Conditions on optimal support recovery in unmixing problems by means of multi-penalty regularization

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Abstract
Inspired by several real-life applications in audio processing and medical image analysis, where the quantity of interest is generated by several sources to be accurately modeled and separated, as well as by recent advances in regularization theory and optimization, we study the conditions on optimal support recovery in inverse problems of unmixing type by means of multi-penalty regularization. We consider and analyze a regularization functional composed of a data-fidelity term, where signal and noise are additively mixed, a non-smooth, convex, sparsity promoting term, and a quadratic penalty term to model the noise. We prove not only that the well-established theory for sparse recovery in the single parameter case can be translated to the multi-penalty settings, but we also demonstrate the enhanced properties of multi-penalty regularization in terms of support identification compared to sole $\ell^1$-minimization. We additionally confirm and support the theoretical results by extensive numerical simulations, which give a statistics of robustness of the multi-penalty regularization scheme with respect to the single-parameter counterpart. Eventually, we confirm a significant improvement in performance compared to standard $\ell^1$-regularization for compressive sensing problems considered in our experiments.

Keywords: compressed sensing, support recovery, multi-penalty regularization, sparsity, unmixing problems

(Some figures may appear in colour only in the online journal)
1. Introduction

In many real-life applications such as audio processing or medical image analysis, one encounters the situation when given observations (most likely noisy) have been generated by several sources \( u_i \) that one wishes to reconstruct separately. In this case, the reconstruction problem can be understood as an inverse problem of unmixing type, where the solution \( u^\dagger \) consists of several (two or more) components of different nature, which have to be identified and separated.

In mathematical terms, an unmixing problem can be stated as the solution of an equation

\[
Au^\dagger = y,
\]

where \( u^\dagger = \sum_{i=1}^{L} u_i, u_i \in V_i \) and \( V_1 + \cdots + V_L = \mathbb{R}^N \) but \( \langle V_i, V_j \rangle \simeq 0 \) for \( i \neq j \) in the sense that

\[
|\langle v_i, v_j \rangle| \simeq \delta_{ij}
\]

for all \( v_i \in V_i \) and \( v_j \in V_j \), \( \|v_i\|_2 = \|v_j\|_2 = 1, i \neq j \). In general, we are interested to acquire the minimal amount of information on \( u \) so that we can selectively reconstruct with the best accuracy one of the components \( u_{i\hat{}} \), but not necessarily also the other components \( u_j \) for \( j \neq i \). In this setting, we further assume that \( A \) cannot be specifically tuned to recover \( u_{i\hat{}} \) but should be suited to gain universal information to recover \( u_{i\hat{}} \) by a specifically tuned decoder.

A concrete example of this setting is the noise folding phenomenon arising in compressed sensing, related to noise in the signal that is eventually amplified by the measurement procedure. In this setting, it is reasonable to consider a model problem of the type

\[
A(u + v) = y,
\]

where \( v \) is the random Gaussian noise with variance \( \sigma_v \) on the original signal \( u \in \mathbb{R}^N \) and \( A \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times N} \) is the linear measurement matrix. Several recent works (see, for instance, [1] and the references therein) illustrate how the measurement process actually causes the noise folding phenomenon. To be more specific, one can show that (2) is equivalent to solving

\[
\hat{A}u + \omega = y,
\]

where \( \omega \) is composed by i.i.d. Gaussian entries with distribution \( \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma_{\omega}) \), and the variance \( \sigma_{\omega} \) is related to the variance of the original signal by \( \sigma_{\omega}^2 = \frac{N}{m} \sigma_v^2 \). This implies that the variance of the noise on the original signal is amplified by a factor of \( N/m \).

Under the assumption that \( A \) satisfies the so-called restricted isometry property, it is known from the work on the Dantzig selector in [4] that one can reconstruct \( u^\dagger \) from measurements \( y \) as in (3) such that

\[
\|u - u^\dagger\|_2^2 \leq C^22\left((1 + k)\frac{N}{m} \sigma_v^2 \right) \log N,
\]

where \( k \) denotes the number of nonzero elements of the solution \( u \). The estimate (4) is considered (folklore), nearly optimal in the sense that no other method can really improve the asymptotic error \( \mathcal{O}\left(\frac{N}{m} \sigma_v^2 \right) \). Therefore, the noise folding phenomenon may in practice significantly reduce the potential advantages of compressed sensing in terms of the trade-off between robustness and efficient compression (given by the factor \( N/m \) here) compared to other more traditional subsampling methods [5].

In [2], the authors present a two-step numerical method which allows not only to recover the large entries of the original signal \( u \) accurately, but also has enhanced properties in terms of support identification over simple \( \ell^1 \)-minimization based algorithms. In particular, because...
of the lack of separation between noise and reconstructed signal components, the latter ones can easily fail to recover the support when the support is not given \textit{a priori}. However, the computational cost of the second phase of the procedure presented in \cite{2}, being a non-smooth and non-convex optimization problem, is too demanding to be performed on problems with realistic dimensionalities. It was also shown that other methods based on a different penalization of the signal and noise can lead to higher support detection rate.

