

Developmental Idealism and Family Life in Malawi

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### **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 modern 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. 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, report that development brings family change, and report that family change fosters development. Many people also state that Malawi is a changing society and predict that family attributes defined as modern will become more common in the future. We also explore how these beliefs intersect with local values and beliefs held for centuries in Malawi.

## Introduction

An important element of scholarly research during the past two decades has been the documentation of the globalization of world culture, a culture that originated in the West and has been circulated internationally (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. 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 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; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004; Baker and Letendre 2005; Cole 2005; Koo and Ramirez 2009; Meyer, Bromley, and Ramirez 2010; Frank, Camp, and Boutcher 2010).

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 19<sup>th</sup> century developmental idealism 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. 2011; 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 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 the belief in an 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 the idea 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), such that the status of women has become a litmus test for membership in the global club of modern democratic states (Towns 2010). 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; Chimbwete 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. The data supporting this conclusion include qualitative studies in India, Nepal, Egypt, Lebanon, Zambia, 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. Studies have used survey data to document widespread reported acceptance of developmental idealism in Nepal (Thornton, Binstock, and Ghimire 2008; Mitchell 2009; Thornton, Ghimire, and Mitchell forthcoming). A survey from a city in Iran shows that developmental idealism is widely accepted among people in that city (Abbasi-Shavazi *et al.* 2012). An Argentinean study used both questionnaires and focus groups to document widespread acceptance 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 acceptance of developmental idealism ideas concerning fertility are widespread in those countries (Thornton *et al.* 2012).

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 important gap in our knowledge because this world region is large and contains cultures and histories that are different 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 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 international and regional organizations have expended considerable efforts to encourage African countries to support improved education and health, the use of family planning, legislation on gender equality and human rights, 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 focus on the country of Malawi for an initial investigation of developmental idealism in sub-Saharan Africa. We examine whether Malawians say that attributes of the family defined as modern are good and are associated with attributes of society defined as modern. We also investigate whether Malawians say that a modern society is a force fostering modern families and say that modern families facilitate the creation of modern society. We also ask whether Malawians say that the future will bring more modern families and whether they report positive or negative evaluations of such future changes. We examine developmental idealism related to the following family attributes: age at marriage, who arranges marriage, fertility, gender equality, respect for elders, and polygamy.

We study reports about 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 completed using face-to-face interviews, was conducted among men in a low to medium income neighborhood of a city in Malawi.

Our data show that there is considerable knowledge of developmental idealism in Malawi. At the same time, we recognize that there is considerable ambivalence and tension around these issues, as knowledge or even verbal endorsement of developmental idealism does not necessarily indicate a rejection of competing cultural scripts. With this recognition, we consider how apparent endorsement of developmental idealism coexists with very different models of decision-making and behavior.

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

### **Cultural Models**

Developmental idealism is a cultural or ideational model. We follow Geertz's (1973) observation that culture provides models explaining the world and models for living in the world (also see Fricke 1997). Cultural models provide understanding of the world and the way it operates. They also define what is good and to be sought after, provide guidance for actions, and specify methods to achieve goals.

Cultural models are frequently conceptualized as schemas, scripts, and mental maps (Sewell 1992; Thornton *et al.* 2001; Johnson-Hanks 2011). In his specification of schema, Sewell

(1992) includes the concepts of rules, principles, and norms that apply to many circumstances. Thornton and colleagues (2001) identify beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms as elements of cultural models. Johnson-Hanks and colleagues (2011) identify three kinds of schemas: categorical; procedural; and evaluative. Categorical schemas are defined by them as types of things or actions, procedural schemas are defined as indicating how things should be done, and evaluative schemas indicate what is good or bad. Schemas can be broad or narrow, shallow or deep. They can vary in the emotion they carry and in the degree to which they are endorsed (Sewell 1992; Swidler 2001; Johnson-Hanks et al. 2011). As Johnson-Hanks and colleagues state, schemas exist both in the heads of individual people and as shared ideas in communities.

Multiple schemas often exist simultaneously and provide opposite messages about values, goals, and appropriate actions. With multiple conflicting schemas existing simultaneously, any particular cultural model generally does not dictate decision-making and behavior. Instead, as discussed by Swidler (1986, 2001), cultural models generally provide goals and strategies that people can choose from in making decisions. This means that individuals can use one schema in one circumstance and another schema in a different circumstance. Thus, individuals have tool kits of various schemas that they can choose from in particular situations. This means that there is often only a loose connection between schemas and behavior. And, it is possible that a particular schema may only infrequently be used as a guide to behavior.

Importantly for our research question, cultural schemas are sometimes introduced to communities and individuals from the outside, at times with considerable prestige, money, and resources encouraging their endorsement (Luke and Watkins 2002; Watkins, Swidler, and Hannan forthcoming; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Karlström 2004). Such newly-introduced cultural schemas are usually seen initially as foreign, irrelevant, or



hostile to a community or individual. The new schemas may also be given lip-service, especially in the company of foreigners, while, at the same time, have little power in people's lives. Nevertheless, even the presence and understanding of a new schema is important in giving people options and legitimacy for particular behaviors. In addition, when schemas increase in their dissemination, salience, legitimacy, and consensus, they increase in their potential for influencing behavior.

