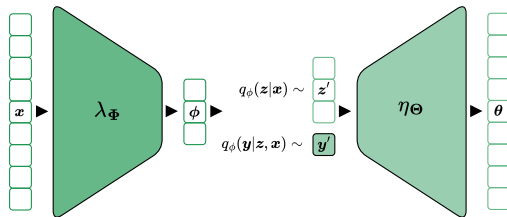


Learning Disentangled Representations with Semi-Supervised Deep Generative Models

David B. Hoffmann

December 4, 2025



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2 Method

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5 Appendix

Fully specified and supervised graphical models which are interpretable

Unsupervised variational auto-encoders which are uninterpretable

Fully specified and supervised graphical models which are interpretable



GAP

Unsupervised variational auto-encoders which are uninterpretable

Fully specified and supervised graphical models which are interpretable



Semi-Supervised VAE [5]

Unsupervised variational auto-encoders which are uninterpretable

What do Narayanaswamy et al. [5] introduce in their paper "Learning Disentangled Representations with Semi-Supervised Deep Generative Models"?

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- Disentanglement refers to learning independent factors that explain the data as previously introduced by β -VAE [2] or β -TCVAE [1].
- Semi-supervised learning takes place where only part of the data is labelled. In "Semi-supervised Learning with Deep Generative Models" Kingma et al. [4] first use this concept to improve generative and classification capabilities of variational auto encoders (VAE).

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- Narayanaswamy et al. combine both concepts to bridge the gap between fully specified graphical models and fully unsupervised VAE representations.

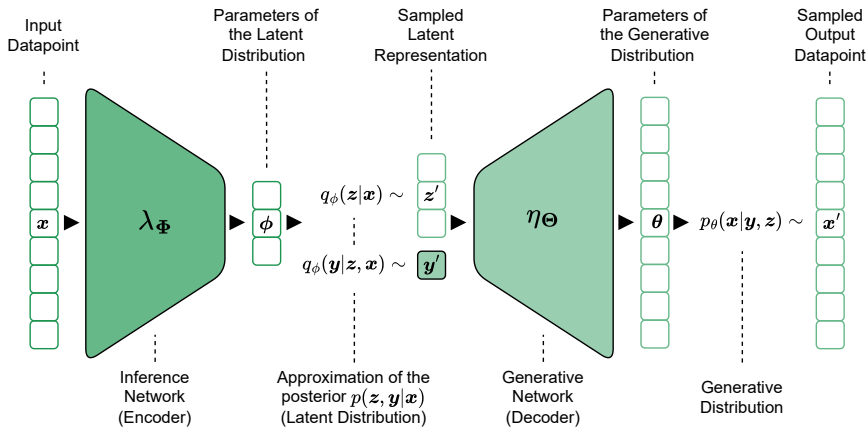


Figure: Formulation of the semi-supervised disentanglement framework

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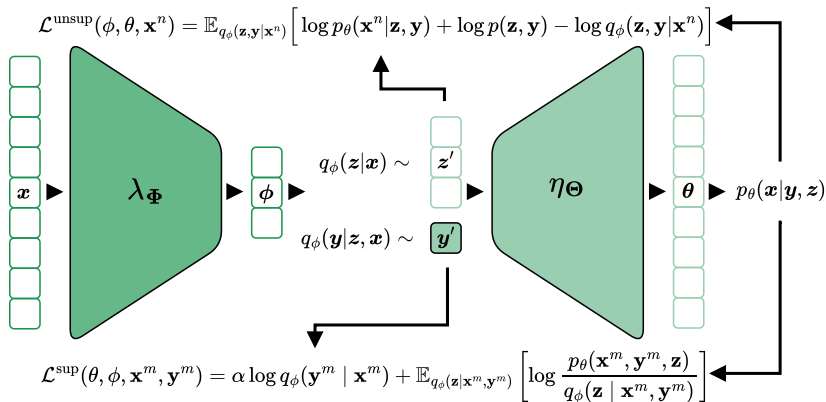


