

JIEE ZHONG

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EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor of Economics, Miami University, 2024 - Present

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

Research Affiliate, Institute of Labor Economics (IZA), 2026 - Present

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Economics, Texas A&M University, May 2024

M.A., Economics, Xiamen University, June 2018

B.A., Taxation, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, June 2013

RESEARCH FIELDS

Education Economics, Labor Economics, Environmental Economics, and Health Economics

PUBLICATIONS

“Early Grade Retention Harms Adult Earnings” [Latest Version]

American Economic Journal: Applied Economics (Forthcoming).

This paper provides new causal evidence on the effects of grade retention on educational attainment, behavioral outcomes, and labor market performance by analyzing Texas’s reading test-based retention policy. Using a fuzzy regression discontinuity design, I find that third-grade retention significantly reduces annual earnings at age 26 by \$3,477 (19%). While temporarily improving test scores, retention increases absenteeism, violent behavior, and juvenile crime, and reduces the likelihood of high school graduation. Moreover, retained students exhibit higher community college enrollment but lower public university attendance, though neither estimate is statistically significant.

Kennedy, K., ter Meulen, S., & Zhong, J. (2026). Grade retention. In K. F. Zimmermann (Ed.), *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57365-6_458-1

Grade retention is widely practiced in education systems worldwide, but the effects of grade retention often differ from those of typical educational attainment. This chapter discusses recent research on the causes and consequences of grade retention, covering the effects of grade retention on academic achievement, behavioral outcomes, and labor market outcomes. Furthermore, it also provides an overview of the estimation of the effects of grade retention and a discussion of how retention can affect other research on education and labor markets. Finally, it provides an overview of research on the incentive effects of grade retention policies on retained and non-retained students and makes suggestions for future work in this area.

“Can Social Media Rhetoric Incite Hate Incidents? Evidence from Trump’s “Chinese Virus” Tweets”

Journal of Urban Economics, 2023. [Published Version]. Corresponding Author, Joint with Andy Cao and Jason Lindo.

We investigate whether Donald Trump’s “Chinese Virus” tweets contributed to the rise of anti-Asian incidents. We find that the number of incidents spiked following Trump’s initial “Chinese Virus” tweets and the subsequent dramatic rise in internet search activity for the phrase. Difference-in-differences and event-study analyses leveraging spatial variation indicate that this spike in anti-Asian incidents was significantly more pronounced in counties that

supported Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election relative to those that supported Hillary Clinton. We estimate that anti-Asian incidents spiked by approximately 4200 percent in Trump-supported counties compared to an increase of approximately 200 percent in Clinton-supported counties.

WORKING PAPERS

“The Effect of Access to Pre-Kindergarten on Long-Term Educational and Labor Market Outcomes” (Joint with Maya Mikdash)

This paper provides new causal evidence on the long-term effects of free prekindergarten access on educational attainment and labor market outcomes. We exploit quasi-random variation from the phased rollout of a 1985 Texas policy that mandated free prekindergarten for disadvantaged children, conditional on the presence of at least 15 eligible students. Using longitudinal administrative data from the Texas ERC, we find precise null effects of access to free Pre-K on labor market outcomes, such as employment and earnings until 23 years after Pre-K. Similarly, we show that access to free Pre-K does not affect the likelihood of graduating high-school or attending college. The null effects are in line with the lack of effects on short term educational and behavioral outcomes.

“Lead in the Air: New Evidence from Piston-Engine Aircraft Emissions” (Joint with Thao Duong)

Does lead pollution from piston engine aircraft (PEA) pose risks to children’s development? This paper provides the first causal evidence on the impact of lead emissions from PEA on both short- and long-term educational and labor market outcomes. We implement a difference-in-differences strategy that leverages a sharp increase in PEA activity in Texas after 2007 and cross-school variation in proximity to lead exposure. Our results indicate that an increase of 80,000 PEA flights leads to a 0.03 standard deviation decline in standardized test scores and a 0.07 percentage point reduction in school attendance. In contrast, we find no statistically significant effects on high school graduation, college enrollment, or early-career earnings.

WORK IN PROGRESS

“Motivation or Stigma? Evaluating the Incentive Effects of Grade Retention Policy” (Joint with Kendall J. Kennedy and Simon ter Meulen)

“The Impacts of Grade Retention Policy: Evidence on Peer Composition, Tracking, and Educator Preferences” (Joint with Kendall J. Kennedy, Simon ter Meulen, and Umut Özek)

“Access to Family Planning Services and Inequalities in Education and Labor Market Outcomes” (Joint with Riley Acton, James Flynn, Daniel Marthey, and Maranna Yoder)

“The Impacts of Light and Noise Exposure on Human Capital Formation: Evidence from Wind Farm Operation” (Joint with Thao Duong)

“The Hidden Costs of Low-Level Lead Exposure: Evidence on Infant Health” (Joint with Tengda Gong)

“The Effects of Reclassifying English Learners as Proficient on Long-Term Educational and Earnings Outcomes” (Joint with Sijia Zhang and Yayun Chen)

PRESENTATIONS

2026: AEFPP, PPCW 2026

2025: Allied Social Science Association (ASSA), ASHEcon, CeMENT Workshops, MidSouth Education Policy Workshop, APPAM Fall Research Conference, SEA

2024: Amherst College, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Miami University, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, ND/Midwest Econ of Education Conference, Southern Economics Association conferences

2023: Southern Economics Association conferences, Western Economic Association International 98th Annual Conference, Eastern Economic Association Conferences, LBJ School Policy Research Workshop

2022: Southern Economics Association conferences, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Western Economic Association International 97th Annual Conference, Midwest Economics Association

2021: Health Econ/Health Policy Mentoring Workshop

2020: Successfully Navigating Your Ph.D. Workshop

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Record

Public Economics, Fall 2025

Intermediate Microeconomic Theory (Spring 2026, Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Fall 2024, Summer 2022)

Econometrics Qualifier Camp (Ph.D. core), Summer 2022

Teaching Assistant

International Trade Theory & Policy, Fall 2023

Data Science for Economic and Social Issues, Spring 2023

Applied Micro-econometrics (Ph.D. level), Spring 2022

Econometrics 461, Fall 2021

Public Finance 412 (Spring 2020, Fall 2019, Spring 2019)

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Texas A&M University, Prof. Barr, Summer and Fall 2021

HONORS AND AWARDS

Russell Sage Foundation Pipeline Grant (PI, \$50,000), 2025-2026

The Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) Hayek Fund Scholars Grant Award (\$500), 2022-2023

REFEREE SERVICE

American Economic Journal: Applied Economics; Journal of Public Economics (3); Journal of Policy Analysis and Management (2); Economic Inquiry (2); Labor economics; Economics of Education Review

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Program Committee, APPAM Fall Research Conference (2025)

SEMINAR COORDINATOR

Student Brown Bag, Spring 2023 and Fall 2022

Professional Memberships

American Economic Association, American Society of Health Economists, Association of Environmental and Resource Economists, Southern Economics Association

Updated April 22, 2026