Bertrand Wilden

PhD Student, Political Science
University of California San Diego
bwilden@ucsd.edu +1 415 624 4769 bwilden bwilden.com | *Updated:* Nov. 30, 2021

Education

PhD Political Science (UC San Diego) 2019 –

MA Political Science (UC San Diego) 2021

BA Political Science, *summa cum laude* (UC San Diego) 2018

AA (Los Angeles Harbor College) 2016

Research Interests

Race and Ethnic Politics · Ethics in AI/Machine Learning · Bayesian Statistics · Causal Inference

Current Projects

A Constitutive Causal Theory of Race. Most social science research purporting to examine the effect of one's race on an outcome implicitly uses a theoretically incoherent understanding of race. Under the widely-accepted constructivist understand of race, it is impossible to isolate the "effect" of race as required by classic counterfactual causal inference paradigms. In this project I critique existing quantitative methods using race and offer an alternative framework which incorporates race's constitutive elements. These constitutive elements are identified empirically using a structural learning algorithm to find the Markov Blanket surrounding the race variable in a particular data set.

Interest Group Ideal Points, with Nhat-Dang Do. We estimate political ideal points of interest groups lobbying in the California state legislature using a hierarchical Bayesian item-response theory model. Our findings indicate that Racial Minority Interest Groups (RMIGs) lie on the far left of the ideological spectrum. In fact, they are more liberal than any other category of interest group (Public Interest, Labor, Education, Business, etc).

Improved Bayesian Ethnorace Prediction. I develop a method for predicting individual level race/ethnicity using Bayes' Rule. Racial distributions from a nationwide surname list are combined with distributions from geolocations to yield predicted probabilities of individuals' race and ethnicity. I expand upon existing methods by incorporating information from a nationwide list of first names as well as from residence characteristics. Along with some other adjustments, these improvements lead to substantial gains in predictive performance when validated against official state voter files.

Software Packages

`bper`: Bayesian Prediction for Ethnicity and Race https://github.com/bwilden/bper

Teaching

Discussion Section Leader

Big Data Analytics (*graduate*); Quantitative Methods (*graduate*); Machine Learning for Social Sciences

Grader

Senior Honors Seminar; Algorithms, Public Policy, and Ethics; British Politics; Political Inquiry (x2); Voting Rights Act 50 Years Later; Quant Analysis/Congress Politics; European Integration

Research Assistance

Replication of *The Political Consequences of External Economic Shocks: Evidence from Poland* (2020). John Ahlquist, Mark Copelovitch, Stefanie Walter. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12503

Center for Commerce & Diplomacy (UC San Diego) 2020

Languages

R, Python, LaTeX, Stata