

Sara Weston

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www.sarajweston.com

DATA SCIENTIST | QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH | ADVANCED ANALYTICS & BEHAVIORAL DATA

Behavioral scientist with 14 years of experience and 50+ peer-reviewed papers, awarded for translating complex statistical methods into clear narratives. I build reproducible pipelines and modular systems that transform messy data into actionable insights—treating variation as signal, not noise. I document and teach so others can iterate without me

WORK EXPERIENCE

Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development (RAPID-EC) **04/2020 – Present** **Data Scientist • Contractor** **Remote**

- Designed and deployed 50+ nationally representative surveys tracking 3,300+ families during COVID-19, uncovering unmet needs that informed Child Tax Credit within 6 months.
- Developed an automated NLP pipeline using tidytext and stm, analyzing 6,500+ responses within 3 months, which identified key pain points and shaped federal policy recommendations.
- Developed predictive models identifying families at highest risk for material hardship, integrating attitudinal and behavioral data for targeted interventions.
- Created R Markdown dashboards that visualized key trends in complex survey data, leading to improved decision-making for policymakers, impacting 50,000+ households within 1 year.
- Refined research methodologies using GitHub, which increased the efficiency of data cleaning, analysis, and reporting processes and significantly boosted research output.

University of Oregon **01/2019 – Present** **Associate Professor of Psychology & Director of Graduate Studies** **Eugene, OR**

- Developed a Power BI dashboard that tracked 70+ doctoral students' milestones, enabling 30 faculty to identify at-risk students and reduce time-to-degree.
- Led program redesign by conducting stakeholder interviews, synthesizing feedback into actionable proposals, and achieving unanimous faculty support.
- Implemented proactive student tracking system with regular progress check-ins and newsletters, improving milestone completion rates and student satisfaction.
- Mapped individual differences in the Type 1 diabetes community through NLP analysis of 700,000+ posts, leading to actionable insights for healthcare communication strategies.
- Mentored 13 early-career researchers (5 graduate, 8 undergraduate) through publication and career transitions; graduates placed in data science roles, graduate programs, and industry research positions.
- Developed and delivered a statistics curriculum that improved student understanding of complex data, improving student performance and satisfaction as reflected in feedback surveys.
- Managed \$250K annual research budget across multiple concurrent projects; secured \$1.5M+ in competitive NIH and foundation funding as PI.
- Identified opportunities for curriculum enhancement by analyzing student feedback, leading to a 25% increase in course satisfaction ratings within 1 year.

Northwestern University **01/2017 – 01/2019** **Postdoctoral Fellow, Medical Social Sciences** **Evanston, IL**

- Coordinated analysis across 15 longitudinal datasets (49,000+ participants) to identify patterns in health behavior; led team of analysts across multiple international institutions.
- Built automated R pipelines for reproducible meta-analysis: analysts ran standardized scripts, outputs fed directly into aggregation and visualization. Increased research output by 400% (from 3 coordinated analyses pre-pipeline to 12+ post-implementation) in 8 months.

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Personality Psychology

Washington University in St. Louis

St. Louis, MO • 05/2017

B.A. in English & Psychology

Northwestern University

Evanston, IL • 06/2012

AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Tykeson Teaching Award

University of Oregon

05/2025

Rising Star Award

Association for Psychological Science

06/2021

Secured and managed \$3.6M+ in multi-year applied research projects with cross-functional teams.

PUBLICATIONS

Identifying the number and labels of topics in structural topic modeling analyses: A tutorial.

05/2023

Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science

Methods tutorial (cited 100+ times).

Mapping individual differences online: A case study of the Type 1 diabetes community.

10/2021

JMIR Diabetes

Large-scale social media text analysis.

Psychosocial factors associated with preventive pediatric care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

10/2021

Social Science & Medicine

ML for health behavior prediction; informed policy recommendations.

For a complete list of publications, see www.sarajweston.com.

SKILLS

Programming & Tools: brms, ggplot2, Git, Power BI, Qualtrics, R, SQL, stm, Tableau, tidytext

Analytics & Modeling: Bayesian inference, causal inference, linear modeling, longitudinal modeling, multilevel modeling, NLP, predictive modeling, psychometrics, regression, segmentation, topic modeling, user-centric analysis

Research Methods: A/B testing, experimental design, interviews, scale development, Survey design, usability testing

Collaboration & Communication: cross-functional alignment, leadership, mentorship, stakeholder management, translating technical findings for non-technical audiences, workshop facilitation