The follow up work \cite{11}, which addresses the noise folding scenario by means of multi-penalty regularization, provides the first numerical evidence of the superior performance of multi-penalty regularization compared to its single parameter counterparts for problem (2). In particular, the authors consider the functional

\[ J_{p,q}(u, v) := \|A(u + v) - y\|_2^2 + \alpha\|u\|_p^p + (\beta\|v\|_q^q + \varepsilon\|v\|_2^2), \]  

here \(\alpha, \beta, \varepsilon \in \mathbb{R}_+\) may all be considered as regularization parameters of the problem. The parameter \(\varepsilon > 0\) ensures the \(\ell_2\)-coercivity of \(J_{p,q}(u, \cdot)\) also with respect to the component \(v\). In the infinite dimensional setting the authors presented a numerical approach to the minimization of (5) for \(0 \leq p < 2, 2 \leq q < \infty\), based on simple iterative thresholding steps, and analyzed its convergence.

The results presented in this paper are very much inspired, not only by the above-mentioned works in the signal processing and compressed sensing fields, but also by theoretical developments in sparsity-based regularization (see \cite{8} and references therein) and multi-penalty regularization (\cite{9, 10}, just to mention a few). While the latter two directions are considered separately in most of the literature, there have also been some efforts to understand regularization and convergence behavior for multiple parameters and functionals, especially for image analysis \cite{3, 12}. However, to the best of our knowledge, the present paper is the first one providing a theoretical analysis of the multi-penalty regularization with a non-smooth sparsity promoting regularization term, and an explicit comparison with the single-parameter counterpart.

1.1. Content of the paper

In section 2 we concisely recall the pertinent features and concepts of multi-penalty and single-penalty regularization. We further show that \(\ell^1\)-regularization can be considered as the limiting case of the multi-penalty one, and thus the theory of \(\ell^1\)-regularization can be applied to multi-penalty setting. In section 3 we recall and discuss conditions for exact support recovery in the single-parameter case. The main contributions of the paper are presented in sections 4 and 5, where we extend and generalize the results from the previous sections to the multi-penalty setting. In section 5 we also open the discussion on the set of admissible parameters for the exact support recovery for unmixing problem in single-parameter as well as multi-penalty cases. In particular, we study the sensitivity of the multi-penalty scheme with respect to the parameter choice. The theoretical findings and discussion are illustrated and supported by extensive numerical validation tests presented in section 6. Finally, in section 7 we compare the performance of the multi-penalty regularization and its single-parameter counterpart for compressive sensing problems.

2. Multi-penalty and single-penalty regularization

We first provide a short reminder and collect some definitions of the standard notation used in this paper.
The true solution $u^\dagger$ of the unmixing problem (2) is called $k$-sparse if it has at most $k$ non-zero entries, i.e., $\#I = \#(\text{supp}(u^\dagger)) \leq k$, where $I := \text{supp}(u^\dagger) := \{i : u^\dagger_i \neq 0\}$ denotes the support of $u^\dagger$.

We propose to solve the unmixing problem (2) with $k$-sparse true solution using multi-penalty Tikhonov regularization of the form

$$T_{\alpha,\beta}(u, v) := \frac{1}{2}\|A(u + v) - y\|_2^2 + \alpha\|u\|_1 + \frac{\beta}{2}\|v\|_2^2 \to \min_{u,v},$$

the solution of which we will denote by $(u_{\alpha,\beta}, v_{\alpha,\beta})$. We note that we can, formally, interpret standard $\ell^1$-regularization as the limiting case $\beta = \infty$, setting

$$T_{\alpha,\infty}(u, v) := \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2}\|A_{u} - y\|_2^2 + \alpha\|u\|_1 & \text{if } v = 0, \\ +\infty & \text{if } v \neq 0. \end{cases}$$

Obviously, the pair of minimizers of $T_{\alpha,\infty}$ will always be equal to $(u_{\alpha}, 0)$, where $u_{\alpha}$ minimizes $\frac{1}{2}\|A_{u} - y\|_2^2 + \alpha\|u\|_1$.

**Definition 1.** Let $\beta \in \mathbb{R}_+ \cup \{\infty\}$ be fixed. We say that a set $S \subset \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}^N$ is a set of exact support recovery for the unmixing problem with operator $A$, if there exists $\alpha > 0$, such that $\text{supp}(u_{\alpha,\beta}) = \text{supp}(u^\dagger)$ whenever the given data $y$ has the form $y = A(u^\dagger + v)$ with $(u^\dagger, v) \in S$.

The parameters $\alpha > 0$ for which this property holds are called admissible for $S$.

Specifically, we will study for $c > d > 0$ the sets

$$S_{c,d} := \{(u, v) \in \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}^N : \text{supp}(u) = I, \inf_{i \in I}|u_i| > c, \|v\|_\infty < d\}$$

and the corresponding class

$$S_{c,d,k} := \bigcup_{\#I \leq k} S_{c,d,I}.$$ 

The set $S_{c,d,I}$ is a set of exact support recovery, if there exists some regularization parameter $\alpha > 0$, such that we can apply multi-penalty regularization with parameters $\alpha$ and $\beta$ (or single-parameter $\ell^1$-regularization with parameter $\alpha$ in case $\beta = \infty$) to the unmixing problem (2) and obtain a result with the correct support, provided that the $\ell^p$-norm of the noise is smaller than $d$ and the non-zero coefficients of $u^\dagger$ are larger than $c$. Typical examples of real-life signals that can be modeled by signals from the set $S_{c,d,I}$ can be found in Asteroseismology, see for instance [2].

