Family Life and Developmental Idealism in Yazd, Iran

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Abstract

This paper is motivated by the theory that developmental idealism has been disseminated globally and has become an important international force for family and demographic change. Developmental idealism is a set of cultural beliefs and values about development and how development relates to family and demographic behavior. It holds that modern societies are causal forces producing modern families, that modern families help to produce modern societies, and that family change in the direction of modernity is to be expected. With a focus on Iran, we examine the extent to which developmental idealism has become part of a world culture that is being disseminated globally to ordinary people. Using data collected in 2007 from a sample of women in Yazd, a city in Iran, we find considerable support for the expectation that many elements of developmental idealism have been widely disseminated. Statistically significant majorities of respondents associate development with particular family attributes, believe that development causes change in family life, believe that fertility reductions and age-at-marriage increases help foster development, and perceive Iran as a dynamic country with family trends headed toward modernity. Multivariate analyses also demonstrate that such factors as parental education, respondent education, and income affect adherence to developmental idealism in predicted ways.

Introduction

Thornton (2001, 2005) has presented a theory that developmental idealism has been disseminated globally and has become an important international force for family and demographic change. Developmental idealism is a set of cultural beliefs and values about development and how development relates to family and demographic behavior. Developmental idealism indicates that societies and families defined as modern or developed are better than those defined as traditional or developing. It also indicates that modern societies and modern families are causally connected, with modern societies being forces for the production of modern families and modern families being forces for achieving modern societies. Ideas of development and modernity also suggest a dynamic world where change toward modernity is expected. Developmental idealism also emphasizes the importance of freedom, equality, and consent in human relationships. The importance of such ideas is particularly relevant today because beliefs and values are increasingly seen as influencing family and demographic behavior (Lesthaeghe 1983; Cleland and Wilson 1987; van de Kaa 1987; Chesnais 1992; Mason 1997; Lesthaeghe and Neels 2002; Pearce 2002; Cunningham 2008; Yount and Rashad 2008).

The globalization of developmental idealism is related to the spread of a world culture documented in an extensive body of research (Thomas et al. 1987; Meyer et al. 1997; Krücken and Drori 2009). World culture is a system of social institutions, beliefs, and values for organizing international relations, the state, legal systems, schools, and other activities. It emphasizes the importance of science, education, individualism, freedom, equality, justice, and human rights. It originated in the West, but has spread worldwide where it has been a powerful force affecting many things, including school attendance, school curriculums, the spread of science, support for human rights, campaigns to eliminate female circumcision, and the criminal

regulation of sex (Benavot et al. 1991; Boyle 2002; Chabbott 2003; Drori et al. 2003; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004; Baker and Letendre 2005; Cole 2005; Elliott 2007; Frank and Meyer 2007; Wotipka and Tsutsui 2008; Koo and Ramirez 2009; Meyer, Bromley, and Ramirez 2010; Frank, Camp, and Boutcher 2010).

Thornton (2005) has presented evidence that developmental idealism beliefs and values have spread widely among societal elites, with international family planning programs and related efforts concerning reproductive rights and women's empowerment being especially poignant examples (Donaldson 1990; Greenhalgh 1996; Barrett and Frank 1999; Berkovitch 1999; Luke and Watkins 2002; Chimbweti et al. 2005). There is also evidence from qualitative studies suggesting that ideas related to developmental idealism have spread among ordinary people in various international settings (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). However, there is a dearth of systematic survey evidence documenting the extent to which developmental idealism has been globalized to ordinary people.

A small number of recent surveys have begun to narrow this empirical gap. One study used survey data from samples in Argentina, China, Egypt, Iran, Nepal, and the United States to document the dissemination of developmental idealism as it relates to the topic of fertility (Thornton et al. forthcoming). Two studies have documented extensive endorsement of developmental idealism related to an array of family dimensions in Nepal (Thornton, Binstock, and Ghimire 2008; Mitchell 2009). Also, a study in Argentina used questionnaire and focus group data to show widespread endorsement of many aspects of developmental idealism among high school students (Binstock and Thornton 2007; Thornton et al. 2008).

Although the evidence is growing, there are many gaps in our understanding of the spread of developmental idealism. Our paper is designed to further knowledge by studying the extent of its presence in one city in Iran.

Developmental idealism is a broad concept covering many aspects of personal and family life and their relationships to modernity, making it impossible to evaluate all dimensions in a single paper. For this reason, we focus our investigation on a relatively small number of key elements of developmental idealism and their prevalence in Iran. Our research examines whether Iranians believe that family attributes defined as modern are associated with societal attributes defined as modern, that modern society is a force for bringing modern families, and that modern families are forces for producing a modern society. We also examine to what extent Iranians believe that Iranian families will become more modern in the future,

Our research is motivated by the general hypothesis that the propositions of developmental idealism have been widely disseminated in Iran and are believed by a majority of Iranians. Within this overarching hypothesis, we evaluate four specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The majority of Iranians believe that family attributes defined as modern are associated with being a developed society.

