

RONG ZHANG

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EDUCATION

Department of Agricultural Economics, Texas A&M University *August 2021 - Expected May 2026*
PhD Candidate in Agricultural Economics

Department of Economics, Texas A&M University *2019 - 2021*
Master of Science in Economics
Major: Financial Econometrics, GPA: 4.0/4.0

University of International Business and Economics *2015 - 2019*
Bachelor of Art in Economics
Major: International Economics and Trade

RESEARCH AREA

Empirical Industrial Organization, Applied Microeconomics, Price Discrimination, Inequality, Labor Market

WORKING PAPERS

Price Discrimination and Implicit Market Segmentation in Consumer Packaged Goods

(Job Market Paper, with Yvette Zhang)

Abstract: Implicit market segmentation is a marketing and pricing practice in which firms use indirect cues, such as product design, packaging or branding, to segment the market based on inferred preferences, rather than on explicit observable characteristics. This practice is widely used in consumer packaged goods and it can involve both second-degree and third-degree price discrimination, which together can generate ambiguous welfare effects. Yet most existing empirical studies consider these two forms of price discrimination separately, leaving open the question of how they interact when deployed together. In this paper, we employ a random-coefficient aggregate discrete choice model to assess the price discrimination pattern and welfare effects of implicit market segmentation. The empirical estimation analyzes implicit market segmentation in consumer packaged goods using scanner data of toothbrush market. We find that the implicit market segmentation leads to price differences across markets, and the differences are jointly sustained by third-degree and second-degree price discrimination. By conducting a counterfactual analysis, we find that eliminating the segmentation would increase consumer surplus but reduce producer surplus, resulting in a net welfare gain.

Educational Assortative Matching and Income Inequality in China

(with Song Zhou and Yvette Zhang)

Abstract: The fast increase of the income inequality in China had attracted worldwide attention, one of the causes of the increasing income inequality can be the assortative matching in marriage market. This paper examines how educational assortative matching affects household income inequality in China. Using a national representative survey data from 2010 to 2018, we document a growing tendency for spouses to match by education. We simulate hypothetical scenarios that couples are matched randomly and perfectly to quantify the impact of sorting on inequality. Lorenz curves and Gini coefficients show that educational sorting substantially raises inequality. In most developed countries, assortative matching can contribute to the income inequality through married female labor force participation. Therefore we examine the impact of the changes in women's labor force behavior by considering both extensive and intensive margin of labor market. However, the results find that their effects on inequality are modest. These results indicate that marital sorting played a more substantial role in increasing household income inequality than shifts in post-marriage labor supply.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Welfare Effects of Wholesale Price Discrimination

(with Mengjie Li and Yvette Zhang)

The Lipstick Effects: How Consumers Adapt to Economic Stresses

(with Lingxiao Wang, Wenying Li and Yvette Zhang)

Price Discrimination on Digital Platforms: Evidence from the Global Video Game Market

RESEARCH AND WORK EXPERIENCE

Department of Agricultural Economics, TAMU

Research Assistant for Dr. Yvette Zhang

July 2025-Present

Department of Economics, TAMU

Research Assistant for Dr. Li Gan

April 2021-April 2023

Department of Agricultural Economics, TAMU

Research Assistant for Dr. Jean-Claude Bizimana

January 2022-August 2022

The Bush School of Government & Public Service, TAMU

Research Assistant for Dr. Ren Mu

December 2020-June 2022

CoronaNet Research Group

Volunteer Research Assistant

June 2020 - August 2020

China Development Research Foundation

Economics Research Intern

May 2019 – September 2019

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

INTA Capstone Research Course for Master of International Affairs Students

Teaching Assistant, Spring 2022, graduate level:

Meet weekly with students to assist on their projects' programming and answer questions, provide support materials for students learning R programming.

AGEC 625 Environment of Agribusiness

Teaching Assistant, Spring 2024, graduate level:

Hold office hours and offer R programming assistance on students' final projects, grade assignments.

AGEC 350 Environmental and Natural Resource Economics

Teaching Assistant, Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, undergraduate level:

Give lectures on exam review, coordinate lectures with guest speakers, assist in in-class activities, hold regular office hours, grade assignments and exams.

Other Undergraduate Level Courses:

AGEC 440 Agribusiness Strategic Analysis, Teaching Assistant, Fall 2022 and Spring 2024

AGEC 325 Principles of Farm and Ranch Management, Teaching Assistant, Fall 2024

AGEC 431 Cases in Agribusiness Finance, Teaching Assistant, Fall 2023

AGEC 340 Agribusiness Management, Teaching Assistant, Spring 2025

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATION

SAEA - Paper Presentation, February 2026

American Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA) Annual Conference - Poster Presentation, July 2025

Symposium for Agricultural and Applied Economics Research - Paper Presentation, April 2025

Chinese Economists Society (CES) North America Annual Conference - Paper Presentation, March 2025

Food Health & Applied Group Seminar, TAMU - Paper Presentation, December 2024 & February 2025

Econometrics Study Group, TAMU - Paper Presentation, August 2025

GRANTS AND AWARDS

USDA Grant, Summer & Fall 2025

Graduate Assistantship, Department of Agricultural Economics, TAMU, Fall & Spring 2025

Economics Departmental Graduate Scholarship, TAMU, Fall 2019 – Spring 2021

Graduate Students' Association travel grant, TAMU, Spring and Summer 2025

SKILLS

Programming and Tools: R, Python, Stata, LaTeX, GAMS

Languages: English (Fluent), Chinese (Native)

SERVICE

Graduate Student Organization Agriculture Economics, TAMU

Treasurer, Fall 2024 - Spring 2025

Food Health and Applied Group Meetings, AgEcon Department, TAMU

Organizer, Fall 2024

REFERENCES

Dr. Yvette Zhang (Chair)

Professor

Agricultural Economics

Texas A&M University

Email: yzhang@tamu.edu

Dr. Li Gan (Committee Member)

Professor

Economics

Texas A&M University

Email: ganli@tamu.edu

Dr. Ximing Wu (Co-Chair)

Professor

Agricultural Economics

Texas A&M University

Email: xwu@email.tamu.edu

Dr. Desmond Ng (Teaching)

Associate Professor

Agricultural Economics

Texas A&M University

Email: desmond.ng@ag.tamu.edu