## Near-consistent robust estimations of moments for unimodal distributions

## **Tuban Lee**

10

11

12

13

15

17

20

21

22

23

24

27

28

29

30

31

34

35

This manuscript was compiled on May 22, 2023

Descriptive statistics for parametric models currently heavily rely on the accuracy of distributional assumptions. Here, leveraging the invariant structures of unimodal distributions, a series of sophisticated yet efficient estimators, robust to both gross errors and departures from parametric assumptions, are proposed for estimating mean and central moments with insignificant asymptotic biases for common unimodal distributions. This article also illuminates the understanding of the common nature of probability distributions and the measures of them.

orderliness | invariant | unimodal | adaptive estimation | U-statistics

he potential inconsistencies between the sample mean  $(\bar{x})$ and robust location estimators with non-zero asymptotic breakdown points in distributions with finite moments on the real line have been noticed for more than two centuries (1), yet remain unsolved. Strictly speaking, it is unsolvable as by trimming, some information about the original distribution is removed, making it impossible to estimate the values of the removed parts without distributional assumptions. Newcomb (1886) provided the first modern approach to robust parametric estimation by developing a class of estimators that gives "less weight to the more discordant observations" (2). In 1964, Huber (3) used the minimax procedure to obtain M-estimator for the contaminated normal distribution, which has played a pre-eminent role in the later development of robust statistics. However, as previously demonstrated, under growing asymmetric departures from normality, the bias of the Huber M-estimator increases rapidly. This is a common issue in parameter estimations. For example, He and Fung (1999) constructed (4) a robust M-estimator for the two-parameter Weibull distribution, from which all moments can be calculated. Nonetheless, it is inadequate for the gamma, Perato, lognormal, and the generalized Gaussian distributions (SI Dataset S1). Another interesting approach is based on L-estimators, such as percentile estimators. Examples of percentile estimators for the Weibull distribution, the reader is referred to Menon (1963) (5), Dubey (1967) (6), Marks (2005) (7), and Boudt, Caliskan, and Croux (2011) (8)'s works. At the outset of the study of percentile estimators, it was known that they arithmetically utilize the invariant structures of probability distributions (5, 6). Maybe such estimators can be named as Istatistics. Formally, an estimator is classified as an I-statistic if it asymptotically satisfies  $I(LE_1, ..., LE_l) = (\theta_1, ..., \theta_q)$  for the distribution it is consistent, where LEs are calculated with the use of LU-statistics (defined in Subsection B), I is defined using arithmetic operations and constants but may also incorporate transcendental functions and quantile functions, and  $\theta$ s are the population parameters it estimates. A subclass of I-statistics, arithmetic I-statistics, is defined as LEs are LU-statistics, I is solely defined using arithmetic operations and constants. Since some percentile estimators use the logarithmic function to transform all random variables before computing the L-estimators, a percentile estimator might not always be an arithmetic I-statistic (6). In this article, two subclasses of *I*-statistics are introduced, arithmetic *I*-statistics and quantile I-statistics. Examples of quantile I-statistics will be discussed later. Based on LU-statistics, I-statistics are naturally robust. Compared to probability density functions (pdfs) and cumulative distribution functions (cdfs), the quantile functions of many parametric distributions are more elegant. Since the expectation of an L-estimator can be expressed as an integral of the quantile function, I-statistics are often analytically obtainable. However, it is observed that Marks percentile estimator for the Weibull distribution (7) tends to be inferior to the robust M-estimators (3, 4), especially upon violation of the distributional assumption (SI Dataset S1). Even when distributions such as the Weibull and gamma belong to the same larger family, the generalized gamma distribution, a misassumption can still result in substantial biases for central moments, rendering the approach ill-suited (SI Dataset S1).

