

# Final Report

STAT 697D

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*5/09/2019*

## Abstract

This project explores what the relationship between company fundamentals and stocks prices indicates about recessions. To start, we replicated the results presented in the paper, “Stock Market Market Crash of 2008: an empirical study of the deviation of share prices from company fundamentals” by Taisei Kaizoji and Michiko Miyano (Kaizoji and Miyano 2016) using data from the years 2003 to 2013. Then, we expanded the paper’s results through 2019, rebuilding and reassessing the models presented. Using the fundamental indicators of **cash and short-term investments**, **dividends per share**, and **carrying value** over time, we fit an assortment of linear models, with the goal of choosing the best model to predict stock prices. Our tests indicated a linear fixed effects model with individual intercepts for each company as the best model to describe this data. Kaizoji and Miyano propose using the residuals from the fixed effects model to form a new metric called Divergence Rate that measures the difference between the value of a company’s stock based on fundamentals and the market determined stock price. Kaizoji and Miyano claim that Divergence Rate can serve as a recession indicator by measuring when the stock market is overvalued. We validated the Divergence Rate metric as an overall indicator of trends in the stock market by comparing mean markets trends, sector trends, and individual stock trends observed by economists in other research to the Divergence Rate derived with this model. We conclude that Divergence Rate has value as a metric for economic trend tracking.

## Introduction

Almost 10 years after the last recession, our economy is still expanding. If this trend continues past mid-2019, the U.S will be in the longest economic expansion on record. (Kaissar and Bloomberg 2019) As the expansion continues, economists and financial professionals have started to watch for signs of an oncoming recession. While Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell said that he did not expect a recession in 2019, (Long 2019) others disagree. A February survey conducted by the National Association for Business Economics revealed that, out of 280 business economists, approximately 50% believe that the U.S. will have another recession by 2020, When this timeline was extended to the end of 2021, that number jumped to 75%. Only 11% answered that the U.S can avoid a recession within the next two years. Another survey of almost 800 top business leaders worldwide indicated that a global recession was their biggest concern for 2019. (Telford 2019) These surveys make evident that recession concerns are growing among financial and business professionals.

Given that recessions have a large impact on individuals and corporations by causing increased unemployment, decreased consumer spending, and negative economic growth, the ability to predict future recessions stands as a topic of interest for many financial professionals and economists. (Ross 2015) Due to the relatively small number of recessions on record and changes in the economic landscape over time, the task of predicting recessions remains fraught with uncertainty. However, financial professionals have made progress identifying factors that have a relationship with oncoming recessions, including the stock market and the bond yield curve. (Moore 2018) The recent inversion of the bond yield curve has sparked concerns that a recession may be oncoming. (Kaissar and Bloomberg 2019) In looking at the yield curve, there are certain aspects—such as the degree of inversion and quickness to conclusion—that may have effect. However, some professionals are skeptical about using the bond yield curve in isolation to indicate recessions, due to concerns over false positives that have arisen in prior years when considering various bond timelines (for example, two year versus five year bond maturation.) (Cahn 2019)

So, to build an accurate recession model, researchers will need a number of tools at their disposal. To add the tools available, we focused our research on stock market indicators of recession, focusing on metrics to identify when the market is over or under valued.

## Data

Our data is sourced from Compustat. (Compustat 2019) The quarterly fundamental indicators (i.e. **cash and short-term investments**, **dividends per share**, and **carrying values**) and **share price** from U.S companies between 2003 to 2019 were used. Time was treated as a discrete variable where four quarters were collapsed into yearly data. **Share price** represented the stocks' closing prices of the final day in the quarter. It is important to note that 2019 contains data for only the first quarter, which may lead to exaggerated trends for 2019. Additionally, we added a new binary variable to our data set based on **dividends per share** which was a decision we made during our initial data exploration. We noticed that many companies' quarterly data had dividends of 0. Therefore, **dividends = 0** simply indicated whether that instance of company fundamentals data had a dividend of 0 or not. This is not a variable in the paper (Kaizoji and Miyano 2016), and is specific to our project. Each row consisted of one company's quarterly data during the year. Only complete cases were included in the model, resulting in a total of 161,544 observations. Our final data set included 5,727 companies from 11 sectors (i.e. industrials, financials, IT, Utilities, Consumer Discretionary, Health Care, Energy, Materials, Real Estate, Consumer Staples and Telecommunications). Of the companies included in our data set, 184 were missing sector information.

