Claudia Marangon

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EDUCATION

ETH Zurich
Ph.D. in Economics — 2019-2025 (expected)

Bocconi University
M. Sc., Economic and Social Sciences — 2016-2019
B. Sc., Economic and Social Sciences — 2013-2016

Harvard Kennedy School
Visiting Fellow — Spring 2023

PUBLICATIONS

WCLD: Curated Large Dataset of Criminal Cases from Wisconsin Circuit Courts (with E. Ash, N. Goel, N. Li, and P. Sun)
Proceedings of the 37th Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (2023)
Machine learning based decision-support tools in criminal justice systems are subjects of intense discussions and academic research. There are important open questions about the utility and fairness of such tools. Academic researchers often rely on a few small datasets that are not sufficient to empirically study various real-world aspects of these questions. In this paper, we contribute WCLD, a curated large dataset of 1.5 million criminal cases from circuit courts in the U.S. state of Wisconsin. We used reliable public data from 1970 to 2020 to curate attributes like prior criminal counts and recidivism outcomes. The dataset contains large number of samples from five racial groups, in addition to information like sex and age (at judgment and first offense). Other attributes in this dataset include neighborhood characteristics obtained from census data, detailed types of offense, charge severity, case decisions, sentence lengths, year of filing etc. We also provide pseudo-identifiers for judge, county and zipcode. The dataset will not only enable researchers to more rigorously study algorithmic fairness in the context of criminal justice, but also relate algorithmic challenges with various systemic issues. We also discuss in detail the process of constructing the dataset and provide a datasheet. The WCLD dataset is available at https://clezdata.github.io/wcld/.

WORKING PAPERS

Judging Disparities: Recidivism Risk, Image Motives, and In-Group Bias on Wisconsin Criminal Courts (with E. Ash)
This paper studies racial in-group disparities in Wisconsin, which has one of the highest Black-to-White incarceration rates among all U.S. states. The analysis is motivated by a model in which a judge may want to incarcerate more due to three factors: (1) taste-based preferences about the defendant's group identity; (2) higher recidivism risk where the defendant is more likely to commit future crimes; and (3) image motives stemming from the defendant being in the same group as the judge. Further, a judge may have better information on recidivism risk due to two factors: (4) becoming more experienced, and (5) sharing the same group as the defendant. We take these ideas to new data on 1 million cases from Wisconsin criminal courts, 2005-2017. Looking at racial disparities between majority (White) and minority (Black) judges and defendants, we find no evidence for anti-out-group bias (1). Using a recidivism risk score that we construct using machine learning tools to predict reoffense, we find evidence that judges do tend to incarcerate defendants with a higher recidivism risk (2). Consistent with judge experience leading to better information on defendant recidivism risk (4), we find that more experienced judges are more responsive in jailing defendants with a high recidivism risk score. Consistent with image motives (3), we find that when the minority group is responsible for most crimes, minority-group judges are harsher on their in-group. Finally, consistent with judges having better information on recidivism risk for same-group defendants (5), we find that judges are more responsive to the recidivism risk score for defendants from the same group when that group makes up a relatively small share of defendants.

ONGOING RESEARCH

Identity in Journalism: Evidence from News Reporting of Violence Against Women
This project investigates the role of reporters' identity in media persuasion. I investigate this in the context of media representation of violence against women (VAW) in Italy, focusing on murders where the victim is a woman. I construct a novel dataset of newspaper articles about murders of women from 2006 to 2022, and I isolate different reporting practices outlined in international journalistic guidelines using a dictionary approach. I leverage conditional quasi-random assignment of journalists to crimes to identify differences in reporters' characteristics and show that female authors are more likely to comply with these guidelines. For instance, they are twice as likely as male reporters to mention the Italian helpline number for VAW, 12 percentage points more likely to mention pre-existing violence, and around 10 percentage points less likely to mention a fit of rage. These differences hold within newspapers and crimes and are not driven by differences in age or reporters' gender norms. Finally, in an online experiment, I am investigating whether these differences affect readers differently to provide evidence of a channel for identity-based persuasion.

The Persuasive Power of Policy Narratives
This paper studies the persuasive power of causal narratives about policies. In the first part of the project, I develop a pipeline to extract causal narratives from text. I apply this pipeline to the US Congressional Records and, focusing on the Affordable Care Act and the Reagan Tax Cuts as case studies, I provide evidence that causal narratives are widely used in the initial debate around the policy and decrease afterward. Moreover, I show that politicians with re-electoral incentives and newly elected ones use more causal narratives when speaking about the policies. Motivated by this evidence, I then move to investigate if politicians' behavior is motivated by strategic considerations about the persuasiveness of these narratives. Namely, I ask if causal narratives are more persuasive than other types of information and when these narratives are able to persuade people. To answer this question I conduct an online experiment where I ask respondents to evaluate a policy and where I randomize the framing of the same information using either some data-based facts or a causal narrative to evaluate the facts. I run the experiment for two policies one that is salient in the political debate and one that is not salient and I find that holding fixed the amount of information narratives are more persuasive than facts only for policies that are not salient in the political debate.

Gender Norms in Congressional Records (with C. Pereira)

TEACHING

Lecturer

Text Data in Economics, University of Basel	Fall 2023

Teaching Assistant

Building a Robot Judge: Data Science for Decision Making, ETH Zurich	Fall 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023
Sequencing Legal DNA: NLP for Law and Political Economy ETH Zurich	Spring 2020, 2021, 2022
Experimental Economics and Psychology, Bocconi University	Fall 2018

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

ETH Zurich Doc.Mobility Fellowship (USD 7500)	2023
ETH CIS Research Grant (USD 8500)	2024

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Conferences and Seminars (including scheduled)

NBER Summer Institute – Economics of Crime, NICEP Conference, 15th Transatlantic Workshop in Economics of Crime, Zurich Political Economy Seminar Series	2024
ALEA Annual Meeting, Harvard Graduate Student Workshop in Political	2023

Economy and Culture, 6th Monash-Warwick-Zurich Text-as-Data Workshop, Rebecca B. Morton Conference on Experimental Political Science, WEC.Jr, Zurich Political Economy Seminar Series, Zurich Workshop in Narratives in Economics

Zurich Political Economy Seminar Series 2022

Zurich Political Economy Seminar Series 2021

Summer Schools and Workshops

Summer Institute in Machine Learning in Economics, CAAI 2021
University of Chicago Booth School of Business Narratives, Memory, and Beliefs Summer School and Workshop 2023

Research Assistant

Prof. Gianmarco Ottaviano, Bocconi University Spring 2019
Prof. Paolo Pin, Bocconi University 2017-2019

OTHER SKILLS

Programming Languages and Softwares: Python (Excellent), HTML/CSS (Good), R (Excellent), Javascript (Good), C++ (Basic), SQL (Basic), STATA (Excellent), Matlab (Good)
Languages Italian: Native Speaker; English: Proficient (C2); French: High Intermediate (B2)

REFERENCES

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