42

43

44

45

46

47

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

59

62

63

The majority of robust location estimators commonly used are symmetric owing to the prevalence of symmetric distributions. An asymmetric weighted L-statistic can achieve consistency for a semiparametric class of skewed distributions; but the lack of symmetry makes it suitable only for certain applications. Shifting from semiparametrics to parametrics, consider an estimator with a non-zero asymptotic breakdown point that is consistent simultaneously for both a semiparametric class of distributions and a distinct parametric distribution with finite moments, such a robust location estimator is called an invariant mean. Based on the mean-weighted L-statistic- $\gamma$ -median inequality, the recombined mean is defined as

$$rm_{d,\epsilon,\gamma,n} := \lim_{c \to \infty} \left( \frac{\left( WL_{\epsilon,\gamma,n} + c \right)^{d+1}}{\left( \gamma m_n + c \right)^d} - c \right),$$

where d is the key factor for bias correction,  $\gamma m_n$  is the sample  $\gamma$ -median,  $\mathrm{WL}_{\epsilon,\gamma,n}$  is the weighted L-statistic. If  $\gamma$  is omitted,  $\gamma=1$  is assumed. The subsequent theorem shows the significance of this arithmetic I-statistic.

## **Significance Statement**

Bias, variance, and contamination are the three main errors in statistics. Consistent robust estimation is unattainable without parametric assumptions. In this article, invariant moments are proposed as a means of achieving near-consistent and robust estimations of moments, even in scenarios where moderate violations of distributional assumptions occur, while the variances are sometimes smaller than those of the sample moments.

T.L. designed research, performed research, analyzed data, and wrote the paper. The author declares no competing interest.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> To whom correspondence should be addressed. E-mail: tl@biomathematics.org

Theorem .1. Let  $BM_{\epsilon,n}$  be the WL,  $rm_{d\approx 0.103, \epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  is a consistent mean estimator for the exponential distribution, any symmetric distributions and the Pareto distribution with quantile function  $Q(p)=x_m(1-p)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}, x_m>0$ , when  $\alpha\to\infty$ , provided that the second moments are finite.

*Proof.* Finding d and  $\epsilon$  that make  $rm_{d,\epsilon}$  a consistent mean estimator is equivalent to finding the solution of  $E[rm_{d,\epsilon,n}] = E[X]$ . The quantile function of the expo-nential distribution is  $Q(p) = \ln\left(\frac{1}{1-p}\right)\lambda$ .  $E[X] = \lambda$ .  $E[m_n] = Q(\frac{1}{2}) = \ln 2\lambda$ . For the exponential distribution,  $E\left[{\rm BM}_{\epsilon=\frac{1}{24},n}\right] = \lambda \left(1 + \ln\left(\frac{26068394603446272\sqrt[6]{\frac{7}{247}}\sqrt[3]{11}}{391^{5/6}101898752449325\sqrt{5}}\right)\right), \text{ the detailed formula is given in the SI Text. Since } rm_{d,\epsilon} =$  $\lim_{c\to\infty} \left( \frac{(\mathrm{BM}_{\epsilon}+c)^{d+1}}{(m+c)^d} - c \right) = (d+1)\,\mathrm{BM}_{\epsilon} - dm = \mu. \quad \mathrm{So},$  $d \; = \; \frac{\mu - \mathrm{BM}_{\epsilon}}{\mathrm{BM}_{\epsilon} - m} \; = \; \frac{\lambda - \lambda \left(1 + \ln \left(\frac{26068394603446272 \sqrt[6]{\frac{7}{247}} \sqrt[3]{11}}{391^{5/6}101898752449325\sqrt{5}}\right)\right)}{\lambda \left(1 + \ln \left(\frac{26068394603446272 \sqrt[6]{\frac{7}{247}} \sqrt[3]{11}}{391^{5/6}101898752449325\sqrt{5}}\right)\right) - \ln 2\lambda}$  $\frac{\ln\left(\frac{26068394603446272 \sqrt[6]{\frac{7}{247}} \sqrt[3]{11}}{391^{5/6} 101898752449325\sqrt{5}}\right)}{1-\ln(2)+\ln\left(\frac{26068394603446272 \sqrt[6]{\frac{7}{247}} \sqrt[3]{11}}{391^{5/6} 101898752449325\sqrt{5}}\right)}$  $\approx 0.103$ . The proof of the second assertion follows directly from the coincidence property. For any symmetric distribution with a fi-nite second moment,  $E[BM_{\epsilon,n}] = E[m_n] = E[X]$ . Then  $E\left[rm_{d,\epsilon,n}\right] = \lim_{c \to \infty} \left(\frac{(E[X]+c)^{d+1}}{(E[X]+c)^d} - c\right) = E\left[X\right]. \text{ The proof}$ for the Pareto distribution is more general. The mean of the Pareto distribution is given by  $\frac{\alpha x_m}{\alpha - 1}$ . Since any weighted L-statistic can be expressed as an integral of the quantile function as shown in Theorem A.1, the  $\gamma$ -median is also a percentile, replacing the WL and  $\gamma m$  in the d value with two arbitrary percentiles  $p_1$  and  $p_2$ , for the Pareto distribution.  $d_{Perato} = \frac{\mu - Q(p_1)}{Q(p_1) - Q(p_2)} = \frac{\frac{\alpha x_m}{\alpha - 1} - x_m (1 - p_1)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}{x_m (1 - p_1)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}} - x_m (1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}. \quad x_m \text{ can}$  be canceled out. For the exponential distribution,  $d_{exp} = \frac{1}{\alpha} - \frac$  $\frac{\mu - Q(p_1)}{Q(p_1) - Q(p_2)} = \frac{\lambda - \ln\left(\frac{1}{1 - p_1}\right)\lambda}{\ln\left(\frac{1}{1 - p_1}\right)\lambda - \ln\left(\frac{1}{1 - p_2}\right)\lambda} = -\frac{\ln(1 - p_1) + 1}{\ln(1 - p_1) - \ln(1 - p_2)}.$ Since  $\lim_{\alpha \to \infty} \frac{\frac{\alpha}{\alpha - 1} - (1 - p_1)^{-1/\alpha}}{(1 - p_1)^{-1/\alpha} - (1 - p_2)^{-1/\alpha}} = -\frac{\ln(1 - p_1) + 1}{\ln(1 - p_1) - \ln(1 - p_2)},$ the d value for the Pareto distribution approach that of the exponential distribution, as  $\alpha \to \infty$ , regardless of the type of weighted L-statistic used. This completes the demonstra-tion. 

