

ZHENG WANG

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EDUCATION

European University Institute

PhD Candidate in Economics

2017 – present

Italy

Thesis title: *Essays in the Economics and Econometrics of Networks and Peer Effect*

Supervisors: Prof. Andrea Ichino, Prof. Sule Alan

Expected completion date: May 2023

Aix-Marseille School of Economics

Visiting PhD researcher

2021 – present

France

Mentor: Prof. Yann Bramoullé

London School of Economics

MSc in Econometrics and Mathematical Economics (EME)

2013 – 2014

UK

Beihang University

BSc in Finance, with second degree in Applied Mathematics

2009 – 2013

China

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Primary Fields: Economics and Econometrics of Networks, Causal Inference, Applied Microeconomics

Secondary Fields: Economics of Education, Disparity, Labour Economics

REFERENCES

Andrea Ichino

Professor of Economics

European University Institute

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Sule Alan

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Yann Bramoullé

Professor of Economics

Aix-Marseille School of Economics

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Fabrizia Mealli

Professor of Economics & Professor of Statistics

European University Institute & University of Florence

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TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Econometrics and Statistics I (Causality)

EUI PhD Core Course, TA to Prof. Andrea Ichino

Fall 2019

Econometrics and Statistics II (Microeconometrics)

EUI PhD Core Course, TA to Prof. Michèle Belot

Spring 2018

WORK EXPERIENCE

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

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK

Summer School on The Economics of Networks	2021
<i>Aix-Marseille School of Economics</i>	France
Summer School on The Econometrics of Peer Effects and Social Interactions	2019
<i>Prof. Bryan Graham & Prof. Aureo de Paula</i>	Germany

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

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

GRANTS AND AWARDS

4th year PhD Grant	2021 – 2022
<i>Aix-Marseille School of Economics</i>	France
EUI PhD Grant	2020 – 2021
<i>European University Institute</i>	Italy
EUI Special PhD Grant – Adam Smith	2017 – 2020
<i>European University Institute</i>	Italy

Languages

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

JON 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 empirical study of peer influence for many important types of networks, including friendship networks, buyer-supplier networks and banking networks, etc. This paper puts forward the first causal identification strategy in the literature to study the effect of endogenously formed peer relationships. I prove that causal identification holds under general conditions and needs neither a network formation model nor an outcome model to be specified. This is because the propensity scores of the unobserved confounders can be non-parametrically identified and estimated from the distribution of network links. Using the proposed method, I empirically estimate the causal effect of high school friendships on female students' bachelor's

degree attainment. While previous literature finds that being exposed to more high-achieving boys in high school makes girls less likely to obtain a bachelor's degree, I show that this is not true when these high-achieving boys are considered friends by the girls. In fact, one additional high-achieving male friend increases the probability that a female student graduating from college by 3 p.p. Further analysis suggests that this positive impact is not a result of increased academic ability but rather comes from a significant confidence boost. These results imply that rather than shielding girls from high-achieving boys, it would be more effective to foster friendship and close interactions among them.

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

Competitive Peer Effect – the Case of Duolingo

This paper studies the effect of competition difficulty on one's effort exertion. Using data from the Duolingo leaderboard where language learners are randomly put into group competition, I find evidence suggesting that people react to competition difficulty differently depending on their time constraint and their level of commitment.

Experiment on Test Performance and Implications for Fairness

Joint with Dalila Figueiredo

Ongoing pilot.

The Effect of Victimization on Long-Term Outcomes

Joint with Christian Dustmann, Rasmus Landersø and Mikkel Mertz

Using Danish administrative data, we show how different aspects of victimization causally affect the long-term outcomes of the victims.