The measurement and prevalence of an ideational model of family and economic development in Nepal

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Abstract

This paper is motivated by the expectation that developmental idealism has been disseminated to ordinary people and affects family behavior. Developmental idealism is a belief and value system that endorses societal and family development, views societal and family development as occurring together, and suggests that modern families are causes and consequences of societal development. We use data collected in Nepal in 2003 to examine the understandings of ordinary people and show that Nepalis can discuss ideas about development and its relationship to family life and that developmental idealism has been widely disseminated in Nepal. Developmental idealism is related in predictable ways to education, work experience, rural-urban residence, and mass media exposure. Although research ascertaining the influence of developmental idealism on demographic decision-making and behavior would be valuable, we cannot evaluate this with our one-time crosssectional data, but our data and theory suggest that this influence may be substantial.

Keywords

Family; Fertility; Marriage; Gender; Developmental Idealism; Nepal; Measurement; Data

Introduction

This paper is motivated by the understanding that worldviews, belief and value systems, cultural models, and ideational schemas and scripts are important influences in the decision-making and behavior of people in everyday life. Although demographers have long stressed the importance of economic and material influences on family and demographic behavior and trends, recent research has emphasized that economic and material models cannot alone explain behavior. This has led to increased attention to ideational or cultural factors in demographic analyses (Caldwell 1982; Coale and Watkins 1986; Cleland and Wilson 1987; Bumpass 1990; Cherlin 1992; Chesnais 1992; van de Kaa 1996; Lesthaeghe and Neels 2002; Lesthaeghe 2010; Johnson-Hanks et al. 2011).

We expect that developmental idealism is one of the ideational forces influencing family and demographic behavior and change. Developmental idealism is a belief and value system that endorses societal and family development, views societal and family development as occurring together, and suggests that modern families are causes and consequences of

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societal development. There are both theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that developmental idealism has been widely disseminated and is an important force for changing many dimensions of family life around the world.

In this paper we report a study of the extent to which one element of developmental idealism is known in Nepal. Although developmental idealism contains many interrelated elements, we focused our research only on one: views of the connection between family systems and development. We report a study of new measures of such views and evaluate our ability to measure this element of developmental idealism in a survey conducted with a broad spectrum of Nepalis. We also examine the extent to which developmental idealism is known in Nepal and investigate the convergent validity of our developmental idealism measures by estimating how these measures correlate with other variables that theory suggests they are correlated with.

Although we recognize the importance of studying how the beliefs and values contained within developmental idealism are used in decision-making and translated into behavior, our research had a more limited goal of studying the extent to which developmental idealism is known. Assuming that a substantial number of people know the ideas of developmental idealism studied here, future research would investigate how people view additional dimensions of developmental idealism and draw upon developmental idealism to make and implement decisions.

We proceed first with a discussion of ideational or cultural models and then explain the underlying assumptions and power of developmental idealism. We then discuss Nepal and the mechanisms for the spread of developmental idealism there. We then turn to data and methods, present our results, and end with conclusions.

Ideational or Cultural Models

Ideational or cultural models take many forms and include a host of different, but related, concepts, including worldviews, beliefs, values, schemas, and scripts. We begin with Geertz's (1973) proposition that culture gives people models of the world and models for the world (also see D'Andrade 1984; Fricke 1997). As such, these ideational models give people an understanding of the world and how it operates. They define what is good, provide motivations to guide decisions and actions, and specify what methods are appropriate for desired ends.

Several scholars have conceptualized such ideational or cultural models as schemas, scripts, and mental maps (Sewell 1992; Thornton et al. 2001; Johnson-Hanks 2011). Sewell (1992) includes in his specification of schema such concepts as rules, principles of action, habits of speech, and norms that can be generalizable to a range of circumstances. Thornton and colleagues (2001) discuss values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms as elements of cultural models or schemas. Johnson-Hanks and colleagues (2011) suggest that schemas can be of at least three kinds: categorical; procedural; and evaluative. They suggest that categorical schemas define types of things or actions, procedural schemas define how to do things, and evaluative schemas provide information about what is good, right, desirable, shameful, or disreputable. Schemas can vary in their depth and scope, how visceral they are felt, and whether they are endorsed or rejected (Sewell 1992; Swidler 2001; Johnson-Hanks et al. 2011). As Johnson-Hanks and colleagues emphasize, schemas exist both as shared community ideas and in the minds of individuals. Different schemas exist simultaneously and can conflict or be mutually reinforcing. Schemas are malleable as they can and do change among individuals and within societies. Combined with social and economic resources, schemas constrain and guide decisions.

It is important to recognize that cultural models or schemas generally do not dictate people's decision-making or actions. Instead, as Swidler (1986, 2001) has argued, cultural models generally provide repertoires or strategies of action that people can use or choose from in making and implementing decisions. Because multiple schemas often exist simultaneously and are implemented in different circumstances, they form tool kits from which people can choose action for particular situations. We thus expect a loose coupling between schemas and behavior, but also expect that increases in the salience, legitimacy, and consensus of schemas can have important implications for behavior and behavior change.

Developmental Idealism

Developmental idealism is an ideational model that provides understanding of the way the world works and for living in the world. It comes from the ideas of development or modernization that have for centuries dominated much of social science and the thinking and programs of other elites (Harris 1968; Nisbet 1969; Mandelbaum 1971; Sanderson 1990; Thornton 2001, 2005). Most contemporary governments and nongovernmental agencies are enthusiastic supporters of development, with development often identified as a central goal for governments, the United Nations, and other organizations.

