We use the simulated data to run the regression model (2), focusing on the t-statistics for the coefficients $\{\alpha_0, \alpha_1, b_0, b_1\}$. The variable Z_t^* in Equation (4) is an unobserved latent variable that drives both expected market returns and time-varying betas. The term β_t in Equation (4) is a time-varying beta coefficient. As Z_t^* has mean equal to zero, the expected value of beta is 1.0. When $k \neq 0$ there is an interaction between the time variation in beta and the expected market risk premium. A common persistent factor drives the movements in both expected returns and conditional betas. Common factors in time-varying betas and expected market premiums are important in asset pricing studies such as Chan and Chen (1988), Ferson and Korajczyk (1995) and Jagannathan and Wang (1996), and in conditional performance evaluation, as in Ferson and Schadt (1996). There is a zero intercept, or “alpha,” in the data generating process (4), consistent with asset pricing theory.

Because the spurious regression problem is driven by biased estimates of the standard error, at least in the context of the regression (3), the choice of the standard error estimator is crucial. In a simulation exercise, it is possible to find an efficient unbiased estimator, since we know the “true” model that describes the simulated regression error. Of course, this will not be known in practice. To mimic the practical reality, the analyst in our simulations uses the popular heteroskedasticity-and-autocorrelation consistent (HAC) standard errors from Newey and West (1987), with an automatic lag selection procedure. The number of lags is chosen by computing the autocorrelations of the estimated residuals, and truncating the lag length when the sample autocorrelations become “insignificant” at longer lags.²

Modeling the Market Return

The market return data, $r_{m,t+1}$, are generated as follows. We set the parameter $\mu_{sp} = 0.0071$ to

² Specifically, we compute twelve monthly sample autocorrelations and compare the values with a cutoff at two approximate standard errors: $2/\sqrt{T}$, where T is the sample size. The number of lags chosen is the minimum lag length at which no higher order autocorrelation is larger than two standard errors.

equal the monthly average return of the S&P500 stock index in excess of the one-month Treasury bill.

The variance of the error is $\sigma_w^2 = \sigma_{sp}^2 - k^2 \text{Var}(Z^*)$, where $\sigma_{sp} = 0.057$ matches the S&P500 return and

$\text{Var}(Z^*) = 0.055$, is the estimated average monthly variance of the market betas on 58 randomly selected

stocks from CRSP over the period 1926-1997.³ The predictor variables follow an autoregressive process:

$$(Z_t^*, Z_t)' = \begin{Bmatrix} p^* & 0 \\ 0 & p \end{Bmatrix} (Z_{t-1}^*, Z_{t-1})' + \begin{pmatrix} \varepsilon_t^* \\ \varepsilon_t \end{pmatrix}. \quad (5)$$

The assumption that the true expected return is autoregressive follows studies such as Lo and MacKinlay (1988), Conrad and Kaul (1988), Fama and French (1988b) and Huberman and Kandel (1990).

The errors $(\varepsilon_t^*, \varepsilon_t)$ are drawn randomly as a normal vector with mean zero and covariance matrix, Σ . The covariance matrix is diagonal, Z_t and Z_t^* are independent, and the true value of δ_1 in the regression (3) is zero. We build up the time-series of the Z and Z^* through the vector autoregression (5), where the initial values are drawn from a normal with mean zero and variances, $\text{Var}(Z)$ and $\text{Var}(Z^*)$. The other parameters that calibrate the simulations, $\{\mu, \sigma_u^2, \rho, \rho^*, \text{ and } \Sigma\}$, are described below.

Modeling Data Mining

Our simulations capture the interaction between spurious regression and data mining, where the instruments to be mined are independent as in Foster, Smith and Whaley (1997). There are L measured

³ We calibrate the variance of the betas to actual monthly data by randomly selecting 58 stocks with complete CRSP data for January, 1926 through December, 1997. Following Fama and French (1997) we estimate simple regression betas for each stock's excess return against the S&P500 excess return, using a series of rolling 5-year windows. For each window we also compute the standard error of the beta estimate. This produces a series of 805 beta estimates and standard error estimates for beta for each firm. We calibrate the variance of the true beta for each firm to equal the sample variance of the rolling beta estimates minus the average estimated variance of the estimator. Averaging the result across firms, the value of $\text{Var}(Z^*)$ is 0.0550. Repeating this exercise with firms that have data from January of 1926 through the end of 2004 increases the number of months used from 864 to 948 but decreases the number of firms from 58 to 46. The value of $\text{Var}(Z^*)$ in this case is 0.0549.

instruments over which the analyst searches for the “best” predictor of the test asset return, based on their Newey-West t-ratios in the univariate regression (3). In Equation (5) Z_t becomes a vector of length L , where L is the number of instruments through which the analyst sifts. The error terms $(\varepsilon_t^*, \varepsilon_t)$ become an $L+1$ vector with a diagonal covariance matrix; thus, ε_t^* is independent of ε_t . Following Ferson, Sarkissian and Simin (2003), we compile a randomly-selected sample of 500 potential instruments, through which our simulated analyst sifts to mine the data. We select the 500 series randomly from a much larger sample of 10,866 potential variables, as described in the appendix. The 500 series are randomly ordered, and then permanently assigned numbers between 1 and 500. When a data miner in our simulations searches through, say 50 series, we use the sampling properties of the first 50 series to calibrate the simulations.

Modeling Persistence

We use our sample of potential instruments to calibrate the amount of persistence in the “true” expected market returns, ρ^* . Ferson, Sarkissian and Simin (2003) argue that if the instruments we see in the literature arise spuriously from data mining, they are likely to be more highly autocorrelated than the underlying “true” expected returns. However, if the instruments in the literature are a realistic representation of expected stock returns, their autocorrelations may be a good proxy for the persistence of the true expected returns. The mean autocorrelation of our 500 variables is 15% and the median is 2%. Of the 13 popular instruments from the literature surveyed by Ferson Sarkissian and Simin (2003, Table 1), the median autocorrelation is 95%. We use $\rho^* = 95\%$ for the results reported in the tables. We also experiment with smaller values of ρ^* as described below. With larger values of ρ^* the biases we document become even more severe.