The fundamental indicators used in our analysis give information about company profitability and value. **Cash and short-term investments** show the value of a company's liquid assets. Liquid assets relate to a company's solvency and ability to expand, making this variable important to consider when valuing a company. **Dividends per share** notes the amount in dividends that a firm pays out to shareholders each quarter. ("Investment Valuation Ratios: Dividend Yield," n.d.) The **carrying value**, which is also known as the book value, shows the stock's market value and how much shareholders would receive in the event that the company was liquidated. Carrying value is calculated by subtracting a company's total liabilities from its total assets. Carrying value gives investors a sense of whether a stock is being overvalued or undervalued. ("Book Value," n.d.) Taken together, these variables give information about the true value of a company that can be compared to the company's current stock price (Kaizoji and Miyano 2016).

## Models and Methodology

Our study focuses on the exploration of a number of linear regression models to predict stock price from company fundamentals. We started with the base model:

$$\ln(price_{it}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ln(dividends_{it}) + \beta_2 \mathbb{I}(dividends = 0) + \beta_3 \ln(bookvalue_{it}) + \beta_4 \ln(cashflow_{it}) + \mu_i + \gamma_t + \epsilon_{it}$$

In this model,  $\mu_i$  indicates the company effects and  $\gamma_t$  indicates the discrete time effects. We fit the models described in Table 1, and assessed each model for fit. We repeated this process twice. First, we validated the results presented by Kaizoji and Miyano using the years 2003-2013. Then, we re-fit all of the models using 2003-2019.

We used F-tests to assess the pooled ols and fixed effects model performance, likelihood ratio tests to compare the pooled ols and fixed effects models, and Hausman Tests to compare the fixed and random effects models. In all cases, we obtained p-values indicating that the fixed effects models outperformed the pooled ols model and the random effects model. The best model overall was the fixed effect model with time and company intercepts included. These results replicated the results obtained by Kaizoji and Miyano, both for the years of data presented in their original paper and with the data set expanded through 2019.

Table 1:  $\mu$  and  $\tau$  for All Tested Models

Model	$\mu$	$\tau$
Pooled OLS	0	0
Individual Fixed Effects	Fixed Effect	0
Time Effects	0	Fixed Effect
Two-Way Fixed	0	Fixed Effect
Individual Random	Random	0
Time Random	0	Random
Two-Way Random	Random	Random

## Divergence Rate

### Definition

The overarching research question of the Kaizoji and Miyano paper we replicate here focused not on building the best model given the data (although this step is important), but on using a model that accurately describes company value to notice anomalies in the stock market at given time points. For this reason, the authors of the paper chose to use the fixed effects model with only company effects. Because we can assume that, in a perfect market, company fundamentals will always compose the stock price in an additive way with no time effects, the design choice to exclude time effects from the model makes contextual sense. Then, we can use the predictions from the model with company fixed effects to notice when stocks are overvalued or undervalued in the market. Kaizoji and Miyano propose a metric for this purpose named Divergence Rate defined as follows:

$$D_{it} = \ln(Y_{it}) - \ln(\tilde{Y}_{it})$$

In this formula,  $Y_{it}$  is the observed stock price for company  $i$  at time  $t$  and  $\tilde{Y}_{it}$  is the model's prediction for the stock price of company  $i$  at time  $t$ . The Divergence Rate indicates how overvalued or undervalued a company's stock is given that company's fundamental value at time  $t$ .

### Mean Divergence Rate Over Time

Figures 1 and 2 below display the time effects coefficients from the two-way fixed effect model and the mean Divergence Rate by year. We can see that, as expected, these two figures track each other. While it feels counter-intuitive to leave an informative variable out of the model, in this case, doing so gives us a powerful tool. Now, we can track in real time, how overvalued or undervalued the market is as a whole. Our sample only contains one recession (2008-2009), so it is less powerful than a data set that contains all known recessions. However, we can look here to seek potential recession-indicating trends. In the years leading up to the recession, the market became overvalued. Then, in 2008, the recession led to an undervaluing of the market as a whole. Looking to the current year, we can see that in 2019, the market appears more overvalued than at any other point in the data set. Other recession indicators outside of our model have also recently appeared, including the inversion of the bond yield curve. ("Yield Curve and Predicted Gdp Growth," n.d.) We interpret the overvaluing of 2019 indicated by our model cautiously, since we only have one quarter of 2019 in the data so far. However, this trend matches our assertion about the overvaluing of the market serving as a potential recession indicator.