We note that this class of signals is very similar to the one studied in [2]. The main difference is that we focus on the case where the noise $v$ is bounded only componentwise (that is, with respect to the $\ell^\infty$-norm), whereas [2] deals with noise that has a bounded $\ell^p$-norm for some $1 \leq p \leq 2$. Additionally, we allow the noise also to mix with the signal $u^\dagger$ to be identified in the sense that the supports of $v$ and $u^\dagger$ may have a non-empty intersection. In contrast, the signal and the noise are assumed to be strictly separated in [2].

Throughout the paper, we will refer to the sign function $\text{sgn}$, which we always interpret as being the set valued function $\text{sgn}(t) = 1$ if $t > 0$, $\text{sgn}(t) = -1$ if $t < 0$, and $\text{sgn}(t) = [-1, 1]$ if $t = 0$, applied componentwise to the entries of the vector $u_{\alpha}$.

We use the notation $A_I$ to denote the restriction of the operator $A$ to the span of the support of $u^\dagger$. Additionally, we denote by
the complement of $I$, and by $A_I$ the restriction of $A$ to the span of $J$. We note that the adjoints $A^*_I$ and $A^*_J$ are simply the compositions of the adjoint $A^*$ of $A$ with the projections onto the spans of $I$ and $J$, respectively.

As a first result, we show that the solution of the multi-penalty problem (6) simultaneously solves a related single-penalty problem.

**Lemma 1.** The pair $(u_{\alpha, \beta}, v_{\alpha, \beta})$ solves (6) if and only if

$$v_{\alpha, \beta} = (\beta + A^*A)^{-1}(A^*y - A^*Au_{\alpha, \beta})$$

and $u_{\alpha, \beta}$ solves the optimization problem

$$\frac{1}{2}\|B_\beta u - y\|_2^2 + \alpha\|u\|_1 \to \min$$

with

$$B_\beta = \left(\text{Id} + \frac{AA^*}{\beta}\right)^{-1/2} A$$

and

$$y_\beta = \left(\text{Id} + \frac{AA^*}{\beta}\right)^{-1/2} y.$$

**Proof.** We can solve the optimization problem in (6) in two steps, first with respect to $v$ and then with respect to $u$. Assuming that $u$ is fixed, the optimality condition for $v$ in (6) reads

$$A^*(A(u + v) - y) + \beta v = 0.$$  \hfill (9)

That is, for fixed $u$, the optimum in (6) with respect to $v$ is obtained at

$$v(u) := (\beta + A^*A)^{-1}(A^*y - A^*Au).$$

Inserting this into the Tikhonov functional, we obtain the optimization problem

$$\frac{1}{2}\|A(u + v(u)) - y\|_2^2 + \alpha\|u\|_1 + \frac{\beta}{2}\|v(u)\|_2^2 \to \min_u$$

Using (9), we can write

$$\frac{1}{2}\|A(u + v(u)) - y\|_2^2 = \frac{1}{2}\langle A(u + v(u)) - y, Au - y \rangle$$

$$+ \frac{1}{2}\langle A^*(A(u + v(u)) - y), v(u) \rangle$$

$$= \frac{1}{2}\langle A(u + v(u)) - y, Au - y \rangle - \frac{\beta}{2}\|v(u)\|_2^2.$$  \hfill (10)

Thus the optimization problem for $u$ simplifies to

$$\frac{1}{2}\langle A(u + v(u)) - y, Au - y \rangle + \alpha\|u\|_1 \to \min_u.$$
Now note that

\[
A(u + v(u)) - y = A(\text{Id} - (\beta + A^*A)^{-1}A^*)u - (\text{Id} - A(\beta + A^*A)^{-1}A^*)y \\
= A(\text{Id} + A^*A / \beta)^{-1}u - (\text{Id} + A^*A / \beta)^{-1}y \\
= (\text{Id} + AA^* / \beta)^{-1}(Au - y).
\]

Inserting this equality in (10), we obtain the optimization problem

\[
\frac{1}{2}((\text{Id} + AA^* / \beta)^{-1}(Au - y), Au - y) + \alpha\|u\|_1 \to \min_u
\]

which is the same as (8).

\[
\square
\]

**Remark 1.** As a consequence of lemma 1, we can apply the theory of \( \ell^1 \)-regularization also to the multi-penalty setting we consider here. In particular, this yields, for fixed \( \beta > 0 \), estimates of the form

\[
\|u^\dagger - u_{o,\beta}\|_1 \leq C_{1,\beta} \alpha + C_{2,\beta} \frac{\|x_0 - B_\beta u^\dagger\|_2}{\alpha}
\]

provided that \( u^\dagger \) satisfies a source condition of the form \( B_\beta^* \eta \in \partial(\|u^\dagger\|_1) \) with \( \|B_\beta^* \eta\| < 1 \) for every \( i \notin \text{supp}(u^\dagger) \), and the restriction of the mapping \( B_\beta \) to the span of the support of \( u^\dagger \) is injective (see [8]). Additionally, it is easy to show that these conditions hold for \( B_\beta \) provided that they hold for \( A \) and \( \beta \) is sufficiently large.