The autocorrelations of the observed instruments, denoted by the L -vector, ρ , are set equal to the sample autocorrelations of the first L instruments in our 500 potential instruments, rescaled around the

value of 0.95.⁴ The rescaling allows us to center the distribution of autocorrelations at 0.95 while preserving the range in the original data.⁵ The simulations match the unconditional variances of the instruments, $\text{Var}(Z)$, to the data. The first element of the covariance matrix Σ is equal to σ_*^2 . For a typical i -th diagonal element of Σ , denoted by σ_i , the elements of $\rho(Z_i)$ and $\text{Var}(Z_i)$ are given by the data, and we set $\sigma_i^2 = [1-\rho(Z_i)^2]\text{Var}(Z_i)$.

Coefficients of Determination

In the asset pricing regressions there are two ways to think about R-squared. The *predictive* R-squared, R_p^2 , measures the proportion of the variance of the market return that could be predicted if Z^* was observed: $R_p^2 = \text{Var}\{E(r_{t+1}|Z_t^*)\}/\text{Var}(r_{t+1})$. We choose the scale parameter, k , to match the values of R_p^2 and $\text{Var}(Z^*)$, which imply $k^2 = \sigma_{sp}^2 R_p^2 / \text{Var}(Z^*)$.

The R-squares observed when the regressors include a contemporaneous market return, as in (2), will be higher than those of pure predictive regressions. Hence, we define the *contemporaneous* R-squared, $R_c^2 = \text{Var}\{\beta_{r_m,t+1}\}/\text{Var}(r_{t+1})$. This is the R^2 that could in principle be observed by using the contemporaneous market return as the regressor, if the true value of the time-varying beta was known. The two versions of R-squared are monotonically related in our experiments and we report only the predictive R_p^2 in the tables.

The final parameters of the simulations are chosen to match the values of ρ and R_p^2 as follows.

We set $\sigma_\varepsilon^2 = \text{Var}(Z^*) (1-\rho^2)$ and we set σ_u^2 so that the predictive R-squared of the return r_{t+1} is equal to the

⁴ We calibrate the true autocorrelations in the simulations to the sample autocorrelations, adjusted for first order finite sample bias as: $r + (1+3r)/T$, where r is the OLS estimate of the autocorrelation and T is the sample size.

⁵ The transformation is as follows. In the 500 instruments, the minimum bias-adjusted autocorrelation is -0.571, the maximum is 0.999 and the median is 0.02. We center the transformed distribution about 0.95. If the original autocorrelation ρ is less than 0.95 we transform it to:

$$.95 + (\rho - .02)\{(.95 + .571)/(.02 + .571)\}.$$

If the value is above 0.95 we transform it to:

$$.95 + (\rho - .02)\{(.999 - .95)/(.999 - .02)\}.$$

predictive R-squared of the market return, $r_{m,t+1}$.

In summary, the analyst in the simulations estimates the regression model (2). He uses the lagged instrument, Z_t , which is independent of Z_t^* . He identifies the lagged instrument as the one that maximizes the absolute t-ratio in the predictive regression (3). The true values of the coefficients in the regression (2) are $\alpha_0=0$, $\alpha_1=0$, $b_0=1$ and $b_1=0$. Thus, the true alpha is zero as predicted by the asset pricing model and there is no time variation in the beta that is related to the measured instrument. Because of the interaction terms in the data generating process, the returns data will be conditionally heteroskedastic, with an unobservable form. The analyst forms t-ratios for the coefficients using the Newey-West procedure, as described above.⁶

V. Results

Cases with Small Amounts of Persistence

We first consider a special case of the model where we set $\rho^* = 0$ in the data generating process for the market return and true beta, so that Z^* is white noise and $\sigma^2(\varepsilon^*) = \text{Var}(Z^*)$. In this case the predictable (but unobserved by the analyst) component of the stock market return and the betas follow a white noise process. We allow a range of values for the autocorrelation, ρ , of the measured instrument, Z , including values as large as 0.99. For a given value of ρ , we choose $\sigma^2(\varepsilon) = \text{Var}(Z^*)(1-\rho^2)$, so the measured instrument and the unobserved beta have the same variance. We find in this case that the critical values for all of the coefficients are well behaved. Thus, when the true expected returns and betas

⁶ Substituting the three equations of (4) together we can express the data generating process for the return r_{t+1} as:

$$r_{t+1} = (1+Z_t^*)(\mu_{sp} + k Z_t^* + w_{t+1}) + u_{t+1}.$$

Because of the interaction between the two Z_t^* terms, we transform the data generated from this expression to obtain the desired true parameter values in the model, which are $\alpha_0=\alpha_1=b_1=0$, $b_0=1$. The transformed return is given by $a + br_{t+1}$, where the constants are $b = [1 + 3k\mu_{sp} \text{Var}(Z^*)/\text{Var}(r_m)]^{-1}$, $a = \mu_{sp} - b\{\mu_{sp} + k \text{Var}(Z^*)\}$. This transformation makes the means of r_{t+1} and r_{mt+1} equal to each other.

are not persistent, the use of even a highly persistent regressor does not create a spurious regression bias in the asset pricing regressions.

It seems intuitive that there should be no spurious regression problem when there is no persistence in Z^* . Since the true coefficient on the measured instrument, Z , is zero, the error term in the regression is unaffected by the persistence in Z under the null hypothesis. When there is no spurious regression problem there can be no interaction between spurious regression and data mining. Thus, standard corrections for data mining (e.g. White, 2000) can be used without concern in these cases.

In our second experiment the measured instrument and the true beta have the same degree of persistence, but their persistence is not extreme. We fix $\text{Var}(Z) = \text{Var}(Z^*)$ and choose, for a given value of $\rho^* = \rho$, $\sigma^2(\varepsilon) = \sigma^2(\varepsilon^*) = \text{Var}(Z^*)(1-\rho^2)$. For values of $\rho < 0.95$ and all values of R_p^2 the regressions seem generally well-specified, even at sample sizes as small as $T=66$. These findings are similar to the findings of Ferson, Sarkissian and Simin (2003) for the case of the pure predictive regression (3). Thus, the regressions appear to be well specified when the autocorrelation of the true predictor is below 0.95.

