

# Renewalist Christianity, Political Competition and the Political Saliency of LGBTs in sub-Saharan Africa

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## Abstract

One of the intriguing political developments in Africa in the past decade has been the spatial and temporal variation in the growing saliency of morality politics in general and of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) politics in particular. I argue that the uneven upward trend in the political saliency of LGBT-related issues is closely related to two key recent political processes: (i.) a rapid growth of Pentecostal, Evangelical and related Renewalist or Spirit-filled churches (demand-side factor) and (ii.) a democratization process leading to heightened political competition (supply-side). To evaluate the above proposition I put together an original, fine-grained longitudinal dataset of media coverage of LGBTs in Africa, which I use as measure of issue saliency. Using a series of negative binomial regression models, I find robust evidence that the saliency of LGBTs is increasing in a country's level of political competition and its population share of Renewalist Christians.

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# 1 Introduction

In October 2009 David Bahati, then a relatively unknown Member of Parliament (MP) from Uganda’s ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), introduced a bill that sought to further criminalize any homosexuality activity in Uganda.<sup>1</sup> Following mounting international pressure, Bahati’s now infamous bill—which would institute the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality”—has been removed off the agenda, stirring a national debate in Uganda over the country’s sovereign right to criminalize any activity it sees fit. Immediately thereafter, similar bills showed up in other African countries: anti-gay measures passed in Burundi in late 2009, Malawi in 2010, Nigeria in 2011 and Liberia in 2012.<sup>2</sup> Religious leaders in Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Cameroon and Ghana are currently pushing forward similar bills that further place limitations on same-sex relations.

In February 2012, Bahati’s bill was reintroduce to the Ugandan parliament. Interestingly, when MP Bahati took the stand to address parliament he received a resounding standing ovation from both the NRM and the opposition caucuses.<sup>3</sup> The events surrounding Uganda’s anti-gay bill underline several intriguing political developments in Africa in the past decade. First is the growing saliency of morality politics in general and of same-sex behavior in particular, at least in *some African countries*. Second, that in contrast to the case of OECD countries, morality politics in Africa, as other politically salient issues such as ‘corruption’, is constructed as a consensual (valence) rather than a wedge issue. Third, that unlike the human rights discourse that is typical to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) politics in the west, in Africa the issue of LGBT has been represented in relation to wider discourses regarding threats to *African values, national identity and sovereignty*.

Mainstream political science scholarship has recently added gay and lesbian politics to the study of morality politics issues, such as alcohol, abortion, drugs, and gambling (Lax and Phillips, 2009; Egan, 2008). As the Bahati anti-gay bill suggest, the dynamic surrounding LGBTs politics in Africa may be different than in advanced liberal democracies. The study of politics of highly salient morality issues, however, has thus far concentrated on a handful of western countries. Focusing on spatial and temporal variation in the saliency of LGBTs in Sub-Saharan Africa, this paper seeks first and foremost to begin closing this gap.

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<sup>1</sup>At the time MP Bahati introduced his anti-gay legislation, homosexuality was already illegal in Uganda under colonial era laws, punishable by up to 14 years imprisonment.

<sup>2</sup>In 2009, Burundi passed an amendment to the criminal code that criminalizes homosexuality. In 2010, the Malawian Parliament amended the country’s penal code to outlaw same-sex relations between females. In 2011, the Nigerian Senate passed the *Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill*, which criminalizes not only same-sex marriages but also registration and operation of any gay organization in the country. In 2012, Liberia passed a law making homosexuality a second degree felony and outlawing gay marriage.

<sup>3</sup>See *New Vision*, February 8, 2012 “Bill to outlaw Homosexuality in Uganda re-tabled.” See also *Daily Monitor*, February 8, 2012 “Government resurrects Anti-homosexuality Bill.”

This study’s key outcome of interest is the extent to which LGBTs–related issues have become politically salient in Sub-Saharan Africa in the past decade. Following Wlezien (2005), I use the term political salience to identify the importance voters place on a certain policy area. An issue is deemed more salient, the greater citizens’ level of concern regarding the issue is. Put differently, political saliency can be thought as the degree to which political information on issue  $x$  impacts the way citizens evaluate parties and candidates. To that extent, the position a candidate takes with respect to a salient issue is a politically relevant information, competing with other evaluative criteria such as the candidate’s sex, experience and past record (Wlezien, 2005, p. 558).

Building on Binder (1999) and Epstein and Segal (2000), among others, I measure the spatial and temporal political saliency of LGBTs using media coverage: the number of articles on LGBTs in country  $j$ ’s leading newspaper in year  $t$ .<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 describes the aggregated trend in the issue saliency of LGBTs in Sub-Saharan Africa between 2002 and 2011. Consistent with anecdotal evidence, media coverage data strongly suggests that the saliency of LGBT in Africa has increased more than threefold in the past decade.<sup>5</sup>

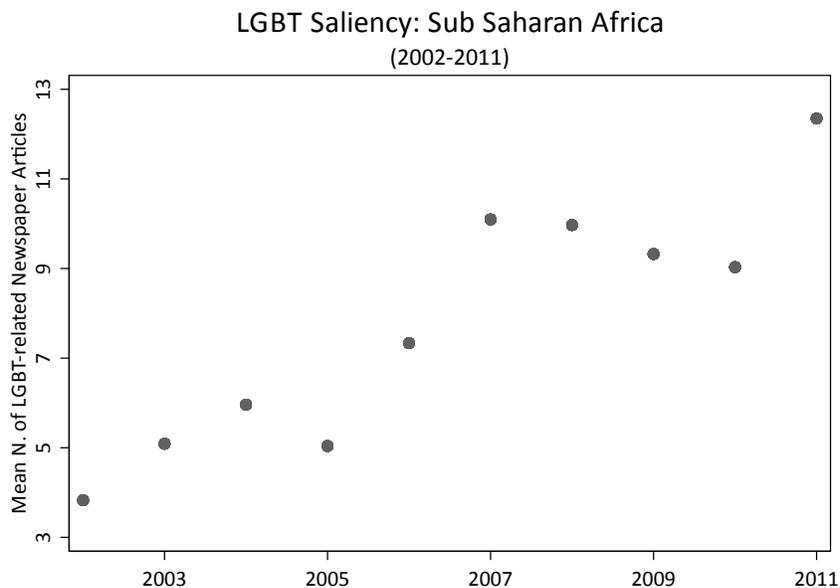


Figure 1: Trend in the issue saliency of LGBTs in Sub-Saharan Africa (2002-2011). LGBT issue saliency of country  $j$  is measured as the number of LGBT-related articles in a country’s leading daily newspaper in year  $t$ .

Note however that the unmistakable regional upward trend may obscure variation between countries across Sub-Saharan Africa. Figure 2, which provides information on the number of LGBT-related articles in 2011, demonstrates that while in some counties in Sub-Saharan Africa

<sup>4</sup>I provide further information on the construction of the measure below in Section 3.

<sup>5</sup>This is consistent with findings of past studies that the political saliency of an issue is dynamic and may change over time. See for example, Edwards, Mitchell and Welch (1995) and Eifert, Miguel and Posner (2010).

LGBTs politics is highly salient (e.g., Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Angola) in other countries (e.g., Guinea-Bissau, Niger and Rwanda) the issue does not enter the political sphere. Explaining this variation is the key objective of this paper.

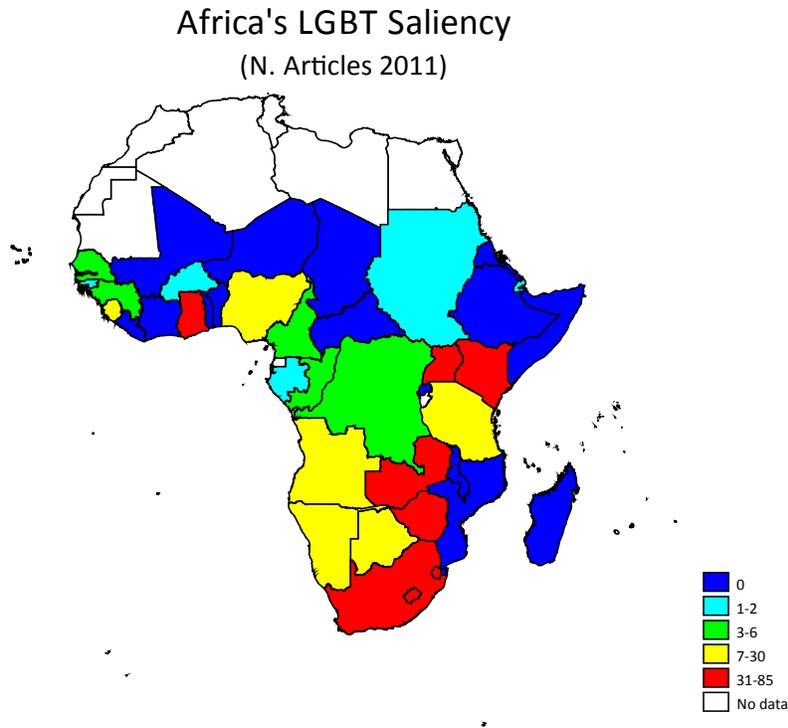


Figure 2: **LGBT Issue Saliency Map.** Figure describes the number of LGBT-related articles in 2011, across Sub-Saharan Africa. Data has not been collected on North African countries.

My measure of LGBT saliency builds on the intuition that the amount of media attention devoted to issue  $x$  mirrors not only the degree of *public* concern for that issue (Behr and Iyengar, 1985), but also the degree to which *elites* have an interest in addressing the issue. To test the plausibility of this assumption, I create an additional dataset of LGBTs-related legal events in Sub-Saharan Africa. For each county-year I code whether there LGBTs related legislation was debated in the national assembly or in the supreme court, and whether a piece of legislation regarding LGBTs became the law of the land. Figure 3 demonstrates clearly, that my media-base measure of LGBTs saliency correlates strongly with actions of political actors intent on regulating same-sex behavior.

