

Adventures in Open & Reproducible Social Science

Charlie Rahal

LCDS, Department of Sociology and Nuffield College

University of Oxford, 18th April, 2023



In the spirit of ‘Open Science’:

crahal.github.io/files/adventures_in_social_science.pdf

and *all* of the research you see here today is at:

github.com/crahal

Lots of examples: hopefully something for everyone!

Everything here is made with free, and ‘Open’ tools:

- Linux (operating system)
- Python (general purpose programming)
- L^AT_EX (typesetting)

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- L^AT_EX (typesetting)

Why mention this? We’re talking about ‘Open’ Science!

What is ‘Open Science’?

‘The movement to make scientific research (including publications, data, physical samples, and software) and its dissemination accessible to all levels of an inquiring society, amateur or professional’

Pragmatically:

1. Allows creation of value and advancement.
2. Allows verification of the scientific record.
3. Allows public disclosure and engagement.
4. Allows science to become accessible and transparent.

What motivates a talk about ‘Open Science’?

- Three anecdotes from my time as a doctoral student.

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 2. Critically analyze everything.

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- Three anecdotes from my time as a doctoral student.
 1. Make sure your coauthors have code.
 2. Critically analyze everything.
 3. Consider using open-source software.

What does ‘Open Science’ look like?

1. Preprints and ‘Open Access’.
2. Publicly available data.
3. Open source code



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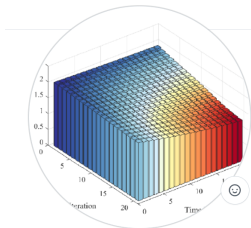
Publishing your data is easy on Harvard Dataverse!

Learn about getting started creating your own dataverse repository here.

[Getting started](#) ↗

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[GWASReview](#)

Public ::

A Scientometric Review of Genome Wide Association Studies

● HTML ☆ 15 📄 7



[NHSSpend](#)

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A home for the NHSSpend Library

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[InterModel_Vigorish](#)

Public ::

Introducing the InterModel Vigorish (IMV)

● Jupyter Notebook ☆ 1



[OxfordDemSci/gwasdiversitymonitor](#)

Public ::

Source code for the GWAS Diversity Monitor

● CSS ☆ 12 📄 1

These slides are made with an open source typesetting language!

I_make_this_slide.tex

```
\begin{frame}[]  
  These slides are made with an open source typesetting language!  
  \begin{center}  
    \begin{scriptsize}  
      \begin{minipage}{.95\linewidth}  
        \begin{myenv}{guess$_\_what$__this$__does.py}  
          \begin{minted}{latex}  
            # Hello friends :)  
          \end{minted}  
        \end{myenv}  
      \end{minipage}  
    \end{scriptsize}  
  \end{center}  
\end{frame}
```

Open source statistical code comes in the form of Python (or R):

guess_what_this_does.py

```
import json, io, imageio, requests
from PIL import Image

def get_cat_bounded(url):
    api_ret = requests.get(url)
    if api_ret.status_code==200:
        text = json.loads(api_ret.text)
        while (text[0]['width']<=400 or text[0]['width']>=600) or \
            (text[0]['height']<=400 or text[0]['height']>=600):
            api_ret = requests.get(url)
            if api_ret.status_code==200:
                text = json.loads(api_ret.text)
            r = requests.get(api_text[0]['url'])
            return Image.open(io.BytesIO(r.content))

url = 'https://api.thecatapi.com/v1/images/search'
images = []
for _ in range(0, 50):
    images.append(get_cat_bounded(url))
imageio.mimsave('CATS.gif', images, fps=1)
```

Thats right: Cats!

Why show you this? Well, Python is great at lots of useful things:

1. Scientific Computing (SciPy, numpy)
2. Data visualisation (Matplotlib, seaborn)
3. Web scraping (requests)
4. Data wrangling (Pandas)

If you remember one thing from my talk today: try to learn a computer language as early as possible!

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Python is **great** at building new datasets. But why bother?

‘We have been using the same data sets over and over again, and since we wanted new answers, we have been developing new econometric techniques to try to transform the data, and get more meaningful information out of them. Just having a fresh, new data set brings a whole new perspective, and I think people are starting to realize that, and gradually people are becoming more interested in data collection itself’

A. Cavallo, 15 November 2012 in Taylor et al. (2014)

New datasets allow fresh **insight** and are typically
open!

A lot of my work involves **semi-structured** data!