Cases with Persistence

Table 2 summarizes simulation results for a case that allows data mining and spurious regression. In this experiment the true persistence parameter ρ^* is set equal to 0.95. The table summarizes the results for time-series samples of $T=66$, $T=350$ and $T=960$. The number of variables over which the artificial agent searches in mining the data, ranges from one to 250. We focus on the two abnormal return coefficients, $\{\alpha_0, \alpha_1\}$ and on the time-varying beta coefficient, b_1 .

Table 2 shows that the means of the coefficient α_0 , the fixed part of the alpha, are close to zero, and they get closer to zero as the number of observations increases, as expected of a consistent estimator. The 5% critical t-ratios for α_0 are reasonably well specified at the larger sample sizes, although there is some bias at $T=66$, where the critical values rise with the extent of data mining. Data mining has little

effect on the intercepts at the larger sample sizes. Since the lagged instrument has a mean of zero, the intercept is the average conditional alpha. Thus, the issue of data mining for predictive variables appears to have no serious implications for measures of average abnormal performance in the conditional asset pricing regressions, provided $T > 66$. This justifies the use of such models for studying the cross-section of average equity returns.

The coefficients α_1 , which represent the time-varying part of the conditional alphas, present a different pattern. We would expect a data mining effect, given that the data are mined based on the coefficients on the lagged predictor in the simple predictive regression. The presence of the interaction term, however, would be expected to attenuate the bias in the standard errors, compared with the simple predictive regression. The table shows only a small effect of data mining on the α_1 coefficient, but a large effect on its t-ratio. The overall effect is the greatest at the smaller sample size ($T=66$), where the critical t-ratios for the intermediate R_p^2 values (10% predictive R^2) vary from about 2.4 to 5.2 as the number of variables mined increases from one to 250. The bias diminishes with T , especially when the number of mined variables is small, and for $L=1$ there is no substantial bias at $T=360$ or $T=960$ months.

The results on the α_1 coefficient are interesting in three respects. First, the critical t-ratios vary by only small amounts across the rows of the table. This indicates very little interaction between the spurious regression and data mining effects. Second, the table shows a smaller data mining effect than observed on the pure predictive regression (see Ferson, Sarkissian and Simin, 2003, Table III). Thus, data mining corrections for predictive regressions will overcompensate in this setting. Third, the critical t-ratios for α_1 become smaller in Table 2 as the sample size is increased. This is just the opposite of what is found for the simple predictive regressions, where the inconsistency in the standard errors makes the critical t-ratios larger at larger sample sizes. Thus, the sampling distributions for time-varying alpha

coefficients are not likely to be well approximated by simple corrections.⁷

Table 2 does not report the t-statistics for b_0 , the constant part of the beta estimate. These are generally unbiased across all of the samples, except that the critical t-ratios are slightly inflated at the smaller sample size ($T=66$) when data mining is not at issue ($L=1$).

Finally, Table 2 shows results for the b_1 coefficients and their t-ratios, which capture the time-varying component of the conditional betas. Here, the average values and the critical t-ratios are barely affected by the number of variables mined. When $T=66$ the critical t-ratios stay in a narrow range, from about 2.5 to 2.6, and they cluster more closely around a value of 2.0 at the larger sample sizes. There are no discernible effects of data mining on the distribution of the time-varying beta coefficients except when the R^2 values are very high. This is an important result in the context of the conditional asset pricing literature, which we characterize as having mined predictive variables based on the regression (3). Our results suggest that the empirical evidence in this literature for time-varying betas, based on the regression model (2), is relatively robust to the data mining.

Suppressing Time-varying Alphas

Some studies in the conditional asset pricing literature use regression models with interaction terms, but without the time-varying alpha component (e.g. Cochrane (1996), Ferson and Schadt (1996), Ferson and Harvey, 1999). Since the time-varying alpha component is the most troublesome term in the presence of spurious regression and data mining effects, it is interesting to ask if regressions that suppress this term may be better specified. Table 3 presents results for models in which the analyst runs regressions without the α_1 coefficient. The results suggest that the average alpha coefficient, α_0 , and its t-statistic are well specified regardless of data mining and potential spurious regression. Thus, once again

⁷ We conducted some experiments in which we applied a simple local-to-unity correction to the t-ratios, dividing by the square root of the sample size. We found that this correction does not result in a t-ratio that is approximately invariant to the sample size.

we find little cause for concern about the inferences on average abnormal returns using the conditional asset pricing regressions, even though they use persistent, data mined lagged regressors.

The distribution of the average beta estimate, b_0 , is not shown in Table 3. The results are similar to those obtained in a factor model regression where no lagged instrument is used. The coefficients and standard errors generally appear well specified. However, we find that the coefficient measuring the time-varying beta is somewhat more susceptible to bias than in the regression that includes α_1 . The b_1 coefficient is biased, especially when $T=66$, and its mean varies with the number of instruments mined. The critical t-ratios are inflated at the higher values of R_p^2 and when more instruments are mined.

Including the time-varying alpha in the regression helps “soak up” the bias so that it will not adversely effect the time varying beta estimate. These experiments suggest that if one is interested in obtaining good estimates of conditional betas, then in the presence of data mining and persistent lagged instruments, the time-varying alpha term should be included in the regression.

Suppressing Time-Varying Betas

There are examples in the literature where the regression is run with a linear term for a time-varying conditional alpha but no interaction term for a time varying conditional beta (e.g. Jagannathan and Wang, 1996). Table 4 considers this case. First, the coefficient for the average beta in the regression with no b_1 term (not shown in the table) is reasonably well specified and largely unaffected by data mining on the lagged instrument. We find that the coefficients for alpha, α_0 and α_1 , behave similarly to the corresponding coefficients in the full model. The estimates of the average alpha are reasonably well behaved, and only mildly affected by the extent of data mining at smaller sample sizes. The bias in α_1 is severe. The bias leads the analyst to overstate the evidence for a time-varying alpha, and the bias is worse as the amount of data mining increases. Thus, the evidence in the literature for time-varying alphas, based on these asset-pricing regressions, is likely to be overstated.

