**Trends in Attitudes about Domestic Violence in Africa**
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*Introduction*

Since the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, violence against women has become an increasingly prominent subject of international advocacy and development programming worldwide. World society scholars observe that violence against women, and gender equality more broadly, are cultural products, which have gained recognition among international and national elites (Bekovitch 1999, Merry 2006). Scholars note, however, that formal structures and actual practices are often loosely coupled (Meyer *et al*. 1997). National elites' public support for efforts to combat violence against women may not translate into consequential action. Moreover, the concept of violence against women may not be meaningful to people whose social and cultural environments are not strongly influenced by the cultural constructions of world society (Merry 2006). Since an association between the international consensus on violence against women and local understandings of physical interactions between men and women cannot be assumed, research is required to examine the influence (if any) of the transnational discourse on local beliefs and practices.

This paper begins such an investigation by examining individual attitudes about a husband's right to use physical violence against a wife who fails to fulfill aspects of her gender role, and the extent to which changes in those attitudes are consistent with world society discourse. Using repeated cross-sectional and nationally representative Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, this paper addresses four main questions about recent trends in domestic violence attitudes in sub-Saharan Africa. First, given increased international activism on violence against women, are women becoming less likely to justify husbands' right to use physical violence against their wives? Next, if there are changes in the proportion of the population willing to justify violence, are aggregate changes due to cohort replacement or period effects in the population? Third, if there are period effects, are changes due to changing responses only among those with a high degree of access to the international discourse on violence against women, or are the changes reaching beyond those boundaries? And last, to what

extent do responses to questions about domestic violence and other gender issues reflect adoption of international conceptions of violence against women and gender equality?

*Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*

In the community of transnational women's rights activism, violence against women is conceptualized as a human rights violation perpetuated by conditions of gender inequality (United Nations 2008: 13). This definition of violence against women is a cultural product; it is based on fundamental principles of world society, including universalism and liberal individualism (Berkovitch & Bradley 1999, Merry 2006). It appeals to powerful human rights and gender equality frameworks to gain legitimacy within world society. National and international elites are compelled to support the new legal and institutional structures because of the association between human rights and gender equality on the one hand, and modernity and development on the other hand (Thornton 2001; Thompson 2002; Berkovitch 1999). With the successful normalization of this cultural construction, competing definitions of violence against women, or the actions and interactions now labeled violence against women, are seen as less legitimate (Berkovitch & Bradley 1999; Meyer *et al*. 1997).

The dominant definition of violence against women is enshrined in recent transnational agreements and national laws. In 1979, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which provided an international normative framework of women's rights (Thompson 2002: 104). CEDAW demanded changes not only in the practices of the state, but also required that the state ensure that women were not discriminated against by private entities in economic or social life. This declaration opened the door to debate about violations of women's rights in the private sphere. The debate found its full expression at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which produced a Platform for Action that is widely credited for popularizing the mantra, "women's rights are human rights" (Tinker 2004). The Platform for Action was one of the first major statements proclaiming that violence against women is a violation of women's human rights. In 2003, the African Union furthered this agenda by adopting the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on The Rights of Women in Africa (hereafter 'the Protocol'). Among other provisions, Article 4 of the Protocol compels signatories to take all appropriate measures to eliminate violence against women. All countries included in this study

signed the Protocol between 2003 and 2005, and it has been ratified by all but Ethiopia, Kenya, and Madagascar.

The influence of the global cultural context on national policies is further evidenced by the uniformity in the types and timing of national political actions to prevent violence against women (Berkovitch 1999: 5). The period from the 1990s to the early 2000s has been called the "era of a human rights revolution" because of widespread adoption of human rights institutions, indicating the national incorporation of global human rights regimes (Koo & Ramirez 2009: 1326). Likewise, all of the countries included in this study have implemented legal or policy changes since 2000 to prohibit, prevent, and/or punish violence against women. Table 1 lists the legislative and policy initiatives most directly related to addressing violence against women in each of the countries. Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe have passed legislation specific to violence against women. Ethiopia, Madagascar, Uganda, and Zambia have amended their penal codes to incorporate specific penalties for acts of violence against women. Mali and Nigeria have gotten as far as establishing national action plans to address violence against women. The pressures and incentives of world society produced this remarkable similarity in national political actions.

As noted by world society and law and society scholars, however, there is often a disconnect between the formal policies of nation-states that are designed to reflect international consensus and the practices undertaken to implement (or not) those national policies (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Merry 2006). Moreover, we cannot assume that national laws and policies are salient in the lives of citizens because legal rights are only one of many available schema used by individuals to interpret social relations (Albiston 2005). In Africa, where there are multiple, overlapping legal systems, changes in one distant social system (the formal legal system) are unlikely to have direct effects on individual beliefs and behaviors (Stamp 1995; Hirsch 1998). Adoption of national policies recognizing the rights of women does not necessarily mean that there will be tangible progress toward gender equality (Berkovitch 1999: 2).

Nonetheless, national-level policies have symbolic importance for activists promoting an end to violence against women. Elite activists gain legitimacy by using international norms to justify their work (Tsutsui & Shin 2008). In addition, as in most social movements, legal action is part of an ongoing, multi-sited struggle for social change (McCann 1994). Although legal

changes may not have direct effects, they can signal the potential for change in social relations and alter what types of social relations are imaginable (Silbey 2005; Scheingold 2004).

