

The Zero Beta Rate

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The Consumption Euler Equation

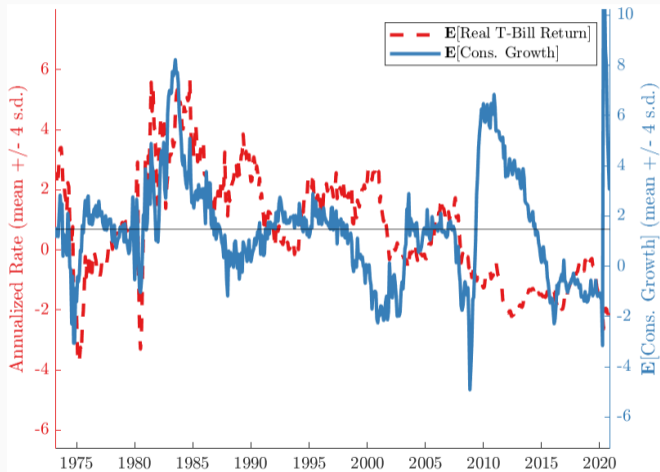
- The consumption Euler equation,

$$C_t^{-\sigma} = \mathbb{E}_t \left[\delta C_{t+1}^{-\sigma} \frac{R_{f,t}}{1 + \pi_{t+1}} \right]$$

is a foundation of modern macro models.

- Problem: it does not describe the data
 - with aggregate consumption C_t , CPI inflation π_t , and Treasury bill yield $R_{f,t}$
 - Hansen and Singleton [1983], Dunn and Singleton [1986], Yogo [2004]

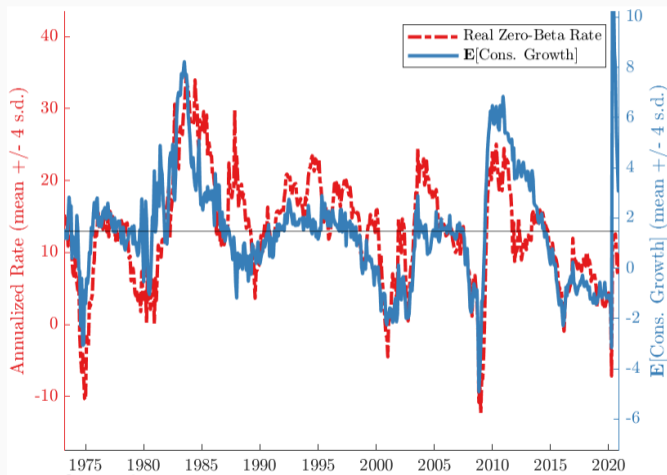
The Consumption Euler Equation: Theory vs Data



- Formal GMM tests reject: Dunn and Singleton [1986], Yogo [2004]

- Maybe habits or Epstein-Zin preferences? but see Canzoneri et al. [2007]
- Maybe wrong C_t , or time preference (δ_t) shocks?
- Our hypothesis: bonds are convenient, stocks are not
 - Cash and deposits have convenience. We don't expect the Euler equation to hold with their return. What if bonds are also convenient?
- Implication: all assets without convenience have same risk-adjusted return
 - call this the “zero-beta rate”
- We first estimate the zero-beta rate, then test the Euler equation

Main Result: A Consumption Euler Equation That Works



- cannot reject in formal GMM tests

- Key idea: time-varying estimate of zero-beta rate (Black [1972])
 - Black et al. [1972], Bali et al. [2017] : zero-beta rate 3-8% above Tsy yield
 - could have been problem with CAPM...
 - but Lopez-Lira and Roussanov [2020] and Kim et al. [2021] (among others) find high returns with no factor exposure
 - Some (weak) evidence on time-variation: Black et al. [1972], Shanken [1986]
- Macro models: large, volatile “Euler shock” needed in DSGE models (Smets and Wouters [2007]; Chari et al. [2009]; Fisher [2015])

1. Construct a time-varying estimate of the zero beta rate
2. Show that it works in the consumption Euler
3. Implications for monetary policy

The Classic Euler Equation: Three Implications

1. Cross-sectional asset pricing: $0 = \mathbb{E}_t \left[\frac{C_{t+1}^{-\sigma}}{C_t^{-\sigma}} \frac{R_{i,t+1} - R_{j,t+1}}{1 + \pi_{t+1}} \right]$
2. Safe bonds: $R_{b,t}^{-1} = \mathbb{E}_t \left[\delta \frac{C_{t+1}^{-\sigma}}{C_t^{-\sigma}} \frac{1}{1 + \pi_{t+1}} \right]$
3. The zero-beta (covariance w/ sdf) rate: $R_{0,t}^{-1} = \mathbb{E}_t \left[\delta \frac{C_{t+1}^{-\sigma}}{C_t^{-\sigma}} \frac{1}{1 + \pi_{t+1}} \right]$

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 - (1) is false (cross-sectional AP e.g. Fama and French [1993])
 - (2) is false (convenience, Hansen-Singleton)
 - idea: test (3) without imposing (1) or (2)
 - first: a modified Euler in which (3) but not (1) or (2) holds

