

Elisa Macchi

MIT Department of Economics - 50 Memorial Drive, E52-510 - Cambridge, MA 02142

✉ emacchi@mit.edu 🌐 elisamacchi.github.io ☎ +1-857-999-7953

Employment

Sep '21 - Dec '22 M.I.T., Postdoctoral Fellow, Economics Department
Jan '23 BROWN UNIVERSITY, Assistant Professor of Economics

Education

2021 UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH, PhD in Economics (summa cum laude)
 Thesis title: "Essays in Development Economics and Political Economy"
 Committee: David Yanagizawa-Drott, Lorenzo Casaburi, Hans-Joachim Voth
2015 UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA, M.Phil. in Economics (LMEC)
2013 UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO - BICOCCA B.Sc. in Economics and Business

Visiting Positions

2018 - 2019 HARVARD UNIVERSITY Visiting Fellow Economics Department
2012- 2013 EBERHARD KARLS UNIVERSITÄT TÜBINGEN, Erasmus Semester

Working Papers

"Worth your weight: experimental evidence on the benefits of obesity in low-income countries."

This paper studies the wealth-signaling value and the economic benefits of being obese, a seemingly irrelevant but harmful status symbol, in low-resource settings. My empirical strategy leverages a set of experiments in which I randomly assign body mass by varying if a decision maker sees an obese or a not-obese weight-manipulated portrait. I provide three main results. First, residents of Kampala (Uganda) perceive obesity as a strong signal of wealth, but not of other traits like beauty or health. Second, being obese facilitates access to credit. In a real-stake field experiment in cooperation with 124 Kampala credit institutions, professional loan officers screen borrowers based on body mass. In an access-to-credit index of loan officers' evaluations, going from normal weight to obese is equivalent to increasing a borrower's earnings by 60%. Third, the obesity premium is mainly a response to asymmetric information, thus body mass matters because it signals wealth. To test for the wealth-signaling hypothesis, I vary the degree of asymmetric information over wealth: increasing the amount of borrowers' financial information available reduces the obesity premium by two-thirds. Since obesity and earnings are positively correlated in Kampala, the results may be consistent with profit-maximizing behaviors. Yet, I find evidence of large misperceptions. Obesity benefits in accessing credit are significantly overestimated —thus inefficiently raising the perceived cost of healthy behaviors, and people appear to place too much weight on obesity as a wealth signal —likely distorting supply and demand of credit.

Ongoing Research

"Pressure to Employ, Productivity and Technology Adoption ", with B. Caprettini

"The mental health of graduate students and professors: evidence from European Economics departments", with P. Barreira and C. Sievert

Publications

"EU transfers and Euroscepticism: can't buy me love?", with A. Borin and M. Mancini [forthcoming, *Economic Policy*].

Grants & Honors

July '21	Swiss Re Fund for Development Economic - Top-up grant (USD 10'800)
Nov '20	SNSF Early Postdoc Mobility scholarship
July '20	Diligentia Stiftung Research Grant, with D. Yanagizawa-Drott (USD 39'500)
Dec '19	GRC Travel Grant (USD 2'800)
Sep '19	Swiss Re Fund for Development Economics (USD 27'000, maximum amount)
May '19	Director's Grant Zurich GSE (USD 5'400, maximum amount)
Nov '18	SNSF Doc. Mobility scholarship
Mar '17	B. Stringher scholarship (<i>particolarmente meritevole</i>) • Banca D'Italia
Mar '15	PhD scholarship • University of Zürich
Jan '14	Unicredit Ad Honorem • Unicredit S.p.a.
Sep '14	LMEC top-four-students scholarship • Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna
2010- '12	Merit-based scholarships • Università degli Studi di Milano - Bicocca

Conferences & seminar presentations

2021	EEA-ESEM congress; Weggis Workshop in Political Economy and Development, JEES. Job Market: Brown University, CEMFI, Collegio Carlo Alberto, Harris School of Public Policy, IIES, NHH, NES Moscow, Nova, PSE, Rady School of Management at UC San Diego, Stockholm University, World Bank Research.
2020	DEVPEC, Stanford (virtual); Essen Health Conference (virtual); Early Career Behavioral Economics Conference, BRIQ; Internal Applied Microeconomics Seminar, University of Zürich.
2019	Development Economics Lunch, Harvard; Internal Applied Microeconomics Seminar, University of Zürich; Development Economics Lunch, Harvard; Political Economy and Culture Workshop, Harvard; Project Design seminar, University of Zürich.
2018	Political Economy Seminar, Government department, Harvard; Accepted for poster presentation at SSDEV; Internal Applied Microeconomics Seminar, University of Zürich.
2017	European Trade Study Group (ETSG), European University Institute and University of Florence; Internal Applied Microeconomics Seminar, University of Zürich.

Teaching Experience

Spring '18	T.A., <i>Econometrics for Policy Analysts</i> (M.A.), University of Zürich
Fall '17	T.A., <i>Labor Economics</i> (M.A.), University of Zürich
Spring '17	T.A., <i>Intermediate Econometrics</i> (B.A.), University of Zürich

Referee

QJE, AER: INSIGHTS

Relevant Employment History and Professional Activities

- 2018 PhD Member of hiring committee for 2 positions in "Economics of Child and Youth Development / with a focus on breastfeeding." Economics department, University of Zürich.
- 2017- 2019 Research Assistant for Fabrizio Zilibotti,
SNSF Project "*Inequality, cultural transmission, and human capital accumulation*"
- 2017 Ph.D. Intern, DG Economics, Statistics and Research, Bank of Italy
-

Personal skills

IT

Stata • R • Python • ~~LaTeX~~ • OTree • HTML (beginner)

LANGUAGES

Italian (native) • English (fluent) • Spanish (fluent) • German (advanced)