In sum, the promotion of gender equality and the associated efforts to reduce violence against women are prominent components of contemporary world society. Transnational activists share common definitions of gender equality and violence against women, which have been constructed based on fundamental principles of world society. National elites worldwide gain legitimacy by pursuing policies that are consistent with the goals of promoting gender equality and reducing violence against women. National governments have enacted relevant legislative and/or policy changes in each of the African countries included in this study. This is the context for the current investigation. This study does not include direct measures of international and national discourse on gender equality. Rather, I use knowledge of the context to make predictions about changes in attitudes about violence against women at the individual level. I posit that world society actors are influential in introducing new cultural frameworks and topics of conversation, and that many individuals will recognize gender equality and violence against women as concepts emanating from international and national elites. The meaning of those cultural constructions, however, may not be clear to people whose cultural frames of reference differ greatly from those of world society actors. Examining whether trends in individual attitudes about violence against women are consistent with the goals of transnational activism for gender equality is important for studying the influence of this world society discourse.

*Current Investigation*

This paper explores trends in attitudes about violence against women in twelve sub-Saharan African countries. More specifically, using nationally representative Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from two time points—the first in the early 2000s and the second in the mid- to late 2000s—I examine trends in responses to questions about domestic violence in Benin, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. These are all of the sub-Saharan countries for which there is DHS data on attitudes about domestic violence at two time points. As discussed above, the timing of this data collection corresponds with a period of increasing efforts among activists to combat violence against women. The focus is on attitudes about domestic violence, in this case violent acts

perpetrated by a husband against his wife, which is one kind of violence against women. The following analysis addresses four main questions.

*Question 1*. Given increased international activism to combat violence against women, are African women becoming less likely to justify a husband's right to use physical violence against a wife who fails to fulfill aspects of her gender role? As discussed above, the gap between national policies that are designed to reflect international consensus and Africans' daily realities means that we cannot assume that individual attitudes will be consistent with world society discourse. In world society, the consensus holds that a husband's physical abuse of his wife is part of a broader social system that reinforces gender inequality. To individual survey respondents, however, the meaning of violent acts may be determined by more immediate concerns, such as the interactional context and individual behaviors. Violent acts are evaluated against socially determined criteria of just cause (Heise 1998). On the other hand, national and international discourse may be a symbolic resource, enabling individuals to change the way they perceive and evaluate violent acts. Rani *et al*. (2004) theorize that exposure to non-conformist gender ideologies is one of three main mechanisms that lead individuals to question established norms regarding wife beating.

*Question 2*. If there are changes in the proportion of the population willing to justify violence, are aggregate changes due to cohort replacement or period effects in the population? In other words, are changes due to growing populations of youth who reject violence, or changing responses among people of all age groups? Previous research on the historical trajectory of attitudes and values on a variety of topics has found that shifts to a focus on quality of life and self-expression values, including gender equality, generally occur when a new cohort of people grows up under conditions where survival is taken for granted (Inglehart & Baker 2000: 26 & 42). Such a shift has not taken place in most of the countries in this study. Average life expectancies in included countries range from 49 for men in Nigeria and Zambia to 65 for women in Benin (United Nations 2009). People in the countries of Eastern and Southern Africa are coping with dramatic effects of high adult mortality due to HIV/AIDS. Also, research finds that individuals most often form their basic values early in life, which would lead one to expect that only cohort replacement could bring substantial changes in average attitudes about violence against women (Inglehart & Baker 2000).

Nonetheless, activists and development practitioners have expended a great deal of energy and resources in recent years attempting to change the way individuals think about violence against women. Small-scale studies find that these efforts may have some impact, even among adults (e.g. Barker *et al*. 2010; Usdin *et al*. 2005). There has been little research, however, that has examined macro-level trends in attitudes about violence against women (although, see Simister & Mehta 2010) and little research exploring whether macro-level trends are due to population compositional changes or to changes across all population groups.

*Question 3*. If there are period effects, are changes due to changing responses only among those with a high degree of access to the international discourse on violence against women, or are advocacy efforts reaching beyond those boundaries? World society theory predicts that people most closely connected to the global institutional environment will be most likely to reflect the values promoted in that environment (Meyer 2010: 13). Previous research on predictors of domestic violence have confirmed this prediction; on average people in urban areas, those with more education, and those with greater access to media are less likely to justify domestic violence (Uthman *et al*. 2009). This analysis will examine whether changes in the proportion of the population that rejects domestic violence is due to an increasing uniformity of responses among one group of people (those with access to world society norms), or whether people in all social positions are increasingly likely to reject domestic violence. Moreover, exploring who rejects violence in each survey wave will shed light on whether changes in the composition of the population in terms of wealth, education, and access to media are driving changes in reported attitudes. The findings will provide preliminary evidence of the breadth of the reach of the movement to combat violence against women.

*Question 4*. To what extent do responses to questions about domestic violence and other gender issues reflect adoption of world society values? As discussed above, world society norms are often modified as they are incorporated into existing social and cultural systems (Merry 2006). World society discourse about violence against women may influence individual responses to questions about domestic violence in the absence of wholesale adoption of its principles. For example, Boyle and Carboné-Lopez (2006) find that many women in Africa reject female circumcision but do not appeal to international activist discourses to explain their opposition. Moreover, most women in their study preferred limited explanations that "allow[ed] them to oppose the practice of female genital cutting without criticizing other aspects of their

culture, such as overall gender roles" (445). Similarly, changes in the proportion of respondents who reject specific justifications for domestic violence may simply reflect changes in the social construction of 'just cause' for violence. Changes are not necessarily indicative of the adoption of world society values such as gender equality.

