

Academic Appointments

UTHealth Houston

Assistant Professor

May 2023 - Current

Texas A&M

Postdoctoral Fellow

April 2022 - March 2023

Education

Ph.D. Public Policy

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Research Interests: Public Health Policy

Dissertation Titles: Spatiotemporal Emotions' Patterns of Twitter Data on COVID-19 and Health Policies

May 2022

Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Science and Technology

2021

Master of Public Administration

2017

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Master of Social Medicine and Health Management

2017

Henan University, School of Nursing, China

Bachelor of Public Enterprise Management

2013

Henan University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, China

Areas of Interest and Expertise

Public Health Policy • Food Policy • Health Technology • Digital Health • Geospatial Analyses • Spatial Visualization • Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease • Cancer • Mental Health

Publications

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

1. **Gao, J.**, Jones, E.C., Brown, L.D. *et al.* The geographic digital divide among dementia caregivers in the U.S.: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Health Serv Res* (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-026-14690-0>
2. **Gao J**, Idris MA, Kim-Vences SIH and Windett JH (2026) Patterns and predictors of anxiety medication use among United States adults: a national analysis with a focus on racial disparities in the Asian population. *Front. Public Health* 14:1803386. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2026.1803386
3. **Gao J**, Idris MA, Ademu LO, Griffin BC, Zhang Y, Hang Y and Gallegos GA (2026) Food delivery services for enhancing participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) in the United States: bridging the WIC-eligible access gap. *Frontiers in Public Health* 14:1756682. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2026.1756682

4. Munroe, S., **Gao, J.**, Ferguson, G., Idris, M. A., & Jones, E. (2026). *Geospatial disparities in adolescent mental health resources: School- and community-level evidence from Travis County, Texas. Frontiers in Public Health.*
5. Idris MA, **Gao J**, Aguilera J and Brown LD (2026) Mental health outcomes among United States remote-eligible working adults post COVID-19: national evidence. *Front. Public Health* 14:1809511. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2026.1809511
6. **Gao, J.***, Muinat Abolore Idris, Gabriela A. Gallegos, Bryan Colby Griffin, Sharon V. Munroe, Jason Windett (2025). Diffusion and Division: A Spatial Analysis of Surrogacy Policy Determinants in the United States. *SSN Population Health*
7. Idris, M. A., Gitter, A., Deemer, E., Zhang, Y., & **Gao, J.** (2025). Work-and hydration-related health outcomes prevalence among USA construction workers: evidence from the national survey. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 13, 1721825.
8. Dai, Y., **Gao, J.**, & Radford, B. J. (2024). From fear to hate: Sources of anti-Asian sentiment during COVID-19. *Social Science Quarterly.*
9. Gallegos, G. A., Schaper, K., Roy, S., & **Gao, J.** (2024). Analyzing the Relationships between State School Policies and Absenteeism Rates for 9-12th Grade Students in Texas-Mexico Border Districts. *Research in Educational Policy and Management*, 6(1), 255-268.
10. Cowan-Pyle, A. E., Bailey, R. L., **Gao, J.**, Hess, J. M., Ademu, L. O., Smith, J. L., & Racine, E. F. (2024). Dietary Quality and Diet-Related Factors Among Emerging Adults (18–23 y) in the United States Are a Cause for Concern: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2015–2018. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 154(8), 2524-2533.
11. **Gao, J.**, Gallegos, G. A., & West, J. F. (2023). Public Health Policy, Political Ideology, and Public Emotion Related to COVID-19 in the US. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(21), 6993.
12. **Gao, J.**, Keenan, O. E., Johnson, A. S., Wilhelm, C. A., Paul, R., & Racine, E. F. (2023). The COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation, and their influence on dining out frequency and spending. *Nutrients*, 15(6), 1373.
13. Ademu, L., **Gao, J*.**, Assis, J., Olajide, A., & Atawodi, O. (2023) Taking a Shot: The Impact of Information Frames and Channels on Vaccination Willingness in a Pandemic. *Vaccines*, 11(1), 137.
14. **Gao, J.**, Guo, Y., & Ademu, L. (2022). Associations between Public Fear of COVID-19 and Number of COVID-19 Vaccinations: a county-level longitudinal analysis. *Vaccines*, 10(9), 1422.
15. **Gao, J.** (2022). The Complementary and Substitutive Value of Online Health Information. *Health and Social Care in the Community.*
16. Guo, Y., **Gao, J.**, & Sims, T. O. (2022). Associations between Bonus and Lottery COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive Policies and Increases in COVID-19 Vaccination Rates: A Social Epidemiologic Analysis. *Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease*, 7(7), 118.
17. Guo, Y., Kaniuka, A. R., **Gao, J.**, & Sims, O. T. (2022). An Epidemiologic Analysis of Associations between County-Level Per Capita Income, Unemployment Rate, and COVID-19 Vaccination Rates in the United States. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(3), 1755.
18. Ademu, L., **Gao, J.**, Thompson, T., & Ademu, L. (2022) Impact of ShortTerm Air Pollution on Respiratory Infections: A Time-Series Analysis of COVID19 Cases in California during the 2020 Wildfire Season. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19.9 (2022): 5057.
19. **Gao, J.**, Radford, B. (2021). Death by Political Party: The Relationship Between COVID19 Deaths and Political Party Affiliation. *World Medical & Health Policy*, 1– 26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wmh3.435>.

