

YUJUAN GAO

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EDUCATION

- University of Florida** *August 2021 - Current*
Food and Resource Economics Department
Ph.D., Applied Economics
- Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions** *August 2018 - August 2019*
Visiting Graduate Research Fellow, Supervised by Scott Rozelle
- Shaanxi Normal University** *July 2016 - January 2020*
Center for Experimental Economics in Education
M.A., Economics
- Shanxi University of Finance and Economics** *July 2012 - June 2016*
B.S., Statistics

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

- Minzu University of China** *July 2020 - January 2021*
Research Assistant for Yu Bai
Consultant for *Save the Children Yunnan Ludian 0-3 Years Early Childhood Development Project*

RESEARCH FIELDS

- Primary: Experimental Economics, Development Economics, Spatial Economics
Secondary: Economics of Education, Causal Inference, Spatial Economics

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).
- Ma, Yue, **Yujuan Gao**, Wang, Yue, et al. (2018). "Impact of a Local Vision Care Center on Glasses Ownership and Wearing Behavior in Northwestern Rural China: A Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. [click here]

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."

JOB MARKET PAPER

Unintended Consequences of Best Intentions: Examining Spillover Effects in Targeted Supplementary Education Interventions [[click here](#)]

Abstract: Understanding the externalities of targeted interventions is crucial for optimal policy design. This study investigates spillover effects of targeted educational interventions in resource-constrained settings through a field experiment across 130 rural Chinese boarding schools. We compare two interventions: computer-assisted learning (CAL) and traditional workbooks (pencil-and-paper learning treatment). The findings reveal significant negative spillovers from workbook interventions on non-targeted students' performance, particularly affecting those with close connections to targeted students. These effects strengthen with increased treatment exposure and peer interaction. The key mechanism appears to be motivational: when students observe peers receiving extra workbook resources in class, they develop reduced confidence in the value of their own academic efforts for future career development. In contrast, CAL interventions, conducted outside the classroom, show no such negative spillovers. These results emphasize the importance of accounting for unintended consequences on non-targeted individuals when designing educational interventions in competitive, resource-limited environments.

WORKING PAPERS

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

This study investigates the causal relationship between peer effects and academic performance in classroom microenvironments, addressing the challenge of endogeneity in peer group selection. Using data from 2,956 primary school students in rural China, we employ network theory to model study group structures and an instrumental variable approach to control for selection bias. Our findings reveal that study groups significantly enhance student achievement by 0.11 standard deviations. The marginal benefits are heterogeneous across subgroups, with stronger peer effects observed among male participants, lower-performing individuals and in groups with stronger group cohesion. Through a mediation analysis, we identify intrinsic motivation as the primary mechanism driving these peer effects, suggesting that peer effects primarily work by enhancing autonomous learning behaviors. Our findings inform cost-efficient policy interventions in both educational institutions and corporate environments. The evidence indicates that optimizing spatial proximity in peer networks represents an efficient policy instrument for human capital accumulation, particularly valuable in resource-constrained settings as it leverages existing human capital without substantial additional inputs.

Using Text Messages to Improve Parenting Knowledge and Early Childhood Development in Rural China (with Yue Ma and Susanna Loeb), under review at *Journal of Comparative Economics* [[click here](#)]

This paper evaluates a text messaging-based parenting program (Tips-by-Text) among 1,096 low-income mothers in 6 counties in rural northwestern China. Overall, our results show substantial, positive impacts of Tips-by-Text on parenting knowledge (ITT = 0.222 SD, $p < 0.01$) and some critical stimulating parenting practices. While the average treatment effects on other parenting practices and early childhood development outcomes at ages 0-3 are statistically insignificant in the sample overall, we found large heterogeneities in the treatment effects consistent with three behavioral economics concepts: lack of information, inattention, and motivated cognition.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The Impact of 3G Network Coverage on Fertility Decisions and Infant Mortality in Nigeria (with Conner Mullally, Xinde “James” Ji, and Jared Gars) [[click here](#)]

Parental Migration and Children Development in Rural China (with Yue Ma and Conner Mullally)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

AEB 3103 - Principles of Food & Resource Economics	TA for Prof. Xinde “James” Ji	2025
AEB3341 - Selling Strategically	TA for Prof. John Lai	2024
AEB3133 - Principles of Agribusiness Management	TA for Prof. Xumin Zhang	2023
IDS 2935-22961 - How Do We End Poverty?	Guest Lecture	2023
AEB3671 - Comparative World Agriculture	TA for Prof. Jared Gars	2023
AEB4283 - International Development Policy	TA for Prof. Conner Mullally	2022
AEB4673 - International Agricultural Trade	TA for Prof. Conner Mullally	2022

AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND GRANTS

University of Florida Graduate School Fellowship, University of Florida	2021-2025
J. R. Greenman Memorial Scholarship from CALS, University of Florida	2022, 2024
Best Paper Awards in 2021 Agricultural & Applied Economics Association Annual Conference	2021

CONFERENCES AND SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

2025: AERE@ASSA

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 Annual Conference

2023: NEUDC at Harvard; AAEA Annual Conference

2022: WEAI 97th Annual Meeting

2021: AAEA Annual Conference

SKILLS

Programming: R, Stata, Python, SPSS, SAS, ArcGIS, L^AT_EX, GitHub

Language: English (fluent), Chinese (native)

Software: Survey Solutions, Qualtrics

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)

REFERENCES

Professor Conner Mullally (Chair)
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