On the other hand, the women in Boyle and Carboné-Lopez's study who did appear to accept the world society discourse offered "more rationalized accounts" (i.e. more consistent and comprehensive accounts) of their opposition to female circumcision (456). Similarly, I expect that adoption of gender equality values will lead women to form a rationalized/universalized opposition to domestic violence. Adherents to world society values reject justifications for domestic violence because they view all forms of violence against women as manifestations of gender inequality and as human rights violations. Their egalitarian gender ideology is a latent value that informs the attitudes they express in response to a wide range of questions (Vespa 2009). We would expect the responses to all domestic violence questions to cohere more tightly for respondents who answer based on a latent value, such as gender equality. Moreover, for respondents who base their answers on an underlying belief in gender equality, we expect that their answers to questions about other gender issues will be highly correlated with their responses to the domestic violence questions.

*Data & Methods*

The data for this study come from 24 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data sets. The MEASURE DHS Project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by ICF Macro, a U.S.-based organization. The data sets are all nationally representative of women in their reproductive years (usually 15-49). Sampling was conducted by randomly selecting primary sampling units (PSUs) from a complete roster and then randomly sampling households within selected PSUs. Every eligible woman in selected households was interviewed. Some of the samples were stratified at the PSU level to ensure representation of all groups of interest. All analyses below use sampling weights to adjust for variation in the probability of selection. The dates of data collection in each country can be found in Table 2. I refer to the earlier survey from each country as wave 1 and the later survey as wave 2 (although they are part of longer research efforts and are only wave 1 and wave 2 for the

purposes of this analysis). The first and second waves of data were collected approximately 5 years apart in each country, except for Zimbabwe where the data were collected 6 years apart.

The outcome variables of interest in the analyses all come from a question that asks respondents whether it is okay for a man to beat his wife under certain circumstances. Specifically, the question states, "Sometimes a husband is annoyed or angered by things which his wife does. In your opinion, is a husband justified in hitting or beating his wife in the following situations?" The five situations presented to the respondents were: 1. "if she goes out without telling him," 2. "if she neglects the children," 3. "if she argues with him," 4. "if she refuses to have sex with him," or 5. "if she burns the food." Many of the analyses below examine responses to each of the situations separately. In addition, I have created a scale for the total number of situations in which a respondent thinks a husband is justified in beating his wife. The scale ranges from 0 to 5. A third outcome is a dichotomous indicator of whether a respondent broadly rejects wife beating. This variable is coded 1 for respondents who rejected all five scenarios as reasonable justification for a husband to beat his wife.

To examine the trends in attitudes about domestic violence, I conduct chi-square tests to analyze whether there is a statistically significant change between the first and second waves in the proportion of respondents in each country who agreed that wife beating was justified in any of the five specified scenarios. These raw comparisons do not control for any changes in the composition of the populations. To estimate the effects of cohort replacement on the attitudes about domestic violence, I use linear regression decomposition (Firebaugh 1989), which disaggregates the total change into a portion due to cohort replacement and a portion due to intra-cohort change.

I address the third question, regarding who rejects domestic violence, through a series of logistic regression analyses. First, I examine whether survey wave is a significant predictor of attitudes about domestic violence when important demographic factors are controlled. Second, I test the significance of demographic predictors in each wave and test for interaction effects of demographic predictors interacted with a dummy variable for wave 2. The predictors of interest include marital status, age, urban/rural residence, level of education, employment status, score on an asset index (wealth), and access to media. Previous research in sub-Saharan Africa has found mixed results regarding the effects of marital status on justification of domestic violence (Uthman *et al*. 2009) and I expect to find the same since the institution of marriage varies across

places. Contrary to the finding that younger women are more supportive of feminist values in the United States (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004), younger women in sub-Saharan Africa are generally more likely to justify domestic violence (Uthman *et al*. 2009).

Urban residence, higher levels of education, employment, wealth, and access to media of all kinds are likely to increase a respondent's exposure to world society norms regarding gender equality. I expect, therefore, that these factors will be negatively associated with willingness to justify domestic violence in both waves. I also test whether these exposure factors increase or decrease in salience between wave 1 and wave 2. Increasing salience (more strongly negative coefficients and negative interaction effects) will indicate increasing uniformity of responses from people with higher levels of access to world society discourse. Decreasing salience of these exposure factors will indicate that the values of world society are spreading to people more isolated from international norms.

Finally, I examine the extent to which responses to questions about domestic violence and other gender issues reflect adoption of the values promoted in international discourse. The DHS does not include questions specifically probing familiarity with world society values of gender equality and a rejection of violence against women. Instead, I have to measure consistency of responses to questions about domestic violence and other gender issues to estimate whether respondents are applying latent values when answering. This analysis has two components. First, I examine the consistency of responses to the violence questions in each wave. If the world society messages condemning violence against women are influencing individual attitudes, I would expect the consistency of responses to the violence questions to increase. I use Cronbach's alpha to measure scale consistency in each wave. I also plan to use M-Plus to examine whether model fit is improved by letting the factor scores vary between wave 1 and wave 2.