### 3. Sets of exact support recovery—single-penalty setting

The main focus of this paper is whether multi-penalty regularization allows for the exact recovery of the support of the true solution \( u^\dagger \) and how it compares to single-penalty regularization. Because, as we have seen in lemma 1, multi-penalty regularization can be rewritten as a single-parameter regularization for the regularized operator \( B_\beta \) and right-hand side \( y_\beta \), we will first discuss recovery conditions in the single-parameter setting.

In order to find conditions for exact support recovery, we first recall the necessary and sufficient optimality condition for \( \ell^1 \)-regularization:

**Lemma 2.** The vector \( u_o \) minimizes

\[
T_o(u) := \frac{1}{2}\|Au - y\|_2^2 + \alpha\|u\|_1,
\]

if and only if

\[
A^*(Au_o - y) \in -\alpha \text{ sgn}(u_o).
\]
Lemma 3. We have \( \text{supp}(u_\alpha) = I \), if and only if there exists \( w_\alpha \in (\mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\})^J \) such that
\[
A^*_J(A_J w_\alpha - y) = -\alpha \text{ sgn}(w_\alpha),
\]
\[\|A^*_J(A_J w_\alpha - y)\|_\infty \leq \alpha,\]

Proof. This immediately follows from lemma 2 by testing the optimality conditions on the vector \( u_\alpha \) given by \( u_\alpha_i = (w_\alpha)_i \) for \( i \in I \) and \( u_\alpha_i = 0 \) else.

Our main result concerning support recovery for single-parameter regularization is the following:

Proposition 1. Assume that \( A_J \) is injective and that
\[\|A^*_J(A_J^* A_J)^{-1}\|_\infty < 1.\]  \( \tag{11} \)
Then the set \( S_{c,d,1} \) defined in (7) is a set of exact support recovery for the unmixing problem whenever
\[
d > \frac{\|A^*_J(A_J^* A_J)^{-1}A^*_J - \text{Id}A\|_\infty \|A^*_J A_J\|_\infty}{1 - \|A^*_J(A_J^* A_J)^{-1}\|_\infty} + \|A^*_J A_J\|_\infty. \]  \( \tag{12} \)
Moreover, every parameter \( \alpha > 0 \) satisfying
\[\frac{d\|A^*_J(A_J^* A_J)^{-1}A^*_J - \text{Id}A\|_\infty}{1 - \|A^*_J(A_J^* A_J)^{-1}\|_\infty} \leq \alpha < \frac{c - d\|A^*_J A_J\|_\infty}{\|A^*_J A_J\|_\infty} \]  \( \tag{13} \)
is admissible on \( S_{c,d,1} \).

Proof. First we note that the injectivity of \( A_J \) implies that the mapping \( A_J^* A_J \) is invertible. Thus the condition (11) actually makes sense. Moreover, the inequality (12) is necessary and sufficient for the existence of \( \alpha \) satisfying (13).

Now let \( (u^\dagger, v) \in S_{c,d,1} \) and assume that \( \alpha \) satisfies (13). We denote
\[ s_i^\dagger := \text{sgn}(u_i^\dagger), \quad i \in I \]
and define
\[ w_\alpha := u_\alpha^\dagger + (A_J^* A_J)^{-1}A_J^* A v - \alpha (A_J^* A_J)^{-1}s^\dagger. \]
Because \( \|s^\dagger\|_\infty = 1 \), it follows from the second inequality in (13) that
\[ |(w_\alpha)_i - u^\dagger_i| \leq \|A_J^* A_J\|^{-1}A_J^* A \|v\|_\infty + \|A_J^* A_J\|^{-1}\|\| < c \leq |u^\dagger_i| \]
and therefore
\[ \text{sgn}(w_\alpha) = \text{sgn}(u_\alpha^\dagger) = s^\dagger. \]
Thus \( w_\alpha \) actually satisfies the equation
\[
w_\alpha = u^\dagger + (A_J^* A_J)^{-1}A_J^* A v - \alpha (A_J^* A_J)^{-1}\text{ sgn}(w_\alpha)
\]
\[= (A_J^* A_J)^{-1}A_J^* (A_J u^\dagger + Av) - \alpha (A_J^* A_J)^{-1}\text{ sgn}(w_\alpha)
\]
\[= (A_J^* A_J)^{-1}A_J^* y - \alpha (A_J^* A_J)^{-1}\text{ sgn}(w_\alpha)\]
and thus

\[ A_f^\ast (A_f w_n - y) = -\alpha \, \text{sgn}(w_n), \]

which is the first condition in lemma 3.

