Theoretical Foundations of Buffer Stock Saving

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Drawbacks of Numerical Solutions

A Black Box

- Can Construct Solution to Model Without Really Understanding It
- Hard Even To Be Sure Your Numerical Solution Is *Right*
- Little Intuition for How Results Might Change With
  - Calibration
  - Structure
- *Very* Hard To Teach!

I Am A *Big* Fan Of Numerical Methods

- Have Done A Good Deal Of Work With Them Myself
- But As A Result, Have Felt All These Drawbacks Keenly

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The Gap This Paper Fills

Foundations For Microeconomic Household's Problem With

- Uncertain Labor Income
- No Liquidity Constraints
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Key Result

Restrictions On Parameter Values Such That

- Problem Defines A Contraction Mapping
  - $\Rightarrow \exists$ A Unique Consumption Function $\mathrm{c}(m)$
- There Is A 'Target' Ratio Of Assets to Permanent Income
  - Requires A Key 'Impatience' Condition To Hold
  - Good News
    - Condition Is Weaker (Easier To Satisfy) Than Previous Papers Imposed

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Limit as horizon T goes to infinity of

$$\mathrm{v}_{T-n} = \max\ \mathbb{E}_t \left[\sum_{i=0}^{n} \beta^i \mathrm{u}(\mathrm{c}_{t+i}) \right]$$

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathrm{a}_t &= \mathrm{m}_t - \mathrm{c}_t \\
\mathrm{k}_{t+1} &= \mathrm{a}_t \\
\mathrm{b}_{t+1} &= \mathrm{k}_{t+1}\mathrm{R} \\
\mathrm{p}_{t+1} &= \mathrm{p}_t \underbrace{\mathbf{\Phi}\Psi_{t+1}}_{\equiv \mathbf{\Phi}_{t+1}} \\
\mathrm{m}_{t+1} &= \mathrm{b}_{t+1} + \mathrm{p}_{t+1}\boldsymbol{\xi}_{t+1},
\end{aligned}$$

$$\boldsymbol{\xi}_{t+n} = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{with probability } \wp > 0 \\ \boldsymbol{\theta}_{t+n}/(1-\wp) & \text{with probability } (1-\wp) \end{cases} \tag{1}$$

- $u(\bullet) = \bullet^{1-\rho}/(1-\rho)$; $\mathbb{E}_t[\Psi_{t+n}] = \mathbb{E}_t[\boldsymbol{\xi}_{t+n}] = 1\ \forall\ n > 0$; $\beta < 1, \rho > 1$

Surely This Problem Has Been Solved?

No.

- Can't Use Stokey et. al. theorems because CRRA utility
- Lit thru ? Can't Handle Permanent Shocks
- Must Use Boyd's 'Weighted' Contraction Mapping Theorem
- Surprisingly Subtle

Fortunately, the Conclusions Are Simple!

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Benchmark: Perfect Foresight Model

Definitions:

Absolute Patience Factor	Þ	$=$	$(\mathsf{R}\beta)^{1/\rho}$
Return Patience Factor	Þ_{R}	$=$	$\text{Þ}/\mathsf{R}$
Perfect Foresight Growth Patience Factor	$\text{Þ}_{\boldsymbol{\Phi}}$	$=$	$\text{Þ}/\boldsymbol{\Phi}$

Name	Condition	Implication
(AIC) Absolute Impatience Condition	$\text{Þ} < 1$	$c \downarrow$ over time
(RIC) Return Impatience Condition	$\text{Þ}_{\mathsf{R}} < 1$	$c/a \downarrow$ over time
(GIC) Growth Impatience Condition	$\text{Þ}_{\boldsymbol{\Phi}} < 1$	$c/p \downarrow$ over time

When Does A Useful Limiting Solution Exist?

Finite Human Wealth (FHWC) condition:

$$\mathbf{\Phi} < \mathsf{R} \tag{2}$$

Return Impatience Condition:

$$\text{Þ}_{\mathsf{R}} < \mathsf{R} \tag{3}$$

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What If There Are Liquidity Constraints?

