

# Understanding Harmful Cultural Practices: Origins, Drivers & Behavior Change

**March 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> 2018, University of California, Santa Barbara**

Organized by David Lawson (UCSB) & Mhairi Gibson (University of Bristol)

Sponsored by the UCSB College of Letters and Science and the Broom Center for Demography

## Day 1 – Open to All. Registration required.

All talks will be held in the Alumni Hall of [Mosher House](#).

08:15-08:45 Breakfast at Mosher House

08:45-09:00 Welcome / Opening Remarks from: the organizers, Dean Charles Hale (Dean of Social Sciences, UCSB) and Maria Charles (Director of the Broom Centre, UCSB).

09:00-09:45 **Opening Talk: Kathryn Yount** (Hubert Department of Global Health, Emory University): *Gender Norms in the Global Social Ecology of Violence and Harmful Practices*

### **Session 1: Female Genital Cutting**

09:45-10:15 **Karisa Cloward** (Department of Political Science, Southern Methodist University): *When Norms Collide: Local Responses to Activism against FGM and Early Marriage*

10:15-10:35 Coffee Break

10:35-11:05 **Mhairi Gibson** (Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Bristol): *Hidden Support for 'Harmful Cultural Practices' in rural Ethiopia.*

11:05-11:35 **Gerry Mackie** (Department of Political Science, University of California, San Diego): *When and How is Law Effective in Reducing the Practice of FGM/C?*

11:35-12:00 Group Discussion

12:00-13:00 Catered Lunch

### **Session 2: Child Marriage**

13:00-13:30 **Erica Field** (Department of Economics, Duke University): *Power vs Money: Alternative Approaches to Reducing Child Marriage in Bangladesh, A Randomized Control Trial*

13:30-14:00 **Susan Schaffnit** (Department of Anthropology, University of California, Santa Barbara): *Understanding Early Marriage in Context: Marital Timing and Women's Wellbeing in Kisesa, Tanzania*

14:00-14:30 **Nicholas Syrett** (Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Kansas): *Child Marriage and the Law in the United States*

14:30-14:55 Group Discussion

14:55-15:15 Coffee Break

### **Session 3: Female Autonomy and Intimate Partner Violence**

15:15-15:45 **Jonathan Stieglitz** (Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse, Université Toulouse 1 Capitole): *Marital Violence and Fertility in a Relatively Egalitarian High Fertility Population*

15:45-16:15 **Janet Howard** (Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Bristol): *Can Evolutionary Anthropology Help to Explain Levels of Male-Female Intimate Partner Violence?*

16:15-16:45 **Brooke Scelza** (Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles): *Concurrency in Context: The Roles of Autonomy, Mobility and Kinship*

16:45-17:10 Group Discussion

## Day 2 – Closed Event. Invited Speakers and Delegates Only.

Held in the Board Room of [Mosher House](#).

08:30-09:00 Breakfast at Mosher House

09:00-09:10 Introduction to Day's Structure and Objectives (Mhairi & David)

09:10-10:10 Flash presentations from those who did not speak in Day 1.

10:10-10:30 Coffee Break

10:30-12:00 **Discussion Activity 1:** Contradictions and Evidence Gaps

12:00-13:00 Catered Lunch

13:00-14:00 **Discussion Activity 2:** Behavior Change / Policy

14:00-15:00 **Discussion Activity 3:** Interdisciplinarity and Research Uptake

15:00-15:20 Coffee Break

15:20-16:30 Open Discussion & Publication Plans

## Talk Abstracts and Speaker's Representative Publications

### **Opening Talk:**

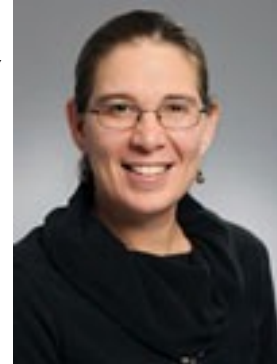
### ***Gender Norms in the Global Social Ecology of Violence and Harmful Practices***

[Kathryn Yount](#)<sup>1,2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Asa Griggs Candler Chair of Global Health