It remains to show that

\[ \|A_f^\ast (A_f w_n - y)\|_\infty \leq \alpha. \]

However

\[ A_f^\ast (A_f w_n - y) = A_f^\ast (A_f w_n - A_f u^I - A_v) = A_f^\ast (A_f (A_f^\ast A_f)^{-1}A_f^\ast A_v - A_v - \alpha A_f (A_f^\ast A_f)^{-1}y^I) \]

and thus

\[ \|A_f^\ast (A_f w_n - y)\|_\infty \leq d \|A_f^\ast (A_f (A_f^\ast A_f)^{-1}A_f^\ast A_v - \text{Id})A\|_\infty + \alpha \|A_f^\ast A_f (A_f^\ast A_f)^{-1}\|_\infty. \]

Now the first inequality in (13) implies that this term is smaller than \( \alpha \). Thus \( w_n \) satisfies the conditions of lemma 3, and thus \( \text{supp}(u_n) = I \).

**Remark 2.** In the case where \( A = \text{Id} \) is the identity operator, the conditions above reduce to the conditions that \( c > 2d \) and \( d \leq \alpha < c - d \). Given that \( \ell^1 \)-regularization in this setting reduces to soft thresholding, these conditions are very natural and are actually both sufficient and necessary: since the noise may componentwise reach the value of \( d \), it is necessary to choose a regularization parameter of at least \( d \) in order to remove it. However, on the support \( I \) of the signal, the smallest values of the noisy signal value are at least of size \( c - d \). Thus they are retained as long as the regularization parameter does not exceed this value.

For more complicated operators \( A \), the situation is similar, i.e., a too small regularization parameter \( \alpha \) is not able to remove all the noise, while a too large one destroys part of the signal as well. Also, as in the case of the identity operator, the essential restrictions on support recovery involve the maximal entry of the noise \( v \) and the gap between the non-zero entries of the true signal \( u \) and the values of \( v \), the latter possibly amplified by the action of \( A^\ast A \). The exact bounds for the admissible regularization parameters, however, are much more complicated than for \( A = \text{Id} \).

In addition, equation (13) highlights the difference between the problem of support reconstruction and more classical results from regularization theory concerning convergence rates. Interpreting the value \( d \) as noise level, the convergence rates results for \( \ell^1 \)-regularization state that a parameter choice \( \alpha = Cd \) will, under certain additional conditions, lead to an error that is again proportional to \( d \) (see remark 1). However, there are no bounds on the choice of \( C \) apart from positivity. In contrast, equation (13) contains both a lower bound for the ratio \( \alpha/d \), which only depends on \( A \) and \( I \), and a strict upper bound for \( \alpha \) mainly depending on the non-zero values of \( u \). This indicates that exact support reconstruction is much more delicate than classical reconstruction problems.

### 4. Sets of exact support recovery—multi-penalty setting

We now consider the setting of multi-penalty regularization for the solution of the unmixing problem. Applying lemma 1, we can treat multi-penalty regularization with the same methods as single-penalty regularization. To that end, we introduce the regularized operator
\[ A_{\beta} = \left( I + \frac{\beta}{\|e\|^2} \right)^{-1} A. \] 

In particular, we have with the notation of lemma 3 that \( B_{\beta}^* B = A_{\beta}^* A \) and \( B_{\beta}^* y = A_{\beta}^* y \).

As a first result, we obtain the following analogon to lemma 3:

**Lemma 4.** We have 
\[ A_{\beta}^* (A_{\beta} w_{\alpha, \beta} - y) = -\alpha \text{ sgn}(w_{\alpha, \beta}), \]
\[ \|A_{\beta}^* (A_{\beta} w_{\alpha, \beta} - y)\|_\infty \leq \alpha. \]

**Proof.** Applying lemma 2 to the single-penalty problem (8), we obtain the conditions 
\[ B_{\beta}^* (B_{\beta} w_{\alpha, \beta} - y) = -\alpha \text{ sgn}(w_{\alpha, \beta}), \]
\[ \|B_{\beta}^* (B_{\beta} w_{\alpha, \beta} - y)\|_\infty \leq \alpha. \]

Now the claim follows from the equalities
\[ B_{\beta}^* B_{\beta} = A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta}, \]
\[ B_{\beta}^* y = A_{\beta}^* y, \]
\[ B_{\beta}^* A_{\beta} = A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta}. \]

Since the proof of proposition 1 only depends on the optimality conditions and the representation of the data as \( y = Au + Av \), we immediately obtain a generalization of proposition 1 to the multi-penalty setting.

**Proposition 2.** Assume that \( 0 < \beta < \infty \) is such that 
\[ \|A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta} (A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta})^{-1}\|_\infty < 1. \] 

Then the set \( S_{\alpha, \beta} \) is a set of exact support recovery for the unmixing problem in the multi-penalty setting whenever
\[ \frac{c}{d} > \frac{\|A_{\beta}^* (A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta})^{-1} A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta} - \text{Id} A\|_\infty \|A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta} (A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta})^{-1}\|_\infty}{1 - \|A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta} (A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta})^{-1}\|_\infty}. \]

Moreover, all the pairs of parameter \((\alpha, \beta)\) satisfying (16) and
\[ d\|A_{\beta}^* (A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta})^{-1} A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta} - \text{Id} A\|_\infty \leq \frac{c}{d} \|A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta} (A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta})^{-1}\|_\infty \]
\[ 1 - \|A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta} (A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta})^{-1}\|_\infty \]
are admissible on \( S_{\alpha, \beta} \).