A Cross-section of Asset Returns

We extend the simulations to study a cross-section of asset returns. We use five book-to-market (BM) quintile portfolios, equally weighted across the size dimension, as an illustration. The data are courtesy of Kenneth French. In these experiments the cross-section of assets features cross-sectional variation in the true conditional betas. Instead of $\beta_t = 1 + Z_t^*$, the betas are $\beta_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_t^*$, where the coefficients β_0 and β_1 are the estimates obtained from regressions of each quintile portfolio's excess return on the market portfolio excess return and the product of the market portfolio with the lagged value of the dividend yield. The set of β_0 's is $\{1.259, 1.180, 1.124, 1.118, 1.274\}$, the set of β_1 's is $\{-1.715, 1.000, 3.766, 7.646, 8.970\}$.⁸ The true predictive R-squared in the artificial data generating process is set to 0.5%. This value matches the smallest R-squared from the regression of the market portfolio on the lagged dividend yield with a window of 60 months.

Table 5 shows simulation results for the conditional model with time-varying alphas and betas. The means of the b_0 and b_1 coefficients are shown in excess of their true values in the simulations. The critical t-statistics for both α_1 and b_1 are generally similar to the case where $R_p^2=0.5\%$ in Table 2. As before, there is a large bias in the t-statistic for α_1 that increases with data mining but decreases somewhat with the sample size. The t-statistics for the time-varying betas are generally well specified.

We conduct additional experiments using the cross section of asset returns, where the conditional asset pricing regression suppresses either the time-varying alphas or the time-varying betas. The results are similar to those in Table 5. When the time-varying betas are suppressed there is severe bias in α_1 that diminishes somewhat with the sample size. When time-varying alphas are suppressed there is a mild bias

⁸ The β_1 coefficient for the BM2 portfolio is 1.0, replacing the estimated value of 0.047. When the β_1 coefficient is 0.047 the simulated return becomes nearly perfectly correlated with r_m and the simulation is uninformative. The dividend yield is demeaned and multiplied by 10. The dividend yield has the largest average sample correlation with the five BM portfolios among the standard instruments we examine.

in b_1 .

Revisiting Previous Evidence

In this section we explore the impact of the joint effects of data mining and spurious regression bias on the asset pricing evidence. First, we revisit the studies listed in Table 1. Consider the models with both time-varying alphas and betas. If the data mining searches over 250 variables predicting the test asset return and $T=350$, the 5% cut-off value to apply to the t-statistic for α_1 is larger than 3.8 in absolute value. For smaller sample sizes, the cut-off value is higher. Note from Table 1 that the largest t-statistic for α_1 in Shanken (1990) with a sample size of 360 is -3.57 on the T-bill volatility, while the largest t-statistic for α_1 in Christopherson, Ferson and Glassman (1998) with a sample size of 144 is 3.72 on the dividend yield. This means that the significance of the time-varying alphas in both the studies is questionable. However, the largest t-statistic for b_1 in Shanken (1990) exceeds the empirical 5% cut-off, irrespective of spurious regression and data mining adjustments. This illustrates that the evidence for time-varying beta is robust to the joint effects of data mining and spurious regression bias, while the evidence for time-varying alphas is fragile.

Now consider the model with no time-varying alpha. If the data mining searches over 250 variables to predict the test asset return, the 5% cut-off value to apply to the t-statistic on b_1 is less than 3.5 in absolute value. Cochrane (1996) reports a t-statistic of -4.74 on the dividend yield in a time-varying beta, with a sample of $T=186$. Thus, we find no evidence to doubt the inference that there is a time-varying beta. (However, the significance at a 10% level of the term premium in the time-varying beta, with a t-statistic of -1.76, is in doubt.)

Finally, consider the model with no time-varying beta. If the data mining searches over 25 variables to predict the test asset return, then the 5% cut-off value to apply to the t-statistic on α_1 is larger than 3.1 in absolute value. The largest t-statistic in Jagannathan and Wang (1996) with a sample size of

330 is 3.1. Therefore, their evidence for a time-varying alpha does not survive even with a modest amount of data mining.

An empirical example further illustrates the effects of using the correct cutoffs to evaluate the evidence for time-varying alphas. We use the value-growth spread portfolio excess return as the test asset and a conditional CAPM as the asset pricing model. The lagged conditioning variable is the term spread, measured as the lagged difference between ten-year and one-year, constant-maturity yields from the Federal Reserve Data Base.⁹ The regressions include both time-varying betas and alphas, and the monthly returns cover the period from April of 1953 through the end of 2005. We summarize results for samples of length $T=66$ and $T=350$. We roll the regressions through the overall sample and use the average of the rolling regression coefficients and the average absolute t-ratios as proxies for the expected results, given a randomly chosen sample of each size. The average absolute t-ratios for the two sample sizes are shown below the regression equation:

$$r_{t+1} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Z_t + b_0 r_{m,t+1} + b_1 r_{m,t+1} Z_t + u_{t+1} \quad (6)$$

$T=66$	1.559	2.199	21.32	2.897
$T=350$	0.815	1.978	21.34	0.952

Figure 2 presents time-series plots of the absolute t-ratios for the coefficients, α_1 , from the rolling regressions. We evaluate the significance of the t-ratios using the simulations previously described, assuming $\rho^* = 0.95$ and the true predictive R-squared is 10%. The cutoff levels for the absolute t-statistics with different amounts of data mining are depicted as horizontal lines in the figure.

Figure 2 shows that the expected t-ratio for a time-varying alpha is just above the 5% critical

⁹ We also examined the dividend yield and a short-term Treasury yield and the overall impressions are similar.

cutoff level for $T=66$, and very close to the cutoff for $T=350$ when there is no adjustment for data mining. However, the results vary with the sample period. When we sort the sample t-statistics from high to low, we find that about 1/3 are above the cutoff with no data mining when $T=66$ and 53% are above the cutoff when $T=350$. Thus, we are likely to find evidence of time-varying alphas when there is no adjustment for data mining.