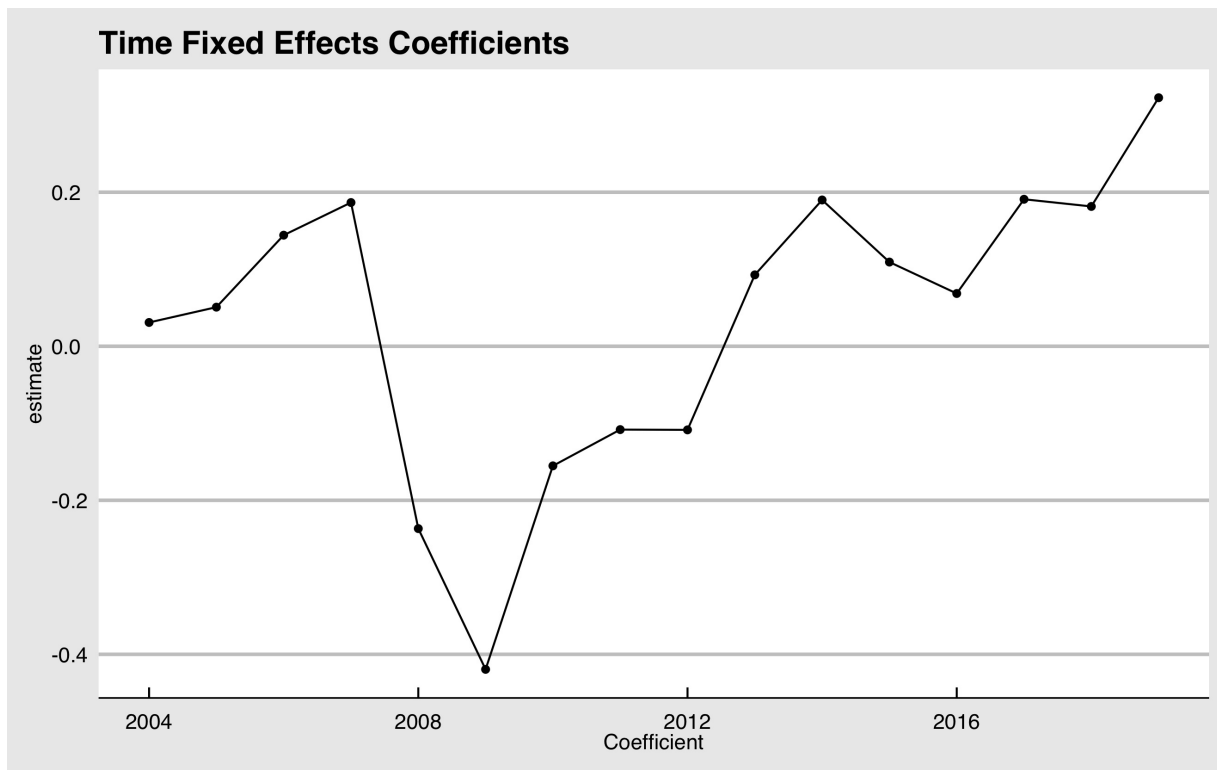


Figure 1: Time Fixed Effects Coefficients

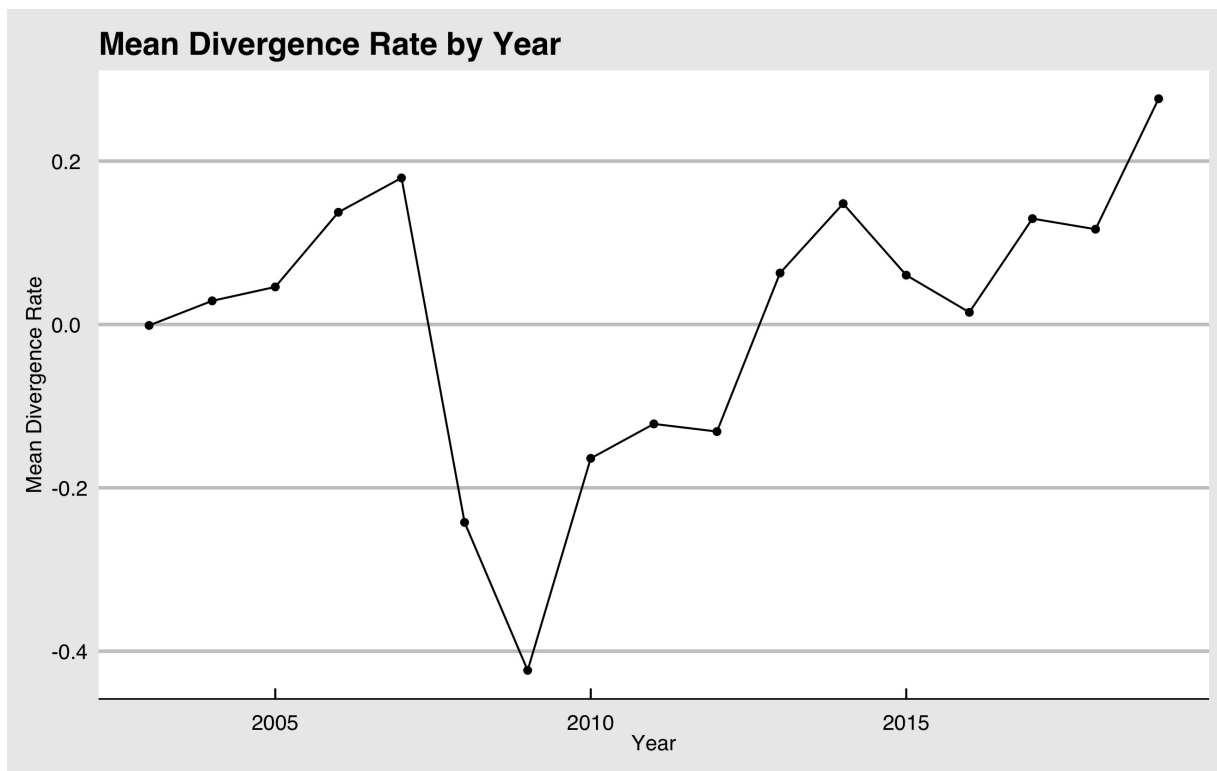


Figure 2: Mean Divergence Rate by Year

## Divergence Rate by Sector

### All Sectors

Viewing the mean Divergence Rate by sector reinforces the Divergence Rate as a metric to describe market behavior (see Figure 3). Take the energy sector as an example. Leading up to the 2008 recession, the Iraq War caused a global oil shortage. (Luft 2016) In response, oil prices rose significantly. Figure 3 shows the market response to the increase in oil prices over the years of 2005 to 2008 in the energy sector as a high mean Divergence Rate. During the recession in 2008, the energy sector remained overvalued when all other sectors became undervalued. However, as the Iraq region began to recover in the following years (Jaffe and Ellass 2016), the valuation of the energy sector decreased as the oil market normalized. Seeing real world events reflected in the Divergence Rate adds confidence to this methodology.

