

Akanksha Vardani

CONTACT INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
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PLACEMENT CHAIRS

Sandra Black
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PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATORS

Amy Devine
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Rosie Lourentzatos
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EDUCATION

Columbia University, New York

Ph.D in Economics

2019-2025 (*Expected*)

M.Phil in Economics

2022

M.A. in Economics

2021

Delhi School of Economics (DSE), New Delhi

Master of Arts in Economics

2018

Indraprastha College for Women(IPCW), University of Delhi

Bachelor of Arts (Honors) in Economics

2016

RESEARCH FIELDS

Development Economics, Public Economics, Economics of Family and Gender

JOB MARKET PAPER

A House for Two : Empowering Women with Property Rights

Abstract: Formal property ownership may not empower women unless those that they interact with also recognize it. I study the effect of improving awareness about property rights on women's empowerment through a field experiment in rural Maharashtra. I work in a setting where following a recent policy change married women are documented owners but only 26% recognize it. I randomize an awareness campaign across 1,783 households that informs both spouses that women co-own their property and delivers a physical copy of their ownership document. The campaign improves knowledge that women hold property rights, increases expenditure on women-specific goods by 40%, and reduces men's alcohol consumption by 33%, though it has no overall effect on domestic violence. I develop and test an intrahousehold bargaining model, which highlights that the effect of the campaign may differ depending on who already knows. Consistent with the model's predictions, the strongest consumption effects are observed in households with the lowest initial knowledge about women's ownership, while reductions in domestic violence occur in households where the husband did not know but the wife did. This study highlights how shifting beliefs about women's rights is essential to realizing the full impact of large-scale government programs.

This project is conducted in collaboration with the government administrative unit Pune Zilla Parishad and Chaitanya, a not-for-profit organization working on women's empowerment.

WORKING PAPER

How do political connections affect property tax compliance?

with Aneesha Parvathaneni

Abstract: How does being connected to a local elected leader affect property tax compliance? Using a close election difference-in-discontinuities design, we quantify the effect of being connected to a local elected leader on tax liability and compliance. We use novel administrative data on property taxation from an Indian district and find that citizens connected to local elected leaders are 45 percentage points more likely to remit taxes and remit 351% more in taxes. We also find that these results are partially driven by enforcement as those who are connected are 30.8 percentage points more likely to face fines and face 247% more in fines. Among those who are connected to the local elected leader, we find that these results are driven by poorer property owners.

This project is conducted in collaboration with the government administrative unit Pune Zilla Parishad.

WORK IN PROGRESS	Unpacking Willingness to Pay as a Measure of Women's Empowerment with Aletheia Donald, William Hickman and Berber Kramer	
	From Skills to Jobs: How Community and Household Networks Impact Women's Workforce Entry with Tushar Kundu	
	<i>This project is conducted in collaboration with Calcutta Foundation, a not-for-profit organization working on women's skill development.</i>	
	Signaling in Female Education with Tushar Kundu	
AWARDS AND HONORS	SurveyCTO Primary Data Collection Research Grant (Honorable Mention)	2024
	Wueller Pre-Dissertation Award for Best 4th-year Proposal, Columbia University	2023
	Reubens Travel and Research Award, Columbia University	2023
	Wueller Award for Best TA for MA Program, Columbia University	2022
	Wueller Award for Best TA (Runners up) for Undergraduate Courses, Columbia University	2022
	Exim Bank Scholarship, DSE	2016-2018
	National (CAS) Scholarship Internal, DSE	2016-2018
	Rai Bahadur Raghunath Sahai Memorial Prize, IPCW	2016
	Rewa Dhawan Memorial Scholarship, IPCW	2013-2016
	Nagendra Nath Majumdar Memorial Prize, IPCW	2016
	Principal's Honour Roll, IPCW	2015
FELLOWSHIPS	NBER Gender in the Economy Fellowship	2023-2024
RESEARCH GRANTS	Weiss Fund (with Aneesha Parvathaneni)	2024
	CDEP Student Research Grant , Columbia University	2023
	PER Experiment Grant , Columbia University	2023
	CDEP Student Research Grant , Columbia University	2022
	PER Experiment Grant , Columbia University	2022
	PER Research Fellow Summer Grant , Columbia University	2020
FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE	Running a randomised control trial (RCT) in India to study the impact of land ownership on women's empowerment.	May 2023-present
	Conducted a household-level survey on women's bargaining power across 30 villages, covering 150 households in Pune, India.	October 2022
	Surveyed the workers of the informal wire stripping industry in Seelampur, Delhi.	March 2015
	Surveyed the workers of the informal garment sector in Kapashera, Delhi.	December 2013
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AND INTERNSHIPS	Research Assistant <i>Supervisors: Michael Best and Evan Sadler</i> Department of Economics, Columbia University, New York	2020-2021
	Research Assistant <i>Supervisor: Rohini Somanathan</i> Department of Economics, Delhi School of Economics, New Delhi	2017-2019
	Research Analyst Intern India Institute, New Delhi	2015
	Research Intern Consumers India, New Delhi	2014-2015

TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Teaching Fellow, Columbia University	
	Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate)	Fall 2022
	Microeconomics (MA)	Spring 2022
	Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate)	Fall 2021
	Math Camp (PhD)	Summer 2021
ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS	European Association of Young Economists Annual Meeting	2024
	Imperial College PhD Conference	2024
	NBER Summer Institute	2023
	14th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development	2018
	4th Annual Center for research on the Economics of Climate, Food, Energy and Environment (CECFEE) Research and Policy Workshop	2018
	12th South Asian Economics Students’ Meet	2016
TECHNICAL SKILLS	STATA, R, Python, L ^A T _E X	
LANGUAGE SKILLS	English (Fluent), Hindi (Native Speaker), French (Intermediate) and German (Beginner)	
REFERENCES	Cristian Pop-Eleches Professor School of International and Public Affairs Columbia University cp2124@columbia.edu	Michael Best Assistant Professor Department of Economics Columbia University mcb2270@columbia.edu
	Pierre-André Chiappori E. Rowan and Barbara Steinschneider Professor of Economics Department of Economics Columbia University pc2167@columbia.edu	Bernard Salanié Sami Mnaymneh Professor of Economics, Director of the Master’s Program Department of Economics Columbia University bs2237@columbia.edu
	Jack Willis Assistant Professor Department of Economics Columbia University jw3634@columbia.edu	