For hundreds of years northwest Europe and its overseas populations in North America and Australia have been identified with high development, the indigenous populations of Africa, America, and Australia have been associated with low development, and other countries have been seen as located at intermediate levels. This hierarchical view of societies has existed for centuries and is today found in numerous indices of development, of which the United Nations human development index (HDI) may be the best known (UNDP 2001, 2002).

From the 18th century onward, scholars have observed that family systems have varied across countries, with families in northwest Europe differing in important ways from families in many other places (Westermarck 1894/1891; Hajnal 1965; Laslett 1977; Millar 1979/1779; Le Play 1982/1855–1881; Wall 1983; Anderson 1986/1980; Macfarlane 1986; Malthus 1986/1803; Burguière et al. 1996/1986; Reher 1998; Todorova 2006; Viazzo 2009). Compared to northwest Europe, societies in many other parts of the world were generally organized around families, had strong family solidarity, had little gender equality, lived in large and complex households, contracted marriages at relatively young ages, and had arranged marriages. Located in places frequently labeled as less developed or traditional, these family attributes were frequently seen as elements of a less developed, or traditional, society. In comparison, northwest European societies were often viewed as more individualistic, having little parental authority, having greater gender equality, having small and simple households, contracting marriages at more mature ages, and having more freedom and affection in the mate selection process. Being located in places seen as modern or developed, these family attributes became identified as part of modernity and development.

Thornton (2001, 2005) has argued that developmental thinking and the association of developmental hierarchies with family systems have created developmental idealism a package of values and beliefs that have been forces for family change during the last two centuries. Developmental idealism indicates that—a modern society is good and to be sought after, that modern families are preferred, that modern families and societies are linked, that a modern society helps produce a modern family system, that a modern family system helps bring prosperity, and that freedom and equality are human rights. More specifically, developmental idealism is associated with the desire for a higher standard of living, an emphasis on individual agency rather than fatalism, individualism, the

empowerment of women and younger generations, and desires for small families, mature marriage, and fertility control. Developmental idealism, thus, includes many of the ideational elements that are used either directly or indirectly in much of the ideational literature explaining family and demographic behavior and change.

Developmental idealism is one of several cultural ideas that originated in the West and has been disseminated internationally among academic, economic, and political elites. This Western or modern culture has helped spread support for a rational worldview and science (Thomas et al. 1987; Meyer et al. 1997; Krücken and Drori 2009), helped expand. school enrollment (Benavot et al. 1991; Chabbott 2003; Baker and Letendre 2005), increased support for human rights (Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004; Cole 2005; Elliott 2007; Wotipka and Tsutsui 2008; Koo and Ramirez 2009), expanded emphasis on individualism in school textbooks (Bromley et al. 2009), supported campaigns against the circumcision of girls (Boyle 2002), supported expansion of women's roles (Berkovitch 1999), and spread support for family planning and small families (Barrett and Frank 1999; Thornton 2001, 2005).

There are many mechanisms for the spread of developmental idealism. European travelers, religious missionaries, colonial administrators, leaders of feminist movements, family planning programs, national and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including aid organizations, have helped to distribute these ideas. So have Western education, the mass media, and international communication mechanisms (United Nations 1948, 1962, 1979; Nisbet 1980; Escobar 1995; Meyer et al. 1997; Latham 2000; UNDP 2001, 2002). Academic discussions of these models are often abstract, complex, and nuanced, but as they are disseminated to more general audiences, they become much more simple and straightforward--and more powerful.

There are limited data indicating that the ideas of development and the association of development with certain family types are understood by at least some ordinary people in several countries. Observers using ethnographic data in Sub-Saharan Africa, India, China, the Middle East, and New Guinea have reported ordinary people using developmental frameworks (Caldwell et al. 1988; Dahl and Rabo 1992; Ferguson 1999; Wang 1999; Osella and Osella 2006; Yount et al. 2010). Surveys have also documented that ordinary people in several countries understand developmental hierarchies and associate development with northwest Europe, North America, and Japan, while associating little development with Subsaharan Africa and South Asia (Melegh et al. 2010; Thornton et al. 2011).

Importantly, many ideas of developmental idealism are in direct opposition to the cultural schemas concerning families and the good life that the world's people have had for centuries. This means that when the ideas of developmental idealism come into contact with the schemas of local populations, there is often tension, clash, conflict, and rejection (Escobar 1995; Thornton 2001, 2005; Deeb 2006). Nevertheless, developmental idealism provides a new schema that comes with considerable international legitimacy and the support of many powerful international organizations (Luke and Watkins 2002). Over time, developmental idealism can gain considerable legitimacy and the power to have important effects on marriage and family life. In almost every place, there is resistance, and the resisters have slowed change and succeeded in keeping many aspects of local culture, but almost everywhere there have been changes, often with hybridization (Thornton 2001, 2005).

Although there is extensive evidence that developmental idealism has spread widely among the world's elites, there is little survey data evaluating the prevalence of developmental idealism. This lack of evidence about people's beliefs in developmental idealism is the product of two interrelated factors. The first is the historical lack of appreciation in the

research community of the importance of developmental models, which has resulted in little motivation to measure people's views on these topics. The second factor is that there have been no tools to measure people's knowledge of developmental idealism.

The theoretical reasoning discussed above and these methodological and empirical shortcomings provided the motivation for our research. Building upon qualitative research, we constructed survey measures to evaluate the ideas of ordinary people concerning developmental idealism. We administered our survey to a sample of respondents in the Chitwan Valley in Nepal to evaluate the extent to which people there know the key features of developmental idealism.

