Robert Ainsworth

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Placement

Chairs: Donald Davis, drd28@columbia.edu, and Martin Uribe, mu2166@columbia.edu
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Education

Ph.D., Economics, Columbia University (*expected*)	2020
M.Phil., Economics, Columbia University	2017
M.A., Economics, Columbia University	2016
B.A., Economics, Williams College, Highest Honors	2013

Fields

Political Economy, Public Economics, Economics of Education

Job Market paper

Measuring gerrymandering by recovering individuals' preferences and turnout costs

Abstract: Legislative maps are often evaluated along dimensions of proportionality (the alignment between parties' seat shares and their state- or nation-wide vote shares) and competitiveness (the fraction of contests with uncertain winners). Since a map is intended to be used for multiple elections, policy-makers want to accurately predict how it will perform on these dimensions in the future. Doing this is difficult because future elections will differ from past ones due to changes in the demographic composition of the electorate and as a result of electoral shocks to preferences and turnout costs. Citing this uncertainty, the U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled that the judicial system is incapable of adjudicating claims of partisan gerrymandering. In this paper, I develop a method for predicting the uncertainty in a map's performance due to these factors. The method relies on a structural voting model, which describes the preference and turnout decisions of a potential voter. The model decomposes an election into (i) a set of candidate qualities and (ii) individual-level utility parameters. I assess map performance in two steps. First, I examine the effect of electoral shocks by simulating alternative values of the candidate qualities and utility parameters. Second, I investigate the influence of demographic changes by re-running the simulations using different electorates. I apply the method to rich data from the 2008 to 2018 general elections in North Carolina and show that it allows credible and precise evaluations of maps. I also show that the method is better than existing approaches at predicting gerrymandering outcomes in excluded elections.

Research in progress

The relative importance of value added and prestige in school choice: evidence from a field experiment in Romanian high school markets (with Rajeev Dehejia, Cristian Pop-Eleches, and Miguel Urquiola)

The effects of the competitiveness of legislative districts on turnout and partisanship: evidence from redistricting in North Carolina

Supplementary local school funding and residential sorting of high-income families: the case of private donations and school district parcel taxes in California

Work history

Research assistant, Cristian Pop-Eleches and Miguel Urquiola, Columbia University	2016-2019
Litigation consultant, Red Peak Economics Consulting	2013-2014
Research assistant, Michael Samson, Williams College	2011

Teaching

Principles of Economics, Columbia University	2015-2016

Referee service

Journal of the European Economic Association, *Journal of Human Resources*

Non-Economics Publications

"Teaching global health in the undergraduate liberal arts: a survey of fifty colleges," (with David R. Hill and Uttara Partap), *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, July 2012, pp. 11-15.

Other

Computing: Stata, R, Python, Julia
Citizenship: United States
Personal: SAT tutor, South Bronx United, New York, NY, 2013-2019

References

Miguel Urquiola (sponsor)
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Cristian Pop-Eleches
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