

YUJUAN GAO

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EDUCATION

University of Florida

August 2021 - Current

Food and Resource Economics Department

Ph.D., Applied Economics, Supervised by Conner Mullally

Graduate School Fellowship (Merit-based, 2021 – 2025)

Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions

August 2018 - August 2019

Visiting Graduate Research Fellow, Supervised by Scott Rozelle

Shaanxi Normal University

August 2016 - December 2019

Center for Experimental Economics in Education

M.A., Economics

Shanxi University of Finance and Economics

September 2012 - July 2016

B.S., Statistics

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Food and Resource Economics Department, University of Florida

August 2021 -Current

Teaching and Research Assistant

Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University

July 2025 -Current

Research Assistant

Minzu University of China

July 2020 - January 2021

Consultant for Save the Children Yunnan Ludian 0-3 Years Early Childhood Development Project

RESEARCH FIELDS

Primary: Development Economics, Labour Economics, Economics of Education

Secondary: Spatial Economics, Causal Inference, Food Nutrition

PUBLICATIONS

Chen, Xuqi, Lisa House, Zhifeng Gao, **Yujuan Gao** (2024). "Do Color-Coded Nutrition Facts Panels Nudge the Use of Nutrition Information on Food Packaging?" *Food Policy*. [click here]

Ma, Yue, Xinwu Zhang, Lucy Pappas, Andrew Rule, **Yujuan Gao**, Sarah-Eve Dill, Tianli Feng, et al. (2023). "Associations between Urbanization and the Home Language Environment: Evidence from a LENA Study in Rural and Peri-urban China." *Child Development*. [click here]

Yujuan Gao, Derek Hu, Even Peng, et al. (2020). "Depressive Symptoms and the Link with Academic Performance among Rural Taiwanese Children." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. [click here]

Ma, Yue, **Yujuan Gao**, Jason Li, et al. (2020). "Maternal Health Behaviors during Pregnancy in Rural Northwestern China." *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*. [click here]

Yujuan Gao, Yu Bai, Yue Ma, et al. (2018). "Arrival Order for Positive and Negative Effects of Parental Migration on the Academic Performance of Left-behind Children in Rural China." *Studies in Labor Economics* (in Chinese).

POLICY AND OUTREACH WRITINGS

Bai, Yu and **Yujuan Gao** (2021). "Save the Children Yunnan Ludian 0-3 Years Early Childhood Development Project (2019-2020) Evaluation Report."

The Impact of 3G Network Coverage on Fertility Decisions in Nigeria [\[click here\]](#)

*This paper examines whether mobile internet access influences fertility behavior and women's autonomy in high-fertility settings. I link georeferenced 3G coverage data with 80,247 women from the 2013 and 2018 **Nigerian Demographic and Health Surveys** and exploit staggered network rollout in a **heterogeneity-robust difference-in-differences** framework. A one-standard deviation **increase in 3G coverage reduces the annual birth probability** of adolescent women (ages 12–20) by 1.3–1.8 percentage points—an 11–16 percent decline relative to baseline. Event-study estimates confirm parallel pre-trends and show that impacts strengthen with exposure duration. Mechanism tests indicate that fertility reductions operate through delayed cohabitation and postponed first births, not contraceptive adoption. Mobile internet also increases young women's wage employment and transitions into moderate-skill work, alongside selective gains in household decision-making power.*

WORKING PAPERS

Unintended Consequences of Best Intentions: Examining Spillover Effects in Targeted Supplementary Education Interventions (with Yue Ma and Susanna Loeb), Under Review at *Economics of Education Review* [\[click here\]](#)

*This study investigates **spillover effects** from targeted **educational interventions** in resource constrained settings. Through a **cluster-randomized controlled trial** across 130 rural Chinese primary schools, I assigned boarding students to computer-assisted learning (CAL), traditional workbook exercises, or control conditions, then measured effects on over 6,400 untreated non-boarding classmates. Workbook interventions generated significant negative spillovers, reducing non-boarding students' math performance by 0.087 standard deviations, with effects intensifying among students who frequently interacted with treated peers and in classrooms with higher treatment density. In contrast, CAL programs implemented outside regular classrooms produced no spillover effects. Mechanism analysis reveals that workbook exposure undermines untreated students' instrumental motivation—their belief that mathematical effort will improve future opportunities—while leaving classroom competition and teacher attention patterns unchanged.*