The research reported in this paper evaluated whether people have ideas about developmental idealism that can be measured in surveys. We also studied the extent to which ordinary people know developmental idealism. Another aim was to investigate the extent to which our measures of developmental idealism correlate with important social and economic attributes expected to be related to developmental idealism, such as education, urban residence, paid employment, and media exposure.

Our research is important for several reasons. First, it sheds light on whether knowledge of developmental idealism can be measured in surveys. Second, it answers how widespread knowledge of developmental idealism is in our study area. Third, it indicates whether predictors of developmental idealism are related to developmental idealism in expected ways. Fourth, it provides the basis for new research investigating a wide range of issues concerning the causes and consequences of developmental idealism.

Before proceeding, we mention several caveats. First, our interest in studying developmental idealism was not motivated by a belief that the modernization model is a useful framework for studying social change. In the past few decades this model has been strongly challenged in the social science literature (Bock 1956; Hodgen 1964; Nisbet 1969, 1980; Mandelbaum 1971; Jennings 1975; Tilly 1984; Szreter 1993; Escobar 1995; Baker 1998). Our interest in the model grew out of the recognition that it has been widely disseminated and has great influence among many of the world's elites, and we wanted to document the extent of its dissemination among ordinary people.

Second, we take no position on whether the schemas associated with developmental idealism are true or false or good or bad. Our position is that these ideas are powerful, and it is important to know to what extent they are known by ordinary people.

Third, our label of developmental idealism came from the fact that developmental idealism emerges from an ideational framework focused on development where development is commonly presented in a positive, ideal, even utopian way. We know that there are other discourses that describe development, its goals, and its products as negative and even evil (Escobar 1995; Liechty 2003; Deeb 2006). Even though we take no position on whether developmental idealism is good or bad, true or false, we believe that developmental idealism captures the thrust and power of the schema.

Nepal as a Research Site

Nepal is an excellent location for studying developmental idealism. It is located between China and India and has a rugged mountainous topography. Nepal has historically been characterized by rural residence, an agricultural economy, low income, poor public education, extensive illiteracy, few health services, and limited transportation and communication facilities. Nepal has a majority Hindu population, a substantial minority of Buddhists, and a small number of other religions. In addition, several attributes of the family

labeled in developmental models as traditional have historically characterized Nepal and are common today. These include extended households, early marriage, arranged marriage, parental control over children, and low status of women.

Before the 1950s efforts were made to keep Nepal in isolation from the rest of the world (Adhikari 1998). However, there were a few restricted commercial contacts outside the country and some foreigners visited. In addition, for centuries Nepali men have served in the British and Indian armies, providing access to external cultures. In the 1950s, the country became more open and has been increasingly integrated into the world community.

Over the last half century, development has been a major theme in Nepal (Bista 1991). Nepal has experienced a series of five-year development plans and has attracted many international governmental and nongovernmental organizations to assist with development. The emphasis on development is illustrated by the fact that local governmental bodies are now called development committees, such as district development committees and village development committees. Many of these organizations have promulgated the messages of developmental idealism, including those about child autonomy, gender equality, adult self-choice marriages, low fertility, and family planning. Organized programs have worked to implement developmental idealism policies. For example, Nepal has had a family planning program since the 1950s that has been especially vigorous in recent decades with a major motivation to help develop the country. Furthermore, there has been an extensive expansion of schools, health services, markets, transportation, cooperatives, and employment centers (Axinn and Yabiku 2001). There has been a sharp increase in school enrollment, visits to health clinics, employment outside the home, and exposure to the mass media (Axinn and Barber 2001; Axinn and Yabiku 2001; Beutel and Axinn 2002; Barber and Axinn 2004; Yabiku and Schlabach 2009). Also, for decades Nepal has been a popular destination for international tourists. Many of the new organizations and services have tried to spread developmental idealism to the grassroots.

Developmental idealism can be spread both directly and indirectly. The direct mechanism is through explicit teaching about the association between development and family types through both formal and informal mechanisms. A more indirect way occurs as Nepalis observe Western culture and behavior from visitors, international travel, or the media. Since Nepalis generally characterize the West as modern (Thornton et al. 2007), it is easy for them to generalize information about the West to modernity and development more generally, and, in this way, make conclusions about developmental idealism.

One evidence that the ideas of development have been disseminated to the Nepali grassroots is the fact that two major political parties today are communist (one Maoist and one Marxist/Leninist), with communist ideology including much developmental thinking. For about ten years between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s, the Maoist party, with widespread public support, led an armed conflict against the government, with one of its promises to bring long-promised but insufficiently delivered development. Ethnographic data from some areas of Nepal show that people use developmental thinking to compare urban and rural life and to think about marriage and other family aspects (Justice 1986; Fricke 1988, 1997; Pigg 1992, 1996; Gunaratne 1998, 2001; Ahearn 2001; Liechty 2003).

It might be argued that the evidence for the dissemination of developmental thinking in public events (such as the Maoist armed conflict), public policy, and ethnographies is sufficient and that further documentation of its presence is not necessary. We do not accept this position because the ethnographies have been done in limited places and the public events and policy do not necessarily indicate the perspectives of ordinary people. Our survey research provides a systematic picture of developmental idealism among a representative

sample of the population. Also, our focus is not on general images but on evaluations of the interrelationships between development and family attributes. In addition, our research permits us to evaluate how knowledge of developmental idealism is related to important predictors. Finally, our research forms a foundation for further research concerning the causes and consequences of developmental idealism in the lives of ordinary people in Nepal and elsewhere.