**Proof.** The proof is analogous to the proof of proposition 1.

**Remark 3.** We note that the condition
\[ \|A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta} (A_{\beta}^* A_{\beta})^{-1}\|_\infty < 1 \]
implies the analogous inequality for \( A_{\beta} \) provided that \( \beta \) is sufficiently large. Similarly, if \( \alpha \) satisfies the conditions in proposition 1 that guarantee admissibility on \( S_{\alpha, \beta} \), the pair \((\alpha, \beta)\)
will satisfy the conditions for admissibility in proposition 2 provided that \( \beta \) is sufficiently large. The converse, however, need not be true: if the pair \( \alpha, \beta \) is admissible for exact support recovery on \( \Sigma_{cd,k} \), with multi-penalty regularization, it need not be true that the single parameter \( \alpha \) is admissible for the single-penalty setting as well. Examples where this actually happens can be found in section 6 (see in particular table 1).

### 5. Admissible parameters

As a consequence of propositions 1 and 2, we obtain that the condition

\[
\sup_{|I| \leq k} \| A^*_j I A_j (A^*_j I A_j)^{-1} \|_{\infty} < 1
\]

(18)

is sufficient for \( \Sigma_{cd,k} \) to be a set of exact support recovery for the unmixing problem, provided that the ratio \( c/d \) is sufficiently large; the condition for the single-parameter case can be extracted from (18) by setting \( \beta = \infty \), in which case \( A_{\beta} \) reduces to \( A \) and \( T_{\alpha, \beta} \) always attains its minimum at \( (u_0, 0) \), with \( u_0 \) being the minimizer of the single-penalty functional \( T_{\alpha} \).

Now define the signal-to-noise ratio of a pair \( (u, v) \) as

\[
\rho(u, v) := \frac{\inf \{|u| : i \in \text{supp}(u)\}}{\|v\|_{\infty}}.
\]

That is, \( \rho(u, v) \) is the ratio of the smallest significant value of the signal \( u \), and the largest value of the noise \( v \). Denote moreover

\[
R_{j,k} := \max_{|I| \leq k} \left\{ \frac{\| A^*_j I A_j (A^*_j I A_j)^{-1} A^*_j I A_j - \text{Id} \|_{\infty} \| (A^*_j I A_j)^{-1} \|_{\infty}}{1 - \| A^*_j I A_j (A^*_j I A_j)^{-1} \|_{\infty}} + \| (A^*_j I A_j)^{-1} A^*_j I A_j \|_{\infty} \right\}.
\]

Then the inequality (16) implies that multi-penalty regularization with parameter \( \beta \) allows for the recovery of the support of \( k \)-sparse vectors \( u \) from data \( A(u + v) \) provided the signal-to-noise ratio of the pair \( (u, v) \) satisfies
Whenever the signal-to-noise ratio is larger than $R_{\beta,k}$, we can recover the support of the vector $u$ with some regularization parameter $\alpha$. There are, however, upper and lower limits for the admissible parameters $\alpha$, given by inequality (17). In order to visualize them, we consider instead the ratio

$$\theta(\alpha, v) := \frac{\alpha}{\|v\|_\infty}.$$ 

Defining

$$\Theta_{\beta,k}^{\min} := \max_{|\eta| \leq k} \frac{\|A_{\beta,k}(A_{\beta,k}^*A_{\beta,k})^{-1}A_{\beta,k}^* - \text{Id}\|_\infty}{1 - \|A_{\beta,k}A_{\beta,k}^*(A_{\beta,k}^*A_{\beta,k})^{-1}\|_\infty}$$

and

$$\Theta_{\beta,k}^{\max}(\vartheta) := \min_{|\eta| \leq k} \frac{\vartheta - \|((A_{\beta,k}^*A_{\beta,k})^{-1}A_{\beta,k}^*\|_\infty}{\|((A_{\beta,k}^*A_{\beta,k})^{-1}\|_\infty},$$

we then obtain the condition

$$\Theta_{\beta,k}^{\min} \leq \theta(\alpha, v) < \Theta_{\beta,k}^{\max}(\rho(u, v))$$

for exact support recovery. If the ratio $\theta(\alpha, v)$ is smaller than $\Theta_{\beta,k}^{\min}$, then it can happen that some of the noise $v$ is not filtered out by the regularization method. On the other hand, if $\theta(\alpha, v)$ is larger than $\Theta_{\beta,k}^{\max}(\rho(u, v))$, then some parts of the signal $u^\dagger$ might actually be lost because of the regularization.