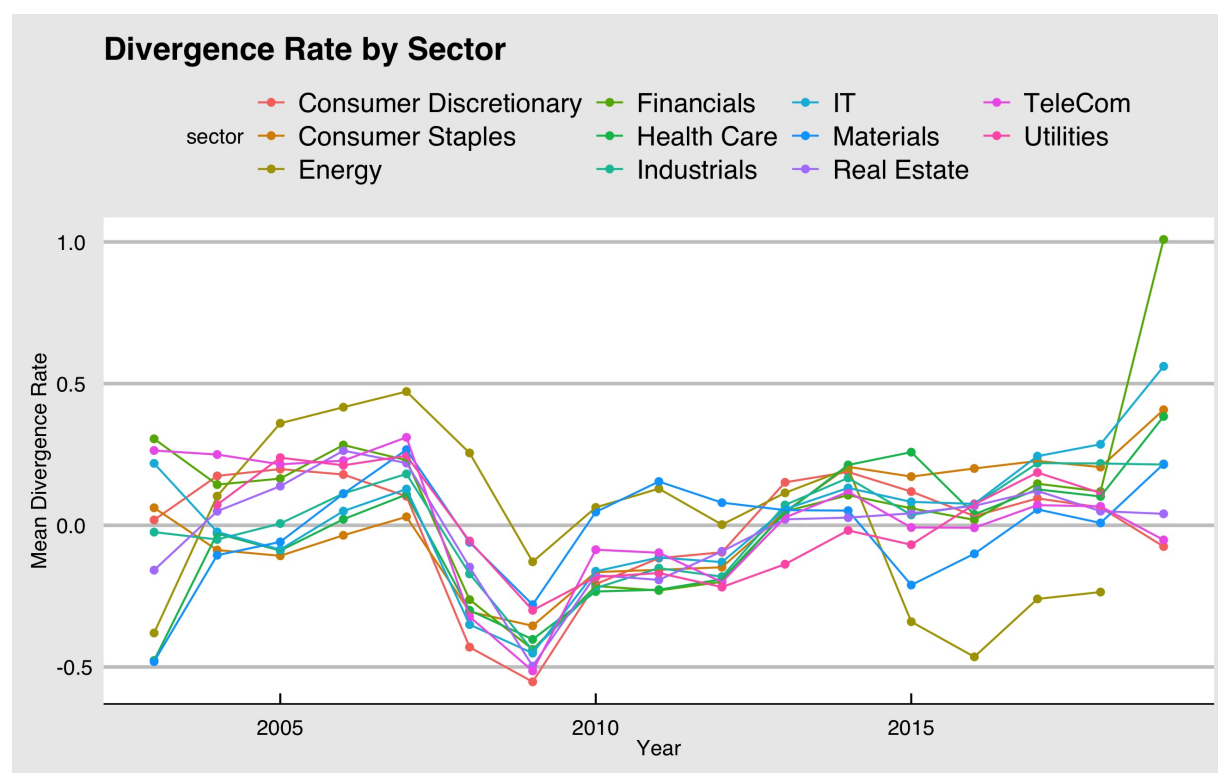


Figure 3: Divergence of All Sectors

### Real Estate

We would also like to briefly highlight the Divergence Rate trends in the real estate sector, given the importance of real estate products and housing prices to the Great Recession. (Ellen and Dastrup 2012) In the early 2000's, mortgage lenders began extending credit to higher risk borrowers and apportioning this risk out to investors through private-label mortgage backed securities. (Duca, n.d.) Adding more buyers to the market caused a spike in housing prices, leading to the overvaluing of the real estate market shown in Figure 4 during the years 2005, 2006, and 2007. Then, as high-risk lenders began to default on their loans en masse, the real estate market collapsed, leading to losses as the market became saturated with properties. Figure 4 shows this in the years from 2007 to 2012. Now, new regulations including the Dodd-Frank act have stabilized the market ("Housing and Mortgage Markets May Have Recovered, but Risks Remain" 2018), shown in the years from 2013 onward. This anecdote offers further evidence that the Divergence Rate metric accurately tracks market trends.