### **Developmental Idealism**

Developmental idealism is a cultural model that 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; Nisbet 1975/1969; Tilly 1984; Wallerstein 1991; Chakrabarty 2000). Despite this 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, encourage 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 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, 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 assumes a changing world where the direction of change is from tradition toward 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 more readily adopt or accept family attributes defined as modern.

Many mechanisms have helped to globalize developmental idealism and the view of changing societies (Thornton 2005). Many researchers have focused on the national and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations that multiplied in numbers in recent decades as forces for the spread of new ideas and norms (Watkins, Swidler, and Hannan forthcoming; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Barnett and Finnemore 2004). Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) refer to these international organizations as “norm entrepreneurs” that actively build and disseminate new standards of action. Barnett and Finnemore (2004) emphasize that officials in these international organizations “often insist that part of their mission is to spread, inculcate, and enforce global values and norms. They are the missionaries of our time” (page 33).

“Norm entrepreneurs” also operate at local levels within countries, promoting elements of developmental idealism (Watkins, Swidler, and Hannan forthcoming). Developmental idealism and other ideas are also spread both informally and formally through such mechanisms as the mass media, education, urbanization, global business, and the distribution of scholarly treatises about modernization. In a subsequent section, we discuss some 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 (Karlström 2004). Developmental idealism often competes with these long-standing beliefs, values, and social systems. Some elements of developmental idealism can even be rejected in favor of long-standing local values in order to attain other elements of development (Karlström 2004). This means that developmental idealism is usually not quickly adopted, but is often resisted and modified, or even rejected. However, international actors often have enormous prestige and resources that can be provided (or withheld) at the national level to encourage the adoption of the programs and ideas of world culture, with foreign aid money to operate various programs to encourage family planning, human rights, and economic growth being particularly powerful examples (Luke and Watkins 2002). As such programs penetrate to the grassroots, they are associated with money, jobs, prestige, and economic opportunities and they can affect the viewpoints and positions that ordinary people express. At both the national and local levels, these mechanisms provide substantial motivation to go-along with new ideas and programs, even when there is neither belief nor commitment to implement them (Luke and Watkins 2002). 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.

We now discuss historical and current elements of Malawian culture and society. We then discuss some of the mechanisms that spread developmental idealism in Malawi. Finally, we describe our data and methods, present our findings, discuss the meanings of our findings, and end with a conclusion.

### **Malawi**

Malawi is a small and land-locked country in southeastern Africa. Current Malawian territory was initially settled by migrating groups of Bantu people. The people of Malawi had trade relations with Swahili Arabs at least as far back as the 17<sup>th</sup> century (McCracken 1977). Malawi was colonized in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the British, and was known during that period as Nyasaland. In 1963, Nyasaland gained its independence under the name of Malawi.

Malawi has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world. Religiously, Malawi is divided between Islam and Christianity, with a substantial number of people following indigenous religions. Life expectancy at birth as recently as 2007 was estimated to be 46 for men and 48 for women, higher than in the past, but still relatively low by current international standards (United Nations 2009-2010). Malawi has also been heavily hit with the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the past several decades.

Reactions to developmental idealism, how it is rejected, modified, and/or accepted, depend upon existing family structures and relationships. Unfortunately, evidence concerning Malawian family structures in the past is relatively limited, and characterizing family systems in Malawi is particularly difficult because of the substantial ethnic diversity in the country.

However, we know that families and kin relations have been very important in structuring social and economic lives. Respect for the elders has also been important historically in Malawi. Just as families have been important in Malawi, marriage has been a central feature of the life course, with most women and men marrying sometime in their lives. Among the Chewa, one of Malawi's largest ethnic groups, historically women married within a few months of reaching puberty, but men could not marry until they were old enough to build a hut for their wife and cultivate the garden of their in-laws (Phiri 1983). The current median age at first marriage for all Malawians is estimated at approximately 18 years old for women and 22 years old for men. There is evidence of increasing marriage age: among women who are currently ages 40-44, 20 percent were married by the age of 15; in comparison, among women who are currently ages 15-19, only 4 percent were married by age 15 (NSO and ICF Macro 2011).

Unlike many other places in the world where marriages were largely arranged by the older generation, with little or no input from the prospective bride and groom, young people in Malawi have historically had considerable say in the choice of their spouse. An early chronicler of family patterns in Malawi, the missionary William Percival Johnson (1922), wrote that while approval by relatives was important, marriages were not arranged by parents and required only the consent of the bride and groom. The anthropologist J.A. Barnes (1951), who did fieldwork in Malawi in the late 1940s, repeated Johnson's earlier assertion that marriages were not arranged. The informality of mate choice and the involvement of the younger generation has apparently persisted for many decades (Kaler 2001).