Data and Methods

Study Site

We conducted our research in Western Chitwan Valley in south central Nepal. Prior to 1955, when the government opened this valley for settlement, it was covered with dense forest. Chitwan soon became a "melting pot," receiving many migrants from all over the country. In the late 1970s the valley became connected to the rest of the country by all-weather roads. The Valley has since experienced many of the changes that have occurred elsewhere in Nepal. For more information about the Valley, see Shrestha 1989; Gunaratne 1994; Barber et al. 1997; Axinn and Yabiku 2001.

Conceptual and Measurement Issues

We have used diverse methods in our research. Our first task was understanding how the concept of development and its relationships to family matters are understood in Nepal. We used the ethnographic work by several scholars (Fricke 1988, 1997; Bista 1991; Pigg 1992, 1996; Guneratne 1998, 2001; Ahearn 2001) and by our research staff to understand how the concept of development, *bikas* in Nepali, is used. We also used informal discussions, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups in 2002 with individuals from different ethnic groups, genders, and ages to explicate how individuals think about societal development and its relationships to family matters.

Our qualitative approaches showed that Nepalis were able to discuss family issues and their relationship to development. This led us to design questions that asked people to tell us where certain family traits are more common. We asked about specific family traits because our qualitative work suggested that asking about concrete family components would be more effective than asking about abstract concepts. We focused our attention on family matters that are very familiar to Nepalis such as marriage, living arrangements, parent-child relations, childbearing, and contraception.

Sample Design

The survey was conducted with 537 people aged 17 and above. These respondents are not part of the Chitwan Valley Family Study that has interviewed a sample of respondents for seven years before our 2003 survey (Barber et al. 1997; Ghimire and Axinn 2006). Our respondents were sampled from the same universe as the Chitwan Valley Family Study, but from different neighborhoods. Because of the limitation of the sampling frame to this one valley and the diversity in Nepal, we cannot extrapolate our results to the entirety of the country.

Respondents were chosen using the following strategy. First, based on distance from the primary urban center within the Chitwan Valley, the study area was divided into five strata. Second, a sample of 2–4 neighborhoods, consisting of 4–25 households from each stratum, was selected. All individuals age 17 and above residing in those neighborhoods were interviewed, providing a representative sample of respondents with all characteristics present in the Western Chitwan Valley. This procedure generated 537 individuals, slightly more than 100 from each strata. The response rate was 97 percent. Respondents were

interviewed in face-to-face interviews in the Nepali language. Three respondents could not be interviewed in Nepali and were excluded from analysis. Although we expect that non-Nepali speakers are less familiar with developmental idealism, with so few people excluded for language reasons and with such a high response rate, our results can only be trivially affected by nonresponse bias.

Our interviewers were residents of the Chitwan Valley. Most of them worked as interviewers on the Chitwan Valley Family Study for several years before our 2003 interviews. The education levels of the interviewers were between high school and batchelors degree. The interviewers were assigned to respondents to match both ethnicity and gender.

Our interviewing period fell during a period when the Maoist armed conflict was intense. We were able to collect data effectively because our interviewers had been conducting interviews for several years and had extensive rapport in the Chitwan Valley. In addition, our organization has made extensive efforts to remain neutral in the conflict.

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics concerning the sample. The sample consisted of 55 per cent women and 45 per cent men, primarily because of the out-migration of men for employment and schooling. Chitwan is ethnically diverse and the sample consists of 47 per cent Brahmins/Chhetris (High Caste Hindu), 12 per cent Dalits (Low Caste Hindu), 6 per cent Newars (who practice both Buddhism and Hinduism), 14 per cent Hill indigenous, and 21 per cent Terai indigenous people.

The mean age was 36.1, 86 per cent have ever been married, and the mean number of children is 2.9. The mean years of schooling is 5.1, with 40 per cent of the sample having no schooling. More than two thirds (71 per cent) never worked for pay outside the home, 16 per cent had done so in the past but were not working currently, and 13 per cent were working outside the home at the time of the survey. Slightly more than one-quarter reported listening to the radio daily and nearly one-half reported watching television at least once a week. The sample spreads out from the main city of Chitwan, Narayanghat. The furthest respondent lives 17.6 miles from the city, with a mean distance of 7.35 miles, with the isolation from the urban center being magnified by slow means of transportation.

Developmental Idealism Measures

We asked four sections of questions about the distribution of family attributes in different settings. These questions presented a characteristic (e.g. marrying at older ages) and asked if this characteristic is more common in different places or types of societies. The location comparisons in the four sections were: 1) Nepal versus U.S.; 2) traditional versus developed places; 3) poor versus rich places; and 4) uneducated versus educated places. The respondents could specify that a characteristic was more common in one location (e.g. Nepal) or in the other location (e.g. the U.S.) or that it was equally common in both. "Don't know" was not given as a response option, but was accepted after a follow up probe asking respondents to give their best estimate.

Note that the United States, rich places, and educated places have generally been associated with development, in contrast to Nepal, poor places, and uneducated places. This is true in the scholarly and policy discourse, in the way the United Nations measures development as a composite of gross domestic product, education, and life expectancy, and in the ways that ordinary Nepalis rate countries on development and education (UN 2007/2008; Thornton et al. 2008).

The distribution of answers for our four sets of survey questions is shown in Table 2. In addition, Figure 1 provides a graphical view of the data in Table 2 concerning the answers on the nine questions concerning distributions between developed and traditional places.

