JENNA ANDERS

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Academic Positions

Assistant Professor of Public Policy, 2025-
University of Virginia, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy

S.V. Ciriacy-Wantrup Postdoctoral Fellow, 2024-2025
University of California-Berkeley, Agricultural and Resource Economics

Education

Harvard University
Ph.D. Economics, 2018 to 2024
Harvard Environmental Economics Program Pre-Doctoral Fellow

Brown University
B.A. Economics (honors), Environmental Studies, 2016

Fields

Primary: Public Economics, Environmental Economics
Secondary: Labor Economics

Working Papers

"**Good Cop, Bad Cop: State and Federal Environmental Enforcement**" (with Romaine Campbell)

How does federal regulatory capacity affect state enforcement outcomes? In this paper, we provide a model in which a stronger federal regulatory agency can either strengthen or weaken states' negotiating position with their regulated entities. The optimal federal enforcement for the states is one that maximizes state-level negotiated penalties. We apply this in the context of environmental regulation to test whether the EPA's enforcement is too strong or too lenient in two environmental programs. First, using an EPA database of state-issued penalties, we show that when EPA's budget was cut in 2011, state penalties for Clean Air Act violations shrank by 15%. Second, using a dataset with information about environmental remediation projects under California state jurisdiction, we show that firms are more likely to begin cleanup projects during Democratic federal administrations. Our remediation analysis identifies the mechanism: while firm cleanup behavior is affected by EPA strength, cleanups conducted by the state are not, providing evidence that the effects operate through firm-state bargaining. We conclude that over one-third of EPA's effect on environmental penalties is through its spillovers to state outcomes, and that states would benefit from a stronger EPA.

"**The Welfare Effects of Eligibility Expansions: Theory and Evidence from SNAP**" (with Charlie Rafkin), 2024. Conditionally accepted at *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*.

We study the U.S. rollout of eligibility expansions in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Using administrative data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we show that expanding eligibility raises enrollment among the inframarginal (always-eligible) population. Using an online experiment and an administrative survey, we find evidence that information frictions, rather than stigma, drive the new take-up. To interpret our findings, we develop a general model of the optimal eligibility threshold for welfare programs with incomplete take-up. Given our empirical results and certain modeling assumptions, the SNAP eligibility threshold is lower than optimal.

"**Social Disconnection and the Missing Market**" (with Amanda Pallais)

Social disconnection has increased over the last 25 years, while traditional contexts for forming connections, like churches and in-person workplaces, have weakened. Through a field experiment, we

show the effectiveness of an alternative approach to connection formation: mutual friend intermediaries. We hosted a four-week trivia competition where participants could either join friend-organized teams or register to be matched onto teams with strangers. We then randomized which teams could participate. When teams were organized by existing friends, teammates who weren't initially friends were 20 pp more likely to be friends and 15 pp to be in text communication four months later due to participating, while participating reduced contemporaneous loneliness by 11 pp (24%). In contrast, the intervention did not generate lasting relationships for pairs matched onto teams by the competition. Yet, we propose mutual friends make inefficiently few introductions due to a market failure: it is difficult to compensate friends for organizing costs. Consistent with inefficient underprovision, survey evidence finds substantial untapped supply of friend introductions – 72% of people say they could connect friends, while only 5% recently have – alongside strong demand for such introductions. Finally, we discuss examples of organizations that encourage people to bring their networks together at scale, showing how the organizations best positioned to scale this approach may not be those typically associated with community building

Work in Progress

"Welfare Analyses of Firm-Based Government Policies" (with Valerie Chuang, Nathaniel Hendren, and Eric Zwick)

Fellowships & Awards

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2018-2023

Teaching

Using Big Data to Solve Economic and Social Problems, Harvard University, teaching fellow for Professor Raj Chetty, 2022
Labor Market Analysis, Harvard University, teaching fellow for Professor Lawrence Katz, 2021

Academic Service

Referee, *Journal of Public Economics*
Referee, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*
Referee, *Journal of Urban Economics*
MOOC creator, Pathways to Research and Doctoral Careers (PREDOC) Consortium
Co-organizer, Harvard Labor/Public Finance Workshop, 2021-2022

Research Grants

Chae Family Economics Research Fund, Harvard, 2022
Mind, Brain, and Behavior, Harvard, 2020
The Lab for Economic Applications and Policy (LEAP), Harvard, 2020
Foundations of Human Behavior, Harvard, 2019
Warburg Foundation, Harvard, 2019