Peer-Reviewed Book

1. West, J.F., **Gao, J.**, and Jang, S. (2021). *The Factors and Behaviors Associated with Legislator Use of Communication Technology*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Under Review

1. **Gao, J.**, Windett, J. H., Radford, B. J., Ademu, L. O., & Racine, E. F. (**revise and resubmit**). *Integrating social media sentiment and mobility data for public health surveillance: The role of emotion in COVID-19 policy compliance*. **JMIR Formative Research**.
2. **Gao, J.**, Munroe, S. V., Zhang, Y., & Windett, J. H. (**revise and resubmit**). *Cancer information burden among U.S. cancer survivors during the early generative-AI era*. **JMIR Cancer**.
3. **Gao, J.**, Windett, J. H., Ademu, L. O., Li, Z., Idris, M. A., Griffin, B. C., Zhang, Y., & Radford, B. J.. *Social media misinformation exposure, fact-checking difficulty, and HPV vaccine awareness among U.S. adults: A national HINTS analysis*. **Journal of Medical Internet Research**.
4. **Gao, J.** (under review). *Social media use and loneliness among older adults in the emerging AI-mediated digital environment: Evidence from HINTS 2022-2024*. **Frontiers in Digital Health**.
5. **Gao, J.**, & Windett, J. H. (under review). *Political ideology, sociodemographic factors, and social media health information engagement among U.S. adults: Evidence from HINTS 2024*. **Frontiers in Digital Health**.
6. Gallegos, G. A., Patel, P., & **Gao, J.** (submitted). *Social network pathways into community-based physical activity: A cross-sectional study of adult triathlon participants in a predominantly Latine border region*. **Frontiers in Public Health**.
7. **Gao, J.**, Gallegos, G. A., Ademu, L. O., Griffin, B. C., Zhang, Y., & Omowale, S. S. (submitted). *Digital health engagement and utilization of nutrition information in food purchasing decisions: A national cross-sectional study*. **Nutrition Journal**.
8. **Gao, J...** (under review). *The digital divide and spatial disparities in late-stage breast cancer burden across Texas*. **BMC Public Health**.
9. Yue Zhang, **Gao, J...** (under editorial review). *Mammography infrastructure and urbanicity associated with late-stage breast cancer*. **International Journal of Health Geographics**.
10. **Gao, J...** (Manuscript under peer review). *Inequities in pandemic resilience: A spatial-temporal study of mortality and economic recovery during COVID-19*. Submitted to **International Journal of Health Geographics**.
11. **Gao, J.** Gabriela A. Gallegos (**2025 Revised & Resubmitted**). The Impact of the Public's Stress Level and Governor's Political Party Affiliation on Public Health Policy Effectiveness.
12. **Gao, J.**, Idris, M. A., Hang, Y., Bi, K., & Jones, E. (**2025 Revised & Resubmitted**). Inequities in pandemic resilience: A spatial-temporal study of mortality and economic recovery during COVID-19. *Frontiers in Public Health*
13. **Gao, J.** Lilian Ademu; Beth Racine; Ben Radford; Jason Windett (2025 under review). Public Emotion, Public Policy, and Working from Home During COVID-19.