Figure: Semi-supervised disentanglement framework

The total objective combines unsupervised (x) and supervised (x, y) data, weighted by γ :

$$\mathcal{L}(\theta, \phi, \mathcal{D}, \mathcal{D}^{\text{sup}}) = \sum_{x^n \in \mathcal{D}}^N \mathcal{L}^{\text{unsup}}(\theta, \phi; x^n) + \gamma \sum_{(x^m, y^m) \in \mathcal{D}^{\text{sup}}}^M \mathcal{L}^{\text{sup}}(\theta, \phi; x^m, y^m)$$

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The Supervised Term \mathcal{L}^{sup} : Defined to jointly maximize the generative likelihood and discriminative power:

$$\mathcal{L}^{\text{sup}}(\theta, \phi; x, y) = \underbrace{\alpha \log q_{\phi}(y|x)}_{\text{Discriminative}} + \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{q_{\phi}(z|x,y)} \left[\log \frac{p_{\theta}(x, y, z)}{q_{\phi}(z|x, y)} \right]}_{\text{Generative (ELBO on joint } x, y \text{)}}$$

In the supervised term, we cannot evaluate $q_\phi(z|x, y)$ directly:

$$\mathcal{L}^{\text{sup}}(\theta, \phi; x, y) = \alpha \log q_\phi(y|x) + \mathbb{E}_{q_\phi(z|x, y)} \left[\log \frac{p_\theta(x, y, z)}{q_\phi(z|x, y)} \right]$$

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We use that $q_\phi(z|x, y)$ factorizes to $\frac{q_\phi(y, z|x)}{q_\phi(y|x)}$ and get:

$$\mathcal{L}^{\text{sup}}(\theta, \phi; x, y) = (1 + \alpha) \log q_\phi(y|x) + \mathbb{E}_{q_\phi(z|x, y)} \left[\log \frac{p_\theta(x, y, z)}{q_\phi(y, z|x)} \right]$$

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Now we approximate the expectation and $\log q_\phi(y|x)$ with importance sampling and get:

$$\hat{\mathcal{L}}^{\text{sup}} = \sum_{s=1}^S \frac{w_s}{\sum_j w_j} \log \frac{p_\theta(x, y, z_s)}{q_\phi(y, z_s | x)} + (1 + \alpha) \log w_s$$

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- Claim: Show that the generalization maintains comparable classification performance to the semi-supervised VAE setup in Kingma et al. [4].
- Setup: Partially specified digit label y and unsupervised style parameters \mathbf{z} as shown below.

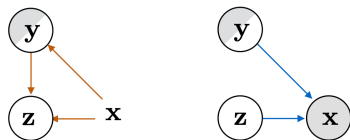


Figure: MNIST Graphical Model. (Left) The Recognition Model component. (Right) The Generator Model component.

	M	Ours	M2 [4]
MNIST $N = 50000$	100	9.71 (± 0.91)	11.97 (± 1.71)
	600	3.84 (± 0.86)	4.94 (± 0.13)
	1000	2.88 (± 0.79)	3.60 (± 0.56)
	3000	1.57 (± 0.93)	3.92 (± 0.63)
SVHN $N = 70000$	M	Ours	M1+M2 [4]
	1000	38.91 (± 1.06)	36.02 (± 0.10)
	3000	29.07 (± 0.83)	—

Table: Classification error rates for different labelled-set sizes M over multiple runs, with supervision rate $\rho = \frac{\gamma M}{N + \gamma M}$, $\gamma = 1$.
Table and Caption from Fig. 3 of the paper [5].

- Claim: Demonstrate that latent variables are isolated and can be used to guide generation. Only shown qualitatively.
- Setup: Same as for the classification scenario.

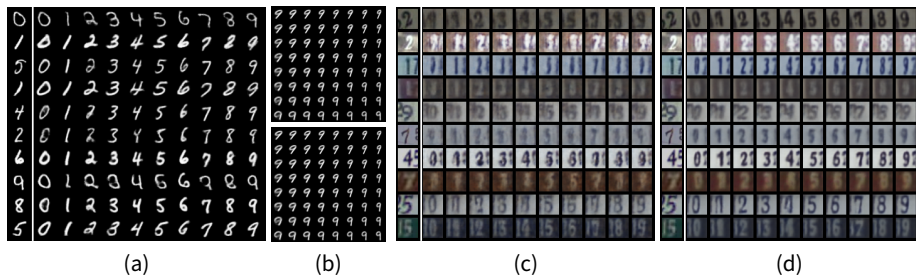


Figure: (a) Visual analogies for the MNIST data, partially supervised with just 100 labels (out of 50000). They infer the style variable z and then vary the label y . (b) Exploration in style space with label y held fixed and (2D) style z varied. Visual analogies for the SVHN data when (c) partially supervised with just 1000 labels, and (d) fully supervised. Table and Caption from Fig. 2 of the paper [5].