Analysis Strategies

We used several criteria for evaluating whether respondents know the ideas of developmental idealism. Our informal discussions, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions indicated that Nepalis have perceptions of development and how it is related to family matters. We used this understanding to construct survey measures, and we focused our analysis on the survey data. Our first step in the analysis investigated levels of respondent participation in the surveys, including response rates, incomplete interviews, and the amount of missing data. We expected that a lack of understanding and knowledge of developmental thinking in the survey would be revealed by respondents becoming frustrated, terminating the survey early, refusing to answer questions, saying they do not have answers, and providing answers unrelated to the questions. Thus, we considered the comments of the interviewers and respondents concerning the interviews and examined the amount and type of missing data.

Second, we checked for acquiescence in the data, with responses given without really listening to and thinking about the questions. We expected that such answers could occur when people were not familiar with the topic of development, but wanted to please the interviewer by participating in the survey. This may be reflected in respondents saying that every attribute is more common in the US than in Nepal or in rich places versus poor places.

Third, we evaluated our central hypothesis that the majority of Nepalis believe that family attributes defined by developmental idealism as modern are associated with a developed society (or with education, wealth, or the US). For each family item that we asked about, we determined whether developmental idealism associated that family item with being developed (vs. being traditional), with a wealthy society (versus being poor), with an educated society (versus not being educated), and with the US (versus Nepal). The responses that developmental idealism specifies as modern are shown in bold in Table 2. If the majority of respondents gave this developmental idealism answer, we judged the distribution of responses to be consistent with our developmental idealism hypothesis. Of course, the bigger the majority, the more the dissemination of developmental idealism. If only a small fraction gave the developmental idealism answers, we concluded that developmental idealism—at least as measured here—was not widespread in our study area.

This approach provided a straightforward test for the questions asking about the distribution of family types by development. It was also straightforward for the questions asking about educated/not educated places, about wealthy/poor places, and about the US/Nepal, because in these dichotomies education, wealth, and the US are commonly associated with development (Thornton et al. 2007).

In our survey, respondents may have been influenced by the interviewer and the respondent's desire to look good to the interviewer. This dynamic may have produced social desirability bias in which respondents gave developmental idealism answers because they believed such answers would positively impress the interviewer. However, even if this were true, such responses are important data because they indicate that respondents both know the developmental idealism answer and perceive that it is socially desirable and has legitimacy and authoritativeness.

Our final approach was to create a summary index of knowledge of developmental idealism and to predict this index with independent variables in OLS regressions. For this index, we

combined the nine questions asking about the distribution of family attributes between traditional and developed places. We recoded the 9 variables so that 1 = the developmental idealism answer (the **bold** answer in Table 2) and 0 = the non developmental idealism answer, or "the same". We then summed these 9 items, and in order to avoid collinearity problems with the intercept we mean-centered this variable. The 8 respondents who did not supply answers to all 9 items were dropped from the analysis. Because they are so few in number their elimination is not expected to substantially influence the results.

We first estimated a series of bivariate equations with only one predictor variable included. We then estimated a single ordinary least squares equation with all predictor variables. These equations told us if the expected mechanisms for the transmission of developmental idealism were actually related to people's understanding of developmental idealism.

Results

Respondent Understanding and Rapport

The survey data provide evidence of good respondent comprehension. Despite a long interview that averaged 71 minutes, 97 per cent of the sample participated. No one terminated the interview early, and respondents and interviewers provided positive comments about the interview experience. This implies that the questions were reasonable enough that most respondents finished the survey and did so pleasantly.

Further evidence of the acceptability of the questions is the low level of missing data. As seen in the columns in Table 2 for missing data, item non-response ranges from 0.4 per cent to 5.4 per cent, with the great majority being at 2 per cent or less. The missing data are the result of respondents reporting that they don't know, since only two uncodeable answers were given, and there were no refusals. This low level of missing data, of course, occurred in the context of an interview using a fixed set of categories, with probing of initial do not know answers. We do not know what the results would have been under different interviewing protocols.

Acquiescence

The examination of acquiescence provided further evidence that the questions are understandable and the answers are meaningful. We asked several similar questions in opposite directions to see if respondents gave the same developed/non developed answers to questions measured in the opposite direction. The results indicate that most distinguish between the oppositely worded questions. For example, in the Nepal/US and Traditional/Developed society comparisons, respondents were asked where it was more common to have marriages arranged by parents, while the Rich/Poor and Uneducated/Educated comparisons asked where it is more common for young people to choose their spouse. Despite the directional differences of the question wording, Table 2 shows that a large majority chose the outcome linking young people's control over marriage to the U.S. and living in developed, rich, and educated places. A similar result occurred with the two age at marriage questions. Although the Nepal/U.S. comparison asked about child marriage and the other three sections asked about marrying at older ages, all distributions suggest that the great majority of respondents believe that older age at marriage is positively associated with the U.S. and living in developed, rich, and educated places.

Another possible acquiescence problem is that respondents may respond with the same answer to each question in a section. For example, a respondent might simply say that everything is more common in the US than Nepal. A review of the response distributions in Table 2 reveals that this did not happen. Instead, a substantial fraction of people reported

that some things were more common in Nepal than in the U.S. while reporting that other things were more common in the U.S. Note that the Nepal/US comparison was asked at the end of the survey, so there appears to be very little acquiescence even after the respondents had spent considerable time answering questions.

Correspondence with Developmental Idealism

We now present data concerning our hypothesis that the majority of respondents state that family attributes are distributed between US/Nepal, developed/traditional, educated/uneducated, and rich/poor as predicted by developmental idealism being widely disseminated. The data for these four sets of comparisons are reported in Table 2 (also see Figure 1). They confirm that the vast majority of Nepalis perceive correlations between family matters and geographical location, wealth, development, and education. Two thirds or more report that people marrying at older ages, young people choosing their own spouse, women having a high degree of respect, married couples using contraception, and working for pay are more common in the US, in developed places, in rich places, and in educated places than in Nepal and in traditional, poor, and uneducated places, and that marriages arranged by parents and large families with many children are more common in Nepal than in the US and in traditional than in developed places. That more than four-fifths report a positive correlation between many of the family attributes and geographical location, development, wealth, and education is quite remarkable. Nearly three-fifths or more gave the expected answer correlating celibacy with development, polygamy with traditionality, and parental control with Nepal.