Motivating Euler Equation

- Representative household maximizes

$$\mathbb{E} \left[\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \delta^t \xi_t \left(\frac{C_t^{1-\sigma}}{1-\sigma} + \eta(\theta_t) \right) \right]$$

- C_t : consumption, θ_t : asset holdings
- $\eta(\theta_t)$: “convenience” from asset holdings. role: explain convenience yields (2)
- ξ_t : exogenous shock to marginal utility, martingale independent of consumption
 - independence from consumption derived from primitive conditions in full model
 - role: explain why consumption doesn't price the cross-section (1)
- generalized Euler equation for nominal asset return $R_{i,t+1}$:

$$C_t^{-\sigma} = \frac{\partial \eta(\theta_t)}{\partial \theta_{i,t}} + \mathbb{E}_t \left[\delta \frac{\xi_{t+1}}{\xi_t} C_{t+1}^{-\sigma} \frac{R_{i,t+1}}{1 + \pi_{t+1}} \right]$$

The Zero-Beta Rate

- Consider portfolio with (i) no convenience and (ii) uncorrelated with the SDF.
- R_{t+1} vector of N returns, $w \in \mathbb{R}^N$ weights of a zero-beta portfolio
- For zero-beta, zero-convenience portfolios only,
 1. classic consumption Euler holds,

$$C_t^{-\sigma} = \mathbb{E}_t [w' \cdot R_{t+1}] \mathbb{E}_t \left[\delta \frac{\xi_{t+1}}{\xi_t} \frac{C_{t+1}^{-\sigma}}{1 + \pi_{t+1}} \right] = \underbrace{R_{0,t}}_{\text{zero-beta rate}} \mathbb{E}_t \left[\delta \frac{C_{t+1}^{-\sigma}}{1 + \pi_{t+1}} \right]$$

2. expected portfolio return is zero-beta rate:

$$\mathbb{E}_t [w' \cdot (R_{t+1} - R_{0,t})] = 0$$

- Plan: use second + extra structure to construct zero-beta rate, then test first

Factor Structure Implementation

- Implementation: (i) use stocks, and (ii) assume linear factor SDF,

$$\underbrace{\delta \frac{\xi_{t+1}}{\xi_t} \left(\frac{C_{t+1}}{C_t}\right)^{-\sigma} \frac{1}{1 + \pi_{t+1}}}_{\text{SDF}} = (R_{0,t})^{-1} + \sum_{j=1}^K \omega_{j,t} (F_{j,t+1} - \mathbb{E}_t [F_{j,t+1}]) + \zeta_{t+1}$$

- K factors, time-varying prices of risk $\omega_{j,t}$, ζ_{t+1} uncorrelated with returns
- Constant beta of excess returns to factors:

$$R_{i,t+1} - R_{0,t} = \alpha_i + \sum_{j=1}^K \beta_{ij} F_{j,t+1} + \epsilon_{i,t+1}, \quad \mathbb{E}_t [F_{j,t+1} \epsilon_{i,t+1}] = 0$$

- note: $R_{0,t}$, not $R_{b,t}$, defines excess returns
- Zero-beta spread vs Tsy yield (“convenience spread”) affine in L instruments Z_t :

$$R_{0,t} = R_{f,t} + \gamma' \cdot Z_t$$

- $Z_{0,t} = 1$; extension: $\beta_{ij,t}$ linear in Z_t (ala “conditional CAPM”)

Portfolio Interpretation

- Pretend we know excess returns $R_{t+1} - R_{0,t}$
1. Regress excess returns on factors to get betas
 2. Form minimum variance zero-beta portfolio, $w^*(\gamma, \beta)$
 - minimum variance for efficiency, Ledoit and Wolf [2017] for robustness
 3. Predict returns of portfolio using instruments Z_t ,

$$w^*(\gamma, \beta)' \cdot R_{t+1} - R_{f,t} = \gamma' \cdot Z_t + \kappa_{t+1}$$

Portfolio Interpretation

1. Regress excess returns on factors to get betas
 - moments $\mathbb{E}[F_{j,t+1}\epsilon_{i,t+1}]$, $F_{0,t+1} = 1$
2. Form minimum variance zero-beta portfolio, $w^*(\gamma, \beta)$
 - minimum variance for efficiency, Ledoit and Wolf [2017] for robustness
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$$w^*(\gamma, \beta)' \cdot R_{t+1} - R_{f,t} = \gamma' \cdot Z_t + \kappa_{t+1}$$

- moments $\mathbb{E}[\kappa_{t+1}Z_t] = 0$
- Feasible: both moments at same time with GMM
 - inspired by Shanken [1986] MLE procedure
 - if all factors tradable: non-linear least squares w/ GLS

GMM Moments

- Let $\theta = (\alpha, \beta, \gamma)$ be the relevant parameters of the model.
- Define the orthogonal projection matrix, $H(\beta) = I - \beta\beta'$.
 - If $w \in \mathbb{R}^N$ are portfolio weights, $\hat{w} = H(\beta) \cdot w$ are portfolio weights with zero beta.
- time-series moments (α, β) + instrumented asset pricing moments (γ) :

$$g_{t+1}(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} \epsilon_{t+1}(\theta) \otimes F_{t+1} \\ H(\beta) \cdot (R_{t+1} - R_{f,t} - \gamma' \cdot Z_t) \otimes Z_t \end{bmatrix}$$