“A form of structured data that does not obey the tabular structure of data models associated with relational databases or other forms of data tables, but nonetheless contains tags or other markers to separate semantic elements”

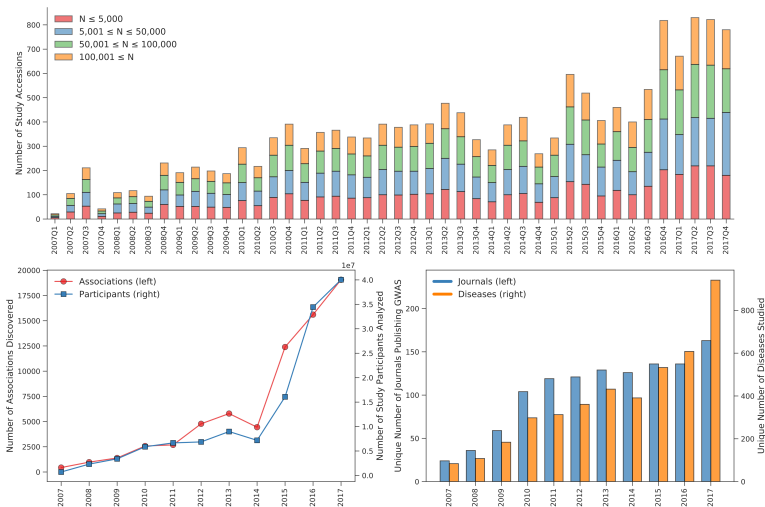
Differs from **tabular** surveys classical social scientists used to.

Often, our goal is to parse it and make it tabular all the same.

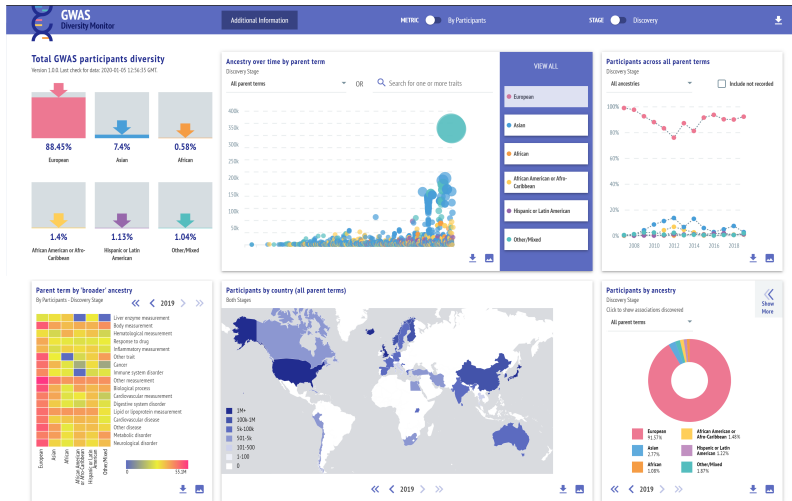
A lot of my semi-structured work is ‘**scientometric**’ and ‘**bibliometric**’ in nature:

- **Scientometrics** is the field of study which concerns itself with measuring and analysing science.
- **Bibliometrics** is the use of statistical methods to analyze quantitative information pertaining to books, articles and other publications.

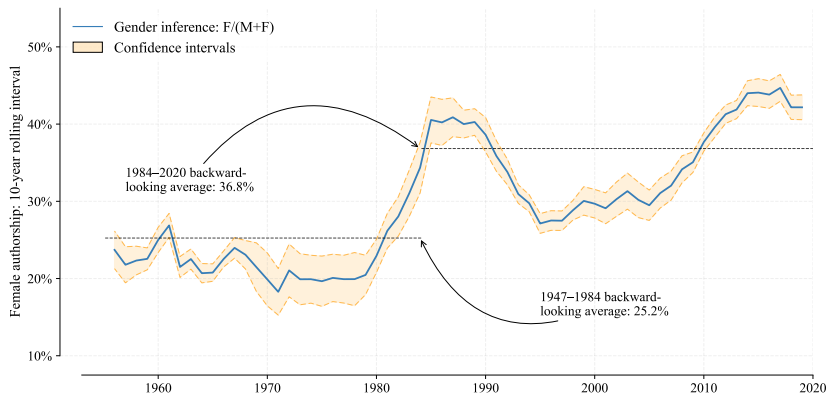
These fields are naturally related to ‘**Open Science**’.



