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Development Economics
Distributive Justice and Economic Philosophy
Applied Microeconomics

Desired Teaching:

Development Economics
Distributive Justice and Economic Philosophy
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Comprehensive Examinations Completed:

2005 (Oral) Development Economics;
Distributive Justice and Economic Philosophy
2004 (Written) Microeconomics, Macroeconomics

Dissertation Title:

Economic Causes of Sex Discrimination in India

Committee:

Professor Christopher Udry
Professor Dean Karlan
Professor Mark Rosenzweig

Expected Ph.D. Completion Date: May 2009

Degrees:

Ph.D., Economics, Yale University, Expected May 2009
M.Phil., Economics, Yale University, 2007
M.A., Economics, Yale University, 2005
B.A., Economics and Mathematics, Williams College (cum laude), 2002

Fellowships, Honors, Awards:

Yale Dissertation Fellowship, Fall 2008
Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship, Yale University, 2006-2007
Sasakawa Research Award, Yale University, 2006
YCIAS Dissertation Fellowship, Yale University, 2006
Coca Cola World Fund Summer Grant, Yale University, 2005
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Fellowship, Yale University, 2003-2008
Fulbright Award, Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Norway,
2002-2003

Teaching Experience:

Teaching Assistant
IDE International Economics, Prof. Koichi Hamada, Yale University, Spring 2006,
Spring 2007, Spring 2008
Game Theory, Prof. Benjamin Polak, Yale University, Fall 2005
Game Theory, Prof. Stewart Johnson, Williams College, Fall 2000, Fall 2001

Research Experience

Field Work
Randomized Study Design: Health Insurance and Health Education, w/ Centre for Microfinance,
India, 2005-2006
Research Assistant
Research Assistant, Prof. Rohini Pande, Yale University, 2005
Research Assistant, Prof. Gordon Winston, Williams College, 1999-2002
Research Assistant, Prof. Michael Samson, South Africa, EPRI, 2001
Research Assistant, Prof. Catherine Hill, Williams College, 1999

Language Skills:

English (native), French (basic), Norwegian (basic)

Papers:

“Fertility Decisions and Child Mortality: Unintended Consequences of Family Formation in India,” (Job Market Paper).
“Economic Incentives for Selective Abortion in India” (in progress).
“Opium Supply and HIV: Did the Taliban Reduce Global HIV Transmission?” (in progress).

Referee Service:

Journal of Development Economics

Presentations:

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References:

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Dissertation Abstract: *Economic Causes of Sex Discrimination in India*

In several developing countries, child mortality is high and girls suffer much higher mortality rates than boys. This finding is particularly troubling because boys are biologically weaker than girls, and thus we see higher mortality rates amongst boys than girls in all developed countries. My dissertation examines the economic causes of sex discrimination in India. If boys provide future economic benefits, while girls bring economic burdens, then parents with scarce resources have strong incentives to favor their sons over their daughters. The first chapter shows theoretically and empirically how parents in this context make fertility decisions and how these decisions disadvantage girls relative to boys. I take these results further by examining the particular cultural institutions of India that can create economic incentives to discriminate against girls and favor boys. I focus on how inheritance rights that favor sons can help explain fertility decisions and the child mortality gap. The second chapter estimates the lifetime economic costs of girls and benefits of boys using detailed household economic data.

Fertility and Child Mortality: Unintended Consequences of Family Formation in India (Job Market Paper)

This chapter examines how fertility decisions are affected by boys having large future economic benefits and girls having large future economic costs and how these fertility decisions in turn intensify discrimination against girls and in favor of boys. Economic incentives cause households to use sex-selective abortion and fertility stopping rules. Son-preferring stopping rules create a distribution of fertility outcomes such that households with few children have a high proportion of boys and households with many children have a high proportion of girls. Sex selective abortion reduces family size and increases the proportion of boys in a household. I present an economic model to derive the effects of number of children, *the household size effect*, and of a change in the proportion of boys or girls, *the sex composition effect*, on parents' discrimination against girls. As the proportion of girls increases, parents have a stronger incentive to discriminate against relatively costly girls, and parents have a stronger incentive to favor economically beneficial boys, who will help mitigate the cost of their sisters. Careful consideration of the sex composition effect is a major contribution of the paper. The household size effect is the well-known drop in resources per child as the number of children increase. An innovation from the

model is that it provides an economic rationale for the existence of stopping rules. Stopping rules intensify discrimination against girls by causing them to be, on average, in larger households with a high proportion of girls. Boys benefit from having fewer siblings on average, yet suffer from being in households with a high proportion of male children.

I examine these hypotheses using a large Indian demographic health survey. By calculating the sex ratio at birth, I show that there is virtually no sex-selective abortion for first-births in India and, thus, can use the sex outcome of the first pregnancy as a “natural experiment”. A first-born boy predicts fewer children and a higher proportion of boys compared to a first-born girl. Girls in a household with a first-born boy have higher rates of child survival. Boys, surprisingly, are more likely to survive in a household with a first-born girl, indicating that the sex composition effect outweighs the household size effect. There are two implications from the results. First, stopping rules lead to increased discrimination against girls and in favor of boys. Second, sex selective abortion reduces the child mortality gap. I provide a new result that about a quarter of the gap between boy and girl mortality in children of birth order two and higher can be explained by the outcome of the first pregnancy.

There are several possible explanations for why parents’ have incentives to discriminate against girls, such as dowry or higher wages amongst men than women. This last part of the paper focuses on the Indian institution of inheritance laws that favor boys. I present an alternative economic model to explain fertility decisions and child mortality via a desire to maximize the amount of land bequeathed to sons by parents. One of the seemingly paradoxical implications of the model is that if girls are given equal inheritance rights, both boys and girls will have higher mortality rates. I use changes in state inheritance laws, which give girls inheritance rights over their parents’ land, to perform a difference-in-difference analysis. I find that, indeed, an unintended consequence of giving inheritance rights to women is higher child mortality rates, regardless of sex.

The Economic Incentives for Selective Abortion in India (in progress)

While several research papers have attempted to estimate the prevalence of sex selective abortions in India, this paper is the first to examine the economic incentives for parents in India to selectively abort females. For parents, sons have many economic advantages over daughters. The joint family structure in India causes sons to continue to directly contribute to their parents’ household even after the son marries. When a son marries, his parents acquire dowry income and the labor supply of their new daughter-in-law. After marriage, daughters are no longer a part of their parent’s joint household. Parents lose the labor supply of their daughters and have to pay sizeable dowries to get their daughters married.

This paper uses a new estimation technique to determine the economic gains to households who selectively abort girls. Parents in India do not selectively abort their first pregnancy; hence, we can use the outcome of the first pregnancy as a natural experiment. Parents who have first-born girls, who instead had used sex-selective abortion to have a boy, will, absent the direct costs of selective abortion, have the same outcomes as parents who have first-born boys. I use a detailed economic survey to provide the first estimates of the magnitude of the economic benefits for parents’ use of sex-selective abortion including the gains from labor income and dowry and the resulting increases in household consumption and parents’ leisure. The paper also looks into differential investment decisions caused by, for example, the need to save for dowry payments for girls, but not for boys. The significant economic costs of daughters and benefits of sons help to explain the high levels of sex discrimination in India.