Hypothesis 2: The majority of Iranians believe that modern society is a force fostering modern families.

Hypothesis 3: The majority of Iranians believe that modern families are forces for producing a modern society.

Hypothesis 4: The majority of Iranians believe that Iranian families will become more modern in the future,

As we discuss in the following section, developmental idealism specifies traditional and modern families along many dimensions. The dimensions that we consider in this paper are: the living arrangements of married children, age at marriage, family unity and loyalty, living arrangements of the elderly, who arranges marriages, fertility, gender equality, romantic love between spouses, respect for elders, and nonmarital sex, cohabitation, and childbearing. We discuss in detail later the dimensions that developmental idealism specifies as modern and the dimensions it specifies as traditional.

There have been many mechanisms for globalizing developmental idealism and the view of dynamic societies (Meyer et al. 1997; Thornton 2005; Krücken and Drori 2009). These include the mass media, education, the shift from rural agricultural societies to urban industrial societies, participation in paid employment, and the distribution of scholarly and policy treatises about modernization. Social movements, including those for civil rights, women's equality, and fertility control, also spread developmental idealism. Many national and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including the United Nations, embrace and encourage elements of developmental idealism, as do many foreign aid programs.

In our research, we test several hypotheses about the effects of some of these factors on beliefs in developmental idealism. The hypotheses of this type that we examine include:

Hypothesis 5: Growing up in an urban area, as opposed to a rural area, has a positive effect on beliefs in developmental idealism.

Hypothesis 6: Childhood community resources has a positive effect on beliefs in developmental idealism.

Hypothesis 7: Parent education has a positive effect on beliefs in developmental idealism.

Hypothesis 8: Own education has a positive effect on beliefs in developmental idealism.

Hypothesis 9: Mass media has a positive effect on beliefs in developmental idealism.

Hypothesis 10: Family income has a positive effect on beliefs in developmental idealism.

We evaluate these ten hypotheses using data collected from women living in Yazd, Iran in 2007. The data were collected in face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of married women aged 15 – 59 and unmarried women aged 15 – 29. We evaluate Hypotheses 1-4 by examining the distributions of answers concerning beliefs in developmental idealism. We evaluate Hypotheses 5-10 by estimating multivariate ordinary least squares regression equations on developmental idealism beliefs.

Our research in Iran is particularly important because no survey research has been reported concerning the prevalence of the beliefs of developmental idealism among Middle Eastern populations. Iran is especially relevant because it experienced several decades of modernization programs, yet during the last three decades has had an Islamic government that has positioned itself in opposition to the West and many practices associated with the West. During recent decades Iran has also experienced dramatic social change, including large declines in fertility and marked increases in education, especially among women. It is therefore valuable to document the extent to which developmental idealism is accepted among ordinary Iranians. Also valuable is the opportunity to examine factors affecting beliefs in developmental idealism.

Conceptual and Theoretical Background

Cultural models are important because they provide frameworks for understanding the world and how it operates (Geertz 1973; Fricke 1997). Cultural models specify ways for people to live and tell people which things are good and how to achieve them. Johnson-Hanks and colleagues (forthcoming) conceptualize culture and belief systems as schemas that are important for understanding families. Schemas are often taken-for-granted and provide scripts for daily

living. Such schemas exist both in the heads of individual people and in the beliefs and values shared in communities. Especially important is that different schemas can be contradictory between societies, within societies, and within individuals. Schemas can also be malleable.

We begin our conceptual discussion with the modernization/development framework because developmental idealism grows out of that framework, which has dominated much of social science and public policy for centuries (Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet 1975/1969). We discuss the modernization model not because we believe it is appropriate for understanding people's behavior and social change, but because it provides the foundation for the power of developmental idealism. In fact, in recent decades modernization and development models have for many reasons been heavily criticized in academia (Mandelbaum 1971; Césaire 1972; Nisbet 1975/1969; Tilly 1984; Wallerstein 1991; Böröcz 2000; Chakrabarty 2000). Yet their influence remains far-reaching. Also, we do not study developmental idealism beliefs because we believe that they are true or false, good or bad, but because we believe that, when accepted, they have the power to change many elements of life.

The modernization model assumes that social change follows a trajectory, with all societies progressing along the same steps from traditional to developed, but at different speeds (Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet 1975/1969; Thornton 2001, 2005). The result is that at any time point, societies are believed to occupy different positions along the developmental ladder. The model has for centuries identified Northwest Europe and its diasporas as modern or developed, while placing other countries at lower positions defined as traditional or less developed. The model specified that the good life could be found in northwest Europe and its overseas populations and suggested that less-developed societies should model more advanced ones.

Developmental idealism draws from this modernization framework beliefs and values for living in the world. Developmental idealism states that societal attributes defined as modern are good and attainable and include such things as urban living, industrial production, and high levels of education and wealth. It also indicates that modern families are good and labels the following attributes as modern: individualism, autonomy of children, marriages arranged at mature ages by the prospective bride and groom, romantic love, nuclear families, equality between women and men, and planned and low fertility. In addition, several aspects of personal and family life such as divorce and non-marital sex, non-marital cohabitation, and non-marital childbearing have become associated with modernity in recent decades, although they are often seen as negative rather than positive aspects of development. Developmental idealism also includes reciprocal causal processes indicating that modern families help bring a developed society and that a developed society will result in modern families. Equality, freedom, and consent also are specified as basic rights.