‘The Scientometrics of Genome Wide Association Studies’ with Melinda C. Mills

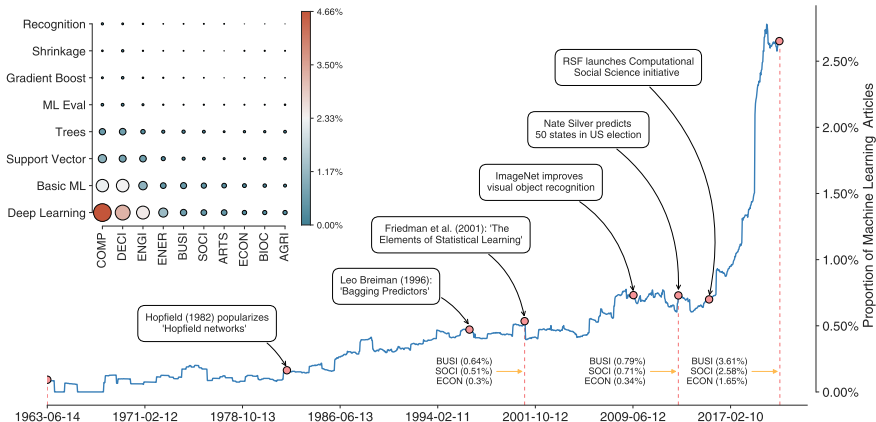


‘The GWAS Diversity Monitor Tracks Diversity in Real Time’
with Melinda C. Mills



'Population Studies at 75 Years: An empirical review'

With Melinda C. Mills



'The Rise of Machine Learning in the Academic Social Sciences'

With Dave Kirk and Mark Verhagen

Administrative Data is an invaluable resource for Good.

ADR UK (2018)

- UK leads world in terms of 'Openness' of government data.
- Value of public government data is increasingly recognised.
 - Increasingly recognised by the ESRC (e.g. ADRNs).
- For better or worse:
 - I'm interested in 'hard to use', semi-structured data.

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- For better or worse:
 - I'm interested in 'hard to use', semi-structured data.
 - Using curated data would be too easy.

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL UK
Open Access Home Other versions **DONATE** About

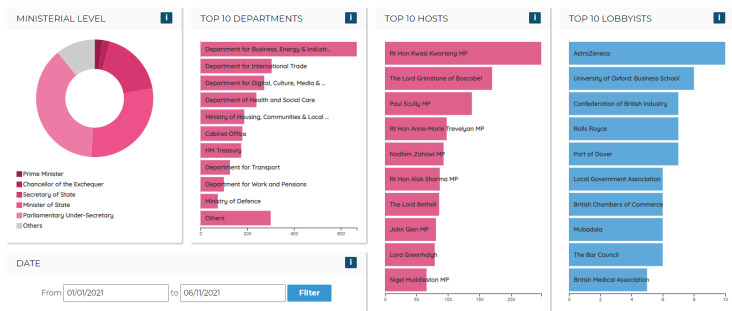
2,623 out of 74,435 meetings

SEARCH BY LOBBYIST, HOST, SUBJECT

Reset

UK GOVERNMENT

LOBBYIST



openaccess.transparency.org.uk

With Ian Knowles, Paulo Serôdio, David Stuckler and TI UK

Procurement Data

- David Cameron opened data on government contracts (2010).
- This provided a totally new type of semi-structured data.
- From from local authorities, to the NHS, to central government.
- This sounds like it might be useful for academic research...
- However, the raw data is **unbelievably** messy.

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If only there was a **Government Data Service** to curate it...

Lets list a few of the problems with procurement data. Some are common to semi-structured data, some are not:

1. Some organisations don't believe in their legal obligation.
2. Every file is in a heterogeneous format in a different location (**thousands** of locations across the internet.)
3. Data commonly converted from a tabular file...

Lets list a few of the problems with procurement data. Some are common to semi-structured data, some are not:

1. Some organisations don't believe in their legal obligation.
2. Every file is in a heterogeneous format in a different location (**thousands** of locations across the internet.)
3. Data commonly converted from a tabular file... **into** a .pdf!
(This is a **direct** downgrade in the Berners-Lee 5* schema.)
4. Naturally, of course, there are no supplier UUIDs.

Just one quick example, followed by what we can do...