- FHWC is *not* necessary for solution to exist
- Other Key Condition For Useful Solution is 'Perfect Foresight Finite Value of Autarky Condition (PF-FVAC)':

$$\beta \mathbf{\Phi}^{1-\rho} < 1 \tag{4}$$

- Without RIC, Constraints Are Irrelevant
  - Because Wealth Always Wants To Rise, So Constraint Never Binds

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Liquidity Constraints and Uncertainty

- Introduce permanent shocks to income
- Finite Value of Autarky Condition Becomes

$$\text{FVAC:}\ \ 0 < \overbrace{\beta\underline{\underline{\mathbf{\Phi}}}^{1-\rho}}^{\equiv\underline{\underline{\beth}}\ =\ \text{VAF}} < 1 \tag{5}$$

$$0 < \beta < \underline{\underline{\mathbf{\Phi}}}^{\rho-1},$$

Contraction Mapping Requirements

Finite Value of Autarky Condition: Same As In Liq Constr Problem!

$$\text{FVAC:}\ \ 0 < \overbrace{\beta\underline{\underline{\mathbf{\Phi}}}^{1-\rho}}^{\equiv\underline{\underline{\beth}}\ =\ \text{VAF}} < 1 \tag{6}$$

$$0 < \beta < \underline{\underline{\mathbf{\Phi}}}^{\rho-1},$$

'Weak Return Impatience Condition' (WRIC)

$$0 \leq \quad \wp^{1/\rho}\text{Þ}_{\mathsf{R}} \quad < 1 \tag{7}$$

Requirement For Existence Of A Target

Definitions: 'Uncertainty-Adjusted' Growth:

$$\underline{\mathbf{\Phi}} \equiv \mathbf{\Phi}\underline{\Psi} < \mathbf{\Phi}$$

Adjusted Growth Patience Factor:

$$\text{GPF-Mod:} \quad \text{Þ}_{\underline{\mathbf{\Phi}}} = \text{Þ}/\underline{\mathbf{\Phi}} = \mathbb{E}[\text{Þ}/(\mathbf{\Phi}\Psi)] \tag{8}$$

Growth Impatience Condition:

$$\text{GIC-Mod:} \quad \text{Þ}_{\underline{\mathbf{\Phi}}} < 1, \tag{9}$$

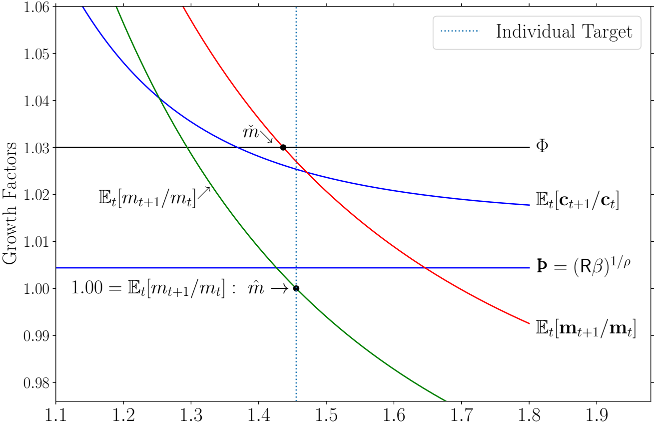
Why? Because it can be shown that

$$\lim_{m_t \to \infty} \mathbb{E}_t \left[\frac{m_{t+1}}{m_t} \right] = \text{Þ}_{\underline{\mathbf{\Phi}}} \tag{10}$$

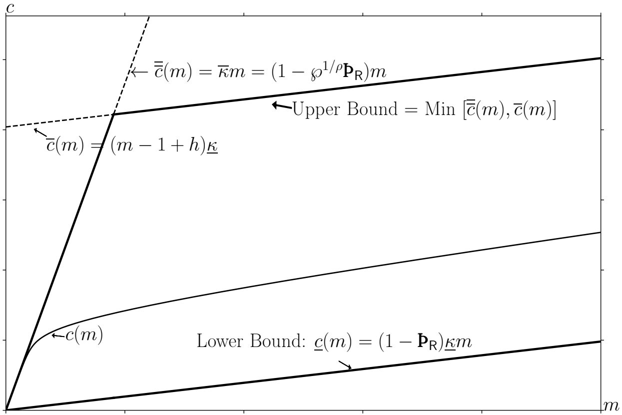
Five Propositions

1. $\lim_{m_t \to \infty} \mathbb{E}_t[\mathrm{c}_{t+1}/\mathrm{c}_t] = \text{Þ}$
2. $\lim_{m_t \to 0} \mathbb{E}_t[\mathrm{c}_{t+1}/\mathrm{c}_t] = \infty$
3. $\exists$ a unique target value of m, called $\check{m}$
4. $\mathbb{E}_t[\mathrm{c}_{t+1}/\mathrm{c}_t | m_t = \check{m}] = \mathbf{\Phi} - \epsilon$
5. $\left(\frac{d\mathbb{E}_t[\mathrm{c}_{t+1}/\mathrm{c}_t]}{dm_t}\right) < 0$