Theorem .1 implies that for the Weibull, gamma, Pareto, lognormal and generalized Gaussian distribution,  $rm_{d\approx 0.103,\epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  is consistent for at least one particular case. The biases of  $rm_{d\approx 0.103,\epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  for distributions with skewness between those of the exponential and symmetric distributions are tiny (SI Dataset S1).  $rm_{d\approx 0.103,\epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  exhibits excellent performance for all these common unimodal distributions (SI Dataset S1).

Besides introducing the concept of invariant mean, the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that, in light of previous works, the estimation of central moments can be transformed into a location estimation problem by using U-statistics, the central moment kernel distributions possess desirable properties, and a series of sophisticated yet efficient robust estimators can be constructed whose biases are typically smaller than

the variances (as seen in Table ?? for n = 4096) for unimodal distributions.

## **Background and Main Results**

**A. Invariant mean.** It is well established that a theoretical model can be adjusted to fit the first two moments of the observed data. A continuous distribution belonging to a location–scale family, parametrized by a location parameter  $\mu$  and a scale parameter  $\lambda$ , takes the form  $F(x) = F_0\left(\frac{x-\mu}{\lambda}\right)$ , where  $F_0$  is a standard distribution without any shifts or scaling. Consequently,  $F(x) = Q^{-1}(x) \to x = Q(p) = \lambda Q_0(p) + \mu$ . Thus, for a location–scale distribution, any WA $(\epsilon, \gamma)$  can be expressed as  $\lambda$ WA $_0(\epsilon, \gamma) + \mu$ , where WA $_0(\epsilon, \gamma)$  is an integral of  $Q_0(p)$  according to the definition of the weighted average. The succeeding theorem shows that the  $whl_k$  kernel distribution is invariably a location–scale distribution if the original distribution belongs to a location–scale family with the same location and scale parameters. The proof is given in the SI Text.

**Theorem A.1.** 
$$whl_k (x_1 = \lambda x_1 + \mu, \dots, x_k = \lambda x_k + \mu) = \lambda whl_k (x_1, \dots, x_k) + \mu.$$

Let WeHLM $_0(\epsilon,\gamma)$  denote the expected value of a weighted Hodges-Lehmann mean for the standard distribution, then for the same location-scale distribution above, the WeHLM can also be expressed as  $\lambda$ WeHLM $_0(\epsilon,\gamma) + \mu$ . As Theorem A.1 proved the  $w_i \neq 1$  case, this form is valid for all weighted L-statistics. The simultaneous cancellation of  $\mu$  and  $\lambda$  in  $\frac{(\lambda \mu_0 + \mu) - (\lambda \text{WL}_0(\epsilon,\gamma) + \mu)}{(\lambda \text{WL}_0(\epsilon,\gamma) + \mu) - (\lambda \gamma m_0 + \mu)}$  assures that d is always a constant for a location-scale distribution.