In Malawi, as in many other parts of Africa, polygyny, a man having multiple wives at the same time, has been quite common (Marston et al. 2008; Reniers and Tfaily 2008; de Kok 2009). As of 2010, approximately 14 percent of married women reported that they were in polygynous

unions and 8 percent of men reported practicing polygyny (NSO and ICF Macro 2011).

Polygyny is more common in rural areas and the prevalence varies by region.

Malawians have generally greatly valued children and fertility levels have been relatively high. Historical data on fertility rates in Malawi are difficult to find. In 1992, the first Demographic and Health Survey estimated that women gave birth on average to 6.7 children in their lifetimes (NSO and Macro International 1994). Although fertility has declined somewhat in the country, the total fertility rate estimated from the 2010 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS) remains relatively high; 5.7 for the country as a whole, 6.1 for rural areas, and 4.0 in urban areas (NSO and ICF Macro 2011).

Historically, gender relations varied across cultures within Malawi: residential patterns (matrilocal or patrilocal), lineage systems (matrilineal or patrilineal), levels of polygamy, and religious practices differ by region and ethnic group. The central region of the country, the location of this study, is the most ethnically and culturally diverse. Women had considerable socio-economic power in pre-colonial Malawian society, especially among groups where a man married into a woman's family and joined her in cultivating her family's land (Davison 1993). Women were (and still are) the primary source of household agricultural laborers. Nonetheless, women were generally subject to an ultimate male authority (Mbilizi 1999).

In the past two centuries, gender relations have been transformed by the slave trade, colonialism, famine, and the rise of a capitalist economy (Phiri 1983; Vaughan 1987; Davison 1993). Under the influence of patriarchal colonial European powers, men sought to codify a privileged social status as "tradition" under the rubric of customary law (Power 1995). At the same time, colonial demands for hut taxes and laborers for commercial agricultural production increasingly drove men into paid labor, giving them control over the majority of household

income (Davison 1993; Berheide and Segal 1994). Men's status as the head of household remains important today, and wives, who are responsible for most domestic labor, are often dependent on their husbands for goods that cannot be produced by the household (Power 1995). Given historical variation in gender relations and increasing class differentiation, there is a great deal of heterogeneity in gender relations today.

### **Mechanisms for the Spread of Developmental Idealism in Malawi**

Beginning from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there have been many mechanisms for the dissemination of developmental idealism in Malawi. A particularly important factor was the colonization of Malawi from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through 1963. Accompanying the colonization of Malawi were Christian missionaries. The Christianization of Malawi has been so extensive that today about 85 percent of all Malawians identify as Christian (NSO and ICF Macro 2011). British colonialism and Christianity brought to Malawi European and Christian ideas related to developmental idealism and the resources to help spread them. Colonizers and missionaries in Africa were particularly troubled by polygyny and emphasized the importance of monogamy to native populations (Harries 1953; Karlström 2004; Phillips 1953).

The Christian missionaries of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century played a major role in bringing schools to Malawi (Schafer 2006), a source of new ideas promulgated at impressionable ages. By the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, men who had been educated at Christian missions formed associations with the goal of bringing personal improvement, which had an emphasis on utilizing European agricultural techniques (McCracken 1977). Education was expanded further in the 1960s after independence, although schooling opportunities remained limited (Schafer 2006).

Education also became a major basis of social differentiation, since Malawi had no known and valuable exploitable and exportable natural resources and few could accumulate

wealth through farming (McCracken 1977). Currently, the major social distinction is between those who are “developed” –elites who are relatively educated, relatively wealthy and, usually, urban—and the rural population, derided by the elites who talk of “the rural masses” as poor and poorly educated, as well as backward and superstitious (Myroniuk 2011).

During the last several decades multiple international organizations, the “norm entrepreneurs” described by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), have been major disseminators of the discourses of developmental idealism in Malawi, as well as the discourses of other international ideologies such as human rights and environmental sustainability. Messages pass from world capitals to the Malawian elites who work for governmental and non-governmental organizations, and from the elites to the Malawian population. At each layer—from national elites to interstitial elites to the most distant rural villagers—the concepts are discussed and debated in interpersonal interactions: some are accepted, some rejected (at least temporarily), and some adapted (Watkins, Swidley, and Hannan forthcoming). The work of John Meyer and his colleagues has shown that generally for the world, the participation of country nationals in international meetings and membership in international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are crucial steps at the beginning of the diffusion process (Meyer 1987, 2010; Boli and Thomas 1999). Many such international organizations, both large and small, work in Malawi.

Western countries and international organizations explicitly promoting development began to work extensively in Africa as the countries became independent from Western empires, largely in the 1960s: these organizations initially brought both infrastructure thought to be the basis of economic development—roads, dams, bridges—and the discourse of development. However, development organizations came to Malawi later than in many other African countries because President Banda, Malawi’s first and long-time president after independence in 1963,



wanted to protect Malawi from what he saw as the corrupting influences of the modern world; for example, western men with long hair and women with trousers were not permitted entry into the country. Unlike most other African presidents, who sought development and welcomed foreign organizations who would provide assistance, Banda envisioned Malawi as a country of peasants, with a small educated elite to govern them, and he did not want western values to corrupt his people (Chimwete et al 2005). Malawi's political circumstances from the early 1960s to the early 1990s, therefore, formed a partial barrier to the entry and reception of the discourse of developmental idealism.