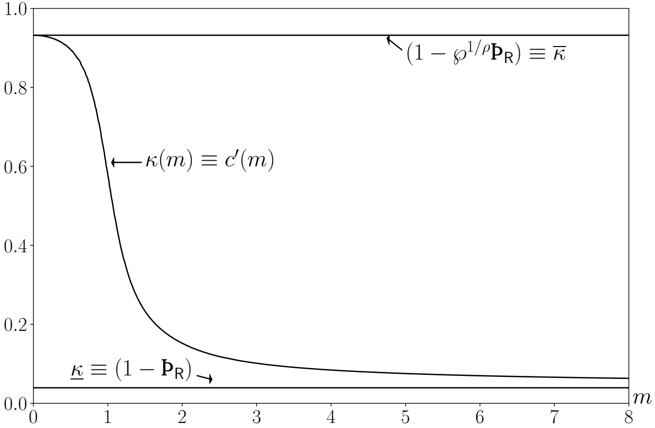
The Target Saving Figure



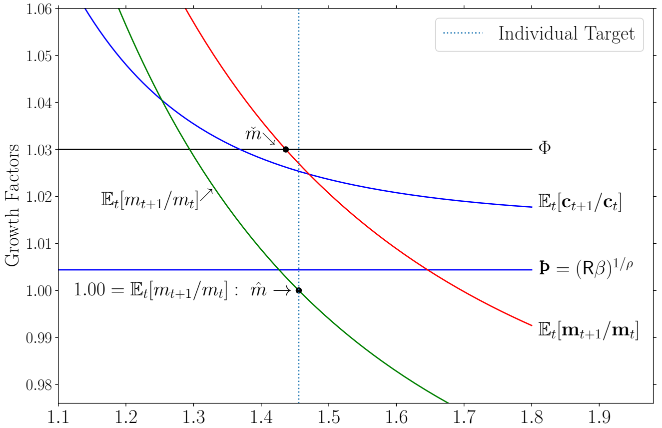
Bounds On the Consumption Function



The Marginal Propensity to Consume

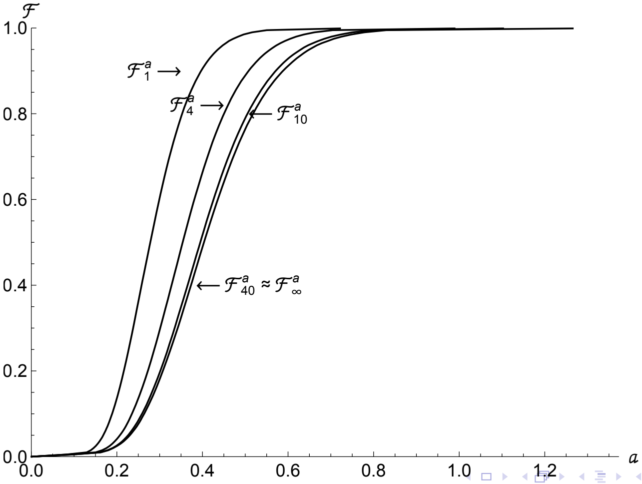


The Consumption Function and Target Wealth



Convergence To The Invariant Distribution

? Proves Existence of an Invariant Distribution of m, c, a, etc.



Balanced Growth Equilibrium

Achieved When Cross Section Distribution Reaches Invariance

$$\mathrm{Y}_{t+1}/\mathrm{Y}_t = \mathrm{C}_{t+1}/\mathrm{C}_t \quad = \quad \mathbf{\Phi} \tag{11}$$

Fisherian Separation Fails, Even Without Liquidity Constraints!

Insight:

- Precautionary Saving $\approx$ Liquidity Constraints
- If $\grave{\mathrm{c}}(m)$ is solution for constrained consumer,

$$\lim_{\wp \downarrow 0} \mathrm{c}(m; \wp) = \grave{\mathrm{c}}(m) \tag{12}$$

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The MPC Out Of Permanent Shocks

https://www.econ2.jhu.edu/people/ccarroll/papers/MPCPerm.pdf

Lots of Recent Papers Trying to Measure the MPCP

Paper Proves:

- MPCP < 1
- But not a lot less:
    - 0.75 to 0.95 (annual rate) for wide range of parameter values

- Defined Conditions Under Which Widely Used Problem Has Solution
  - Finite Value of Autarky Condition Guarantees Contraction (with WRIC)
  - Growth Impatience Condition Prevents $m \to \infty$
- Economy Of Buffer Stock Consumers Exhibits Balanced Growth
  - Even In Absence of General Equilibrium Adj of Interest Rate