That the public's interest is insufficient to make an issue salient has been evident, for example, in the extremely slow and uneven response of governments in Africa to the AIDS pandemic crisis (De Waal, 2006).<sup>6</sup> In other words, for an issue  $x$  to become salient both pull and push factors

<sup>6</sup>See also the frustration of Drze and Sen at the failure of famines to be high on the political agenda of many low-income countries (Drèze and Sen, 1989, Ch. 13.7).

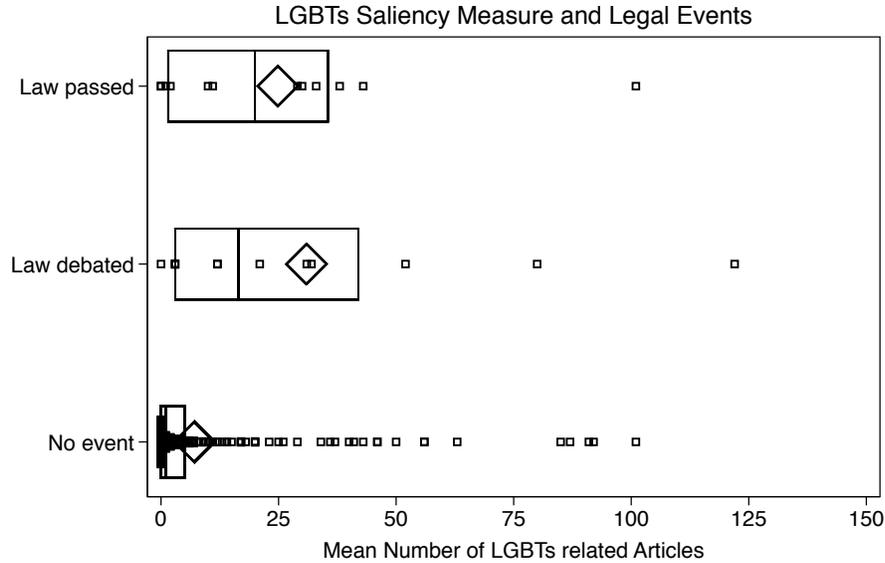


Figure 3: **Saliency Robustness** Figure presents a box-plot of the mean number of LGBT-related articles by legal events, across Sub-Saharan Africa. A list of events is provided in the Appendix, Table 3. The figure allows to gauge the entire distribution of LGBTs articles for each of the three categories of legal events; diamond symbols within box plots stand for the mean of the distribution.

must be in place. On the demand-side, a large number of citizens need to support political action on issue  $x$ . On the supply-side, there have to be politicians that see political gains in addressing citizens' priorities and preferences on that issue.

I argue that the upward trend in the issue saliency of LGBTs is closely related to two key processes that took-off in (*parts of*) Africa in the past two decades: (i.) a rapid growth of pentecostal, evangelical and related renewalist or Spirit-filled churches (demand-factor) and (ii.) a democratization process leading to heightened political competition (supply-factor). Whereas recent papers began exploring the policy implications of Africa's democratization (Stasavage, 2005), the political implications of the uneven spread of pentecostal and evangelical Christianity have largely been overlooked by students of African politics. This is another important knowledge gap that this paper seeks to address.

In exploring the reasons for why the recent spread of Evangelical Christianity in Africa increases the political saliency of LGBTs, I build on insights from the literature on the 'culture wars' in the USA (Cromartie, 2003), and especially on the political and sociological work on religious fundamentalism (Marty and Appleby, 1993; Almond, Sivan and Appleby, 1995). As I explain below in section 2, religious doctrine as well as political opportunities underline the active role that fundamental African Christian groups are playing in mobilizing in demand that the state regulates morality issues, and especially place further limitations on homosexual behavior.

As mentioned, the fact that a large number of citizens prioritize an issue hardly guarantees that politicians and political parties will act in response. I argue that politicians are more likely to be responsive to morality politics demands when facing high-levels of political competition. In short, heightened competition increases the pressure politicians face to differentiate themselves by building a political reputation or stereotyping one’s opponents. The imperative of differentiation, however, can lead politicians to be flag-bearers of many possible issues; most of which remain ‘unclaimed’ by political parties (Riker, 1986). I therefore explore below several characteristics of LGBTs politics, which make them especially appealing to African politicians and parties. These include the high mobilization capacities of churches, but also the low information barrier that citizens and politicians face when participating in morality debates.

I follow a two step empirical strategy to evaluate the above propositions. First, I put together an original, fine-grained longitudinal dataset of media coverage of LGBTs in Africa. Using a series of negative binomial regression models, I find robust evidence that LGBTs saliency is increasing in a country’s level of political competition and its population share of Evangelical Christians. Second, I analyze the content of all 530 newspaper articles on LGBTs in 2011 to examine the way in which the issue is constructed in the public sphere. If the media coverage of LGBTs is generally positive, then the demand-side of my argument is unlikely to be correct. I find that only 16% of newspaper articles have a positive tone, and that an article is three times more likely to have a clear negative tone than positive. These findings are consistent with the idea that anti-gay sentiment is pushing same-sex behavior to the top of the political agenda in some African countries.

The argument and findings in this paper have implications for several distinct literatures. Most importantly, this paper makes a contribution to the literature on when ‘unclaimed’ issues become politically salient. As explained below, the current literature focuses on the impetus of *losing* politicians to explore polarizing issues (Carmines and Stimson, 1986). This paper argues instead that, at least in Africa, the interest in politicizing same-sex behavior is likely stronger for *incumbents*. More so, whereas the current literature—developed in and for advanced western democracies—holds that only polarizing issues are likely to become salient, I argue instead that, in low-income countries, dormant issues are more likely to become salient the wider their popular support is.<sup>7</sup>

This paper also contributes to the growing literature on the effects of Africa’s political liberalization beginning in the 1990s. This literature focused initially on whether this liberalization is genuine (Lindberg, 2009) or superficial, merely designed to appease the development community (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). Recently, the literature has moved to explore the policy implication of heightened political competition, for example on education spending (Stasavage, 2005) and on decentralization

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<sup>7</sup>This argument is consistent with the emphasis that Bleck and van de Walle (2012) place on the role of uncertainty in issue claiming in Africa. Whereas Bleck and van de Walle (2012) are interested in explaining why politically salient issues are framed as valence issues, this paper is interested, instead, in explaining why some issues—in our case LGBTs—becomes salient in some places and not others.

policies (Grossman and Lewis, 2012). My theoretical argument and empirical evidence contributes to these recent advances, in particular providing further support for the logic advanced by Harding and Stasavage (2012)—that African incumbents respond to democratization pressures by implementing populist policies, which are highly visible, do not require high-implementation capacity and which can be credibly attributable to incumbents’ behavior. The anti-gay rhetoric (and proposed bills) follow a similar logic: LGBTs offers an easy way for African politicians to gain religious legitimacy and to credibly signal responsiveness to popular will.

Finally, the paper is also related to the literature on the role organized religion plays in politics. The literature on the political impact of religious groups in advanced liberal democracies is vast (Haider-Markel and Meier, 1996).<sup>8</sup> Outside the west, much of recent scholarship has focused on the determinants of success of Political Islam (Blaydes and Linzer, 2008) and on the role that Catholic and mainline churches played in the “third-wave” democratic transitions in Latin America (Gill, 1998), Asia (Freston, 2001) and Africa (Gifford, 1995; Haynes, 2004). Increasingly, prominent religion scholars have lamented that mainstream scholarship on religion and politics, whether focused on Africa, Asia, or Latin America, tends to ignore or downplay the burgeoning evangelical sector of Christianity in the global South (Ranger, 2008). Indeed, in Africa “little is really known about the role of the churches beyond the leadership of the mainline churches (Freston, 2001, p. 156).” I contributes to this literature by focusing attention to the role renewalist Christian groups (rather than Roman Catholic and Protestant Mainline churches) are playing in policy-making in Africa (rather than in democratization processes).

## 2 When Do LGBTs-Related Issue Become Politically Salient?

Political scientists have long recognized the significance of issue salience—the relative importance of different policy areas. Studies that seek to explain the electoral success of politicians and parties commonly take account of where those actors stand. But as Humphreys and Garry (2000) rightly stress, they also have to take account of what issues have become important, and what issues have been marginalized or remained ‘unclaimed.’ From a theoretical point of view, however, the study of salience has been rather underdeveloped. Specifically, political scientists have insufficiently addressed endogenous changes in political saliency: the ability and will of political actors to reshape the relative importance of different issue areas (Humphreys and Garry, 2000).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>The reviews by Wald, Silverman and Fridy (2005); Gill (2001) and Emerson and Hartman (2006) serve as a good starting point for the role organized religions play in politics. In addition, Marty and Appleby (1993) is devoted entirely to looking at the political impact of religious fundamental movements.

<sup>9</sup>Many studies of politics are focused on why different issues are on or off the political agenda without explicitly using the language of salience (Humphreys and Garry, 2000). A case in point is the influential work of Horowitz (1985), which focuses on the institutions that make intra-ethnic issues more salient relative to inter-ethnic issues.

Indeed we have only a limited understanding of how and why new issues become politically salient (De Vries and Hobolt, 2012, p. 247). To date, the literature on issue saliency still follows some variant of the seminal studies of Carmines and Stimson (1986) and Riker (1986), which posit that ‘dormant’ issues become salient following mobilization efforts of ‘losing’ parties that have a greater incentive than incumbents to promote conflict on a new policy dimension. According to Carmines and Stimson (1986), this sort of political entrepreneurship is successful only to the extent that voters are aware of differences in position; i.e., that attitudes regarding the issue are known to be polarized. Importantly, several assumptions underline Carmines and Stimson’s theoretical argument. First, their framework implicitly conceptualizes political issues as concerned with different positions on some policy space that typically map onto known societal cleavages. Second, it assumes a polarized constituency, a well-functioning party system that reflects societal cleavages and a mature media market. There are, however, good reasons to question whether this framework can explain newfound political salience in political environments where media markets are undeveloped and political parties are weakly institutionalized (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2005) and are non-ideological (Wantchekon, 2003) as is generally the case in Africa.

