

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Non-Technical Summary

A 1000 word (maximum) summary of the main research results, in non-technical language, should be provided below. The summary might be used by ESRC to publicise the research. It should cover the aims and objectives of the project, main research results and significant academic achievements, dissemination activities and potential or actual impacts on policy and practice.

Development policy, economist's models, and gendered anthropological research are concerned with understanding the space for empowerment of those who suffer illbeing through their gender identity. This involves grappling with the exercise of agency within marriage, and the ways in which power is expressed, controlled, effective and thwarted in the everyday conduct of conjugality, and the trajectories of marriage, divorce, remarriage and non-marriage over the life course. The research is based on a study of a rural area of eastern Uganda, dominated by the Bagisu, and on multiple methods, including survey data, ethnography and the methods of experimental economics with married couples.

Aims:

The research had 3 aims

1. Improved understanding of intrahousehold relations in poor rural African communities for more effective poverty reduction and social justice.

The research aimed to contribute to the basic research upon which effective development policies are built, through improved understanding of the complex nexus of gender identity, poverty and power.

2. Testing of Sen's cooperative conflict model.

The proposed research will focus on testing the three elements of this model, as well as extending it by integrating anthropological understanding of subjectivities and conjugality into a fuller account of bargaining, breakdown positions and gendered power.

3. Theoretical and methodological advances for development research.

The research aimed at methodological innovation through integrating qualitative ethnographic work with both survey data and the results of experimental economics games. The game material derives from a marriage game in which spouses pooled and allocated real money, with variants in which either husband or wife controlled the divisions of the pool.

The research questions posed and the findings at the time of writing are as follows:

What gender gaps are there in achieved wellbeing of spouses? Do women and men have different perceptions of personal wellbeing?

The emerging research findings suggest that there is little evidence, contra Sen, that women have lower perceptions of personal welfare than men.

What are the contributions of spouses to joint livelihoods? Do women and men have different perceptions of member's contributions to household wellbeing?

Both women and men make important contributions to joint livelihoods and value their own contributions, and it is not clear that women's work is invisible or that they accept male devaluation of their livelihood contributions.

How do the breakdown positions of women and men vary? Do women and men perceive their

breakdown positions differently?

The situation of husbands and wives in the event of divorce is very different but the position of women is not always more difficult than that of men and a great deal depends on the specifics of the presence and ages of children, relations with natal kin, the nature of the re-marriage possibilities and other factors beyond the materialist account of breakdown positions given in Sen. Husbands and wives perceive divorce in distinctive ways, and marital instability is feared by men in particular.

How does household poverty relate to the individual power of women, and gender relations?

Household poverty affects women in complex and contradictory ways in which personal autonomy may be traded off against material wellbeing.

Is bargaining power of spouses determined largely by economic power, especially participation in labour and commodity markets?

This study suggests that bargaining power and influence in marriage is at least equally determined by factors which are not directly related to economic power

How is bargaining power within marriage patterned by kinship, marriage and broader social relations?

Natal kin, friendships and other forms of social networks strengthen the position of women within marriages as well as strengthening their breakdown positions in the event of divorce, and they therefore have complex effects on marital stability and on the success of conjugal cooperation.

What differences are there in articulated gender relations, and allocation behaviour as revealed in experimental game behaviours?

The game results diverge widely from the gender norms as expressed by both women and men. This seems to be partly due to the nature of the experimental method (see submitted paper on reflexivity) but also a reflection of the gaps between ideals, representations and practice.

Achievements:

At the time of writing data collection and processing has been completed, the data has been documented and archived, and several articles written and submitted to journals. However my publication ambitions have risen considerably from those indicated in the proposal, since the data collection proved so fruitful, and therefore outputs will ultimately be much more than expected or promised. The full delivery of outputs is expected to take place over the coming two years during which I have 12 months of funded time (in two 6 month blocks) to devote almost exclusively to analysis and writing from the research materials I have collected over the period of the award.

A major achievement of the research is the creation of an unusual and very rich set of data which has been very carefully documented to make it useable to other researchers. This is a public good in its own right and I am actively encouraging students and others to make use of it. Data has been collected for 112 individuals (56 married couples) in three extended semi-structured interviews, and for 250 other individuals representing those who are divorced, never married, yet to marry, in levirate marriages and so on. SPSS files and substantial qualitative files have been created for the first round on marital histories and the game de-brief, the second round on livelihoods, and the third round on intrahousehold relations. Further files contain materials from sample of cases of marital disputes from the local FIDA offices, and key informant interviews and focus group outputs.

Dissemination:

I have produced 7 papers, a research proposal, a conference paper and am working on an edited journal collection currently. The successful follow-on research proposal (DFID/ESRC) involves applying the methods of this study to comparative research in India, Nigeria, and Ethiopia.

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Impact:

My proposal aimed at basic research for changing ways in which conjugality is understood and conceptualised in development thinking, and primary impacts are expected through peer-reviewed journal publication.