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- General Framework: Extends semi-supervised VAEs [4] to support arbitrary dependency structures in both generative and recognition models.

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- Derives a generic Importance Sampling estimator that handles computationally intractable marginals, removing architectural restrictions.
- Structured Disentanglement: Achieves disentanglement by combining partially-specified graphical models (for interpretable factors) with flexible neural networks (for unstructured noise).

- [1] Ricky T. Q. Chen, Xuechen Li, Roger B Grosse, and David K Duvenaud. Isolating Sources of Disentanglement in Variational Autoencoders. In *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, volume 31. Curran Associates, Inc., 2018.
- [2] I. Higgins, L. Matthey, Arka Pal, Christopher P. Burgess, Xavier Glorot, M. Botvinick, S. Mohamed, and Alexander Lerchner. beta-VAE: Learning Basic Visual Concepts with a Constrained Variational Framework. November 2016.
- [3] Varun Jampani, S. M. Ali Eslami, Daniel Tarlow, Pushmeet Kohli, and John M. Winn. Consensus message passing for layered graphical models. *CoRR*, abs/1410.7452, 2014.
- [4] Diederik P. Kingma, Danilo J. Rezende, Shakir Mohamed, and Max Welling. Semi-supervised Learning with Deep Generative Models. In *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, volume 27. Curran Associates, Inc., 2014.
- [5] Siddharth Narayanaswamy, Brooks Paige, Jan-Willem van de Meent, Alban Desmaison, Noah Goodman, Pushmeet Kohli, Frank Wood, and Philip Torr. Learning Disentangled Representations with Semi-Supervised Deep Generative Models. In *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, volume 30. Curran Associates, Inc., 2017.

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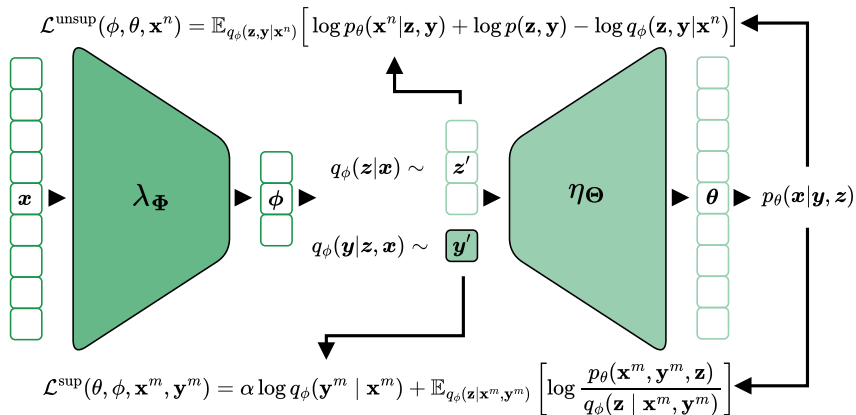


Figure: Semi-supervised disentanglement framework

Approximate the expectation with importance sampling

$$\mathbb{E}_{q_{\phi}(z|x,y)} \left[\log \frac{p_{\theta}(x,y,z)}{q_{\phi}(y,z|x)} \right] \simeq \frac{1}{S} \sum_{s=1}^S \frac{w^s}{Z} \log \frac{p_{\theta}(x,y,z^s)}{q_{\phi}(y^m,z^s|x)}$$

Here We sample $z^s \sim q_{\phi}(z|x)$ from the unconditioned encoder with importance weights:

$$w^s := \frac{q_{\phi}(y,z^s|x)}{q_{\phi}(z^s|x)}, \quad Z = \frac{1}{S} \sum_{s=1}^S w^s$$

Using the same weights we approximate $\log q_{\phi}(y^m|x^m)$ with a Monte Carlo estimate of the lower bound:

$$\log q_{\phi}(y|x) \geq \mathbb{E}_{q_{\phi}(z|x)} \left[\log \frac{q_{\phi}(y,z|x)}{q_{\phi}(z|x)} \right] \simeq \frac{1}{S} \sum_{s=1}^S \log w^s$$

- Goal: Exploration of the supervision rate which controls the balance of supervised and unsupervised objectives in the loss.
- Setup: Same graphical model as before. Here, scaling of the classification objective is held fixed at $\alpha = 50$ (MNIST) and $\alpha = 70$ (SVHN).
- Result: For sparsely labelled data ($M \ll N$), some over-representation ($\gamma > 1$) helps improve generalization with better performance on the test set. Too much over-representation leads to overfitting.