One implication of the weak party system prevalent in Africa is that consensual (i.e., valence) issues are more likely to become politically salient than polarizing issues that force politicians to take positions (Bleck and van de Walle, 2012).<sup>10</sup> An additional implication of the weak party system in many African countries is that opposition parties commonly lack elite coordination and discipline, as well as resources and mobilization capacity that are necessary for being the impetus of new issue dimensions. Instead opposition parties are more likely to be reactive to cues from incumbents or from organized societal groups. In this section I provide a theoretical framework to explain the sudden saliency of LGBTs in Africa. I first highlight the key role that Renewalist churches play in LGBTs-politics (section 2.1), before turning to examine the role of political actors, and especially incumbents (section 2.2).

## 2.1 Demand Side: Spread of Renewalist Christianity

Among civil society organizations, African religious groups are uniquely positioned to aggregate interests and preferences and to mobilize citizens in support of initiatives that the church wishes to advance. As a prominent religion sociologists recently noted “in Africa . . . churches become the main mediating institutions, and Christian appeals count as major arbiters of political legitimacy. Churches become alternative communities wielding power through non-governmental organizations, and Pentecostals especially may act as alternative oppositions, picking up the sentiments of the

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<sup>10</sup>Bleck and van de Walle (2012, p. 4) define *valence* issues as political issues on which there is generally a broad agreement, but that parties may have different opinions about how to achieve those goals, or make claims about competence in addressing the issues’ goals.

excluded” (Martin, 2002, p. 133-134). This insight lies at the heart of my argument regarding the central role conservative religious groups play in making LGBTs- related issues politically salient in Sub-Saharan Africa. I begin this section by defining Renewalist Christianity and reviewing its brief history of expansion in Africa. I then move to analyze why might Renewalist churches be more involved in morality politics than mainstream churches, and the reasons Renewalists are especially preoccupied with the state placing limitations on homosexual behavior.

## **Renewalist Christianity in Africa**

Renewalist Christianity—and the related pentecostal, evangelical and ‘charismatic’ movements—is one of the largest and fastest-growing movements in global Christianity, with its major strands accounting for at least a quarter of all Christians worldwide (World Christian Database). In Africa, as recently as 1970, pentecostals and charismatics combined represented less than 5% of the continent’s population. According to recent figures from the World Christian Database, by 2005 pentecostals alone represented 12%, or about 107 million, of Africa’s population of nearly 890 million people. Charismatic members of non-pentecostal denominations number an additional 40 million, or approximately 5% of the population (Pew, 2006).<sup>11</sup>

It is worth briefly reviewing the recent expansion of renewalist Christianity in historical perspective. As is well documented, the spread of Christianity in Africa is closely tied to the colonial era. In short, the colonial powers replicated their domestic religious systems on the continent—the Anglican Church got preferential treatment in Britain’s colonies just as the Catholic church got in Francophone and Belgian possessions. Proto-Renewalist movements were subjugated since they were viewed with suspicion by the colonial authorities, who saw in them attempts to break free of European-directed religious control through traditional chiefs. The fear was that an independent African Christianity might serve as a locus for opposition to the colonial regime (Martin, 2002).

The spread of Christianity across the African continent continued after independence, albeit with an important modification. Citizens of post-colonial states began forming numerous African Initiated Churches (AICs), which broke from historic denominations and practiced an idiosyncratic form of Christianity that mixed biblical doctrine with traditional African practices such as demon exorcism and ancestor veneration (Anderson, 1992). Catholic and Protestant denominations, which suffered from association with the colonial regimes, were thereby forced to compete for membership with the newer AICs— the precursors of renewalist churches. In this context, the tepidity and sterility of certain historical denominations wedded to stultified ceremony and theology has contributed to the rapid growth of alternative faiths (Anderson, 1992).

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<sup>11</sup>Consider, for example, the case of Zambia, where there were 515,000 (9%) evangelicals in 1980. This figure grew to 800,000 (12.6%) in 1990 and more than doubled to 2.2 million (25%) in 2000 (Ranger, 2008, p. 100).

Providing a full account of the dramatic growth of Renewalism in Sub-Saharan Africa is beyond the scope of this paper. We note, however, that Renewalist expansion since the 1970s owes much to the growing ties between AICs and Evangelical and Pentecostal churches from the developed world.<sup>12</sup> More so, as elsewhere, the rapid spread of renewalist Christianity in Africa has its roots in its complementary relationship to modernity; an idea to which I return below.

## Defining Renewalist Christianity

There is a considerable debate in the literature about how to define Renewalist Christianity and its related traditions. Prominent religion scholars such as Freston (2001) and Ranger (2008) therefore suggest using a ‘working definition’ that highlights the centrality of four broad characteristics: *conversion* (emphasis on the need for change of life), *activism* (emphasis on evangelistic and missionary efforts), *biblicism* (a special importance attached to the Bible) and *crucicentrism* (emphasis on the centrality of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross). Similarly Anderson (1992, p. 4) defines Renewalism as a Christian movement concerned primarily with the experience of the working of the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts. Other widespread characteristics of Renewalism are the belief in the prosperity gospel, belief in exorcism and the existence of demons, spiritual warfare against representatives of the devil in daily life, and syncretic blending with certain traditional indigenous practices (Kay, 2011, p. 64–67). These definitions emphasize spiritual experience, spontaneity and congregational participation rather than adherence to a formal codified doctrine.

Paul Gifford suggests in that vein an organizational (residual) definition that does not place emphasis on theology: Renewalist Christians in Africa are “not the Roman Catholics, not the mainline Protestants [...], not the classical African Initiated Churches, but the rest” (Ranger, 2008, p. 225). Notwithstanding some differences in dogma, in this manuscript I follow Gifford and Pew (2006), and use the terms Pentecostals, Evangelical Christians and Renewalists interchangeably.<sup>13</sup>

## Renewalist Christianity and Morality Politics

There are several reasons why might Renewalist churches be more involved in morality politics than mainstream churches in Sub-Saharan Africa. First, presupposing that intense belief is a prerequisite for involvement in morality politics based on a “Christian understanding” of morality, Renewalists hew to their faith with greater intensity than other types of Christians. Consider the findings of a ten-nation public opinion survey conducted by Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life in 2006.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>See Ranger (2008) and Freston (2001) for an analysis of the historical developmental links between the various expressions of Renewalist Christianity that considers them part of a broader ‘conservative’ movement.

<sup>13</sup>See appendix for a short glossary of conservative Christian denominations.

<sup>14</sup>The Pew survey took place in the United States, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, India, Philippines and South Korea.

Renewalists (those who self-identify as Pentecostals or Charismatic) were found to be significantly more likely than other believers to take the Bible literally, to believe in the existence of miracles today as in ancient times, to believe in the Apocalypse and the Rapture, and to have claimed to receive personal revelations from God. Importantly, Renewalists pray, go to church, and attend Bible study groups more often than any other Christian population (Pew, 2006, p. 114–148).

Second, and closely related, existing public opinion data suggests that Renewalists tend to have significantly more conservative views on social issues than other groups of Christians. For example, further findings reported by Pew (2006) reveal that Renewalists express a more negative view of extra-marital sex, abortion, alcohol use, polygamy, euthanasia, and divorce. In addition, Renewalists are more likely to state that AIDS is God's punishment for immoral behavior, and that “moral decline” is an important issue facing their countries today.

Third, and likely most consequential, Renewalists are more likely to seek eroding distinctions between public and private, state and church, and secular and divine affairs. Renewalist Christianity is a reactionary movement to the dramatic rise of liberalism since the early 19th century (Martin, 2002). At the heart of modern liberal societies lies the public/private distinction, which is essential to the way liberalism conceives of law and politics (Rawls, 1971). The essence of this distinction is the idea that the main role of government is to regulate behavior in the public sphere according to secular rules, whereas in the private sphere, people are free to behave as they see fit. Renewalist Christian groups reject this model of political organization, vehemently objecting to the liberal idea that religion could be separated from law and politics (Garvey, 1991). This rejection of the secularization of modernity by renewalist Christians, for example, lies at the basis of the ‘culture wars’ that engulfed the USA since the 1980s (Haider-Markel and Meier, 1996). Charismatic, neo-charismatic, evangelicals and pentecostals may disagree on issues associated with Christ's second coming, but being armed with explicit moral codes that make universal truth claims, they all agree that influencing all spheres of the secular world is a Christian mandate.

Fourth, the spread of renewalist churches creates a fragmentation of congregation and a heightened competition among churches that pushes religious leaders to sharpen their message to attract broader followings (Martin, 2002). This, in turn, increases the pressure on churches, including mainline churches, to mobilize in demand for state regulation of morality and family.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the recent expansion of the efforts of renewalists to shape politics and public life may be simply a reaction to its demographic explosion. Given the above, I therefore argue that the heightened saliency of morality politics in some parts of Africa, and not in other, is closely related to the uneven rapid growth of renewalist Christian groups.

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<sup>15</sup>This argument is based on a series of interviews the author had conducted with key civil society actors in Uganda.

