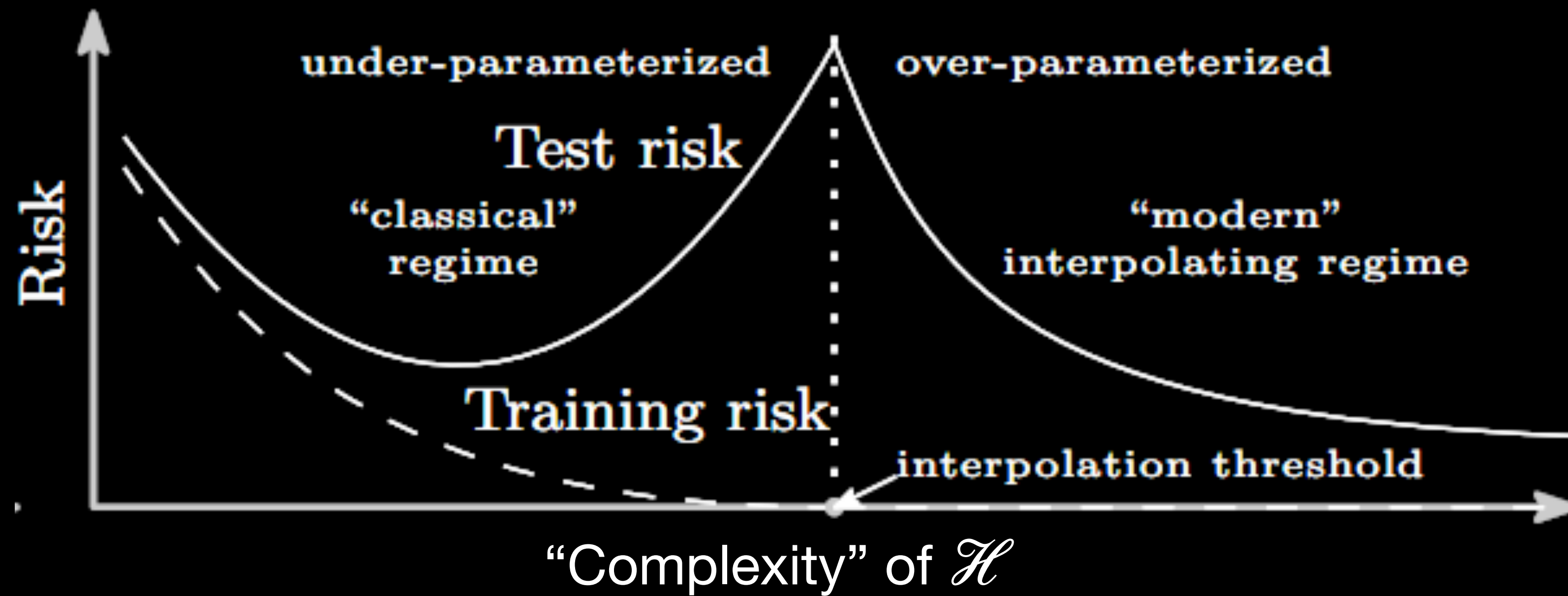


# Revisiting minimum description length complexity for overparameterized models

raaz dwivedi, chandan singh, bin yu & martin wainwright



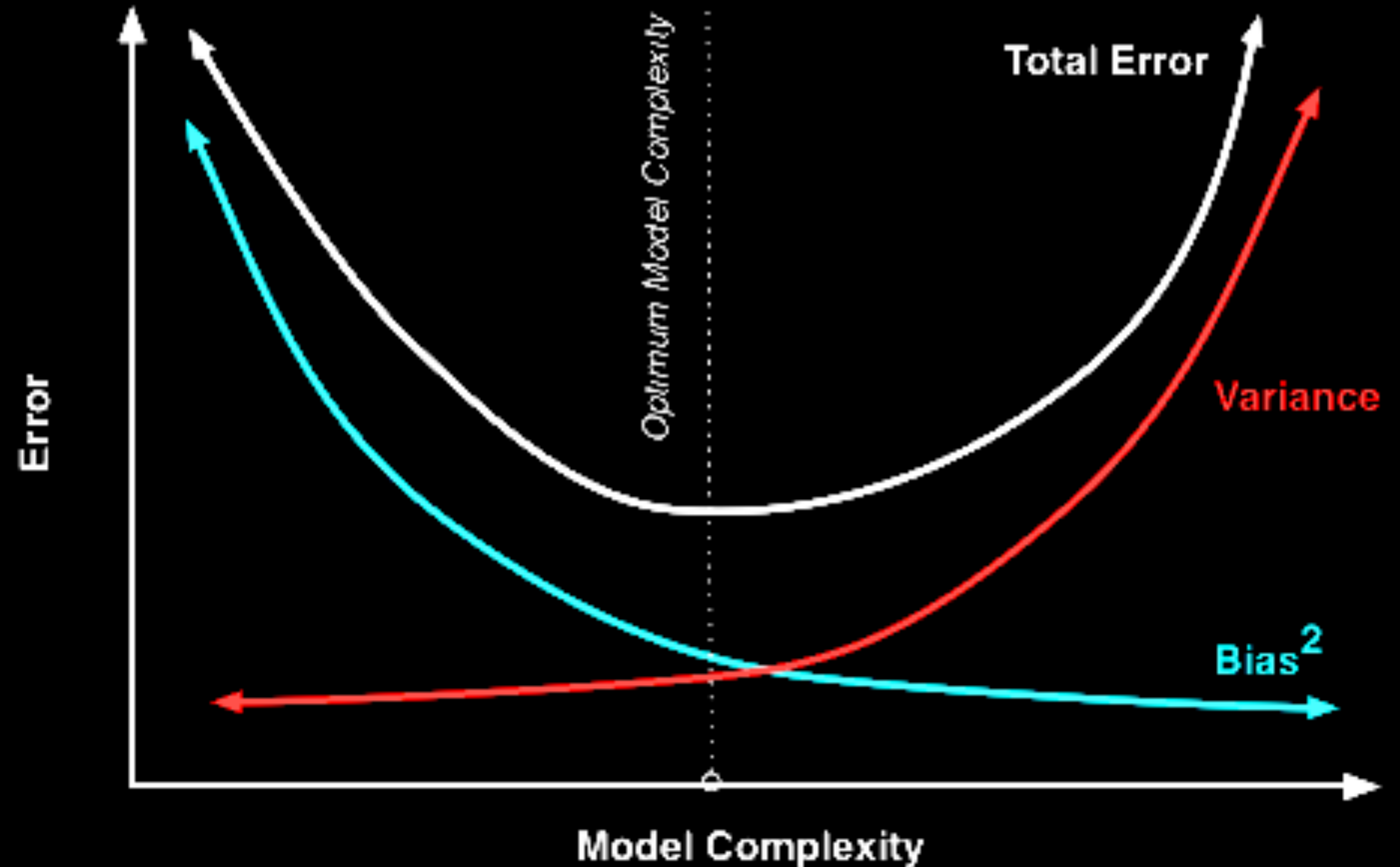
# Non-U shaped “tradeoff” curves in modern ML settings



Belkin-Hsu-Ma-Mandal 18, Muthukumar-Vodrahalli-Sahai 19, Hastie-Montanari-Rosset-Tibshirani 19, ...

# Bias-variance tradeoff

- Occam's razor: Pick the simplest model that provides a good fit to the training data
- U-shaped curves: Established for low-dimensional settings with “good” estimators



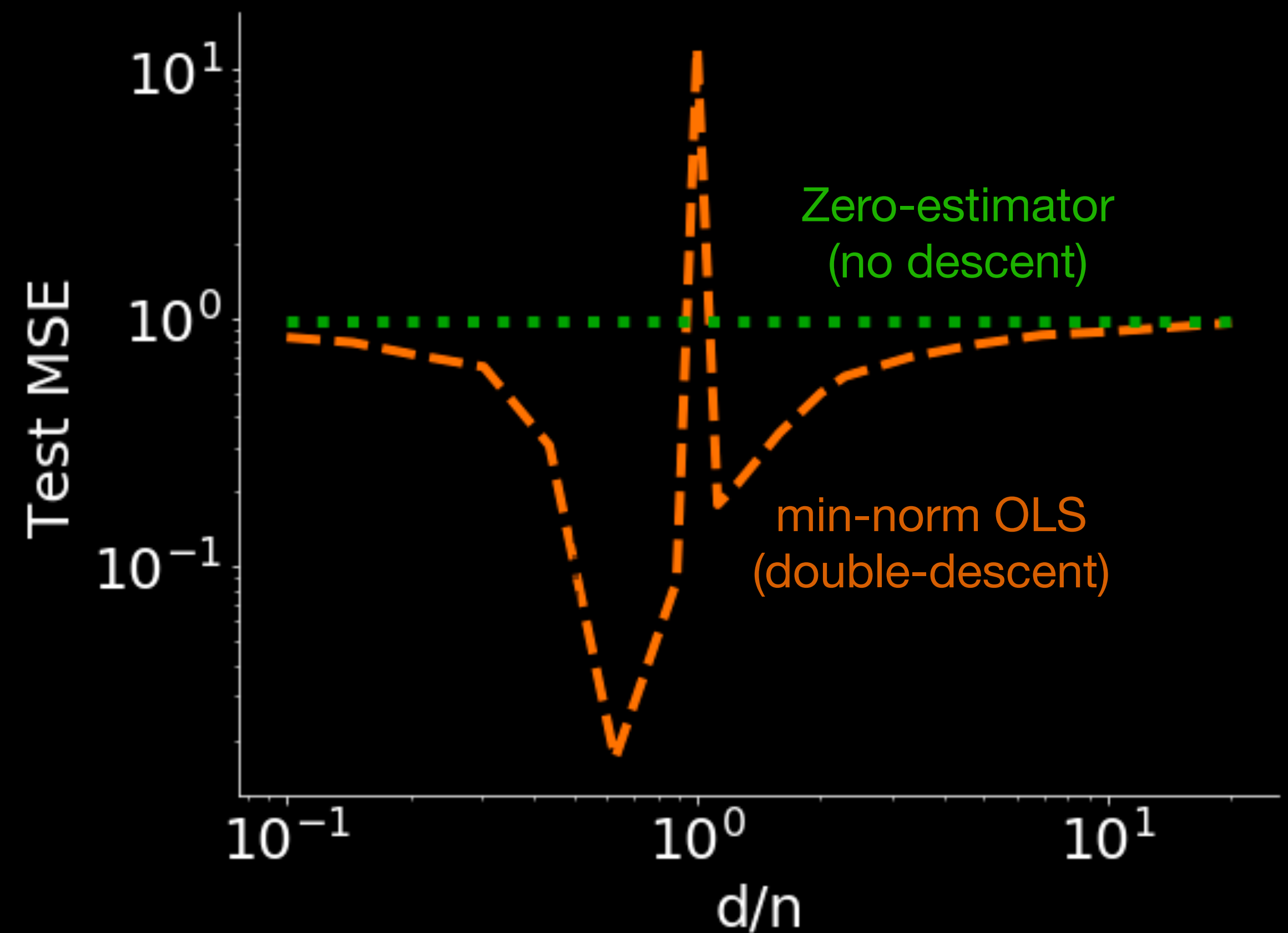
# Bias-variance tradeoff: Few things to note..

- We should expect a tradeoff *given*
  - some fixed data
  - as the “complexity” of the fitted estimator varies



# Bias-variance tradeoff: Few things to note..

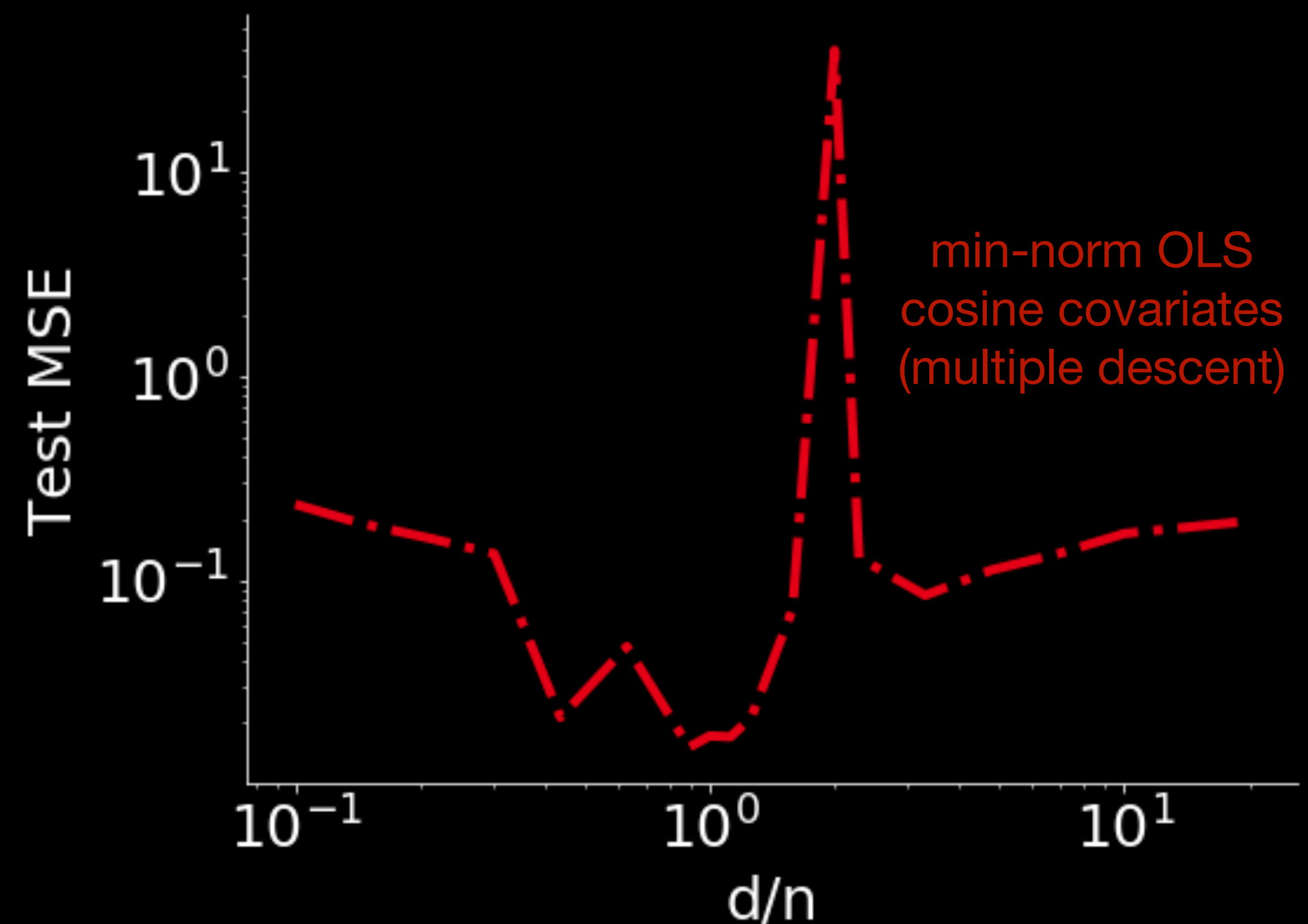
- We should expect a tradeoff *given*
  - some fixed data
  - as the “complexity” of the fitted estimator varies
- Need not observe a tradeoff for
  - poor choice of estimators