The developmental model tells people that they live in a dynamic world, with the direction of change being away from tradition and towards modernity. This dynamic worldview tells people what kind of future they and their children and grandchildren should prepare for. Since expectations of the future have important influences on people's present decisionmaking, belief in a modern future may make people more open to the adoption of family attributes they define as modern.

Of course, the world's people have for centuries had their own beliefs and values about how the world works, the goals they should strive for, and the appropriate ways for achieving those goals. McDonald (1994) has described such systems in regard to family life as an idealized family morality specifying what family attributes are good and moral. This idealized

family morality also has mechanisms to encourage adherence by the members of society (McDonald 1994; Abbasi-Shavazi and McDonald 2008).

Developmental idealism has been in conflict with many systems of idealized family morality. As the beliefs and values of developmental idealism come into contact with such idealized family moralities, clashes of culture frequently emerge. Consequently, developmental idealism is usually not simply and quickly adopted, but more often is resisted and modified. Nevertheless, contact with developmental idealism often leads to substantial changes in a society's idealized family morality, with implications for women's status, intergenerational relations, marriage, and childbearing.

We now turn to a discussion of the idealized family morality that has historically existed in Iran. We follow this with a discussion of the forces spreading developmental idealism in the country. We then discuss data and methods, present findings, and end with a conclusion.

Idealized Iranian Family Morality

Families have for centuries been important elements of Iranian society. Families have been primary units for organizing nearly all of the social activities of life, including production, consumption, education, socialization, reproduction, leisure, and living arrangements. Historically, families in Iran were centers for warmth and affection, extended, and patriarchal. Establishing, maintaining, and continuing family units have been encouraged.

The Islamic value system has had a strong effect on family values and behaviours ever since the spread of Islam in Iran. In the Islamic religious culture of Iran, marriage and family harmony was emphasized, marriage was nearly universal, age at marriage was often low, and divorce was discouraged and infrequent. Interactions between men and women were specified by religious codes, and opportunities for premarital relationships were usually limited to short

sessions of acquaintance that were strictly supervised by families and neighbors (Bauer 1984; Tashakkori and Thompson 1988). Marriage partners were chosen by parents with a preference for first-cousin marriage (Abbasi-Shavazi, McDonald 2008). Childbearing and procreation were encouraged, and in spite of the fact that birth control was not prohibited in Islam (Mirzaie 2005), institutional pressure for high fertility limited its practice.

Mechanisms for the Spread of Developmental Idealism in Iran

There have been many mechanisms for the spread of developmental idealism in Iran during the past two centuries. Although Iran was never a colony of the West, beginning in the 19th century European political and commercial expansion brought Iran into the European network of international commerce. Ideological contact with the West through educational institutions introduced new concepts, aspirations, occupations, and eventually a professional middle class. Numerous western concepts were introduced into the vocabulary of contemporary Iran, including development, progress, modernity, the rights of man, equality, freedom, liberty, parliament, and democracy (Abrahamian 1982).

Increased contact with the West and the spread of new ideas created desires for development (Saraie 2007). Adibi (1979) suggested that this enthusiasm for economic development necessitated educating a professional work force for political, industrial, and service occupations. This led to the establishment of more educational institutions in Iran and to many students obtaining education in Western countries. The result was an important increase in the number of educated and professional groups in the second half of the 19th century.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Iran experienced political and economic disorganization and the increasing dissemination of Western ideas of progress, constitutionalism, and nationalism (Foran 1993). Many intellectuals criticized the existing

political structure as backward and argued that freedom and the rule of law were important for creating security and progress (Seyed-Rabie 2000). These trends cumulated in a Constitutional Revolution in 1905.

The development ideals and models that had spread steadily during the 19th century were vigorously promulgated by the Pahlavi regime that came to power in 1925. During the 54 years of the Pahlavi rule of Reza Shah (1925 – 1941) and Mohammad Reza Shah (1941 – 1979), the regime regarded the West as the pinnacle of development and as a model for government efforts for social improvement. The cultural norms and ethical system of the West were treated by the Pahlavi regime as a substitute for long-standing religious and cultural values. The concept of modernization was considered equivalent to Westernization, and the concept of tradition was viewed as equivalent to backwardness (Vatandoust 1985; Pirmoradi 2004). During this period Iran experienced major social, economic, and familial changes.

Reza Shah's modernization goals included the expansion of communication and transportation networks, the establishment of secular educational institutions, and a new judiciary and administrative system. In his efforts to portray Iran as a modern nation, Reza Shah tried to abolish all visible symbols of the past, such as the veil and the native attire for men, and to replace them with Western dress and headgear (Abbasi-Shavazi and McDonald 2008). These initiatives paid little attention to social and religious sensitivities, and, as a result, veil banning received extensive opposition from the religious sector which treated it as an indication of ethical decline and a superficial imitation of Western appearance.

