

YE ZHANG

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EDUCATION

Ph.D.	Department of Economics, Columbia University	2015 – Expected 2021
B.S.	Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Major: Mathematics and Economics, Department of Mathematics Minor: Information Technology, Department of Computer Science and Engineering	2011 – 2015
Exchange Student	Department of Economics, Northwestern University	2014

RESEARCH INTEREST

Entrepreneurial Finance, Field Experiment, Empirical Corporate Finance, Applied Microeconomics

JOB MARKET PAPER

“Discrimination in the Venture Capital Industry: Evidence from Two Randomized Controlled Trials”, 2020

Abstract: This paper examines the presence of discrimination in early-stage investors using two randomized controlled trials with real venture capitalists mainly from the U.S. The first experiment invites real U.S. investors to evaluate multiple randomly generated startup profiles, which they know to be hypothetical, in order to be matched with high-quality startups from the collaborative incubators. Investors can also donate money to randomly displayed startup teams to show their anonymous support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The second experiment utilizes a new email technology which traces detailed information acquisition behaviors of global VC investors to hypothetical pitch emails with randomized startup’s information. I find three main results: (i) Investors are biased towards female, Asian and older founders in lower-stake situations while biased against female, Asian and older founders in higher-stake situations. (ii) The source of bias comes from implicit bias, statistical discrimination and taste-based reasons. (iii) I detect a temporary stronger bias against Asian founders during the COVID-19 outbreak, which started to fade since April 2020. I also develop a consistent decision-based heterogeneous effect estimator by using within-individual level randomization.

WORKING PAPER

“How Venture Capitalists Bet: Evidence from Two Randomized Controlled Trials”, 2020

Abstract: Understanding the importance of both human and non-human assets in the process of firms' early-stage financing is crucial to examining theories of the firm. However, it is empirically difficult to generate causal evidence due to data limitations and the lack of exogenous variations. This paper uses two randomized controlled trials with real venture capitalists mainly from the U.S. to identify multiple startup team characteristics and project characteristics that causally affect venture capitalists’

investment process and to compare their relative importance. I find that multiple team characteristics (i.e. founder's educational background and entrepreneurial experiences) and project characteristics (i.e. traction, business model, location, comparative advantages, etc.) causally affect investors' contact and investment interest by influencing their evaluation of startups' potential financial return, risk, and loyalty. Although project traction matters the most in my experimental setting, fundamentally it is the investors' belief in the startup's profitability that matters the most. I also find the traditional correspondence test method, to an extent, inappropriate in testing the significance of project characteristics in virtue of the different signal-to-noise ratio problems.

“ESG and Venture Capital Investment: Experimental Evidence”, 2020

Abstract: This paper examines the effect of ESG characteristics of startups on venture capitalists' investment interest by employing a randomized controlled method. I invite real U.S. investors to evaluate multiple randomly generated startup profiles, which they know to be hypothetical, in order to be matched with high-quality startups from the collaborative incubators. I find the following three main results: (i) Aiming for environmental and social impact causally lowers investors' expectation of the startup's future profitability rather than risk. Therefore, profit-driven investors are less likely to contact or invest in ESG-related startups. (ii) Profit-driven investors have a stronger implicit belief that ESG related startups would not seek for collaboration with them. (iii) There is a positive interaction effect between ESG characteristics and the founder's educational background, indicating that a high level of education helps improve investor's expectation of the ESG startup's profitability. Experimental results challenge the traditional thesis of “doing well by doing good” and support the recent findings that investors derive non-pecuniary utility from impact investing while sacrificing their financial returns.

“The Microstructure of U.S. Housing Market: Evidence from Millions of Bargaining Interactions”, 2020 with [Haaris Mateen](#), [Franklin Qian](#)

Abstract: We study patterns of behavior in the U.S. housing market bilateral bargaining situations using a rich new data set describing bid-level housing transaction behaviors occurring in over 150,000 listings from Redfin platform. We compare observed behavior to predictions from the large theoretical housing literature. Model testing outcomes show that existing housing micro-structure models do not adequately explain the under-reaction behaviors in sellers' estimates of the final sales price of the house. We also provide novel micro-level evidence describing how home buyers' characteristics affect their bargaining power and surplus allocation in these bilateral bargaining process in the housing market. These observations suggest that housing transaction behaviors, which are neither incorporated nor explained by existing theories, play an important role in the U.S. housing market.

WORKING IN PROGRESS

“Who Are the Most Attractive Venture Capitalists? Evidence from Lab-in-field Experiment” with [Junlong Feng](#)
(The pilot study is finished)

“Track the Venture Capital Investment Climate: Experimental Evidence from Global VC Industry”

“Initial Public Offerings and Expectation in the Housing Market” with [Haaris Mateen](#), [Franklin Qian](#)

HONORS AND AWARDS

Dissertation Fellowship, Columbia University	2020-2021
Eugene Lang Entrepreneurship Center PhD Fellowship	2018
Lead Teaching Fellowship in Economics, Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning	2018-2019
Dean's Fellowship, Columbia University	2015-2020
10 th Epsilon Award of Mathematics Department	2015
Academic Achievement Awards, HKUST-Dean's List	2014

RESEARCH FUNDING

PER Research Funding

Eugene Lang Entrepreneurship Center PhD Fellowship

CELSS Grants for Online Experiments

TEACHING

Instructor:	Corporate Finance	Summer 2018
TA:	Corporate Finance	Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020 (evaluation)
	Advanced Econometrics	Fall 2018 (evaluation)
	Introduction of Econometrics	Fall 2016, Spring 2017
LTF:	Economics Lead Teaching Fellow	2018- 2019

RESEARCH AND WORK EXPERIENCE

Economist Intern, Amazon Lending Team	Summer 2017
Research Assistant for Prof. Bernard Salanie, Columbia University	Spring 2017
Research Assistant for Prof. Wei Jiang, Columbia University	Summer 2016
Research Assistant for Prof. Yao Amber Li, HKUST	2014-2015

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Organizer:	Global Entrepreneurship Summit (NYC)	2018
	LTF event, “Workshop: application of static and dynamic graphs in R”	2018
	LTF event, “Mentoring RAs: Challenges in GU4996/GU4995”	2019
	Young Economist Symposium organizing committee member	2019
	Emergency Medical Technician Certification	2016
	HKUST Table Tennis Women’s Single Champion and Double Champion	2012

SKILLS

Programming: R, STATA, SQL, Qualtrics, Javascript
 Languages: Chinese, English

REFERENCES

Professor Harrison Hong (co-sponsor)	Professor Jack Willis (co-sponsor)	Professor Wei Jiang
Department of Economics	Department of Economics	Columbia Business School
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