Introduction and Motivation
oooooooooooooooo

Scientometrics
ooooo

Civic Technology
oooo●oooo

Inequality
oooo

Model Uncertainty
oooooo

Introduction and Motivation
oooooooooooooooo

Scientometrics
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Civic Technology
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Inequality
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Model Uncertainty
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Expenditure Over Threshold

23 / 37

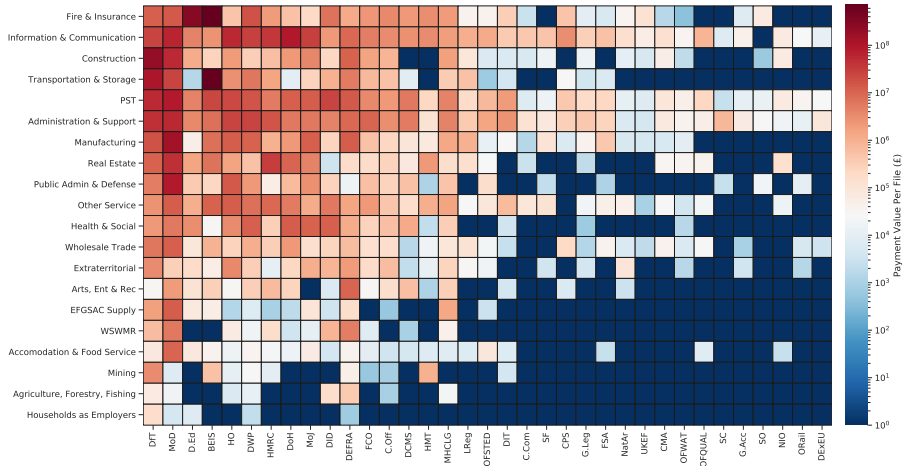
Introduction and Motivation
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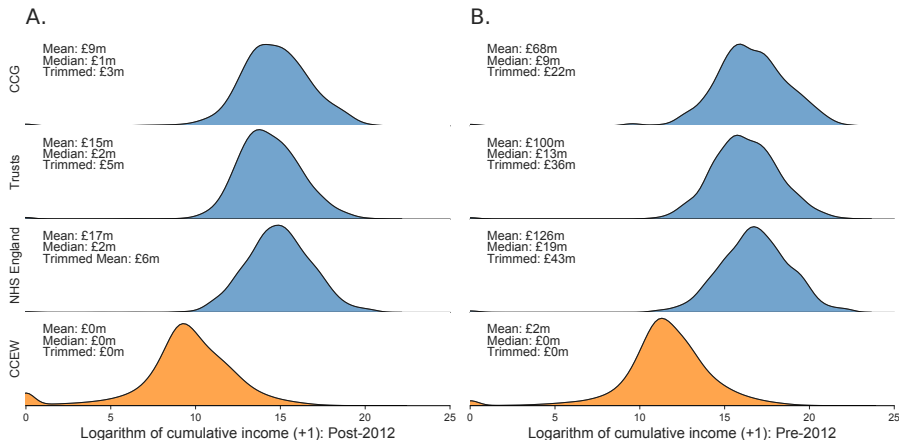
Civic Technology
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Model Uncertainty
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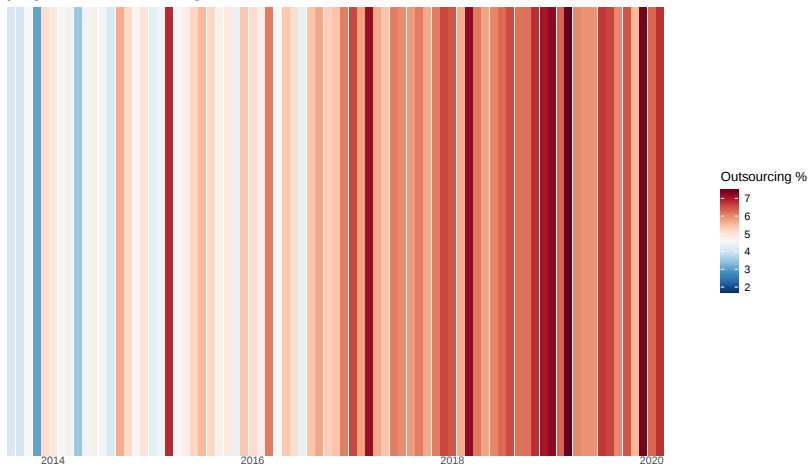


‘Tools for Transparency in Central Government Spending’