- Weight second group by $w^*(\gamma, \beta) = H(\beta)w^*(\gamma, \beta)$ for exact identification,

$$W(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} I & 0 \\ 0 & w^*(\gamma, \beta)w^*(\gamma, \beta)' \otimes I_L \end{bmatrix}$$

- Stock portfolios: size by value by market beta sorted portfolios + industries
- Factors: five equity factors (Fama and French [2015]) + 2 bond factors (Fama and French [1993]). Also: consumption SDF (doesn't matter)
- Instruments: t-bill yield, 12m trailing inflation, unemployment, term spread, excess bond premium (EBP)
- Consumption: real Non-Durable + Services per capita
- Reasoning + Robustness in paper

Table 1: Predicting the Zero-Beta Rate

	(1)	(2)
	GMM	OLS (inf.)
Lrf	1.186 (0.914)	1.187 (0.789)
Lump	0.105 (0.0986)	0.105 (0.0965)
Lebp	-0.603 (0.342)	-0.603 (0.309)
Ltsp	0.310 (0.118)	0.310 (0.119)
L2cpi_rolling	-2.582 (1.175)	-2.586 (1.048)
Constant	0.718 (0.137)	0.716 (0.134)
Wald/F	21.46	5.012
p-value	0.000663	0.000167
Observations	574	574

Standard errors in parentheses

The Zero Beta Rate

- Significant predictability (Wald/F); minimum-variance helps here
- High constant: 0.7%/mo excess return (not too surprising)
 - 3.2% std. dev., 0.8 annual Sharpe ratio vs. T-bills
- Spread increasing in rate level (Nagel [2016]), statistically weak)
- Spread decreasing in inflation (contra Cohen et al. [2005] story?)
- inverted TS, high EBP, low ump: bad expected returns when recession soon
 - macro variables help predict these stock returns

- Our perspective: $R_{0,t} - R_{f,t} = \mathbb{E}_t [R_{p,t+1} - R_{f,t}]$ represents convenience yield
- Alternative perspective: $R_{p,t+1} - R_{f,t}$ is an omitted factor
 - with a high Sharpe ratio, uncorrelated with all other factors
 - by no-arbitrage, there is an SDF that prices the stocks + Treasury bills
- The two perspectives can co-exist within the same model
 - Frazzini and Pedersen [2014]
 - and with other stories: Hong and Sraer [2016], Bali et al. [2017]
- Our perspective can explain why $R_{0,t}$ predicts consumption growth

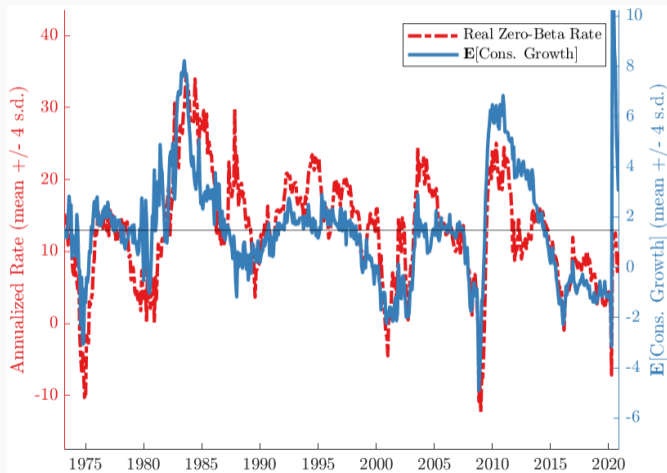
The Linearized Euler Equation

- Linearizing the consumption Euler equation:

$$E_t[\Delta c_{t+1}] = \sigma^{-1} \ln(\delta) + \sigma^{-1}(r_{0,t} - E_t[\pi_{t+1}])$$

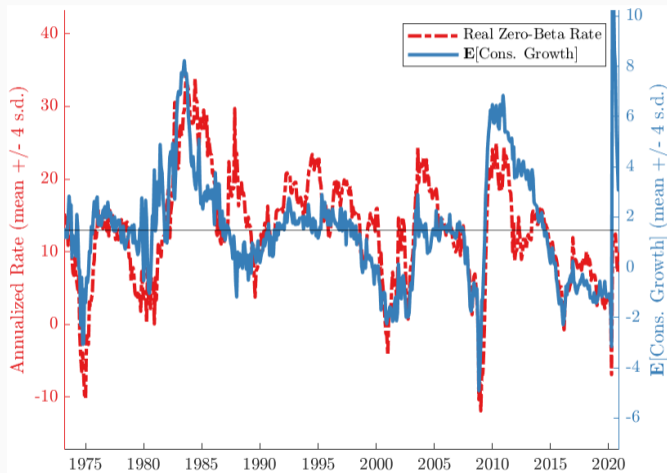
- our figures line up the means, scale by standard deviations
- in effect, choosing δ using the means and σ using the std. devs.
- Next:
 1. revisit figures
 2. compare $r_{0,t}$ and $r_{f,t}$ as predictors of Δc_{t+1}
 3. discuss weak identification problem
 4. conduct weak-i.d.-robust GMM inference