We interpret the results in Table 2 as suggesting that the vast majority of people in Chitwan understand the ideas of developmental idealism. They perceive that the family attributes generally held by scholars and other elites as being positively related to development are, in fact, positively related to development, wealth, education, and living in the US. Two factors could explain these strong patterns. First, these patterns could reflect the widespread dissemination of developmental idealism in Nepal through such mechanisms as education, the mass media, and government programs. Second, these patterns could reflect the fact that knowledge of the distribution of family attributes between Nepal and such places as the United States has been widely disseminated through the various mechanisms discussed above, that Nepalis widely associate the US with development and Nepal with the lack of development, and that Nepalis put these two things together to conclude that development is associated with certain family attributes. We expect that both of these mechanisms are happening and that they operate in mutually reinforcing ways to explain the observed data. Unfortunately, our data do not indicate which of the mechanisms are operative or most important. Irrespective of the ways in which Nepalis learned about developmental idealism or constructed it from their observations, the data in Table 2 provide strong support for the hypothesis that knowledge of developmental idealism is widespread in Nepal. That is, we know that there is widespread understanding of developmental idealism, but future research will be required to establish how those ideas were acquired.

Predictors of Developmental Idealism

We now turn to the predictors of our developmental idealism index constructed from the 9 traditional/developed items in Table 2. The results of regressions predicting this summary measure of knowledge of development idealism are reported in Table 3. Columns 1 through 9 report equations with just one predictor, while the last column reports estimates of a multivariate equation containing all the listed predictors.

As shown in Model 1 in Table 3, women and men do not significantly differ in developmental idealism thinking. However, respondent's ethnicity, which reflects social

status and social inclusion and exclusion, is associated with developmental idealism as expected (Model 2). Compared to Brahmin and Chettri (high caste Hindus), all other ethnic groups, except Newar, have a lower level of developmental idealism. For example, on a 0 to 9 point developmental idealism scale, people with Terai indigenous ethnic background are 0.65 points lower on the developmental idealism scale than Brahmin/Chhertis. We expected this difference because the Terai indigenous people are generally less integrated into Nepali society than others and are also less educated.

Model 3 displays the association between developmental idealism and the respondent's residential proximity to the urban center. The result suggests that as the distance from the urban center increases, developmental idealism decreases. This result is consistent with our expectation that, although developmental idealism is spreading, the people living in or near the urban area have more intense interactions with these ideas and are more aware of developmental idealism than people living further away from the city.

We find similar results of access to the avenues of new ideas such as education, non-family work, and mass media: each is positively associated with developmental idealism. On a 0 to 9 scale, each year of schooling increases developmental idealism by one tenth of a point. Likewise, compared to people who have never worked for pay outside the home, people currently working for pay outside the home are more than half a point higher on developmental idealism. In addition, exposure to mass media, particularly to radio and television, has a positive association with the level of developmental idealism.

Marital status, childbearing, and age are also associated with developmental idealism, but in an opposite way than exposure to the avenues of new ideas. As shown in Model 7, compared to unmarried people, married people hold lower developmental idealism by more than two thirds of a point (.74). Similarly, compared to those who do not have children, those who do have lower developmental idealism scores. Likewise, compared to younger people, older people hold lower levels of developmental idealism.

Finally, in Model 10 we combined all nine predictors in a single model, and in this equation the magnitude and statistical significance of the associations between most of the predictors and developmental idealism were reduced and some became statistically non-significant. However, the associations between the major sources of new ideas—schooling and exposure to mass media—and developmental idealism remained large and statistically significant. Also, differences in schooling and mass media exposure help to explain the bivariate associations between perceptions of developmental idealism and ethnicity, distance from the city, nonfamily employment, marital status, number of children, and age. These results are both substantively important and important in establishing the convergent validity of our data.

Conclusions

This study was designed to answer three main questions. Is it possible to measure knowledge of developmental idealism? Do ordinary people in a non-Western setting know the elements of developmental idealism? And, do perceptions of developmental idealism vary in predictable ways with individual experience?

The answer to each of these questions is yes. Concerning the first question, we have confirmed the ability to measure developmental idealism in a survey conducted with a broad spectrum of people in Nepal. In addition to a very high response rate of 97 per cent, most respondents willingly participated, and there were almost no refusals on individual survey items. Furthermore, respondents displayed a remarkable ability to answer the questions measuring knowledge of developmental idealism. Most respondents answered questions

about the correlation between family matters and various indicators of socioeconomic position, including geography, wealth, development, and education. Our in-depth interviews and focus group materials also are consistent with this conclusion.

Concerning our second question, the evidence from the Chitwan Valley in Nepal supports our expectation that a central element of developmental idealism—views of an association between development and certain family dimensions--has been disseminated widely among the people of this area. As suggested by the ethnographic work of Pigg (1992), Ahearn (2001), and Gunaratne (1998) in other areas of Nepal, most people in our study are familiar with the ideas of development and use them in understanding the world. Most ordinary people acknowledge an association between socioeconomic development and family structure that is consistent with developmental idealism. Most report that such central family things as mature marriage, self-choice marriage, respect for women, controlled and low fertility, monogamy, and non-family employment are more common in the US and developed, wealthy, and educated places than in Nepal and traditional, poor, and less educated places. Most also report that married sons living with their parents are more common in Nepal than in the United States.

