

Developmental Idealism and Family Life in Malawi

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May 30, 2011

Abstract

This paper examines the extent to which developmental idealism has been disseminated in Malawi. Developmental idealism is a set of beliefs and values about development and the relationships between development and family structures and behavior. Developmental idealism states that attributes of societies and families defined as developed are better than attributes defined as traditional, that modern societies help produce modern families, that modern families facilitate the achievement of modern societies, and that the future will bring family change in the direction of modernity. Previous research has demonstrated that developmental idealism is widespread in many places around the world, but provides little systematic data about its occurrence in Sub-Saharan Africa. In this paper we help to fill this gap by examining the extent to which developmental idealism has become widespread in two settings in Malawi, a Sub-Saharan African country. Malawi was relatively isolated from the circulation of world culture during the three decades between independence from the British in 1964 and multiparty elections in 1994. Yet our analysis of survey data collected in 2009 and 2010 from two samples of men in Malawi shows considerable evidence that many aspects of developmental idealism have been spread in that country. Many people relate development with certain family attributes, believe that development brings family change, and believe that family change fosters development. Many people also perceive Malawi to be a changing society and predict that family attributes defined as modern will become more common in the future.

Introduction

An important element of scholarly research during the past two decades has been the documentation of the globalization of world culture (Thomas et al. 1987; Meyer et al. 1997; Krücken and Drori 2009). World culture contains institutions, beliefs, and values that help to organize the state, schools, international relations, and other social endeavors. The particular world culture that we consider here originated in the West: it emphasizes individualism, freedom, equality, human rights, and education. It has encouraged the adoption of certain institutions, ideas, and practices such as the standardized organization of education, the valorization of scientific empiricism, the elimination of female circumcision, support for western-defined human rights, and the revision of criminal codes concerning sexual expression (Benavot et al. 1991; Boyle 2002; Chabbott 2003; Drori et al. 2003; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004; Baker and Letendre 2005; Cole 2005; Elliott 2007; Frank and Meyer 2007; Wotipka and Tsutsui 2008; Koo and Ramirez 2009; Meyer, Bromley, and Ramirez 2010; Frank, Camp, and Boutcher forthcoming).

A recent body of related research defined an interrelated set of beliefs and values about families and family change, labeled these as “developmental idealism”, and showed that since the 19th century it has become a core component of world culture and an important force for changing family behavior in places as different as Latin America, Europe, China, and the United States (Thornton 2001, 2005). Developmental idealism specifies that societal and familial attributes socially constructed as modern are widely perceived as more desirable than attributes defined as traditional or not modern. Developmental idealism also specifies that there are causal connections between modern societal and modern familial attributes. Modern societies are seen as forces facilitating modern family lifestyles; reciprocally, modern families are seen as driving social change in the direction of modernity. Although the roots of developmental idealism are old,

the ideational aspects that it privileges continue to guide change in family behavior. This is particularly relevant for research today because ideational factors are increasingly seen as important elements affecting family structures and behavior (Lesthaeghe 1983; Cleland and Wilson 1987; van de Kaa 1987; Chesnais 1992; Johnson-Hanks et al forthcoming; Mason 1997; Lesthaeghe and Neels 2002; Pearce 2002; Cunningham 2008; Yount and Rashad 2008).

There is extensive evidence that beliefs and values associated with developmental idealism spread widely from their origins in the West. Some of the attractions of western societies appear to have been self-evident, at least to some, as non-Western students attending schools in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries returned home to lead revolutions and to promote aspects of western family behavior such as individual choice of marriage partners. Also common has been the dissemination of beliefs in the association between development and certain family practices that were promoted through organizations with a global reach, such as the United Nations and the Rockefeller Foundation. Paradigmatic are the efforts to persuade millions around the world to regulate their fertility using chemical or physical contraceptives. This campaign shifted into high gear in the 1950s; within a few decades, the majority of countries had adopted population policies that aimed to achieve slower rates of population growth through the use of contraception, a standardized organization to coordinate population and family planning activities (e.g. a national population control organization and a national family planning organization), and the institutionalization of family planning promotion in local maternal and child health clinics. The promotional efforts were infused by developmental idealism and disseminated its assumption that there was a causal relationship between development and small families. Thus, posters promoting family planning often displayed two families, one with many children in ragged clothes, a defeated-looking father, and an exhausted-

looking mother, and the other family having a well dressed, satisfied-looking father and mother with two or three happy well-dressed children and a tricycle. Subsequent campaigns promoted equality between men and women (e.g. the United Nation's Women in Development activities). More recent efforts have striven to "empower women", emphasizing "reproductive rights" as having universal validity and making efforts to eliminate child marriage (Donaldson 1990; Greenhalgh 1996; Barrett and Frank 1999; Berkovitch 1999; Luke and Watkins 2002; Chimbweti et al. 2005).

