

Ellen Anderson

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Education

Ph.D., Economics, University of California, Davis, 2019-2025 (expected)
B.A., Economics and Statistics, Northwestern University, 2012-2016

Research Interests

Development Economics, Economic History, Labor Economics

Job Market Paper

Anderson, Ellen and Socorro Martinez. “Gender Equity in the US Civil Service: Evidence from the Classification Act of 1923.” (2024).

Pay standardization schemes are commonly implemented in organizations to address pay gaps based on gender, race, or ethnicity. These schemes limit managerial discretion to determine wages, thereby limiting gender inequality within job titles. However, this may shift inequality to other margins such as position quality or promotions. This study examines the effects of the Classification Act of 1923, which standardized pay grades and position categories and required “equal pay for equal work” in the US Civil Service, on women’s earnings relative to men’s. Using a triple difference approach, we exploit the fact that the policy applied to civil servants working in Washington, D.C., but not to those working in federal field offices, and allow for differential effects of the policy by gender. We find that the law did not improve women’s relative pay within job titles. Further, the law lowered women’s relative compensation without controlling for job titles, suggesting changes in women’s positions. We indeed find large negative effects on the position margin. In response to the law, departments downgraded women to lower-quality positions. These negative consequences predominantly affected newly hired women. Our findings underscore the importance of unintended margins of adjustment for policies related to gender equity.

Publications

Anderson, Ellen, Travis J. Lybbert, Ashish Shenoy, Rupika Singh, and Daniel Stein. “Does Survey Mode Matter? Comparing In-Person and Phone Agricultural Surveys in India.” *Journal of Development Economics* 166 (2024): 103199.

Ubiquitous mobile phone ownership makes phone surveying an attractive method of low-cost data collection. We explore differences between in-person and phone survey measures of agricultural production collected for an impact evaluation in India. Phone responses have greater mean and variance, a difference that persists even within a subset of respondents that answered the same question over both modes. Treatment effect estimation remains stable across survey mode, but estimates are less precise when using phone data. These patterns are informative for cost and sample size considerations in study design and for aggregating evidence across study sites or time periods.

Working Papers

Anderson, Ellen, Rupika Singh, Daniel Stein, and Kate Sturla. “What are the Barriers to Pulse Cultivation in India? Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial.” (2024).

India is the largest producer and consumer of pulses, but in recent years has needed to import pulses to meet domestic demand. In order to keep prices stable and control the balance of trade, increasing domestic pulse production has become a national policy priority. However, farmers face multiple constraints to pulse cultivation. We design an experiment to measure the relative importance of these constraints for an optimal short-term pulse promotion policy. We conduct an RCT testing three different implementation models designed to ease different constraints: the “high intensity” provides seed distribution, extension services, and demonstration plots, the “medium intensity”

provides seed distribution and extension services, and the “low intensity” only provides seed distribution via a voucher system. Overall, we find that all three models are effective in promoting pulse cultivation, with no statistically significant differences between the models. Treatment increased farmers’ propensity to grow pulses over two seasons by 12 and 15 percentage points, respectively. These results suggest that, at least for the initial phase of pulse adoption, access to quality seeds is the key constraint, as opposed to information. Therefore, seed distribution is likely a cost-effective way to quickly increase the adoption and production of pulse crops.

Relevant Professional Experience

Research Assistant, Prof. Erich Muehlegger, UC Davis, 9/2022-9/2023

Worked with wholesaler used vehicle auction data to study the relationship between used car demand and tax refunds. Tasks included data cleaning, visualization, and analysis.

Research Assistant, Profs. Travis Lybbert and Ashish Shenoy, UC Davis, 6/2021-9/2021

Compared responses to phone and in-person household surveys to measure survey mode effects. Tested for differences in randomized control trial treatment effects based on survey data collection method.

Senior Associate, IDinsight, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, 8/2018-8/2019

Developed toolkit to assist social sector organizations in choosing and implementing the right monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool for program needs. Supported client development to expand work with US-based organizations. Contributed to impact evaluation design for results-based financing projects.

Associate, IDinsight, New Delhi, India, 8/2016-8/2018

Conducted randomized control trial with farmers in Bihar, India, measuring the effects of a pulses farming subsidy and extension program on economic outcomes. Supported research design, implementation, survey design, data collection, analysis, and results dissemination, including technical report writing.

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, UC Davis, 2020-2024

Courses: Public Finance (Fall 2020), Principles of Microeconomics (Winter 2021), Economics of the Labor Market (Spring 2021, Winter 2022), Economic Development (Fall 2021), Economic History (Spring 2022), Analysis of Economic Data (Summer 2022), Intermediate Microeconomics (Fall 2024).

Conference Presentations

2024: Bay Area Economic History Graduate Student Workshop, Economic History Association Annual Meeting (poster), All-California Labor Economics Conference (2nd Place for Best Poster Prize), All-California Economic History Graduate Student Job Market Conference

2022: Innovations for Poverty Action Annual Researcher Gathering

Grants and Fellowships

UC Davis Bilinski Fellowship (Tuition and Stipend), 2023-2024

Economic History Association Early-Stage Dissertation Grant, 2023

Oxford Global Priorities Fellowship, 2023

Forethought Foundation Global Priorities Fellowship, 2022

UC Davis Economics Research Travel Award, 2022

UC Davis Provost Fellowship (Tuition and Stipend), 2019-2020

Referee Service

European Review of Agricultural Economics

Other Service and Leadership

Treasurer, UC Davis Economics Graduate Student Association, 2022-2023

President, UC Davis Economics Graduate Student Association, 2021-2022

Team Captain, Member of Northwestern University Women's Swim & Dive Team, 2012-2016

Programming

Advanced: Stata, LaTeX, SurveyCTO

Proficient: R, Python

References

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