Works in Progress

1. **Gao, J.**, (2025). Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of COVID-19 Scholarship Lottery Policy among Young People.
2. **Gao, J.**, (2025). Health Care Resources and Racial Disparities in Children Vaccination Rate: a county-level analysis, Preventive Medicine.
3. **Gao, J.**, (2025). Seeking Online Health Information Among Patients with Multiple Health Conditions.
4. **Gao, J.**, (2025). AI and Rare Disease
5. **Gao, J.**, (2025). Cultural Intervention Through Gardening to Improve Mental Health Among Asian American Population

Note: Some works in progress may not yet include all authors.

Awarded Grants

\$30 Million Rio Grande Colonias USDA Regional Food Business Center. Texas A&M AgriLife Research /US Department of Agriculture (USDA). (Role: Postdoc Fellow; PI: Elizabeth F. Racine)	2023 - 2028
\$500 Travel Funding from Graduate & Professional Student Government The University of North Carolina at Charlotte	2022
\$6000 The Graduate School Summer Fellowship Program (GSSF) The University of North Carolina at Charlotte	2020
\$500 Travel Funding from Graduate & Professional Student Government The University of North Carolina at Charlotte	2020
\$1000 Travel Funding from Graduate & Professional Student Government The University of North Carolina at Charlotte	2019
\$500 Travel Funding from Graduate & Professional Student Government The University of North Carolina at Charlotte	2018

Submitted Grants (Pending)

NIH R01-Geographic and Sociodemographic Determinants of Digital Health Engagement Among Dementia Caregivers. (\$3,754,711 Role: PI)	2027-2032
CPRIT-Spatial Inequities in Mammography Access and Late-Stage Breast Cancer in Texas: Implications of AI-Enabled Screening. (\$882,050 Role: PI)	2026-2029
Gulf Research Program: Texas Navigating Orphaned Wells: Strategic Framework for Orphaned Well Assessment, Risk Prioritization, & Remediation (\$1,270,413 Role: Co-I)	2026-2029
NIH R01-Cultural Intervention Through Gardening to Improve Mental Health Among the Asian American Population. (\$376,188 Role: PI)	2026 - 2031
NIH R01-Technologies among Alzheimer Patients' Family Caregivers in the U.S. (2.6 million Role: PI)	2026 - 2031
NIH R01-Surrogacy Policy Environments and Health Outcomes. (2.5 million Role: PI)	2026 - 2031
NIH R21-Utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technologies for Cancer Treatment. (\$429,000 Role: PI)	2026 - 2028
NIH R21-Impact of Hydration Break Policy Rollback on Texas Construction Workers' Health: A natural Experiment (Role: Co-I)	2026 - 2028
NIH R21-Hydration Break Policy Rollbacks Impact on Heat-Related Health Outcomes Among Construction Workers in Texas: A Time Sensitive Natural Experiment Assessment (Role: Co-I)	2026 - 2028
CPRIT-Leveraging All-Payer Claims Data to Map Breast Cancer Treatment Pathways by Insurance Type Among Texas Women Under 65 (Role: Co-I)	2026 - 2029

Teaching Experience

Lecture:

UTHealth Houston

2251PHD-3918L700: Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

2251PHM-3918L700: Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

2252PHM-3715L700: Management and Policy Concepts in Public Health

Teaching Assistant:

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

GRAD 8103: Classificatory Methods and Time Series, Graduate School

GRAD 8102: Categorical Outcomes, Graduate School DTSC 2301: Modeling and Society, School of Data Science

Invited Lecture:

Conference Presentations

1. Gao, J., and Muinat Abolore M Idris (2026) Diffusion and Division: A Spatial Analysis of Surrogacy Policy Determinants in the United States, *SPSA*, New Orleans
2. Gao, J., (2025) Identify in Adopting Technologies among Family Caregivers of Alzheimer in the U.S, *American Public Health Association*, Washington, DC
3. Gao, J., and Bryan Colby A Griffin (2025) Determinants of State-Level Surrogacy Policy Adoption in the United States, *American Public Health Association*, Washington, DC
4. Gao, J., and Muinat Abolore M Idris (2025) Spatial-Temporal Analysis of Resilience to COVID in Europe and the Americas, *American Public Health Association*, Washington, DC
5. Gao, J., and Bryan Colby A Griffin (2025) Supporting WIC-Eligible Mothers with Infants through Food Delivery Services: A Spatial Analysis of Access and Equity, *American Public Health Association*, Washington, DC
6. Gao, J., and Muinat Abolore M Idris (2025) Water Break Access and Occupational Health Outcomes Among Construction Workers: Evidence from the National Health Interview Survey, *American Public Health Association*, Washington, DC
7. Gao, J., Gallegos, G., (2025) Governor Political Affiliation, Public Emotion, and Staying at Home During COVID-19, *Annual Southern Political Science Association Meetings*, San Juan, Puerto Rico
8. Gao, J., (2023). Public Emotions and Public Working Modes in COVID-19: Moderate Roles of Public Policy, *Annual Southern Political Science Association Meetings*, St. Pete Beach, Florida.
9. Gao, J., Radford, B., & Dai, Y., (2022). The Mechanism of Policy Diffusion of COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive Policies. The 79th Annual *Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference*, Chicago.
10. Gao, J., Dai, Y., & Radford, B., (2022). From Fear to Hate: Anti-Asian Sentiment During COVID-19. Annual Southern Political Science Association Meetings, San Antonio, Texas, January 15, 2022.
11. Gao, J. (2020). Chronic Diseases, Health Insurances, and Online Health Information Searching Behavior. Annual Southern Political Science Association Meetings, Puerto Rico, January 2020.
12. Maestas, C., Gao, J., Cawvey, M., Levens, S., and Atkeson L. (2019). Expressing Anxiety: Emotion Regulation Strategies and Social Sharing of Policy Information. Annual Southern Political Science Association Meetings, Austin, Texas, January 17, 2019.
13. West, J.F., Gao J. (2019). Legislator Use of Communication Technology: The Critical Frequency Theory of Policy System Stability. The 77th Annual Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference, Chicago.
14. West, J.F., Gao J. (2019). Legislator Use of Communication Technology and the Critical Frequency Theory of Policy System Stability. North Carolina Political Science Association (NCPA), Charlotte.
15. Gao, J. (2018). The Relationships between Diseases and Online Health Information Searching Behavior (Poster). The 76th Annual Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference, Chicago.
16. Gao, J. (2017). Utilizing Social Media as a Policy Tool: An Examination of the Impact of Social Media on Healthcare Outcomes in Chinese University Students. The 75th Annual Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference, Chicago.
17. West, J.F., Gao, J. (2017). Death of a Trustee: An Examination of Traditional Legislator Roles in an Era of Increased Legislator-Constituent Linkages Precipitated by Internet-Enabled Communication Technologies. The 75th Annual Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference, Chicago.

18. West, J.F., Gao, J. (2016). Evolution and the Internet: A Theoretical and Empirical Exploration of State Legislator Choice of Communication Technology. 2016 Southeastern Conference for Public Administration (SECoPA), Raleigh.

Other Positions

Graduate Research Assistant The University of North Carolina at Charlotte	August 2017 - May 2022
Graduate Research Assistant The University of North Carolina at Pembroke	October 2015 - December 2016
Compensated Internship North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC); Four-department rotations: Government Relations, Communications, Member Service/Education, and Research.	June 2016 - August 2016
Reviewer of Journal <i>World Medical & Health Policy; Work</i>	

Languages and Skills

- Chinese (native), English (fluent)
- Python, R, ArcGIS Pro, GeoDa, QGIS, Voxler (3D Visualization), Tableau, MATLAB, SQL, SPSS, STATA