Friendship Formation and Peer Effect: Using Seat Distribution as an Instrument (with Yu Bai and Scott Rozelle), R&R at *China Agriculture Economic Review* [\[click here\]](#)

*This paper studies how physical distance shapes peer networks and academic achievement in rural Chinese primary schools. Using data from 2,956 students and exploiting **exogenous seating assignments** as an **instrument** for study-partner formation, we find that belonging to a higher-performing study group increases individual math achievement by about 0.11 standard deviations. Effects are strongest for lower- and middle-performing students and in more cohesive groups. Mediation analysis shows that gains operate primarily through improved intrinsic motivation and academic self-concept, highlighting spatial proximity as a low-cost lever for enhancing learning.*

Using Text Messages to Improve Parenting Knowledge and Early Childhood Development in Rural China (with Yue Ma and Susanna Loeb), Submitted to *Education Finance and Policy* [\[click here\]](#)

*This study evaluates whether low-cost **“Tips-by-Text” interventions** can improve **early childhood outcomes** in under-resourced rural Chinese communities. Drawing on a **randomized controlled trial** with caregivers of children ages 0–3, the program delivered weekly text messages offering actionable guidance on play, language stimulation, and nutrition. The intervention significantly increased caregiver engagement, strengthened home learning environments, and improved children's language and cognitive development. Impacts were largest among caregivers facing higher parenting barriers. The results demonstrate that simple, scalable mobile messaging can effectively support early childhood development where access to formal services is limited.*

WORK IN PROGRESS

Maternal Migration and Early Child Development in Rural China [\[link\]](#)
Determination of Labor Demand and Wage, Evidence from 500 million Job Post in China

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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| AEB 3103 - Principles of Food & Resource Economics | TA for 49 students | 2025 |
| AEB3341 - Selling Strategically | TA for 65 students | 2024 |
| AEB3133 - Principles of Agribusiness Management | TA for 89 students | 2023 |
| IDS 2935-22961 - How Do We End Poverty? | Guest Lecture | 2023 |
| AEB3671 - Comparative World Agriculture | TA for 69 students | 2023 |
| AEB4283 - International Development Policy | TA for 77 students | 2022 |
| AEB4673 - International Agricultural Trade | TA for 9 students | 2022 |

AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND GRANTS

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| J. R. Greenman Memorial Scholarship from CALS, University of Florida | 2022, 2024 |
| Young Scholar Excellent Paper Award, China Education Finance Research Association | 2023 |
| Best Paper Awards, Agricultural & Applied Economics Association Annual Conference | 2020 |

CONFERENCES AND SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

2026: AERE@ASSA (Scheduled)
2025: AERE@ASSA; AAEA; Advances with Field Experiments (AFE)
2024: Global GLO-JOPE Conference (Job Market Session); APPAM Fall Conference; CES North America Annual Conference; PacDev at Stanford; SSC Young Researcher Workshop at Stanford; AAEA
2023: NEUDC at Harvard; AAEA Annual Conference
2022: WEAI 97th Annual Meeting
2020: AAEA Annual Conference

SKILLS

Programming: R, Stata, Python, SPSS, ArcGIS, L^AT_EX, GitHub, TensorFlow, PyTorch, scikit-learn, EconML
Software: Survey Solutions, Qualtrics, ArcGIS

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Referee: BMC Public Health; PLOS ONE; Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health
Certification: Preparing Future Faculty Program, Center for Teaching Excellence, University of Florida (Fall 2024)
Service: Mentor, 2025 Summer AEA Mentoring Program

REFERENCES

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|--|---|
| Professor Conner Mullally (Chair) University of Florida Food and Resource Economics Department connerm@ufl.edu (352)294-7680 | Professor Scott Rozelle (Committee) Stanford University Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions rozelle@stanford.edu (650) 862-0466 |
| Professor Jared E. Gars (Committee) University of Florida Food and Resource Economics Department jgars87@ufl.edu (352)294-7692 | Professor Xinde "James" Ji (Committee) University of Florida Food and Resource Economics Department xji1@ufl.edu (315)600-6676 |