Main Result: A Consumption Euler Equation That Works



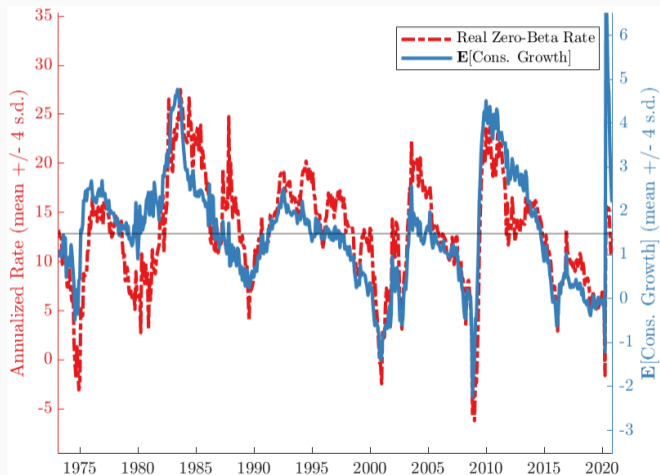
- Predictive regressions for inflation and consumption growth using Z_t

Without Consumption Factor



- No visually detectable differences when omitting consumption factor

Robustness: Ridge Regressions

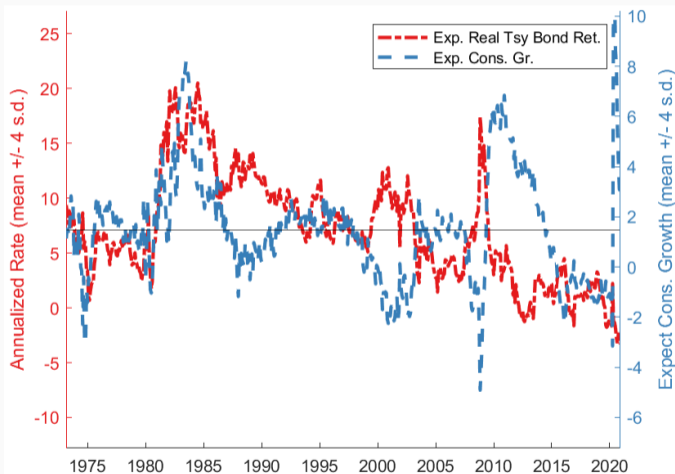


- γ and consumption prediction penalized using ridge, 10-fold cross-validation

What Can Go Wrong

- Too many factors: estimates noisy but unbiased
- Omitted factors:
 - omitted factor with constant risk price: only level biased, Euler still works
 - omitted factor with one-month ahead return predictability by our instruments: bias
- Too many instruments: weak identification (discussed next)
- Not enough instruments:
 - need at least two
 - bias if omitted instrument predicts either consumption growth or portfolio returns

Placebo: 6-11y Treasury Bond Returns



- convenience (bonds) and predictable risk premium [Campbell and Shiller, 1991]

- Two predictive regressions:

$$\Delta c_{t+1} = \sigma^{-1} \ln(\delta) + (\sigma^{-1} \gamma^c)' \cdot Z_t + \epsilon_{t+1}^c,$$
$$r_{p,t+1} - \pi_{t+1} = (e_b + \gamma - \gamma^\pi)' \cdot Z_t + \epsilon_{t+1}^0.$$

- Define $\hat{\gamma} = \sigma^{-1} \gamma^c - e_b + \gamma - \gamma^\pi$
- Our graphs show $\hat{\gamma}' \cdot E[Z_t Z_t'] \cdot \hat{\gamma}$ is small (point estimates)
- Next steps:
 1. Test statistically if non-linear Euler can be rejected
 - 1.1 challenge: potential for weak instruments
 2. Test economically: do monetary shocks affect $\hat{\gamma}' \cdot Z_t$ (at point estimates)?

- Big picture: Stock and Wright [2000] meets Cochrane [2009]
 1. Conjecture value of σ_0 (null hypothesis)
 2. Estimate $\hat{\theta}(\sigma_0)$ using previous procedure
 - 2.1 constructs same zero-beta rate given σ_0
 3. Estimate $\hat{\delta}(\sigma_0)$ using $\mathbb{E}[\delta(\frac{C_{t+1}}{C_t})^{-\sigma_0} \frac{1}{1+\pi_{t+1}} R_{0,t}(\gamma)] = 1$
 4. Test using unused moments $\mathbb{E}[(\delta(\frac{C_{t+1}}{C_t})^{-\sigma_0} \frac{1}{1+\pi_{t+1}} R_{0,t}(\gamma) - 1)Z_{l,t}] = 0$
- S-set: values of σ_0 not rejected with 95% confidence

GMM Again

- OLS moments (α, β) + asset pricing moments (γ) + cons. Euler (δ) :

$$g_{t+1}(\theta, \delta, \sigma_0) = \begin{bmatrix} \epsilon_{t+1}(\theta) \otimes F_{t+1}(\sigma_0) \\ H(\beta) \cdot (R_{t+1} - R_{0,t}(\gamma)) \otimes Z_t \\ (\delta (\frac{C_{t+1}}{C_t})^{-\sigma_0} \frac{1}{1+\pi_{t+1}} R_{0,t}(\gamma) - 1) \otimes Z_t \end{bmatrix}$$