Although Malawi did not experience the same flood of development experts as did many other African countries following independence, there were some development efforts during the Banda period. For example, in 1971 the World Bank began agriculture projects that also had a health component, and the World Health Organization (WHO) prepared a national health plan to establish and improve infrastructure for health services and training (World Bank 1986, 1992; WHO 1978; Ministry of Health 1979).

Some of the first global movements designed to transform low income countries into rich ones were the associated population control and family planning movements. However, Banda rejected the notions that Malawi needed a smaller population and that Malawians needed chemical and mechanical contraception. Banda was initially effective in blocking the discourse of the population movement. In fact, in the late 1960s the Peace Corps was expelled on the grounds that they were foreigners who were promoting birth control (Chimwete *et al.* 2005).

In subsequent years, international organizations that promoted population control and family planning began to have a presence in the country. Individuals in the health field began to attend international population meetings, returning with new ideas and a new language about

population issues. Early leaders in Malawi's family planning movement, with education in the West, were well-networked with powerful local people, and thus able to act as bridges between the international family planning community and the Malawi government. Formal efforts to formulate a neo-Malthusian population policy began in the late 1980s, when the National Population Steering Committee (NPSC), was set up with membership from all main government ministries and departments, non-governmental organizations, and academics, with support from the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Population Fund.

Malawi's relative isolation from the international modernity efforts ended in 1994, with multi-party elections of a new president. This was followed by a flood of donors and of technical experts from international organizations. Almost immediately, the new president adopted a family planning policy (but not a population policy that would promote small families).

By 1999, the discourse linking fertility and family to development was being disseminated widely in Malawi. Population and family planning posters appeared stressing the joys of small families and the difficulties of large families. Family planning talks were delivered to women in maternal and child health clinics, community health workers went to the villages with drama and songs about the advantages of family planning, and village family planning committees received training so that they could disseminate the messages to their neighbors.

We have emphasized here the importance of efforts to spread ideas about population control and family planning in Malawi, but there have been numerous other campaigns for central dimensions of developmental idealism. Some of these have focused on increasing age at marriage, with a recent UNESCO bumper sticker advocating: "stop early marriage: give girls a chance to complete their education" (<http://developmentalidealism.org/imagery/malawi.html>).

Other developmental idealism campaigns have focused on efforts to empower women and bring reproductive rights (Luke and Watkins 2002).

Many of the developmental idealism messages are disseminated through mass media. Information on family planning, gender equality, and health is covered in newspaper articles, radio campaigns, and television shows. At present, a little more than 60 percent of women and 80 percent of men have weekly access to at least one form of media. Wealthier people and those who live in urban areas have greater access to media than their rural and poorer counterparts (NSO and ICF Macro 2011).

## **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 2010 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (NSO and ICF Macro 2011), approximately 35 percent of urban households have electricity and 19 percent have improved sanitation facilities. In comparison, only 4 percent of rural households have electricity and approximately 6 percent have improved sanitation facilities. Social characteristics vary as well. The median educational attainment in urban areas is 7.5 years for women and men, compared to 4.3 years for women and 5.6 years for men in rural areas (NSO and ICF Macro 2011). Having a sample from both types of

locations allows investigation of the acceptance of developmental idealism among people living in these different environments.

Questions asking about 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 of Lilongwe. The catchment area is divided into census enumeration areas. Using Google maps, the research team further subdivided 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. 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 could not be located. 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 to represent all of Malawi. 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, 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 and family status from the 2010 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 and key family characteristics. Education, work, wealth, and media all provide greater access to new people and ideas, thereby serving as mechanisms for the diffusion of developmental idealism. We also test for differences in family characteristics since these are the topics of the developmental idealism questions.

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. On average, men in the district where the study took place are more likely to be literate and are somewhat wealthier than average rural Malawian men. The differences, however, are not large enough to indicate that our study district is an outlier region. They are similar to the rural average in terms of education, current employment status, and access to media. Men in our study district are as likely to have ever been married and ever had any children as average rural Malawian men.

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. Men in the city where we conducted our survey have slightly more education and are more likely to be working than average urban men. They are somewhat less likely than average urban men to access media at least once per week. Literacy and wealth among men in the study city are comparable to the urban average for the country as a whole. Overall, men in the study city have close to the average level of access to developmental idealism through education, work, wealth, and media. Moreover, their family characteristics are the same as the national urban average: the proportions of the men in our study city who have ever been married and who have ever had a child are approximately the same as the urban average. 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 series of questions about development and family change. Within each series, respondents were asked about several 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. Series topic introductions and exact wording of the questions can be found in Appendix A.