Second, I examine the relationship between responses to questions about domestic violence and questions about other issues that have been central to transnational campaigns for gender equality. If respondents are adopting values of world society, I would expect a high and increasing correlation among responses to all these questions. The DHS includes measures of attitudes about two other issues that have been central in world society activism for women's rights: a woman's right to refuse sex with her husband, and female circumcision. In all countries except for Ethiopia and Kenya, women were asked, "Is a wife justified in refusing to have sex

with her husband when she is tired or not in the mood?" A woman's power to choose when and with whom she has sex is paramount in her ability to control her fertility and to prevent HIV infection. Acknowledgement of this link between gender inequality, fertility, and HIV is one of the main reasons that gender inequality became a central focus in development programming (United Nations Population Fund 1994; Tinker 2004). World society discourse on gender equality leads to the expectation of a positive relationship between the right to refuse sex and the rejection of all justifications for domestic violence.

In Benin, Ethiopia, and Mali, women were asked, "Do you think this practice [female circumcision] should be continued, or should it be stopped?" These three countries have relatively high rates of female circumcision. Female circumcision (also known as female genital cutting or female genital mutilation) is the subject of extensive international advocacy and is seen by many as a violation of women's rights (Boyle 2002). Women who have adopted the world society explanation that both domestic violence and female circumcision are violations of women's rights will reject both practices, resulting in a high correlation between these measures.

I will test multiple ways of measuring this association in each wave. First, I will examine the correlation between the rejection of all justifications for domestic violence and both attitudes about a woman's right to refuse sex and attitudes about female circumcision. Second, I will conduct regression analyses using attitudes about these two other gender issues to predict attitudes about domestic violence. I will test for interaction effects with wave 2 to explore whether these attitudes are becoming more highly predictive of each other over time.

*Expected/Preliminary Results*

The following section presents the results of preliminary analyses. For each research question, I will conduct additional analyses to further test the results.

*Question 1*. Table 2 provides the proportion of respondents in each country who agreed that wife beating was justified in each one of the five specified scenarios. Remarkably, there were statistically significant, consistent, and substantial declines in rates of acceptance of domestic violence in eight of the countries: Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Zambia. In Ethiopia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe the results are mixed: rates of acceptance of wife beating did not change for 2 or 3 of the scenarios and they increased for 1 scenario in each country. Madagascar had one of the lowest overall rates of justification of

domestic violence, but the changes in responses do not mirror trends found in the other countries. The proportion of the population who justified domestic violence stayed the same for 2 scenarios and increased for the other 3.

Aggregating the responses to all of the domestic violence questions produces very similar findings, as shown in Table 3. In almost all countries, respondents agree with fewer justifications for domestic violence in wave 2 than they did in wave 1. The change is not significant in Ethiopia, Uganda, or Zimbabwe. The change is statistically significant in the opposite direction for Madagascar. The percentage of respondents who reject all justifications for domestic violence increased in all countries except in Zimbabwe, where the change was not significant, and in Madagascar, where fewer people rejected all justifications for violence in wave 2. Given that the time between waves 1 and 2 was only five years, these are remarkable changes.

*Question 2*. The results of the regression decomposition of cohort replacement versus intra-cohort effects are shown in Table 4. The left panel repeats the results shown in the left panel of Table 3 regarding the average number of justifications for domestic violence accepted by respondents in each country. The right panel decomposes the observed change in mean number of acceptable justifications into a portion due to cohort replacement and a portion due to intra-cohort change, which combines age and period effects. In theory, those two amounts (shown in the first and second columns of the right panel) should sum to the total observed change (shown in the last column of the left panel). The column showing percent agreement provides a measure of how well the sum of the predicted change due to cohort replacement plus predicted change due intra-cohort change matches the observed change. For most countries, this measure is close to one, indicating that a linear decomposition of the trends provides fairly precise estimates. I plan to conduct further investigation to determine why linear decomposition of the trends is not as accurate for Madagascar and Zimbabwe.

Finally, the last column in Table 4 shows the proportion of the change in attitudes about domestic violence that is due to cohort replacement. For all countries where acceptance of justifications for domestic violence decreased, cohort replacement accounted for less than 12 percent of the change. For many of the countries, cohort replacement would have led to an increase in average acceptance of domestic violence if not for the strong effects of intra-cohort change. On the 0-5 scale of the number of acceptable justifications for domestic violence, the average across all countries decreased by about 0.5 justifications in just five years. Nearly all of

this difference can be attributed to intra-cohort change. In other words, nearly all of the change in attitudes about domestic violence can be attributed to age and period effects. The importance of period effects is consistent with the hypothesis that the increasingly prevalent world society discourse about gender equality and violence against women is influencing individual attitudes at the grassroots level.

*Question 3*. Table 5 provides evidence of the influence of access to world society discourse, as measured by demographic factors. First, it is important to note that even when controlling for demographic factors, the dummy variable for wave 2 is statistically significant in almost every country where there was a significant reduction in justification of domestic violence. This suggests that there are period effects; not all of the change in attitudes can be attributed to changes in population education, wealth, or access to media. Even when controlling for a range of demographic factors that are associated with attitudes about domestic violence, responses collected during the second wave indicate a higher odds of rejecting all justifications for domestic violence.