- Weight matrix:

$$W(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} I & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & w^*(\gamma, \beta) w^*(\gamma, \beta)' \otimes I_L & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e_0 e_0' \end{bmatrix}$$

- Same exact identification scheme for (α, β, γ)
 - will recover same zero-beta rate given σ_0
- Exactly identify δ by average cons. Euler

Testing with Unused Moments

- For $l > 0$, the unused moments are

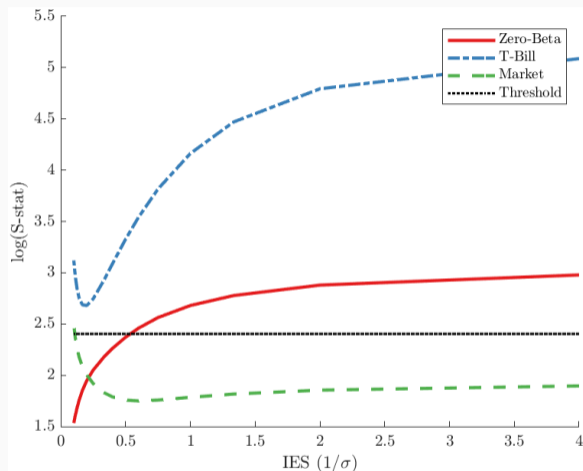
$$g_{l,t+1}(\theta, \delta, \sigma_0) = \left(\delta \left(\frac{C_{t+1}}{C_t} \right)^{-\sigma_0} \frac{1}{1 + \pi_{t+1}} R_{0,t}(\gamma) - 1 \right) Z_{l,t}$$

- Let $\psi_{Test}(\sigma_0)$ be the vector $\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T g_{l,t}(\hat{\theta}_1(\sigma_0), \hat{\delta}(\sigma_0), \sigma_0)$
- Let $\hat{V}_{Test}(\sigma_0)$ be the (robust) covariance matrix of $\psi_{Test}(\sigma_0)$
- Following Stock and Wright [2000]: under null of $\sigma = \sigma_0$,

$$\hat{S}(\sigma_0) = \psi_{Test}(\sigma_0)' \cdot \hat{V}_{Test}(\sigma_0)^{-1} \cdot \psi_{Test}(\sigma_0) \rightarrow^d \chi_L^2$$

- robust to σ_0 weak i.d., not most powerful (Andrews [2016])
- Also show results for $R_{f,t}$ and $R_{m,t+1}$ in place of $R_{0,t}$ (Yogo [2004])

S-Set Results



- $R_{f,t}$: rejected $R_{m,t+1}$: not identified $R_{0,t}$: reject $\sigma \leq 1.5$, not reject $\sigma \geq 1.5$
- Nothing can reject for $\sigma \geq 20$ (COVID, rare disaster)

- The consumption Euler equation holds when applied to the zero-beta rate
 - in contrast to using a Treasury bill rate (rejected) or the market return (unidentified)
- Robustness:
 - Test assets: ▶ More sorts
 - Factors: ▶ linear cons. , ▶ Mkt+cons. , ▶ FF3+cons. , ▶ linear betas
 - Instruments: ▶ +shadow spread , ▶ +lag cons. , ▶ +CAPE , ▶ BAAS instead of EBP
 - Others: ▶ Non-durable goods cons. only , ▶ pre-COVID

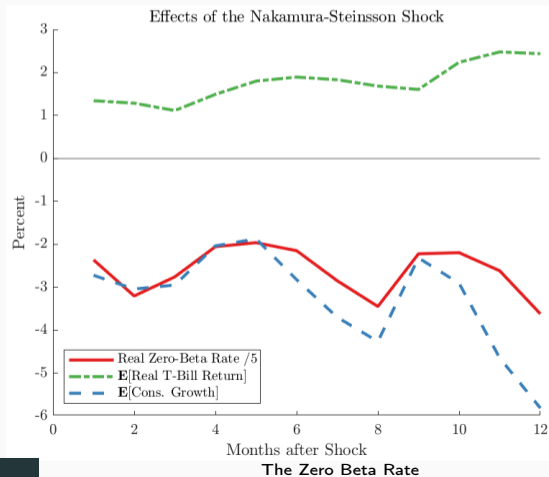
- When recessions are imminent (inverted term structure, high credit spreads, but currently low unemployment), agents expect:
 1. negative consumption growth (generates desire to save)
 2. low risk-adjusted (zero-beta) stock returns (offsets desire to save)
- Interest rates don't enter this calculation
 - short-dated bonds are held for convenience
 - longer-dated bonds inherit some convenience via financing
- Natural question: how does monetary policy change the zero-beta rate?

