

# Da Gong

Department of Economics

*Latest CV*

University of California, Riverside

*Updated March 7, 2024*

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<b>Research Interests</b>	Development Economics, Public economics, Political Economy, Culture and Institution, Labor Economics, Applied Machine Learning
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<b>Education</b>	<b>Ph.D. Economics</b>	Sep. 2018 – Jun. 2024 (expected)
	UC Riverside	Riverside, CA
	<b>M.A. History</b>	Sep. 2015 – Jun. 2018
	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)	Beijing, China
	<b>B.A. Business Administration</b>	Sep. 2011 – Jun. 2015
	Hunan University	Changsha, China

## Job Market Paper

### **Formation and Evolution of Beliefs: Famine Experience and Trust in Neighbors** [\[latest version\]](#)

with Zhian Hu and Chuanchuan Zhang

*Abstract:* This paper examines how the impact of traumatic experiences on contemporary trust could vary across different initial social capital levels within the context of the Confucian clan and the Great Chinese Famine. Our triple-differences analysis exploits county-level variation in famine intensity, variation in famine exposure based on birth cohorts, and geographic variation in the initial clan culture. We use soil suitability to instrument for famine intensity. We find that traumatic experiences strengthen trust among clan members in areas with high levels of initial social capital. Our findings are robust to model choice, pass placebo tests, and remain stable in a event study model.

## Publications

### **Economic Impacts of China's Zero-COVID Policies**

*China Economic Review*, 2024, vol. 83

with Zhuocheng Shang, Yaqin Su, Andong Yan and Qi Zhang

[[China COVID Risk Level Dataset](#)]

*Abstract:* This paper presents an investigation of the economic consequences of the zero-COVID policy implemented by the Chinese government as a pilot experiment in using big data for country management from 2020 to 2022. Our study includes an original county-daily panel data set on the COVID-19 Risk Level issued by the State Council of the People's Republic of China (PRC). To measure economic activities, we used satellite data on night lights and PM2.5, and geographical data on population mobility. Our findings indicate that the zero-COVID policy did not result in significant economic loss in 2021. However, in 2022, when the Omicron variant emerged, a stricter zero-COVID policy led to a 30% decline in mobility, a 1.17% decrease in PM2.5 and a 7.7% reduction in night lights. Based on our calculations, China experienced a 3.9% loss in GDP as a consequence of the implementation of the zero-COVID policy in 2022.

## Working paper

### **Cost of Zero-Covid: Effects of Anti-contagious Policy on Labor Market Outcomes in China**

*Revision Requested, Journal of Labor Research*

[Nomination For The Best Paper Award, [1st International Workshop on the Chinese Development Mode](#), 2022 ]

with Andong Yan and Jialin Yu

*Abstract:* We study the effect of China's anti-contagious policy on labor market outcomes in 2020. By exploiting variation in the duration of the zero-Covid policy in China, which is triggered by the outbreak of new cases of COVID-19 in a 14-day observation window, we find that a 10% increase (3.7 days in average) in the duration of the zero-Covid policy caused the probability of unemployment to increase by around 0.1. We show that the disruption on the labor market majorly comes from the zero-Covid containment measures, while health shocks are trivial on the labor market outcomes. Moreover, the zero-Covid policy decreases the labor income and hours worked for employed individuals, and the policy effect is heterogeneous across demographic groups.

### **Mass Reproducibility and Replicability: A New Hope**

with Abel Brodeur, Derek Mikola, Nikolai Cook et al.

*Abstract:* The present study pushes the boundaries of understanding research reliability by mass reproducing and replicating claims from 110 papers in leading economic and political science outlets. The analysis, involving computational reproducibility checks and robustness assessments, reveals several patterns. First, we uncover a high rate (over 85%) of fully computationally reproducible results. Second, excluding very minor errors like missing packages or paths, we uncover coding errors for about 25% of studies, with some studies containing multiple errors. Third, we test the robustness of the results to 5,494 re-analyses. We find a robustness reproducibility of 71%. Fourth, 52% of re-analysis effect size estimates are smaller than the original published estimates and the average statistical significance of a re-analysis is 77% of the original. Last, we rely on a many-analysts approach to answer eight additional research questions. Most analyst teams find a negative relationship between replicators' experience and reproducibility, while finding no relationship between reproducibility and the provision of intermediate or even raw data combined with the necessary cleaning codes.

### **Governor Press Release Effects on Public Beliefs and Behaviors During a Pandemic**

*Abstract:* This research focuses on how politician's opinions, provided by local media, shape people's belief and behavior during a pandemic. Specifically, I study how state governors' press release, covered by local media, impact on people's social distancing response, belief in conspiracy theory and trust in vaccines. I use geographic variations, specifically the difference between media market boundaries and state boundaries, as quasi-random exposures to local news and politicians' press releases. My approach involves collecting data on governors' press releases and employing Natural Language Processing models such as Topic LDA and COVID-Bert to categorize news topics and measure politicians' attitudes towards COVID and related policies. Additionally, I leverage multiple waves of survey data from MIT, CMU, and Facebook, providing outcome variables such as individuals' social distancing behavior, mask usage, and vaccine intent.

### **The Impacts of the Zero-Covid Policy on Academic Performance: Evidence for Primary and Secondary Students in China**

*Under Review, Journal of Asian Economics*  
with Yaqin Su, Anping Xia, and Andong Yan

*Abstract:* This paper exploits variation in the duration that cities were classified as medium- or high-risk areas to identify the effects of China's zero-COVID policy on the academic outcomes of children aged 6 to 15. Employing a difference-in-differences methodology and focusing on within-student changes in academic performance between pre- and early stages of the pandemic, we uncover robust evidence that the stringency of the zero-COVID policy is associated with significantly better mathematics performance for boys, while having no effects on girls. Mechanism analyses show that parental discipline is crucial for children's academic performance during COVID-19. Boys benefit more from parental discipline than girls, especially those with weaker noncognitive skills. In particular, a conscientious mother, coupled with an amiable father, seems to bring the best outcomes for the child.

