

# Peter Berck's Impacts on Gender Equity in Environmental Economics



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Peter Berck's research on topics in natural resources, environmental economics, and agricultural economics was impactful both in academia and in the policy realm. His research inspired its researchers and provided insights on problems in multiple sectors. Many others have discussed Peter's research impacts. I will focus on how Peter impacted people. He built people up and inspired them, especially his students.

Peter believed in his students, both those who were fortunate enough to have him as their advisor and those who took his classes. Peter treated his students as colleagues. A student's opinions and findings were as important to Peter as those of his Berkeley faculty colleagues. Peter had a strong sense of himself and confidence in his work. In academia, researchers get rejections more often than not, so confidence in oneself is essential to success. Peter instilled confidence in his students.

There were a small number of female doctoral students in ARE at Berkeley in the 1990s, of whom I was one. Peter expected excellence from us and took our research very seriously. He was always willing to give us feedback and offer advice. We were treated no differently than his almost entirely male colleagues. We were invited to social events and academic events. In my experiences over more than 20 years since graduating from Berkeley, I have come to understand that this is the exception rather than the rule in how professors relate to PhD students, especially female students. Peter personally offered to watch my newborn daughter so I could attend a seminar.

It is not surprising that many of the female students who interacted with Peter have been some of the leaders in the field of agricultural and resource economics. Of the 30 doctoral-granting agricultural and resource economics departments, only nine have female department heads or chairs. Of those nine, five of them (56%)

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are Berkeley graduates who overlapped with and were influenced by Peter. There is one male Berkeley PhD graduate, Jinhao Zhao, Dean of the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell, who also interacted with Peter. The female Berkeley PhD department chairs/heads include more department chairs or department heads (five) than the number produced by any other university, by a 2.5 factor. (Five other universities each have produced two female chairs/heads each. All others have produced only one, or none.) This has important long-term implications.

In sum, Peter believed in ARE PhD students, especially female students. There is often an expectation bias that discounts women. Peter's mentorship counteracted this bias. Peter's mentorship has resulted in profound changes in the field of agricultural and resource economics. His research, administrative, and policy impacts were also large and will be long-lasting. I emphasize the impact that his students will have. His students and their students will forever honor his memory.

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