Figure 2 also shows as horizontal bars the 5% critical cutoff levels when the lagged instrument is mined to predict the test asset, searching over $L=25$ and $L=250$ instruments. When $L=25$ and $T=66$, only 15% of the t-statistics lie above the cutoff, and less than 10% exceed the cutoff when $L=250$. None of the t-statistics appear significant when $T=350$ and $L=25$ or $L=250$. Thus, even modest amounts of data mining are likely to change the inferences about time-varying alphas. In particular, given a typical sample with $T=350$, there is no evidence for a time-varying alpha related to the term premium.

VI. Robustness

This section summarizes the results of a number of additional experiments. We extend the simulations to consider examples with more than a single lagged instrument. We also consider asset pricing models with multiple factors, motivated by Merton's (1973) multiple-beta model. We also examine models where the data mining to select the lagged instruments focuses on predicting the market portfolio return instead of the test asset returns. Tables with the results of these additional experiments are available by request.

Multiple Instruments

The experiments summarized above focus on a single lagged instrument, while many studies in the literature use multiple instruments. We modify the simulations, assuming that the researcher mines two independent instruments with the largest absolute t-statistics and then uses both of them in the conditional asset pricing model with time-varying betas and alphas. (Thus there are two a_1 coefficients

and two b_1 coefficients.) These simulations reveal that the statistical behavior of both coefficients are similar to each other and similar to our results as reported in Table 2.

Multiple-beta Models

We extend the simulations to study models with three state variables or factors. In building the three-factor model, we make the following assumptions. All three risk premiums are linear functions of one instrument, Z^* . The factors differ in their unconditional means and their disturbance terms, which are correlated with each other. The variance-covariance matrix of the disturbance terms matches that of the residuals from regressions of the three Fama-French (1993, 1996) factors on the lagged dividend yield.

The true coefficients for the asset return on all three factors and their interaction terms with the correct lagged instrument, Z^* , are set to unity. Thus, the true conditional betas on each factor are equal to $1 + Z^*$.

We find that the bias in the t-statistic for α_1 remains and is similar to the simulation in Table 2. There are no biases in the t-statistics associated with the b_1 's for the larger sample sizes.

Predicting the Market Return

Much of the previous literature looked at more than one asset to select predictor variables. For the examples reported in the previous tables, the data mining is conducted by attempting to predict the excess returns of the tests assets. But a researcher might also choose instruments to predict the market portfolio return. We examine the sensitivity of the results to this change in the simulation design. The results for the conditional asset pricing model with both time-varying alphas and betas are re-examined. Recall that when the instrument is mined to predict the test asset return, there is an upward bias in the t-statistic for α_1 . The bias increases with data mining and decreases somewhat with T . When the instruments are mined to predict the market, the bias in α_1 is small and is confined to the smaller sample size, $T=66$. Mining to predict the market return has little impact on the sampling distribution of b_1 .

VII. Conclusions

We study regression models for conditional asset pricing models in which lagged variables are used to model conditional betas and alphas. We focus on the finite sample properties of the models in view of two important issues. The first issue is data mining and the second is spurious regression, caused by predictor variables that are persistent time series. These two issues have been studied separately in many previous papers, and their combined effects for simple predictive regressions are studied by Ferson, Sarkissian and Simin (2003). This study addresses the joint effects of data mining and spurious regression on models with time-varying alphas and betas.

The conditional asset pricing literature has, for the most part used the same variables that were discovered based on simple predictive regressions, and our analysis characterizes the problem by assuming the data mining occurs in this way. Our results relate to several stylized facts that the literature on conditional asset pricing has produced.

Previous studies find evidence that the intercept, or average alpha, is smaller in a conditional model than in an unconditional model, suggesting for example that the conditional CAPM does a better job of explaining average abnormal returns. Our simulation evidence finds that the estimates of the average alphas in the conditional models are reasonably well specified in the presence of spurious regression and data mining, at least for samples larger than $T=66$. Some caution should be applied in interpreting the common 60-month rolling regression estimator, but otherwise we take no issue with the stylized fact that conditional models deliver smaller average alphas.

Studies typically find evidence of time varying betas based on significant interaction terms. Here again we find little cause for concern. The coefficient estimator for the interaction term is well specified in larger samples, and largely unaffected by data mining in the presence of persistent lagged regressors. There is an exception when the model is estimated without a linear term in the lagged instrument. In this

case the coefficient measuring the time-varying beta is slightly biased. Thus, when the focus of the study is to estimate accurate conditional betas, we recommend that a linear term be included in the regression model.

Studies typically find that even conditional models fail to completely explain the dynamic properties of stock returns. That is, the estimates indicate time-varying conditional alphas. We find that this result is the most problematic. The estimates of time variation in alpha inherit biases similar to, if somewhat smaller than, the biases in predictive regressions. We use our simulations to revisit the evidence of several prominent studies. Our analysis suggest that the evidence for time-varying alphas in the current literature should be viewed with some suspicion. Perhaps, the current generation of conditional asset pricing models do a better job of capturing the dynamic behavior of asset returns than existing studies suggest.

Appendix: The Sample of 500 Instruments

All the data come from the web site Economagic.com: Economic Time Series Page, maintained by Ted Bos. The sample consists of all monthly series listed on the main homepage of the site, except under the headings of LIBOR, Australia, Bank of Japan, and Central Bank of Europe. From the Census Bureau we exclude Building Permits by Region, State, and Metro Areas (more than 4,000 series). From the Bureau of Labor Statistics we exclude all non-civilian Labor force data and State, City, and International Employment (more than 51,000 series). We use the CPI measures from the city average listings, but include no finer subcategories. The PPI measures include the aggregates and the 2-digit subcategories. From the Department of Energy we exclude data in Section 10, the International Energy series.

We first randomly select (using a uniform distribution) 600 out of the 10,866 series that were left after the above exclusions. From these 600 we eliminated series that mixed quarterly and monthly data and extremely sparse series, and took the first 500 from what remained.

Because many of the data are reported in levels, we tested for unit roots using an augmented Dickey-Fuller test (with a zero order time polynomial). We could not reject the hypothesis of a unit root for 361 of the 500 series and we replaced these series with their first differences.

