

Yuwei Zhang

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EDUCATION

University of Houston, Houston, TX

Ph.D. in Economics

2022-present

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI

M.S. in Agricultural & Applied Economics

2020-2021

Renmin University of China, Beijing, China

B.A. in Economics

2016-2020

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Health, Labor, and Environmental Economics

WORK IN PROGRESS

1. “Acclimating to Air Pollution: Evidence from Student Test Scores in Beijing.” with *Wei Huang*, and *Elaine M. Liu*

Abstract: Does repeated exposure reduce the short-run cognitive costs of air pollution? To answer these questions, we study how exam-time exposure to fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) affects college students’ test performance using administrative records from a university in Beijing between 2008 and 2016. We find that higher PM_{2.5} levels during exams are associated with lower test scores. This effect is systematically smaller for students from more polluted hometowns than for those from cleaner-air areas. Moreover, among students from cleaner-air hometowns, sensitivity to exam-time pollution declines with years spent in Beijing, and differences in sensitivity across groups largely disappear over time. Together, these findings provide suggestive evidence that repeated exposure to air pollution is associated with adaptation in short-run cognitive responses.

2. “Racial Disparities in Obstetric Care: The Role of Physician Decision-Making”

Abstract: This paper examines how the Black–White gap in cesarean section rates varies with patient medical risk. Using Texas hospital inpatient discharge data on all deliveries from 2000 to 2024, I study 2.6 million deliveries that begin with a trial of labor and estimate racial gaps within bins of a predicted medical risk index, controlling for hospital and physician fixed effects. The gap is two-sided: Black mothers are 1–3 percentage points more likely than White mothers to receive a C-section at low and medium levels of medical risk, but 4.4 percentage points less likely at the highest risk. Hospital and physician fixed effects leave this pattern largely unchanged. The high-risk deficit is concentrated among breech deliveries: among breech deliveries that begin with a trial of labor, for which C-section is the standard of care, Black mothers are 6.7 percentage points less likely to receive a C-section than White mothers treated by the same physician. These findings reveal substantial racial disparities in C-section use at both ends of the medical-risk distribution, with the direction of the gap reversing at high risk.

TEACHING & RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant for *Evaluation for Early REACH (Raising Educational Access for Children in Harris County)*

Spring 2025-present

Lecturer for Principle of Macroeconomics (Undergrad Level), University of Houston	<i>Fall, 2024</i>
Teaching Assistant for Microeconomics II (Ph.D. Level), University of Houston	<i>Spring 2024</i>
Teaching Assistant for Microeconomics I (Ph.D. Level), University of Houston	<i>Fall 2023</i>
Research Assistant for Prof. Elaine M. Liu and Prof. Zihan	<i>2022</i>

HONORS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

Best Workshop Presentation Award, University of Houston	<i>2026</i>
Cullen Fellowship Travel Grant, University of Houston	<i>2025</i>
Presidential Fellowship, University of Houston	<i>2022, 2023</i>
Excellent Student Cadre, Renmin University of China	<i>2018, 2019</i>
Merit Student, Renmin University of China	<i>2018, 2019</i>
Top 15% GPA Guanghua Scholarship	<i>2017</i>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Languages: English (fluent) and Mandarin (native)

Software: STATA, Python, R, and L^AT_EX

Last Updated: Sep 2026