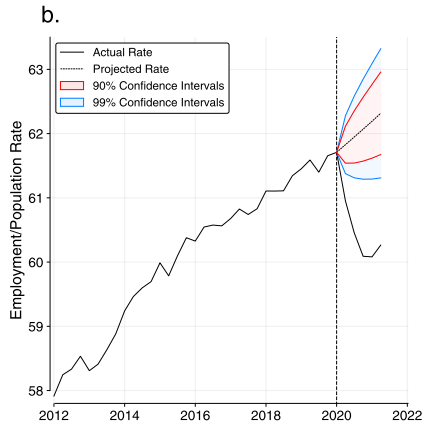
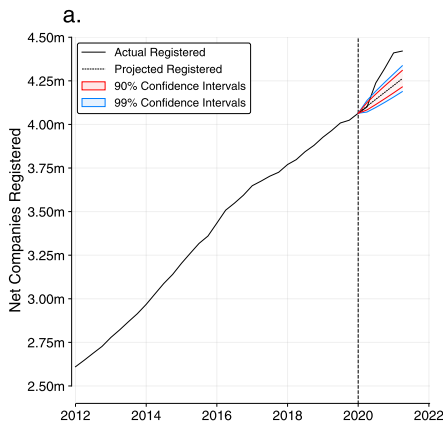
‘The Role of Non-Profits in Public Health Service Provision’
With John Mohan

Creeping Privatisation in England's NHS



Source: Raw CCG payments approximately matched to Companies House and the Charity Commission, then manually verified

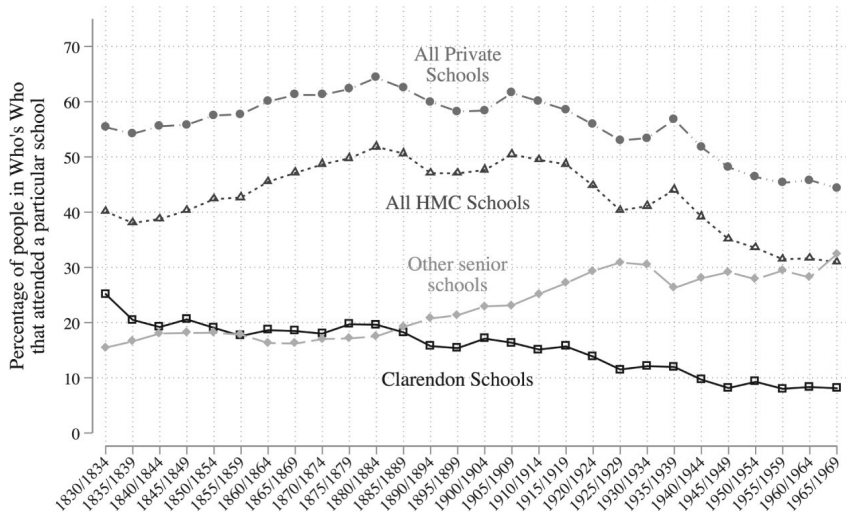
‘Creeping Commercialization in the NHS’
With Ben Goodair and Aaron Reeves



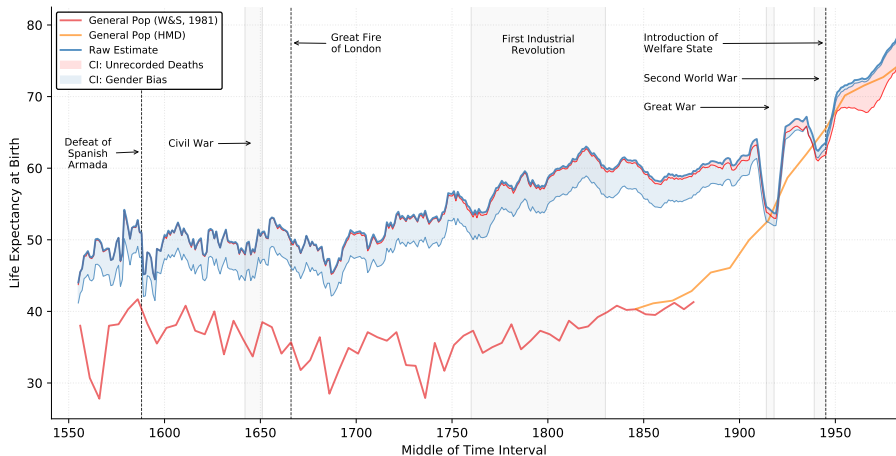
‘Modelling Labour Market Inequalities and the Covid-19 Pandemic’
With Aaron Reeves and Naomi Muggleton

Semi-Structured Data for Inequality Research

- Data doesn't always come from APIs.
- Sometimes, it can come from raw `.html` itself.
- One example of this is when we scraped Who's Who to get information on education background of 'elites'.
- Another is when we scraped `thepeerage.com` to get data on dates of birth and death of British Peers.
- When doing this, we might choose to (there are competing views):
 - Check ToS and `robots.txt`.
 - Contact the webmaster first.



