

Da Gong

Department of Economics

University of California, Riverside

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Research Interests

Development Economics, Political Economy, Culture and Institution,
Labor Economics, Applied Machine Learning

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

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 exploit 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 and pass placebo tests, and remain stable in a event study model.

A Systematic Evaluation of the Economic Impacts of China's Zero-COVID Policies *revised and resubmitted, China Economic Review*

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

Abstract: This paper presents the first investigation into 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 risk level issued by the State Council of the PRC. To measure economic activities, we use satellite data on night lights and PM2.5, and geographical data on mobility index. 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, 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.

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. We also find that the stringent clearance during the first stage of the pandemic caused the negative impacts on the labor outcomes, while the subsequent dynamic clearance strategy did not generate significant disruption on the labor market outcomes in 2020.

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, 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

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

Talks

2023

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

Seminar in China Economy at Harvard University

Research Assistant

China Gazetteer Project

Mentor: Richard B. Freeman, Harvard University Feb. 2017 – Dec. 2017

- Collaborated with team members to digitize and clean data of Chinese county-level gazetteers and create a socio-economic database for post-1949 China.
- Interviewed with gazetteer compilers and conducted qualitative research in the China’s statistic criteria at county level.
- Established a database of population and agriculture policies in China from 1949 to 2000.

Human Capital Transfers and Rural Enterprise Development

Mentor: Jie Bai, Harvard Kennedy School Oct. 2017 – Jan. 2018

Investigated the effects of urban-rural migration shocks throughout the Chinese “sent-down” movement spanning from 1968 to 1976. Employed a 2sls model to explore the sent-down effects on rural human capital and local firm performance.

Teaching Experience

Lead Consultant

Graduate Quantitative Methods Center

Jan. 2023 – Present

UC Riverside

- Develop and present graduate level workshops on topics e.g. 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

Econ153: Labor Economics

Summer A 2021

Teaching Assistant

UC Riverside

Econ101: Statistics for Economics Fall 2020, Winter 2022, Spring 2022

Econ107: Introductory Econometrics

Winter 2021, Fall 2021

Econ 104B: Intermediate Microeconomic Theory

Spring 2021

Econ 105B: Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory

Spring 2020

Econ103: Intermediate Macroeconomics for Business Fall 2019, Winter 2020

Econ135: The Stock Market

Fall 2019, Fall 2022

Referee Service

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

Joseph R. Cummins (Chair)
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