Monetary Shocks and the Zero-Beta Rate

- Is the convenience yield endogenous (concern of Chari et al. [2009])?
- Tension:
 - fed funds hike raise rates more generally
 - but lower consumption growth
 - inconsistent with standard Euler equation
- Suppose $R_{0,t} = \gamma' \cdot Z_t$ is structural
- How do Nakamura and Steinsson [2018] shocks affect $\gamma' \cdot Z_t$?
 - updated shocks from Acosta [2022]
 - paper: Romer and Romer [2004] shocks

Effects of NS Shocks

- change from $t-1$ to $t+h$ regressed on NS shock in month t
- rates scaled (1 = 1:1 with fed funds)



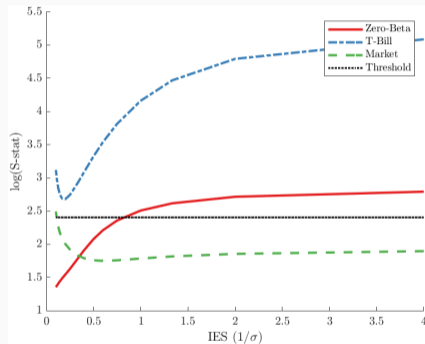
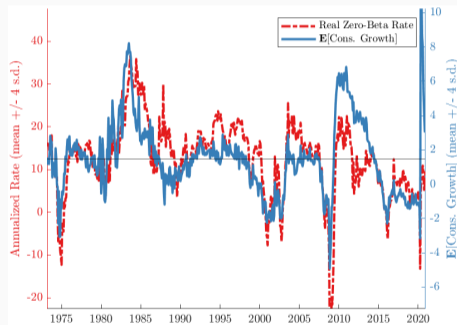
- In response to a surprise monetary hike:
 - Data: consumption growth falls, then (maybe) rises (“hump”)
 - Vanilla NK: consumption drops on impact, then grows
 - standard fix: habits
 - but habits don't fix Euler (Canzoneri et al. [2007]), inconsistent with MPCs (Auclert et al. [2020])
- Our story: zero-beta rate falls on impact, cons. gr. falls, vanilla Euler works
 - standard errors too large to test reversion (second part of “hump”)
 - alternative to sticky information hypothesis (Auclert et al. [2020])

Related Papers on Stock/Bond Segmentation

- Itskhoki and Mukhin [2021] exchange rate disconnect
- ROE on arbitrages (say, JPY-USD CIP) is 3-7% over bills (Boyarchenko et al. [2018])
- High return on physical capital: Gomme et al. [2011], Farhi and Gourio [2018]
- Beta anomaly (Frazzini and Pedersen [2014], Hong and Sraer [2016])
- Corporate finance implications thereof (Baker and Wurgler [2015], Baker et al. [2020])
- Equity premium puzzle (Bansal and Coleman [1996])

- The intertemporal price of consumption is not the yield on a Treasury
- The consumption Euler works– if you use the zero-beta rate
- This changes our understanding of monetary policy:
 - monetary shocks substantially alter convenience yields

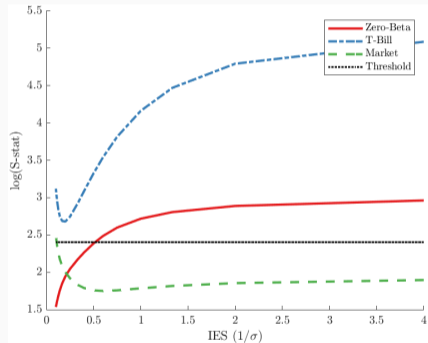
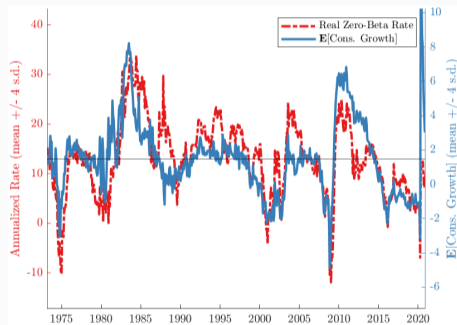
FF5 Sorted + Industry Portfolios



- 3x3x3 beta by size by {value, prof., inv.} + 49 industry portfolios

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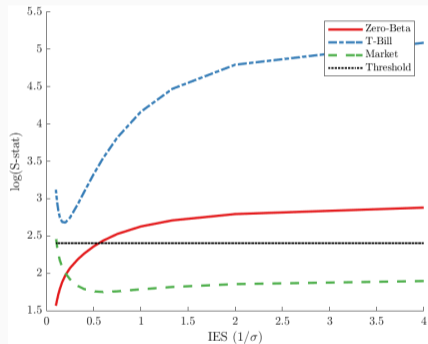
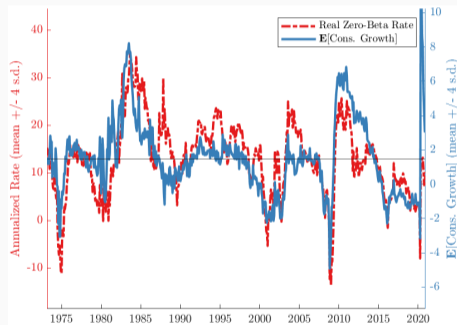
No Consumption Factor