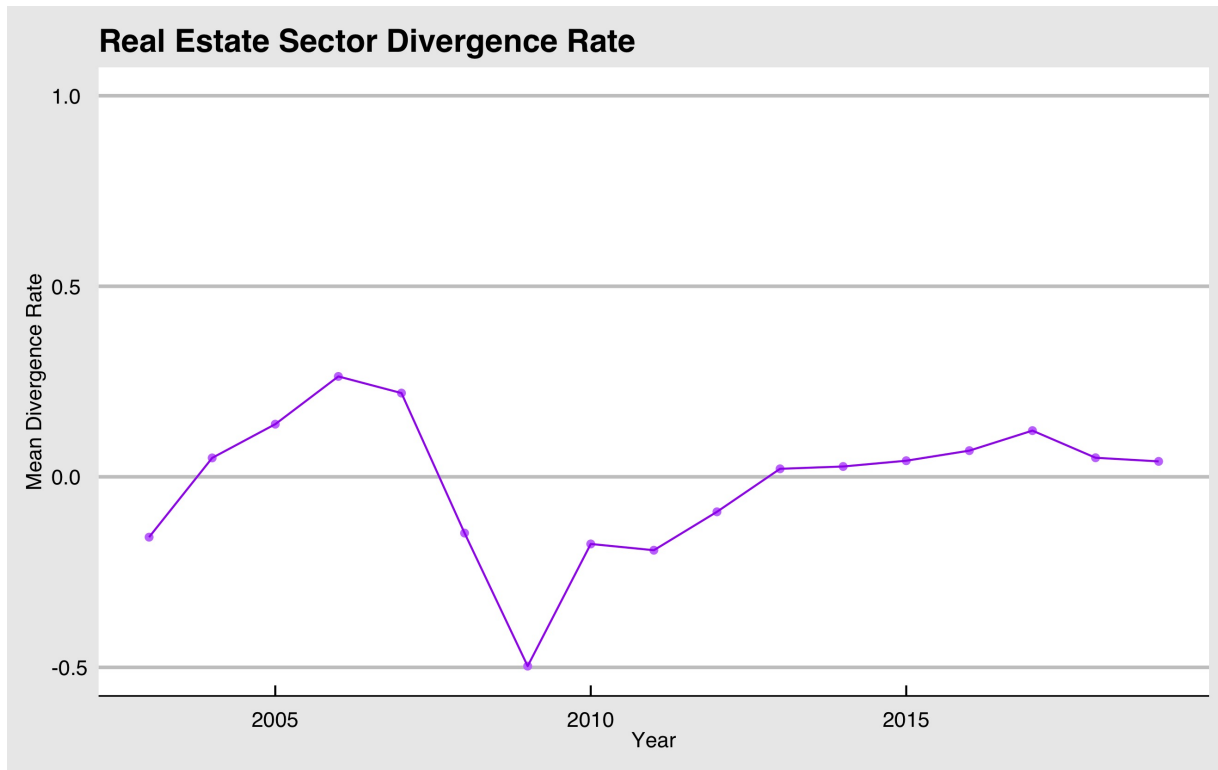


Figure 4: Divergence of Real Estate Sector

## FAANG Stocks

To fully assess the performance of the Diversion Rate metric, we also looked into the behavior of the so-called FAANG stocks, composed of Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, and Google shown in Figure 5. Collectively, these stocks make up about 37% of the NASDAQ composite index, about 12% of the S&P 500, and about 5% of the Dow Jones index (calculated April 29, 2019). These stocks provide an alternate look at how well Diversion Rate tracks market trends because, during the entire first recession, these stocks had very different performance rates than the majority of the market. Unlike other stocks, the FAANG collection entered the recession undervalued and, until recently, displayed meteoric year-over-year growth. Now, the majority of these stocks are considered over-valued by our model. Recent headlines such as “A Toothless FAANG” in Forbes and “It’s Time to Break up the FAANGs” in Markets Insider hint that the investment community has begun to feel wary of this group of stocks. The fact that our Divergence Rate metric reflects the patterns the investment community has noted in these stocks provides more evidence that Divergence Rate serves as a valid metric for assessing patterns in the stock market.