The ideas of developmental idealism have not just been articulated among scholars and policy makers in societies all over the world, but appear to have reached large swathes of ordinary people in many places around the world. The data supporting this conclusion are extensive and include qualitative studies in India, Nepal, Egypt, Lebanon, New Guinea, and the Arabian Peninsula (Caldwell, Reddy, and Caldwell 1988; Dahl and Rabo 1992; Pigg 1992; Ferguson 1999; Ahearn 2001; Liechty 2003; Deeb 2006; Osella and Osella 2006; Yount et al. 2010).

Analyses of survey data reach the same conclusion. Two studies have used survey data to document widespread endorsement of developmental idealism in Nepal (Thornton, Binstock, and Ghimire 2008; Mitchell 2009). A survey from a city in Iran shows that developmental idealism is widely endorsed among people in that city (Abbasi-Shavazi et al 2011). An Argentinian study used both questionnaires and focus groups to document widespread endorsement of developmental idealism among secondary school students in Argentina (Binstock and Thornton 2007; Thornton et al. 2008). Yet another study used survey data from Argentina, China, Egypt, Iran, Nepal, and the United States to show that developmental idealism beliefs concerning fertility are widespread in those countries (Thornton et al. forthcoming).

Unfortunately, to our knowledge, there have been no survey data reported documenting the extent of developmental idealism in any Sub-Saharan country. This is an especially important gap in our knowledge because this world region is large and contains cultures and histories that are different in many ways from those in other world regions. Sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest income region in the world, has relatively low levels of education, and has high levels of both mortality and fertility. Many people in the region have been relatively isolated from global networks, although there has been a long history of Western colonialism and missionary work, with many people in the region endorsing Christianity. Also, in recent decades many international and regional organizations have expended considerable efforts to spread education, better health, family planning, and numerous other elements associated with developmental idealism. As we discuss below, we expect that developmental idealism has been spread through many mechanisms in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In this paper we examine whether Malawians believe that attributes of the family defined as modern are good and are associated with attributes of society defined as modern. Reciprocally, we also investigate whether Malawians believe that a modern society is a force fostering modern families and believe that modern families facilitate the creation of a modern society. Our research also studies whether Malawians believe that the future will bring more modern families and whether they positively or negatively evaluate such future changes. The family beliefs and values that we examine focus on the following family attributes: age at marriage, who arranges marriage, fertility, gender equality, respect for elders, and polygamy.

We study the dissemination of these dimensions of developmental idealism using data collected from two samples of Malawian men in 2009 and 2010. The first survey was conducted in face-to-face interviews with men living in a rural area of Malawi. The second survey, also

conducted with face-to-face interviews, was conducted among men in a district of a city in Malawi.

With these data, we are able to provide the first evidence concerning the extensiveness of developmental idealism values and beliefs in Malawi. Examination of the factors facilitating and inhibiting the spread of developmental idealism in Malawi and the effects of that spread is beyond the scope of this paper, although such topics will be important for future research.

Conceptual and Theoretical Background

We begin our conceptual and theoretical discussion of developmental idealism with the observation that developmental idealism is an ideational model. Like other ideational models, developmental idealism provides a framework for understanding the way the world operates and for specifying valuable goals and the means to achieve them (Geertz 1973; Fricke 1997). Johnson-Hanks and colleagues (forthcoming) conceptualize ideational systems as schemas that are often taken-for-granted. These ideational schemas exist within communities where they are available for use by individuals (Swidler 1986; Sewell 1992). Available schemas vary within and across societies. Different schemas can be contradictory between different societies, between individuals within the same society, and even within a single individual. Schemas can also change over time.

