

Research Statement

I am an applied microeconomist, focused on questions in the areas of public and urban economics. My work also touches on issues related to labor economics and political economy. My research agenda focuses on minority representation in government and media, migration, racial bias, and political economy, in both the U.S. and in China. To date, I have six completed papers, including one publication, one R&R, two currently under review, and two working papers. I also currently have 4 additional active research projects.

My job market paper “**Racial Representation, Segregation, and Sorting**” (which will be presented at the 2024 ASSA conference) investigates the impact of electing a Black mayor on Black and white individuals’ location choices. Utilizing data from closely contested mayoral elections and a self-constructed migration dataset derived from North Carolina voter registration records. I establish causal links between the election of a Black mayor and individual location decisions within and across cities. The analysis reveals that the presence of a Black mayor significantly increases the net population in both majority-Black and white neighborhoods in North Carolina. This effect is more prominent in majority-Black neighborhoods, which see a significant rise in the Black population and a slight uptick in the white population. Using the information I construct on individual migration decisions, I am able to further demonstrate that these net population changes are the result of the reduced out-migration of both Black and white residents, coupled with increased inflows of Black individuals into these neighborhoods from outside of the city. I am also able to corroborate the net flows observed in the North Carolina data using tract-level data from a national sample of 120 large U.S. cities. The overall effect of these net population flows is an increase in racial segregation that arises from the increased concentration of Black individuals in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Further analysis into the underlying mechanisms shows that Black representation narrows the disparity in amenities between majority-Black and white neighborhoods and shifts local media focus towards these areas.

I have multiple interdisciplinary projects at the intersection of political economy and public economics. In “**Minority Representation and Police Behavior**” (co-authored with Daniel Jones and Xiaohong Wang), we draw on statewide data from North Carolina to examine the impacts of racial and ethnic representation in city councils on policing. Another paper, “**The Elected Official Next Door**” (co-authored with Daniel Jones and Randall Walsh) shows that the election of a city council member generates highly localized benefits within their own neighborhoods. My research also delves into various cultural and institutional frameworks. In “**Mayors' Promotion Incentives and Subnational-level GDP Manipulation in China**” (co-authored with Qiyao Zhou, R&R at *Journal of Urban Economics*), we find that competition between mayors in GDP growth rate in China eventually leads to local GDP manipulation. In “**Estimating the Economic Cost of Environmental Regulation in China**” (co-authored with Qiyao Zhou and Dali Yang, published at *Environmental and Resource Economics*), we use a novel dataset that contains detailed firm-level environmental enforcement records to study the impact of campaign style environmental enforcement in China since 2013.

Going forward, I plan to continue my work at the intersection of urban economics and political economy, and also on the impacts of representation. I have an active research agenda on racial representation in the media with Claire Duquenois. We causally identify the effects of exposure to minority child media icons in Sesame Street and successful minority athletes in the NFL and NBA on racial biases. We plan to further assess their long-term impact on friendships, romantic relationships, neighborhood choices and their implications for residential segregation, as well as short-term effects on hate crimes and hate speech. In addition, I am also working with Noah McKinnie Braun on a project examining how local politics influence partisan sorting, using the individual-level migration record I have compiled for North Carolina. I look forward to deepening my existing research relationships and initiating new collaboration.