## Renewalist Christianity and the Regulation of Homosexual Behavior

Specifically, Renewalist Christian groups seek to enlist the state to place limitations on homosexual behavior. This, I argue, stems not only from religion dogma but also due to political opportunity structures. As for dogma, the rejection of homosexuality is commonly justified on the basis of a literal acceptance of the bible as God’s words (see Leviticus 18: 22, and Romans 1: 18-32). More so, for Renewalists the family stands as the center of religious life. Since Renewalist churches tend to view homosexuality as posing a threat to the traditional nucleus heterosexual family, state intervention is called upon to protect religiosity itself (Garvey, 1991).<sup>16</sup>

The discussion about dogma implicitly assumes that Renewalist Christians hold more negative attitudes towards homosexuals than the general population. To test the plausibility of this assumption in Sub-Saharan Africa I use Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life public opinion data from 2010. These data are based on national representative samples in 19 African countries. To construct a country-level measure of negative attitudes towards homosexuals I calculate a country’s share of population that views homosexuality as morally wrong. To construct a measure of a country’s population share of Renewalist Christians, I use the World Christian Database.<sup>17</sup> Figure 4 shows that the higher the population share of Renewalist Christians the more likely are citizens to have negative attitudes towards homosexuality.

The sociological literature highlights an additional reason for the mobilization campaign of conservative Christian groups against homosexuals: political opportunity. The idea is that fundamental groups are strategic, focusing on political battles which they believe they can win; these tend to be issues where people who oppose their agenda are likely to be less dedicated and less organized (Fox, 2013). In Africa, gay-rights groups are hardly resourceful if they are at all legal, raising the prospects of religious groups’ success in demanding state regulation of sexual behavior. As mentioned, in Africa, the ability of religious organizations to be effective interest groups is especially strong given the general weakness of civil society organizations, including political parties. Churches in Africa are in a unique position to assert significant political influence by taking advantage their elaborate organizational structures and resources, but also their moral authority that allows them to speak in the name of large populations.

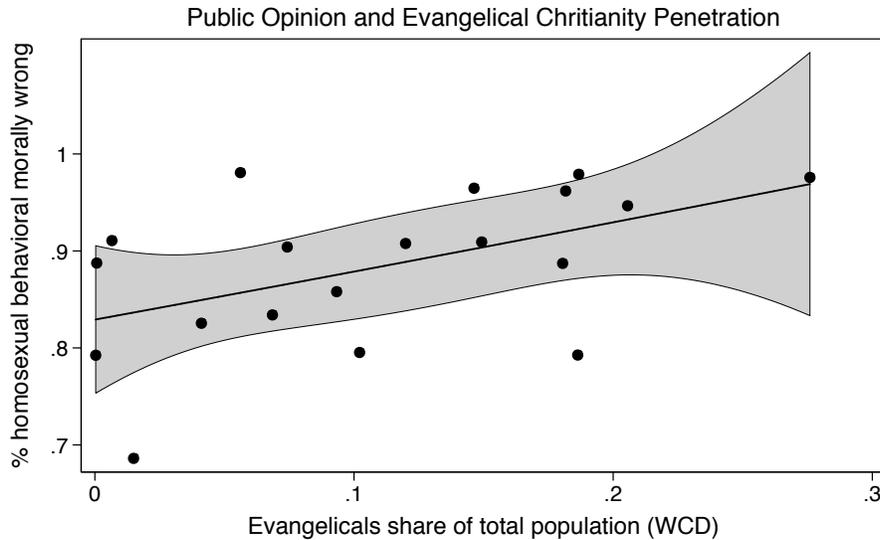
I formalize the above discussion using the following hypothesis:

$H_1$  **Demand:** LGBTs related issues are more likely to be politically salient the higher is a country’s population share of Renewalist Christians.

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<sup>16</sup>See Fulton, Gorsuch and Maynard (1999) for an illuminating account of the reasons behind the widespread anti-homosexual sentiment of religious Christians. See also Sadgrove et al. (2012), which reconstructs the debate around Uganda’s anti-gay bill, pointing to the key role that ‘born-again’ pastors have played in mobilizing anti-gay sentiment.

<sup>17</sup>Further information on the construction of the measure of a country’s population share of Renewalists can be found in section 3 and in the appendix.



Source: The World Christian Database and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (2010)

Figure 4: **Pew Public Opinion.** Figure describes the relationship between the penetration of Evangelical Christianity and Public Opinion with respect to whether homosexuality is morally wrong. Data: Pew

Journalistic accounts of the Ugandan anti-gay bill commonly attribute the growing saliency of LGBTs in Africa to a deliberate export of United States’ own culture wars by far-right Christian groups.<sup>18</sup> This argument has an element of truth, in that several prominent American conservative Christian groups have dramatically increased their activities in Africa in the past several years (Kaoma, 2012).<sup>19</sup> Attempts to diffuse ideas internationally, however, need something to work with in the target countries. In what follows, I explore the incentive of national politicians and political parties to claim the issue of LGBTs.

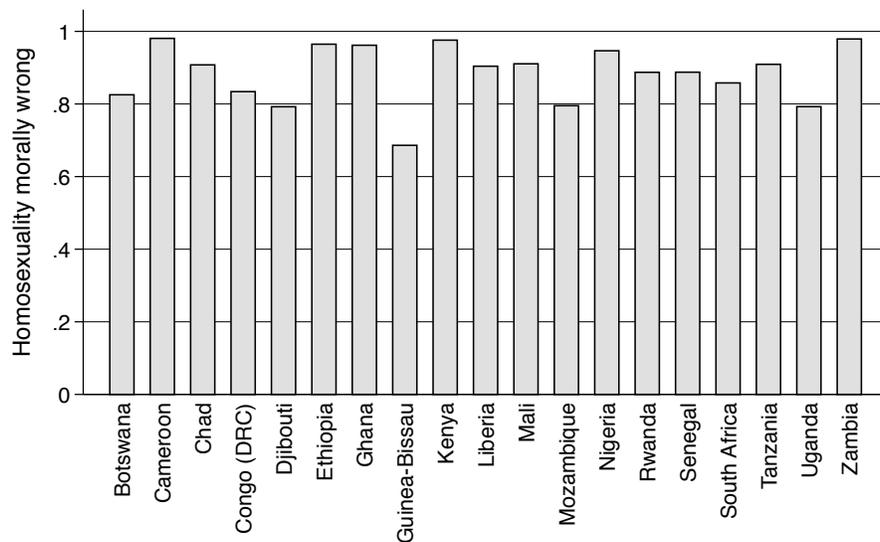
## 2.2 Supply-Side: Political Competition

When political competition is high, politicians are more inclined to promote a new topic and attempt to make it salient in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Zaller, 1992). More so, high levels of political competition increase the likelihood that politicians and political parties become responsive to citizen inputs and demands that have, thus far, been ‘unclaimed’. The relationship between political competition and government responsiveness has been demonstrated for advanced western democracies (Besley, Persson and Sturm, 2010) as well as for poor African countries (Stasavage, 2005; Kudamatsu, 2012).

<sup>18</sup>See Max Strasser 2010, *Foreign Policy*, “The Global Gay Rights Battlefields.”

<sup>19</sup>The influence of American Christian right is most visible in African countries that are introducing bill banning adoption and same-sex marriage in a context where homosexuality itself is illegal; i.e., where LGBTs do not even have the right to have sex with their preferred partners.

The fact that political competition forces politicians to deferential themselves, by itself, does not explain why politicians will mobilize around morality issues and not attempt to claim some other issue. There are several reasons that make LGBTs especially appealing for politicians that are pressured by heightened competition. One obvious reason is the equilibrium pressure to match between supply and demand: the more religious are constituents, the more politicians will seek religious legitimacy. Second, and closely related, studies of issue saliency in Africa suggest that politicians are risk averse and information constrained and are therefore more likely to claim an issue that enjoys broad support while shying away from polarizing issues (Bleck and van de Walle, 2012). Consider now the information recently published by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, on attitudes towards homosexuality. As Figure 5 makes clear, negative attitudes towards homosexual behavior are extremely widespread in this set of 19 African countries.



Source: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (2010)

Figure 5: **Attitudes towards Homosexuality** Figure describes the percent of survey respondents from a national representative sample that view homosexual behavior as morally wrong.

A third reason why political actors find morality issues attractive is the fact that churches occupy a special place in low-income countries as one of few organizations that have control over mobilization means (Wald, Silverman and Fridy, 2005). That religious institutions have access to resources and are able to mobilize them effectively, makes them valuable allies to politicians.<sup>20</sup> Specifically, Renewalist churches are characterized by charismatic leaders that are thought to have a unique ecclesial authority, and therefore significant influence on their followers (Ranger, 2008).

<sup>20</sup>Using numerous historical example, Gill (2008) demonstrates the close relationship between political competition and religion rights. When political competition has been high, government were in greater need of religious assistance in maintaining control, and thus were more inclined to push for policies that are supported by the church.

A fourth reason for the attractiveness of morality issues for politicians is the fact that those issues offer an easy way to build a political reputation or stereotype one's opponents. When debating morality policies bureaucratic institutions cannot bring their prime resource—information—to bear on the issue and therefore take to the sideline. Indeed, compared to other policy domains, such as fiscal policy, in order to participate in moral politics debates politicians face hardly any expertise barriers (Haider-Markel and Meier, 1996). In addition, politicians often find it relatively easier to communicate their position on morality policies to the electorate because citizens too have little need to acquire information to participate in the debate. As Haider-Markel and Meier (1996, p. 333) aptly comment “everyone is an expert on morality.”<sup>21</sup> I summarize the above discussion with the following hypothesis:

*H*<sub>2</sub> **Supply I:** LGBTs related issues are more likely to be politically salient the higher is a country's level of political competition.

Incumbents, especially, find Renewalist preaching attractive. In Africa, Renewalist Christianity resonates well with indigenous African religions and African-initiated churches holding strong belief in spirits, demons and exorcism, speaking in tongues, and prophecy (Ellis, 2012). Key to Renewalist preaching in Africa is the idea that the improvement or “transformation” of society is achieved first and foremost through “spiritual warfare” and the expulsion of demonic or sinful beings from a geographic area (Kaoma, 2012).<sup>22</sup> In short, the ability of governments to combat poverty is invariably tied with development of spiritual fitness and not merely with the implementation of pro-growth policies.<sup>23</sup> These doctrinal positions allow incumbents to mobilize against homosexuals as a way to link between morality issues and material being.<sup>24</sup> In this context, not only does the fight against homosexuals become a fight for development, but in the process blame for poor economic outcomes is shifted away from incumbents.