Developmental idealism grows out of the modernization or development framework, a model that has dominated both social science and much public discourse for centuries (Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet 1975/1969). Our discussion of the modernization model is not motivated by a belief that it is a useful framework for understanding social change, but because the model provides the basis for developmental idealism's power. In fact, recently in academia,

modernization and development models have been heavily criticized for many reasons (for example, see Mandelbaum 1971; Césaire 1972; Nisbet 1975/1969; Tilly 1984; Wallerstein 1991; Böröcz 2000; Chakrabarty 2000). Despite this extensive criticism, developmental models continue to be influential. We also do not study developmental idealism because we believe that its values and beliefs are good or bad, or true or false, but because we believe that they can, if accepted even in modest amounts, have the power to encourage substantial social change.

The development model specifies that all societies progress through the same stages from traditional to developed (Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet 1975/1969; Thornton 2001, 2005). The model also specifies that societies develop at different speeds, so that at any particular time, societies are located at different stages along the developmental pathway. The model has identified Northwest Europe and its overseas populations as modern or developed and defined other countries as traditional or less developed. The model indicates that the good life is located in developed northwest Europe and its diasporas and that less-developed societies should imitate those more advanced.

This modernization framework provides beliefs and values that define developmental idealism. Among these developmental idealism beliefs and values is the idea that modern societal attributes are good and include urban living, industrial production, wealth, and high levels of education. Developmental idealism also indicates that modern family attributes are good, with the following attributes labeled as modern: individualism, youthful autonomy, marriages contracted at mature ages by the bride and groom themselves, gender equality, and low fertility. Developmental idealism further states that modern families facilitate the achievement of a developed society and that societal development brings modern families.

The developmental model indicates that people live in a changing world and that the direction of change is from traditionality towards modernity. This dynamic model indicates that people should prepare themselves and their descendants for a more modern lifestyle. Such beliefs in a modern future may lead people to be more likely to adopt or accept family attributes defined as modern.

Many mechanisms have helped to globalize developmental idealism and the view of changing societies around the world (Thornton 2005). Among these are the mass media, education, urbanization, and the distribution of scholarly treatises about modernization. Movements for fertility control, for civil rights, and for women's equality also help to spread developmental idealism. Many foreign aid programs and governmental and nongovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations, encourage many elements of developmental idealism. In a subsequent section, we discuss some of the mechanisms most relevant to Malawi.

Developmental idealism, of course, does not spread in a vacuum, but in a world where people have their own well-engrained and long-standing beliefs and values about the world, desired goals, and the appropriate ways to attain those goals. These beliefs, values, and social systems may encourage and/or constrain the adoption of new values and behaviors.

Developmental idealism comes in conflict with many local value and belief systems, often resulting in clashes of culture. This means that developmental idealism is usually not quickly adopted, but is often resisted and modified, or even rejected. Nevertheless, in many instances contact with developmental idealism has led to substantial changes in family beliefs and values, with implications for many behaviors and relationships. In part, the success of developmental idealism is due to its promotion by relatively powerful actors (Luke and Watkins 2002).

We now discuss some historical and current elements of Malawian culture and society. We then discuss some of the forces spreading developmental idealism in Malawi. We then discuss our data and methods, present our findings, and end with a conclusion.

Malawi

To be written

Mechanisms for the Spread of Developmental Idealism in Malawi

To be written

Data and Methods

Research Sites and Samples

The data used for this study come from two surveys of young men conducted in Malawi: one in a rural traditional authority (an administrative sub-division of a district) in the Southern region, and the other in working/lower-class neighborhoods in an urban center. The rural study site was selected because it has an ethnically and religiously diverse population. The living conditions in the urban study site are similar to those faced by many urban dwellers.

Urban and rural living conditions in Malawi are distinct. For example, according to the 2004 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (National Statistics Office [NSO] and ORC Macro 2005), approximately 30 percent of urban households have electricity and almost two-thirds have finished floors (mostly cement). In comparison, only 2 percent of rural households have electricity and approximately 12 percent have finished floors, with the majority having floors made of earth or sand. Social characteristics vary as well. The median educational

attainment in urban areas is 5.2 years for women and 6.9 years for men, compared to 1.4 years for women and 2.5 years for men in rural areas (NSO Malawi and ORC Macro 2005). Having a sample from both types of locations allows investigation of the beliefs of developmental idealism among people living in these different environments.