We estimate a sample correlation matrix of the 500 instruments as follows. We take each pair of instruments and compute the sample correlation between the two series, using all of the observations for which our data for the two series overlap. For some pairs, there is no overlapping data. For these cases we substitute the average of all the sample correlations that we can compute.

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TABLE 1

Representative Studies

This table summarizes representative conditional asset pricing and performance evaluation studies. The first column indicates the published study. The second column specifies the lagged instruments used. The next two columns give the sample (*Period*) and the number of observations (*Obs*) on the stock returns. Columns five and six indicate whether the conditional model includes time-varying alpha (α_t) and the time-varying beta (β_t), respectively. The last five columns summarize the regression results. Column seven shows the ratio of an intercept (a pricing error) in the conditional model to that of the unconditional. Columns 8 and 9 report the point estimates of the time-varying alpha, α_1 , and their corresponding t-statistics, $t(\alpha_1)$. Columns 10 and 11 report the point estimates of the time-varying beta coefficient, b_1 , and their corresponding t-statistics, $t(b_1)$. For each predictor, the table reports regression estimates corresponding to the largest in absolute value t-statistics. The abbreviations in the table are as follows. *TB1y* and *TB1vol* are the yield and volatility on the one-month Treasury bill, respectively. *Three-one* is the difference between the lagged returns of a three-month and a one-month T-bill. The variable “*Cay*” is the linear function of consumption, asset wealth, and labor income. *DY* is the dividend yield of the CRSP index. *Term* is a spread between long-term and short-term bonds. *Default* is a spread between low-grade and high-grade corporate bonds.

(1) Reference	(2) Predictor	(3) Period	(4) Obs	(5) α_t	(6) β_t	(7) $ \alpha_0/\alpha_1 $	(8) α_1	(9) $t(\alpha_1)$	(10) b_1	(11) $t(b_1)$
Shanken (90, T3&4)	TB1y TB1vol	5301-8212	360	Yes	Yes	NA	-0.48 -5.70	-1.17 -3.56	1.42 -8.40	5.92 -4.42
Cochrane (96, T8)	DY Term	47Q1-93Q4	188	No	Yes	NA	None	None	-0.53 -0.31	-4.74 -1.76
Ferson & Schadt (96, T2)	TB1y DY Term Default	6801-9012	276	No	Yes	0.72	None	None	NA	NA
Jagannathan & Wang (96, T2)	Default	6307-9012	330	Yes	No	1.53	-65.7	-3.10	None	None
Christopherson et al. (98, T1&2)	TB1y DY Term	7901-9012	144	Yes	Yes	0.77	-0.21 1.22 -0.21	-2.01 3.72 -1.85	NA	NA
Lettau & Ludvigson (01a, T3)	“Cay”	63Q3-98Q3	144	Yes	Yes	0.84	NA	NA	NA	NA
Petkova & Zhang (05, T3)	TB1y DY Term Default	2701-0112	900	No	Yes	0.97	None	None	NA	NA

“None” stands parameter values not used in the study, “NA” stands for results not reported.

TABLE 2

Simulating a Conditional Asset Pricing Model

The table shows the results of 10,000 simulations of the estimates of the conditional asset pricing model, allowing for possible data mining of the lagged instruments. The regression model is:

$$r_{t+1} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Z_t + b_0 r_{m,t+1} + b_1 r_{m,t+1} Z_t + u_{t+1}.$$

T is the number of time series observations, L is the number of lagged instruments mined, R_p^2 is the true predictive R-squared in the artificial data generating process.

R_p^2	T=66			T=350			T=960		
	L=1	L=25	L=250	L=1	L=25	L=250	L=1	L=25	L=250
Means: α_0									
0.001	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.01	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.05	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.1	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	0.000	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.15	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
Critical 5% t-statistics for α_0									
0.001	2.280	2.603	2.855	1.999	2.061	2.146	1.996	2.005	2.115
0.005	2.266	2.540	2.792	1.994	2.058	2.135	2.013	2.002	2.104
0.01	2.253	2.508	2.759	2.000	2.045	2.125	2.016	2.002	2.098
0.05	2.153	2.408	2.728	1.974	1.998	2.094	2.021	1.991	2.100
0.1	2.088	2.388	2.652	1.977	2.000	2.030	2.058	2.008	2.073
0.15	2.065	2.382	2.597	1.968	1.960	1.987	2.069	2.031	2.041
Means: α_1									
0.001	0.001	0.007	-0.003	-0.001	-0.002	0.003	-0.001	-0.002	-0.001
0.005	0.001	0.005	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	0.002	-0.001	-0.002	-0.001
0.01	0.001	0.005	0.000	-0.001	-0.001	0.002	-0.001	-0.002	-0.001
0.05	0.001	0.005	-0.002	-0.001	-0.001	0.002	-0.001	-0.001	-0.002
0.1	0.001	0.005	0.000	-0.001	-0.001	0.002	-0.001	-0.001	0.000
0.15	0.001	0.004	0.000	-0.001	0.000	0.002	-0.001	-0.001	0.001
Critical 5% t-statistics for α_1									
0.001	2.392	3.992	5.305	2.023	3.240	3.891	1.910	3.097	3.748
0.005	2.390	3.961	5.252	2.024	3.206	3.874	1.905	3.092	3.719
0.01	2.387	3.912	5.198	2.025	3.198	3.872	1.902	3.091	3.712
0.05	2.412	3.924	5.237	2.039	3.172	3.855	1.902	3.062	3.706
0.1	2.426	3.912	5.163	2.036	3.159	3.837	1.912	3.040	3.690
0.15	2.423	3.913	5.086	2.024	3.155	3.785	1.909	3.024	3.629
Means: b_1									
0.001	-0.041	-0.017	0.026	-0.003	-0.002	0.011	0.010	0.008	-0.009
0.005	-0.038	-0.019	0.061	-0.003	0.001	0.002	0.009	0.007	-0.005
0.01	-0.038	-0.012	0.055	-0.003	0.000	0.004	0.008	0.004	-0.006
0.05	-0.039	-0.014	0.077	-0.003	0.006	-0.003	0.006	0.001	0.001
0.1	-0.040	-0.018	0.058	-0.003	0.010	0.003	0.005	0.000	0.004
0.15	-0.041	-0.015	0.062	-0.003	0.014	0.007	0.004	0.001	0.000
Critical 5% t-statistics for b_1									
0.001	2.576	2.534	2.634	2.122	2.098	2.175	1.996	2.013	2.075
0.005	2.574	2.579	2.611	2.116	2.138	2.210	2.022	2.036	2.075
0.01	2.583	2.574	2.597	2.114	2.133	2.219	2.027	2.071	2.126
0.05	2.603	2.588	2.597	2.149	2.212	2.336	2.027	2.121	2.219
0.1	2.612	2.614	2.596	2.157	2.297	2.451	2.024	2.188	2.475
0.15	2.610	2.601	2.657	2.156	2.361	2.614	2.018	2.322	2.722