Of course, the widespread discussions of development in Nepal and its endorsement in many public arenas raise the possibility of social desirability affecting respondent answers to questions. The presence of such public endorsements may have led people who understand developmental idealism but do not endorse it to repeat its ideas to interviewers in order to look good. If this pattern were common, support for developmental idealism may be over-estimated in the data.

We cannot know whether our data represent only knowledge of developmental idealism and a desire to look good to interviewers, or a combination of these mechanisms with real beliefs. However, as we indicated earlier, our results are important even if the expressed developmental idealism support came entirely from respondents being knowledgeable and wanting to impress interviewers. The data then minimally suggest that Nepalis know the messages of developmental idealism and see them as socially desirable. This interpretation suggests that developmental idealism has been widely disseminated, has a positive public valence, and is widely available for guiding decisions.

Although social desirability effects were probably operating at least to some extent, we expect that many people believed developmental idealism at some level. Our focus groups and qualitative interviews support this interpretation, but we recognize that social desirability also can influence data gathered in these formats. Again, a central conclusion is that developmental idealism is a schema available in Nepal and can be used as people make and implement family and demographic decisions. The more that developmental idealism is perceived to be legitimate and authoritative, the greater will be its influence in the actual lives of individuals, families, and communities. These conclusions suggest the importance of additional research in Nepal and elsewhere concerning how developmental idealism combines with other schemas and in combination with material constraints to influence the making and implementing of decisions in concrete circumstances.

Our third conclusion is that knowledge of developmental idealism is related in predictable ways to personal experiences. People who are highly educated, have non-family work experience, live close to the urban center, and have more media exposure are more likely than others to report elements of developmental idealism. Furthermore, multivariate analysis suggests that education and mass media exposure are the central correlates of developmental idealism knowledge.

These results indicate that at least one central element of developmental idealism—knowledge that several important family attributes are associated with development--has been spread widely in at least one rural and low income non-Western population. It is also likely that related developmental idealism ideas concerning the desirability of modern societies and families, societal development being a cause of family change, and family change being a causal force for development have also been widely disseminated. If these related ideas about developmental idealism have also been disseminated widely, it would have substantial implications for family change. It is too early to draw conclusions about the implications of these beliefs for family behavior and family change in Chitwan, Nepal.

Our data do not specify the sources of knowledge about developmental idealism. We have argued that there are many sources disseminating such ideas, including schools, the mass media, government programs, international visitors, and travel abroad. Our multivariate results are consistent with such arguments, although the data are insufficient to establish this as a causal relationship. Further research will be necessary to document the mechanisms through which individuals come to know developmental idealism.

Our survey in Chitwan, Nepal used a particular method of forced-choice questions, and we do not know if other survey methods would have produced similar findings. However, the findings from our in-depth interviews and focus groups suggest that our conclusion of widespread knowledge of developmental idealism is not an artifact of our survey methods.

Of course, our data come from only one region in Nepal and do not indicate how widespread developmental idealism might be among people in other parts of Nepal or in other countries. Nepal itself is a very diverse country, with numerous distinct geographical regions and ethnic groups, and there is substantially more diversity at an international level. However, our expectation is that knowledge about developmental idealism is widespread elsewhere as well. This expectation is consistent with recent evidence showing such beliefs among high school students in Argentina (Binstock and Thornton 2007), and with recent research in Argentina, China, Egypt, Iran, and the United States concerning developmental idealism as it relates to one specific dimension of family life, planned and low fertility (Thornton et al. forthcoming). Additional data and data analysis are required for determining how widespread such knowledge is in other parts of the world.

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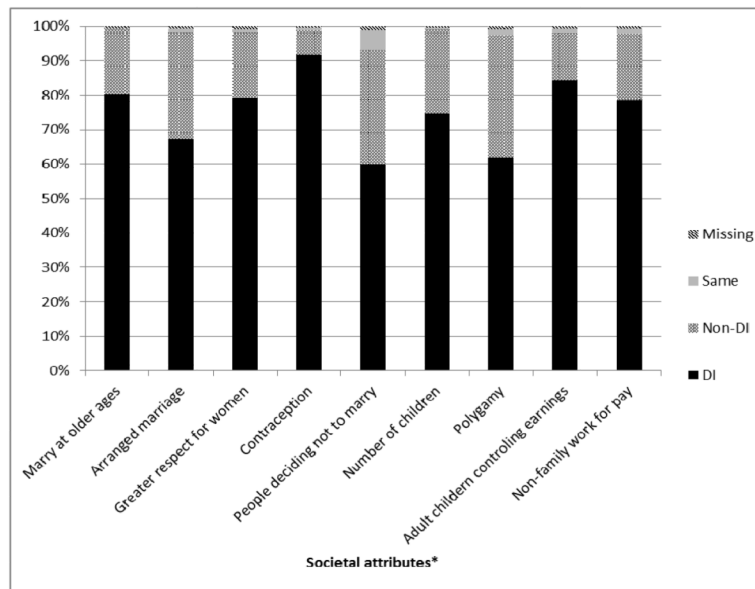
Figure 1. Percentage distribution of responses to comparing "traditional" and "developed" society characteristics, Chitwan, Nepal
*Respondents were asked to if the attribute was more common in developed places or more common in traditional places. They could respond either in line with Developmental Idealism (DI), not in line (Non-DI), say the attribute was equally likely in both places ("Same") or refuse to provide a response (i.e. don't know, uncodeable response, etc).
Source: 2003 Chitwan Valley, Nepal Survey