Questions measuring developmental idealism beliefs and values were included at the beginning of survey questionnaires designed primarily to study male circumcision and sexual behavior. The research sites and sampling strategy were determined by the larger study. In both the urban and rural sites, all surveys were administered as face-to-face interviews and were conducted in Chichewa, one of the dominant languages in the southern region of Malawi.

The urban data were collected in 2010. The urban study site was the catchment area of a health clinic, which included two administrative zones of the city. (The city will remain unnamed to protect the identity of study participants.) The catchment area is divided into census enumeration areas. Using Google maps, the research team further sub-divided the enumeration areas into blocks and randomly selected two blocks from each. The survey team completed a census of all households in the selected blocks and interviewed one eligible man per household. On-the-spot randomization was used to select the survey participant if there was more than one eligible person in the household. All men ages 18-35 were considered eligible for participation. Almost 2,300 men were interviewed about male circumcision and 1,286 of them were randomly selected to answer the developmental idealism questions.

The rural study participants were interviewed twice: the baseline data collection took place in 2008 and the follow-up was in 2009. The developmental idealism questions were included on the follow-up survey questionnaire. At baseline, participants were selected using a two-stage sampling strategy. First, 70 villages from the target traditional authority were

randomly selected into the sample. A full census of people living in these villages was conducted to identify men ages 18-40. Eligible participants were then stratified by religion. In each village, all eligible and available men, up to a maximum of 20 Christians and 20 Muslims, were selected to participate. Few sampled men refused to participate, but some were difficult to locate to complete an interview. Interviews were completed with just under 70 percent of sampled participants. A total of 1,236 men were interviewed at baseline.

Approximately 77 percent of the men interviewed at baseline were successfully re-contacted and interviewed for the follow-up survey, resulting in a sample of 955 men who responded to the developmental idealism questions. Most non-interviews were due to respondents who could not be located, rather than to individuals refusing to participate. Table 1 compares some demographic characteristics of the men who were interviewed for the follow-up survey with those who researchers were unable to relocate. The overall similarity of these groups provides reassurance that the follow-up study sample is likely to remain representative of the geographic area used for the original sampling frame.

In each location, the samples are representative of small geographic areas. The results cannot be generalized or extrapolated to represent all of Malawi or all of sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, this is an important first study to examine the dissemination of developmental idealism on the continent. And, although the samples are not representative of the country as a whole, it is important to note that the populations in the two study locations are similar in important ways to Malawian national averages for urban and rural populations. To demonstrate this, we present indicators of socio-economic status from the 2004 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in Table 2. The measures included in the table capture population characteristics often associated with the spread of developmental idealism. Education, work, wealth, and media

all provide greater access to new people and ideas, thereby serving as mechanisms for the diffusion of developmental idealism. All data in Table 2 come from the 2004 DHS. The left panel of the table compares population averages for the district of the rural study site with the averages for the country's whole rural population. For the most part, the measures indicate similarity in terms of education, employment, and household well-being. On average, men in the district where our survey took place are less likely to be literate but more likely to own a radio than average rural Malawian men. The differences, however, are not large enough to indicate that our study district is an outlier region. Moreover, none of the differences on the other characteristics are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Looking at the comparison of the city where the study took place with national urban averages in the right-hand panel of Table 2, we see the similarities here are impressive as well. Residents of the city where we conducted our survey are similar to the urban average on most measures of socio-economic status. None of the differences presented in the table are statistically significant. Overall, Table 2 confirms that the study populations are not located in regions with unique socio-economic conditions. Rather, on important characteristics, they are similar to national averages. Thus, while we cannot generalize to the country's population as a whole, data from these study sites provide an indication of the extent to which developmental idealism has spread in Malawi.

Measures

In this paper, we use data from five sections of questions about development and family change. In each section, respondents were asked about a list of family attributes, including women's age of marriage, arranged marriage, fertility, gender equality, respect for elders, and

polygamy. The interviewer did not define development or give examples of developed and not developed countries; respondents used their own conceptions of development to answer the questions. The first section asked respondents about the association between development and particular family forms. The introduction stated, “Now think of life nowadays in not developed countries as compared to life in developed countries. We would like to learn from you if the below listed things are found more often in not developed countries or found more often in developed countries.” The first question in the section asked, “Women getting married before the age of 18. Is this found more often in not developed countries or found more often in developed countries?” Questions on each of the other family attributes followed this pattern.

