

Akanksha Vardani

CONTACT INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
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PLACEMENT CHAIRS

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PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATORS

Amy Devine
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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, Family Economics, Public Economics

JOB MARKET PAPER

A House for Two : Empowering Women with Property Rights

Abstract: Improving women's access to property ownership is a commonly employed policy to enhance their empowerment, yet the evidence on its impact remains mixed. One key reason may be the failure to distinguish between documented rights and effective rights - the latter encompassing both formal rights and their recognition, particularly by women and those around them, especially husbands. This study investigates the impact of strengthening women's effective property rights on empowerment through a field experiment in rural Maharashtra. I work in a setting where women are documented owners but lack effective rights, and beliefs about these rights vary within couples. I implement a randomized awareness campaign across 1,783 households, providing both spouses in the treatment group with information on women's property rights and a physical copy of the ownership document. The campaign significantly improves beliefs about women's property rights, increasing expenditure on women-specific goods by 40% and reducing men's alcohol consumption by 33%, though it has no overall effect on domestic violence. I then develop and test an intra-household bargaining model, which highlights the role of pre-existing differences in spousal beliefs. Consistent with the model's predictions, the strongest consumption effects are observed in households with the lowest initial beliefs about women's ownership, while reductions in domestic violence occur in households where the husband's initial beliefs are lower than the wife's. By focusing on effective property rights, this study clarifies the link between women's property rights and empowerment, offering insights into how beliefs could explain the mixed evidence in the literature.

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.

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	
	Signaling in Female Education with Tushar Kundu	
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
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*

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^AT_EX

LANGUAGE SKILLS

English (Fluent), **Hindi** (Native Speaker), **French** (Intermediate) and **German** (Beginner)

REFERENCES

Cristian Pop-Eleches
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