The influence of each predictor varies across countries, but there are some general trends. In most countries, older respondents were more likely to reject all justifications for domestic violence. For the most part, people who live in urban areas and have at least some education (compared to those with no education) were also more likely to reject all justifications for domestic violence. Listening to the radio, reading the newspaper, and watching T.V. at least weekly were associated with an increased likelihood of rejecting all justifications in many countries, although these variables were not always significant. The respondent's employment status did not have a consistent effect on her responses to the domestic violence questions. Overall, this is consistent with world society theory's prediction that those with access to international discourses will be more likely to reflect world society values in their survey responses.

The interaction effects were not consistent across countries. On the whole, it seems that most of the variables measuring access to world society discourse are similarly predictive of domestic violence attitudes in waves 1 and 2. However, there are some interesting country-level differences. For example, in Benin in wave 1, listening to the radio or reading the newspaper at least weekly were associated with lower odds of rejecting all justifications for domestic violence. In wave 2, the association reversed and radio and newspaper access were associated with higher

odds of rejecting all justifications. This suggests a need for research on the content of media in Benin over this time period. In Nigeria, living in an urban area did not affect a respondent's odds of rejecting all forms of domestic violence in wave 1, but it increased the odds in wave 2. On the other hand, the effect of education, controlling for all other variables, seems to be lower in wave 2 than in wave 1. In Zambia, respondents living in an urban area and respondents who were working were less likely to reject all justifications for domestic violence in wave 1. In wave 2, urban residence and employment are associated with higher odds of rejecting all justifications for domestic violence. In depth research is needed to examine the mechanisms behind these changing associations.

*Question 4*. Last, I turn to the question of whether changes in responses to domestic violence questions reflect adoption of world society values. The first test examines whether world society messages condemning violence against women are influencing individual attitudes, and increasing the consistency of responses to the violence questions. By summing responses to all of the domestic violence questions into a scale, I can use Cronbach's alpha to examine the internal consistency. The higher the Cronbach's alpha value, the higher the internal consistency of the scale. Table 6 shows the Cronbach's alpha for each country in wave 1 and wave 2. The Cronbach's alpha scores are high in both time periods in all countries. And yet, with the exceptions of Ghana, Nigeria, and Rwanda, the Cronbach's alpha increased between wave 1 and wave 2, suggesting that there may be greater internal consistency among responses to domestic violence questions in wave 2. Additional analyses will test whether these changes are statistically significant.

The second test explores the relationship between attitudes about domestic violence and attitudes about other issues that are central to world society advocacy for gender equality. First, I examine the correlations among these attitudes. As a summary of the responses to the domestic violence questions, like above, I am using a dummy variable coded 1 for respondents who reject all justifications for domestic violence. The tetrachoric correlation between rejecting all justifications and agreeing that a woman has the right to refuse sex if she is tired is 0.145, which is significant at the 0.001 level. The correlation increased slightly from 0.135 in wave 1 to 0.142 in wave 2. In Benin, Ethiopia, and Mali, the tetrachoric correlation between rejecting all justifications for domestic violence and the belief that female circumcision should be discontinued is 0.388, which is also significant at the 0.001 level. These correlation scores

indicate that there is some association among attitudes about world society gender issues. They are not high enough, however, to suggest that there has been widespread adoption of gender equality as an underlying framework for evaluating all social issues. This is tested further by the analyses presented in Table 7.

Table 7 shows coefficients from OLS regressions predicting the mean number of acceptable justifications for domestic violence and logistic regressions predicting the rejection of all justifications for domestic violence. For each of these outcomes, model 1 tests the association between attitudes about female circumcision or attitudes about a wife's right to refuse sex and attitudes about domestic violence, controlling for survey wave. The second models add interaction effects. Looking at the top panel, we can see that in both survey waves, respondents who believe that a wife has the right to refuse sex when she is tired agree with fewer justifications for domestic violence and are more likely to reject all justifications for violence. In both of the second models, however, the interaction coefficient is not significant. This means that attitudes about a wife's right to refuse sex are not more strongly associated with attitudes about domestic violence in wave 2. I do not find evidence for increasing consistency in responses to questions about these gender issues.

The data in the bottom panel on attitudes about female circumcision in Benin, Ethiopia, and Mali tell a similar story. In both survey waves, respondents who think that female circumcision should be discontinued agree with fewer justifications for domestic violence and are more likely to reject all justifications for violence. In the second models, the interaction effects are in the opposite of the expected direction. Attitudes about female circumcision are less strongly associated with attitudes about domestic violence in wave 2 than they were in wave 1. If respondents were increasingly applying the world society value of gender equality to respond to these questions, I would expect the associations to increase over time. Instead, I find no evidence of increasing reliance on an overarching belief in gender equality. These results are a reminder to interpret changes in reported attitudes carefully. It is important to remember that decreasing proportions of African women who report that domestic violence is justifiable does not necessarily mean that increasing proportions accept gender equality, as it is defined in the world society discourse. Additional in-depth research is needed to further examine individual understandings of domestic violence and gender equality, and the relationship between the two.

