

# ZHENG WANG

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## EDUCATION

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<b>European University Institute</b> <i>PhD Candidate in Economics</i> Thesis title: <i>Essays in the Economics and Econometrics of Networks and Peer Effect</i> Supervisors: Andrea Ichino & Sule Alan Expected completion date: May 2023	2018 – present Italy
<b>Aix-Marseille School of Economics</b> <i>Visiting PhD researcher</i> Mentor: Yann Bramoullé	2021 – present France
<b>European University Institute</b> <i>MRes in Economics</i>	2017 – 2018 Italy
<b>London School of Economics</b> <i>MSc in Econometrics and Mathematical Economics (EME)</i>	2013 – 2014 UK
<b>Beihang University</b> <i>BSc in Finance, with second degree in Applied Mathematics</i>	2009 – 2013 China

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

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**Primary Fields:** Applied Econometrics, Causal Inference, Applied Microeconomics  
**Secondary Fields:** Networks, Peer Effects, Education, Inequality, Gender, Crimes

## REFERENCES

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<b>Andrea Ichino</b> Professor of Economics European University Institute ✉ <a href="mailto:andrea.ichino@eui.eu">andrea.ichino@eui.eu</a> ☎ (+39) 055 4685 974	<b>Sule Alan</b> Professor of Economics European University Institute ✉ <a href="mailto:sule.alan@eui.eu">sule.alan@eui.eu</a> ☎ (+39) 055 4685 909
<b>Yann Bramoullé</b> Professor of Economics Aix-Marseille School of Economics ✉ <a href="mailto:yann.bramouille@univ-amu.fr">yann.bramouille@univ-amu.fr</a> ☎ (+33) (0)413 5525 34 and (0)413 9420 06	<b>Fabrizia Mealli</b> Professor of Statistics University of Florence & European University Institute ✉ <a href="mailto:fabrizia.mealli@unifi.it">fabrizia.mealli@unifi.it</a> ☎ (+39) 055 4685 474

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## JOB MARKET PAPER

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### **The Linking Effect: Causal Identification and Estimation of the Effect of Peer Relationship**

The endogeneity of network formation has been a major obstacle to the study of peer influence. This paper proposes a causal identification solution in the potential outcome framework. Combining results from multiple causal inference and statistical network analysis, I show that confounding can be addressed by inferring propensity scores of network link formation from the adjacency matrix. This identification strategy imposes minimum restrictions on the data-generating process and, unlike existing econometric solutions, does not rely on any parametric modelling. As an application, I estimate the effect of high school friendships on bachelor's degree attainment. While previous literature finds that exposure to more high-achieving boys makes girls less likely to obtain a bachelor's degree, I show that if the girls consider the boys as friends, their interactions induce a positive impact instead. Since friendship endogeneity has been addressed, the estimated effect is causal.

## **WORK IN PROGRESS – Econometrics**

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### **The Perils of Pairwise Peer Effect**

*Joint with Yann Bramoullé and Pierre-Philippe Combes*

Pairwise regressions have been increasingly more commonly used to study peer influence, noticeably after the influential paper by Bayer, Ross and Topa (2008). In this paper we show both the identification and inference issues coming from pairwise regressions.

## **WORK IN PROGRESS – Applied Microeconomics**

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### **Can Women be More Competitive than Men? Evidence from Duolingo**

This paper examines the differential effects of competition difficulty on men and women when the competition does not involve face-to-face confrontation, and effort is the only determinant of the final ranking. I investigate this in the setting of Duolingo, a free online foreign-language learning platform with over 300 million users. Every week, language learners on Duolingo are randomly allocated to groups of 30 people to compete on the number of language lessons completed during that week. While people within the same competition group could track each other's performance, they have no means of communicating with one another. Interestingly, I find that when faced with tougher competitors who have a track record of higher performance, women become tougher competitors themselves by putting in more effort in the competition. At the same time, men don't seem to respond the same way.

### **The Effect of Familiarity on Test Performance and its Implications on Fairness**

*Joint with Dalila Figueiredo*

In this paper, we design and conduct an experiment to examine whether students' familiarity with test topics used in IELTS, a standardised English test commonly used for college admission, affects their test performance. Then, with a survey, we investigate whether familiarity disparities across groups lead to unfair examinations for students of different genders, cultures, and socioeconomic status.

### **Victimization and Crime Overlap**

*Joint with Christian Dustmann, Rasmus Landersø and Mikkel Mertz*

Using Danish administrative data, we study whether and how different aspects of victimization causally affect the future criminal activities of the victims.

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

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**Econometrics and Statistics I (Introductory Econometrics and Causality)**

Fall 2019

*EUI PhD Core Course, TA to Prof. Andrea Ichino*

**Econometrics and Statistics III (Microeconometrics)**

Spring 2018

*EUI PhD Core Course, TA to Prof. Michèle Belot*

## WORK EXPERIENCE

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<b>Research assistant for Prof. Andrea Ichino</b>	2018
<i>European University Institute</i>	
<b>Junior Economist</b>	2016 – 2017
<i>Research Department, International Labor Organization (Geneva)</i>	
<b>Research Intern</b>	2015 – 2016
<i>Research Department, International Labor Organization (Geneva)</i>	
<b>Data Analyst Intern</b>	2015
<i>International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Geneva)</i>	

## ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK

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<b>Summer School on The Economics of Networks</b>	2021
<i>Lori A. Beaman, Sanjeev Goyal, Yann Bramoullé &amp; Habiba Djebbari</i>	France
<b>Summer School on The Econometrics of Peer Effects and Social Interactions</b>	2019
<i>Bryan Graham &amp; Aureo de Paula</i>	Germany

## CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

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<b>2nd International Econometrics PhD Conference</b>	November 2022
<i>The Econometric Institute (EI) at Erasmus University Rotterdam</i>	
<b>PhD-EVS online seminar</b>	October 2022
<i>International online seminar for PhD candidates and early career researchers</i>	

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

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<b>4th year PhD Grant</b>	2021 – 2022
<i>Aix-Marseille School of Economics</i>	France
<b>EUI Special PhD Grant – Adam Smith</b>	2017 – 2021
<i>European University Institute</i>	Italy

## Languages

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English (fluent), Mandarin (native), French (basic)  
R, Python, MATLAB, Stata