$d$  = number of features  
 $n$  = number of samples

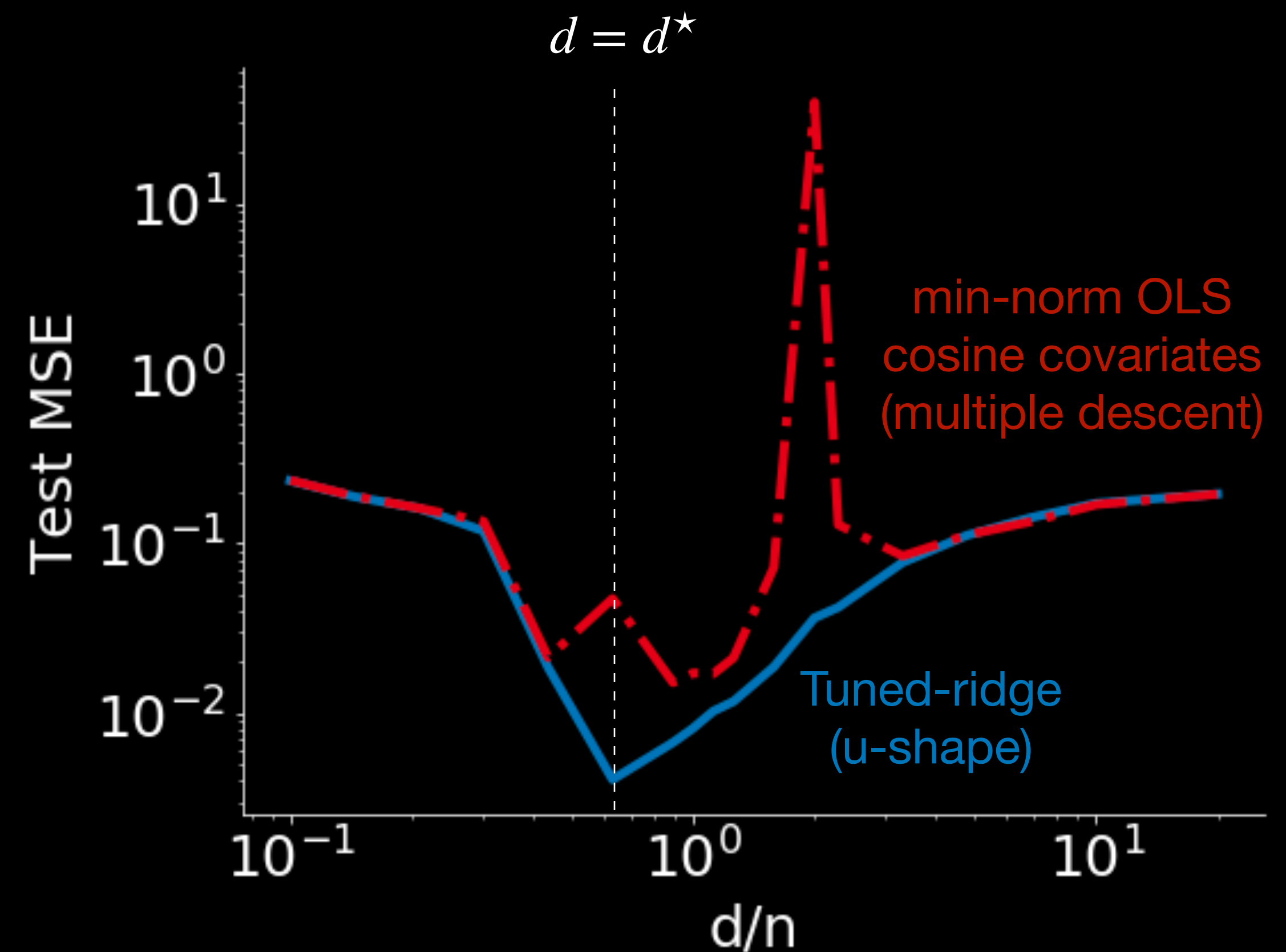
# Bias-variance tradeoff: Few things to note..

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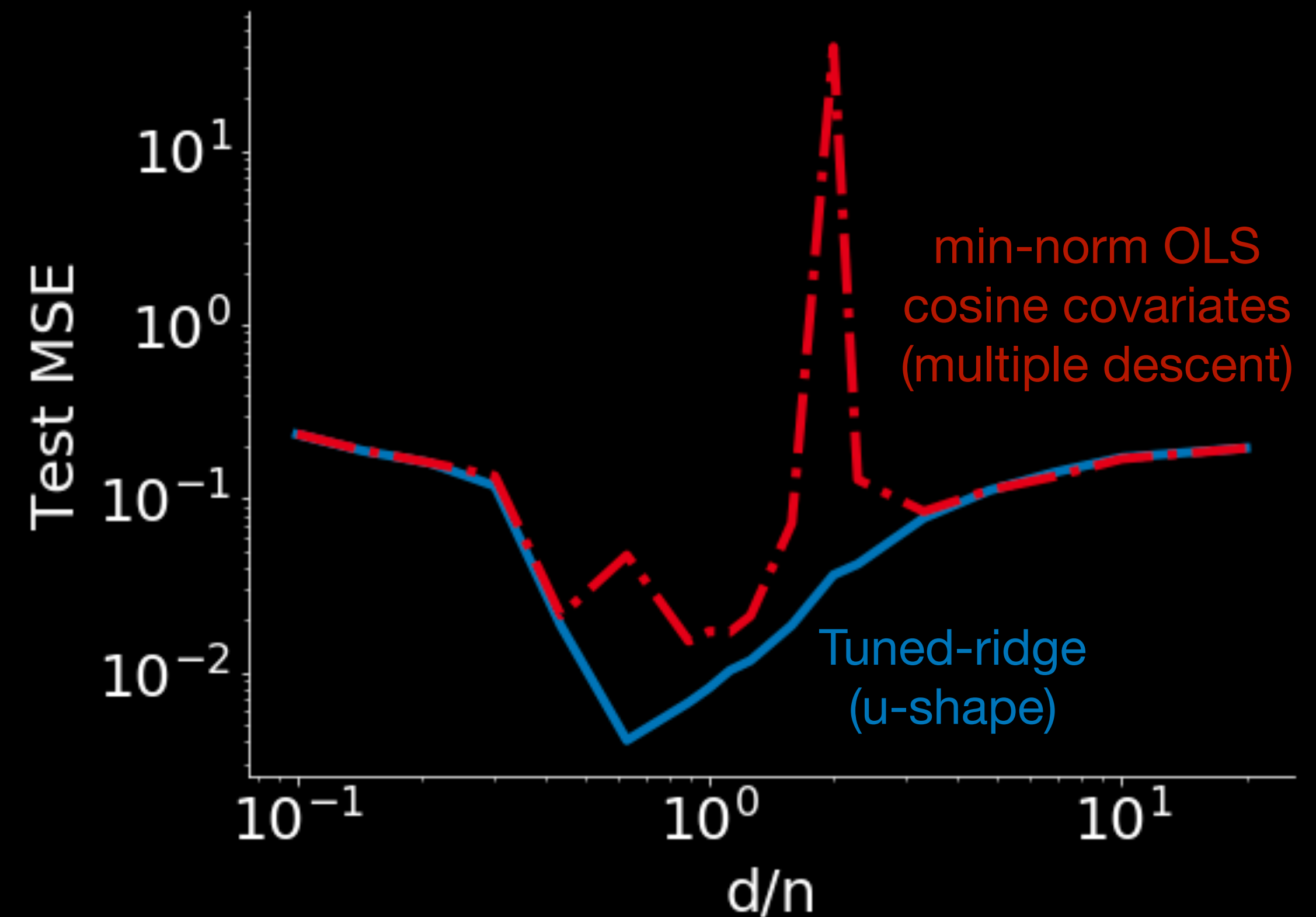
# Bias-variance tradeoff: Few things to note..

- We should expect a tradeoff *given*
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- Need not observe a tradeoff for
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# Bias-variance tradeoff: Few things to note..

- We should expect a tradeoff *given*
  - some fixed data
  - as the “complexity” of the fitted estimator varies
- Need not observe a tradeoff for
  - poor choice of estimators
  - poor choice of complexity



Is parameter counting a valid complexity measure?





# Complexity: A tricky concept

- A fundamental notion: Kolmogorov's algorithmic complexity
- Complexity in Statistics and ML
  - Test error  $\sim$  Train error + Complexity /  $n^a$
  - useful for model selection
  - x-axis on bias-variance tradeoff—often vaguely defined; parameter count often used

# Parameter counting as complexity: Origins (for linear models)

- Akaike Information Criterion (AIC):  $d/2$
  - Bayesian information criterion (BIC):  $\frac{d}{2} \log n$
  - Rademacher complexity:  $\mathbb{E} \left[ \sup_{\theta \in \Theta} \sum \epsilon_i x_i^\top \theta \right] \sim d$
  - Degrees of freedom:  $\text{trace}(X^\top X) \sim d$
  - Vapnik-Chervonenkis dimension:  $d$
  - Minimum Description Length complexity:  $\frac{d}{2} \log n$  (asymptotically)
- OLS achieves the minimax error in low-dimensions of order  $\frac{d}{n}$

but in high-dimensions these complexity  
measure neither work nor theoretically  
well-justified

**this talk:**

**a data-dependent complexity using minimum  
description length that is not just parameter count**

# Minimum Description Length (MDL)

- Another formalism of Occam's razor

*“Choose the model that gives the shortest description of data”*

- Developed by Rissanen in the 70s with roots in Kolmogorov's algorithmic complexity, making it computable using Shannon's information theory
- Different forms over the years: Two-stage MDL, mixture MDL, normalized maximum likelihood



# Underlying principle: Probability models as codes

- Model  $\longleftrightarrow$  Code  
Good fit  $\longleftrightarrow$  Shorter code length (description)
- Given any distribution  $Q$  on the space  $\mathcal{Y}$ , we can associate a code such that to encode any observation  $y$ , we need  $\log(1/Q(y))$  bits
  - This interpretation does not need a generative model

# Optimal code: With known true model $P^\star$

- When  $y \sim P^\star$ , the expected code-length when using code  $Q$  is given by

$$\mathbb{E}_{y \sim P^\star} \log \left( \frac{1}{Q(y)} \right)$$

# Optimal code: With known true model $P^\star$ is $P^\star$

- When  $y \sim P^\star$ , the expected code-length when using code  $Q$  is given by

$$\mathbb{E}_{y \sim P^\star} \log \left( \frac{1}{Q(y)} \right) = \underbrace{\mathbb{KL}(P^\star \| Q)}_{\text{Redundancy}} + H(P^\star)$$

- Minimized when  $Q = P^\star$ , since redundancy is non-negative

# Optimal code: With known true model $P^\star$ is $P^\star$

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- Minimized when  $Q = P^\star$ , since redundancy is non-negative
- $P^\star$  also minimizes the worst-case regret

$$p^\star = \arg \min_q \max_y \left[ \log \left( \frac{1}{q(y)} \right) - \log \left( \frac{1}{p^\star(y)} \right) \right] \text{ such that } \int q(z) dz \leq 1$$

# Optimal code when $P^\star$ is *unknown*

- Given a class of models  $\{p_\theta, \theta \in \Theta\}$ , not necessarily containing  $p^\star$ , consider the generalization of the min-max regret problem:

$$\min_q \max_y \left[ \log \left( \frac{1}{q(y)} \right) - \min_\theta \log \left( \frac{1}{p_\theta(y)} \right) \right] \text{ such that } \int q(z) dz \leq 1$$

- Shtarkov (1981) showed that

$$q_{NML}(y) \propto \max_\theta p_\theta(y) \quad \text{i.e.,} \quad q_{NML}(y) = \frac{\max_\theta p_\theta(y)}{\int \max_{\theta'} p_{\theta'}(z) dz}$$

solves the optimization problem above where NML stands for “normalized maximum likelihood”; the normalization makes this a universal (valid for any  $y$ ) code



# NML Complexity

- $\log \int \max_{\theta} p_{\theta}(z) dz$  is both the worst-case and the average regret of
  - Referred to as the NML or Shtarkov complexity for the class  $\{p_{\theta}, \theta \in \Theta\}$
- For  $d$ -dimensional parametric-class  $\{p_{\theta}, \theta \in \Theta\}$ , Rissanen showed that the Shtarkov complexity simplifies to  $\frac{d}{2} \log n$  (under regularity conditions)