Mohammad Reza Shah initiated an extensive set of reforms (Vatandoust 1985; Abbasi-Shavazi and McDonald 2008). The reform policy aimed to redistribute agricultural land among farmers and to transform the economic organization of society, including the role of the family.

One consequential impact of land reform was labor transfer from agricultural to non-agricultural sectors and the weakening of the family as a unit in economic production.

Mohammad Reza Shah's reform program made efforts to increase the status of women. This included granting voting rights to women, reduction of the unilateral right of men to divorce, and limitations on the right of men to take a second wife (Bahmani 2000). Women were also given the right to divorce. The custody of children after divorce became subject to the couple's agreement, and in cases of dispute, the courts could make the decision based on the best interests of the children. The minimum age at marriage without court consent was increased to 18 for females and to 20 for males. These reforms were not implemented fully, but their symbolic value was important, indicating that certain rights of women were officially recognized (Makhlouf Obermeyer 1994; Hoodfar 1995).

To help achieve economic development, the government started an official family planning program in 1967. This program was implemented through government financial incentives and the provision of information and contraceptive services. As a result of this program, some people, particularly in large cities, were able to prevent unintended pregnancies and to reduce family sizes.

Many government initiatives received criticism and resistance, especially by religious leaders. Many people regarded the initiatives as top-down Western-oriented cultural invasions against Islamic culture. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution many of the reforms were abolished, the family planning program was suspended, women's opportunities to work outside the home were restricted, and the school curriculum was revised to reflect Islamic values better. There was also a reduction of the minimum age at marriage, the elimination of the limitations on polygamy, and financial support for new couples was provided.

Although the 1979 Islamic Revolution encouraged previous religious values, it did not mean overwhelming opposition to modernity. In fact, the desire to maintain long-standing cultural values was combined with widespread demands for progress (Hetherington 1982). Soon after the revolution, the new government followed broad policies and programs to create a more equitable distribution of national resources among rich and poor areas as well as rural and urban regions of the country.

One change in post-revolutionary Iran has been the expansion of education and a reduction in the gap between female and male enrollment. Because female educational expansion was sponsored by the Islamic government with the support of the clergy, previous opposition to female education was substantially weakened (Hoodfar and Assadpour 2000, 21). The literacy rate for women aged 15–19 in urban areas increased from around 57% in 1966 to around 97% in 1996 and in rural areas from 5% to 86% (Abbasi-Shavazi and McDonald 2008, 185). In 2001, around 62% of those admitted to government universities were women (Abdollahyan 2004). Aspirations and expectations of women in postrevolutionary Iran have also risen considerably (Kian-Thiebaut 2002; Mir-Hosseini 2002; Shadi-Talab 2005). This has led to the increase in the status of women within the family and increased women's role in family decision making.

After the revolution there was a gradual shift of religious values toward cultural elements and material values of Western societies (Rafi-Pour 1998). Furthermore, marriage, family formation, and childbearing attitudes and values experienced substantial changes (Mohseni 2000; Askari Nodoushan, Abbasi-Shavazi and Sadeghi 2009). Many of these attitudinal changes have been encouraged by government policies. For example, a decade after the revolution, the government began its own national family planning program to control population growth to reach the objectives of the first national development plan. The family planning program has

been very successful, with fertility decreasing from around 7.0 children per woman in the early 1980s to 1.9 in 2006 (Hosseini-Chavoshi, McDonald, and Abbasi-Shavazi 2007; Abbasi-Shavazi, McDonald, and Hosseini-Chavoshi 2009; Salehi-Isfahani, Abbasi-Shavazi, and Hosseini-Chavoshi 2010). Marriage and childbearing are now often delayed into the twenties.

In this paper we investigate ten specific hypotheses concerning the dissemination of developmental idealism in one city in Iran. One major thrust of our research evaluates our first four hypotheses stating that the majority of Iranians have assimilated four basic elements of developmental idealism. A second major thrust of our research evaluates hypotheses about the factors spreading developmental idealism in Iran. We have selected six factors that we hypothesize to be influences on beliefs in developmental idealism: growing up in an urban area; childhood community resources; parental education; own education; the mass media; and high family incomes.

Data and Methods

Research Site

Our data come from a survey conducted in Yazd, a city in central Iran. Yazd is the capital of Yazd province, with a population of 423 thousand people, the city alone having nearly half of the province's population. During the last decades, as a result of rapid industrialization of the city, many migrants from both rural and urban areas have moved to the city. Its population grew rapidly from 64 thousand to 423 thousand between 1956 and 2006 (Bharier [1972] 1977, 337; Statistical Center of Iran 2006). According to the 2006 census, 99% of the province's population are Muslims, most of whom are Shi'a and Persian.