*Preliminary Conclusions*

Overall, the analyses in this paper demonstrate that in a short period of time, there have been substantial changes in women's reported attitudes about domestic violence in a number of African countries. The timing of these changes coincides with increasing attention to gender equality and violence against women in transnational and national policy priorities. There appear to be changes in the acceptability of violence for women of all ages and all social locations. Moreover, the majority of the change can be attributed to aging and period effects, which is consistent with the hypothesis that world society discourse on violence against women is reaching women at the grassroots. The last part of the analysis indicates that we should be careful not to conclude that these changes indicate wholesale adoption of the world society definition of gender equality as a social good. Nonetheless, there are important changes documented by the analyses in this paper; changes that deserve ongoing research and analysis.

Table 1: Legislative and Policy Actions to Address Violence Against Women

| | Year Legislation / Policy Enacted | Description[1] |
|---|---|---|
| Benin | 2006 | Sexual Harassment Law[2] |
| Ethiopia | 2005 | Revised Criminal Code criminalizing female circumcision, early marriage, rape, and sexual harassment |
| Ghana | 2007 | Domestic Violence (DV) Act 732, followed by a 10-Year Domestic Violence National Plan of Action to guide implementation of the new Act[3] |
| Kenya | 2006 | Sexual Offenses Act (although provisions criminalizing marital rape and female circumcision were removed before passage)[4] |
| Madagascar | 2000 | Law N° 2000 – 021, revised the Penal Code to include previsions regarding violence against women[5] |
| Malawi | 2006; 2008 | Prevention of Domestic Violence Act; National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence |
| Mali | 2006; 2008 | National Action Plan to Combat Violence Against Women; National Action Plan to Combat Female Circumcision; No legislative actions |
| Nigeria | 2007 | National Policy on Gender Equality and associated Strategic Implementation Framework and Plan; No legislate actions |
| Rwanda | 2008 | Law N° 59 Providing legal sanctions against perpetrators of gender based violence |
| Uganda | 2006; 2009 | Penal Code amended to include offenses of simple and aggravated defilement; Domestic violence bill passed at cabinet level and submitted to Parliament for consideration (not yet passed) |
| Zambia | 2005 | Penal Code (Amendment) Act No. 5 to increase penalties for indecent assault, sexual harassment, defilement and trafficking in persons |
| Zimbabwe | 2001; 2007 | Sexual Offenses Act; Domestic Violence Act |

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all information comes from 2010 national submissions to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women for the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action.

[2] USAID Women's Legal Rights Initiative. 2007. *Women's Legal Rights Initiative Final Report*. Washington DC: Chemonics International Inc.

[3] From the Republic of Ghana, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs website: http://www.mowacghana.net/programs.html. Accessed, February 24, 2011.

[4] Onyango-Ouma, W., Njoki Ndung'u, Nancy Baraza, and Harriet Birungi. 2009. *The making of the Kenya sexual offenses act, 2006: Behind the scenes.* Nairobi: Kwani Trust.

[5] From Republic of Madagascar website: http://www.assemblee-nationale.mg/mg/loisadoptees.php. Accessed, March 21, 2011.

Table 2: Percentage of women who agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she…

| | Goes out without telling him | Neglects the kids | Argues with him | Refuses sex with him | Burns the food |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Benin | | | | | |
| 2001 | 43.97 | 51.03 | 39.45 | 17.01 | 29.16 |
| 2006 | 36.70 | 36.39 | 33.97 | 17.26[a] | 19.01 |
| Ethiopia | | | | | |
| 2000 | 56.17 | 64.52 | 61.32 | 50.87 | 64.46 |
| 2005 | 64.17 | 64.56[a] | 58.71[a] | 44.29 | 61.02 |
| Ghana | | | | | |
| 2003 | 33.98 | 37.08 | 29.46 | 19.93 | 13.87 |
| 2008 | 22.26 | 26.30 | 21.30 | 12.26 | 8.31 |
| Kenya | | | | | |
| 2003 | 39.35 | 55.12 | 45.87 | 29.41 | 16.34 |
| 2008/09 | 30.68 | 41.72 | 30.86 | 22.66 | 13.38 |
| Madagascar | | | | | |
| 2003/04 | 14.36 | 24.89 | 3.27 | 5.50 | 8.30 |
| 2008/09 | 19.21 | 28.18[a] | 5.97 | 9.20 | 7.24[a] |
| Malawi | | | | | |
| 2000 | 16.56 | 21.76 | 18.61 | 17.85 | 16.54 |
| 2004/05 | 13.90 | 17.17 | 11.79 | 13.65 | 11.38 |
| Mali | | | | | |
| 2001 | 74.95 | 71.30 | 61.65 | 73.55 | 33.56 |
| 2006 | 60.28 | 52.62 | 49.12 | 56.79 | 23.37 |
| Nigeria | | | | | |
| 2003 | 52.80 | 49.42 | 43.48 | 37.55 | 30.73 |
| 2008 | 32.17 | 30.48 | 27.61 | 25.31 | 16.18 |
| Rwanda | | | | | |
| 2000 | 36.58 | 56.43 | 11.74 | 33.32 | 22.43 |
| 2005 | 26.30 | 41.12 | 7.32 | 13.92 | 10.69 |
| Uganda | | | | | |
| 2000/01 | 56.28 | 67.34 | 36.91 | 24.24 | 22.19 |
| 2006 | 52.23 | 56.03 | 39.85 [a] | 30.52 | 23.41[a] |
| Zambia | | | | | |
| 2001/02 | 78.84 | 60.94 | 52.06 | 47.03 | 45.42 |
| 2007 | 42.27 | 42.57 | 43.08 | 36.33 | 32.94 |
| Zimbabwe | | | | | |
| 1999 | 27.80 | 31.24 | 31.67 | 22.32 | 11.99 |
| 2005/06 | 33.02 | 30.16[a] | 25.96 | 24.34[a] | 12.22[a] |
| | | | | | |
| Wave 1 average | 45.30 | 50.55 | 37.86 | 34.77 | 29.06 |
| Wave 2 average | 36.12 | 38.12 | 29.32 | 25.73 | 19.95 |