The performance in heavy-tailed distributions can be further improved by defining the quantile mean as

$$qm_{d,\epsilon,\gamma,n} \coloneqq \hat{Q}_n \left( \left( \hat{F}_n \left( \mathrm{WL}_{\epsilon,\gamma,n} \right) - \frac{1}{1+\gamma} \right) d + \hat{F}_n \left( \mathrm{WL}_{\epsilon,\gamma,n} \right) \right),\,$$

provided that  $\hat{F}_n\left(\mathrm{WL}_{\epsilon,\gamma,n}\right) \geq \frac{1}{1+\gamma}$ , where  $\hat{F}_n\left(x\right)$  is the empirical cumulative distribution function of the sample,  $\hat{Q}_n$  is the sample quantile function. When  $\hat{F}_n\left(\mathrm{WL}_{\epsilon,\gamma,n}\right) < \frac{1}{1+\gamma}$ ,  $qm_{d,\epsilon,\gamma,n}$  is defined as  $\hat{Q}_n\left(\hat{F}_n\left(\mathrm{WL}_{\epsilon,\gamma,n}\right) - \left(\frac{1}{1+\gamma} - \hat{F}_n\left(\mathrm{WL}_{\epsilon,\gamma,n}\right)\right)d\right)$ . Without loss of generality, in the following discussion, only the case where  $\hat{F}_n\left(\mathrm{WL}_{\epsilon,\gamma,n}\right) \geq \frac{1}{1+\gamma}$  is considered. Moreover, in extreme right-skewed heavy-tailed distributions, if the calculated percentile surpasses  $1-\epsilon$ , it will be modified to  $1-\epsilon$ . A widely used method for calculating the sample quantile function involves employing linear interpolation of modes corresponding to the order statistics of the uniform distribution on the interval  $[0,\ 1]$ , i.e.,  $\hat{Q}_n\left(p\right) = X_{\lfloor h\rfloor} + (h-\lfloor h\rfloor)\left(X_{\lceil h\rceil} - X_{\lfloor h\rfloor}\right),\ h = (n-1)\,p+1$ . To minimize the finite sample bias, here, the inverse function of  $\hat{Q}_n$  is deduced as  $\hat{F}_n\left(x\right) \coloneqq \frac{1}{n-1}\left(cf-1+\frac{x-X_{cf}}{X_{cf+1}-X_{cf}}\right)$ , where  $cf = \sum_{i=1}^n \mathbf{1}_{X_i \leq x},\ \mathbf{1}_A$  is the indicator of event A. The quantile mean uses the location-scale invariant in a different way as shown in the subsequent proof.

**Theorem A.2.** Let  $BM_{\epsilon,n}$  be the WL,  $qm_{d\approx 0.088, \epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  is a consistent mean estimator for the exponential, Pareto  $(\alpha \to \infty)$  and any symmetric distributions provided that the second moments are finite.

164 Proof. The cdf of the exponential distribution is  $F(x) = 1 - e^{-\lambda^{-1}x}$ ,  $\lambda \ge 0$ ,  $x \ge 0$ . Recall that the expectation of  $BM_{\epsilon,n}$  can be expressed as  $\lambda BM_0(\epsilon)$ , so  $F(BM_{\epsilon})$  is free of  $\lambda$ , as are  $F(\mu)$  and F(m). When  $\epsilon = \frac{1}{24}$ ,  $d = \frac{1}{24}$ 

free of 
$$\lambda$$
, as are  $F(\mu)$  and  $F(m)$ . When  $\epsilon = \frac{1}{24}$ ,  $d = \frac{F(\mu) - F(BM_{\epsilon})}{F(BM_{\epsilon}) - \frac{1}{2}} = \frac{-e^{-1} + e}{\frac{1}{2} - e} \left(\frac{26068394603446272 \sqrt[6]{\frac{7}{247} \sqrt[3]{11}}}{391^{5/6}101898752449325\sqrt{5}}\right) = \frac{1}{2} - e^{-1} + e^{-1} + e^{-1} \left(\frac{26068394603446272 \sqrt[6]{\frac{7}{247} \sqrt[3]{11}}}{391^{5/6}101898752449325\sqrt{5}}\right)\right)$ 

