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**Spousal Control and Intra-Household Decision Making:
An Experimental Study in the Philippines**

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I elicit causal effects of spousal observability and communication on financial choices of married individuals in the Philippines. When choices are private, men put money into their personal accounts. When choices are observable, men commit money to consumption for their own benefit. When required to communicate, men put money into their wives' account. These strong treatment effects on men, but not women, appear related more to control than to gender: men whose wives control household savings respond more strongly to the treatment and women whose husbands control savings exhibit the same response. Changes in information and communication interact with underlying control to produce mutable gender-specific outcomes. (JEL D13, D14, J12, J16, O15)

Household outcomes depend on decisions made by spouses who may often disagree. Given these potential differences in preferences, the particular conditions under which intra-household decisions are taken may matter a great deal for household outcomes. A large and growing literature in economics provides evidence from several countries that household savings and investment are significantly affected by how decision-making power is allocated between women and men. In particular, when intra-household financial decisions are made by women, savings and investment are often greater and repayment of debt is more likely.¹

Theoretical and empirical work in economics has generally overlooked the range of factors that influence intra-household decisions. Most models of household decisions have either treated the household as an individual decision maker—ignoring intra-household decisions completely—or modeled household decisions as a bargaining process between agents who are able to make

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¹ For example, income given to women is more likely to be used for investment in education, children's nutrition, and having their income in the hands of men (Thomas Thomas 1990, 1994; John Hoddinott and Lawrence Hoddinott 1995; Esther Duflo 2001). Ramona Arambrós de Aghion and Jonathan Morduch (2004) review findings that microfinance loans made to women are significantly more likely to be repaid. Martin Browning (2000) provides an interesting model for how differences in savings outcomes can arise within one household.

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