

Zhen Gu

Department of Economics
Eller College of Management
University of Arizona
McClelland Hall
1130 E Helen St
Tucson, AZ 85721 USA

Website: <https://www.sites.google.com/view/zhengu>
Email: zhengu@arizona.edu
Phone: (919)-638-6273

EDUCATION

University of Arizona, Department of Economics, Tucson, Arizona

Ph.D. Economics, *expected* May 2024.

Dissertation Committee: Price V. Fishback (Chair), Evan J. Taylor, Juan Pantano, Ashley Langer

Duke University, Durham, North Carolina

M.A. in Economics, May 2019.

Shanghai University of International Business and Economics, Shanghai, China

Bachelor of Economics, June 2016.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Economic History, Labor Economics, Migration, Entrepreneurship

WORKING PAPERS

“Immigrant Entrepreneurship in the US 1910-1940”

(Job Market Paper)

I study immigrant entrepreneurship in the early twentieth century. Using the full count US Censuses, I document the widening gap between immigrants and native whites in self-employment from 1910 to 1940. Immigrants from Asia and Southern and Eastern Europe were most entrepreneurial. The tightening immigration restrictions and a series of economic and political events changed the demographics of immigrants staying in the US, which contributed to the higher business ownership rate of immigrants. I propose two factors to explain the remaining immigrant-native difference in self-employment. The pull factor is the expanding ethnic enclave that creates markets for ethnic goods, increases labor supply for immigrant business owners, and builds up social connection among immigrant entrepreneurs. The push factor is the deterioration of job opportunities in the wage sector of labor market which forces immigrants into self-employment for survival. I find higher wage expectation decreased the probability of immigrant being self-employed while a larger immigrant community size at city level was positively correlated with self-employment. I also show self-employed immigrants and native whites had different preferences for industries. Immigrants tended to concentrate in industries that required less education and financial investment, suggesting immigrants in the period of study used self-employment more as a survival strategy.

“The Effects of Trading with the Enemy Act on German Newspapers”

How does discrimination affect immigrant business? To answer this question, I assemble novel data from the N.W. Ayer and Son’s Newspaper Annual Directories to measure the presence of ethnic press in the US between 1910 and 1920 when World War I took place. In 1917, Trading with the Enemy Act was passed and one of the sections required foreign prints on international affairs to be translated into English. I examine the impact of discrimination on German newspapers by exploiting the passage of the Act and WWI casualty which serves a proxy for local anti-German sentiment. My difference-in-differences estimates show that the Act reduced the number and circulation of German newspapers at county level. The fractions of German newspapers with political affiliations decreased while independent newspapers were largely unaffected. The Act did not influence the publication frequency, but the share of bilingual newspapers increased.

“Community and Schooling of Second-generation Immigrants in the Age of Mass Migration”

In this paper, I study the impact of ethnic enclaves on school and labor market decisions of second-generation immigrants. I exploit exogenous variation in immigration to US cities between 1910 and 1930 induced by World War I and the Immigration Acts of 1920s to construct instruments for location choices of immigrants and their children. I disentangle the effects of first-generation immigrants from those of immigrant children. I find that second-generation immigrants were more likely to attend elementary schools but less likely to go to secondary schools if they lived with more peers in the same ethnic group. In addition, when they reached the minimum age for employment, they preferred work instead of staying in schools. On the other hand, first-generation immigrants reduced the rate of school attendance in the stage of primary education while raised the rate of employment for second gens who are at the age of secondary education.

“The Effects of Child Support Guidelines: Cognitive Outcomes of Young Children and Mother Behavior”

This paper estimates the effects of child support guidelines on young children's cognitive skills using panel variation in the policy. Data from the NLSY79 indicates that the establishment of guidelines improves children's PIAT math score at age 5. This impact is more significant for children born to married mothers and white mothers. The guidelines also reduced the probability of divorce among married mothers as well as the labor supply of mothers. These results are helpful to understand how the guidelines affect children's academic outcomes.

WORK IN PROGRESS

“Immigrant and Native Disparity in Federal Program Access”

The project aims to document the difference in federal relief program take-up rates during the Great Depression between immigrants and natives. The gap remains significant after controlling for comprehensive individual, household, and migration factors. Moreover, there was large variation across regions. The difference in take-up rates was much larger in the South and West than in the Midwest or Northeast. One of the potential reasons could be that immigrants concentrated in occupations that were less likely to be covered by work relief programs.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant for Professor Juan Pantano

Project on applying an extension of local average treatment effect (LATE) estimate to the impact of schooling on earnings using college proximity as an instrument

Computer Skills: extensive programming experience including Python, R, and SQL and statistical application STATA

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor

Microeconomic Analysis for Business Decisions

Summer 2021

Teaching Assistant

An Economic Perspective

Fall 2019

Microeconomic and Global Institutions and Policy

Fall 2019

Basic Economic Issues

Spring 2020

Intermediate Macroeconomics

Fall 2020

Global and Financial Economics and Strategies

Spring 2020, Spring 2021

Law and Economics

Fall 2021

Labor and Public Policy

Fall 2021

Economic History of the United States

Spring 2022

Historical Development of Financial and Economic Institutions

Spring 2022

Climate Science and Economics

Fall 2022

Microeconomic Analysis for Business Decisions

Fall 2020, Spring 2023

Statistical Inference in Management

Fall 2023

REFERENCES

Price V. Fishback (Chair)
Regents Professor, APS Professor of Economics
Department of Economics
University of Arizona
520-621-4421
fishback@arizona.edu

Evan J. Taylor
Associate Professor of Economics
Department of Economics
University of Arizona
520-621-2028
evantaylor@arizona.edu

Juan Pantano
Professor of Economics
Department of Economics
University of Arizona
520-621-4560
jpanta@arizona.edu