TABLE 3

Simulating a Conditional Asset Pricing Model with no Time-Varying Alpha

The table shows the results of 10,000 simulations of the estimates from the conditional asset pricing model with no time-varying alpha, allowing for the possibility of data mining for the lagged instruments. The regression model is:

$$r_{t+1} = \alpha_0 + b_0 r_{m,t+1} + b_1 r_{m,t+1} Z_t + u_{t+1}.$$

T is the number of time series observations, L is the number of lagged instruments mined, R_p^2 is the true predictive R-squared in the artificial data generating process.

R_p^2	T=66			T=350			T=960		
	L=1	L=25	L=250	L=1	L=25	L=250	L=1	L=25	L=250
Means: α_0									
0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.005	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.01	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.05	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	0.000	0.000	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.1	-0.002	-0.002	-0.003	0.000	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.15	-0.003	-0.003	-0.003	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.001
Critical 5% t-statistics for α_0									
0.001	2.165	2.146	2.123	1.951	1.988	1.947	1.990	1.965	1.934
0.005	2.138	2.114	2.089	1.949	1.981	1.929	1.983	1.961	1.922
0.01	2.132	2.102	2.054	1.944	1.966	1.918	1.992	1.956	1.931
0.05	2.042	2.020	1.986	1.907	1.921	1.917	1.983	1.970	1.921
0.1	1.984	1.956	1.929	1.896	1.910	1.885	1.988	1.962	1.904
0.15	1.949	1.922	1.893	1.900	1.884	1.829	1.993	1.965	1.869
Means: b_1									
0.001	0.007	-0.006	-0.043	-0.008	0.004	-0.001	-0.003	0.013	-0.012
0.005	0.008	-0.017	-0.060	-0.006	-0.003	0.000	-0.003	0.013	-0.008
0.01	0.008	-0.015	-0.064	-0.006	-0.003	-0.004	-0.003	0.010	-0.007
0.05	0.010	-0.031	-0.047	-0.003	-0.003	-0.003	-0.002	0.007	-0.001
0.1	0.010	-0.020	-0.035	-0.002	-0.005	-0.001	-0.002	0.000	0.001
0.15	0.010	-0.029	-0.042	0.000	-0.003	-0.003	-0.002	0.002	-0.002
Critical 5% t-statistics for b_1									
0.001	2.630	2.605	2.639	2.157	2.128	2.218	1.987	2.136	2.147
0.005	2.636	2.646	2.631	2.156	2.145	2.246	1.991	2.162	2.170
0.01	2.661	2.665	2.643	2.163	2.150	2.256	1.987	2.154	2.216
0.05	2.656	2.748	2.739	2.146	2.257	2.441	1.988	2.267	2.476
0.1	2.629	2.811	2.861	2.175	2.378	2.618	1.994	2.395	2.639
0.15	2.607	2.857	3.001	2.201	2.466	2.755	2.008	2.479	2.828

TABLE 4

Simulating a Conditional Asset Pricing Model with no Time-Varying Beta

The table shows the results of 10,000 simulations of the estimates from the conditional asset pricing model with no time-varying beta, allowing for the possibility of data mining for the lagged instruments. The regression model is:

$$r_{t+1} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Z_t + b_0 r_{m,t+1} + u_{t+1}.$$

T is the number of time series observations, L is the number of lagged instruments mined, R_p^2 is the true predictive R-squared in the artificial data generating process.

R_p^2	T=66			T=350			T=960		
	L=1	L=25	L=250	L=1	L=25	L=250	L=1	L=25	L=250
Means: α_0									
0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.01	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.05	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.1	-0.002	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
0.15	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Critical 5% t-statistics for α_0									
0.001	2.239	2.592	2.794	1.991	2.080	2.182	2.004	2.047	2.092
0.005	2.219	2.533	2.764	1.982	2.070	2.147	2.014	2.036	2.084
0.01	2.206	2.511	2.731	1.988	2.069	2.150	2.013	2.018	2.089
0.05	2.124	2.429	2.656	1.970	2.056	2.148	2.019	2.012	2.130
0.1	2.065	2.389	2.607	1.968	2.034	2.158	2.035	2.010	2.160
0.15	2.015	2.356	2.546	1.978	2.033	2.177	2.072	2.010	2.167
Means: α_1									
0.001	0.001	0.000	0.002	-0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.001	0.000
0.005	0.001	0.000	0.001	-0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001
0.01	0.001	0.000	0.001	-0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001
0.05	0.000	0.001	0.003	-0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.002
0.1	0.000	0.001	0.005	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001
0.15	0.000	0.000	0.003	-0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.000
Critical 5% t-statistics for α_1									
0.001	2.307	4.015	5.298	2.068	3.172	3.912	2.020	3.073	3.794
0.005	2.311	4.005	5.169	2.066	3.149	3.890	2.017	3.061	3.761
0.01	2.312	3.998	5.142	2.061	3.148	3.891	2.017	3.058	3.754
0.05	2.322	3.968	5.040	2.054	3.156	3.885	2.003	3.029	3.739
0.1	2.323	3.908	5.041	2.056	3.138	3.849	2.012	3.001	3.713
0.15	2.323	3.901	5.075	2.056	3.124	3.783	2.005	3.003	3.659

TABLE 5

Conditional Asset Pricing Models with a Cross-section of Returns

The table shows the results of 10,000 simulations from a conditional asset pricing model, allowing for the possibility of data mining for the lagged instruments. The dependent variables are book-to-market quintile portfolios. The regression model is:

$$r_{t+1} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Z_t + b_0 r_{m,t+1} + b_1 r_{m,t+1} Z_t + u_{t+1}.$$

T is the number of time series observations and L is the number of lagged instruments mined. The true predictive R-squared in the artificial data generating process is 0.005.