The second set of questions asked respondents about a causal relationship between development and changes in family attributes. The introduction said, “Some people believe that Malawi will become richer in the future. Now let us talk about some things that will either increase or decrease if Malawi as a country becomes richer.” Respondents were then asked if the prevalence of each of the family attributes of interest would increase or decrease if Malawi became richer.

A later section returned to questions of causation, but asked about the opposite causal pathway. Respondents were asked whether family changes will bring development. The introduction said, “We have been talking about things that can happen if Malawi becomes richer. Now we will talk about something different—what can happen to the Malawi nation if something related to families changes. Among these things, please tell me which ones will help to make Malawi richer or poorer.” The questions in the section asked if Malawi would become richer or poorer following changes in each of the family attributes of interest.

Another set of questions asked respondents to compare various family attributes and to evaluate which family form is better. The introduction to the section said, “I will ask you to compare various family arrangements. Please tell me which arrangement is the best for most people.” Subsequent questions asked respondents to compare gender equality vs. no gender equality, one vs. three children per family, three vs. five children per family, women marrying at age 22 vs. at age 28, youth choosing their marriage partners vs. parents choosing for them, a man having two wives at the same time vs. one wife at a time, and Western culture vs. Malawian culture. The rural questionnaire also asked respondents to compare a culture that respects elders vs. another that does not respect elders. Respondents who initially answered “other” or “don’t know” to any of the questions were encouraged to choose one of the options in a follow-up question.

The last section asked respondents about their beliefs regarding future family change in Malawi and asked that they evaluate those prospective changes. For example, the first question asks, “Now think of twenty years to come in Malawi. Do you think that women’s age at first marriage will increase or decrease?” And the next question asked, “Imagine that women’s age at first marriage increases in Malawi in the next twenty years. Would this be a good thing, bad thing, or it doesn’t matter?” Similar questions were asked for all of the other five focus family attributes.

Results

The results are presented in Tables 3 – 9. Overall, large majorities of the respondents from both our urban and rural samples associate development with family attributes more commonly found in the United States and Western Europe, which writers have described for

centuries as modern lifestyles. Developmental beliefs are prevalent among our Malawian respondents. We will review the results for each set of questions one at a time. In each of the results tables, the response that is consistent with the tenets of developmental idealism is indicated by bold font.

Associations between development and family attributes

We begin by examining Malawian respondents' views of the association between development and a variety of family forms. Table 3 shows that 93 percent of urban respondents and 94 percent of rural respondents believe that women marry before the age of 18 more often in not developed countries than in developed countries. There are also very high levels of agreement on the association between development and fertility, with 95 percent of urban and 91 percent of rural respondents reporting that parents in "not developed" countries have more children. These findings are consistent with our expectations regarding the influence of family planning programs in Malawi on people's perceptions in recent years.

Approximately three-quarters of urban and rural respondents reported that arranged marriage and respect for elders are more common in not developed countries and two-thirds reported that gender equality is more common in "developed" countries. These results indicate a high degree of familiarity with developmental idealism's association between modernity on the one hand, and family forms based on individualism and equality on the other hand. A majority of respondents associate polygamy with not developed countries, although the results are not as consistent.

Causal relationships between development and family attributes

Table 4 shows results of the questions about the causal influence of development on certain family attributes. A great majority of respondents from both the urban and rural samples reported that if Malawi becomes richer, fewer women will marry before the age of 18, fewer marriages will be arranged by parents, parents will have fewer children, there will be more gender equality, and respect for elders will decrease. More than three-quarters of both samples agree about the effect of development on arranged marriage, fertility, and gender equality. The beliefs that development will decrease the number of women marrying before age 18 and will decrease respect for elders are shared by 60 to 80 percent of the respondents. Respondents were split on whether increasing wealth would lead to an increase or decrease in polygamy. Historically, wealthier men were more likely to have multiple wives. This historical association between wealth and polygamy may be competing with developmental idealism's association between wealth and monogamous marriages.

As reported in Table 5, with a few exceptions, the respondents also reported the opposite causal relationship. A large majority said that Malawi will become a richer country if fewer women marry before the age of 18, fewer people have arranged marriages, parents have fewer children, and there is more gender equality. Also, there was a very high level of agreement that an increase in polygamy would make Malawi poorer.