The first series asked respondents to identify whether certain family forms were more commonly found in not developed or developed countries. The next series of questions asked respondents to establish whether there is a causal relationship between development and family change by describing how an increase in Malawian development might increase or decrease certain family attributes. A third series returned to questions of causation, but asked about the opposite causal pathway; that is, respondents were asked whether family changes will bring development. In a fourth series respondents compared various family attributes and evaluated which family form is better for most people. In this series, the question concerning elder respect was included in the rural sample questionnaire only. Both urban and rural questionnaires added a question asking respondents to evaluate whether Western culture is better or Malawian culture is better. 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. And finally, the fifth series asked respondents to report their expectations for family change in Malawi over the next twenty years and to evaluate those prospective changes.

## **Results**

The results are presented in Tables 3 – 9. 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' reports 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 report 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, although, as we noted earlier, fertility remains high. This suggests that respondents believe that Malawi is not a developed country, a conclusion consistent with other evidence indicating that Malawians give their country low scores on development (Thornton et al 2011).

Approximately three-quarters of urban and rural respondents said that arranged marriage and respect for elders are more common in not developed countries and two-thirds said 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 associated 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 family attributes. A great majority of respondents from both the urban and rural samples said 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 provided the developmental idealism responses about the effects of development on arranged marriage, fertility, and gender equality. Reported acceptance of the ideas 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 reported agreement that an increase in polygamy would make Malawi poorer.

Yet, despite the overall agreement for the sample as a whole, there are striking differences between the urban and rural samples. Eighty-four percent of urban dwellers in our sample said 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 wordings 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 views of 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 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. 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 said 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.

Also note 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 said that people will give less respect to elders if Malawi becomes richer. In Table 5, we see that respondents did not say that they expected the opposite causal pathway; only 10-14 percent reported that increasing respect for elders will make Malawi poorer. Rather, three-quarters of urban and rural

respondents reported that more respect for elders will lead to Malawi becoming richer. So, while respondents may report seeing decreased respect for elders as a result of development, they do not report acceptance of the idea that showing less respect for elders will cause development.

*Expectations for the future of Malawian families*

Table 7 presents respondents' reports of 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 said that gender equality will increase and arranged marriage and respect for elders will decrease in the next 20 years. However, respondents are split on whether women's ages at marriage will increase or decrease in the future.

Two-thirds of urban respondents said 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 from 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 report acceptance 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 express approval of a decrease in respect for elders. Most respondents report 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 said 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 chose 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. We do not know from these data why these men report fertility ideals substantially lower than current fertility levels in the country.

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 reported a preference for 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 said that they preferred many of the family forms that are commonly found in the U.S. and Western Europe, a large majority said that they preferred Malawian culture to Western culture. This is a 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.

### **Possible Interpretations of Results**

It is important to recognize that answers to developmental idealism questions in a survey, like answers to all survey questions, can be influenced by many factors, including the various cultural schemas that the respondents may have, the ways respondents interpret the questions,

and the influences of the interviewers on the respondents. Answers consistent with developmental idealism indicate that respondents have learned the developmental idealism answer, and are able to articulate it. At the very least, therefore, patterns of responses reflecting developmental idealism indicate widespread dissemination of developmental cultural models.

Knowledge of developmental idealism may or may not be accompanied by endorsement of the associated values. Respondents may have incentives to respond to questions in a manner that is consistent with the tenets of developmental idealism because they know that the ideas are endorsed by local and national elites. Respondents may want to appear knowledgeable and modern to the well-educated interviewers who the respondents assume are proponents of developmental idealism. Respondents may be further motivated to provide the “correct” answer in the hope that it will bring them some of the social and economic rewards associated with well-funded development programs. To the extent that these motivations are operating, expressions of support for developmental idealism may mean nothing more than knowledge of developmental idealism and a desire to look good to the interviewer.

It is also important to remember that all people possess knowledge of a variety of cultural models that can be applied flexibly in different social situations. In the context of the survey, respondents may have felt that developmental idealism was the most appropriate cultural schema to use in answering the questions. Providing answers that were consistent with developmental idealism may be an acknowledgement that developmental idealism is an appropriate model for behavior in some circumstances. So, responses that are consistent with the tenets of developmental idealism may reflect the selective application of cultural schema. However, we only asked respondents about one particular cultural schema—developmental idealism—and not about cultural schemas that have historically existed in Malawi. Thus, even for respondents who

endorse developmental idealism, we do not know how this schema might be combined with other schemas in making decisions about family matters. In actual practice, people might endorse a developmental idealism belief or value in the abstract, but choose to follow another belief or value in concrete decision-making. Also, as Karlström (2004) describes for other parts of Africa, individuals and groups may endorse an indigenous rather than a competing developmental idealism element in order to more efficiently attain a different aspect of development.

We cannot adjudicate between these interpretations of the data. We recognize that in Malawi, as in other places, the ideas have been introduced into a society with its own worldviews, values, and beliefs, many of which conflict with developmental idealism. Thus, it is not surprising that some of the values and beliefs of developmental idealism have been slowly adopted, while others have been vigorously resisted, and even rejected by many (Hannerz 1992; Luke and Watkins 2002; Watkins 2004; Karlström 2004). Qualitative data from in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of the urban respondents suggest that there is both real endorsement and strong resistance to developmental idealism in the population.

