
Research Philosophy

Jadrian Wooten – PhD Candidate

I find that research works best through a cross-disciplinary approach: studying topics, techniques, methods, and subject areas under the realm of economics. I have always been fascinated with taking commonly held beliefs about topics and introducing a new approach to measuring the outcome, or redefining a traditional view on the topic. My unique approach to research has translated to increased discussions in the classroom, and has enhanced my ability to teach economics as well. Having a broad scope of research interests leads to unique applications in my primary fields, as well as a new perspective in my secondary fields. I look at research methods and techniques conducted in other economic fields, as well as other disciplines, to learn how other scientists approach problems. With Washington State University having a strong foundation in empirical work, I feel confident approaching empirical estimations using non-traditional techniques. This cross-field and cross-discipline approach improves both my research and teaching philosophies.

Cross-Discipline Tools

While some topic areas lack the economic rigor of theoretical or empirical economics papers, they still offer valuable insight into observable behavior of decision makers. Applying the same tools that psychologists, sociologists, or political scientists use also allows economic researchers added breadth in their research scope. Understanding how psychologists view the accuracy of professional pundits, my recent work with a colleague has uncovered how consumers respond to accuracy and confidence in punditry using Twitter data. This research not only approaches the demand for pundits from a different aspect, but also introduces a new way of collecting data using Twitter.

Not only does cross-discipline research open doorways to new research methods, as in data collection, but it also opens opportunities to study new areas in an economic context. Working with computer programmers immediately opens the door to the collection of large data sets. Collaborating with environmental scientists has exposed economic issues regarding hydroelectricity decision making that must be considered under an environmental impact framework. Working across disciplines not only improves the reach of my research, but also improves the applicability for those in positions to implement the findings toward effective policy.

Cross-Field Analysis

While the bulk of my dissertation focuses on issues related to decision making in sport organizations, the techniques and methods are fundamental in other economic fields and disciplines. Public policy, political science, and education researchers use mixed-effects modeling to measure the impact of subgroups on future outcomes. Just as other fields apply techniques to their problems, I apply similar methods in economics research to answer our unique problems. Using multi-level modeling can uncover how scoring and point spreads vary in college basketball. The same techniques that predict student success in classrooms can be used to predict athletic success on the basketball court.

Just as it is important to utilize techniques applied in other economics fields, it is important to develop research that can be used by researchers in other fields. The techniques and methods used in sports and labor research need to be clearly outlined so that researchers in environmental or trade fields can apply the techniques to their research. My work in studying how nationalities affect salary discrepancies in Major League Soccer could be applied to salary discrepancies in labor markets where nationality or gender has a perceived benefit.

Application

My philosophy of using cross-discipline and cross-field techniques enhances my research philosophy overall. As a researcher, I am interested in topics that lead to future policy implications by decision makers. The application of policy options in sports economics need to extend beyond the scope of a particular sports league or team, and be applicable to education economists exploring the effect of policies on school districts or energy grid supervisors determining the right mix of hydro-electricity and wind power. By studying techniques in other fields, it broadens the scope of potential policy implications beyond the subset of my current work. Using techniques from political science or education may lead to specific policy recommendations, which can occasionally be counterintuitive to traditional economic results. The results of education and political science research opens avenues for comparisons to traditional economic intuition.

Not only should the results be applicable to the field of study, but also applicable to other fields and disciplines looking for policy options to similar problems. The true value of my research prevails when seemingly unrelated fields can adapt my research to fit their models or when my results can be implemented through policy changes in other fields and disciplines.