

Ruoming Zhang

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Education **University of Delaware**, Newark, DE Aug 2020 – May 2026 (Expected)
Ph.D., Economics

Penn State University, University Park, PA Aug 2018 – May 2020
M.A., Economics

Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, Wuhan, China Aug 2012 – Jun 2016
B.A., Management Science
Minor in Economics

Research Fields Public Policy, Development Economics, Labor, Economics of Education

Job Market Paper *Higher Education Expansion and the Rural–Urban Gap in Secondary Schooling and Labor Outcomes: Evidence from China’s 1999 Reform*
(Job Market Paper; Revise & Resubmit at Journal of Development Economics)

In this paper, I trace how China’s nationwide surge in university admissions in 1999 propagated upstream to the upper-secondary gate and downstream to labor allocation, with differential effects by rural status. Treating the tertiary expansion as an exogenous national supply shock, I link microdata from the 2015 1% Population Census to a difference-in-differences design with city-by-cohort fixed effects. Relative to otherwise comparable urban cohorts, rural students exposed to the reform were 3.9 percentage points more likely to complete the academic high-school track and accumulated 0.32 additional years of schooling; the expansion also reallocated rural labor away from low-skill sectors by 2.8 percentage points. These effects arise in an exam-based, capacity-constrained upper-secondary system—particularly in rural counties facing higher effective costs and fewer general-track seats per junior-high cohort. The evidence is consistent with an expectations-driven mechanism: national tertiary expansion raised the perceived attainability and payoff of the academic track for rural cohorts, inducing behavioral responses at the upper-secondary gate rather than reflecting a mechanical increase in high-school seats.

Working Papers *Legal Marriage-Age Reform, Early Marriage, & Fertility: Evidence from China's 1981 Legal Marriage-Age Regulation*

I exploit the nationwide abolition, on January 1, 1981, of administrative rules that had effectively raised the minimum marriage age above the statutory floor to estimate the causal effect of marriage timing on completed fertility. Using the 2010 China 1% Census and women born 1951–1961, I implement a two-stage regression-kink design that instruments age at first marriage with exposure at the statutory threshold. The reform generates a sharp change in the slope of marriage timing at age 20 for women; RKD/2SLS estimates indicate that delaying first marriage by one year lowers completed fertility by about 0.20 births. Effects are stronger in urban and more-educated groups, consistent with heterogeneous responsiveness to marriage-timing incentives; results are robust to placebo cutoffs, flexible polynomials, and adjustments for cohort and province-by-cohort heterogeneity.

Building Human Capital in Rural China: Long-Term Effects of Compulsory Education Reform

This paper studies the staggered 2006–2007 abolition of tuition and miscellaneous fees in rural compulsory education and its long-run impacts on human capital and early-adult outcomes. I assemble pooled microdata and administrative yearbook series and estimate a differences-in-differences framework that contrasts adjacent birth cohorts across provinces with different reform timing, complemented by event-study diagnostics. Exposure to the reform increases years of schooling and the probability of completing upper secondary, with the largest gains among rural girls and students from poorer counties. I also document subsequent shifts toward nonfarm employment and delayed early marriage, consistent with a human-capital channel. Mechanisms include reductions in direct schooling costs and improvements in school inputs; results are robust to alternative timing codings, selective migration checks, and province-by-cohort controls.

Work in Progress *Premarital Property and Marriage Timing: Evidence from China's 2011 Marriage Law Interpretation*

Studies the 2011 *Interpretation (III)* of China's Marriage Law and estimates impacts on age at first marriage and household formation using 2010 & 2020 census microdata and city-level house prices in an event-study framework.

Employment	China Minsheng Bank	2016–2017
	<i>Assistant Account Manager, Small & Micro Enterprise Banking</i>	
	New Oriental Education & Technology Group	2017–2018
	<i>TOEFL Teaching Assistant</i>	

Teaching	<i>Course Instructor(disscusion section), University of Delaware</i>	
	Introduction to Microeconomics (ECON 101)	Fall 2024
	<i>Teaching Assistant, University of Delaware</i>	
	Introduction to Microeconomics (UG)	Fall 2023
	Topics in Labor Economics (Ph.D.)	Fall 2023
	Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory with Calculus (UG)	Spring 2024
	International Economics (UG)	Fall 2024
	Applications of Modern Econometrics (UG)	Spring 2025
Funds Awards	Departmental Graduate Assistantship (Full Tuition & Stipend), University of Delaware	
Fellowships		
Languages	Mandarin (native), English (fluent)	
Software	Stata, R, L ^A T _E X	
References	Professor Sabrin Beg (Chair)	
	Department of Economics, University of Delaware	
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	Professor Adrien Lucas	
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