In many of the qualitative interviews, respondents associated lower fertility with development, which is consistent with the findings from the survey. Some of the interview responses suggested a committed endorsement of lower fertility based on developmental idealism. For example, one of the respondents, a 28-year old man with a high school education and no children, suggested at the end of his interview that the research team should do more to educate Malawians about the benefits of lower fertility. He said, “You should also tell those at hospitals, the patients, the advantages of having a manageable number of children. If you were to start disseminating this, our country would develop rapidly. You should also be telling them about the disadvantages of having too many children. If you had enough personnel, then they

would spread out disseminating these messages and our country would develop rapidly.” This sentiment is also reflected in an important behavioral change consistent with the spread of developmental idealism: the recent decline of the total fertility rate to only four children among urban Malawians (NSO and ICF Macro 2011). In contrast, the relatively high fertility rate among rural Malawians may be an indication that the developmental model linking lower fertility and wealth is widely known and acknowledged as a valid cultural model, but is not commonly used to guide reproductive decisions in rural areas.

On the other hand, some of the comments about gender equality shared during the qualitative interviews provide evidence of resistance to the developmental idealism model. For example, in one of the interviews, when the interviewer asked a 32 year old respondent what he thought of gender equality, the man explained, “Ah, what I can say is that we just strive with these things [toward gender equality] because of the way we hear other people explaining from other countries, but we should differentiate; our country is poor and we have our culture. We have to follow our culture, which is better than for us to be copying from outside countries.” He feels that gender equality is a cultural model that is coming from outside of Malawi and it is incompatible with Malawian culture.

While the survey data do not provide information on the extent to which respondents actually use developmental idealism to guide their behavioral choices, they do show that knowledge of developmental idealism is widespread. Moreover, a majority of respondents in Malawi know that developmental idealism is valued by many elites both within and outside of Malawi. As discussed further below, such understanding is potentially very powerful. We expect that respondents providing developmental idealism answers will vary along the continuum from



only knowledge to both knowledge and belief, with all positions on the continuum reflecting important dissemination of developmental idealism.

### **Conclusion**

Our research was motivated by the hypothesis that developmental idealism has been spread widely around the world. Developmental idealism is a schema suggesting that modern families are good, that modern families are both causes and effects of modern societies, and that social change is ubiquitous and moving from “traditionality” to “modernity.” The spread and acceptance of these ideas have important implications for family change.

Our main question concerns the extent to which several elements of developmental idealism are known and accepted by ordinary people in Malawi. Although we were motivated by country-wide interests, we have studied only men in one rural region of Malawi and men in one urban area of Malawi. This restricts our ability to generalize to Malawi’s national population, but we have data from two different settings in Malawi that provide insights about our motivating question.

Our data provide strong support for the expectation that developmental idealism has been widely disseminated in our two research settings. With some exceptions, the vast majority of men in both settings report an association between family behavior and development in the direction of developmental idealism, report that development is a causal influence on family change, and report that certain family changes will make Malawi richer. Also, with some exceptions, the great majority reports expectations that family change will be in the direction developmental idealism defines as modern, and the majority endorse most of these changes.

We note that research about developmental idealism is very new and much more research is needed. Our research was conducted in only two areas of Malawi, and more research should

study the distribution of developmental idealism in the country as a whole. Additional research along these lines is also needed in other countries, both in Africa and elsewhere.

We also believe that more methodological and substantive work concerning the measurement and interpretation of developmental idealism measures would be very helpful. The interpretation of answers to all survey questions is difficult, and questions concerning development and family life are no exceptions. It would be useful to measure the strength of developmental idealism endorsement, separated from the effects of social desirability, and to examine the strength of endorsement of developmental idealism in comparison to the levels of endorsement of other cultural schemas available for guiding family behaviors.

Unfortunately, our data do not tell us when the ideas of developmental idealism became widespread in Malawi. Developmental idealism may have been disseminated shortly before our surveys, but that seems unlikely. As we discussed earlier, we know that access to Western ideas has been widespread for a long time in Malawi, through the presence of Christian missionaries, colonial governments, and bureaucratic structures. Also, even though development efforts were restricted in Malawi more than in many other places for approximately three decades after independence, there were development programs and efforts to promulgate certain ideas about developmental idealism even in these years. During the past two decades development programs and the dissemination of developmental idealism ideas have been vigorous. This understanding indicates that awareness and acceptance of developmental idealism has been expanding in Malawi for at least two decades and probably much longer.

These considerations suggest that the introduction and acceptance of developmental idealism may be related to past family changes, even though many family changes have not been large. Our findings also have strong implications for the nature of future family trends. The

widespread understanding of developmental idealism, recognition that it is endorsed by elites, and the endorsement of it by at least some ordinary people indicate that this cultural schema is likely to influence future family changes in Malawi. Of course, our argument that developmental idealism is a strong causal force for family change in Malawi does not mean that we believe it is the only factor influencing family trends. In fact, our argument is that developmental idealism combines with changing material conditions and social and economic structures to influence family decisions and change.