 $\frac{\frac{101898752449325\sqrt{5}\sqrt{6}\sqrt{\frac{247}{7}}391^{5/6}}{\frac{26068394603446272\sqrt{711}e}{\sqrt{11}e}} - \frac{1}{e}}{\frac{1}{2} - \frac{101898752449325\sqrt{5}\sqrt{6}\sqrt{\frac{247}{7}}391^{5/6}}{\frac{26068394603446272\sqrt{711}e}{\sqrt{11}e}} \approx 0.088. \text{ The proof of the}$ 

169

172

173

174

175

176

177

182

183

184

185

186

187

188

189

190

193

194

196

197

199

200

203

204

205

206

207

symmetric case: since for any symmetric distribution with a finite second moment,  $F(E[BM_{\epsilon,n}]) = F(\mu) = \frac{1}{2}$ . Then, the expectation of the quantile mean is  $qm_{d,\epsilon} = F^{-1}(F(\mu) - \frac{1}{2})d + F(\mu) = F^{-1}(0 + F(\mu)) = \mu$ .

For the assertion related to the Pareto distribution, the cdf of it is  $1-\left(\frac{x_m}{x}\right)^{\alpha}$ . Similar to Theorem .1, replacing the  $F(\mathrm{WL}_{\epsilon,\gamma})$  and  $\frac{1}{1+\gamma}$  in the d value with two arbitrary percentiles  $p_1$  and  $p_2$ ,

$$d_{Pareto} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{\alpha x_m}{\alpha - 1}}\right)^{\alpha} - \left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_1)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}\right)^{\alpha}\right)}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_1)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}\right)^{\alpha}\right) - \left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}\right)^{\alpha}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{\alpha x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}\right) - \left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}\right) - \left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m(1 - p_2)^{-\frac{1}{\alpha}}}}\right)^{\alpha}}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{x_m}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{\frac{x_m}{x_m}}\right)^{\alpha}}\right)} = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{x_m}\right)^{\alpha}}{\left(1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{x_m}\right)^{\alpha}}\right)^{\alpha}}$$

179  $\frac{1-\left(\frac{\alpha-1}{\alpha}\right)^{\alpha}-p_1}{p_1-p_2}$ . When  $\alpha\to\infty$ ,  $\left(\frac{\alpha-1}{\alpha}\right)^{\alpha}=\frac{1}{e}$ , so in this case,  $d_{Pareto}$  is identical to that of the exponential distri-

bution, since 
$$d_{exp} = \frac{\left(1 - e^{-1}\right) - \left(1 - e^{-\ln\left(\frac{1}{1 - p_1}\right)}\right)}{\left(1 - e^{-\ln\left(\frac{1}{1 - p_1}\right)}\right) - \left(1 - e^{-\ln\left(\frac{1}{1 - p_2}\right)}\right)} =$$

 $\frac{1-\frac{1}{e}-p_1}{p_1-p_2}$ . Therefore, same logic as in Theorem .1, their d values are always identical, regardless of the type of weighted L-statistic used. All results are now proven.

The definitions of location and scale parameters are such that they must satisfy  $F(x; \lambda, \mu) = F(\frac{x-\mu}{\lambda}; 1, 0)$ . By recalling  $x = \lambda Q_0(p) + \mu$ , it follows that the percentile of any weighted L-statistic is free of  $\lambda$  and  $\mu$ , which guarantees the validity of the quantile mean. The quantile mean is a quantile Istatistic. Specifically, an estimator is classified as a quantile I-statistic if LEs are percentiles of a distribution obtained by plugging LU-statistics into a cumulative distribution function and I is defined with arithmetic operations, constants and quantile functions.  $qm_{d\approx 0.088,\epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  works better in the fat-tail scenarios (SI Dataset S1). Theorem .1 and A.2 show that  $rm_{d\approx 0.103,\epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  and  $qm_{d\approx 0.088,\epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  are both consistent mean estimators for any symmetric distribution and a skewed distribution with finite second moments. The breakdown points of  $rm_{d\approx 0.103,\epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  and  $qm_{d\approx 0.088,\epsilon=\frac{1}{24}}$  are both  $\frac{1}{24}$ . Therefore they are all invariant means.