[a] The change is not significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3. Aggregate Domestic Violence Attitudes

| | Average number of transgressions that provide adequate justification (out of 5) | | | Percentage of people for whom none of the transgressions provide adequate justification | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Wave 1 | Wave 2 | W1 to W2 Change | Wave 1 | Wave 2 | W1 to W2 Change |
| Benin | 1.806 | 1.433 | -0.373 | 39.59 | 53.51 | 13.92 |
| Ethiopia | 2.973 | 2.927 | -0.046 [a] | 15.49 | 19.00 | 3.51 |
| Ghana | 1.343 | 0.904 | -0.439 | 51.46 | 63.43 | 11.97 |
| Kenya | 1.861 | 1.393 | -0.468 | 32.09 | 47.38 | 15.29 |
| Madagascar | 0.563 | 0.698 | 0.135 | 71.97 | 67.70 | -4.27 |
| Malawi | 0.913 | 0.679 | -0.234 | 64.34 | 71.76 | 7.42 |
| Mali | 3.150 | 2.422 | -0.728 | 11.24 | 24.81 | 13.57 |
| Nigeria | 2.140 | 1.317 | -0.823 | 35.77 | 56.96 | 21.19 |
| Rwanda | 1.605 | 0.994 | -0.611 | 36.67 | 51.98 | 15.31 |
| Uganda | 2.070 | 2.020 | -0.050 [a] | 23.54 | 29.83 | 6.29 |
| Zambia | 2.843 | 1.972 | -0.871 | 14.63 | 38.08 | 23.45 |
| Zimbabwe | 1.250 | 1.257 | 0.007 [a] | 49.04 | 52.34 | 3.30 [a] |
| Average | 1.975 | 1.492 | -0.483 | 35.39 | 49.26 | 13.87 |

[a] The change is not significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4. Regression Decomposition of Cohort Replacement vs. Intra-Cohort Change

| | Mean Number of Acceptable Justifications for Wife Beating | | | Regression Decomposition | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Wave 1 | Wave 2 | Observed Change | Cohort Replacement | Intra-Cohort Change | % Agreement (Pred/Obs) | % Change Due to Cohort Replacement |
| Benin | 1.806 | 1.433 | -0.373 | -0.044 | -0.328 | 0.997 | 11.8 % |
| Ethiopia | 2.973 | 2.927 | -0.046[a] | -0.069 | 0.022 | 1.009 | Offset |
| Ghana | 1.343 | 0.904 | -0.439 | 0.010 | -0.457 | 1.018 | Offset |
| Kenya | 1.861 | 1.393 | -0.468 | -0.026 | -0.431 | 0.976 | 5.5 % |
| Madagascar | 0.563 | 0.698 | 0.135 | 0.027 | 0.062 | 0.660 | 20.0 % |
| Malawi | 0.913 | 0.679 | -0.234 | 0.032 | -0.273 | 1.033 | Offset |
| Mali | 3.150 | 2.422 | -0.728 | -0.059 | -0.719 | 1.069 | 8.2 % |
| Nigeria | 2.140 | 1.317 | -0.823 | -0.017 | -0.840 | 1.042 | 2.1 % |
| Rwanda | 1.605 | 0.994 | -0.611 | -0.035 | -0.537 | 0.937 | 5.8 % |
| Uganda | 2.070 | 2.020 | -0.050[a] | -0.004 | -0.046 | 1.003 | 8.1 % |
| Zambia | 2.843 | 1.972 | -0.871 | -0.015 | -0.876 | 1.022 | 1.7 % |
| Zimbabwe | 1.250 | 1.257 | 0.007[a] | 0.028 | -0.047 | 2.717 | Offset |
| Average | 1.975 | 1.492 | -0.483 | -0.019 | -0.484 | 1.041 | 4.0 % |

[a] Not statistically significant.

Table 5: Predictors of Rejection of All Justifications for Domestic Violence (Odds ratios)