Although the pattern of responses to our developmental idealism questions is relatively clear, as we noted earlier, interpretation of the responses is more ambiguous. We believe that the widespread reported endorsement of the developmental idealism answers indicates that the messages of developmental idealism have been disseminated widely throughout our study settings. In most instances the large majority know, and are able to respond to survey questions in ways that are consistent with the general messages of developmental idealism.

It is less clear, however, whether such respondent answers indicate endorsement and belief in the developmental idealism propositions, or just knowledge of the cultural schema. It is possible that respondents recognize that developmental idealism is widely endorsed among Malawian and international elites and believe that the interviewers also endorse developmental idealism. Such understandings may produce a social desirability bias in that respondents are motivated to give the “correct” developmental answer to the interviewers. That is, respondents who understand various aspects of developmental idealism but who do not believe them will repeat the developmental idealism answers to interviewers so that they will look good and appear to be modern. Respondents may also give developmental idealism answers because they feel that

developmental idealism is good in the abstract, although they may not use it to guide all of their own behaviors.

We do not know the extent to which answers to our questions are affected by desires to look good to the interviewers. However, our findings are important even if the reported support for developmental idealism is entirely a result of our respondents knowing the ideas of developmental idealism and endorsing them only in the abstract, or endorsing them because they want to look good. The answers then would minimally suggest that respondents know the developmental idealism messages and think they are socially desirable. This skeptical interpretation suggests that developmental idealism has been widely disseminated, is perceived as socially desirable, and is available for guiding people's behavior. Although we accept the likelihood of social desirability effects among at least some respondents, we also believe that knowledge of developmental idealism and the desire to look good are not the only forces producing the widespread endorsement of developmental idealism displayed in the respondent answers. Instead, we believe that developmental idealism is both widely known and accepted in some way by many people.

We also emphasize that people can and do simultaneously hold multiple schemas that can be contradictory, such as developmental idealism and aspects of historical Malawi culture. This means that when it comes time to make decisions or select courses of action, people have multiple schemas to call on. The result is that there is unlikely to be a one-to-one match between endorsement of developmental idealism and decision-making and behavior. At the same time, our data suggests that developmental idealism has offered new options and opened up new avenues of discussion, which, if continued over a long period, is likely to have substantial effects on decision-making and behavior.



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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 2010 Malawi DHS

	Rural		Urban	
	Sample District	All Rural	Sample City	All Urban
Percent literate (males)	77.86	68.59*	91.26	85.84
Mean years of education (males)	5.72	5.52	8.16	7.69*
Percent currently working (males)	88.59	83.68	85.06	73.56**
Percent in highest wealth quintile	16.51	14.51*	63.63	70.28
Percent in lowest wealth quintile	10.40	18.20**	1.91	1.85
Percent who access media at least once per week (males)	83.78	81.55	82.98	91.34*
Percent of men who ever married or lived with partner	64.50	65.03	55.69	51.72
Percent of men who have children	61.36	62.11	55.83	49.85

Notes: Differences between the sample district/city and the average for all of rural/urban Malawi are statistically significant if starred: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondent Perceptions of Whether Family Attributes are More Common in Developed or Not Developed Places (Percentages Where Respondents Answered in the Developmental Direction are Bolded)

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

Table 4: Percentage distribution of responses about the effects of development on family attributes (Percentages where Respondents Answered in the Developmental Direction are bolded)

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

Table 5: Percentage distribution of responses about the effects of family change on Malawi's wealth (Percentages Where Respondents Answered in the Developmental Direction are Bolded)

	Urban			Rural		
	Richer	Poorer	About the same	Richer	Poorer	About the same
*Fewer women marrying before 18	<b>84.19</b>	14.17	1.64	<b>40.21</b>	55.71	4.08
*Fewer arranged marriages	<b>87.87</b>	9.33	2.80	<b>55.36</b>	36.34	8.30
Parents having fewer children	<b>95.63</b>	3.28	1.09	<b>91.52</b>	6.49	1.99
More gender equality	<b>85.81</b>	10.13	4.05	<b>88.35</b>	8.08	3.57
Respect for elders increases	75.08	<b>14.10</b>	10.83	75.68	<b>9.96</b>	14.36
Polygamy increases	5.68	<b>92.69</b>	1.63	5.52	<b>89.20</b>	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)	<b>5.029</b> <b>(0.081)†</b>
Fewer arranged marriages	69.23 (27)	23.08 (9)	7.69 (3)	33.33 (12)	63.89 (23)	2.78 (1)	<b>12.795</b> <b>(0.002)**</b>

Table 7: Percentage distribution of respondents' expectations about the future of family change (Percentages Where Respondents Answered in the Developmental Direction are Bolded)