‘The decline and persistence of the old boy’
With Aaron Reeves, Sam Friedman. and Magne Flemmen



'The Legacy of Longevity: Inequalities in UK Life Expectancy 1500-2016' with Aaron Reeves, Felix Tropsch and Darryl Lundy

Ongoing research (With Aaron Reeves and Naomi Muggleton) uses and probate records from 1858-1996.

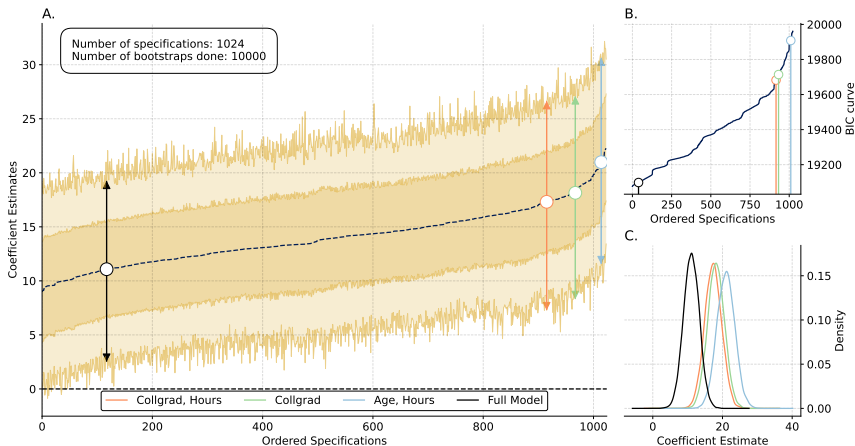
The idea is to:

1. Scrape 800k .pdfs containing 24m probates: **Done!**
2. Preprocess images ready for OCR: **Done!**
3. Run OCR on HPC in parallel: **Done!**
4. Build lifetables to calculate e_0 by wealth at death...: **Pending!**

