

ZHENG WANG

EUI, Department of Economics, Via delle Fontanelle 18, 50014 Fiesole (FI), Italy
☎ (+33) 7 89 69 2561 ✉ zheng.wang@eui.eu 🏠 www.zhengwangeconomics.com

EDUCATION

European University Institute

2017 – 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: Prof. Yann Bramoullé

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, Social Mobility, Discrimination, Crimes

REFERENCES

Andrea Ichino

Professor of Economics

European University Institute

✉ andrea.ichino@eui.eu

☎ (+39) 055 4685 974

Sule Alan

Professor of Economics

European University Institute

✉ sule.alan@eui.eu

☎ (+39) 055 4685 909

Yann Bramoullé

Professor of Economics

Aix-Marseille School of Economics

✉ yann.bramouille@univ-amu.fr

☎ (+33) (0)413 5525 34 and (0)413 9420 06

Fabrizia Mealli

Professor of Statistics

University of Florence & European University Institute

✉ fabrizia.mealli@unifi.it

☎ (+39) 055 4685 474

Placement Officer:

David K. Levine

✉ david.levine@eui.eu

☎ (+39) 055 4685 913

Placement Administrative Officer:

Lucia Vigna

✉ lucia.vigna@eui.eu

☎ (+39) 055 4685 928

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 empirical study of peer influence. This paper puts forward the first causal identification strategy in a potential outcome framework to study the effect of endogenously formed peer relationships. It reveals the minimum set of assumptions needed for causal identification, which, unlike existing econometric methods, needs neither a network formation model nor an outcome model. Using the proposed method, I empirically 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 graduate from college, I show the opposite is true when the girls consider the boys as friends. Thanks to their high-achieving male friends, girls become more confident in their intelligence, although no changes are found in their academic performance. Since friendship endogeneity has been addressed, the estimated effects have causal interpretations.

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

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.

Experiment on Test Performance and Implications for Fairness

Joint with Dalila Figueiredo

Ongoing pilot. Details available upon request.

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 (Causality)

Fall 2019

EUI PhD Core Course, TA to Prof. Andrea Ichino

Econometrics and Statistics II (Microeconometrics)

Spring 2018

EUI PhD Core Course, TA to Prof. Michèle Belot

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>Lori A. Beaman, Sanjeev Goyal, Yann Bramoullé & Habiba Djebbari</i>	France
Summer School on The Econometrics of Peer Effects and Social Interactions	2019
<i>Bryan Graham & 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 Special PhD Grant – Adam Smith	2017 – 2021
<i>European University Institute</i>	Italy

Languages

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