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Introduction to the Issue

The ranking, rating and judging of wine has always been a central theme of wine economics research. "*Who is a reliable wine judge? How can we aggregate the will of a tasting panel? Do wine judges agree with each other? Are wine judges consistent? What is the best wine in the flight?*" are typical questions that beg for formal statistical answers. The statistical treatment of wine tasting by Amerine and Roessler (1976) was probably the first of its kind entirely devoted to wine. Beginning with the rigorous formal analyses by Richard Quandt (2006, 2007), we have published numerous theoretical and applied papers on this topic in the *Journal of Wine Economics* (see e.g., Ashton 2011, 2012; Bodington 2012, 2015; Cao, 2014; Cao and Stokes, 2010; Cicchetti, 2007; Ginsburgh and Zang, 2012; Hodgson 2008, 2009; Hodgson and Cao, 2014). The *Judgment of Princeton*, held at the 2012 AAWE Annual Conference at Princeton University, has provided an excellent opportunity for applied research (Ashenfelter and Storchmann, 2012).

The first issue of Volume 10 of the *Journal of Wine Economics* begins with a tutorial for the statistical evaluation of wine tastings by Ingram Olkin, Ying Lou, Lynne Stokes and Jing Cao (Olkin et al., 2015). In "*Analyses of Wine-Tasting Data: A Tutorial"* they provide guidelines for the statistical analysis of wine tasting and suggest methods for "(i) measuring agreement of two judges and its extension to m judges; (ii) making comparisons of judges across years; (iii) comparing two wines; (iv) designing tasting procedures to reduce burden of multiple tastings; (v) ranking of judges; and (vi) assessing causes of disagreement."

In his paper entitled "Evaluating wine-tasting results and randomness with a mixture of rank preference models," Jeffrey Bodington examines the applicability of mixture models for food and for wine tastings (Bodington, 2015). An application of the mixture model to the tasting of Pinot Gris suggests that "agreement among tasters exceeds the random expectation of illusory agreement."

In the paper "An analysis of wine critic consensus: A study of Washington and California wines," Eric Stuen, Jon Miller and Robert Stone analyze the degree of consensus in quality ratings of prominent U.S. wine publications (Stuen et al., 2015). Similar to Ashton (2013), they find a moderately high level of consensus, measured by the correlation coefficient, between most pairs of publications. Consensus does not seem to be related to the blinding policies of the critical publications.

In their study entitled "Should it be told or tasted? Impact of sensory versus non-sensory cues on the categorization of low-alcohol wines," Josselin Masson and

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Philippe Aurier present an experiment in which they confront test subjects with wines of various alcohol contents, 0.2%, 6%, 9% and 12%, and let them assign them to one of the following beverage categories: *wine, other wine-based drink, grape juice, premix, new alcoholic drink,* or *new non-alcoholic drink* (Masson and Aurier, 2015). When tasting blind the assignment into the wine category was generally positively correlated with the alcohol content with some ambiguity in the middle alcohol range (20% of the subjects assigned the 9% alc wine to "other non-alcoholic drinks"). In contrast, when the alcohol content was disclosed all beverages, even the 0.2% and 6% wines, were more likely to be classified as wines.

In the last paper of this issue, Philippe Masset, Jean-Philippe Weisskopf and Mathieu Cossutta examine "Wine Tasters, Ratings, and En Primeur Prices" of Bordeaux grand cru wines (Masset et al., 2015). Their findings suggest that Robert Parker and Jean-Marc Quarin are the most influential critics, as a 10% surprise in their scores leads to a price increase of around 7%. In addition, their impact appears to be higher for appellations and estates that are not covered by the official 1855 classification and for the best vintages.

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