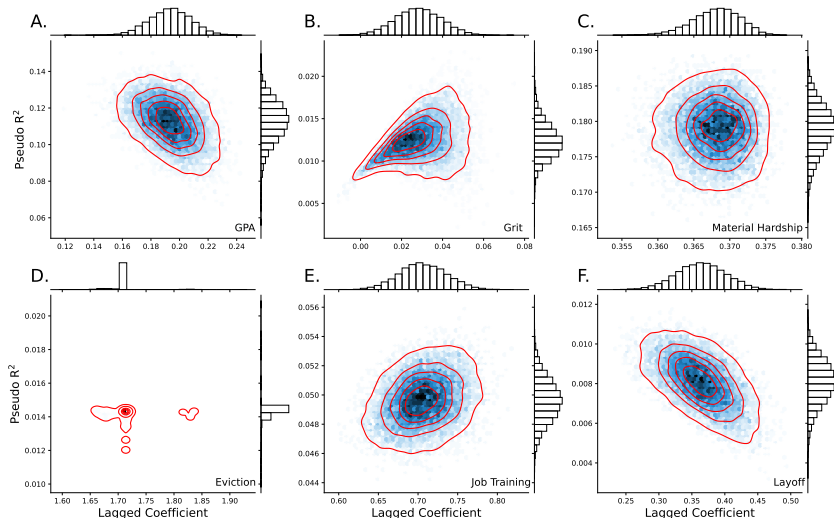
689	ABBOTT Henry Bernard of 22 Isles Road, Hammersmith, died 14 April 1901 at 68. Buried in Kensal Green Cemetery. Effects £100. 1891. ABBOTT Henry Bernard of 22 Isles Road, Hammersmith, died 14 April 1901 at 68. Buried in Kensal Green Cemetery. Effects £100. 1891.	ABBOTT Sarah Catherine of 32 Rhywood-road Seven Kings Essex (wife of Benjamin Hunter Abbott) died 18 Dec 1901. Buried in Seven Kings. Effects £100. 1891.
	ABBOTT Isaac of Thrapston Northamptonshire butcher died 16 October 1901 Administration Peterborough 13 December to Sarah Hannah Abbott widow. Effects £221 19s. 1891.	ABBOTT Susan Leggett of Barking House George-own Eastbourne (wife of Henry Susan Abbott) died 21. 1891. Probate London 31 July to the said Henry Susan Abbott. Effects £100. 1891.
	ABBOTT James of The Elms Hotel Grove-road Romford licensed victualler died 10 February 1901 Probate London 19 April to Elizabeth Abbott widow. Effects £184 14s. 2d.	ABBOTT Thomas of Dunstable gentleman died 17 November 1901 Probate Walsford 1 March to William John Abbott and Henry David Boddy apothecary. Effects £708 12s. 4d. Residue £7100 14s. 2d.
	ABBOTT Jane of 12 Lennard-road Leytonstone Essex died 20 January 1901 Administration London 7 March to John Benjamin Abbott contractor. Effects £440 17s. 2d.	ABBOTT Thomas of 103 Abchurch-lane Rochdale-Mo Manchester died 10 March 1901 Probate Manchester 23 Apr to Thomas Edward Miller and William Scott composers. Effects £108 11s.
	ABBOTT John of Hatched Lane Lincolnshire died 10 February 1901 Administration London 23 February to Thomas Abbott farmer. Effects £293 4s.	ABBOTT Thomas of 10 Marshall-street Middlesbrough died 7 June 1901 Administration London 9 July to Elizabeth Abbott widow. Effects £668 8s. 2d.
128	ABBOTT John of Mayfield House Northfield House Yorkshire died 28 June 1901 Probate London 10 September to Mary Abbott widow and William Abbott railway clerk. Effects £1918 13s. 4d.	ABBOTT Walter of Fairwood near Witham Essex died 24 November 1901 Probate London 10 July to Walter Perc Abbott and Osborne Hedley Abbott gardeners. Effects £599 10s. 12d.
86	ABBOTT John White of 2 Westbury-gardens Hanger Lane Ealing Middlesex died 21 April 1901 Probate London 27 June to Gertrude Agnes Abbott widow. Effects £2130 15s. 2d.	ABBOTT William of Kilnward-road Burnmarsh Rochester Kent died 1 November 1901 Probate Walsford 12 February to Ellen Abbott widow Effects £146 16s. 8d.
	ABBOTT Joseph of 8 Progressive-cottages Clapham Field Bawtrentall Lancashire grocer died 7 November 1901 Administration London 9 December to Martha Jane Abbott widow. Effects £431 14s. 2d.	ABBOTT William of Horncastle Lincolnshire died 23 January 1901 Probate Lincoln 23 March to John Elsey Chatterto clerk to the Guardians. Effects £131.
	ABBOTT Lucia Augusta of Banasterie Leeward Islands spinster died 8 June 1901 Administration (with Will Lewis) London 10 January to Augustus Wade near Chief Attorney of Barbados. Effects £100. 1891.	ABBOTT William of 68 Post-street Footscray Wigan townsmaster died 14 October 1901 Administration Liverpool 10 November to Sarah Ann Lowe (wife of Edwin Lowe Effects £57 3s.
1605	ABBOTT Mary of Colsterworth Lincolnshire widow died 13 December 1901 Probate London 10 December to Charles Alfred Ernest Abbott bank clerk and George Edward Abbott bank manager. Effects £1042 19s. 4d.	ABBOTT William Morgan of 37 York-road Southend-on-Sea died 2 April 1901 Administration (with Will Lewis) London 2 July to Frank Abbott commercial traveller. Effects £30 10s. 2d.
	ABBOTT Matilda of Hestonshire County Ayrshire Hill End Saint Peter's Burgh Ayrshire married to Charles George Abbott) died 3 July 1901 Administration London 18 August to the said George Abbott gardener. Effects £148 18s. 10d.	ABBOTT Henry of The Cranford Cottage near Woodmore Devonshire (widow of Henry) died 18 May 1901. Probate London 3 December to Elizabeth Abbott widow. Effects £203 7s. 1d.
	ABBOTT Henry Wilford of 31 Ashchurch Park Villa Avenue court Park Middlesbrough died 3 May 1901 at sea. Administration London 3 September to Henry Abbott chemist's manager. Effects £441 11s. 3d.	ABBOTT James of West Beckham Norfolk died 27 Apr 1901 Probate Norwich 10 June to James Kemp clerk Effects £100.
	ABBOTT Samuel of Cornhill Yorkshire died 21 June 1901 Administration (with Will Lewis) London 8 December to George Albert Taylor builder and Christopher Arthur Radford millers. Effects £42.	ABBOTT Robert of Boston Norfolk retired farmer died 4 October 1901 Probate Norwich 17 October to Robert James Abbott shrodder and William Allen haberdashers. Effects £244 20s.
1693	ABBOTT Samuel Mitchell of Elmsfield Park-road near Broom's Barns Kent died 10 August 1901 Administration (with Will Lewis) London 21 December to Elizabeth Abbott widow. Effects £152.	ABBOTT Dame Mary Thelma of 28 Rue de Malbecville Enghien les Bains 14 France (wife of Sir William Neville Noel Barrett) died 12 September 1901 Administration London 29 October to George Herbert Cress commercial clerk Effects £200.
52	ABBOTT Sarah of Dunster Somersetshire spinster died 20 December 1901 Administration (with Will Lewis) London 23 April to Emily Gardner widow. Effects £51 3s. 10d.	ABBOTT Anne of Uppermost Stanley-road Sutton Surrey widow died 21 October 1901 Administration London 5 December to Magdeline Anne Mary Miller (wife of Ernest Brinsford Miller). Effects £208 16s. 1d.
693	ABBOTT Sarah of 11 Southgate-street Rochdale Furnesshampton widow died 28 April 1901 Probate London 6 May to Eliza Taylor (wife of Robert Taylor). Effects £137.	ABBOTT Anna Maria of Titchfield Norfolk widow died 21 May 1901 Probate Norwich 4 June to the reverend William Francis Kemp clerk. Effects £167 10s. 8d.
1015	ABBOTT Sarah of The Square Bedford Northamptonshire (wife of Thomas Abbott) died 17 June 1901 Probate London 20 July to Thomas Abbott engineer. Effects £30 8s. 6d.	ABBOTT Eliza of 11 Denstable-road Luton Bedfordshire spinster died 18 September 1901 Probate Northampton 1 November to Earn Smith cooper and Alfred William Spink baker. Effects £715 16s. 5d.

