

CDESG

ALBERT BERRY PRIZE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Canadian Development Economics Study Group is pleased to announce that the 2011 Albert Berry Junior Scholar Paper Prize has been split among two winners, Matthieu Chemin of McGill University and Daniel Rosenblum of Dalhousie University.

Matthieu won for his paper, “Do Peer Effects Mitigate Social Dilemmas? Evidence from a Field Experiment”, co-authored with Caroline Archambault (UCU) and Joost de Laat (World Bank). In this paper, the authors examine the effect of peer effects in social dilemmas. This hypothesis of peer effects in social dilemmas has received theoretical attention as well as been the subject of lab experiments, but has until this point not been tested in a real world setting. The authors do just that with a field experiment they conducted in rural Kenya in the context of a community electrification project. The experiment randomly varied (i) exposure to different motivational messages delivered in private at homes; (ii) exposure to motivational messages delivered in a public setting; and, (iii) the composition of invitees to the public meetings. Private motivational messages had no impact while public meetings had a substantial impact on project contributions. Furthermore, the meeting composition mattered importantly: ex ante high contributors increased contributions when randomly matched with ex ante low contributors, who were themselves unaffected. Detailed qualitative evidence from the meetings supports a positive role model hypothesis. Finally, the paper also finds that ex ante high contributors attending the meetings positively impacted the contributions of non-attending high contributors. This paper thus finds support for the peer effects hypothesis, at least among ex-ante high contributors.

Our second winner, Daniel Rosenblum, won for his paper, “Economic Incentives for Sex-Selective Abortion in India”. This paper explores the economic reasoning behind sex-selective abortion and is unique in that it is the first to empirically estimate the economic benefits from a son relative to a daughter in the case of India. The results of this paper are particularly important from a policy perspective as the Indian government currently has programs which subsidize the birth and development of girls, and so the results of this paper should help inform Indian policy makers about the size of the subsidies needed in order to reduce selective abortion. As well, Daniel’s results help determine which types of households benefit more from a son, and so should also be of assistance to policy makers in terms of how to target certain groups which benefit most from sons.

Congratulations Matthieu and Daniel!

For more on the Albert Berry prize: <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~compton/2011AB.pdf>