

The 33rd International Seminar on Experiments and Surveys in Economics and Related
Social Sciences

Date: 13:30-14:20 Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Speaker: Alistair Munro (National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies)

Title: Female Autonomy in North and South India: An Experiment

Venue: W9 Building, 6th floor, Room #626, Ookayama campus, Tokyo Institute of
Technology

Abstract: Dyson and Moore (1983) hypothesise that women in South India enjoy relatively more agency than in the North. Their conclusions have become part of the standard picture of Indian rural society. We take a sample of 1200 couples from two areas in the north of India (Uttar Pradesh) and one area in the south (Tamil Nadu) that are often taken to exemplify differences in the status of women and the nature of marital relationships. We run economic experiments to test some standard theories of the household and to examine anthropological theories about women's autonomy and men's behaviour within marriage. We find large-scale and robust evidence of inefficiency and the hiding of assets when this is possible. Men invest more and are more generous to their partners. Women are more willing to invest in a common pool when their income is earned through working and when assets are publicly observable. They work harder when they control the results of their work. Overall we find continuing significant differences between North and South and we find no evidence that urbanisation is associated with changes in the nature of marital relationships.

Moderator: Noboru Hidano