

# Wenjie Zhan

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RESEARCH INTERESTS      Food, Nutrition, and Health Economics  
Agribusiness and Agricultural Policy

EDUCATION      Ph.D. Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis, 2025 (Expected)  
M.Sc. Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Tokyo, 2020  
B.Mgmt. Financial Management, Sun Yat-sen University, 2018  
Semester Abroad, Seoul National University, 2017

REFERENCE	Timothy K.M. Beatty ( <i>Chair</i> ) Professor Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics University of California, Davis <a href="mailto:tbeatty@ucdavis.edu">tbeatty@ucdavis.edu</a>	Marianne P. Bitler Professor Department of Economics University of California, Davis <a href="mailto:bitler@ucdavis.edu">bitler@ucdavis.edu</a>
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Richard J. Sexton Distinguished Professor Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics University of California, Davis <a href="mailto:rich@primal.ucdavis.edu">rich@primal.ucdavis.edu</a>	Stephen A. Vosti Adjunct Professor Emeritus Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Institute for Global Nutrition University of California, Davis <a href="mailto:savosti@ucdavis.edu">savosti@ucdavis.edu</a>
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WORKING PAPERS      **"Long Run Effects of Folic Acid Fortification,"**  
*Job Market Paper*, 2025

Recent concerns about the effectiveness of existing interventions aimed at improving dietary quality, often hindered by the challenge of changing consumer behavior, have highlighted a relatively understudied intervention in the economic literature: food fortification. By enhancing the nutritional content of widely consumed foods without requiring changes to eating habits, food fortification offers a promising alternative that may overcome current barriers to improving dietary outcomes. This paper studies the most recent food fortification effort in the U.S.—the folic acid fortification of enriched grain products in the late 1990s. This policy substantially increased folate intake and reduced the incidence of birth defects. By comparing cohorts exposed and unexposed to the fortification across regions with varying baseline folate deficiency levels, I find that (1) in the short run, fortification increased the share of births to disadvantaged mothers, likely due to improved fetal survival rates; and (2) in the long run, maternal exposure to folic acid fortification raised the likelihood of young adults enrolling in post-secondary education by 0.63-0.78 percentage points. My findings suggest that food fortification has significant potential to improve dietary and health outcomes and to generate broad, long-lasting benefits for children.

**"The Impact of Electronic Benefit Transfer on WIC Participation: Evidence from Natality Data,"**  
with Charlotte Ambrozek, and Timothy K.M. Beatty

Policymakers have an interest in ensuring participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) – WIC has been shown to increase birthweight for participating mothers and improve long-run outcomes for children who participate in the first years of life. Between 2002 and 2022, WIC transitioned from paper vouchers to electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards. This payment reform was expected to encourage WIC participation by reducing transaction costs and welfare stigma. Empirical studies of the effects of WIC EBT on participation have found mixed results, with studies often limited to one or a few states. Without detailed WIC participation data on a large scale, results are not generalizable. In this paper, we evaluate the impact of WIC EBT implementation on WIC participation nationwide by linking the WIC EBT roll-out schedule to Vital Statistics Natality Data across virtually all counties in the U.S. We document a significant increase in WIC participation among the likely eligible by 2.39-2.5 percentage points after EBT implementation. We also find WIC EBT reduces probability of low birth weights births by 0.47-0.62 percentage points and preterm births by 0.54-0.82 percentage points among the likely-eligible. Our findings suggest that facilitating the delivery of public benefits can improve program uptake and well-being of beneficiaries.

IN PROGRESS "Does Food Distribution Still Work? Evidence from Commodity Supplemental Food Program."

"Consumer Welfare and Dietary Impacts of Food Price Inflation,"  
with Julian M. Alston, Timothy K.M. Beatty, and Abigail M. Okrent

"Does Electronic Benefit Transfer Reduce Fraud? Evidence from SNAP and WIC,"  
with Charlotte Ambrozek, and Timothy K.M. Beatty

"Designing Large-scale Food Fortification Programs: Theory and Application,"  
with Stephen A. Vosti

OTHER  
PUBLICATIONS

"Input-Output Efficiency Evaluation of Technological Innovation Funds in the Universities, Scientific Research Institutions, and Enterprises in China,"  
with Weiguo Qiao, *Science & Technology Progress and Policy*, 2022. (in Chinese, CSSCI)

"Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2020: Towards Sustainable Economies,"  
with United Nations ESCAP, *United Nations ESCAP Flagship Publication*, 2020.

"Is Governmental Appropriation the Best Way to Finance Top Universities? Lessons from the U.S.,"  
with Weiguo Qiao, and Juan Zhou, *Study & Exploration*, 2019. (in Chinese, CSSCI)

PRESENTATIONS **2025** AEA/ASHEcon/ASSA Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA (scheduled)  
**2024** UC Davis-University of Gottingen Joint Research Symposium, Davis, CA; Giannini ARE Student Conference, Berkeley, CA; AAEA Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA  
**2023** Giannini ARE Student Conference, Davis, CA

RESEARCH  
EXPERIENCE

Graduate Student Researcher, University of California, Davis  
for Julian M. Alston, 01/2024-  
for Timothy K.M. Beatty, 06/2023-  
for Stephen A. Vosti, 04/2022-12/2022

Research and Policy Engagement Intern, Resources for the Future, Washington, DC, 2022

Intern in Economic Affairs, United Nations ESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand, 2019

Research Assistant, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China, 2017-2018

TEACHING EXPERIENCE	<i>Instructor</i> Introduction to Mathematics in Economics, UC Davis, Summer 2023
	<i>Teaching Assistant</i> ARE 173 Capital Markets, UC Davis, Spring 2023 ARE 107 Econometrics for Business Decision, UC Davis, Winter 2023 ARE 171 Principles of Finance, UC Davis, Winter 2022 ARE 176 Environmental Economics, UC Davis, Fall 2021 ARE 155 Operation Research & Management Science, UC Davis, Winter 2021
HONORS AND AWARDS	Summer Research Fellowship, UC Davis, 2024 Travel Grant for Behavioral Obesity Research Workshop, Indiana University Bloomington, 2023 Tuition Supplemental Fellowship, UC Davis, 2020 Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) Honor Scholarship, JASSO, 2018 – 2019 Yamamoto Foundation Allowance, University of Tokyo, 2018 Hong Kong Ho's Foundation Scholarship, Sun Yat-sen University, 2018
SERVICES AND LEADERSHIP	Coordinator, Student Café, Diversity and Inclusion in Research, Education, and Career Program (DIRECT), UC Davis, 2022 Co-organizer, Development Tea, UC Davis, 2021 – 2022 Secretary of Academic Affairs, Student Union, Sun Yat-sen University, 2015 – 2018
LANGUAGES	English (Fluent), Mandarin (Native), Cantonese (Fluent), Japanese (Intermediate)