Specifically, in the neo-charismatic teaching, homosexuality brings various curses on the nation. In the past decade several of Africa's big-men—notably Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and Uganda's president Yoweri Museveni—have used anti-gay rhetoric to defend their autocratic

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<sup>21</sup>The low information barrier may explain why homophobia has proven to be a powerful rallying point for many established politicians across sub-saharan Africa. It is quite telling, that incumbents such as Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, the late Binguwa Mutharika of Malawi, and former Zambian President Rupiah Banda all accused their opponents as in bed with the homosexual agenda when their leaderships were threatened.

<sup>22</sup>It is quite telling that after Frederick Chiluba, a staunch Pentecostal, was declared the president of Zambia, he left State House unoccupied for three months after the elections in order to allow charismatic friends and associates to perform a “cleansing service.” A group of fifty Christians from evangelical fellowships went to State House, conducting prayers in each room with the intention of chasing out evil spirits (Ranger, 2008, p. 101).

<sup>23</sup>See for example books such as “Spiritual Warfare: Victory Over the Powers of This Dark World” by Timothy M. Warner.

<sup>24</sup>See work by Paul Gifford (e.g., Gifford (1995, 1998) for a thoughtful treatment of the way some biblical ideas found among evangelicals have undermined the power of Africans to challenge their governments on their poor performance in eradication chronic poverty.

rule. Notably, for those heads of states, anti-LGBTs rhetoric has become central to the project of nation-building. Specifically, opposing homosexuality is constructed as part of a broader discourse of national self-identity and self-reliance and is portrayed in the media and in leaders' statements as part of a battle on the soul of Africa against the corrupting influence of the materialist west intent on eroding the values and morality of 'authentic' African tradition.<sup>25</sup> The appeal to 'African values' resonates well since homosexuality strikes at the heart of the kin, clan, reproductive and marital relationships that underpin much of African society (Sadgrove et al., 2012). This sort of nationalist mobilization, I argue, is more likely to take place in countries in which the incumbents suffer from low levels of legitimacy (due to poor economic performance, lack of electoral legitimacy, or both). I formalize this expectation using the following hypothesis:

*H*<sub>3</sub> **Supply II:** LGBTs related issues are more likely to be politically salient the *lower* is a state's level of legitimacy.

### 3 Data Sources and Measurement of Key Variables

This section briefly describes the data used in this paper and how it was collected. In the empirical literature, issue saliency—the study's key dependent variable—has been measured using party manifestos, mass surveys and media coverage. Party manifestos are inadequate in Africa since most parties are weakly institutionalized and non-programmatic and thus their manifestos, if exist, tend to be short, abstract, general and uninformative. In addition, party manifestos hardly change between electoral cycles, limiting the ability to measure changes over short time periods. Mass surveys of public opinion are also inadequate for measuring issue saliency in Africa, since they are infrequent and are hardly comparable across countries.

I therefore use, instead, media coverage to construct a measure of LGBTs saliency. Specifically, my measure of LGBTs saliency is the number of LGBTs related articles that appear in the news or opinion pages of county *j*'s leading newspaper in year *t*. One key advantage of this measure of LGBTs saliency is that it allows capturing fine-grained spatial and temporal variation comparable across all African countries. An additional advantage of this measure is its 'objectivity', in the sense that it is based on a minimal coding rule and on publicly available documents, which make my measure easily replicable. Finally, this measure builds on ample evidence suggesting that when events resonate with more general social concerns, they are significantly more likely to be reported (Earl et al., 2004).<sup>26</sup> I provide additional information on the coding of the dependent variable including a complete list of newspapers in the appendix.

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<sup>25</sup>See for example, The Zimbabwe Mail, May 24, 2012 "Gays 'lower than dogs' - Mugabe."

<sup>26</sup>Studies claiming that the mass media constitute the most important arena for public debates on politically relevant issues in present-day democracies include, among others, Bennett et al. (2004) and Ferree et al. (2002).

### 3.1 Key Independent Variables

The main independent variables in the empirical analysis include a country’s major religion and share of renewalist Christians, which are both derived from the World Christian Dataset (WCD). *Christian majority* is an indicator variable that equals one if the population share of Christians is larger than 0.5. To measure the spread of Renewalist christianity, I follow WCD’s approach and calculate the share of total population that is pentecostals, charismatics and neo-charismatics. The variable *Renewalist* is an indicator variable (high/low) that uses the median as the cutoff point. In all model specifications I add an interaction term between *Christian majority* and *Renewalist* capturing the idea that the influence of conservative religion churches on the issue saliency of LGBTs is likely to be significantly larger in Christian majority countries than in muslim countries.

The two key political variables are political competition and state legitimacy. I construct a binary measure of *political competition* (high/low) from the World Bank Database of Political Institutions (DPI) margin of majority variable using the median margin as a cutoff point.<sup>27</sup> To measure state legitimacy I use a 12-point scale summary index constructed by the State Fragility Index project. Figure 6 provides a simple graphic representation of the relationship between LGBTs-saliency and the study’s key explanatory variables over-time.

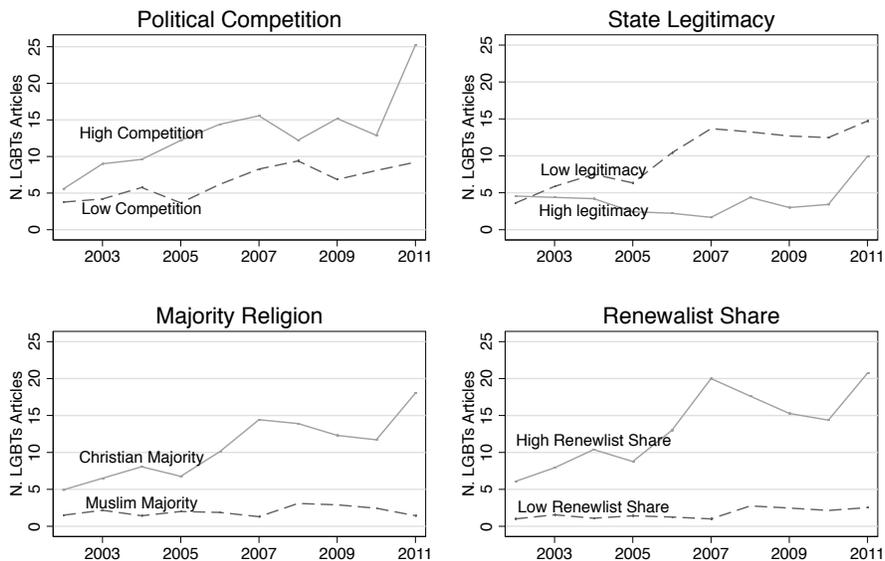


Figure 6: **LGBTs Saliency and Key Explanatory Variables** Figure describes the relationship between LGBTs-Saliency and the study’s key explanatory variables over-time

<sup>27</sup>Margin of Majority measure the fraction of seats held by the government and is calculated by dividing the number of government seats by total (government plus opposition plus non-aligned) seats.

## 3.2 Control Variables

In addition to the key religion and political independent variables I use various political, social and economic measures as control. The inclusion of controls is based on theoretical reasoning but also on empirical (i.e. model fit) considerations. Political controls, include *democracy*, an indicator that is equal one for countries that score 6 and above using the Polity IV measure of regime type (Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland, 2010), capturing the idea that democracies tend to have more open and free media markets and more likely to protect minority rights. I also control for a country’s political system following the long-standing argument that a strong presidential system impacts on the development as well as the use of party manifestos (Almond and Powell, 1966). Political system (*presidential*) is a binary variable that equals one for countries using a presidential system and zero for countries using a parliamentary system. In addition, I use two variables to capture features of the legal system that may impact LGBTs saliency. First, I control for a country’s colonial power using a set of indicators.<sup>28</sup> Second, all regressions include an indicator of whether male homosexuality is illegal, since illegality likely increases media coverage, for example by generating media reports on arrests of LGBTs persons.<sup>29</sup>

A large body of work argues that fundamentalism develops in a reaction to modernization (Emerson and Hartman, 2006). For this reason I further control for GDP per capita, which is taken from the World Bank Development indicators database, and for a country’s Human Development Index score. I further control for foreign aid committed per capita (log), derived from the World Bank Development indicators, since aid-dependence may constrain the ability of governments in their treatment of LGBTs, as is evident in the case of the Ugandan anti-gay bill. I also control for HIV prevalence taken from the UNAIDS project, since media outlets in high-infection countries are more likely to report stories related to the relationship between homosexuality and HIV/AIDS. Further controls include a measure of ethnic polarization, which I derive from data assembled by Desmet, Ortuño-Ortín and Wacziarg (2012), and a measure of population-size (log) using data from the US Census Bureau International Census project, since larger countries are more likely to be regional leaders in the politicization of new issues. Finally, I account for regional clustering and spatial diffusion by adding regional indicators for central, Western, Eastern and Southern Africa.

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<sup>28</sup>Controlling directly for a country’s type of legal system in addition to a country’s colonial power does not improve the model fit using the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC). I therefore use the more parsimonious models that do not include indicators for legal system type.

<sup>29</sup>In a recent cross-national study, Asal, Sommer and Harwood (2013) show that countries with legal systems based on English Common Law are significantly more likely to have prohibitions against homosexuals. One limitation of the focus on legal prohibition is that it tells us very little about the political saliency of LGBTs (Bruce-Jones and Itaborahy, 2011). For example, LGBTs is not salient in Common Law countries such as Gambia, Mauritius, Sudan and Malawi, but is highly salient in other Common Law countries such as Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Swaziland.

