

Notes for August 7 Meeting

General updates:

- **Committee**
 - Met with Jiaying
 - I will set a meeting up for the four of us (myself, you, Aloysius, and Jiaying) in September when everyone is back in town.

Project updates:

- **Predicting historical cohabitation**
 - I have been learning about neural networks.
 - There are computationally efficient algorithms (stochastic gradient descent) which should allow me to use an exceptionally large training set.
 - Once I fit the model, I am going to go back and construct estimates of who was cohabitating using past census data.
 - The prevailing opinion is that cohabitation either didn't increase, or actually declined, from 1880-1970. If my model produces something different, it could be a interesting contribution to the demographic literature.
- **Decline of marriage**
 - I am trying to assess possible explanations for the decline in marriage amongst young people so as to tell an interesting story.
 - In general, there has been a decline in "community" since about 1970. Coincidentally, this is also when marriage rates start to trend downward.
 - Related to that, I have a couple potential ideas I am looking into:
 - * Video games/leisure – there is a recent JPE paper about how young men work less because they'd rather play video games. Is this similar for forming relationships?
 - * Increased political polarization. I read something recently about how young men are becoming more conservative while this isn't true for young women. Is this creating friction in matching markets?
 - I am currently going through some data to see if I can estimate any reduced-form/first-stage relationships and then I'll try to find some exogenous variation to do something causal.
- **Endogenous separation**
 - I have been reading some IO papers to see how they handle this type of problem.
 - Models of firm entry/firm exit are not too dissimilar from what I am considering.
 - If exiting is a terminal state, this problem is solved. I can derive a closed-form separation function and identify exit costs if I assume that marriage quality shocks are common to both partners and I have multiple periods of divorce/separation data.
 - What is novel in my case is the possibility of remarriage. I am thinking about how to deal with this.