<sup>2</sup> Hubert Department of Global Health, Emory University (USA)

<sup>3</sup> Department of Sociology, Emory University (USA)



### ***Representative Publications:***

Yount KM, Crandall A, and Cheong YF 2018. [Women's Age at First Marriage and Long-Term Economic Empowerment in Egypt](#). *World Development* 102, 124-134

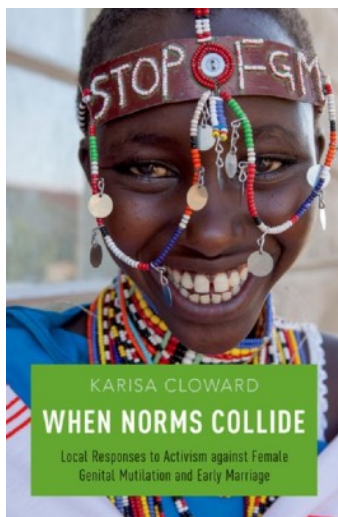
Yount KM, James-Hawkins L, Cheong Y F, & Naved RT. 2018. [Men's perpetration of partner violence in Bangladesh: Community gender norms and violence in childhood](#). *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 19: 117.

# ***When Norms Collide: Local Responses to Activism against Female Genital Mutilation and Early Marriage***

[Karisa Cloward](#)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science, Southern Methodist University (USA)

Many transnational campaigns, and particularly the transnational campaign on violence against women, promote international norms that target the behavior of local non-state actors, but these international norms are often at odds with local practices. What happens when the international and local norms collide? When does transnational activism lead individuals and communities to abandon local norms and embrace international ones? I present a theoretical framework for understanding the processes by which individuals negotiate competing demands placed on them by international and local norms. Drawing on extensive fieldwork with Maasai and Samburu communities in Kenya, I apply the theory to the practices of female genital mutilation and early marriage. I argue that, when faced with international normative messages, individuals can decide to change their attitudes, their behavior, and the public image they present to international and local audiences. I find that the impact of transnational activism on individual decision-making substantially depends on the salience of the international and local norms to their respective proponents, as well as on community-level factors. I further find that there are both social and temporal dimensions to the diffusion of international norms across individuals and through communities.



## ***Representative Publications:***

Cloward K. 2014. [\*False Commitments: Local Misrepresentation and the International Norms Against FGM and Early Marriage\*](#). *International Organization* 68(3): 495-526.

Cloward K. 2016. [\*When Norms Collide: Local Responses to Activism against Female Genital Mutilation and Early Marriage\*](#). New York: Oxford University Press

# ***Measuring Hidden Support for ‘Harmful Cultural Practices’ in Rural Ethiopia.***

[Mhairi A. Gibson](#)<sup>1</sup>, Eshetu Gurmu<sup>2</sup>, Beatriz Cobo Rodríguez<sup>3</sup>, María del Mar Rueda García<sup>3</sup>, Isabel M. Scott<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Anthropology and Archeology, University of Bristol (UK)

<sup>2</sup>Institute of Development and Policy Research, University of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)

<sup>3</sup>Department Statistics and Operations Research, University of Granada (Spain)

Harmful cultural practices, such as ‘female genital cutting (FGC)’ and ‘intimate partner violence’, have major implications for women’s physical, sexual and psychological health, and their elimination is a key target for public health policy-makers. To date one of the main barriers to achieving this has been an inability to infer privately-held views and intentions within communities where these practices are common. As they are sensitive topics (and illegal behaviors), people are anticipated to hide their true views and intentions when questioned directly. Here we combine an indirect questioning method (unmatched count technique) with ideas from evolutionary anthropology to explore hidden views on FGC in a rural Ethiopian community. Employing a socio-demographic household survey of Arsi Oromo adults (n=1620), which incorporated indirect and direct response techniques we 1) compare public versus privately held views on FGC, 2) compare FGC intentions for daughters versus daughters-in-law and 3) identify individual predictors for these preferences (e.g. by education level, gender, and age). We argue that indirect methods and evolutionary approaches have the potential to advance knowledge and inform policy on culturally-sensitive topics like FGC. They can do this by providing more reliable data on hidden attitudes and behaviors; and by improving our understanding of the “true” drivers of HCPs.