Although we conducted our research in the city of Yazd, we do not believe that a single city could represent all of Iran. Every context has its own features based on its socio-cultural

traits and historical background which makes it unique in some respects. However, Yazd is part of the larger Iranian society and has both similarities and differences with other parts of Iran. One important characteristic that makes Yazd a suitable site for our study is that it "epitomises the interface between tradition and modernity and their ensuing paradoxes" (Tremayne 2006). Yazd has a high level of industrial and socio-economic achievement, while also retaining a religious culture and many of its long-standing family elements from the past.

There are reasons to expect that developmental idealism is both more and less widespread in Yazd than elsewhere in Iran. Such indices as literacy, urbanization, and industrialization suggest that Yazd might have more exposure to developmental idealism than other areas. Yazd Province is above the country averages on each of these indicators, frequently ranking between first and fourth among all 30 provinces of Iran. For example, according to the 2006 Census, the average provincial literacy rate among females and males aged 6 years and over is 80.3 and 88.7 respectively, but corresponding figures for Yazd are 84.9 and 90.9. Employment indicators show that, of all provinces, Yazd has the highest proportion of employed persons working in the industrial sector and the fourth highest in women's labor force participation. Research that has examined provincial disparities in socioeconomic indicators indicates that Yazd Province ranked third in 2006 (Afshani, Askari-Nodoushan, and Ebrahimpour forthcoming).

From another perspective, religious and cultural indicators suggest that developmental idealism may be less endorsed in Yazd than elsewhere in Iran. Yazd is characterized by a strong religious culture and the importance placed on morality and families. Data from the 1999 national Iranian values and attitudes survey (Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance 2002) indicated that people in Yazd place more emphasis on religion than Iranians as a whole, as well as people in other urban provinces such as Isfahan and Tehran. Around 83 percent of respondents

in Yazd reported that they always perform their religious duties, nearly 92 percent believe that religion has a significant role in solving life's problems, and 96 percent place great significance on religion. Corresponding national averages are 59, 88 and 92 percent respectively. Furthermore, people in Yazd place more emphasis on marriage and particularly early marriage for their daughters (Abbasi-Shavazi, McDonald, and Hosseini-Chavoshi 2003; Hosseini-Chavoshi, Abbasi-Shavazi, and McDonald 2004). Comparisons across all 30 provinces of Iran show that in 2006 Yazd Province ranked second lowest in female singulate mean age at first marriage (22 years). Yazd also has one of the lowest divorce rates in Iran. In sum, certain elements in Yazd suggest that it may be above average in Iran on acceptance of developmental idealism, while other elements suggest the opposite. This suggests that Yazd is a useful context for the study of developmental idealism in Iran.

Sample Design

Our data are drawn from individual survey interviews of women in Yazd. The sample was drawn using a two-stage stratified cluster sampling technique by the Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI). In the first stage, clusters, or primary sample units, were selected with probability of inclusion proportionate to size. In the second stage, four random groups of three neighborhood households were chosen within selected clusters. Consequently, a sample of 564 households was obtained from 47 selected clusters, each consisting of 12 households.

Interviews were taken with one ever-married woman aged 15 – 59 in the sample households. For sample households that had never married women aged 15 – 29, one such woman was also interviewed (separately). Altogether, 548 ever-married women and 155 never-married women were interviewed, with an overall response rate of 97.2%. This sample design produces unbiased estimates of the distribution of responses to our survey questions, and the

exceptionally high response rate guarantees that non-response bias is virtually non-existent. Table 1 presents some demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Data Collection

Data were collected during November and December 2007 in face-to-face interviews. The survey questionnaire encompassed a wide variety of prospective and retrospective questions on such demographic and family issues as marriage, fertility, contraceptive use, and family related attitudes and values.

We designed three sets of questions to measure the respondents' views of the connections between development and family life. The first set focused on the perceived association between particular family attributes and development. We did not define development or specify where a developed place was located. Our second set of questions shifted the issue to causality and asked about the influence of a development program on specific aspects of family life in a low income, rural country with poor healthcare. The third set asked about the effects of programs to lower fertility and to increase age at marriage on several socioeconomic outcomes.

The questions about the perceived association between family attributes and development were asked as follows: "Now, please think about what life is like today in countries that are <u>not developed</u> and compare it to what life is like today in countries that are <u>developed.</u> Please tell us whether each of the following things, <u>in general</u>, is more common in countries that are <u>not developed</u> or more common in countries that are <u>developed</u>."

The questions about the effects of a development program were asked as follows: "Now, please think about what life is like in a country where the standard of living is low, most people live in rural areas, and access to healthcare is poor. Suppose that country introduces a program to help make the country more developed. I will read a list of things this development program

might change. For each one, please tell me whether it will increase in that country or decrease in that country once the development program has been successfully implemented."

The questions about the perceived effects of a program to reduce fertility were asked as follows: "Now, please think about what life is like today in a country where income is low, most people live in rural areas, access to healthcare is poor, and most couples give birth to at least six children. Suppose that country introduces a smaller-family-size program to encourage couples to give birth to no more than three children. I will read a list of things this smaller-family-size program might change. For each one, please tell me whether it will increase in that country or decrease in that country once the smaller-family-size program has been successfully implemented." A similar set of questions was asked about the consequences of instituting a successful older age at marriage program.