- No consumption-related factor

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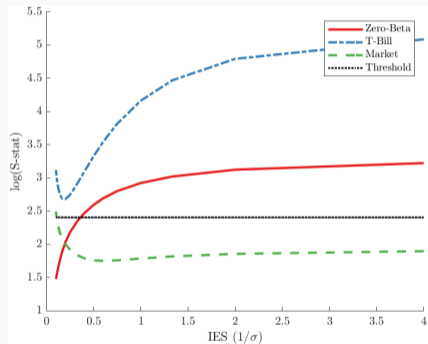
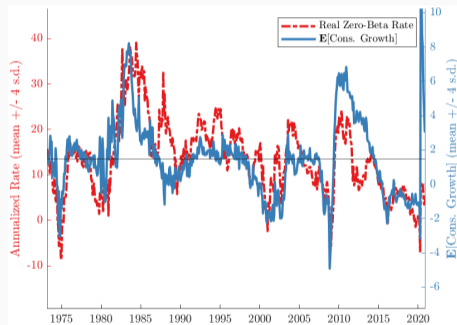
Linear Consumption Factor



- Linear consumption factor + separate inflation factor

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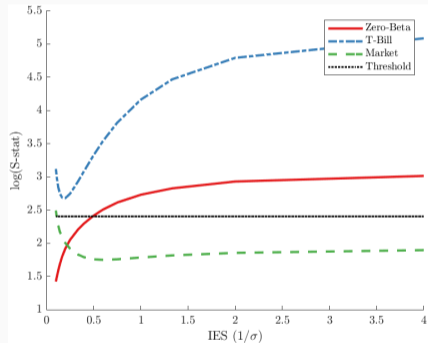
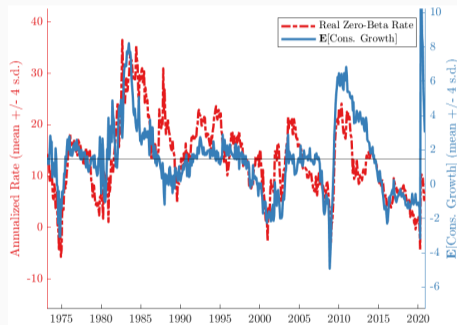
Market Factor



- Market + Non-Linear Consumption factor only

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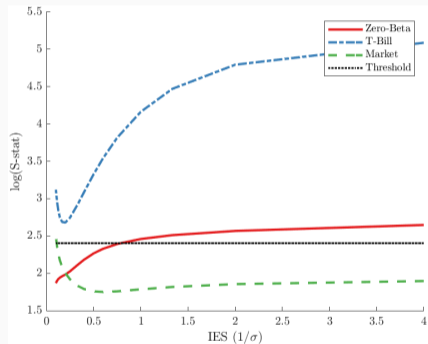
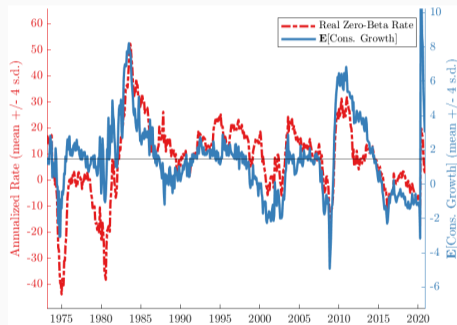
FF3 Factors



- Market, Size, Value, and Non-Linear Consumption factors only

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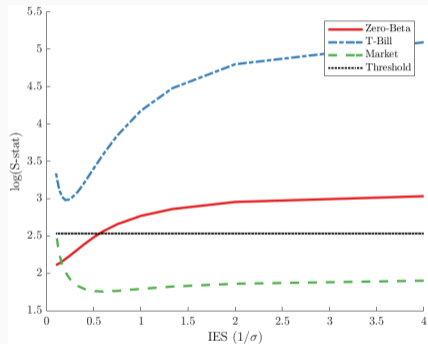
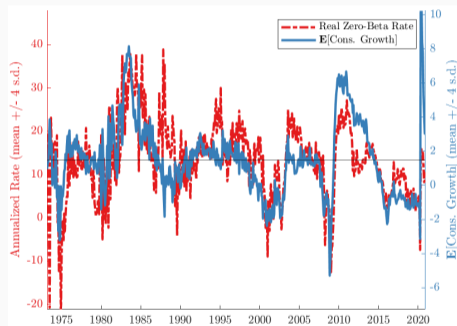
Linear Betas



- $\beta_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot Z_t$; 37 factors (6 factors * 6 Z + 1 consumption-related)

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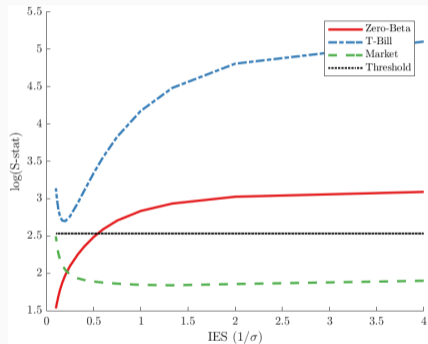
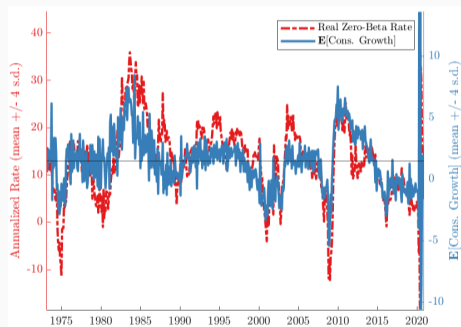
With Shadow Spread Instrument



