ZHENG WANG

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EDUCATION

European University Institute   2018 – present
PhD Candidate in Economics   Italy

   Thesis title: *Essays in the Economics and Econometrics of Networks and Peer Effect*
   Supervisors: Andrea Ichino & Sule Alan
   Expected completion date: May 2023

Aix-Marseille School of Economics   2021 – present
Visiting PhD researcher   France
   Mentor: Yann Bramoullé

European University Institute   2017 – 2018
MRes in Economics   Italy

London School of Economics   2013 – 2014
MSc in Econometrics and Mathematical Economics (EME)   UK

Beihang University   2009 – 2013
BSc in Finance, with second degree in Applied Mathematics   China

RESEARCH INTERESTS

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

REFERENCES

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JOB MARKET PAPER

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

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

Can Women be More Competitive than Men? Evidence from Duolingo

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.

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

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

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

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK

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

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

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

GRANTS AND AWARDS

4th year PhD Grant	2021 − 2022
Aix-Marseille School of Economics	France
EUI Special PhD Grant − Adam Smith	2017 − 2021
European University Institute	Italy

Languages

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