Our fourth set of questions asked about future trends in Iran to ascertain whether people think the future is headed towards or away from the family elements associated with modernity. The set of expectations questions was asked as: "Now please think about the next twenty years in Iran. Do you think (ITEM) will increase or decrease in Iran during the next twenty years?"

The independent variables in our multivariate analyses are standard survey measures. We measure respondents' birthplace as a dichotomy (rural equals zero and urban equals one), birth cohort in single years, parental education measured in average years of school for mother and father, own education in years of school, and family income in Iranian rials. We measured childhood community resources as an index from zero to six as follows: Respondents received code "1" if they had in their neighborhood before age 12 such services as primary school, guidance school, high school, health care centre and police station and received code 0 if they did not have access to such services before they were 12 years old. In another question they were

asked about access to electricity in any places of living before age 12 and the same coding scheme was used. The index of childhood community resources is the sum of these dichotomous measure. Media exposure is also an index from zero to six and was calculated from the sum of the time respondents spent watching TV, listening to the radio, and reading magazines or newspapers which were each coded in an ordinal scale that ranged from 0 (low) to 2 (high)..

Data Analysis

We test our first four hypotheses by examining the univariate distributions of the four sets of dependent variables. We use a chi-square test to evaluate the hypotheses that each item has more than fifty percent of the respondents giving the developmental idealism answer.

We examine the hypotheses concerning the predictors of developmental idealism through a series of multivariate equations. We begin with Model 1 containing predictors that are clearly exogenous to an individual's beliefs: birth cohort; birth place; childhood community resources; and parental education. Model 2 adds to Model 1 the respondent's own education, which is likely exogenous to developmental idealism beliefs. Model 3 adds family income and media exposure to Model 2. We add these two variables last because there may be a reciprocal influence of developmental idealism on them as well as them influencing developmental idealism.

Results Concerning Distributions of Developmental Idealism Beliefs

Perceptions of the Correlation between Development and Family Attributes

Table 2 presents respondent views on the distribution of family and societal attributes between developed and not developed places. We indicate in bold the responses that accord with the writings of several generations of social scientists concerning the relationships between development and family structures. Table 2 also provides chi-square tests of the hypotheses that

the majority of respondents believe that each of the particular items are associated with development in the expected direction.

Table 2 confirms Hypothesis 1 for most family items: the majority of Iranians believe that family attributes defined as modern are associated with a developed society. For most items, the null hypothesis that fifty percent or less believe the hypothesized relationship is soundly rejected. More than 80% said that intergenerational coresidence of young people, young age at marriage, arranged marriage, and high fertility were more common in not developed places, and 73% said that gender equality was more common in developed places. 12% or less gave the opposite answers on these items. It is clear that for these family attributes developmental idealism has been widely disseminated in Yazd[1].

The percentage giving the developmental idealism answer was between 52 and 64% for another 5 family items. These included the views that elderly parents living with their adult children was more common in not developed places and that romantic love between a husband and wife and unmarried sex, unmarried cohabitation, and unmarried childbearing were more common in developed places, but the unmarried childbearing result is not statistically significant.

Family unity and loyalty, divorce, and respect for elders are the only items with less than fifty percent giving the expected developmental answer. However, it was only with family unity and loyalty that the number giving the answer predicted by developmental idealism is smaller than the percentage giving the opposite answer, and this difference is very small.

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[1] The remarkable correspondence between respondent and scholarly reports of the correlation between development and these 5 family attributes is further highlighted by comparing the distribution of answers on these attributes with answers about the distribution of certain socioeconomic attributes (not shown in tables). The percentage saying that child mortality is higher in not developed places and the percentage saying that a high standard of living, education, and women giving birth in hospitals is higher in developed places ranges between 79 and 90%. The similar distributions on these 4 socioeconomic traits and the 5 family traits is remarkable because health, income, and education are three of the standard indicators used in many of the indicators of development used by international agencies, including the United Nations (United Nations Development Programme 2007/2008). Only 56% said that the percentage of people working on farms was more common in not developed places and 64% said that television was more common in developed places

Perceptions of the Causal Influence of Development on Families

We now shift our focus from association to causality and the perceived effects of development on families (Table 3). These data provide extensive, although not completely consistent, support for our second hypothesis that the majority of Iranians believe that modern society fosters modern families. The vast majority perceive development as a causal force for changing families, and for most items, the results are statistically significant. Furthermore, much of the story for perspectives on the consequences of development is very similar to that for perspectives on the family-development correlation. As with the earlier reports of correlation, between 74 and 90% of the respondents believe that development increases equality between men and women and decreases co-residence, early marriage, arranged marriage and high fertility. Furthermore, 62% reported that development would increase romantic love between a husband and wife. Just half believed that development would increase premarital sex.

