

Da Gong

Department of Economics

University of California, Riverside

Updated February 5, 2024

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Research Interests	Development Economics, Public economics, Political Economy, Culture and Institution, Labor Economics, Applied Machine Learning
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Education	Ph.D. Economics	Sep. 2018 – Jun. 2024 (expected)
	UC Riverside	Riverside, CA

M.A. History	Sep. 2015 – Jun. 2018
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)	Beijing, China

B.A. Business Administration	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, Forthcoming

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.

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.

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

Submitted

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.

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 related to COVID. Specifically, I study how state governors' press release (analyzed by natural language processing), covered by local media, impact on people's social distancing response, belief in conspiracy theory and trust in COVID vaccines.

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

Graduate Quantitative Methods Center

Jan. 2023 – Present

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.

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
Econ 107: Introductory Econometrics	Winter 2021, Fall 2021
Econ 104B: Intermediate Microeconomic Theory	Spring 2021
Econ 105B: Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory	Spring 2020
Econ 103: Intermediate Macroeconomics for Business	Fall 2019, Winter 2020
Econ 135: The Stock Market	Fall 2019, Fall 2022

Advising	UC Riverside
MacRue , College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences	Summer 2023
Data Science Pathways Summer Fellowship program	Summer 2023

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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