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

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

Table 8: Percentage distribution of respondent evaluations of expected family changes	Urban				Rural			
	Percentage modern response*	Good	Bad	Won't Matter	Percentage modern response*	Good	Bad	Won't Matter
Women's age at marriage increases	47.66	<b>74.53</b>	24.45	1.01	41.17	<b>71.01</b>	28.68	0.32
Number of children decreases	67.24	<b>86.24</b>	13.30	0.47	45.68	<b>79.73</b>	19.82	0.46
Gender equality increases	79.39	<b>77.53</b>	21.46	1.01	73.53	<b>82.62</b>	16.74	0.64
Arranged marriage decreases	85.61	<b>91.36</b>	8.49	0.16	73.46	<b>84.40</b>	15.06	0.54
Respect for elders decreases	69.29	<b>15.60</b>	83.78	0.62	60.20	<b>18.63</b>	81.15	0.22
Polygamy decreases	66.93	<b>89.29</b>	10.63	0.08	53.72	<b>76.60</b>	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  
(Percentages Where Respondents answered in the Developmental Direction are Bolded)

<b>Which family attribute is better for most people?</b>		
	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
<i>Gender equality or no gender equality?</i>		
Equality	<b>82.10</b>	<b>82.11</b>
No Equality	17.36	17.79
Other	0.39	0.11
DK	0.16	0.00
<i>One child or three children?</i>		
One	<b>41.46</b>	<b>40.61</b>
Three	56.58	59.08
Other	1.88	0.21
DK	0.08	0.10
<i>Three children or five children?</i>		
Three	<b>95.16</b>	<b>91.10</b>
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	<b>45.63</b>	<b>63.66</b>
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	<b>98.05</b>	<b>94.66</b>
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	<b>2.62</b>
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	<b>97.50</b>	<b>93.19</b>
Other	0.00	0.00
DK	0.16	0.00
<i>Western culture or Malawian culture?</i>		
Western culture	<b>12.55</b>	<b>17.73</b>
Malawian culture	85.66	82.06
Other	1.17	0.00
DK	0.62	0.21

## Appendix A. Malawi Developmental Idealism Survey Question Wording

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### Not Developed/Developed Country Comparisons

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.

- Women getting married before the age of 18. Is this found more often in not developed countries or found more often in developed countries?
- Marriages that are arranged on somebody's behalf - is this mostly happening in not developed countries or developed countries?
- Parents having many children?
- Men and women being equal (Gender equality)?
- Giving respect to elders?
- A man having more than one wife at the same time?

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### Development Causes Family Change

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.

- How do you look at women's marriages before the age of 18? If Malawi becomes richer, do you think marriages before age 18 will **increase** or **decrease**?
- Parents choosing who their child should get married to - If Malawi becomes richer, would this **increase** or **decrease**?
- Parents having many children?
- Gender equality?
- Respecting the elders?
- A man having more than one wife at the same time?

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### Family Change Causes Development

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 change. Among these things, please tell me which ones will help to make Malawi richer or poorer.

- If more young women marry before the age of 18, will this help our country to become richer or poorer?
- What would happen if fewer parents choose marriage partners for their children? Would this help the Malawi nation to become richer or poorer?<sup>a</sup>
- If families had fewer children?
- If there was more gender equality?
- If respect for elders increases?
- If men having more than one wife at the same time increases?

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### Which Family Attributes are Better

Now I will ask you to compare various family arrangements. Please tell me which is the best arrangement for most people.

- What do you think is better for most people - a group of people where there is gender equality or another group where there is no gender equality?
- What do you think is better for most people - to have one child or to have three children?
- To have three children or to have five children?
- What do you think is better for most women - getting married at the age of 22 or getting married at the age of 28?
- What do you think is better for most people - youth choosing their marriage partners or parents choosing on their behalf?
- A culture that respect elders or another that doesn't respect elders?<sup>b</sup>
- For a man to have 2 wives at the same time or 1 wife at a time?
- Western culture or Malawian culture?

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### Expectations and Evaluations of Future Change

Now think of twenty years to come in Malawi.

- Do you think that women's age at first marriage will increase or decrease?
- 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.
- Do you think that in the next 20 years the number of children born to women in Malawi will increase or decrease?
- Imagine that the number of children born to mothers in Malawi decreases over the next 20 years. Would this be a good thing, bad thing or it doesn't matter?
- Do you think that gender equality in the next 20 years in Malawi will increase or decrease?
- Imagine that gender equality in Malawi increases over the next 20 years. Would this be a good thing, bad thing or it doesn't matter?
- Do you think that parents choosing marriage partners on behalf of their children will increase or decrease in Malawi in the next 20 years?
- Imagine that parents choosing marriage partners on behalf of their children decreases in Malawi over the next 20 years. Would this be a good thing, bad thing or it doesn't matter?
- Do you think that respect for elders in Malawi will increase or decrease over the next 20 years?
- Imagine that respect for elders decreases in Malawi over the next 20 years. Would this be a good thing, bad thing or it doesn't matter?
- Do you think that men having more than 1 wife at the same time in Malawi will increase or decrease over the next 20 years?
- Imagine that men having more than 1 wife at the same time increases in Malawi over the next 20 years. Would this be a good thing, bad thing or it doesn't matter?

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<sup>a</sup> The Chichewa versions of this question are not identical in the rural and urban questionnaires

<sup>b</sup> Asked of rural sample respondents only