

YUJUAN GAO

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EDUCATION

- University of Florida** *August 2021 - Current*
Food and Resource Economics Department
Applied Economics
- Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions** *August 2018 - August 2019*
Visiting Graduate Research Fellow
- 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, Health 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."

JOB MARKET PAPER

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

We exploit Nigeria’s staggered 3G rollout (2012-2018) to identify mobile internet’s causal effects on fertility and women’s economic outcomes. Using geo-referenced DHS data covering 80,247 women and heterogeneity-robust difference-in-differences estimation, we find a one standard deviation increase in 3G coverage reduces birth probability among women aged 12-20 by 1.3-1.8 percentage points (11-16% decline). Effects operate exclusively through economic empowerment: mobile internet increases young women’s wage employment by 7.6 percentage points and moderate-skill occupations by 6.0 percentage points, with zero effect on contraceptive use. Fertility declines stem from delayed partnership formation rather than family planning adoption. Results demonstrate that telecommunications infrastructure can generate demographic transitions through labor market opportunities, providing insights for infrastructure-led development strategies in resource-rich economies.

WORKING PAPERS

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

This study examines spillover effects of targeted educational interventions through a field experiment across 130 rural Chinese boarding schools, comparing computer-assisted learning (CAL) and workbook interventions. Results show significant negative spillovers from workbook treatments on non-targeted students, particularly those with close peer connections to recipients. The mechanism appears motivational: observing peers receive extra workbook resources reduces non-recipients’ confidence in academic effort for career advancement. CAL interventions, conducted outside classrooms, show no such spillovers. Findings highlight the importance of intervention design in competitive, resource-limited settings to avoid unintended consequences on non-targeted individuals.

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 study investigates peer effects on academic performance using network theory and instrumental variables with 2,956 primary school students in rural China. Study groups significantly enhance achievement by 0.11 standard deviations, with stronger effects among male students, lower performers, and cohesive groups. Mediation analysis identifies intrinsic motivation as the primary mechanism driving peer effects through enhanced autonomous learning behaviors. Results suggest that optimizing spatial proximity in peer networks represents a cost-efficient policy instrument for human capital accumulation in resource-constrained settings, leveraging 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), Submit to *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* [[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

Determination of Labor Demand and Wage, Evidence from 500 million Job Post in China

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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

University of Florida Graduate School Fellowship, University of Florida	2021-2025
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; 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, 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)

Service: Mentor, 2025 Summer AEA Mentoring Program

REFERENCES

Professor Conner Mullally (Chair)
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Professor Jared E. Gars (Committee)
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Professor Scott Rozelle (Committee)
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