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of measures used in analyses

Measure	Coding	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Development-family score	0=Low DI, 9=High DI	6.80	1.67	0	9
Gender	0=male, 1=female	0.55		0	1
Ethnicity					
Brahmin/Chhetri	Reference group	0.47		0	1
Dalit	0=No, 1=Yes	0.12		0	1
Newar	0=No, 1=Yes	0.06		0	1
Hill indigenous	0=No, 1=Yes	0.14		0	1
Terai indigenous	0=No, 1=Yes	0.21		0	1
Distance to city	Miles	7.35	6.33	0	17.6
Education	Years	5.08	4.97	0	16
Nonfamily work					
Never worked for pay	Reference group	0.71		0	1
Worked for pay, not now	0=No, 1=Yes	0.16		0	1
Currently working for pay	0=No, 1=Yes	0.13		0	1
Media exposure					
Radio in past 12 months	0 = never 3 = daily	1.61	0.92	0	3
Movies in past 12 months	Count	2.74	5.86	0	60
T.V. in past 12 months	0 = never 3 = weekly	1.95	1.00	0	3
Ever married	0=No, 1=Yes	0.86	0.35	0	1
Number of children					
0	Reference group	0.21		0	1
1–2	0=No, 1=Yes	0.28		0	1
3–4	0=No, 1=Yes	0.26		0	1
5+	0=No, 1=Yes	0.25		0	1
Age					
18–23	Reference group	0.26		0	1
24–32	0=No, 1=Yes	0.26		0	1

Measure	Coding	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
33–45	0=No, 1=Yes	0.24		0	1
46+	0=No, 1=Yes	0.24		0	1

Source: 2003 Chitwan Valley, Nepal Survey

Table 2

Nepali perceptions of whether certain family attributes are more common in Nepal or the U.S., in traditional or developed places, in rich or poor places and in educated or uneducated places.

Question	Nepal	US	Same	Missing	Traditional	Developed	Same	Missing	Poor	Rich	Same	Missing	Uneducated	Educated	Same	Missing
1. People marrying at older ages					19.0	**80.3**	0.2	0.6	24.2	**73.2**	1.5	1.1	18.4	**80.1**	0.6	0.9
Child marriage	**82.3**	15.3	0.6	1.9												
2. Marriages arranged by parents[1]	**90.7**	7.3	0.4	1.7	**67.2**	30.9	1.1	0.7								
Young people choosing their spouse									26.4	**66.1**	6.3	1.1	8.4	**89.4**	1.1	1.1
3. Women having a high degree of respect[2]	18.6	**78.0**	1.3	2.0	19.0	**79.1**	0.9	0.9	16.9	**79.7**	2.8	0.6	8.4	**89.9**	0.9	0.7
4. Married couples using contraception					7.4	**91.6**	0.6	0.4	14.9	**81.4**	2.6	1.1	6.3	**92.2**	0.7	0.7
5. Women who never marry[3]	27.4	**65.4**	1.9	5.4	33.0	**60.0**	6.0	1.1								
6. Large families with many children	**87.9**	10.4	0.6	1.1	**74.7**	24.6	0.4	0.4								
7. Polygamous families	**84.9**	10.8	0.7	3.5	**61.8**	35.2	2.0	0.9								
8. Adult children having more control over their earnings					13.8	**84.2**	1.3	0.7								
Parental control over the adult children's earnings	**57.4**	38.2	1.3	3.2												
9. People working away from their family for pay	13.0	**84.7**	0.7	1.5	19.2	**78.2**	1.9	0.6								
10. Married sons living with their parents	**72.1**	24.4	0.6	3.0												

Source: 2003 Chitwan Valley, Nepal Survey

Bold-the response we believe most closely matches the developmental idealism answer.

[1]The traditional/developed comparison used the wording "Parents controlling who their children marry."

[2]This wording only used for US/Nepal comparison. Other comparisons used "Women getting treated with respect."

[3]Traditional/Developed comparison used the wording "People deciding not to get married."

Table 3

OLS regression estimates of belief that development and family characteristics are associated (N=529), Chitwan, Nepal

Measure	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10
Gender (female=1)	0.08									0.30†
Ethnicity										
Brahmi/Chherti		--								--
Dalit		-0.39†								0.226
Newar		0.45								0.363
Hill indigenous		-0.17								-0.02
Terai indigenous		-0.65***								-0.08
Distance to city (miles)			-0.04***							0.01
Education (years)				0.10***						0.08***
Nonfamily work										
Never worked for pay					--					--
Worked for pay, not now					0.14					-0.25
Currently working for pay					0.58**					0.24
Media exposure										
Radio in past 12 months						0.30***				0.17*
Movies in past 12 months						-0.01				0.09
T.V. in past 12 months						0.21**				-0.02
Ever married							-0.74***			-0.09
Number of children										
0								--		--
1–2								-0.59**		-0.49†
3–4								-0.53*		-0.19
5+								-1.12		-0.69†
Age (in years)										
18–23									--	--
24–32									-0.31	-0.10

Measure	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10
33–45									−0.06	0.29
46+									−0.69 ***	0.19
Constant	−0.08	0.14 ***	0.25 ***	−0.55 ***	−0.09	−0.88 ***	0.60 **	0.55 ***	0.23	−0.79 *
R-square	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.10	0.02	0.05	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.14

†
p-value 0.10,

*
p-value 0.05,

**
p-value 0.01,

***
p-value 0.001

Source: 2003 Chitwan Valley, Nepal Survey