When  $\int \max_{\theta \in \Theta} p_{\theta}(z) dz$  is infinite, the  
NML distribution is ill-defined

# Issues with NML: Linear model

- Consider linear regression with  $n$  samples and  $d$  feature:

$$p_{\theta}(y) = \mathcal{N}(X\theta, \sigma^2 I_n)$$

(we assume  $X$  and  $\sigma^2$  fixed and known)

- Then  $Q_{NML}$  is given by

$$q_{NML}(y) \propto \max_{\theta} p_{\theta}(y) = p_{\hat{\theta}}(y) = \frac{1}{(2\pi\sigma^2)^{n/2}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|X\hat{\theta}_{OLS} - y\|^2\right)$$

the normalization constant  $\int \max_{\theta} p_{\theta}(z) dz$  is infinite if  $\mathcal{Y}$  is unbounded

# Fixes for NML

- Truncate the output space  $\mathcal{Y}$ : [Barron-Rissanen-Yu 96]
- **This talk:** Use regularization and define a modified NML complexity

# Ridge luckiness normalized maximum likelihood

- Instead of  $\max_{\theta} p_{\theta}(y)$ , we use  $\max_{\theta} p_{\theta}(y)w_{\theta}$  for some “luckiness factor”  $w_{\theta}$
- Use  $w_{\theta}$  induced by ridge regularization—since tuned ridge estimators provide good performance for all range of  $d$ :

$$q_{\Lambda}(y) \propto \max_{\theta} \exp \left( -\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|X\theta - y\|^2 - \frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \theta^{\top} \Lambda \theta \right)$$



# Ridge luckiness normalized maximum likelihood

- Instead of  $\max_{\theta} p_{\theta}(y)$ , we use  $\max_{\theta} p_{\theta}(y)w_{\theta}$  for some “luckiness factor”  $w_{\theta}$
- Use  $w_{\theta}$  induced by ridge regularization—since tuned ridge estimators provide good performance for all range of  $d$ :

$$q_{\Lambda}(y) \propto \exp \left( -\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|X\hat{\theta}_{\Lambda} - y\|^2 - \frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \hat{\theta}_{\Lambda}^{\top} \Lambda \hat{\theta}_{\Lambda} \right)$$

where

$$\hat{\theta}_{\Lambda} = \min_{\theta} \|X\theta - y\|^2 + \theta^{\top} \Lambda \theta = (X^{\top} X + \Lambda)^{-1} X^{\top} y$$

- To derive complexity: Optimize over  $\Lambda$

# LNML codes induced by ridge estimators

- Optimize over the following class

$$\mathcal{Q}_{\text{ridge}} = \{Q_{\Lambda}, \Lambda = UDU^{\top}, D \succeq 0\}$$

where  $U$  denotes the eigenvectors of the matrix  $X^{\top}X$

- Need to account for encoding  $\Lambda$  (not present in usual NML): For  $\Lambda = U\text{diag}(\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_d)U^{\top}$

$$\mathcal{L}(\Lambda) = \sum \log(\lambda_i / \Delta)$$

for small enough (discretization)  $\Delta$

# MDL-COMP: Optimal LNML code in the ridge class

- MDL-COMP captures the best possible redundancy (excess codelength) of  $\mathcal{Q}_{ridge}$  compared to  $P^\star$ :

$$\mathcal{R}_{opt} = \frac{1}{n} \min_{Q \in \mathcal{Q}_{ridge}} \mathbb{KL}(P^\star \| Q)$$

$$MDL - COMP = \mathcal{R}_{opt} + \frac{1}{n} \mathcal{L}(\Lambda_{opt})$$

# Main result: Analytical MDL-COMP for linear models

- Let  $\rho_i$  denote the eigenvalues of  $X^\top X$  and let  $w_i = U^\top \theta^\star$ . When  $y \sim \mathcal{N}(X\theta^\star, \sigma^2 I_n)$ , then

$$\mathcal{R}_{opt} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{\min\{n,d\}} \log \left( 1 + \frac{\rho_i w_i^2}{\sigma^2} \right)$$

$$MDL - COMP = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{\min\{n,d\}} \log \left( \rho_i + \frac{\sigma^2}{w_i^2} \right) + \min \left\{ 1, \frac{d}{n} \right\} \log \left( \frac{1}{\Delta} \right)$$

**Not** just parameter count but data dependent—a function of the covariate design, and the interaction between signal and covariates

# Unpacking the result for Gaussian $X$

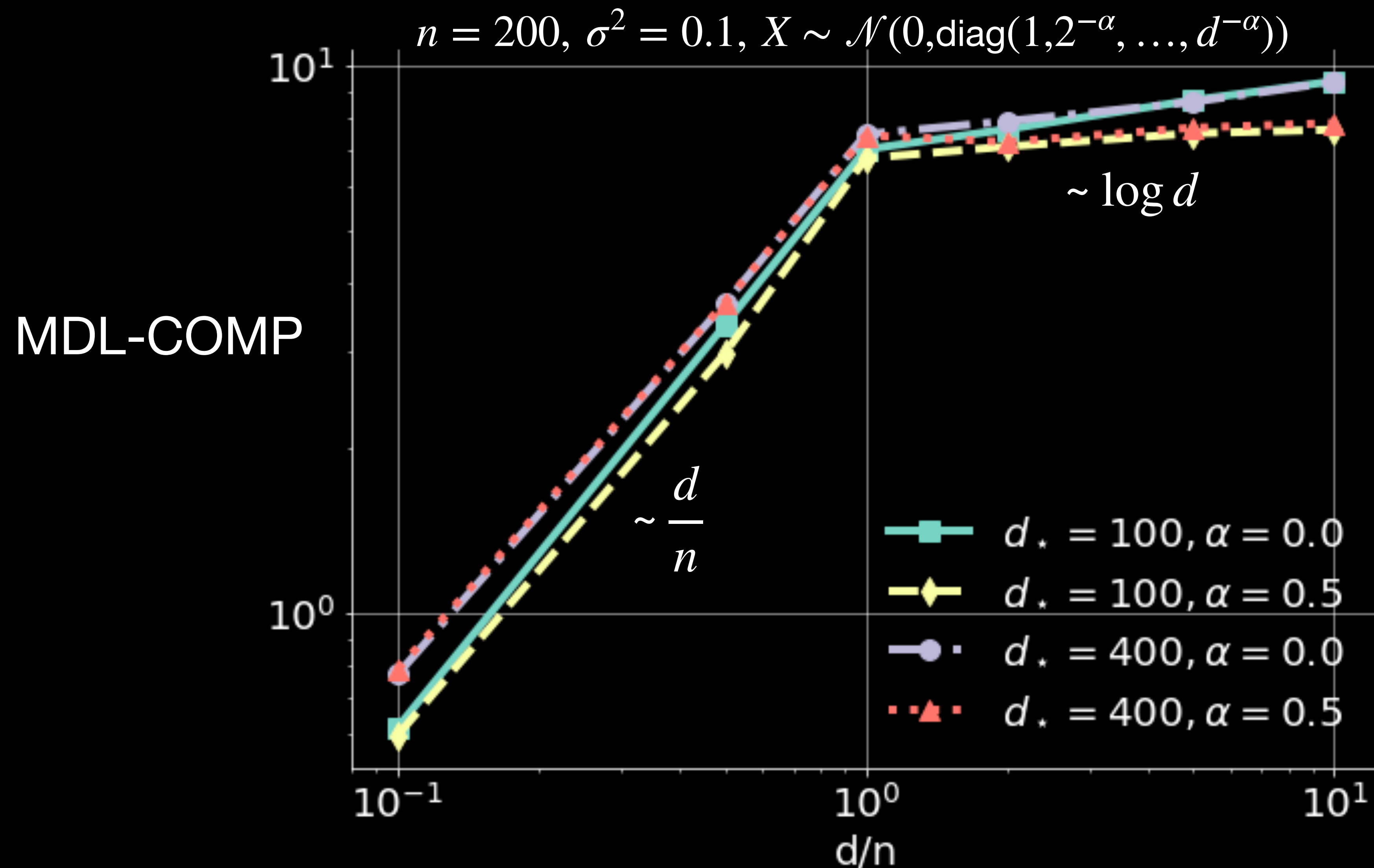
- When  $X \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$  has i.i.d.  $\mathcal{N}(0, 1/n)$  entries, then

$$\text{MDL-COMP} \approx \begin{cases} \frac{d}{n} \log \left( 1 + \frac{d_{\star}}{r^2} \right) + \frac{d}{n} \log \left( \frac{1}{\Delta} \right), & \text{if } d \in [1, d_{\star}] \\ \frac{d}{n} \log \left( 1 + \frac{d}{r^2} \right) + \frac{d}{n} \log \left( \frac{1}{\Delta} \right), & \text{if } d \in [d_{\star}, n] \\ \log \left( \frac{d}{n} + \frac{d}{r^2} \right) + \log \left( \frac{1}{\Delta} \right), & \text{if } d \in [n, \infty) \end{cases}$$

[here  $d_{\star}$  denotes the true dimensionality of  $\theta^{\star}$ , and we assume  $\mathbb{E}[y | X] = \tilde{X}\theta^{\star}$  where  $\tilde{X}$  denotes the first  $d_{\star}$  columns of  $X$ ; and  $r^2 = \|\theta^{\star}\|^2$ ]



# Numerical computation



# Consequences for double descent

- Since MDL-COMP (for Gaussian covariates) is monotone in  $d$ , the double-descent curve for the OLS or ridge remains qualitatively the same
- The double descent likely due to the estimator choice

# Other optimality properties from MDL-COMP

- $\Lambda_{opt}$  provides **optimal** regularization for the **in-sample risk** (a proxy for test error)

$$\Lambda_{opt} = \arg \min_{\Lambda} \mathbb{E} \left( \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i^\top \hat{\theta}_{\Lambda} - x_i^\top \theta^*)^2 \right)$$

- $Q_{opt}$  corresponds to the **min-max optimal code** over a family of distributions, i.e.,

$$Q_{opt} = \arg \min_{Q \in \mathcal{Q}_{ridge}} \max_{P \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_{y \sim P} \log \left( \frac{1}{q(y)} \right)$$

where  $\mathcal{P} = \{P \mid E_P(y \mid X) = X\theta^*, \text{Var}(y \mid X) \leq \sigma^2 I_n\}$

# Extension to kernel methods

- To be added

**Can MDL-COMP be useful for practice?**

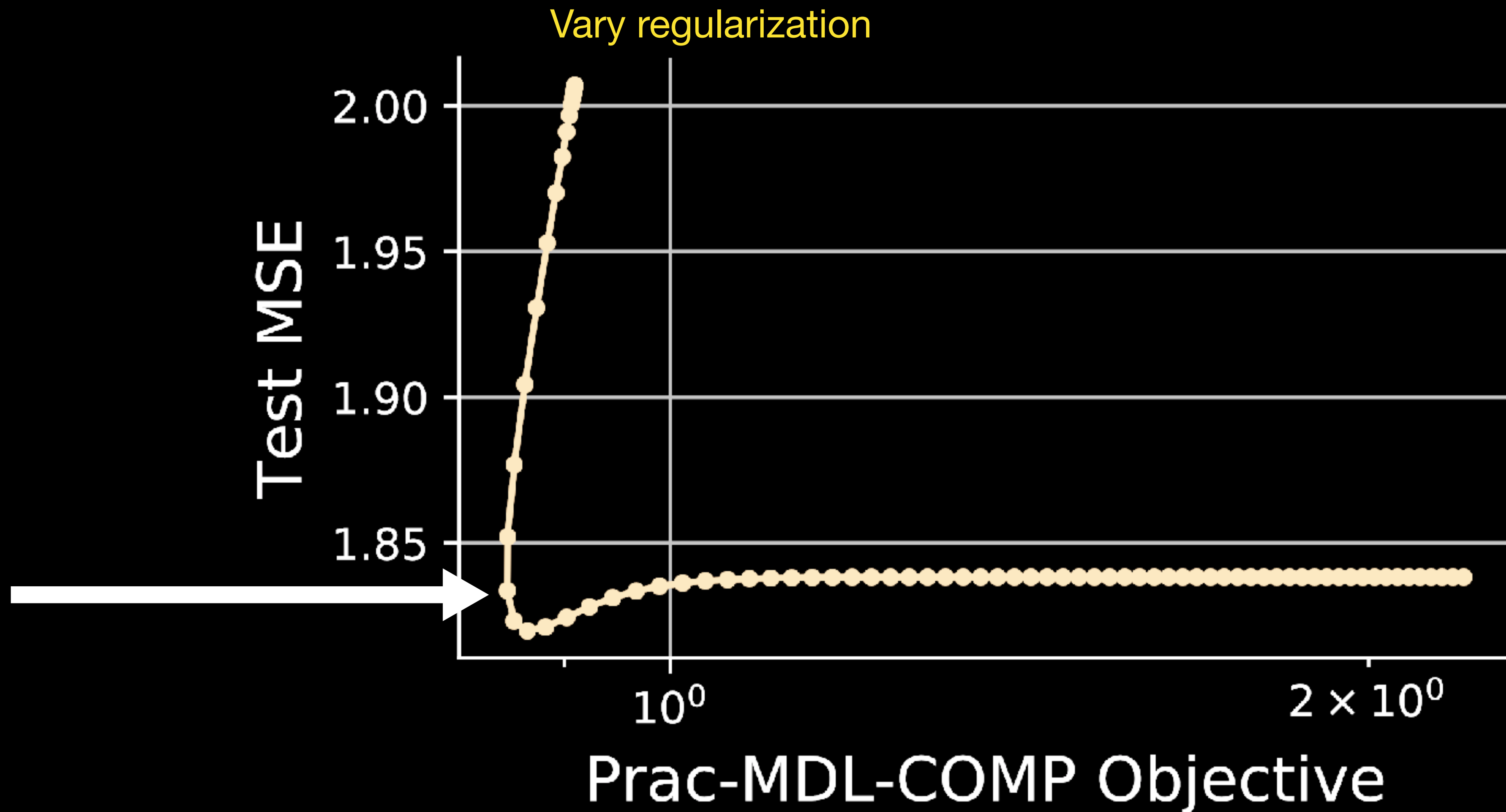
# Let's make it computable from data

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Prac-MDL-COMP} &= \min_{\lambda} \log \left( \frac{1}{q_{\lambda}(y)} \right) \\ &= \min_{\lambda} \left[ \frac{\|X\hat{\theta}_{\lambda} - y\|^2}{2\sigma^2} + \frac{\lambda \|\hat{\theta}_{\lambda}\|^2}{2\sigma^2} + \sum_{i=1}^{\min\{n,d\}} \log \left( 1 + \frac{\rho_i}{\lambda} \right) \right]\end{aligned}$$