### **Crisis Control in Top-down Bureaucracy: Evidence from China's Zero-Covid Policy**

with Andong Yan and Ziao Zhao

*Abstract:* This study investigates the compliance of local Chinese officials with the zero-Covid policy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining biographical data from political elites and using a prefecture-day data set on risk levels – an indicator reflecting the status of zero-Covid policy – we discover a significant impact of prefecture leaders' promotion incentives on their response to COVID-19 outbreaks. Our empirical analysis reveals that leaders with stronger promotion incentives tend to exhibit increased reactions to emerging cases. Evidence shows that such a phenomenon is driven by the different choices of the prefecture leaders facing relatively larger-scale COVID-19 outbreaks. Furthermore, local governors whose jurisdictions are more economically developed tend to enforce more stringent mobility restrictions. However, for prefecture leaders who oversee more developed regions and possess strong promotion incentives, the combined effects of these two factors tend to balance each other out in terms of pandemic response. These results suggest a natural tension between demands for crisis management during the pandemic and routine performance in economic development within the political framework of China.

**Other  
Publications &  
Technical  
Reports**

### **Replication Report: A Comment on Gethin, Martínez- Toledano & Piketty (2022)**

*I4R Discussion Paper 19, 2023*

with Olle Hammar

**Currency Usage in Huizhou Region Before and After Taiping Rebellion: Evidence from Account Books**

*Jianghai Academic Journal. 2023,(01), in Chinese*

with Weipeng Yuan

**Work in progress**

**How does Air Pollution Affect Sleep? Survey and Social Media Evidence from the United States**

with Jingyan Guo and Zhuocheng Shang

**Teaching  
& Advising  
Experience**

**Lead Consultant**

Jan. 2023 – Present

**Graduate Quantitative Methods Center**

UC Riverside

- Develop and present graduate level workshops on Staggered Difference-in-Difference, Testing for Parallel Trends, Bootstrapping, CLT, Natural Language Processing, Web-scraping, Stata, Python, R, Github, Latex and more.
- Conduct daily consultations in statistics and programming to graduate students and postdoctoral scholars from a variety of disciplines, including Economics, Public Policy, Political Sciences, Education, Psychology, Electrical Engineering, Biology, Ecology, and Humanities.

**Advising**

UC Riverside

**MacRue**, College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences Summer 2023

- Provide instructions on presenting data, posters, and research to under-represented undergraduate students in STEM fields from community and 4-year colleges.

**Data Science Pathways Summer Fellowship program**

Summer 2023

- Provide data science training to students from community colleges and 4-year universities with diverse backgrounds.

**Instructor**

UC Riverside

Econ 143: Environmental Economics

Summer B 2022

Econ 153: Labor Economics

Summer A 2021

**Teaching Assistant** UC Riverside  
 Econ 101: Statistics for Economics Fall 2020, Winter 2022, Spring 2022  
 (Teaching Evaluation: 6.69 / 7)  
 Econ 107: Introductory Econometrics Winter 2021, Fall 2021  
 (Teaching Evaluation: 6.33 / 7)  
 Econ 104B: Intermediate Microeconomic Theory Spring 2021  
 (Teaching Evaluation: 6.6 / 7)  
 Econ 105B: Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory Spring 2020  
 (Teaching Evaluation: 6.2 / 7)  
 Econ 103: Intermediate Macroeconomics for Business Fall 2019,  
 Winter 2020  
 Econ 135: The Stock Market Fall 2019, Fall 2022  
 (Teaching Evaluation: 6.18 / 7)

## **Research Assistant**

**China Gazetteer Project**  
 Mentor: Richard B. Freeman, Harvard University Feb. 2017 – Dec. 2017  
**Human Capital Transfers and Rural Enterprise Development**  
 Mentor: Jie Bai, Harvard Kennedy School Oct. 2017 – Jan. 2018

## **Talks**

**2024**  
 Econ of Science & Engineering Seminar, Harvard  
**2023**  
 CEGA Research Retreat, UC Berkeley (Attendee); UC Riverside Applied Economics Seminar; UCSD/UCLA/CIFAR Conference on Economic Development, Political Economy, and Culture; ACLEC at UCSB; UCSD Young Scholars Conference; MacRue; WEAI 98th; Data Science Pathways; CES North America Conference  
**2022**  
 6th TextXD at UC Berkeley (cancelled); SEA 92th Annual Meeting; “The Impacts of Social Media on the Health of Individuals, Communities and Society” Workshop at UCR; 1st International Workshop on the Chinese Development Model; WEAI 97th Annual Conference; CES 2022 Annual Conference  
**2021**  
 Applied Graduate Student Brownbag  
**2017**  
 China Economy Seminar at Harvard University

## Awards & Honors

Dean's Distinguished Fellowship, UC Riverside 2018 - present  
Travel Subsidy, Chinese Economists Society North American Conference 2023  
Student Travel Grant, Graduate Student Association, UC Riverside 2022, 2023  
Travel Grant, Department of Economics, UC Riverside 2022, 2023

## Referee Service

Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization,  
SSM - Population Health

## Skills & Personal

### Programming Skills and Software

STATA, Python, R, ArcGIS,  $\LaTeX$

### Languages

English (fluent), Mandarin Chinese (native)

### Citizenship

China, F-1 Visa

## References

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