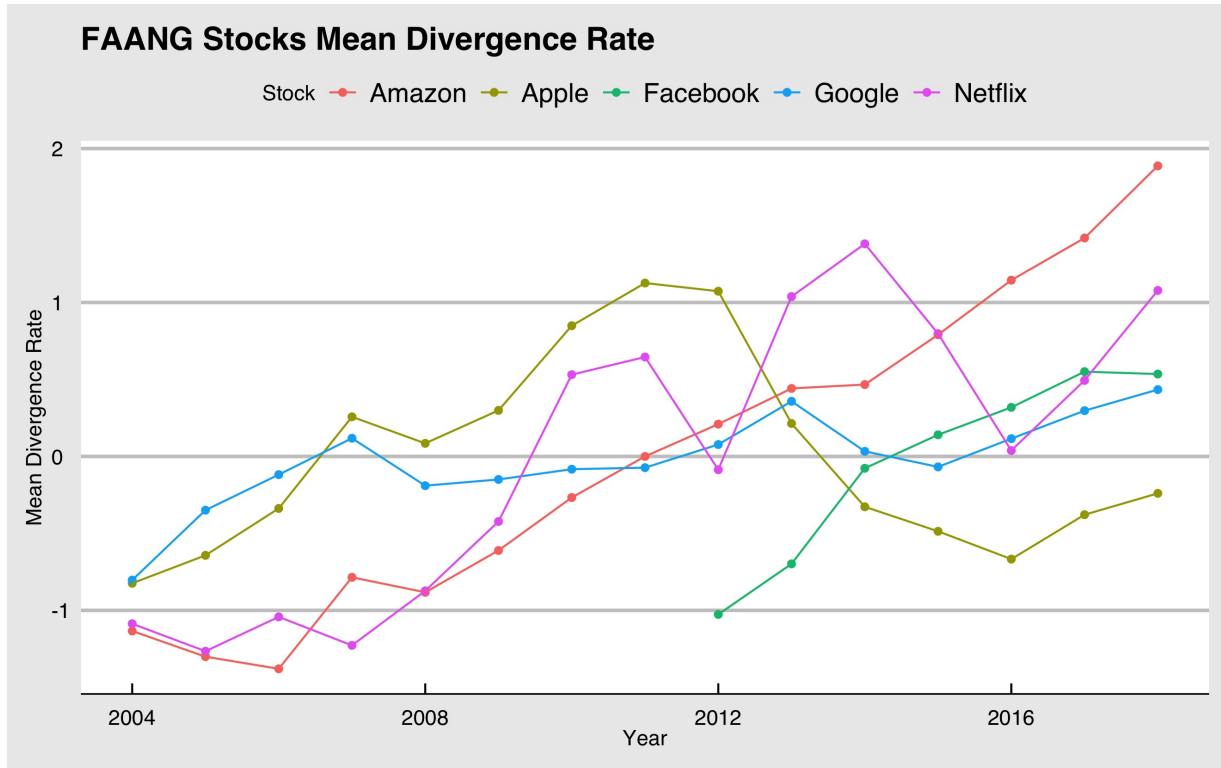


Figure 5: Divergence of FAANG Stocks

## Limitations & Future Work

When considering applications of this work, several expansions to the data set may offer better generalizability.

Our model only contains data from U.S. companies, since comparisons across currencies would have made the work of building this model more difficult. Normalizing across global currencies and including companies from markets outside the United States would likely improve the Divergence Rate metric when the purpose of analysis is to predict recessions. Kaizoji and Miyano built the original version of this model with global data, so the research with a data set that includes multiple currencies and economies has already been started. However, it may be worth exploring if a large model that includes currency normalized data is more informative than a set of models for different regions or economy types.

Due to computational limitations, we did not include the entire history of the United States stock market. However, since the sample size of recessions is so small, including as many recessions as possible in the model is important before drawing overarching conclusions about the validity of Divergence Rate calculated from our regression model as a recession indicator. From this work, we can only conclude that a high Divergence Rate may be related to an oncoming recession. Adding more recession samples might allow us to say that a high Divergence Rate is a likely recession indicator.

If the user of this model had the goal of making money buying undervalued stocks (versus our goal of noticing larger market trends), a data set with smaller time granularity (e.g. daily or monthly) may give better performance. With smaller time increments, the **dividends per share** indicator may prove less informative, since dividends are typically paid quarterly. However, we think Divergence Rate is likely a good metric overall for finding undervalued stocks and consider this area worthy of future work.

## Conclusion

Predicting recessions stands as an important problem for economists and financial professionals. To contribute to the growing body of recession metrics, we replicated and expanded upon the work of Kaizoji and Miyano presented in the paper, “Stock Market Market Crash of 2008: an empirical study of the deviation of share prices from company fundamentals.” Using data from both the years presented by Kaizoji and Miyano and a data set expanded through 2019, we confirmed Kaizoji and Miyano’s linear regression results. We expanded Kaizoji and Miyano’s work on a metric called Divergence Rate that serves as a method to identify over and under valuing of stocks in the market when compared to company fundamentals. We found that Divergence Rate is a robust metric, worthy of continued exploration in future work.

## Appendix.

### Variable Distribution

To solve the long-tailedness in stock prices and the difference in variance between high value and low value stocks, we attempted a number of solutions including normalization of variables, log transformation, and square root transformation. Of these methods, we found log transformation without normalization to give the best results for all indicators included in our model. Figures 6 and 7 show stock prices before and after log transformation. The pattern displayed in Figures 6 and 7 is representative of the effect of the log transformation on all our indicators.