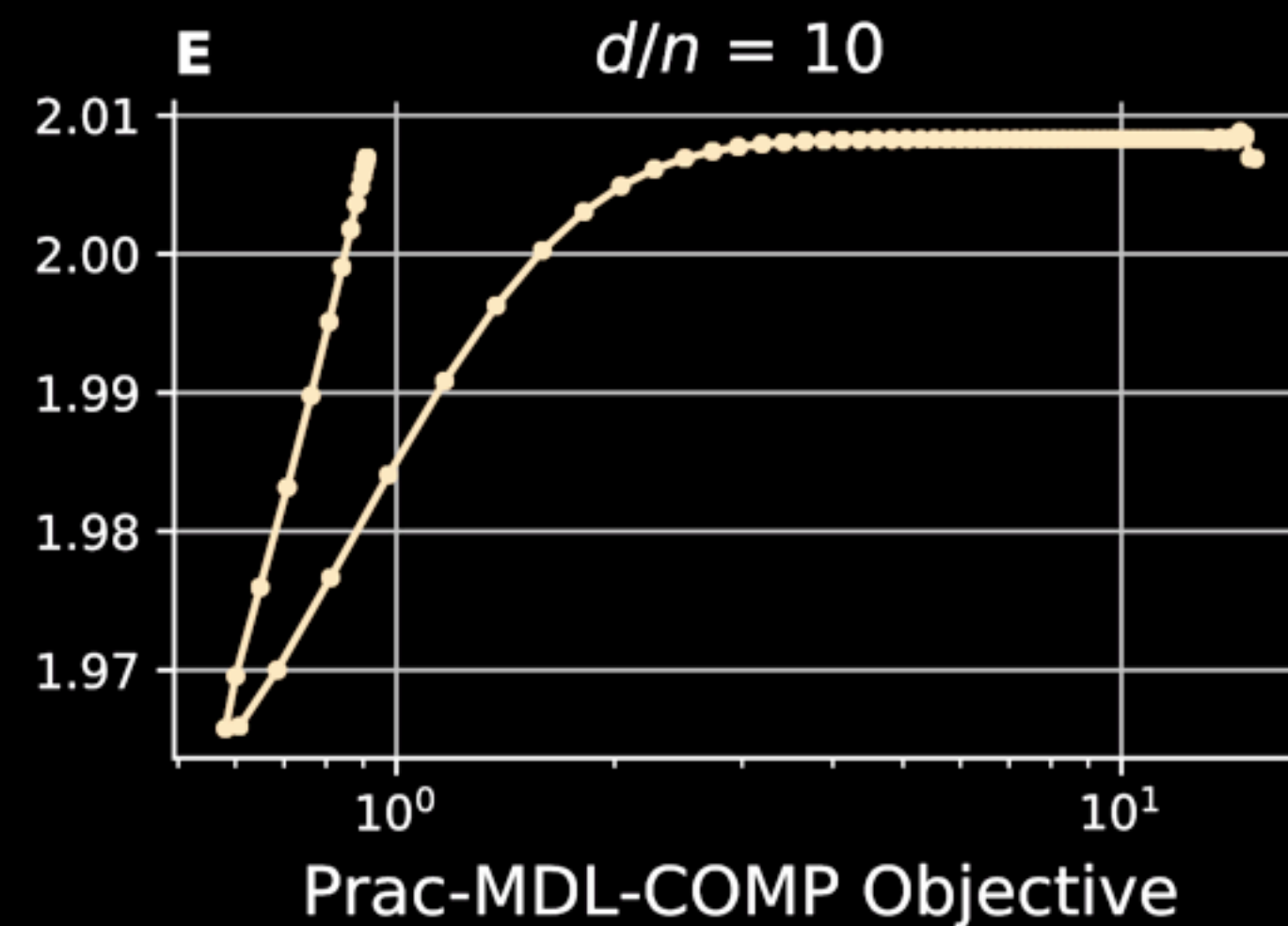
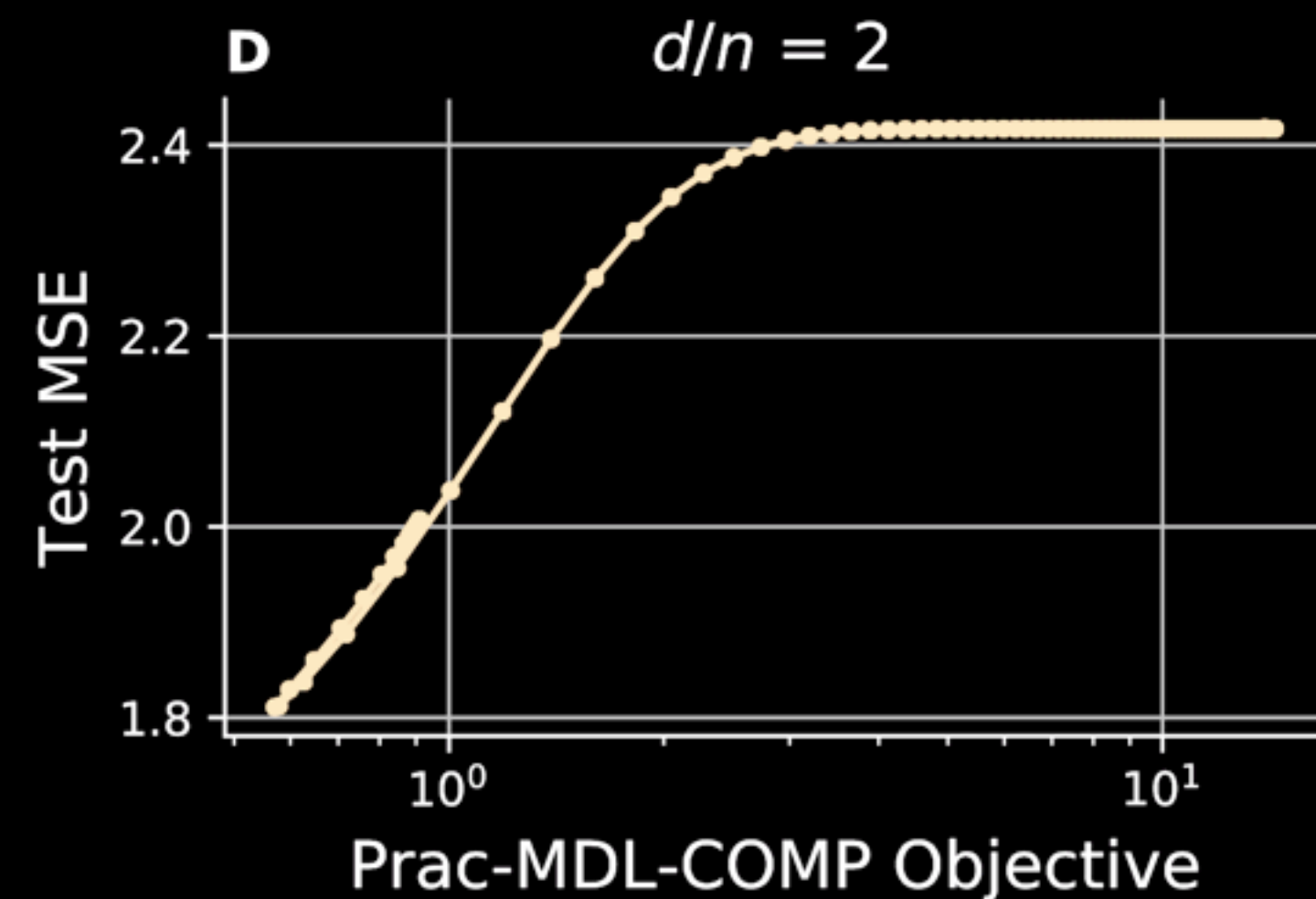
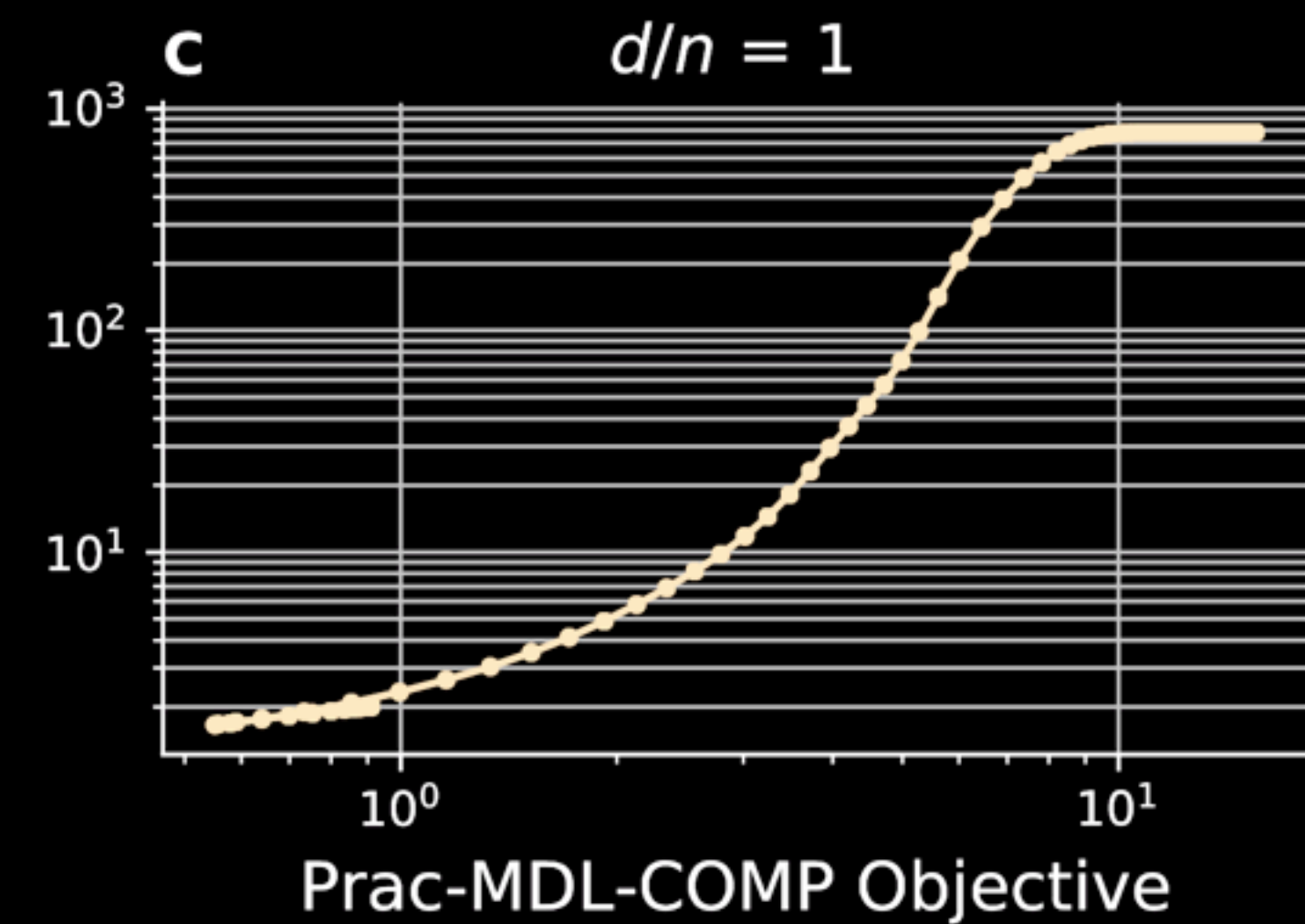
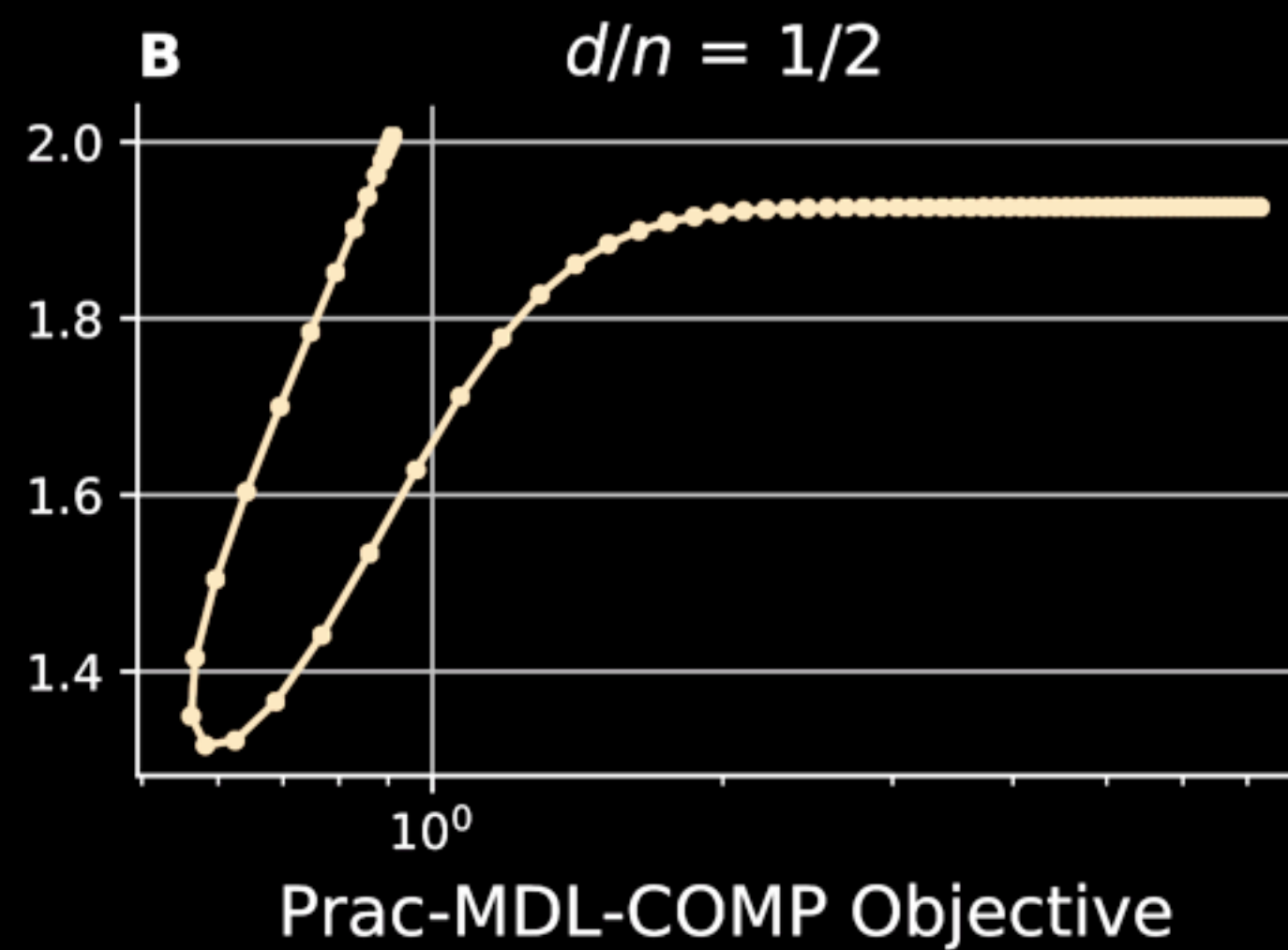
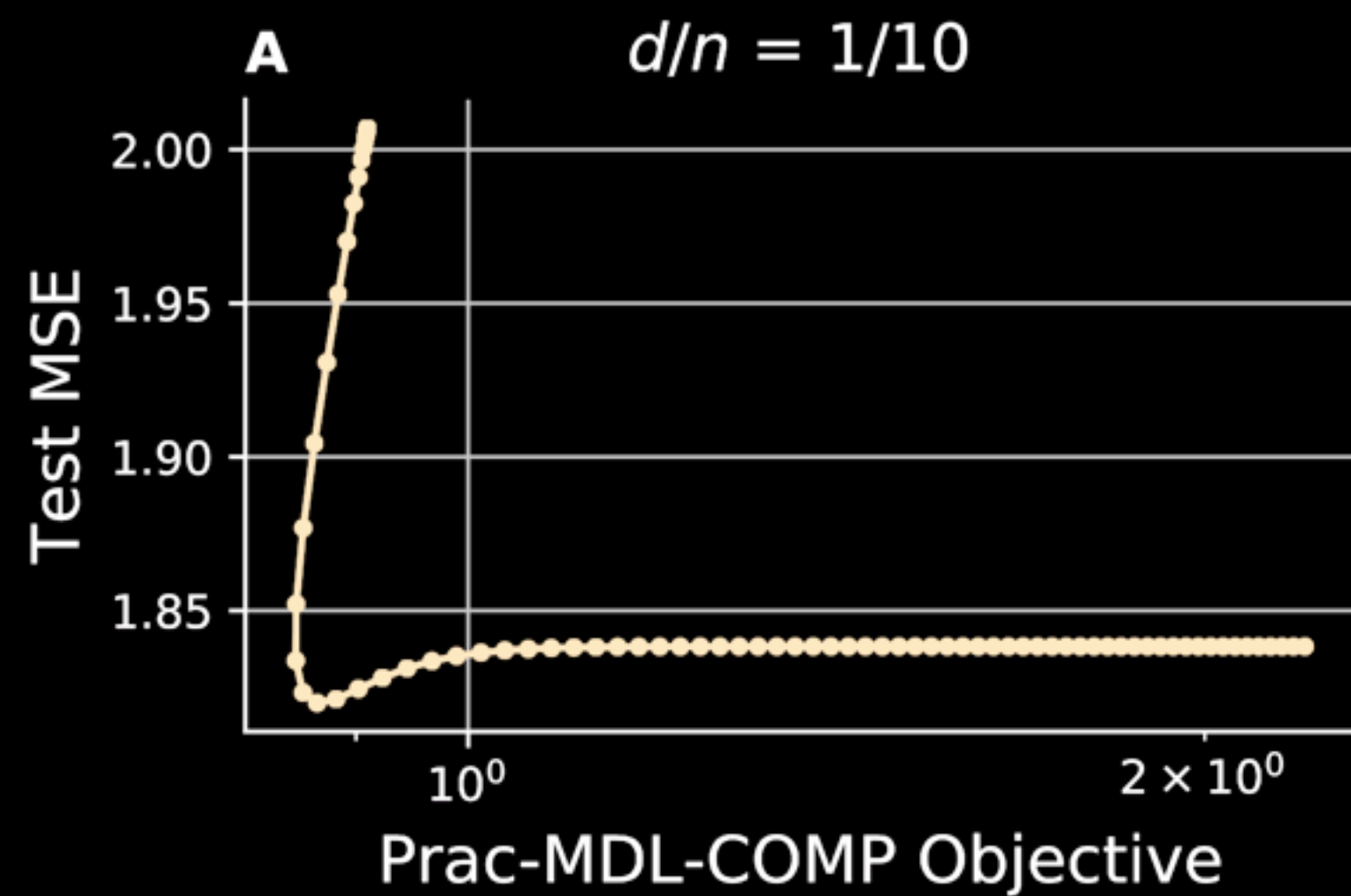
where