- There are close links between ‘Open Science’ and traditional survey based modeling paradigms!
- By opening research, we can examine the certainty of statistical results.
- Does β_1 really equal 7?
- How can we "take the ‘con’ out of econometrics"?
- Transparency and slightly more computational procedures!
- Current research culture around robustness only mandates examination of a couple of choices.
 - With current computational power; why not all combinations?

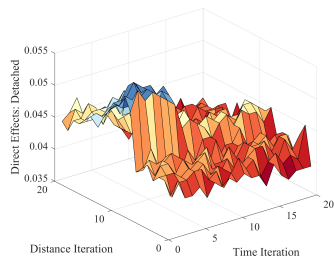
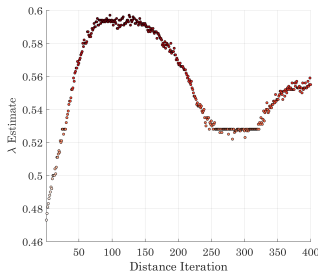
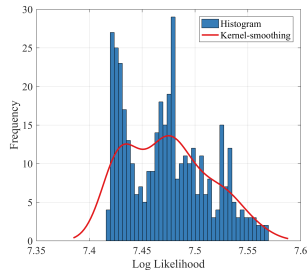
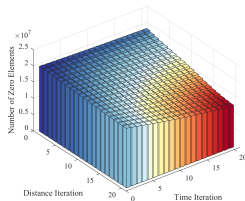
Our work to tackle specific types of uncertainty still in progress!



‘Introducing NRobust: A multiversal library with bootstraps, selection, and model averaging’ with Daniel Valdenegro-Ibarra

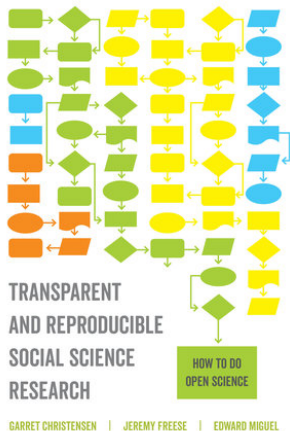


‘From a Seed of Doubt Grows a Forest of Uncertainty’
With Arun Frey, Jiani Yan and Mark Verhagen



‘A Grid Based Approach to Analysing Spatial Weighting Matrix Specification’

Just in case you're looking for something further:



This book is most definitely worth reading!

And not just because one of the authors is a coauthor of mine!

It does an **excellent** job of motivating Open Social Science.

Thank you!

Don't hesitate to get in touch at:

charles.rahall@sociology.ox.ac.uk

and

github.com/crahall!