Answers to three family items are in the opposite direction from the prediction of the developmental idealism framework. Whereas the developmental model suggests that development decreases family unity and loyalty and respect for elders, our respondents perceive the opposite. Similarly, the developmental model suggests that marital dissolution will increase with development, but our respondents tend to see the opposite. Note that these are the same three family attributes where there was no clear consensus of their relationship with development. The common thread in these three items is family solidarity and respect across generations and between husbands and wives. Yazd women, on average, do not see development reducing family solidarity and respect and may even see it producing more. There is apparently an ideational scheme guiding these perspectives different from the standard model of development.

Perceptions of the Influence of Lower Fertility and Older Marriage on Development

We next reverse the causal arrow between development and family by focusing on perceptions of the effects of fertility reduction and increasing age at marriage on several items often thought to be elements of development. As shown in Table 4, the data are generally consistent with Hypothesis 3: The majority of Iranians believe that modern families are forces for producing a modern society. The vast majority indicated that reducing fertility and increasing age at marriage would lead to items associated with development. More specifically, between 75 and 94% believed that reducing fertility and increasing age at marriage would increase the living standard, reduce infant mortality, and increase education. Between 63 and 72% said that reducing fertility and increasing marital ages would increase families having television. All of these results are statistically significant. However, only about one-half believed that reducing fertility and increasing age at marriage would reduce the fraction of people working on farms. Nevertheless, the number that believed that these two family changes would reduce people working on farms was more than twice the number who believed that they would increase farm employment.

Although the vast majority believed that both reducing fertility and increasing age at marriage are causal forces for socioeconomic change, the number seeing decreased fertility bringing development was greater than the number seeing increased age at marriage bringing development. For example, around 95% said that reducing fertility would increase the standard of living, while 75% said that increasing age at marriage would increase the standard of living. This difference may reflect, among other things, the fact that Iran has had a powerful government-led family planning program, while the government has tried to limit increases in age at marriage.

Expectations about Future Family Change

We now shift our attention to people's views of future family trends. As documented in Table 5, the data are consistent with Hypothesis 4: An overwhelming and statistically significant majority view Iran as headed in the direction perceived as modern, A substantial majority (75% or greater) said that all aspects of family life asked about will move in the direction seen as modern. For example, between 76 and 94% expected that age at marriage, divorce, status of women, and relationships between boys and girls prior to marriage would increase. Similarly, between 75 and 91% believed that married couples living with parents or in-laws, the number of children, elderly people living with their adult children, and relative marriage will decrease in the next twenty years. These are substantial expectations for future family change that are consistently in the direction of family change seen as modern.

Results of Analyses of Predictors of Beliefs in Developmental Idealism

For our analysis of the predictors of developmental idealism, we constructed a composite dependent variable as the average number of answers that a respondent gave in the direction of developmental idealism. We did not include in this composite the items in Table 5 about the future, and we did not include any items in Tables 2, 3, and 4 when there was not a statistically significant majority giving the developmental idealism answer. The result was a scale taking the average of 24 questions, with scores ranging from .29 to 1.0, with a mean of .76 and a standard deviation of .15.

Our first observation is that all of the bivariate correlations between our seven predictor variables are in the predicted direction (data not shown in tables). However, only four of these correlations are statistically significant: parental education; respondent's education; media exposure; and family income.

Our multivariate results are shown in Table 6. Hypotheses 7, 8, and 10 dealing respectively with the effects of parental education, own education, and family income on beliefs in developmental idealism are all supported. However, Hypotheses 5, 6, and 9 dealing with the effects respectively of growing up in an urban place, childhood community resources, and media exposure are not supported by the data.

Given the bivariate correlations, it is not surprising that the only statistically significant predictor of developmental idealism in Model 1 is parental education. Its effect is also sizable, with each standard deviation increase in parental education having almost a one-quarter standard deviation effect on developmental idealism. The observed effects of birth cohort, birth place, and childhood community resources are not statistically significant. In Model 2, the added predictor, respondent's own education, has a substantial effect on developmental idealism beliefs—more than a quarter standard deviation effect for each standard deviation of education. Of the two new variables added in Model 3, family income has a positive statistically significant effect of .18, while the coefficient for media exposure is small and statistically insignificant.

Most of the overall effect of parental education on developmental idealism is indirect, operating through respondent's education and family income. The parental education coefficient in Model 2 is about one-half as large as its coefficient in Model 1, suggesting that about one-half of its overall effect operates through respondent's education. The addition of family income in Model 3 reduces the effect of parental education even further (and to statistical insignificance), suggesting that some of the effect of parental education on developmental idealism operates through family income. Substantively, these results indicate that parental education has an effect on developmental idealism primarily because it influences children's education (primarily) and children's family income (secondarily), which then influence the children's developmental

idealism beliefs. Once these indirect pathways are taken into account, there is little direct influence of parental education on children's developmental idealism beliefs.

Conclusion

We began this paper with Thornton's (2001, 2005) theory that developmental idealism has been disseminated globally and become an important force for family and demographic change. We observed that while there is extensive evidence documenting the widespread belief in developmental idealism among the world's elites, there is little empirical evidence about its presence or absence among ordinary people in everyday life. Our research was designed to investigate the extent to which the beliefs and values of developmental idealism have been disseminated among lay people in one city in Iran.