$\hat{\theta}_{\lambda} = (X^{\top}X + \lambda I)^{-1}X^{\top}y$  and  $\rho_i$  denote the eigenvalues of  $X^{\top}X$

# Model selection with Prac-MDL-COMP

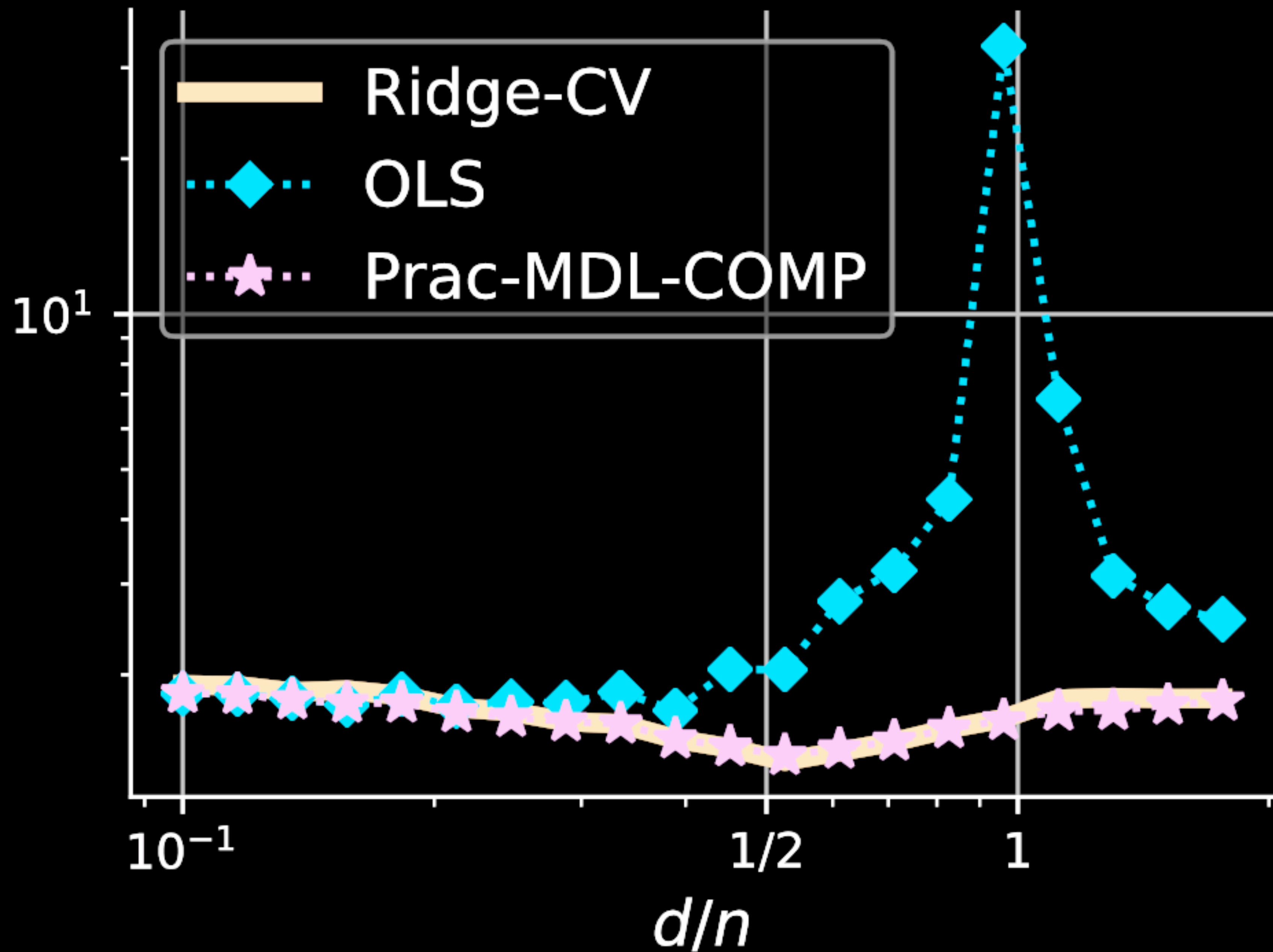


# Model selection with Prac-MDL-COMP





Look Ma,  
no peak

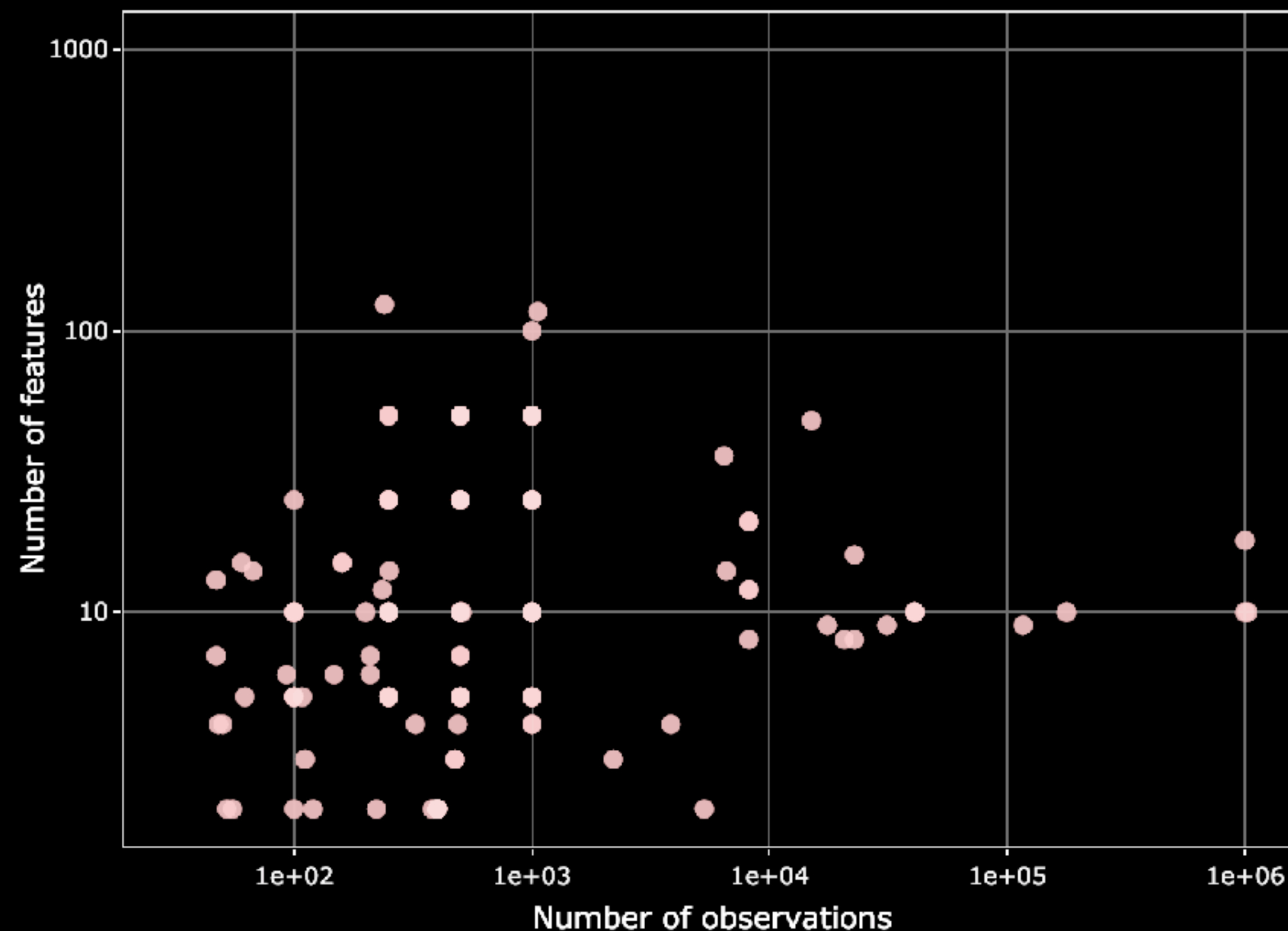


# Using Prac-MDL-COMP for hyperparameter tuning

$$\min_{\lambda} \left[ \frac{\|X\hat{\theta}_{\lambda} - y\|^2}{2\sigma^2} + \frac{\lambda \|\hat{\theta}_{\lambda}\|^2}{2\sigma^2} + \sum_{i=1}^{\min\{n,d\}} \log \left( 1 + \frac{\rho_i}{\lambda} \right) \right]$$