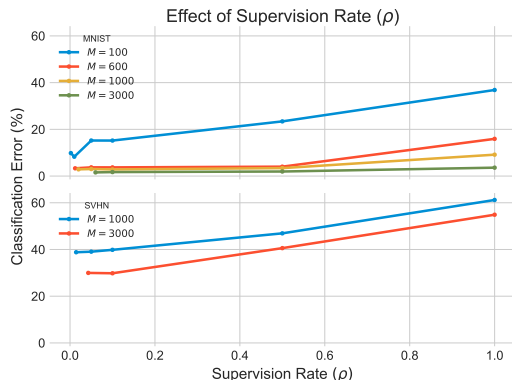


Figure: Classification error over different labelled set sizes and supervision rates for MNIST (top) and SVHN (bottom). Table and Caption from Fig. 3 of the paper [5].

- Goal: Claim that they show that their model learns the correct relationship between lighting, shading and reflectance. Instead they show that their semi-supervised model performs worse than a fully supervised counterpart.
- Setup: Partially supervised identity label i and lighting angle l with unsupervised latent variables for shading s and reflection r .

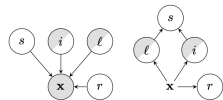
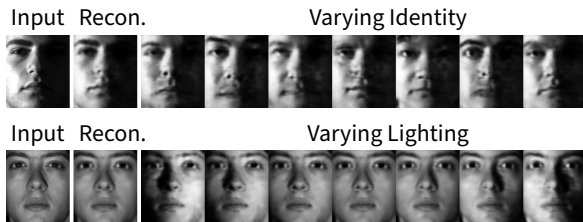


Figure: Graphical Model from Fig. 5 of [5]. (Generator and Recognition Model)



	Identity	Lighting
Ours (Full Supervision)	1.9% (± 1.5)	3.1% (± 3.8)
Ours (Semi-Supervised)	3.5% (± 3.4)	17.6% (± 1.8)
Jampani et al. [3] (plot asymptotes)	≈ 30	≈ 10

Figure: (Left:) Exploring the generative capacity of the supervised model by manipulating identity and lighting given a fixed (inferred) value of the other latent variables. (Right:) Classification and regression error rates for identity and lighting latent variables, fully-supervised, and semi-supervised. Table and Caption from Fig. 4 of the paper [5]

- Goal: Explore capacity for stochastic dimensionality.
- Setup: Use a stochastic sequence generator for each of the digits in the image in composition with the pretrained MNIST VAE from before.

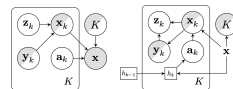
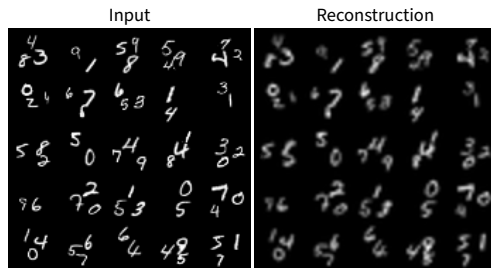


Figure: Graphical Model from Fig. 5 of [4].
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$\frac{M}{M+N}$	Count Error (%)	
	w/o MNIST	w/ MNIST
	Decomposition	
0.1	85.45 (± 5.77)	76.33 (± 8.91)
0.5	93.27 (± 2.15)	80.27 (± 5.45)
1.0	99.81 (± 1.81)	84.79 (± 5.11)

Figure: (Left): Example input multi-MNIST images and reconstructions. (Top-Right): Decomposition of Multi-MNIST images into constituent MNIST digits. (Bottom-Right): Count accuracy. Table and Caption from Fig. 6 of the paper [5].