

# Martina Vecchi

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Home institution:  
**The University of Edinburgh**  
School of Economics, 30 Buccleuch Place  
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Visiting Institution (*current address*):  
**European University Institute (EUI)**  
Villa la Fonte, Via delle Fontanelle 18  
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## Research Fields

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Applied Behavioural Economics, Health Economics, Environmental Economics.

## Education

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Ph.D. Economics, **The University of Edinburgh**, 2014 - 2019 (*expected*).

Supervisors: Michèle Belot, Liang Bai

Research associate and Visiting Ph.D. Economics, **European University Institute**, Jan 2017 - current

Visiting research scholar, **University of Cologne**, Sep 2015 - Feb 2016

M.Sc. Economics of Public Policy, **Barcelona Graduate School of Economics**, 2013 - 2014

M.Sc. Economics and International Finance, **Catholic University of Milan**, 2009 - 2012

B.Sc. Economics and Business Administration, **Catholic University of Milan**, 2006 - 2009

## References

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Michèle Belot  
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European University Institute (EUI)  
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Professor of Economics  
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## Research Papers

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### **"Groups and Socially Responsible Production: An Experiment with Farmers "**

*Job Market Paper*

With a framed field experiment with 126 farmers in Italy, I study the impact of two dimensions of group decisions on socially responsible production: joint decision-making and shared consequences of the decision. I ask farmers about the purchase of a product for their farm in either an ecological or a non-ecological but profitable variety. I find deciding for a group and sharing consequences of the decision gives a self-serving reason to reduce guilt and reduces socially responsible decisions. I also link farmers' socially responsible behaviour in a donation decision to the characteristics of farms and farmers. Older subject, females and subjects with preference for environmentally friendly products donate significantly more. Having more employees in the farm instead slightly decreases donations.

### **"Rewarding with a food makes that food more rewarding"**

*with Jan Michael Bauer, Michèle Belot, Marina Schröder, research in progress*

Parents often use sweet and calorie dense foods to reward their children. We hypothesize that such practices may contribute to the formation of unhealthy food preferences. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a randomized field experiment with 214 children within 3 schools in Germany. In the treatment classes, children were asked to complete a cognitive task in 6 visits over 3 weeks, and received dried apples as a reward. The task consisted of counting a number of random dots in several different pictures. In the control group classes, children received the dried apple unconditionally. Receiving the food for solving the tasks might provoke a positive association of the food with the positive feeling of being rewarded. It could also be that having to provide effort to obtain a food enhances the value of that food. To study this, we split the treatment groups into two, varying the number of pictures between the two treatment groups. Varying the number of pictures allows identifying the role of effort in driving a change in preference for dried apple. Our results show that rewarding children with food does increase their liking for the food reward, it also shows that the effect of rewarding is weaker when the effort required to obtain the reward is high. These findings suggest that parents and carers should avoid using unhealthy food as rewards and may even use this mechanism to increase the liking of healthy food by using such foods as rewards.

### **"Maternal Stress and Food Preferences"**

*with Michèle Belot, Jonathan James and Nicolai Vitt, research in progress*

The spread of obesity in developed nations over the past decades has disproportionately affected lower socioeconomic groups (McLaren, 2007). Among the factors suggested to cause this socioeconomic gradient in obesity are higher levels of stress and a lack of tools to cope with stressful situations among low socioeconomic groups (Moore and Cunningham, 2012). Eating more or eating foods high in fat and sugar might provide comfort in stressful times. Making healthy decisions may also be more difficult when the mind is occupied with handling stressful situations.

To study the impact of acute stress on food choices, immediate or planned, and of in utero exposure to maternal stress affect on child's future preferences for obesogenic foods, we conducted a lab experiment with around 50 Italian low income mothers and we will conduct more sessions in the United Kingdom in the autumn of 2018. In the stress treatment, subjects will be asked to complete a 10 minute block of short incentivised decision tasks which is designed to mimic stressors often experienced by

low-socioeconomic mothers. Following the stress or control task, subjects will be asked to purchase food items in a “virtual supermarket” and will be offered some high- and low-calorie snack foods. The nutritional content of the chosen food shopping basket and the quantity of snacks consumed will be used to determine the impact of acute stress on immediate and planned food consumption choices. We then use a questionnaire to capture chronic stress during pregnancy and we estimate its impact on children’s food preferences measured via survey.

## Teaching Experience

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- 2014** T.A Economics 1 - Microeconomics (undergraduate), The University of Edinburgh
- 2015** T.A Economics 1 - Macroeconomics (undergraduate), The University of Edinburgh
- 2016** T.A Statistical Methods for Economics (undergraduate), The University of Edinburgh

## Presentations and Summer Schools

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**2018**

Florence (Nudge-it Workshop), Copenhagen (Second Workshop on Experimental Economics and Entrepreneurship, Copenhagen Business School), Berlin (ESA World Meeting 2018)

**2017**

Trolleholm Castle (Arne Ryde Workshop: Experimental Methods in the Study of Firms, Management and Entrepreneurs, Lund University)

**2016**

Utrecht (Nudge-it Meeting), Cologne (Seminar, University of Cologne), San Diego (Spring School in Behavioral Economics, UCSD), Kiel (Kiel Institute Summer School and SBRE Workshop)

**2015**

Crieff Hydro (SGPE Ph.D. Conference), Barcelona (GSE Summer School in Microeconometrics), University of Edinburgh (Ph.D. Group Meeting)

## Skills

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**Programming** STATA, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, Qualtrics, z-Tree  
**Languages** Italian (native), English (fluent), Spanish (intermediate) French (basic)

## Other Activities

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- 2013** Internship at ABB SPA - Business Analyst, Milan
- 2012** Internship at UniCredit Bank AG SPA - Investment Banking, Milan