K-fold computational savings compared to K-fold cross validation

# Experiments on PMLB datasets



Diverse set of tabular datasets

Predicting breast cancer from image features

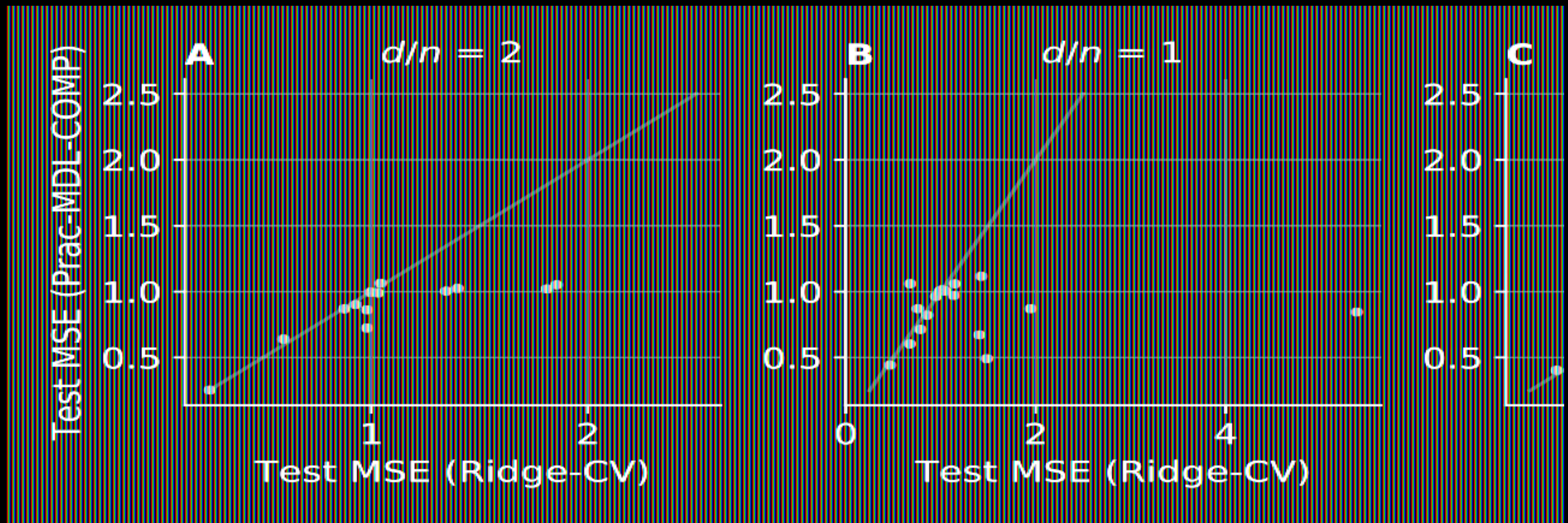
Predicting automobile prices

Election results from previous elections

**PMLB: a large benchmark suite for machine learning evaluation and comparison**

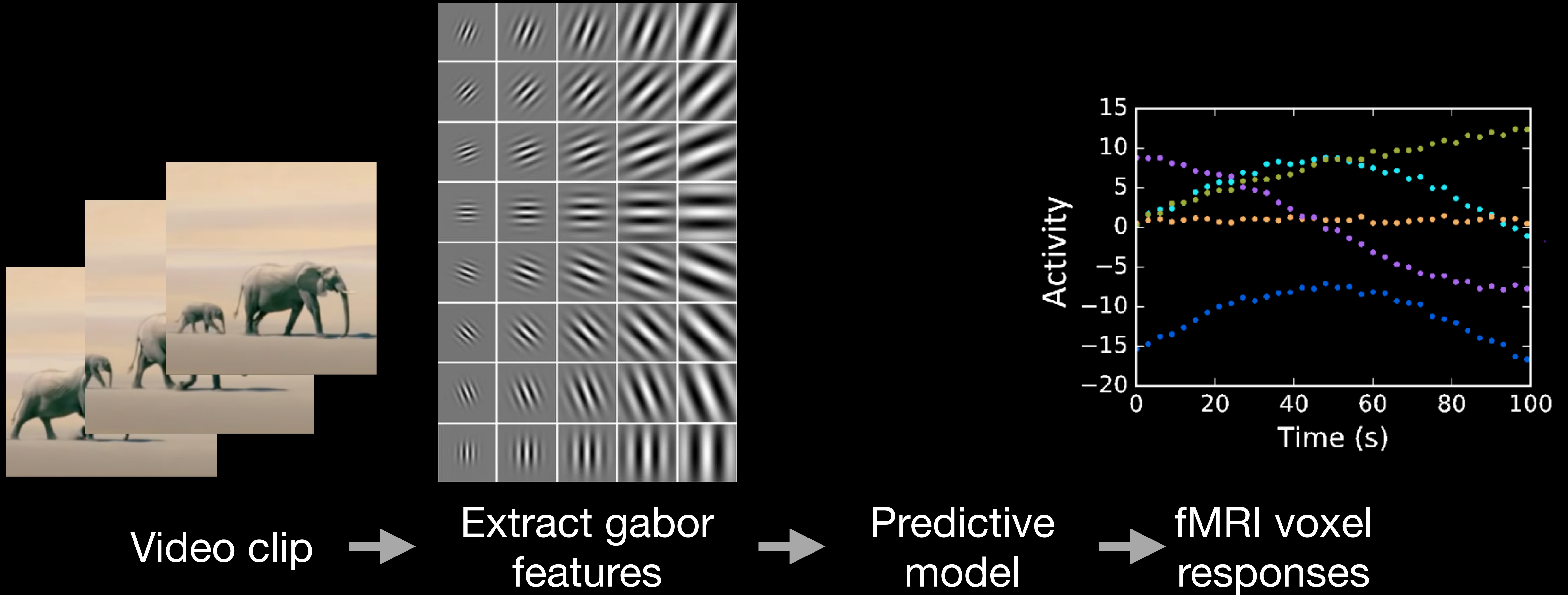
Olson-Cava-Orzechowski-Urbanowicz-Moore 17

# Experiments on PMLB datasets



MDL-COMP better for hyper-parameter tuning in low-data settings

# fMRI experimental setup

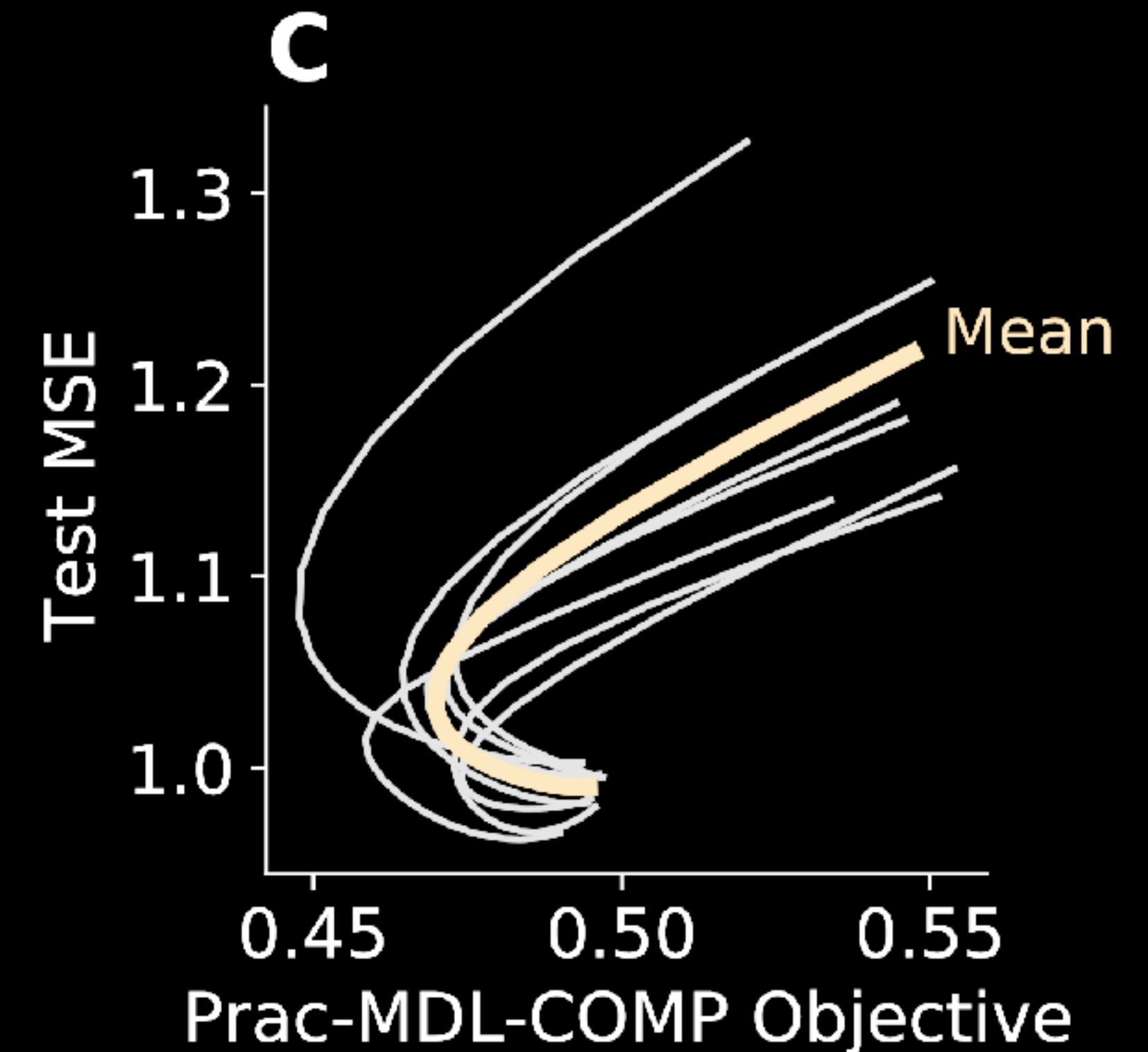
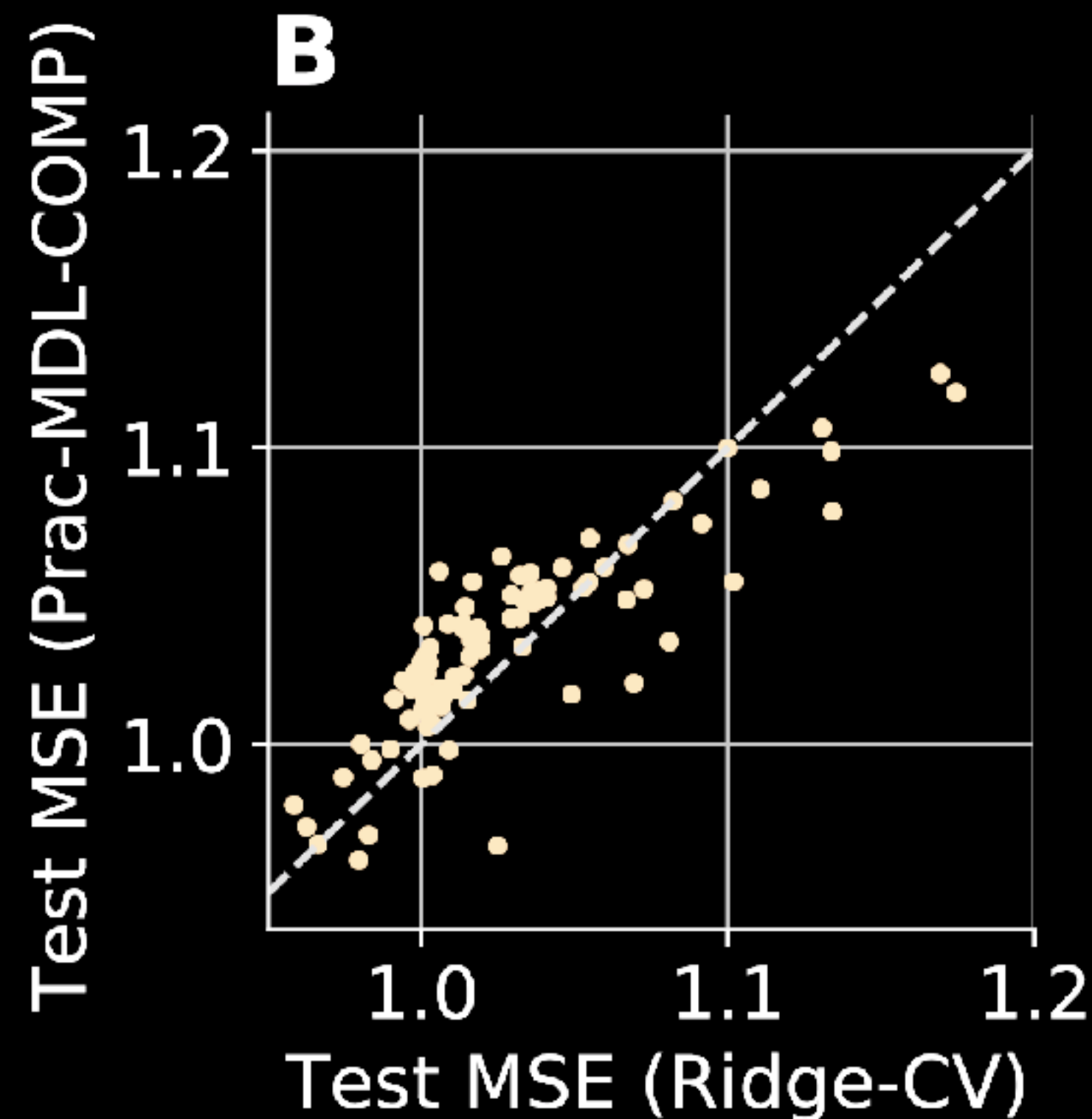
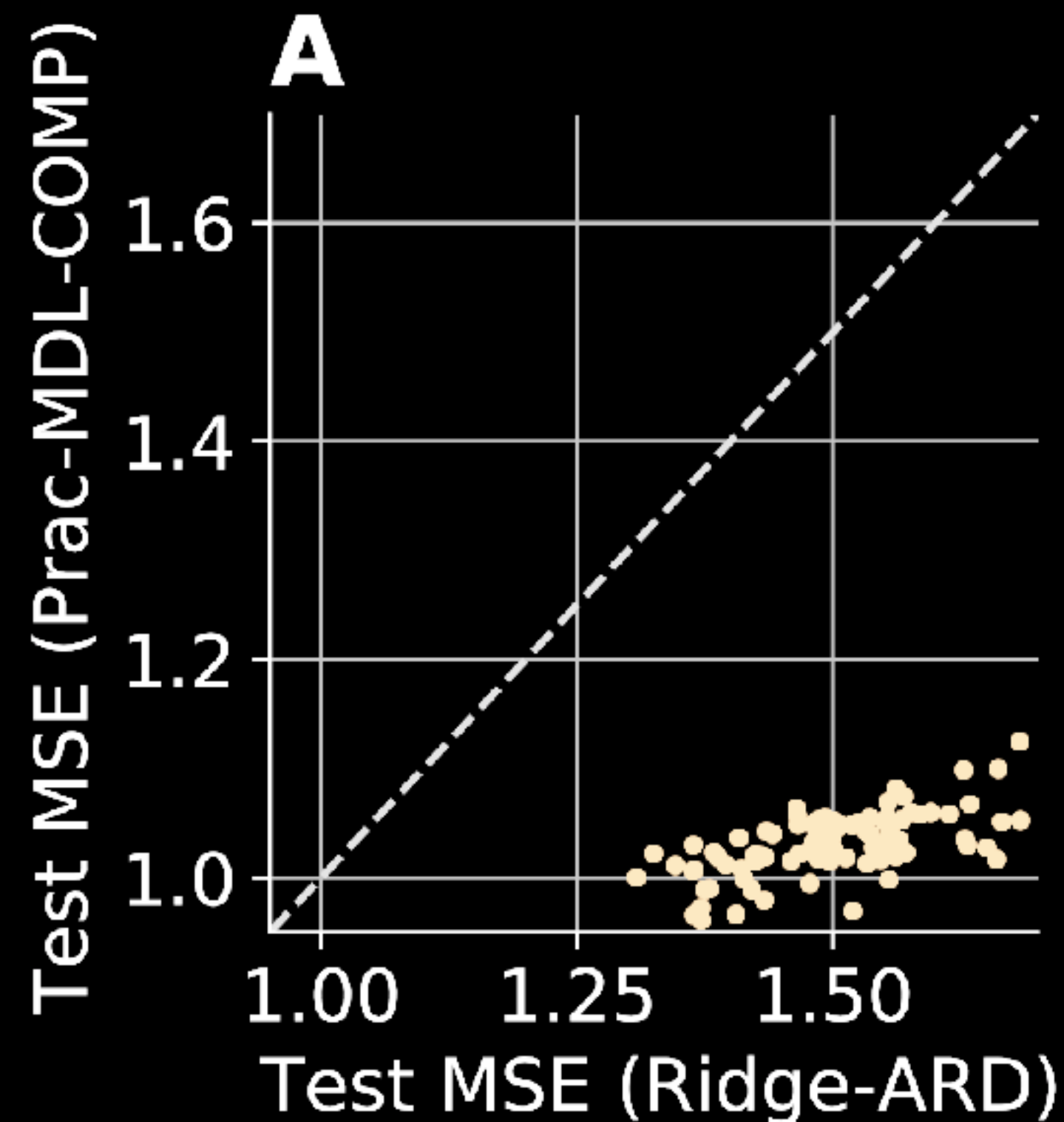


