The Effects of Women’s Attitudes Towards Divorce on Marital Instability in Rural Malawi
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**Background**
- The relationship between women’s autonomy and marriage is complex as marriage has become a way for some women to gain control over their lives.
- In some sub-Saharan African societies, there has been a shift away from traditional marital practices towards greater independence of women from family members.
- This shift suggests a change in attitudes and in cultural practices related to marriage and women’s autonomy.

**Main Research Question**
Can specific domains of women’s attitude towards divorce be more important in predicting women’s likelihood of union dissolution than others?

**Data**
Malawi Longitudinal Survey on Family and Health (MLSFH)
MLSFH is a large panel study on reproductive health, social networks, attitudes and behaviors surrounding HIV/AIDS and gender roles in three rural areas of Malawi.

Our analytical sample consists of all married women in their first union at the first survey wave in 1998.

**Main Findings**
- Divorce rates vary greatly across regions due to different traditional practices and social norms found in rural Malawi.
- The generational effects in the survival rates of unions are likely explained by sample selectivity.
- Women who believe wife beating is a reason for divorce have the highest likelihood of experiencing a union dissolution; it is the opposite for women who suspect their husband to be infected with aids.
- Residential patterns after union and polygyny have strong effects on the odds of union dissolution.

**Event-history analysis**
We use event history analysis in discrete-time with person-year data to model the risk of divorce over the period of observation (1998 to 2008).

**Logistic Regressions**
- We present the odds ratios for discrete time logistic regressions.
- Dependent variable is the occurrence of a union dissolution.
- Main independent variables are domains on attitudes of women on divorce (lagged).
- Model also controls for: union duration (tvc), religion, region.

**Legend:**
- *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001
- H: Husband; W: Wife
- tvc: time-varying covariate