Yet despite the overall agreement for the sample as a whole, it is important to note a couple of striking differences of opinion when the urban and rural samples are compared to one another. Eighty-four percent of urban dwellers in our sample reported that Malawi would become richer if early marriage decreased as compared to 40 percent of the rural sample. In addition, 88 percent of the urban sample said Malawi would become richer if arranged marriages decreased. And, while still a majority, only 55 percent of rural respondents said this would

happen. These sharp contrasts seem out of place for the rural sample, particularly when we see that for the other questions in this series the distributions of rural and urban answers are quite similar.

Upon careful comparison of the urban and rural Chichewa questionnaires, we discovered these two questions had slightly different wording in the urban and rural questionnaires. To investigate the possible impact of these question wording differences, we conducted a small survey experiment with 70 urban respondents who had participated in the main survey to examine whether this difference is due to the differences in question wording or whether it captures a real rural-urban difference in beliefs about the effects of early and arranged marriages on Malawi's wealth. Each of the 70 respondents was randomly assigned either the set of questions originally appearing in the urban questionnaire version or the set originally appearing in the rural version.

Table 6 presents the results of this experiment. For both questions, there was a statistically significant difference between distributions of responses to the two versions of the questions. The wording of the questions substantially affected the results. With the question wording from the original urban questionnaire, 59 percent of respondents said that Malawi will become richer if fewer women marry before age 18 and nearly 70 percent said that Malawi will become richer if there are fewer arranged marriages. In response to the question as originally worded on the rural questionnaire, only one-third of respondents thought that these two changes would result in Malawi becoming richer. This is an indication that the difference between the urban and rural responses to the questions about early and arranged marriages presented in Table 5 is probably the result of differences in question wording, and does not reflect real rural-urban differences.

It is also worth noting the distribution of responses to the question about the causal effect of an increase in respect for elders. In Table 4, we saw that a majority of respondents reported that people will give less respect to elders if Malawi becomes richer. In Table 5, we see that respondents do not believe in the opposite causal pathway; only 10-14 percent report that increasing respect for elders will make Malawi poorer. Rather, three-quarters of urban and rural respondents report that more respect for elders will lead to Malawi becoming richer. So, while respondents may see decreasing respect for elders as a result of development, they do not think that showing less respect for elders will cause development.

Expectations for the future of Malawian families

Table 7 presents respondents' expectations about the future of family change in Malawi. Developmental idealism posits that Malawians will expect their families to look more like the families of the U.S. and Western Europe in the future. To some extent, Malawians' responses meet this expectation. Most respondents agree that gender equality will increase and arranged marriage and respect for elders will decrease in the next 20 years. Respondents are split on whether women's age at marriage will increase or decrease in the future. Two-thirds of urban respondents reported that the number of children born to women in Malawi will decrease in the next 20 years. This is consistent with the predictions of developmental idealism.

Unfortunately, we are unable to report, with any certainty, results concerning the beliefs of rural respondents on this same topic. This is due to the fact that an error occurred during the data collection phase of the project which resulted in 30 percent of the sample not being asked this particular question. The results we have calculated for the remaining 70 percent of the

sample are inconsistent with the urban sample results and with the predictions of developmental idealism, but we cannot rule out the possibility that these differences are due to the missing data.

Respondents' predictions regarding the prevalence of polygamy in the future are mixed. Rural respondents are particularly divided. This may be a reflection of current family patterns. Among married women included in the 2004 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey, 18 percent of rural women were in polygamous unions and only 6 percent of urban women were in polygamous unions (DHS Final Report, NSO and ORC Macro 2005).

Evaluations of family attributes

Tables 8 and 9 show respondents' evaluations of different family attributes. The results in Table 8 demonstrate that Malawian respondents overwhelmingly approve of family change in the direction predicted by developmental idealism, at least in the abstract. More than 70 percent reported that change in the direction of modern family attributes would be good. The only exception, as we have seen in responses to earlier questions, is that respondents do not approve of a decrease in respect for elders. Most respondents believe that decreasing respect for elders would be bad.