## ***Representative Publications:***

Uggla C, Gurmu E, & Gibson MA. 2017. [Are wives and daughters disadvantaged in polygynous households? A case study of the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia](#). *Evolution and Human Behavior*.

Gibson MA & Lawson DW. 2015. [Applying Evolutionary Anthropology](#). *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews* 24(1): 3-14.

# ***When and How is Law Effective in Reducing the Practice of FGM/C?***

[Gerry Mackie](#)<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Co-Director, Center on Global Justice, University of California, San Diego (USA)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Political Science, University of California, San Diego (USA)

A frequent policy response to harmful practices such as female genital cutting or early female marriage is to propose criminalization. Criminal law is designed to regulate deviants who intend harm, not entire populations who believe they are doing the right thing or that they have no other choice. Such laws dismally fail in effect, and when they do, the almost mechanical response is to demand more enforcement, rather than to pause and ask why. I review social, political, legal, and criminological theory on why people obey or not moral, social, and legal rules. I will report on empirical research in progress. In Egypt and in portions of Kenya we will administer quantitative surveys on reasons for obeying or not rules regulating FGC and contrast items such as tax compliance, crop stealing, murder; and a few qualitative vignette studies



on the same topic in ethnic groups at different stages of FGC abandonment. There is a strong law in Burkina Faso and none in Mali; we plan the same qualitative studies on reasons for obedience on both sides of the border; and cross-border list experiments with treatment, control and a third arm asking DHS FGC questions; among other investigations.

## ***Representative Publications:***

Mackie G. [Social Norms Change: Believing Makes it So](#). Prepublication Draft.

Mackie G. 2016. [Construction of a social norm of legal obedience](#). In Tognato C. (Ed) *Cultural Agents Reloaded: The Legacy of Antanas Mockus*. Harvard University Press.



# ***Power vs Money: Alternative Approaches to Reducing Child Marriage in Bangladesh, A Randomized Control Trial***

[Erica Field](#)<sup>1</sup> Nina Buchmann<sup>2</sup>, Rachel Glennerster<sup>3</sup>, Shahana Nazneen<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Economics, Duke University (USA)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Economics, Stanford (USA)

<sup>3</sup>Department of International Development (UK)

<sup>4</sup>Innovations for Poverty Action (USA)

A clustered randomized trial in Bangladesh examines alternative strategies to reduce child marriage and teenage childbearing and increase girls' education. Communities were randomized into three treatment and one control group in a 2:1:1:2 ratio. From 2008, girls in treatment communities received either i) a six-month empowerment program, ii) a financial incentive to delay marriage, or iii) empowerment plus incentive. Data from 15,464 girls 4.5 years after program completion show that girls eligible for the incentive for at least two years were 24% less likely to be married under 18, 14% less likely to have given birth under 20, and 25% more likely to be in school at age 22. Unlike other incentive programs that are conditional on girls staying in school, an incentive conditional on marriage alone has the potential to benefit out-of-school girls. We find insignificantly different effects for girls in and out of school at baseline. The empowerment program did not decrease child marriage or teenage childbearing. However, girls eligible for the empowerment program were 11% more likely to be in-school at age 22. We also find significant and large effects of the empowerment program on income-generating activities (IGAs): an increase in an IGA index by 0.4SDs and 0.6SDs among older girls.



## ***Representative Publications:***

Buchmann N, Field E, Glennerster R, Nazneen S, Pimkina S, & Sen I. 2017. [Power vs Money: Alternative Approaches to Reducing Child Marriage in Bangladesh, a Randomized Control Trial](#).

Field, E., & Ambrus, A. 2008. [Early marriage, age of menarche, and female schooling attainment in Bangladesh](#). *Journal of political Economy*, 116(5), 881-930.



