

JIEE ZHONG

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EDUCATION

Ph.D., Economics, Texas A&M University, Expected May 2024

M.A., Economics, Xiamen University, June 2018

B.A., Taxation, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, June 2013

RESEARCH FIELDS

Education Economics, Labor Economics, Environmental Economics, and Crime Economics

PUBLICATION

“Can Social Media Rhetoric Incite Hate Incidents? Evidence from Trump’s “Chinese Virus” Tweets”

Journal of Urban Economics. (Corresponding Author, Joint with Andy Cao and Jason M. Lindo)

We investigate whether Donald Trump’s “Chinese Virus” tweets contributed to the rise of anti-Asian incidents. We find that the number of incidents spiked following Trump’s initial “Chinese Virus” tweets and the subsequent dramatic rise in internet search activity for the phrase. Difference-in-differences and event-study analyses leveraging spatial variation indicate that this spike in anti-Asian incidents was significantly more pronounced in counties that supported Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election relative to those that supported Hillary Clinton. We estimate that anti-Asian incidents spiked by approximately 4200 percent in Trump-supported counties compared to an increase of approximately 200 percent in Clinton-supported counties.

WORKING PAPERS

“Early Grade Retention Harms Adult Earnings” (Job Market Paper)

Revise and Resubmit to American Economic Journal: Applied Economics

This paper provides the first causal evidence of the effects of grade retention on the labor market and post-secondary educational outcomes using Texas’ policy of retaining third graders who fail a reading test. The fuzzy regression discontinuity design estimates show that third-grade retention significantly reduces the average earnings between ages 22 and 26 by \$3,664. Although the policy aims to improve academic achievement, the findings demonstrate that third-grade retention aggravates behavioral issues and undermines high school graduation rates, thereby adversely affecting labor market outcomes. Interestingly, I find no significant impact on post-secondary educational outcomes, including college enrollment and graduation rates.

“Lead in the Air: Unraveling the Long-Term Impacts of Lead Exposure” (Joint with Thao Duong)

We examine the long-term impact of early childhood lead exposure on earnings and educational outcomes, as well as the underlying mechanisms. Leveraging a unique natural experiment—the decline in the use of leaded gasoline in piston-engine aircraft post 9/11—we find that even minor reductions in lead levels lead to significant improvements in earnings for individuals aged 23 to 29 who were students in grades 4 to 8 at the time of exposure. Additional findings indicate that these reductions also positively affect test scores and high school graduation rates, and increase post-secondary education enrollment, but do not significantly alter behavioral outcomes.

“The Impact of English Proficient Reclassification on Long-Term Educational and Earnings Outcomes” (Joint with Sijia Zhang and Yayun Chen)

Despite the fact that one in ten U.S. students is an English learner, the long-term effects of English Learner (EL) status on life outcomes remain largely unexplored. While existing research provides inconsistent findings on short-term outcomes like test scores and high school graduation, the long-term impacts on earnings and post-secondary education are notably under-studied. This paper fills this critical knowledge gap by leveraging data

from the Texas Education Research Center, which links educational histories to labor market outcomes. Exploiting a quasi-random variation at the ‘advanced high’ cutoff in reading tests—a prerequisite for reclassification—the Fuzzy Regression Discontinuity Design reveals that students achieving English proficiency by grade 3 experience a substantial increase in earnings at age 25, as well as improved high school graduation rates.

WORK IN PROGRESS

“The Impact of Principal-Student Ethnic Match: Evidence from Grade Promotion Decisions”

“The Spillover Effects of Holding Students Back a Grade”

“The Impacts of Light and Noise Exposure on Human Capital Formation: Evidence from Wind Farm Operation” (Joint with Thao Duong)

“The Lifelong Impact of Pre-Kindergarten Education” (Joint with Maya Mikdash)

“Breaking the School-to-Prison Pipeline: The Role of Alternative Education” (Joint with Maya Mikdash)

“Measuring the Negative Impacts of Teachers: Disciplined Teachers and Student Outcomes” (Joint with Maya Mikdash)

PRESENTATIONS

2023 Southern Economics Association conferences

2023 Western Economic Association International 98th Annual Conference

2023 Eastern Economic Association Conferences

2023 LBJ School Policy Research Workshop

2022 Southern Economics Association conferences

2022 Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management

2022 Western Economic Association International 97th Annual Conference

2022 Midwest Economics Association

2021 Health Econ/Health Policy Mentoring Workshop

2020 Successfully Navigating Your Ph.D. Workshop

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Record

Microeconomics Theory, Summer 2022

Econometrics Qualifier Camp (Ph.D. core), Summer 2022

Teaching Assistant

International Trade Theory & Policy, Fall 2023

Data Science for Economic and Social Issues, Spring 2023

Applied Micro-econometrics (Ph.D. level), Spring 2022

Econometrics 461, Fall 2021

Public Finance 412 (Spring 2020, Fall 2019, Spring 2019)

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Texas A&M University, Prof. Barr, Summer and Fall 2021

Seminar Coordinator

Student Brown Bag, Spring 2023 and Fall 2022

REFeree

Journal of Public Economics
Economic Inquiry

HONORS AND AWARDS

The Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) Hayek Fund Scholars Grant Award, June 2022-August 2023

Dissertation Committee

Andrew Christopher Barr (Co-Chair)	abarr@tamu.edu	Texas A&M University
Jason M. Lindo (Co-Chair)	jlindo@gatech.edu	Georgia Institute of Technology
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Kalena E. Cortes	kcortes@tamu.edu	Texas A&M University

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