| | All countries | Benin | Ethiopia | Ghana | Kenya | Madagascar | Malawi | Mali | Nigeria | Rwanda | Uganda | Zambia | Zimbabwe |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wave 2 | 1.736 | 1.178[a] | 1.175[a] | 1.724 | 1.652 | 0.967[a] | 1.388 | 2.927 | 3.163 | 1.898 | 1.391[a] | 2.495 | 0.653[a] |
| Married* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Age | 1.009 | 1.006 | 0.995 | 1.019 | 1.006 | 1.011 | 1.015 | 0.995 | 1.008 | 1.002[a] | 1.012 | 1.005[a] | 1.029 |
| Urban | 1.088[a] | 1.659 | 1.681 | 1.271 | 1.483 | 0.735 | 1.864 | 1.252[a] | 1.137[a] | 1.256 | 1.422 | 0.678 | 1.472 |
| No ed. | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Primary ed. | 1.855 | 1.564 | 1.258 | 1.424 | 1.301 | 0.937[a] | 0.867 | 0.916[a] | 1.949 | 1.293 | 1.060[a] | 0.691 | 1.100[a] |
| Second ed. | 2.738 | 2.926 | 2.611 | 2.027 | 2.112 | 0.890[a] | 1.241 | 1.447 | 2.979 | 2.287 | 1.329 | 0.925[a] | 1.701 |
| Higher ed. | 5.662 | 13.820 | 7.640 | 5.610 | 5.089 | 2.050 | 5.950 | 5.092 | 5.265 | 6.518 | 2.551 | 4.374 | 6.398 |
| Working | 1.037[a] | 0.767 | 1.130[a] | 0.964[a] | 0.887[a] | 0.786[a] | 0.831 | 0.903[a] | 1.034[a] | 0.911[a] | 1.048[a] | 0.507 | 0.956[a] |
| Wealth* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Radio | 1.225 | 0.734 | 1.161[a] | 1.467 | 0.993[a] | 1.217[a] | 1.246 | 0.769 | 0.996[a] | 1.286 | 1.108[a] | 1.336 | 0.851 |
| Newspaper | 1.276 | 0.675 | 1.472[a] | 1.255[a] | 1.334 | 1.394 | 0.843[a] | 1.484 | 1.142[a] | 1.293 | 1.264 | 2.006 | 1.211 |
| TV | 1.001[a] | 1.500 | 1.789 | 1.114[a] | 1.466 | 0.958[a] | 1.177[a] | 1.081[a] | 1.164 | 1.183 | 1.236 | 1.221 | 1.405 |
| *Interactions with wave 2:* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Urban | 1.246 | 0.923[a] | 1.088[a] | 1.153[a] | 1.209[a] | 1.116[a] | 0.929[a] | 0.642 | 1.379 | 0.957[a] | 1.141[a] | 1.498 | 1.292[a] |
| Some educ. | 0.869 | 1.025[a] | 1.062[a] | 0.905[a] | 1.004[a] | 0.961[a] | 1.085[a] | 1.129[a] | 0.627 | 0.789 | 1.026[a] | 0.963[a] | 1.462[a] |
| Working | 1.130 | 1.233[a] | 1.091[a] | 1.057[a] | 1.028[a] | 1.062[a] | 1.032[a] | 0.757 | 0.801 | 1.337 | 0.933[a] | 1.808 | 0.945[a] |
| Wealth* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Radio | 0.904 | 1.480 | 0.820[a] | 0.820[a] | 1.152[a] | 0.808[a] | 0.834 | 1.380 | 0.978[a] | 0.897[a] | 0.949[a] | 0.798 | 1.067[a] |
| Newspaper | 0.888 | 1.570 | 0.874[a] | 1.102[a] | 0.841[a] | 0.511 | 1.074[a] | 0.626 | 1.137[a] | 1.040[a] | 1.028[a] | 0.882[a] | 1.086[a] |

[a] Not statistically significant at 0.05 level.

*Not yet coded.

Table 6. Changes in Scale Consistency using Cronbach's Alpha as Indicator

| | Wave 1 | Wave 2 | W1 to W2 Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Benin | 0.7932 | 0.8854 | 0.0922 |
| Ethiopia | 0.7470 | 0.7763 | 0.0293 |
| Ghana | 0.8847 | 0.8151 | -0.0696 |
| Kenya | 0.8600 | 0.9166 | 0.0566 |
| Madagascar | 0.8179 | 0.8779 | 0.060 |
| Malawi | 0.9140 | 0.9501 | 0.0361 |
| Mali | 0.8603 | 0.9181 | 0.0578 |
| Nigeria | 0.9402 | 0.9243 | -0.0159 |
| Rwanda | 0.7220 | 0.7189 | -0.0031 |
| Uganda | 0.7343 | 0.8044 | 0.0701 |
| Zambia | 0.8086 | 0.8667 | 0.0581 |
| Zimbabwe | 0.8091 | 0.8397 | 0.0306 |
| Average | 0.8344 | 0.8878 | 0.0534 |
| Lowest | 0.7220 (Rwanda) | 0.7189 (Rwanda) | -0.0696 (Ghana) |
| Highest | 0.9402 (Nigeria) | 0.9501 (Malawi) | 0.0922 (Benin) |

Table 7: Attitudes about Other Gender Issues as Predictors of Domestic Violence Responses

| | Mean Number of Acceptable Justifications for Domestic Violence | | Rejects all Justifications for Domestic Violence (odds ratios) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 1 | Model 2 |
| Wave 2 | -0.421*** | -0.387*** | 1.677*** | 1.618*** |
| A wife has the right to refuse sex when she is tired | -0.369*** | -0.337*** | 1.455*** | 1.406*** |
| *Interaction*: Right to refuse sex*wave 2 | | -0.054 | | 1.058 |
| Wave 2 | -0.357*** | -0.418*** | 1.662*** | 1.849*** |
| Female circumcision should be discontinued | -0.837*** | -0.927*** | 2.885*** | 3.268*** |
| *Interaction*: Discontinue FC*wave 2 | | 0.152* | | 0.819* |

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