To study the impact of the choice of WLs in rm and qm, it is constructive to recall that a weighted L-statistic is a combination of order statistics. While using a less-biased weighted L-statistic can generally enhance performance (SI Dataset S1), there is a greater risk of violation in the semi-parametric framework. However, the mean-WA $_{\epsilon,\gamma}$ - $\gamma$ -median inequality is robust to slight fluctuations of the QA function of the underlying distribution when  $0 \le \gamma \le 1$ . Suppose the QA function is generally decreasing in [0,u], but increasing in  $[u,\frac{1}{1+\gamma}]$ , since all quantile averages with breakdown points

from  $\epsilon$  to  $\frac{1}{1+\gamma}$  will be included in the computation of  $\mathrm{WA}_{\epsilon,\gamma}$ , as long as  $\frac{1}{1+\gamma}-u\ll\frac{1}{1+\gamma}-\gamma\epsilon$ , and other portions of the QA function satisfy the inequality constraints that define the  $\nu$ th  $\gamma$ -orderliness on which the WA<sub> $\epsilon,\gamma$ </sub> is based, the mean-WA<sub> $\epsilon,\gamma$ </sub>- $\gamma$ -median inequality still holds. This is due to the violation being bounded (9) when  $0 \le \gamma \le 1$  and therefore cannot be extreme for unimodal distributions. For instance, the SQA function is non-monotonic when the shape parameter of the Weibull distribution  $\alpha > \frac{1}{1-\ln(2)} \approx 3.259$  as shown in the previous article, the violation of the third orderliness starts near this parameter as well, yet the mean-BM  $_{\frac{1}{24}}\text{-median inequality}$ retains valid when  $\alpha \leq 3.387$ . Another key factor in determining the risk of violation is the skewness of the distribution. Previously, it was demonstrated that in a family of distributions differing by a skewness-increasing transformation in van Zwet's sense, the violation of orderliness, if it happens, often only occurs as the distribution nears symmetry (10). When  $\gamma = 1$ , the over-corrections in rm and qm are dependent on the  $SWA_{\epsilon}$ -median difference, which can be a reasonable measure of skewness after standardization (11, 12), implying that the over-correction is often tiny with moderate d. This qualitative analysis suggests the general reliability of rm and qm based on the mean-WA $_{\epsilon,\gamma}$ - $\gamma$ -median inequality for unimodal distributions. Extending this rationale to other weighted L-statistics is possible, since the U-orderliness can also be bounded with certain assumptions, as discussed previously.

213

214

215

216

218

219

220

221

222

223

224

225

226

227

228

230

231

232

233

234

235

236

237

238

241

242

243

244

245

248

249

250

252

254

255

256

257

259

260

261

262

B. Robust estimations of the central moments. In 1979, Bickel and Lehmann (13), in their final paper of the landmark series Descriptive Statistics for Nonparametric Models, generalized a class of estimators called measures of spread, which "do not require the assumption of symmetry." From this, a popular efficient scale estimator, the Rousseeuw-Croux scale estimator (14), was derived in 1993, but the importance of tackling the symmetry assumption has been greatly underestimated. While they had already considered one version of the trimmed standard deviation, which is a measures of dispersion, in the third paper of that series (15); in the final section of that paper (13), they explored another two versions of the trimmed standard deviation based on pairwise differences, one is modified here for comparison,

$$\left[ \binom{n}{2} \left( 1 - \epsilon - \gamma \epsilon \right) \right]^{-\frac{1}{2}} \left[ \sum_{i = \binom{n}{2} \gamma \epsilon}^{\binom{n}{2} (1 - \epsilon)} \left( X - X' \right)_i^2 \right]^{\frac{1}{2}}, \quad [1] \quad \text{251}$$

where  $(X-X')_1 \leq \ldots \leq (X-X')_{\binom{n}{2}}$  are the order statistics of the pseudo-sample,  $X_i-X_j,\ i < j$ . They showed that, when  $\epsilon=0$ , [1] is  $\sqrt{2}$  times the standard deviation. The paper ended with, "We do not know a fortiori which of the measures is preferable and leave these interesting questions open." To address their open question, the nomenclature used in this paper is introduced as follows:

Nomenclature. Given a robust estimator  $\hat{\theta}$ , which has an adjustable breakdown point that can approach zero asymptotically, the name of  $\hat{\theta}$  comprises two parts: the first part denotes the type of estimator, and the second part is the name of the population parameter  $\theta$ , with which the estimator is consistent as  $\epsilon \to 0$ . The abbreviation of the estimator combines the initial letters of the first part and the population parameter. If the estimator is symmetric, the upper asymptotic breakdown

point,  $\epsilon$  (defined in Subsection  $\ref{subsection}$ , or  $\epsilon_{U_k}$  for LU-statistic), is indicated in the subscript of the abbreviation of the estimator, with the exception of the median. For an asymmetric estimator based on quantile average, the associated  $\gamma$  follows  $\epsilon$ .

267

268

269

270 271

272

273

274

275

276

277

278

279

280

281

282

283

284

285

286

287

288

289

290 291

292 293

294

295

296

297

298

299

300

301

302

303 304

305

306

307

310 311

312

In the previous article on semiparametric robust mean estimation, it was shown that the bias of a robust estimator with an adjustable breakdown point is often monotonic with respect to the breakdown point in a semiparametric distribution. Naturally, the estimator's name should contain the population parameter with which it is consistent as  $\epsilon \to 0$ . If multiplying all pseudo-samples with  $\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}$ , then [1] is the trimmed standard deviation following this nomenclature. It should be preferable, not only because it is the square root of a trimmed U-statistic, which is closely related to the minimum-variance unbiased estimator (MVUE), but also because the second  $\gamma$ -orderliness of the second central moment kernel distribution is ensured by the next exciting theorem.

**Data Availability.** Data for Table ?? are given in SI Dataset S1. All codes have been deposited in GitHub.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.** I gratefully acknowledge the constructive comments made by the editor which substantially improved the clarity and quality of this paper.

- CF Gauss, Theoria combinationis observationum erroribus minimis obnoxiae. (Henricus Dieterich), (1823).
- S Newcomb, A generalized theory of the combination of observations so as to obtain the best result. Am. journal Math. 8, 343–366 (1886).
- 3. PJ Huber, Robust estimation of a location parameter. Ann. Math. Stat. 35, 73-101 (1964).
- X He, WK Fung, Method of medians for lifetime data with weibull models. Stat. medicine 18, 1993–2009 (1999).
- M Menon, Estimation of the shape and scale parameters of the weibull distribution. Technometrics 5, 175–182 (1963).
- SD Dubey, Some percentile estimators for weibull parameters. Technometrics 9, 119–129 (1967).
- NB Marks, Estimation of weibull parameters from common percentiles. J. applied Stat. 32, 17–24 (2005).
- K Boudt, D Caliskan, C Croux, Robust explicit estimators of weibull parameters. Metrika 73, 187–209 (2011).
- C Bernard, R Kazzi, S Vanduffel, Range value-at-risk bounds for unimodal distributions under partial information. *Insur. Math. Econ.* 94, 9–24 (2020).
- 10. WR van Zwet, Convex Transformations of Random Variables: Nebst Stellingen. (1964).
- 308 11. AL Bowley, *Elements of statistics*. (King) No. 8, (1926)
  309 12. RA Groeneveld, G Meeden, Measuring skewness and
  - RA Groeneveld, G Meeden, Measuring skewness and kurtosis. J. Royal Stat. Soc. Ser. D (The Stat. 33, 391–399 (1984).
  - PJ Bickel, EL Lehmann, Descriptive statistics for nonparametric models iv. spread in Selected Works of EL Lehmann. (Springer), pp. 519–526 (2012).
- 14. PJ Rousseeuw, C Croux, Alternatives to the median absolute deviation. *J. Am. Stat. associa tion* 88, 1273–1283 (1993).
- 15. PJ Bickel, EL Lehmann, Descriptive statistics for nonparametric models. iii. dispersion in
   Selected works of EL Lehmann. (Springer), pp. 499–518 (2012).

4 | Lee