BM quintile	T=66			T=350			T=960		
	L=1	L=25	L=250	L=1	L=25	L=250	L=1	L=25	L=250
Means: α_0									
BM1 (low)	-0.002	-0.001	-0.001	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002
BM2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
BM3	0.000	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.003
BM4	0.001	0.003	-0.001	0.004	0.005	0.006	0.005	0.006	0.007
BM5 (high)	0.004	0.002	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.005	0.008	0.007	0.006
Critical 5% t-statistics for α_0									
BM1 (low)	2.157	2.593	2.705	1.691	1.847	1.914	1.526	1.618	1.651
BM2	2.297	2.523	2.742	1.916	2.067	2.156	1.960	2.034	2.056
BM3	2.296	2.681	2.916	2.093	2.218	2.380	2.143	2.206	2.301
BM4	2.343	2.686	3.060	2.059	2.253	2.399	2.132	2.233	2.368
BM5 (high)	2.369	2.659	3.099	2.135	2.233	2.326	2.269	2.284	2.359
Means: α_1									
BM1 (low)	0.002	0.000	0.001	-0.001	-0.004	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000
BM2	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001
BM3	0.009	0.006	-0.008	-0.001	-0.005	-0.008	0.001	0.007	0.001
BM4	0.019	-0.027	-0.004	0.007	-0.003	0.012	-0.003	-0.003	0.005
BM5 (high)	0.021	0.028	-0.068	0.005	0.028	0.027	0.002	-0.006	-0.009
Critical 5% t-statistics for α_1									
BM1 (low)	2.381	4.088	5.382	2.037	3.243	3.917	1.962	3.115	3.813
BM2	2.390	3.884	4.956	2.025	3.145	3.793	1.971	3.044	3.637
BM3	2.418	4.146	5.720	1.972	3.264	3.999	1.952	3.148	3.804
BM4	2.403	4.263	5.705	2.078	3.240	3.934	1.999	3.179	3.807
BM5 (high)	2.417	4.227	5.594	2.005	3.271	4.076	2.021	3.134	3.817
Means: b_1									
BM1 (low)	0.018	0.007	-0.054	-0.007	0.002	0.051	0.021	-0.001	0.004
BM2	-0.003	0.032	-0.015	0.000	-0.004	-0.009	-0.010	0.000	-0.002
BM3	0.108	0.050	0.128	0.066	-0.033	-0.042	-0.041	-0.004	0.034
BM4	-0.230	-0.050	-0.062	-0.016	-0.054	0.087	0.028	-0.068	0.032
BM5 (high)	-0.479	0.075	-0.389	0.041	0.113	-0.006	-0.136	0.032	0.058
Critical 5% t-statistics for b_1									
BM1 (low)	2.612	2.522	2.548	2.065	2.168	2.181	2.045	2.115	2.061
BM2	2.521	2.591	2.559	2.146	2.126	2.149	2.056	2.056	2.067
BM3	2.573	2.501	2.585	2.083	2.159	2.089	2.103	2.023	2.061
BM4	2.624	2.556	2.552	2.048	2.114	2.091	2.130	2.004	2.035
BM5 (high)	2.628	2.640	2.536	2.177	2.149	2.068	2.084	2.050	1.982

Figure 1

Interaction of Data Mining and Spurious Regression
CRITICAL t-RATIOS: True Persistence is 95%

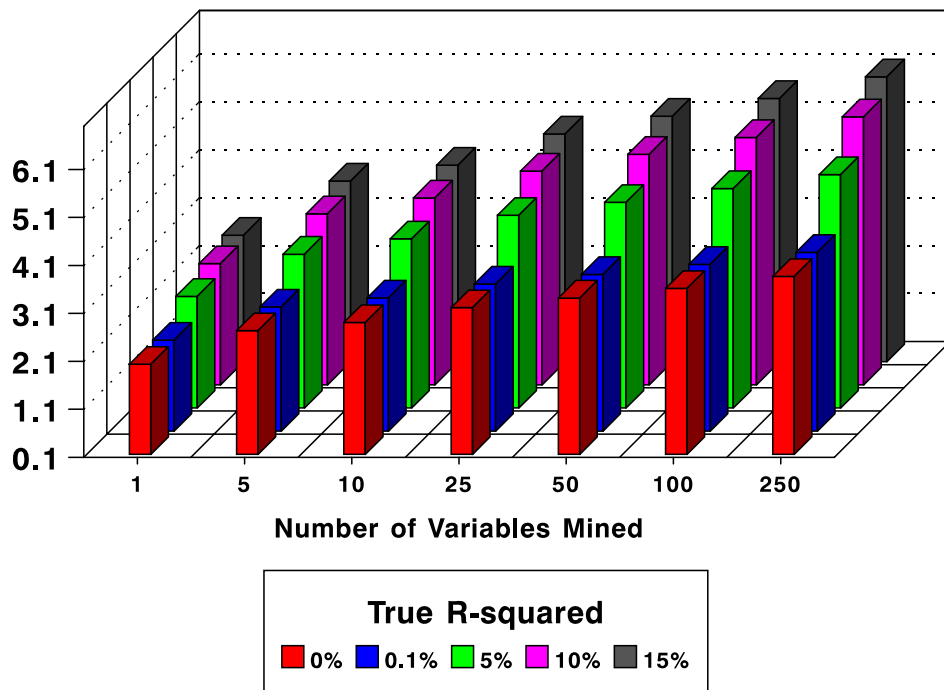


Figure 2