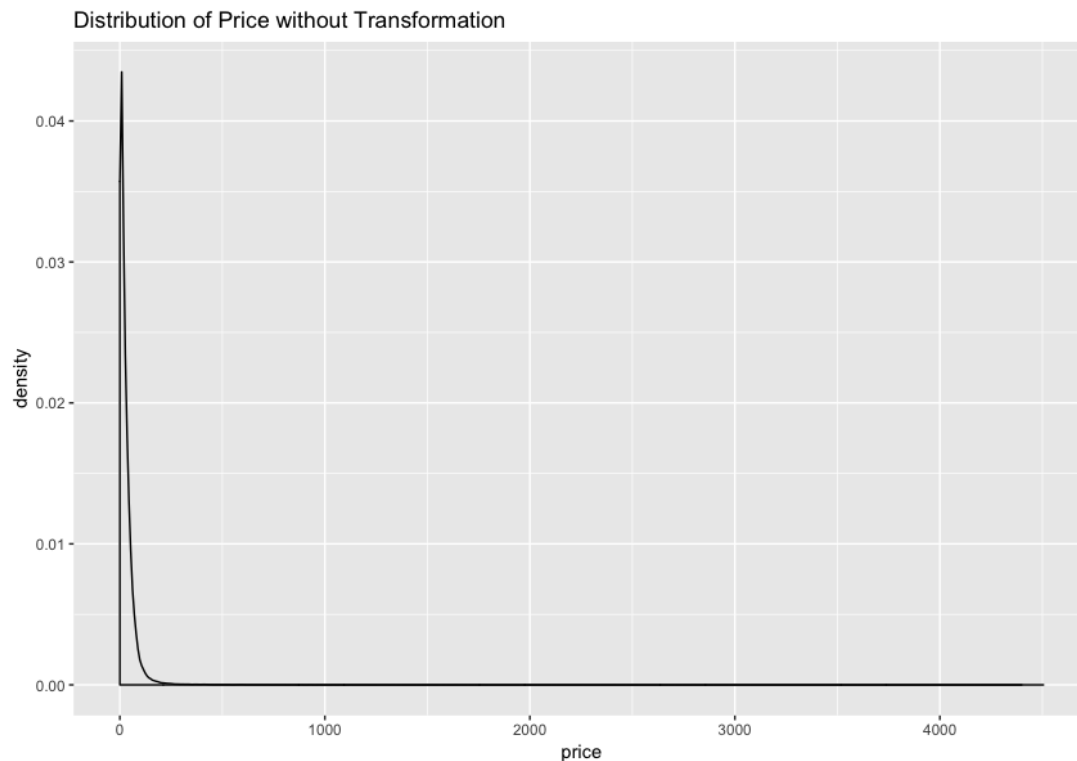


Figure 6: Distribution of Price without Transformation



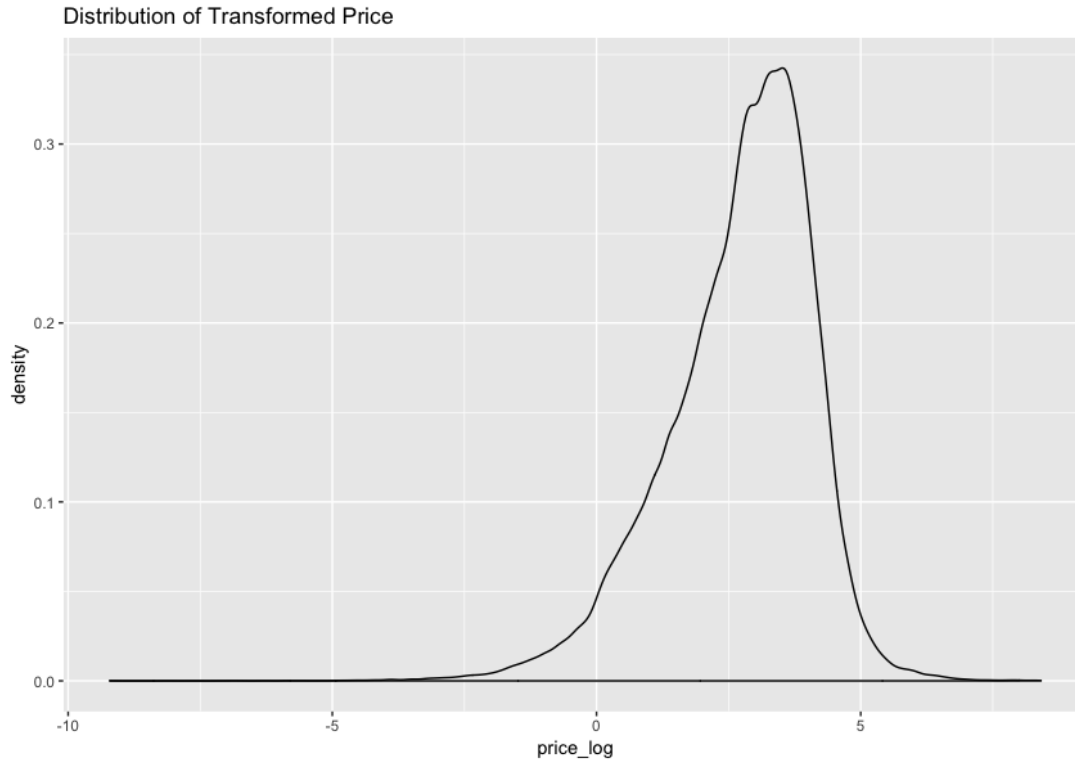


Figure 7: Distribution of Price with Transformation

## Github Repository

This project has an extensive code-base, which may be accessed on github. ([https://github.com/elegant-chaos/recession\\_indicators](https://github.com/elegant-chaos/recession_indicators)) Please note: the database we sourced our data from has usage restrictions, so the repository does not include our data set.

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