Table 9 shows the responses to questions that asked respondents to compare specific family attributes. More than 80 percent, and in some cases more than 90 percent, of respondents agreed that gender equality is better than no equality, youth choosing marriage partners is better than parents choosing for them, and one wife at a time is better than multiple wives. Regarding fertility, respondents were asked first whether it is better for most people to have one child or three children. In the urban sample, those who said three children were then asked whether three children or five children were better. All rural respondents were asked to compare three versus

five children, regardless of their response to the first question. In both samples, respondents were split on whether one or three children would be better for most people. However, more than 90 percent said that three children per family are better than five children. The United Nations' estimate for the total fertility rate during 2005-2010 is 5.59 (United Nations 2009). Fewer than ten percent of urban and rural respondents reported that 5 children is best for most families; therefore, regardless of whether they chose one or three children as the ideal, a vast majority reported that fewer children than women are currently having would be better for Malawian families.

Similarly, some respondents said they preferred that women marry at age 22 and others reported that it would be better if women married at age 28. According to the United Nations Statistics Division, who derive their estimates from the Demographic and Health Survey, the singulate mean age of marriage for women in Malawi in 2000 was 18.9 years and the average age of marriage for men was 23.5. Given these current marriage patterns, either choice (age 22 or 28) represents a preference for an older age of marriage for women than currently exists.

Only rural respondents were asked whether a culture that does, or one that does not, respect elders is better. The responses are consistent with the findings reported earlier: respondents overwhelmingly prefer a culture that respects elders. In this way, the Malawian respondents rejected some of the individualism inherent in the tenets of developmental idealism.

Also, although respondents preferred many of the family forms that are commonly found in the U.S. and Western Europe, a large majority prefer Malawian culture to Western culture. This is a good reminder that while respondents may accept aspects of developmental idealism, they do not provide a blanket endorsement of Western culture over Malawian culture. This likely suggests the mixing of Malawian and Western cultures in the future.

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Table 1: Comparison of Rural Baseline and Follow-up Sample Characteristics

	All Baseline Respondents	Follow-up Participants	Drop-Outs
Number	1236	955	281
Mean age	31.78	31.71	32.04
Percent literate	72.38	73.07	69.90
Mean years of education	5.88	5.90	5.83
Percent who own a radio	81.40	81.05	82.61
Percent married	89.86	90.01	89.34

Table 2: Study Sample Locations Compared to National Averages Using 2004 Malawi DHS

	Rural		Urban	
	Sample District	All Rural	Sample Area	All Urban
Percent literate (males)	62.55	71.18*	89.38	88.10
Mean years of education (males)	4.66	5.17	7.20	7.72
Percent currently working (males)	58.06	53.00	64.08	65.43
Percent with household electricity	5.41	2.58	38.94	36.76
Percent in highest wealth quintile	17.07	12.52	78.70	65.90
Percent in lowest wealth quintile	12.65	15.06	3.20	3.91
Percent with radio in household	71.48	63.41*	84.50	79.53

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondent Perceptions of Whether Family Attributes are More Common in Developed or Not Developed Places

	Urban			Rural		
	Not Developed	Developed	About the same	Not Developed	Developed	About the same
Women marrying before age 18	93.07	4.28	2.65	94.33	1.89	3.78
Arranged marriage	77.68	15.79	6.53	74.58	15.13	10.29
Parents having many children	95.09	1.56	3.35	91.40	2.52	6.08
Gender equality	24.32	66.41	9.28	18.87	62.68	18.45
Giving respect to elders	81.95	8.48	9.57	71.80	10.17	18.03
Polygamy	68.04	16.41	15.55	57.17	17.70	25.13

Table 4: Percentage distribution of responses about the effects of development on family attributes

	Urban			Rural		
	Increase	Decrease	About the same	Increase	Decrease	About the same
Women marrying before age 18	29.47	68.74	1.79	15.93	80.92	3.14
Arranged marriage	18.05	79.46	2.49	14.97	79.27	5.76
Parents having many children	12.62	84.89	2.49	12.46	81.88	5.65
Gender equality	77.57	17.52	4.91	72.33	16.46	11.22
Giving respect to elders	24.38	69.63	6.00	29.14	57.23	13.63
Polygamy	42.07	52.72	5.21	37.50	49.79	12.71

Table 5: Percentage distribution of responses about the effects of family change on Malawi's wealth

	Urban			Rural		
	Richer	Poorer	About the same	Richer	Poorer	About the same
*Fewer women marrying before 18	84.19	14.17	1.64	40.21	55.71	4.08
*Fewer arranged marriages	87.87	9.33	2.80	55.36	36.34	8.30
Parents having fewer children	95.63	3.28	1.09	91.52	6.49	1.99
More gender equality	85.81	10.13	4.05	88.35	8.08	3.57
Respect for elders increases	75.08	14.10	10.83	75.68	9.96	14.36
Polygamy increases	5.68	92.69	1.63	5.52	89.20	5.28

* The wording of these questions was slightly different on the urban and rural versions of the questionnaires.