We note that the function $\Theta_{\beta,k}^{\max}$ is piecewise linear and concave, and $\lim_{\vartheta \to \infty} \Theta_{\beta,k}^{\max}(\vartheta) = +\infty$. Thus the region of admissible parameters defined by (19) is a convex and unbounded polyhedron. Moreover, we have that $\Theta_{\beta,k}^{\max}(R_{\beta,k}) = \Theta_{\beta,k}^{\min}$. Additionally, we note that the behavior of the function $\Theta_{\beta,k}^{\max}$ near infinity is determined by the term

$$\Sigma_{\beta,k} := \max_{|\eta| \leq k} \|(A_{\beta,k}^*A_{\beta,k})^{-1}\|_\infty.$$

If this value is small, then the slope of the function $\Theta_{\beta,k}^{\max}(\vartheta)$ for large values of $\vartheta$ is large, and thus the set of admissible parameter grows fast with increasing signal-to-noise ratio. If, on the other hand, $\Sigma_{\beta,k}$ is large, then the set of admissible parameters is relatively small even for large signal-to-noise ratio. Thus $\Sigma_{\beta,k}$ can be reasonably interpreted as the sensitivity of multi-parameter regularization with respect to parameter choice. The larger $\Sigma_{\beta,k}$ is, the more precise the parameter $\alpha$ has to be chosen in order to guarantee exact support recovery.

### 6. Numerical validation

The main motive behind the study and application of multi-penalty regularization is the problem that $\ell^1$-regularization is often not capable to identify the support of signal correctly (see [2] and references therein). Including the additional $\ell^2$-regularization term, however, might lead to an improved performance in terms of support recovery, because we can expect that the $\ell^2$-term takes care of all the small noise components.

In order to verify this observation, a series of numerical experiments was performed, in which we illustrate for which parameters and Gaussian matrices the conditions for support recovery derived in the previous section were satisfied. In addition, we studied whether the inclusion of the $\ell^2$-term indeed increases the performance.
In a first set of experiments, we have generated a set of 20 Gaussian random matrices of different sizes and have tested for each three-dimensional subspace spanned by the basis elements whether the condition \( (15) \) is satisfied, first for the single-penalty case, and then for the multi-penalty case with different values of \( \beta \). The results for matrices of dimensions 30 times 60 and 40 times 80, respectively, are summarized in table 1 and figure 1.

As to be expected from the bad numerical performance of \( \ell^1 \)-regularization in terms of support recovery, the inequality \( (11) \) fails in a relatively large number of cases, especially when the discrepancy between the dimension \( N \) of the vectors to be recovered and the number of measurements \( m \) is quite large. For instance, in the case \( N = 60 \) and \( m = 30 \), the condition most of the time failed for more than half of the three-dimensional subspaces. In contrast, the corresponding condition \( (15) \) for multi-parameter regularization fails in the same situation only for about an eighth of the subspaces if \( \beta = 1 \), and in even fewer cases for \( \beta = 0.1 \).

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**Figure 1.** Percentage of three-sparse subspaces for which the condition \( (15) \) failed. For each of the different settings the condition has been tested on 20 Gaussian random matrices for multi-parameter regularization with \( \beta = 0.1 \), \( \beta = 1 \) and \( \beta = 10 \), and for single parameter regularization. Upper left: dimension 30 times 60. Upper right: dimension 30 times 80. Lower left: dimension 40 times 60. Lower right: dimension 40 times 80.
For other combinations of dimensionality of the problem and number of measurements, the situation is similar. Introducing the additional $\ell^2$-penalty term always allows for the exact support reconstruction on a larger number of subspaces than single-penalty regularization. Additionally, the results indicate that the number of recoverable subspaces increases with decreasing $\beta$.

In the case where $N = 80$ and $m = 60$ (that is, we want to reconstruct 80-dimensional vectors from 60 measurements), the sufficient condition (15) for multi-penalty regularization was satisfied in our numerical experiments for all three-sparse subspaces for parameters $\beta$ smaller than 5. In this situation, we have therefore additionally computed the significant values $R_{3,3}$ and $\Sigma_{3,3}$, that is, the minimal recoverable signal-to-noise ratio and the parameter sensitivity for three-dimensional subspaces. The results of these numerical experiments are shown in table 2 and figure 2.

The results indicate that decreasing the regularization parameter $\beta$ tends to decrease the necessary signal-to-noise ratio $R_{3,k}$ as well. While a regularization parameter $\beta = 5$ always

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**Table 2.** Influence of the parameter $\beta$ on the values of $R_{3,k}$ and $\Sigma_{3,k}$. The values have been computed for 20 Gaussian random matrices of dimension 60 times 80 with $k = 3$.

| $\beta$ | $R_{3,3}$ | $\Sigma_{3,3}$ |
|--------|-----------|----------------|
|        | Minimum   | Minimum        |
| 0.1    | 1.623     | 31.07          |
| 0.3    | 5.961     | 13.35          |
| 0.5    | 12.05     | 9.379          |
| 1      | 49.14     | 6.517          |
| 5      | 3599.3    | 3.793          |
|        | Median    | Median         |
| 0.1    | 2.252     | 35.17          |
| 0.3    | 11.84     | 15.31          |
| 0.5    | 28.17     | 11.086         |
| 1      | 205.7     | 7.517          |
| 5      | 15041.4   | 4.278          |
|        | Maximum   | Maximum        |
| 0.1    | 5.546     | 44.00          |
| 0.3    | 262.5     | 19.02          |
| 0.5    | 302.85    | 13.474         |
| 1      | 6178.4    | 9.154          |
| 5      | 203621.6  | 4.977          |
requires an unreasonably large signal-to-noise ratio in order to guarantee the recoverability of the support, the ratios for \( b = 0.5 \) or \( b = 0.1 \) turned out to be much more reasonable. However, the results also showed that decreasing the regularization parameter need not necessarily have a beneficial effect on the recoverability. For some matrices it happened that the necessary signal-to-noise ratio \( R_{\alpha, k} \), increased while the regularization parameter \( \beta \) was decreased (see figure 2, left).

