The persistent impact of the slave trades on domestic violence in Africa

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Motivation

- In Africa, almost 37 percent of women have been victims of domestic violence (WHO 2004, 2013)
- Historic determinants through intergenerational transmission of values and norms
- Slave trades, 1400 to 1900
  - High levels of violence
  - Trans-Atlantic slave trade: high demand for men
- Long-term effect of the slave trades on domestic violence?
Historical background

Slave trades, 1400 to 1900

- **Trans-Atlantic slave trade**
  - 12 million slaves
  - From West, West-Central and Eastern Africa to the Americas
  - Higher demand for male than female slaves (work on plantations) (Lovejoy, 1989, 2011; Manning, 1990)
  - Female-biased sex ratio ⇒ change in the role of women (Manning, 1990)

- **Indian Ocean slave trade**
  - 6 million slaves
  - From eastern Africa to Middle East, India, islands in the Indian Ocean
  - High demand for female slaves (concubines, domestic servants)
  - Male-biased sex ratio, but change in sex ratio smaller than during trans-Atlantic slave trade (Harris, 1971)

- High levels of violence (Northrup, 1978; Lovejoy 1994)
Possible mechanisms

Intergenerational transmission of values and preferences (Doumas et al., 1994; Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Bisin and Verdier, 2000, 2001; Hauk and Saez-Marti, 2002; Tabellini, 2008)

- Long-term increase in propensity to violence due to more violent environment (Koenig et al., 2006; Miguel et al., 2011; Couttenier et al., 2016) ⇒ more domestic violence
- Long-term change in gender norms due to female-biased sex ratio
  - General change in gender norms ⇒ less domestic violence
  - Change in female employment (Teso, 2017)
    - Bargaining power (Aizer, 2010) ⇒ less domestic violence
    - Exposure to the spouse (Chin, 2012) ⇒ less domestic violence
    - Backlash effect (Hjort and Villanger, 2011) ⇒ more domestic violence
    - Rent extraction (Bloch and Rao, 2002; Bobonis et al. 2013) ⇒ more domestic violence
Literature review

- Determinants of domestic violence
  - Violent conflicts / environment (Gallegos and Gutierrez, 2011; La Mattina, 2017; Noe and Rieckmann, 2013)
  - Female employment (Aizer, 2010; Chin, 2012; Hjort and Villanger, 2011; Bloch and Rao, 2002; Bobonis et al. 2013)
  - Precolonial ethnic characteristics (Alesina et al., 2016)

- Research on historic determinants of gender roles (Alesina et al., 2011, 2013; Hansen et al. 2015)

- Research on effects of historical events on contemporary outcomes (see, e.g., Nunn, 2009, 2014; Diamond and Robinson, 2010)

- Research on effects of slave trades (Nunn, 2008; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011; Whatley and Gillezeau, 2011; Dalton and Leung, 2014; Teso, 2017)

- Intergenerational transmission of values and preferences (Bisin and Verdier, 2000, 2001; Hauk and Saez-Marti, 2002; Tabellini, 2008)
Data

- **Ethnic group-level data**
  - Slave export data on ethnic group level, matched to Murdock’s (1959) classification of ethnic groups (Nunn, 2008, based on The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database; shared by Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011)
  - Variables to control for intensity of colonization, ethnic group’s historical prosperity and structure of economy

- **Individual-level data**
  - Source: Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), geocoded enumeration areas allocated to Murdock’s (1959) map on ethnic homelands
  - Domestic violence: Indicator variables whether woman ever experienced physical violence (pushed, slapped, punched, kicked, burnt etc). or sexual violence (forced into sexual intercourse) by husband/partner
  - Individual-level controls to control for wealth, education, employment, religion, urban status
Analysis based on residence: Specification

\[ y_{ies} = \alpha_s + \beta_{\text{slave}_e} + X'_e \Gamma + X'_{ies} \Delta + \varepsilon_{ies} \]

\[ y_{ies} = \alpha_s + \beta_1 \text{transatlantic}_e + \beta_2 \text{indianocean}_e + X'_e \Gamma + X'_{ies} \Delta + \varepsilon_{ies} \]

- \( y_{iec} \): indicator variable whether individual \( i \) living in ethnic homeland \( e \) ever experienced any form of physical/sexual violence from her spouse
- \( \text{slave}_e \): log of number of slaves exported from ethnic homeland \( e \) in which individual \( i \) lives, normalized by homeland area, plus 0.1
- \( \text{transatlantic}_e \): slaves exported in trans-Atlantic slave trade
- \( \text{indianocean}_e \): slaves exported in Indian Ocean slave trade
- \( X'_e \): control variables on level of ethnic group \( e \)
- \( X'_{ies} \): individual level control variables
- \( \alpha_s \): survey (country-year) fixed effects
## Analysis based on residence: Physical violence

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Standard errors in parentheses
Standard errors clustered on the ethnic group level.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Analysis based on residence: Sexual violence

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Outlook: Analysis based on ethnic affiliation

- Match women’s and their spouses’ ethnicity from DHS to Murdock’s (1959) ethnic classification
- Effect of women’s or their spouses’ ancestors’ experience during the slave trades
Relative importance of external and internal channels:

\[ y_{iefs} = \alpha_s + \beta_1 slave_e + \beta_2 slave_f + X'_f \Gamma + X'_{iefs} \Delta + \varepsilon_{iefs} \]

- \( f \): ethnic group in whose homeland the individual lives
- \( e \): individual’s ethnic group
- Similar specification for the spouse
Outlook: Adressing causality using instruments

- Distance from where the slaves were taken to the places of demand
  - Distance from the centroid of the ethnic group’s homeland to the closest point on the coast
- Falsification test: Check whether instruments are uncorrelated with domestic violence in other parts of the world and in African countries without slave trades (using DHS)
Preliminary conclusions

- The slave trades tend to decrease sexual domestic violence.
- These results tend to be stronger for the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
- This is consistent with the female-biased sex ratio leading to a change in gender norms and thus to a decrease in domestic violence.
- It is also consistent with a decrease in domestic violence explained by an increase in bargaining power and a decrease in exposure to the spouse due to higher employment.
Thank you!