

## **When Ancient Meets Modern: The Relationship between Postpartum Non-susceptibility and Contraception in Sub-saharan Africa**

**Mark Brown**, *university of manchester*

Extended durations of postpartum non-susceptibility (PPNS) comprising lactational amenorrhea and associated taboos on sex have been a central component of traditional reproductive regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa. In situations of rising contraceptive prevalence this paper draws on data from the Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) to consider the neglected interface between ancient and modern methods of fertility regulation. Individual level data is used to derive susceptibility profiles for women according to time since most recent birth. The analysis reports striking contrasts between countries. At one extreme a woman's natural susceptibility status appears to have little bearing on the decision to use contraception in Zimbabwe, with evidence of widespread 'double protection' from very early durations postpartum. By contrast contraceptive use in Kenya and Ghana builds directly onto underlying patterns of PPNS. A discussion of possible explanations points to the strong influence of national family planning programmes in mediating individual behaviour in this area. The implications for theory and policy are discussed.