# ***Understanding Early Marriage in Context: Marital Timing and Women's Wellbeing in Kisesa, Tanzania***

[Susan Schaffnit](#)<sup>1</sup>, Anushé Hassan<sup>2</sup>, Mark Urassa<sup>3</sup>, David Lawson<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Anthropology, University of California, Santa Barbara (USA)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Population Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (UK)

<sup>3</sup> National Institute of Medical Research, Mwanza (Tanzania)

Around 40% of African girls marry before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. International campaigns to eradicate child marriage are motivated by concerns over a presumed lack of female autonomy and on the purported costs of early marriage on wellbeing. Often lacking from such efforts however, is a consideration of the potential *benefits* to early marriage within settings where it is most common. In addition, an arbitrary and ethnocentric fixation on 18 years as the threshold defining harmful child marriage obscures the possibility that adolescent marriage (e.g. 16 years or over) may have distinct consequences to very early marriage (e.g. 15 years or under). Here, we investigate the causes and consequences of early marriage in



northwestern Tanzania, where late adolescent marriage is the norm. Using qualitative data, we explore local understandings of the marriage process, focusing on how, who, and when to marry. Then using quantitative data from a sample of 1,000 women, we assess the evidence that early marriage is harmful utilizing a range of wellbeing measures. We argue that, in this context, marriage is viewed as a strategy for improving one's status in the local community and thus may be attractive to young people, and that early marriage does not necessarily cause harm to older adolescents. Our conclusions illuminate why rates of early marriage may remain high despite restrictive laws and highlight the need to understand such practices within their own context. Future research directions and implications for initiatives seeking to improve women's lives in this area are discussed.

## ***Representative Publications:***

Schaffnit SB. & Sear R. 2017. [Supportive families versus support from families: the decision to have a child in the Netherlands](#). *Demographic Research*, 37(14): 414-454.

Lawson, DW, et al. [No evidence that polygynous marriage is a harmful cultural practice in northern Tanzania](#). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112.45 (2015): 13827-13832.

# ***Child Marriage and the Law in the United States***

[Nicholas L. Syrett](#)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies  
University of Kansas (USA)

I begin by briefly sketching out the history of the law that allowed minors to marry in the United States, also explaining when and why Americans came to object to the marriage of minors and how this led to raising the minimum marriageable age in most states. I then focus on the legal consequences of marriage, which could be quite beneficial for minors: emancipation from parents, ability to claim inheritances and wages, legitimization of pregnancies and sexual activity. The other side of the same coin, however, is that marriage has also served as a legal shield for older men who sought to exploit younger girls. The same legal principles that could emancipate some girls (the vast majority of marrying minors in the United States) also served to yoke them to their new



husbands, where it was often difficult for parents and representatives of the state to aid them. I close with a brief discussion of the current effort to ban the marriage of minors in the United States, and the opposition to those efforts by groups like the ACLU, arguing that we need to disentangle the legal transformation that minors achieve via marriage from the institution of marriage itself.



## ***Representative Publications:***

Syrett NL. 2016. *American child bride: [A history of minors and marriage in the United States](#)*. UNC Press Books.

Syrett NL. 2013. "[I Did and I Don't Regret It](#)": *Child Marriage and the Contestation of Childhood in the United States, 1880–1925*. *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 6(2), 314-331.

# ***Marital Violence and Fertility in a Relatively Egalitarian High Fertility Population***

[Jonathan Stieglitz](#)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Université Toulouse 1 Capitole

Program Director of Anthropology, Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse (France)

Two broad causal explanations of intimate partner violence (IPV) against women have been proposed: strategic explanations, positing that IPV or its threat is used deliberately by a man to achieve a selfish outcome, and impulsive explanations, positing that IPV is not used deliberately or in self-interest, but instead results from stress or men's antisocial personality. Hybrid (strategic-impulsive) IPV explanations have also been proposed, emphasizing a causal role for social learning. Among Tsimane forager-horticulturalists of Bolivia, we test predictions of strategic evolutionary, impulsive and hybrid IPV explanations by examining fitness consequences and behavioral and psychological determinants of IPV. Consistent with a strategic evolutionary explanation, we find that IPV predicts greater marital fertility; this result is robust to using between- versus within-subject comparisons, and after considering secular changes, reverse causality, recall bias and other factors. Greater IPV rate is associated with men's attitudes favoring intersexual control (predicted by a strategic evolutionary explanation), but not by men's propensity for intrasexual physical aggression (impulsive explanation), nor by men's or women's childhood exposure to family violence (hybrid explanation). Our results suggest a psychological and behavioral mechanism through which men exert direct influence over marital fertility, which manifests when spouses differ in preferred family sizes.