Table 6: Percentage distribution of responses about the effects of family change on Malawi's wealth (frequency in parentheses)

	Urban Version of Qs			Rural Version of Qs			Difference?
	Richer	Poorer	About the same	Richer	Poorer	About the same	Chi square (probability)
Fewer women marrying before 18	58.97 (23)	38.46 (15)	2.56 (1)	33.33 (12)	63.89 (23)	2.78 (1)	5.029 (0.081)†
Fewer arranged marriages	69.23 (27)	23.08 (9)	7.69 (3)	33.33 (12)	63.89 (23)	2.78 (1)	12.795 (0.002)**

Table 7: Percentage distribution of respondents' expectations about the future of family change

	Urban			Rural		
	Increase	Decrease	About the same	Increase	Decrease	About the same
Women's age at marriage	47.66	51.09	1.25	41.17	56.60	2.23
*Number of children born to women	31.98	67.24	0.78	52.96	45.68	1.37
Gender equality	79.39	18.27	2.33	73.53	23.47	3.00
Arranged marriage	13.69	85.61	0.70	24.38	73.46	2.17
Respect for elders	28.37	69.29	2.34	36.23	60.20	3.58
Polygamy	30.89	66.93	2.18	41.99	53.72	4.29

* Missing responses from 30% of the rural sample on this question.

Table 8: Percentage distribution of respondent evaluations of expected family changes

	Percentage modern response*	Urban			Percentage modern response*	Rural		
		Good	Bad	Won't Matter		Good	Bad	Won't Matter
Women's age at marriage increases	47.66	74.53	24.45	1.01	41.17	71.01	28.68	0.32
Number of children decreases	67.24	86.24	13.30	0.47	45.68	79.73	19.82	0.46
Gender equality increases	79.39	77.53	21.46	1.01	73.53	82.62	16.74	0.64
Arranged marriage decreases	85.61	91.36	8.49	0.16	73.46	84.40	15.06	0.54
Respect for elders decreases	69.29	15.60	83.78	0.62	60.20	18.63	81.15	0.22
Polygamy decreases	66.93	89.29	10.63	0.08	53.72	76.60	22.04	1.36

* Percentage of respondents giving answers considered modern and corresponding to the percentage cited in Table DG (odd).

Table 9: Percentage distribution of respondent comparisons of certain family attributes

Which family attribute is better for most people?		
	Urban	Rural
<i>Gender equality or no gender equality?</i>		
Equality	82.10	82.11
No Equality	17.36	17.79
Other	0.39	0.11
DK	0.16	0.00
<i>One child or three children?</i>		
One	41.46	40.61
Three	56.58	59.08
Other	1.88	0.21
DK	0.08	0.10
<i>Three children or five children?</i>		
Three	95.16	91.10
Five	4.03	8.69
Other	0.40	0.10
DK	0.40	0.10
<i>Women getting marriage at age 22 or age 28?</i>		
Age 22	53.59	36.23
Age 28	45.63	63.66
Other	0.47	0.00
DK	0.31	0.10
<i>Youth choosing their marriage partners or parents choosing on their behalf?</i>		
Youth choosing	98.05	94.66
Parents choosing	1.80	5.34
Other	0.00	0.00
DK	0.16	0.00
<i>A culture that respects elders or another that doesn't respect elders?</i>		
Respects elders	N/A	97.38
Doesn't respect elders	N/A	2.62
Other	N/A	0.00
DK	N/A	0.00
<i>Two wives at the same time or one wife?</i>		
Two wives	2.34	6.81
One wife	97.50	93.19
Other	0.00	0.00
DK	0.16	0.00
<i>Western culture or Malawian culture?</i>		
Western culture	12.55	17.73
Malawian culture	85.66	82.06
Other	1.17	0.00
DK	0.62	0.21