## 4 Correlates of LGBTs Political Saliency in Africa

Since the dependent variable is count data, the natural starting point would be to fit a Poisson regression. However, as is well known, the Poisson model makes the strong assumption that the variance of the count is equal to (conditional) expectation. As Figure 7 shows the distribution of the dependent variable is clearly over-dispersed (i.e., the variance is larger than the mean). I therefore estimate, instead, a set of negative binomial regression models, which allow modeling Poisson heterogeneity using a closed-form likelihood function.

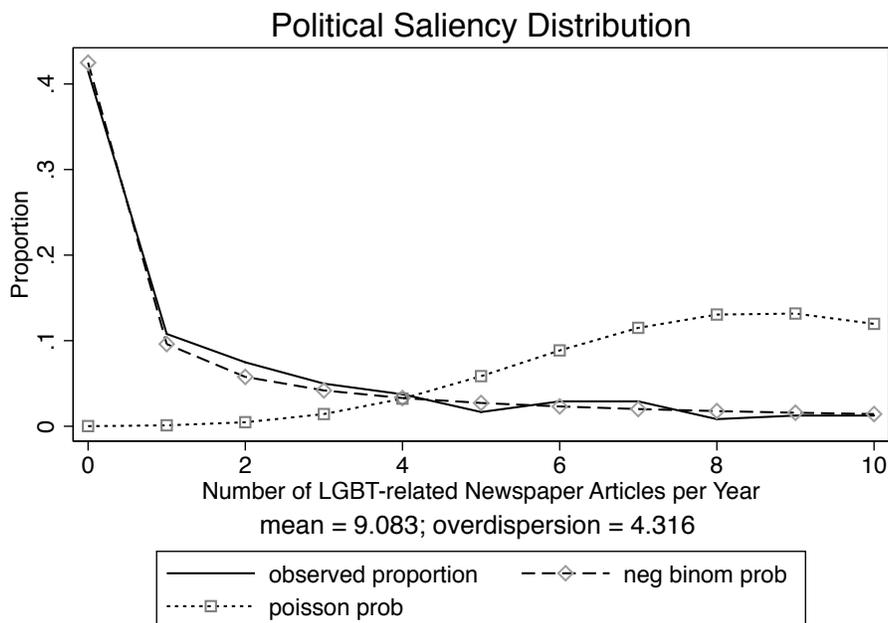


Figure 7: **Distribution DV** Figure describes the distribution of the number of articles per year on LGBTs-related issues. Figure strongly suggests that a negative binomial regression would fit the data better than a poisson regression.

### 4.1 Estimation Strategy

I first fit four single-level negative binomial models. The first two models are a linear (constant dispersion) negative binomial model (NB1) and a quadratic (mean dispersion) negative binomial model (NB2).<sup>30</sup> The third model I fit is a Zero Inflated Negative Binomial (ZINB), which was developed specifically to address the problem of a high percentage of zero counts, exceeding what is accounted for by the negative binomial distribution. The zero-inflated negative binomial model

<sup>30</sup>Whereas poisson model assumes dispersion equals to one, NB1 yields a model with dispersion equal to  $1 + \gamma$  that is a constant for all observations. NB2 yields a model with dispersion equal to  $1 + \alpha \exp(x_j \beta + offset_j)$ ; i.e., the dispersion is a function of the expected mean.

accounts for overdispersion through a splitting process that models the outcomes as zero or nonzero (Long, 1997, p. 242–247).

The fourth model I fit is a hurdle regression, which considers that the count measure of media reporting is the result of two different ‘decision’ processes. The first part specifies the decision to even begin reporting on LGBTs-related issues rather than treating same-sex behavior as a taboo. The second part models the level of positive reporting on LGBTs issues for a media outlet or a country that goes beyond the taboo stage. The model’s key assumption is, therefore, that some meaningful threshold must be crossed to even enter the positive counting process. More technically, the hurdle regression separates the model into two parts that can be estimated separately: zero versus positive counts. For the first part, a binary model is defined consisting of two values, 0 for zero counts and 1 for positive counts. The second decision concerns the level of reporting and is modeled by a truncated at zero count data model.<sup>31</sup> Hurdle models are especially useful when the dependent variable has a high proportion of zeros that remains even after allowing for overdispersion (Bago d’Uva, 2006).

Additional complication arises from the panel structure of the data. As is well known, observations within each panel cannot be considered independent – violating a central assumption of maximum likelihood. In short, within-panel correlation result in additional over-dispersion not accounted for by the single-level models. I therefore fit, in addition, random-effects overdispersion models and population-averaged negative binomial models. Note, however, that here “random effects” and “fixed effects” apply to the distribution of the dispersion parameter, not to the  $X\beta$  term in the model as is the case of multilevel modeling of a continuous dependent variable.<sup>32</sup>

## 4.2 Results

I report results from the six negative binomial models in Table 1. To facilitate a more intuitive interpretation of the findings I report exponentiated coefficients (or the ‘incidence rate ratio’). Note that coefficients above (below) the value of 1 are positively (negatively) associated with the dependent variable. To allow readers to compare between model fits I report the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC). According to Hilbe (2011) for a sample size of about 250 observations the AIC needs to be lower by about 4 points in order to prefer model A over model B. Among the single-level models the hurdle models has the best fit followed by the NB1 model.

Recall that I hypothesize that there exists a positive relation between renewalist Christianity and LGBTs issue saliency ( $H1$ ), and that this effect is much stronger in Christian rather than Muslim

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<sup>31</sup>For a comprehensive explanation of the NB1 and NB2 models, including derivation, see Hilbe (2011, ch. 10). For a formal treatment of the ZINB and Hurdle models see Hilbe (2011, ch. 11).

<sup>32</sup>In the random-effects overdispersion models, the dispersion is the same for all elements in the same group, but the dispersion varies randomly between groups.

majority countries. To test for this effect we look for a positive and significant interaction term between renewalist and Christian majority. I further hypothesize that LGBTs saliency increases in a country's level of political competition (*H2*) and decreases in state legitimacy (*H3*). Results are consistent with the theoretical expectations: in all six estimation models, we find a large positive and significant relationship between share of renewalist Christians and LGBTs saliency. In all six models there is a negative relationship between LGBTs saliency and state legitimacy and in five of the six models there a large positive and significant relationship between the dependent variable and a country's level of political competition.

I calculate predicted values to further facilitate appreciation of the magnitude of the relationship between the key independent variables and LGBTs saliency. For example, using the Zero Inflated NB model, moving from a low Renewalist share, Christian majority country to a high Renewalist share Christian country, the number of LGBTs articles more than quadruples (from 1.7 to 9) holding continuous control variables to the mean and categorical variables to their median value. Similar marginal effects are observed using the NB2 (from 1.8 to 8.7 articles) and slightly smaller marginal effects are observed when using the NB1 model (from 4 to about 7.5 articles per year).

As for political competition, the marginal effect of moving from low to high competition is about doubling of the number of articles per year. As for control variables, the strong positive relationship between GDP per capita and LGBT saliency is consistent with the sociological literature that suggests that conservative religious groups are most vocal where the signs of modernization are strongest (Finke and Stark, 2005; Almond, Sivan and Appleby, 1995). Similarly, the large positive effect of illegality is consistent with a media market reporting on high-profile or sensational criminal cases. Finally, the consistently positive association with log population size is consistent with the theoretical expectation specified above.

### 4.3 Content analysis

I have argued that LGBTs saliency is driven by elite response to mobilization efforts of anti-gay religious-based groups. Though the empirical results presented above are consistent with the theoretical argument, this study, admittedly, suffers from limited identification, as the spread of conservative christianity may be correlated with unobserved country characteristics that may also influence LGBTs media coverage. In order to increase our confidence in the study's argument I ask the following question: if anti-gay attitudes fuel the demand for state regulation of homosexuality, how would this be reflected in the content of the media coverage of LGBTs? For example, the plausibility of my theoretical argument would likely be diminished if a high percentage of newspaper articles describe LGBT people in positive terms. By contrast, the theoretical argument would be strengthened if most newspaper articles describe LGBT people in negative terms.

Table 1: Negative Binomial Regression Models

	Single-level Models				Two-level Models	
	(NB1)	(NB2)	(ZINB)	(HURDLE)	(PA)	(REs)
Christian majority religion	1.47 (1.13)	0.68 (0.55)	0.65 (0.52)	0.57 (0.98)	0.57 (0.29)	1.22 (0.78)
Renewalist share of population	0.19** (0.13)	0.28 (0.24)	0.31 (0.27)	1.45 (1.14)	0.17** (0.12)	0.28** (0.16)
Christian majority $\times$ Renewalist	9.81*** (7.08)	17.23*** (19.43)	17.02** (19.67)	6.70** (5.40)	20.19*** (17.13)	4.12* (3.18)
Political competition	1.47 (0.43)	2.07*** (0.54)	1.91** (0.49)	1.87* (0.69)	2.35*** (0.66)	1.46* (0.30)
Legitimacy Score	0.81*** (0.06)	0.75*** (0.07)	0.75*** (0.07)	0.81** (0.07)	0.80*** (0.06)	0.80*** (0.06)
Democracy	0.57** (0.15)	0.89 (0.43)	0.92 (0.46)	1.34 (0.50)	1.14 (0.52)	0.66 (0.21)
Presidential system	1.88 (1.02)	3.19* (2.20)	3.05 (2.21)	9.25*** (6.66)	2.37 (1.44)	1.85 (1.14)
Male homosexuality illegal	8.11*** (4.46)	8.56*** (3.41)	7.76*** (2.95)	5.93*** (2.52)	8.23*** (3.56)	6.34*** (2.64)
Human Development Index	0.63 (0.32)	0.42 (0.27)	0.41 (0.25)	0.34** (0.18)	0.50* (0.20)	0.84 (0.31)
log HIV prevalence	1.14 (0.24)	1.34 (0.36)	1.36 (0.37)	0.73 (0.25)	1.67** (0.42)	1.34 (0.32)
log GDP per capita	2.78* (1.58)	4.42*** (2.48)	4.46** (2.61)	3.07*** (1.30)	4.51*** (1.81)	1.81 (0.72)
log Aid committed per capita	0.98 (0.12)	0.87 (0.12)	0.87 (0.13)	0.86 (0.10)	0.94 (0.10)	0.98 (0.06)
log population	1.82*** (0.23)	2.04*** (0.22)	2.04*** (0.22)	1.54*** (0.17)	2.17*** (0.21)	1.63*** (0.22)
Ethnic polarization	6.36*** (2.33)	4.67*** (2.41)	4.23*** (2.24)	4.03*** (1.62)	3.87** (2.26)	5.10*** (2.29)
Region indicators	X	X	X	X	X	X
Colonial power indicators	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observations	241	241	241	241	237	241
Log Likelihood	-529.33	-534.79	-534.01	-505.36		-525.85
AIC	1103	1114	1114	1083		1098

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Note:** Table describes the result of a series of negative binomial regressions, in which the dependent variable is the political saliency of LGBTs- related issues, measured as the number of LGBTs related articles that appear in the news or opinion pages of county  $j$ 's leading newspaper in year  $t$ .