Nishimoto-Vu-Naselaris-Benjamini-Yu-Gallant 11

$d = 1280$   
 $n_{\text{train}} = 7200$   
 $n_{\text{test}} = 540$



# Experiments on fMRI data from 100 voxels



MDL-COMP better than Bayesian-ARD regression, and pretty comparable to CV tuning

# Neural tangent kernels (NTK)

# NTK approximates neural net with infinite width

Jacot et al. 2018

- Varies with number of layers and nonlinearity

$$\bullet K(x, x') = \mathbb{E}_{\theta \sim W} \left[ \left\langle \frac{\partial f(\theta, x)}{\partial \theta}, \frac{\partial f(\theta, x')}{\partial \theta} \right\rangle \right]$$

- Analytical expressions for simple architectures (e.g., cosine kernel for 2 layer Relu networks)
- Software libraries for computing the kernel for deeper networks



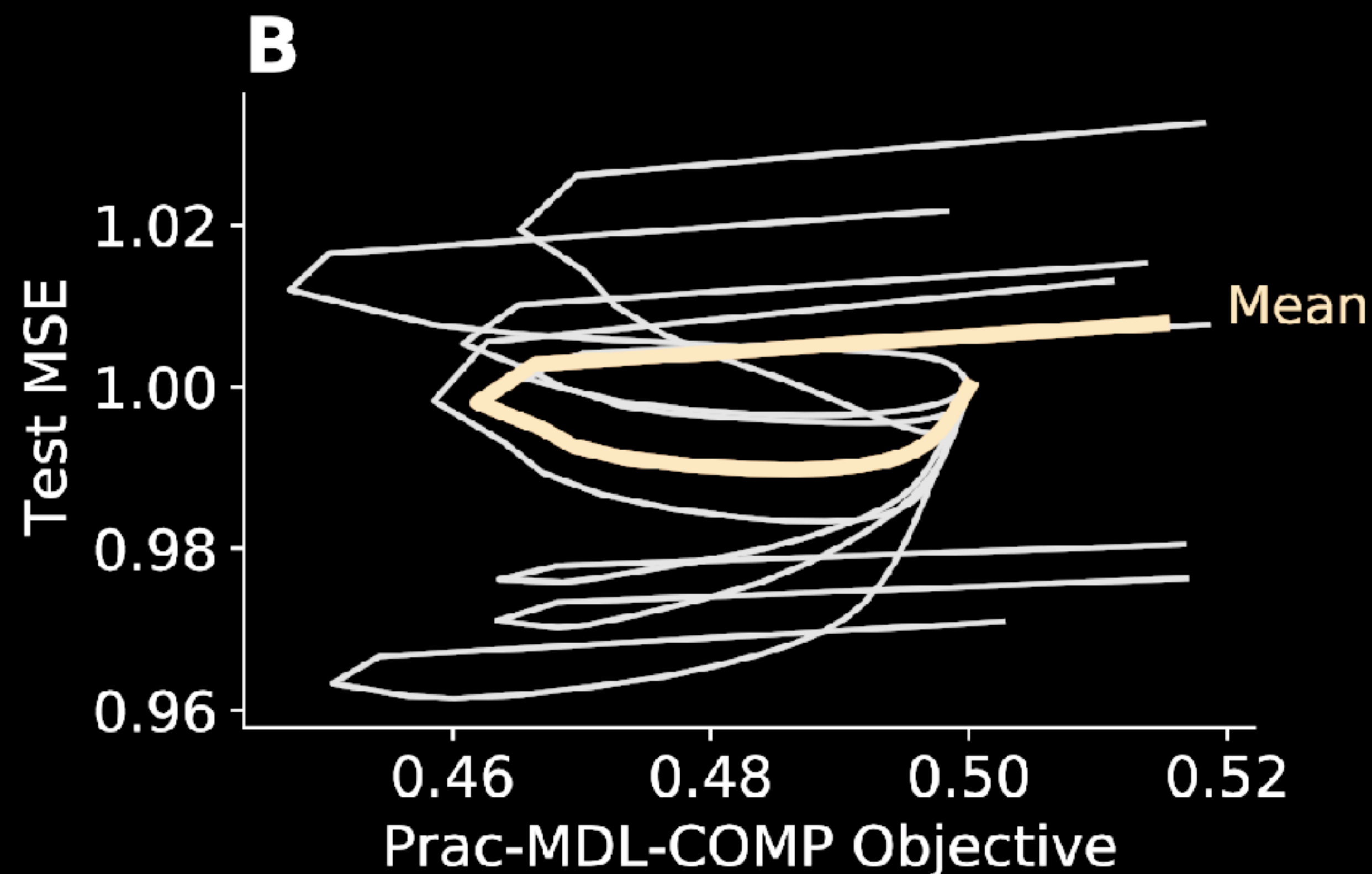
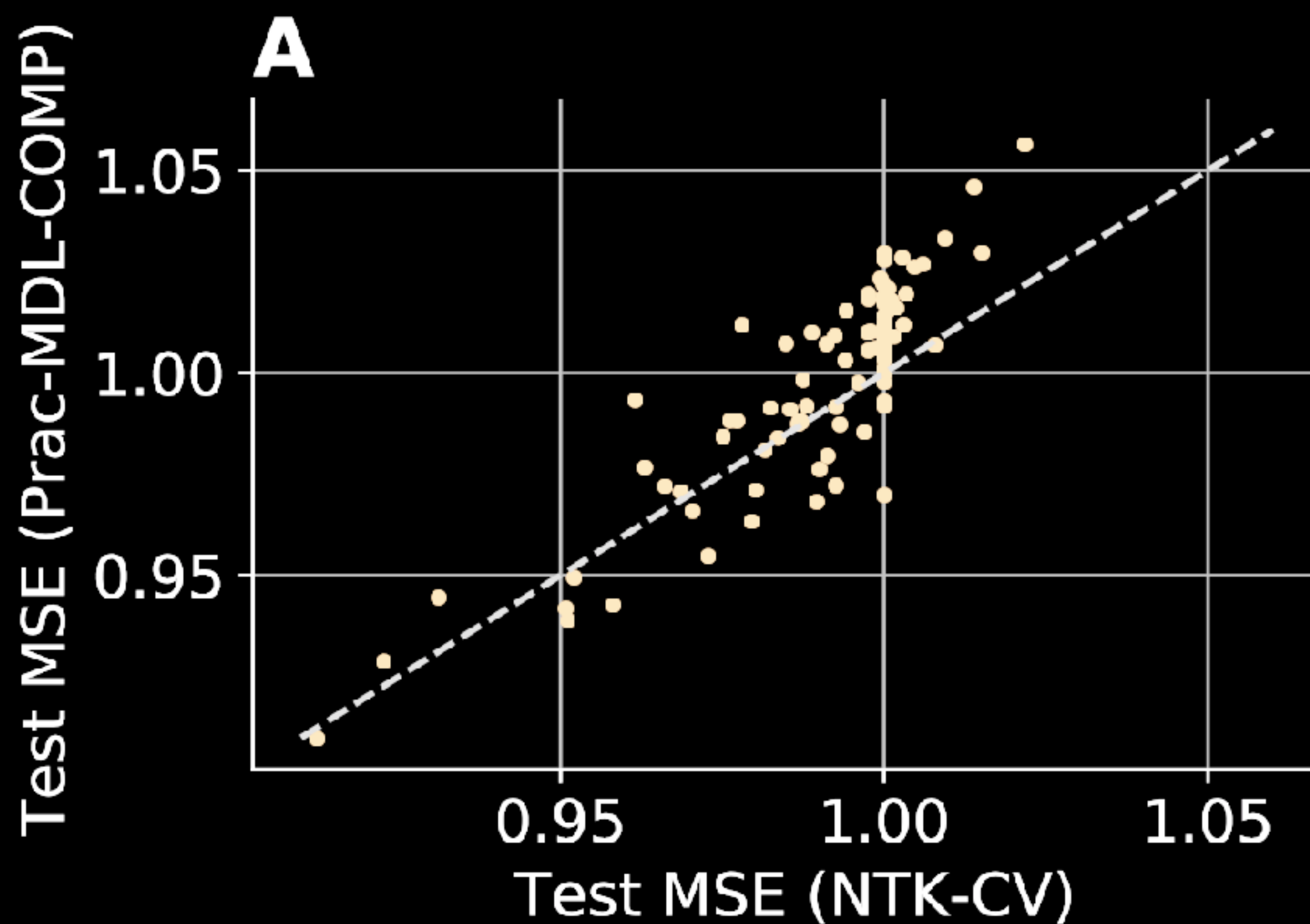
# Kernel version of the computation

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Prac-MDL-COMP} &= \min_{\lambda} \log \left( \frac{1}{q_{\lambda}(y)} \right) \\ &= \min_{\lambda} \left[ \frac{\|K\hat{\theta}_{\lambda} - y\|^2}{2\sigma^2} + \frac{\lambda \hat{\theta}_{\lambda}^{\top} K \hat{\theta}_{\lambda}}{2\sigma^2} + \sum_{i=1}^n \log \left( 1 + \frac{\rho_i}{\lambda} \right) \right]\end{aligned}$$

where

$$\hat{\theta}_{\lambda} = (K + \lambda I)^{-1}y \quad \text{and} \quad \rho_i \text{ denote the eigenvalues of the kernel matrix } K$$