Additionally, the results indicate that the parameter sensitivity \( S_{\alpha, k} \), increases considerably as \( \beta \) decreases (see figure 2, right). As a consequence, the range of admissible parameters \( \alpha \) tends to be significantly smaller for smaller \( \beta \), and can happen much more easily as the combined effect of \( \ell^2 \) and \( \ell^1 \)-regularization leads to a classification of signals as noise. While multi-penalty regularization with a small parameter \( \beta \) might therefore lead to a better necessary signal-to-noise ratio for recovery, at the same time it requires a better balance between the two involved parameters \( \alpha \) and \( \beta \).

### 7. Applications. Numerical experiments

In order to support our theoretical findings even further, we present in this section some statistical data obtained by solving series of compressive sensing problems by means of multi-penalty and \( \ell^1 \)-regularization. Similarly to [2, 11] we consider in our numerical experiments the model problem of the type

\[
y = T(u^\dagger + v),
\]

where \( T \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times N} \) is an i.i.d. Gaussian matrix, \( u^\dagger \) is a sparse vector and \( v \) is a noise vector. The choice of \( T \) corresponds to compressed sensing measurements [7].

In the experiments, we consider 30 problems of this type with \( u^\dagger \) randomly generated, \( \inf_{i \in I} |u_i^\dagger| > 1.5 \) and \#\text{supp}(u^\dagger) = 7, and \( v \) is a random vector whose components are uniformly distributed on \([-1, 1]\), and normalized such that \( \|v\|_\infty = 0.3 \). We also consider the Gaussian matrices of the size \( m = 50, N = 100 \).

In order to approximate minimizers of the multi-penalty (6) and the corresponding single-penalty functional we use the iterative soft-thresholding algorithm [6]. The regularization parameters \( \alpha \) and \( \beta \) were chosen from the grid \( Q_{\alpha}^k \times Q_{\beta}^k \), where \( Q_{\alpha}^k = \{\alpha = \alpha_0 k^i, \alpha_0 = 0.0002, k = 1.25, i = 0, \ldots, 50\} \), and \( Q_{\beta}^k = \{\beta = \beta_0 k^i, \beta_0 = 0.01, q = 1.15, i = 0, \ldots, 30\} \). For all possible combinations of \((\alpha, \beta)\) we run the iterative soft-thresholding algorithm with fifty inner loop iterations and starting values \( u^{(0)} = v^{(0)} = 0 \).

#### Table 3.

|        | AE   | SD   | \( \alpha \) | \( \beta \) |
|--------|------|------|-------------|-------------|
| Minimum| 5.00 | 3    | 4.59        |             |
| SP     |      |      |             |             |
| Mean   | 11.21| 6    | 5.74        |             |
| Maximum| 13.74| 8    | 11.21       |             |
|        |      |      |             |             |
| Minimum| 1.05 | 1    | 3.67        | 0.76        |
| MP     |      |      |             |             |
| Mean   | 5.92 | 3    | 5.74        | 7.09        |
| Maximum| 8.55 | 5    | 8.97        | 9.42        |

Inverse Problems 32 (2016) 104007 M Grasmair and V Naumova
In order to assess the obtained results, we compare the performance of the considered regularization schemes. We measure the approximation error (AE) by \( \| u - u^\star \|_2 \), as well as by the number of elements in the symmetric difference (SD) \#(supp(u) \Delta supp(u^\star))

The SD is defined as follows: \( i \in \text{supp}(u) \Delta \text{supp}(u^\star) \) if and only if either \( i \notin \text{supp}(u) \) and \( i \in \text{supp}(u^\star) \) or \( i \in \text{supp}(u) \) and \( i \notin \text{supp}(u^\star) \).

For each problem we compute the best multi-penalty solution \( u^\star = u^\star(\alpha, \beta) \) meaning that no other pairs \( (\alpha, \beta) \in Q^{(\delta)}_m \times Q^{(\delta)}_n \) can improve the accuracy of the algorithm. Simultaneously, for each problem from our data set we compute the best single-penalty solution \( u^\star = u^\star(\alpha) \). Then, we compute the mean value of the AE and SD. The respective results are

![Figure 3](image-url)

**Figure 3.** The figure reports the results of two different decoding procedures of the same problem, where the circles represent the noisy signal and the crosses represent the original signal. **Upper figure:** results with single-penalty regularization. **Lower figure:** results with mutlty-penalty regularization. Note that multi-penalty regularization allows for a better reconstruction of the support of the true signal \( u^\star \).
shown in table 3. Additionally, figure 3 shows an example of the typical results obtained for single- and for multi-penalty regularization.

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