Following this thought exercise, I use research assistants (RAs) to code all the 530 articles appearing in 2011 according to the article’s (a) type (news/opinion) and (b) slant. To determine whether an article was “news” or “opinion,” the RAs were instructed to rely on the newspapers’ own demarcation of an article as an analysis, editorial, or news. When in doubt, articles written in the first person are coded as opinion. The article’s slant, is a five category variable (negative, somewhat negative, neutral, somewhat positive, and positive). An articles slant was to be considered “negative” or “positive” when the narrator makes positive or negative value laden statements regarding LGBT people as if such statements are fact. The RAs were instructed to code an article as “somewhat negative” or “somewhat positive” when the narrator of the article does not make any such comments, but includes quotations that make these negative or positive assertions without balancing with counter positions. In cases where the article includes equal coverage of negatively and positively slanted quotations, the slant was labeled as “neutral.” Articles were further labeled as “neutral” when they simply relates facts and events. To simplify the graphical representation I present results in which the slant was recoded into a three-category variable.

Data presented in Figure 8 is consistent with the study’s theoretical argument: the share of negative slant articles is more than three times larger than the share of positive articles in both news and opinion sections.

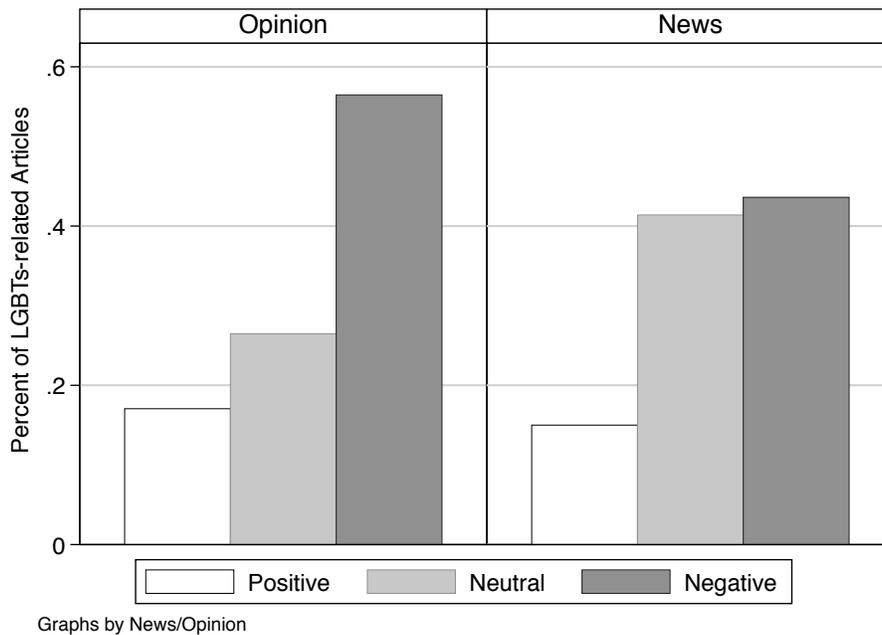


Figure 8: **Articles Tone by Article Type** Figure describes the percent of LGBTs-related articles that are positive, neutral and negative, by type of article. Figure excludes 16 countries that had not a single article published in 2011. Coding is based on 170 opinion articles and 360 news articles from 26 African countries that had at least one LGBTs-related newspaper article published in 2011.

## 5 Discussion

We know relatively little why and how new issues become salient. The theoretical literature on the determinant of issue saliency has developed in and for advanced western democracies. This literature suggests that political ‘losers’ (i.e., those that are not currently in government) have the strongest incentive to reconfigure voter alliances by promoting hitherto ‘dormant’ issues, which are polarized. The strategic mobilization of Southern voters by the Republican party around morality issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage, is a case in point. However, in this paper I have argued that the dominant framework to explain newfound political issues does not travel well outside the west, at least not to Sub-Saharan Africa. Given the institutional weakness of opposition parties in Africa, as well as their non-ideological nature, it may not be that losing parties are crafting new issue dimensions so much as responding to cues from existing societal groups. I further argued, and empirically demonstrated, that among civil-society groups organized churches are well-positioned to aggregate interests and therefore serve as impetus for new issue saliency.

Focusing specifically on the salience of LGBTs- related issues, this paper highlights the key role that Renewalist Christianity plays in policy-making in some parts of Africa. Though Renewalism’s dramatic expansion has left almost no part of sub-Saharan Africa unaffected, the extent of its growth varies across the region. I argue that the uneven expansion of Renewalism can help explain variation in the saliency of morality politics. At the upper end of Renewalists’ expansion are Zimbabwe, South Africa, Ghana, Congo-Zaire, Nigeria, Kenya, Angola, Zambia and Uganda, in all of which pentecostals and charismatics represent more than 20% of the national populations. Importantly, in all those countries LGBTs-related issues are found to be highly-salient. At the lower end of Renewalists’ expansion are Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Madagascar and Sudan, where pentecostals and charismatics make up less than 10% of the population. In all of those countries LGBTs-related issues are found to be low-salient. Using a set of negative binomial regressions, I show robust evidence that the positive association between LGBTs saliency and Renewlaist expansion holds for the entire set of African countries.

Focusing on the recent wave of legislation that places limitations on same-sex behavior, journalists and commentators in policy circles (such as Kaoma (2012)) commonly claim that American Christian Right groups are responsible for exporting US-style ‘culture wars’ to the African continent. These accounts tend to assume, at least implicitly, that Northern conservatives are manipulating Southern communities for their own ends. While the growing ties between Northern and Southern Christian groups is undisputed, this argument fails to explain why Christian right groups are more likely to succeed in some places than others while denying agency from both African political leaders and their constituents who have their own social, political and value concerns (Anderson, 2011). I have argued that political actors in Africa are especially attuned to demands from Christian groups

when levels of political competition are high, as well as when the legitimacy of the state is low. This is because engaging in morality politics provides political actors a relatively easy way to gain religious legitimacy as a way of increasing their standing with voters.

The findings of this paper make a contribution to several distinct bodies of work. First, it contributes to the study of the implications of Africa's recent democratization process. Previous work has focused mostly on the impact of Africa's heightened political competition on service delivery policies, such as education spending (Stasavage, 2005), health spending (Kudamatsu, 2012) and decentralization reforms (Grossman and Lewis, 2012). Given that many African countries have rather weak democratic institutions—e.g., weak parliaments, constitutions that have little bite, a court system that is not independent—there is great need to examine, in addition, whether the continent's emboldened majorities are using their power to infringe on the rights of minorities. Pointing to the fact that heightened political competition is contributing to a wave of legislation that limits the rights of one type of minorities (LGBTs) is one of the paper's key contributions.

Finally, this paper expands the nascent comparative literature of issue saliency in Africa. This literature has by and large, been limited to examining spatial and temporal variations in the political saliency of *ethnicity*. For example, Posner (2004) examines why cultural cleavages that became salient in Malawi did not become salient in Zambia. Focusing on temporal variation, Eifert, Miguel and Posner (2010) and Michelitch (2012) demonstrates that the saliency of ethnicity increases close to election periods and recedes in non-electoral periods. This paper does not wish to challenge the prominence of ethnicity in the study of African politics. However, by focusing on the issue saliency of LGBTs, this paper contributes to a growing body of work that rejects the reductionist view that explain political phenomena in Africa—from vote choice to civil wars—through the exclusive lens of tribalism (see for example, Ferree et al. (2009) and (Bratton and Kimenyi, 2008)).

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## A Appendix

This appendix reports several key aspects of the data collection, coding, and summary statistics. First, it provides additional information on the coding of the study’s dependent variable: LGBTs saliency. Second, it provides further information on the data sources and on the legal events reported in the main text. Third, it provides summary statistics for all variables used in the empirical analyses. Fourth, it provides a short glossary of the terms used throughout the paper.

### Construction of Dependent Variable

To construct the data used in this project, I first determined the newspaper with the highest circulation for every country in Sub-Saharan Africa through general information websites such as Africa Media, Wikipedia. I then searched, with the help of research assistants, for archives of these newspapers on the databases AllAfrica.com and Factiva.com. If these newspapers were not available from these databases, I use the newspaper’s own electronic archives, when available. In cases where the newspaper with the highest circulation was not archived in the above sources, I completed the same methodology for the newspaper with the second highest circulation and, when this was not available, I would search for the third highest circulating newspaper, etc. The list of newspapers used in this study is provided in Table 2.