# Experiments on NTK with fMRI data voxels



Once again, MDL-COMP pretty comparable to CV tuning

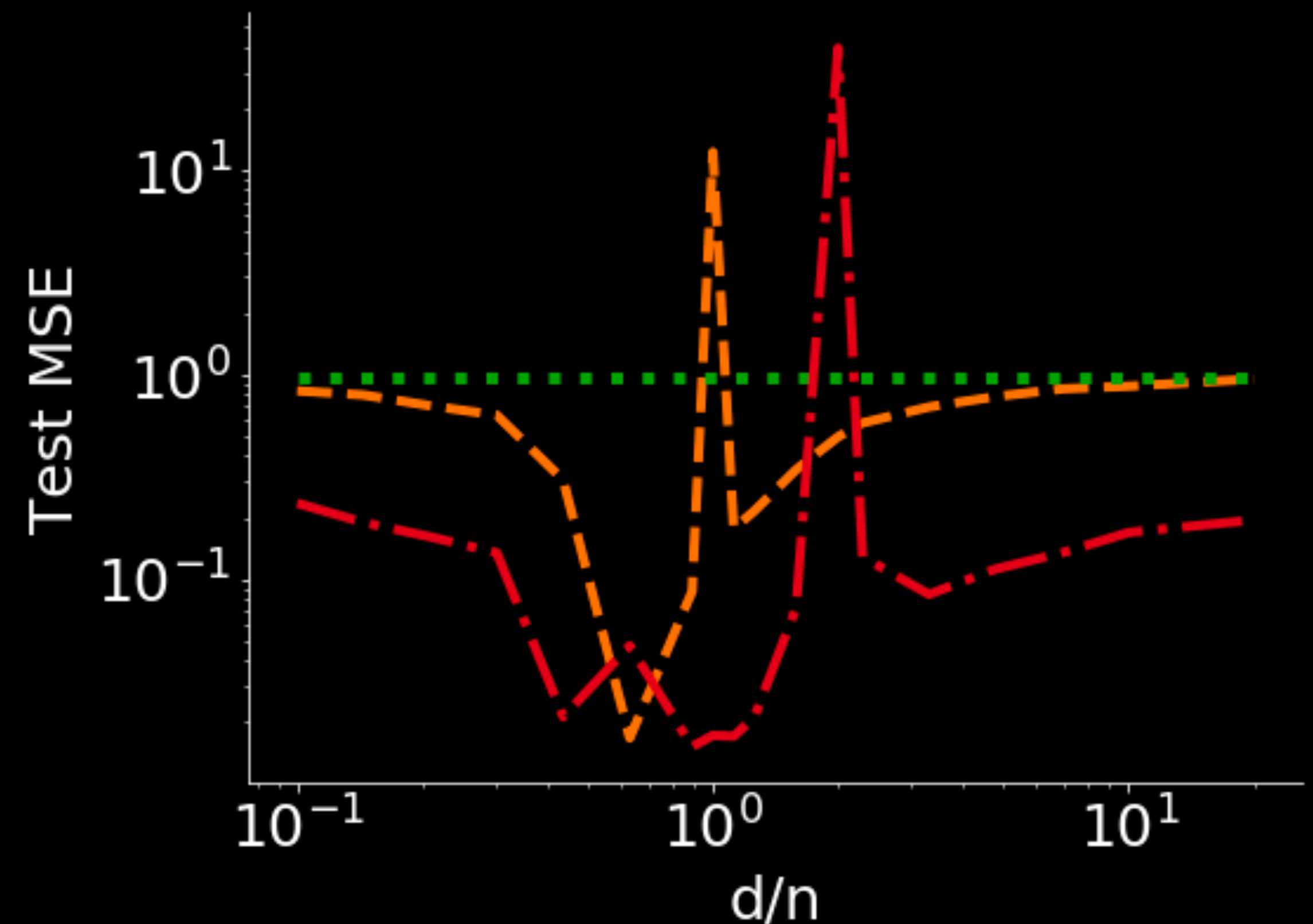
# Summary

- MDL-COMP—a modified NML complexity measure using “optimal” ridge estimators
  - not just parameter count— $\log d$  scaling in overparameterized regime for Gaussian covariates
  - Provides competitive-to-cross validation but computationally more efficient ridge hyper-parameter tuning
- Going forward
  - Establish relationship between MDL-COMP and out-of-sample generalization?
  - Closer to real deep networks: MDL-COMP analytical computations hard for complex models—Approximations?

Additional slides

# Bias-variance tradeoff: Few things to note..

- We should expect a tradeoff *given*
  - some fixed data
  - as the “complexity” of the fitted estimator changes
- Do not expect a tradeoff for
  - poor choice of estimators
  - poor choice of complexity



MDL-COMP for kernel methods

# Universal codes induced by kernel ridge regression

- Define the code  $Q_\lambda$ :

$$q_\lambda(y) \propto \exp \left( -\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|K\hat{\theta}_\lambda - y\|^2 - \frac{\lambda}{2\sigma^2} \hat{\theta}_\lambda^\top K \hat{\theta}_\lambda \right)$$

where

$$\hat{\theta}_\lambda = \min_{\theta} \|K\theta - y\|^2 + \lambda \theta^\top K \theta = (K + \lambda I)^{-1} y$$

- This choice comes from kernel ridge regression:

$$\min_{f \in \mathcal{H}} \sum_{i=1}^n (f(x_i) - y_i)^2 + \lambda \|f\|_{\mathcal{H}}^2$$

# Kernel ridge regression

- One can show that for the optimization problem

$$\min_{f \in \mathcal{H}} \sum_{i=1}^n (f(x_i) - y_i)^2 + \lambda \|f\|_{\mathcal{H}}^2,$$

it suffices to consider the functions of the form

$$f = \sum_{i=1}^n \theta_i K(x_i, \cdot),$$

and this leads to the kernel ridge regression problem in the previous slide



# MDL-COMP for kernel regression

- Let  $\rho_i$  denote the eigenvalues of the kernel matrix  $(K(x_i, x_j))_{i,j=1}^n$  and suppose  $y \sim \mathcal{N}(f^\star(X), \sigma^2 I_n)$  for some  $f^\star$  in RKHS of  $K$ , then

$$\mathcal{R}_{opt} \leq \frac{1}{2n} \left[ \min_{\lambda} \frac{\lambda \|f^\star\|_{\mathcal{H}}^2}{\sigma^2} + \sum_{i=1}^n \log \left( 1 + \frac{\rho_i}{\lambda} \right) \right]$$

(no easy closed-form)

- Since there is only a single hyper-parameter, we can directly take

$$MDL - COMP = \mathcal{R}_{opt}$$

# Unpacking MDL-COMP for Sobolev kernels

- For Sobolev kernel of smoothness  $\alpha$ , the eigenvalues decay like  $\rho_i \sim i^{-2\alpha}$ , and one can derive

$$\mathcal{R}_{opt} \leq C \left( \frac{\|f^\star\|_{\mathcal{H}}^2}{\sigma^2} \right)^{\frac{1}{2\alpha+1}} \cdot n^{-\frac{2\alpha}{2\alpha+1}}$$

# Proofs

# Proof sketch for linear models

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{D}_{\text{KL}}(\mathbb{P}_{\theta_\star} \parallel \mathbb{Q}_{\Lambda}) &= \mathbb{E}_{\mathbf{y}} \left[ \log \frac{p(\mathbf{y}; \mathbf{X}, \theta_\star)}{q_{\Lambda}(\mathbf{y})} \right] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{\mathbf{y}} \left[ \log \left( \frac{\frac{1}{(2\pi\sigma^2)^{n/2}} \exp \left( -\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{X}\theta_\star\|^2 \right)}{\frac{1}{C_{\Lambda}(2\pi\sigma^2)^{n/2}} \exp \left( -\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{X}\hat{\theta}\|^2 - \frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \hat{\theta}^\top \Lambda \hat{\theta} \right)} \right) \right] \\ (31) \quad &= \underbrace{-\mathbb{E}_{\mathbf{y}} \left[ \frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{X}\theta_\star\|^2 \right]}_{=:T_1} + \underbrace{\mathbb{E} \left[ \frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{X}\hat{\theta}\|^2 + \frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \hat{\theta}^\top \Lambda \hat{\theta} \right]}_{=:T_2} + \underbrace{\log C_{\Lambda}}_{=:T_3}. \end{aligned}$$

$$(33a) \quad T_2 = \frac{(n - \min\{n, d\})}{2} + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{\min\{n, d\}} \frac{(\rho_i w_i^2 / \sigma^2 + 1) \lambda_i}{\lambda_i + \rho_i}, \quad \text{and}$$

$$(33b) \quad T_3 = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{\min\{n, d\}} \log \left( \frac{\rho_i + \lambda_i}{\lambda_i} \right)$$



$$\begin{aligned}
(34) \quad \frac{1}{n} \mathcal{D}_{\text{KL}}(\mathbb{P}_{\theta_*} \parallel \mathbb{Q}_{\Lambda}) &= T_1 + T_2 + T_3 \\
&= -\frac{\min\{n, d\}}{2n} + \frac{1}{2n} \sum_{i=1}^{\min\{n, d\}} \underbrace{\left( \frac{(\rho_i w_i^2 / \sigma^2 + 1) \lambda_i}{\lambda_i + \rho_i} + \log \left( \frac{\rho_i + \lambda_i}{\lambda_i} \right) \right)}_{=: f_i(\lambda_i)}.
\end{aligned}$$

Finally to compute the  $\mathcal{R}_{\text{opt}}$  (32), we need to minimize the KL-divergence (34) where we note the objective depends merely on  $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_{\min\{n, d\}}$ . We note that the objective (RHS of equation (34)) is separable in each term  $\lambda_i$ . We have

$$(35) \quad f'_i(\lambda_i) = 0 \quad \Longleftrightarrow \quad -\frac{(\rho_i w_i^2 / \sigma^2 + 1)}{(1 + \rho_i / \lambda_i)^2} + \frac{1}{1 + \rho_i / \lambda_i} = 0 \quad \Longleftrightarrow \quad \lambda_i^{\text{opt}} = \frac{\sigma^2}{w_i^2}.$$

# Proof sketch for the result with Gaussian $X$

- When  $X \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$  has i.i.d.  $\mathcal{N}(0, 1/n)$  entries, then for  $X^\top X = U \text{diag}(\rho_1, \dots, \rho_d) U^\top$ 
  - The matrix  $U$  has uniform distribution over the set of  $d \times d$  orthonormal matrices and hence for any fixed  $\theta^\star$ , the coordinates of  $w = U^\top \theta^\star$  are identically distributed, and we can use the approximation  $w_i^2 \approx \frac{\|\theta^\star\|^2}{d}$

# Proof sketch for the result with Gaussian $X$

- When  $X \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$  has i.i.d.  $\mathcal{N}(0, 1/n)$  entries, then for  $X^\top X = U \text{diag}(\rho_1, \dots, \rho_d) U^\top$ 
  - The eigenvalues  $\rho_i$  follow Marcenko-Pastur Law with the following approximation
  - $d \ll n, \quad X^\top X \approx I_d, \quad \rho_i \approx 1$
  - $d > n, \quad X^\top X \approx \begin{bmatrix} \frac{d}{n} I_n & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \rho_i \begin{cases} \approx \frac{d}{n}, & i \leq n \\ = 0, & i > n \end{cases}$



# Two-stage MDL

# Two-stage MDL

- Consider a parametric class of codes  $\{p_\theta, \theta \in \Theta\}$ , and then use the valid codelength for any fixed  $p_\theta$

$$\log \left( \frac{1}{p_\theta(y)} \right)$$

- Minimizing this codelength is same as MLE over the given parametric class
- But the choice of  $\hat{\theta}$  varies with  $y$ , so need to account for the codelength needed to transmit the value of  $\hat{\theta}$

# Two-stage MDL

- Thus the overall codelength is

$$\log \left( \frac{1}{p_{\hat{\theta}}(y)} \right) + \frac{d}{2} \log n$$

Codelength for data

Codelength for  $d$ -dimensional  
parameter upto  $1/\sqrt{n}$  resolution

- For a fixed parametric class, same as MLE (since the second term is constant)
- For a family of parametric classes, same as BIC procedure (model selection)

# MDL-COMP vs Cross-validation

- For  $n \times d$  covariates, for each value of  $\lambda$ , the computational costs are
  - **K-fold cross-validation:**  $K \times \text{OLS solver} = K \times (nd^2 + \min(n^3, d^3))$
  - **Prac-MDL-COMP:**  $1 \times \text{SVD solver} = nd^2 + n^2d$

Prac-MDL-COMP provides a proxy for complexity and saves K-fold computation!

# Issues with NML

# Issues with NML: Linear model

- Then  $Q_{NML}$  is given by

$$q_{NML}(y) \propto \max_{\theta} p_{\theta}(y) = p_{\hat{\theta}}(y) = \frac{1}{(2\pi\sigma^2)^{n/2}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|X\hat{\theta} - y\|^2\right)$$

$$\hat{\theta} = \arg \max_{\theta} p_{\theta}(y) = \arg \min_{\theta} \|X\theta - y\|^2 = \hat{\theta}_{OLS}$$

(We can use min-norm OLS when  $d > n$ )

# Issues with NML: Linear model

- If  $\mathcal{Y}$  is not compact (even when  $d < n$ )

$$\int \frac{1}{(2\pi\sigma^2)^{n/2}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|X\hat{\theta} - y\|^2\right) dy = \infty$$

- Easiest to see when  $d > n$  so that  $X\hat{\theta} = y$ , and we have

$$\int \frac{1}{(2\pi\sigma^2)^{n/2}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \|X\hat{\theta} - y\|^2\right) dy = \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} \frac{1}{(2\pi\sigma^2)^{n/2}} dy = \infty$$