

# Yi SHENG

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## RESEARCH FIELDS

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Behavioral Economics; Experimental Economics

Research Interests: Costly Signaling; Ethnic Discrimination; Other-regarding Preferences

## EDUCATION

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**Tilburg University**, Tilburg, the Netherlands *2018 - September 2024 (expected)*

Ph.D. candidate in Economics, supervised by Prof. Sigrid Suetens and Prof. Jan Potters

Research Master in Economics, Sep 2019

**Shanghai University of Finance and Economics**, Shanghai, China *2015 - 2018*

Master-PhD program, M.A. in Economics in 2017

**Huazhong University of Science and Technology**, Wuhan, China *2011 - 2015*

B.S. in Economics

## RESEARCH VISITS

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**University of California San Diego**, San Diego, the United States *October - December 2022*

Visiting graduate student at Rady School of Management

## REFERENCES

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**Prof. Sigrid Suetens**

Department of Economics

Tilburg University

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**Prof. Jan Potters**

Department of Economics

Tilburg University

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**Prof. Arno M. Riedl**

School of Business and Economics

Maastricht University

[a.riedl@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:a.riedl@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

## RESEARCH OUTPUT

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### *Working Papers*

**Help to Signal (Job market paper)**, *pre-registered [here](#), available [here](#)*

This study investigates whether helping colleagues in a competitive work environment can be strategically used as a signal of one's ability and how others respond. A novel real-effort lab experiment was conducted where two workers compete for one position and one worker can help the other at a cost. Two treatments, *Signal* and *Baseline*, vary in the timing of whether the helping decisions are observed before or after employers make hiring decisions. The findings show that workers indeed help their competitors to signal their abilities. Employers can recognize this signal and are more likely to hire those who help. Remarkably, no matter whether the help harms the recipient's prospect of being hired, those who provide the help are equally likely to be rewarded by the competing worker. This

study provides insights into how strategic motives encourage employees to help their colleagues, even in competitive work environments.

**Ethnic Salience and Discrimination (with Zahra Murad, Emel Öztürk, and Sigrid Suetens),**  
*pre-registered [here](#), available [here](#)*

We report the results of three controlled experiments in which participants belonging to an ethnic majority group made choices that affected the payoff of another (“vulnerable”) participant who was either a member of the majority group or an ethnic minority group. Each of the experiments consisted of several experimental waves that varied in the extent to which issues related to ethnicity were salient to the decision makers. The variation in *ethnic salience* was the result of the differential timing of the experimental waves, and, in one of the experiments, was also the result of varying the information provided about the vulnerable participant’s ethnic background. Across all three experiments, decision makers behaved more generously towards participants with a minority background in waves with high ethnic salience, while behavior towards participants from the majority was unaffected. Evidence is provided that the mechanism behind this result involves social desirability bias.

*Work in Progress*

**Other-regarding Ethnic Preferences (with Sigrid Suetens),** *pre-registered [here](#)*

We study whether other-regarding preferences of the majority population in Germany and the Netherlands depend on the ethnic background of others. To do so, we ran large-scale controlled experiments among the general majority population in both countries. The participants’ main task was to make a series of choices on allocating money between themselves and another participant, or between two other participants. Part of the decision-makers were matched with others who also belonged to the majority population, and another part of the decision-makers were matched with others who belonged to an ethnic minority group. The choices were constructed with the purpose of structurally estimating the parameters of a utility function that allows for a variety of other-regarding preferences, including altruism, inequality aversion, spite, and welfare maximization. We find that, overall, none of the other-regarding preferences depends on the ethnic background of the other.

*Predoctoral Publication*

Lu, C., J. Li, and Y. Sheng (2020). A study on the negative externality of USD liquidity-based on the asset allocation efficiency of US treasury securities. *The Singapore Economic Review*, 1-29.

**PRESENTATIONS**

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**Help to Signal**

2023 ESA’s job-market candidates seminar series, online	<i>October 2023</i>
2023 European ESA Meeting in Exeter, UK	<i>September 2023</i>
TIBER Symposium 2023 at Tilburg University	<i>August 2023</i>
2023 ESA World Meeting in Lyon, France	<i>June 2023</i>
Interdisciplinary Brownbag Seminar at Maastricht University (invited)	<i>April 2023</i>
2022 North-American ESA Meeting in Santa Barbara	<i>November 2022</i>
Internal seminar of the Behavioral and Experimental Economics group	<i>April and September 2022</i>

**Ethnic Salience and Discrimination**

8th Maastricht Behavioral Economic Policy Symposium (M-BEPS)	<i>June 2023</i>
Poster session at Spring School in Behavioral Economics at UC San Diego	<i>October 2022</i>
Internal seminar of the Behavioral and Experimental Economics group	<i>June 2022</i>

**Other-regarding Ethnic Preferences**

ESA 2021 Global Online Conference	<i>July 2021</i>
2021 CES Annual Conference, online	<i>June 2021</i>
2021 China Behavioral and Experimental Economics Forum at SUFE	<i>May 2021</i>
Internal seminar of the Behavioral and Experimental Economics group	<i>January 2021</i>

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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### Refereeing

Journal of Economic Psychology

### International Visits

8th Spring School in Behavioral Economics hosted by FAIR (NHH) and Rady School of Management at UCSD *October 24 - 28, 2022*

25th Visiting Graduate Student Workshop in Experimental Economics at Chapman University *January 7 - 12, 2020*

### Other Activities

Co-organizer of TIBER symposium 2021 and 2023

Organizer of Tilburg Behavioral & Experimental Economics Reading Group, 2020-2023

## SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

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CentER funding for an international research visit	<i>2022</i>
CentER Scholarship	<i>2018 - 2019</i>
Academic Scholarship at SUFE	<i>2015 - 2018</i>
Best Bachelor Thesis Award in Hubei Province	<i>June 2015</i>

## TEACHING

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### Tilburg University, Tilburg, the Netherlands

*Teaching Assistant*

Macroeconomics for IBA (Lecturers: Louis.B.D.Raes, Malik.Çürük) *Spring 2020 - 2023*

Microeconomics for IBA (Lecturers: Boris van Leeuwen, Mery Ferrando) *Fall 2019 - 2021*

### Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, Shanghai, China

*Teaching Assistant*

Marketing for international undergraduates (Lecturer: Richard F. Foristel) *Fall 2017 - 2018*

Advanced Microeconomics for graduates (Lecturer: Simin He) *Fall 2017 - 2018*

Labor Economics for graduates (Lecturer: Eric Mak) *Fall 2017 - 2018*

International Economics for undergraduates (Lecturer: Yuanyuan Chen) *Fall 2017 - 2018*

Industrial Organization for graduates (Lecturer: Bradley Ruffle) *Summer 2017*

Econometrics for undergraduates (Lecturer: Cong Li) *Spring 2016 - 2017*

Microeconomics Topics for graduates (Lecturers: Quan Wen, Qianfeng Tang, Yongchao Zhang) *Spring 2016 - 2017*

Mathematical Statistics for international undergraduates (Lecturers: Pinyuen Chen, Lifang Hsu) *Spring 2016 - 2017*

## OTHER INFORMATION

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### Languages

Native Chinese, fluent English

### Technical Skills

z-Tree, oTree, LaTeX, R, Python, Stata, MATLAB, C++