Note that in some cases, the archived newspapers were not available for the entire 2002 to 2011 period, but only for a contracted period of years. In some cases, the newspaper was founded after 2002 or went out of business before 2011. These imperfections in source availability account for most missingness in the measure of LGBT saliency. Within the available archives of the highest circulating newspaper for each country in Sub-Saharan Africa, I searched for the terms lesbian, homosexual, and sodomy and catalogued every article containing one or more of these search terms between the period of 2002 and 2011. I excluded the term, “gay,” because including this term significantly distorted the data due to its alternative non-LGBT usages. In addition, random checks suggest that when the term gay is used in LGBTs context it always appeared in an article that also uses a derivative of homosexual and/or lesbian. For non-English language newspapers, I used a direct translation of the terms. For example, in French newspapers, I used the search terms “lesbien,” “homosexuel,” and “sodomie.”

Table 2: Newspaper List

Country	Newspaper	Source	Circulation	Languages	Type
Angola	Jornal de Angola	Factiva	High Circulation	Portuguese	Daily
Benin	Fraternite	AllAfrica	High Circulation	French	Daily
Botswana	Botswana Guardian	Website	High Circulation	English	Daily
Burkina Faso	Le Pays	AllAfrica	High Circulation	French	Five-times
Burundi	Le Renouveau de Burundi	Website	High Circulation	French	Daily
Cameroon	Cameroon Tribune	AllAfrica	Most-read	French	Daily
Cape Verde	Expresso das Ilhas	Website	High Circulation	Portuguese	Weekly
Central African Republic	Centrafrique Presse	Website	Low Circulation	French	Daily
Chad	Agence Tchadienne de Presse	Website	Medium Circulation	French	Daily
Comoros	Al Atwan	Website	Most-read	French	Daily
Congo	Les Dipeches de Brazzaville	Website	Medium Circulation	French	Daily
Congo (DRC)	Le Potentiel	AllAfrica	Medium Circulation	French	Daily
Cote d'Ivoire	Notre Voie	AllAfrica	Medium Circulation	French	Daily
Djibouti	La Nation de Djibouti	Website	High Circulation	French	Daily
Eritrea	Shabait	Factiva	High Circulation	English	Daily
Ethiopia	Addis Fortune	Factiva	Medium Circulation	English	Weekly
Gabon	Info Plus Gabon	AllAfrica	Medium Circulation	French	Daily
Gambia	Daily Observer	AllAfrica	Most-read	English	Daily
Ghana	Ghanaian Chronicle	AllAfrica	High Circulation	English	Three-times
Guinea	Guineepresse.info	Website	Low Circulation	French	Daily
Guinea-Bissau	Bissau Digital	Website	Low Circulation	Portuguese	Daily
Kenya	Daily Nation	Factiva	Most-read	English	Daily
Lesotho	Lesotho Times	Website	Most-read	English	Daily
Liberia	The Inquirer	Factiva	Medium Circulation	English	Daily
Madagascar	Midi Madigasikara	Factiva	High Circulation	French	Daily
Malawi	Daily Times	Factiva	High Circulation	English	Daily
Mali	Les Echos	AllAfrica	High Circulation	French	Daily
Mauritius	l'Express	Website	Most-read	French	Daily
Mozambique	Diario de Mo?ambique	Website	High Circulation	Portuguese	Daily
Namibia	Namibian	AllAfrica	High Circulation	English	Daily
Niger	Le Republicain	Website	High Circulation	French	Daily
Nigeria	Vanguard	AllAfrica	High Circulation	English	Daily
Rwanda	The New Times	Website	Most-read	English	Daily
Senegal	Le Soleil	AllAfrica	Most-read	French	Daily
Sierra Leone	Concord Times	AllAfrica	High Circulation	English	Daily
South Africa	The Star	AllAfrica	Most-read	English	Daily
Sudan	Al-Rayaam	Website	Most-read	English	Daily
Swaziland	The Times of Swaziland	Website	Most-read	English	Daily
Tanzania	Citizen	AllAfrica	High Circulation	English	Daily
Togo	Le Togolais	Factiva	High Circulation	French	Daily
Uganda	New Vision	AllAfrica	High Circulation	English	Daily
Zambia	Times of Zambia	Website	High Circulation	English	Daily
Zimbabwe	The Herald	AllAfrica	High Circulation	English	Daily

**Note:** Table provides information on the newspapers used to construct the measure of LGBTs saliency across Sub-Saharan Africa, including data source, language and circulation.

Table 3: List of Legal Event

Country	Year	Event
Botswana	2003	Supreme Court ruling upholds criminalization of same-sex sexual activity
Botswana	2011	Court case challenging criminalization of homosexuality
Burundi	2009	Law passed criminalizing same-sex relations
Cameroon	2011	Draft of new criminal code includes tougher legislation against homosexuals
Cape Verde	2004	Same-sex relations legalized
DRC	2010	Bill in parliament to criminalize same-sex relations and proponents of LGBTI rights
Ethiopia	2004	Criminalization of same-sex sexual acts
The Gambia	2005	Criminalization of same-sex sexual acts expanded to include females
The Gambia	2008	President proclaims he will forcibly close any lodging that houses homosexuals
Ghana	2003	Illegal
Ghana	2006	Homosexual Activists group makes a bid for government recognition and is turned down
Ghana	2011	Western region director orders the arrest of all gays in the region
Ghana	2012	Law criminalizing homosexuality under review by Supreme Court
Kenya	2003	Criminalization of same-sex sexual acts for males
Kenya	2005	Males can now be recognized as legal rape victims
Kenya	2010	PM orders crackdown on homosexuals
Liberia	2012	Law passed making homosexuality a second degree felony and outlawing gay marriage
Malawi	2010	Bill passed by parliament making lesbianism punishable by law
Malawi	2011	Bill signed by president into law
Malawi	2012	Bill making lesbianism punishable by law is under review by courts
Mauritius	2008	Law passed making discrimination against homosexuals in the workplace illegal
Mozambique	2007	Law passed making discrimination against homosexuals in the workplace illegal
Nigeria	2009	Bill introduced in parliament that would prohibit people of the same gender to live together
Nigeria	2011	Bill passed by parliament prohibiting same-sex marriage
Nigeria	2012	Bill introduced in parliament that would further limit gay rights
Rwanda	2003	New Constitution limits marriage to heterosexual couples
Rwanda	2009	Bill submitted in parliament to make homosexuality illegal
South Africa	2006	Law passed legalizing same sex marriage
South Africa	2007	Age of consent made equal for hetero and homosexual couples
South Sudan	2003	New penal code criminalizes same-sex sexual activity
Uganda	2005	Same-sex marriage banned
Uganda	2009	Bill entered into parliament increasing punishment for same-sex sexual activities
Uganda	2010	Bill still being discussed and amended in parliament
Uganda	2011	Bill declared redundant by Museveni and removed
Uganda	2012	Bill currently in parliament that would further limit gay rights
Zimbabwe	2006	Law pass criminalizing same-sex among males
Zimbabwe	2012	Government suing LGBT associations for “undermining the authority of the government”

## Descriptive Statistics

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Observations</i>
<b>Dependent variable</b>					
LGBTs Saliency (N. articles)	9.083	19.19	0	122	241
<b>Key explanatory variables</b>					
Christian majority religion	0.515	0.501	0	1	241
Renewalist share of population	0.573	0.496	0	1	241
Political competition	0.564	0.497	0	1	241
Legitimacy score (centered)	-0.551	2.441	-6.916	5.084	241
<b>Control variables</b>					
Democracy	0.502	0.501	0	1	241
Male homosexuality illegal	0.689	0.464	0	1	241
Presidential system	0.917	0.276	0	1	241
Human Development Index (centered)	0.114	0.972	-1.473	2.871	241
log HIV prevalence (centered)	-0.0615	1.185	-3.345	2.216	241
log GDP per capita (centered)	-0.0863	0.922	-1.249	2.386	241
log Aid committed per capita (centered)	-0.130	1.230	-4.640	2.981	241
log population (centered)	0.186	1.303	-2.700	3.132	241
Ethnic polarization (centered)	0.326	0.353	0	0.963	241
British colony	0.440	0.497	0	1	241
French colony	0.344	0.476	0	1	241
Portuguese colony	0.0664	0.249	0	1	241
Central Africa indicator	0.373	0.485	0	1	241
Western Africa indicator	0.0913	0.289	0	1	241
Eastern Africa indicator	0.0788	0.270	0	1	241
Southern Africa indicator	0.456	0.499	0	1	241

## Terminology

Scholars, journalists and other observers use a number of terms to refer to the Renewalist movement as a whole as well as to its various currents or subgroups. In the Pew (2006) report, terms are narrowly defined based on responses to several key survey questions. Pew (2006) uses the term “pentecostal” to describe those who belong to specifically Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God or the Assembly of Christian Churches. According to the World Christian Database, Pentecostal is a general descriptive noun or adjective for any person or group or movement stressing direct divine inspiration by the Holy Spirit and exhibiting glossalia, faith healing, and parallel phenomena.

The term “charismatic” is used in the Pew report to describe Christians who do not belong to pentecostal denominations but who nevertheless describe themselves as either charismatic or pentecostal Christians. As for the World Christian Database, Charismatic are defined as baptized members affiliated to non-pentecostal denominations who have entered into the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Neocharismatics are defined as religious people or movements similar to a charismatic but unconnected with mainline pentecostal or nonpentecostal denominations.

Renewalist Christianity places special emphasis on God’s ongoing, day-to-day intervention in human affairs through the person of the Holy Spirit. Renewalists believe that the power of the Holy Spirit is manifested through such supernatural phenomena as speaking in tongues, miraculous healing and prophetic utterances and revelations. The Pew report uses the term “Renewalist” as an umbrella term that refers to both pentecostals and charismatics as a group.