## ***Representative Publications:***

Stieglitz J, Gurven M, Kaplan H, Winking J. 2012. [Infidelity, jealousy, and wife abuse among Tsimane forager-farmers: testing evolutionary hypotheses of marital conflict](#). *Evolution and Human Behavior* 33:438-448.

Stieglitz J, Kaplan H, Gurven M, Winking J, Vie B. 2011. [Spousal violence and paternal disinvestment among Tsimane' forager-horticulturalists of Bolivia](#). *American Journal of Human Biology* 23:445-457.

# ***Can Evolutionary Anthropology Help to Explain Levels of Male-to-Female Intimate Partner Violence?***

[Janet A. Howard<sup>1</sup>](#), Mhairi A. Gibson<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Anthropology and Archeology, University of Bristol (United Kingdom)

The World Health Organization estimates that almost a third of the world's women experience physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) when in a relationship. Due to the detrimental impact on women, the motivations behind male-to-female IPV are of interest to policy-makers, social scientists, and increasingly to evolutionary anthropologists. Male-to-female IPV has been linked to reducing women's extra-pair sexual relations which may increase paternity certainty and decrease men's risk of raising genetically unrelated offspring. It is also suggested that male-to-female IPV arises due to conflict between the sexes over reproduction, when men seek additional offspring either within or outside the relationship. To date, however, these ideas remain largely untested using empirical data. Here we use Demographic and Health Survey data from 18 African countries to test for associations between men's attitudes towards IPV and incidence of IPV and 1) indicators of paternity concern (wife's sexual activity before and during marriage) and 2) indicators of sexual conflict over reproductive interests (disparity in number of desired offspring, and contraceptive use). Moreover, as male-to-female IPV may be a response to social cues from others within the community, we use multilevel analysis to explore both individual and community influences (e.g. prevalence of extra-pair sexual activity and male controlling behaviors towards women within the community, and social acceptance of IPV).



## ***Representative Publications:***

Howard JA, & Gibson MA. 2017. [Frequency-dependent female genital cutting behaviour confers evolutionary fitness benefits](#). *Nature ecology & evolution*, 1(3), 0049.

# ***Concurrency in Context: The Roles of Autonomy, Mobility and Kinship***

[Brooke A. Scelza](#)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles (USA)

Concurrent and serial partnerships are traditionally viewed as harmful to women's health and well-being. Women with concurrent partners are at higher risk of contracting STI's and risky sexual behavior often co-occurs with financial need and low social support. However, recent work on concurrency and transactional sex highlights the importance of understanding the cultural norms and institutions that affect the flows of sex and resources. Here, I present a mix of quantitative and qualitative data from a long-term field project with Himba pastoralists, a group where female autonomy is high, resources are scarce and concurrency is normative. Unlike most studies of concurrency, which focus on market-integrated populations, the Himba economy is still almost exclusively subsistence-based and traditional norms related to marriage and kinship remain strong. Understanding how multiple partnerships operate in this context therefore provides an interesting complement to existing work, and may shed light on the history and function of the practice. I will discuss instances where both serial and concurrent partnerships benefit Himba women, and discuss how kinship, marriage and mobility patterns in this traditional, subsistence economy compare and contrast with broader patterns of concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa.



## ***Representative Publications:***

Scelza, BA. 2011. [Female choice and extra-pair paternity in a traditional human population](#). *Biology Letters*: rsbl20110478.

Scelza, BA. 2013. [Choosy but not chaste: Multiple mating in human females](#). *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews* 22: 259-269.