- Includes Lenel et al. [2019] bill vs. term-structure-extrapolated bill as instrument

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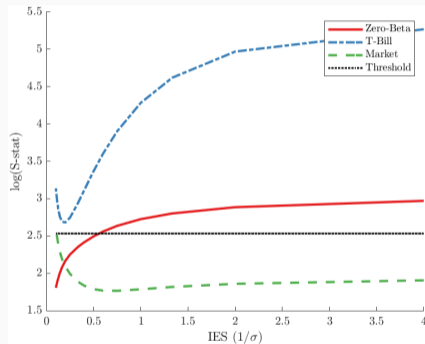
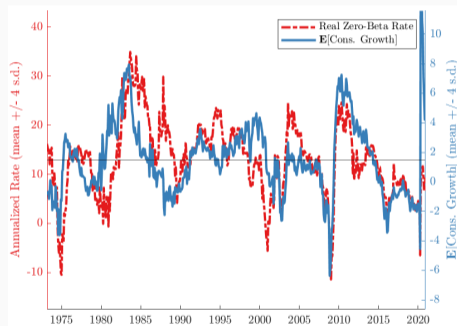
With Lagged Consumption Instrument



- Includes Δc_{t-1} as instrument

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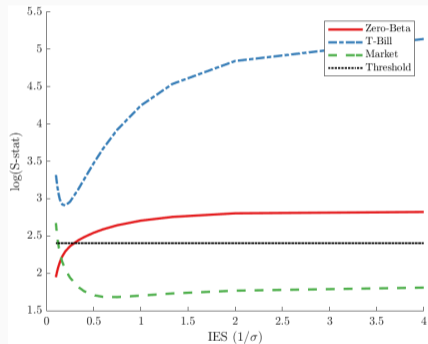
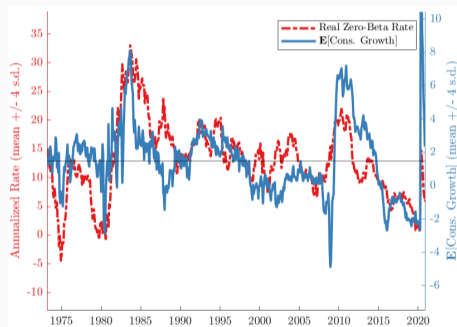
With CAPE Instrument



- Includes Campbell-Shiller cyclically-adjusted P/E ratio as instrument

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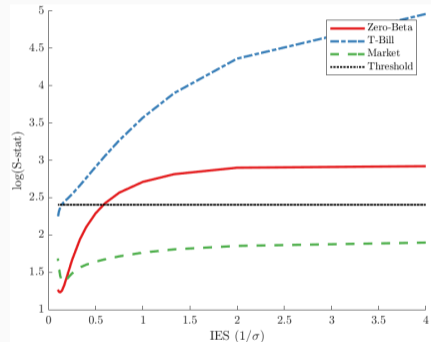
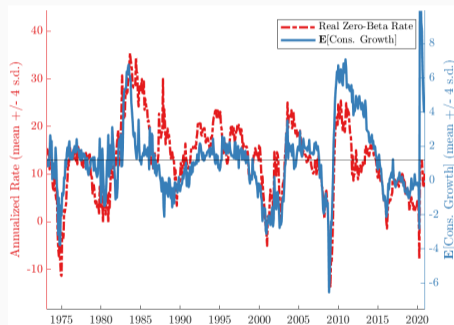
With BAA-Tsy in place of EBP



- Includes Moody's BAA-Treasury spread instead of EBP as instrument

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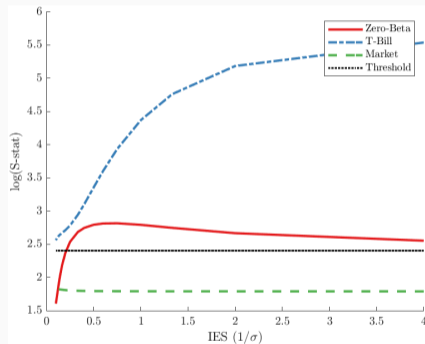
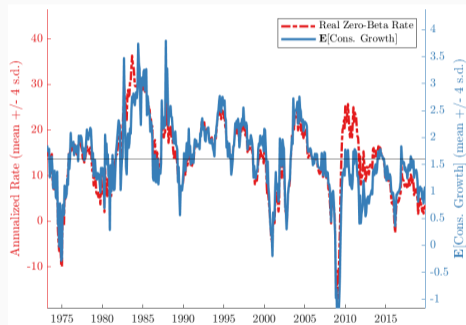
With Non-Durable Goods Consumption Only



- Consumption is real non-durable goods consumption per capita

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Without COVID



- Data sample ends in December 2019

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