

JIEE ZHONG

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EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor of Economics, Miami University, 2024 - Present

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Economics, Texas A&M University, 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 Health Economics

PUBLICATION

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

Journal of Urban Economics. [Published Version]. Corresponding Author, Joint with Andy Cao and Jason 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” [Latest Version]

Revised and Resubmitted (2nd round) to the American Economic Journal: Applied Economics

This paper presents the first causal evidence of the effects of grade retention on labor market outcomes and post-secondary educational attainment, analyzing a reading test-based retention policy in Texas. Employing a fuzzy regression discontinuity design, the study finds that third-grade retention significantly reduces the average earnings between ages 23 and 25 by \$3,512 (22%). While retention initially increases test scores, these gains diminish over time. Moreover, retention increases school absence, violence, and crime. It further reduces the likelihood of high school graduation but does not affect college enrollment, graduation, the timing of these outcomes, or the selectivity of college attended.

“Grade Retention” (Joint with Kendall J. Kennedy and Simon ter Meulen. Invited for inclusion in Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics, ed. Klaus F. Zimmermann.)

Grade retention is widely practiced in education systems worldwide, but the effects of grade retention often differ from those of typical educational attainment. This chapter discusses recent research on the causes and consequences of grade retention, covering the effects of grade retention on academic achievement, behavioral outcomes, and labor market outcomes. Furthermore, it also provides an overview of the estimation of the effects of grade retention and a discussion of how retention can affect other research on education and labor markets. Finally, it provides an overview of research on the incentive effects of grade retention policies on retained and non-retained students and makes suggestions for future work in this area.

“The Effect of Access to Pre-Kindergarten on Long-Term Educational and Labor Market Outcomes” (Joint with Maya Mikdash)

This paper provides new causal evidence on the long-term effects of free prekindergarten access on educational attainment and labor market outcomes. We exploit quasi-random variation from the phased rollout of a 1985 Texas policy that mandated free prekindergarten for disadvantaged children, conditional on the presence of at least 15 eligible students. Using longitudinal administrative data from the Texas ERC, we find precise null effects of access to free Pre-K on labor market outcomes, such as employment and earnings until 23 years after Pre-K. Similarly, we show that access to free Pre-K does not affect the likelihood of graduating high-school or attending college. The null effects are in line with the lack of effects on short term educational and behavioral outcomes.

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

This paper investigates the short- and long-term effects of lead exposure from kindergarten through third grade, leveraging the unexpected decline in lead emissions following the reduced operation of piston-engine aircraft after the 9/11 attacks as a natural experiment. Using detailed individual-level administrative data from the Texas ERC, we estimate the causal impact of lead exposure on educational achievement, disciplinary incidents, and earnings. Our results show that increased lead exposure during early childhood significantly impairs educational outcomes, as evidenced by lower test scores, reduced high school graduation rates, and decreased college enrollment. Additionally, higher lead exposure leads to an increase in disciplinary incidents, including severe offenses such as violence and crime. Finally, we find that lead exposure has a lasting negative impact on labor market outcomes, leading to diminished earnings in adulthood.

WORK IN PROGRESS

“The Effects of Free Pre-Kindergarten Education” (Joint with Maya Mikdash)

“Motivation or Stigma? Evaluating the Effects of Grade Retention Policy” (Joint with Kendall J. Kennedy and Simon ter Meulen)

“The Impact of Principal-Teacher-Student Race Match: Evidence from Grade Promotion Decisions” (Joint with Kendall J. Kennedy and Simon ter Meulen)

“Abortion Access and Inequalities in Education and Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Texas Policy Changes” (Joint with Riley Acton and James Flynn)

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

“The Effects of Reclassifying English Learners as Proficient on Long-Term Educational and Earnings Outcomes” (Joint with Sijia Zhang and Yayun Chen)

PRESENTATIONS

2025: Allied Social Science Association (ASSA)

2024: Amherst College, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Miami University, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, ND/Midwest Econ of Education Conference, Southern Economics Association conferences

2023: Southern Economics Association conferences, Western Economic Association International 98th Annual Conference, Eastern Economic Association Conferences, LBJ School Policy Research Workshop

2022: Southern Economics Association conferences, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Western Economic Association International 97th Annual Conference, Midwest Economics Association

2021: Health Econ/Health Policy Mentoring Workshop

2020: Successfully Navigating Your Ph.D. Workshop

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Record

Intermediate Microeconomic Theory, Spring 2025
Intermediate Microeconomic Theory, Fall 2024
Microeconomic 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

HONORS AND AWARDS

Russell Sage Foundation Pipeline Grant (\$50,000), 2025-2026
The Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) Hayek Fund Scholars Grant Award (\$500), 2022-2023

REFEREE

American Economic Journal: Applied Economics; Journal of Public Economics (3); Journal of Policy Analysis and Management (2); Economic Inquiry (2); Labor economics

SEMINAR COORDINATOR

Student Brown Bag, Spring 2023 and Fall 2022

Professional Memberships

American Economic Association, American Society of Health Economists, Association of Environmental and Resource Economists, Southern Economics Association

Updated June 27, 2025