Our data overwhelmingly support Thornton's theory that many elements of developmental idealism have been globalized, at least within Yazd, Iran. Many elements of Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 are supported by our data. Very large fractions of Yazd women associate development with family attributes, believe that development causes family change, and believe that fertility reduction and increase in age at marriage have positive effects on development. Remarkable numbers perceive family trends in Iran moving toward so-called modernity.

The evidence for Hypotheses 1 and 2 and the conclusion that Yazd women see modern families and modern societies related and development as an influence on family change is especially strong for six family items: gender equality, independent living early in marriage, late marriage, self-choice marriage, low fertility, and romantic love between spouses. This is strong support for the developmental idealism framework, as these six family attributes have been closely linked with development in the scholarly and policy literature for at least a century.

The data, however, also suggest that some family attributes are not connected in the expected way with development in the minds of women in Yazd. This is true for family solidarity where there is no clear consensus that family unity and loyalty, marital stability, and respect for elders are associated with modernity. Modest majorities also expected these things to increase with the introduction of a development program, the opposite from what the developmental idealism framework predicts. Further research is needed to understand why Iranian women relate these aspects of family life to development as they do.

Hypothesis 3 was generally supported by the fact that substantial majorities perceive family change to be a cause of development. Both fertility decline and age at marriage increase are seen as producing greater development. The expectation that fertility decline would bring development is probably related to the extensive recent family planning program in Iran. We did not ask how other family changes would influence development and believe such questions would be of interest for future research.

The data suggest that perceptions of the connections of development with unmarried sex, unmarried cohabitation, and unmarried childbearing are quite complex. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, substantial majorities view these attributes as correlated with development. However, inconsistent with Hypothesis 2, only about one-half see a causal effect of development on premarital relations (respondents were not asked about the causal influence of development on unmarried cohabitation and childbearing). It is likely that these apparently contradictory data result from the different contexts of the correlational and causation questions. The correlation question referred to the correlation between premarital sex and development, in general, and it is possible that respondents were referring to Western countries when they said that premarital sex was associated with developed places. But, when they were asked about the results of a

development program, they were asked to think of a low income and agricultural country that would have excluded Western countries from consideration. For such countries, about one-half expected that a development program would either have no effect on premarital sex or would reduce it. This suggests that women from Yazd are split on the effect of development on premarital sex, but are quite clear in perceiving premarital sex to be associated with the West.

This interpretation is similar to the interpretation that researchers have given to data from Egypt (Thornton et al. 2010). A sample of Egyptian women said that low morality is associated with development when the location of the development was not specified, but when they were asked about the impact of development on an agricultural low income place, the majority said that it would lead to higher morality. This, and other evidence from Egypt (Yount et al. 2010), suggest that there is high ambivalence about Western modernity and that many people conceptually separate modernity from the West. They see an association of modernity with morality, but an association of the West with immorality. A similar thing may be occurring in Iran, with premarital sex seen as associated with the West, but not with development. More research is needed to investigate this interpretation for Iran.

Hypothesis 4, that people perceive the world as dynamic and moving in the direction of modernity, is strongly supported by our data. An overwhelming majority perceived future family changes going in the direction that generations of scholars have labeled as modernity. Such expectations are relevant for how individual Iranians live in the present and prepare themselves and their children for the future.

Support for Hypotheses 5 through 10 is mixed. Contrary to Hypotheses 5 and 6, birth place and childhood community resources had no significant effects on developmental idealism beliefs. There is no evidence in our data that these avenues are important in spreading

developmental idealism in Yazd, Iran. Furthermore, although exposure to the mass media is positively correlated with developmental idealism beliefs, contrary to Hypothesis 9, there is no observable effect in the multivariate analysis. Apparently, media exposure is correlated with developmental idealism only because it is also correlated with education and income which have significant effects. Contrary to our expectations, media exposure itself has little effect on developmental idealism.

Consistent with Hypotheses 7, 8, and 10, parental education, respondent's education, and family income are each important influences on developmental idealism, making them the primary conduits of developmental idealism beliefs that we have measured. We now also know that the influence of parental education is largely indirect through the respondent's education and family income.

Unfortunately, data limitations prevented examination of the full range of influences on developmental idealism beliefs. We have empirically identified some conduits, but others have not been studied. We advocate additional research on these other influences.

It is also important to note that our data are not appropriate for evaluating the part of Thornton's theory that the increases in developmental idealism have been important forces for family and demographic change. Our data are consistent with that hypothesis in many ways, but they cannot demonstrate a causal influence because they were collected in 2007 and cannot establish that developmental idealism had a causal influence on earlier family changes. Nevertheless, our results indicate that understanding of developmental idealism is widespread in Yazd and these beliefs and values are available to influence decisions and behavior.

Our survey data also do not indicate when developmental idealism was disseminated in Yazd. It may have arrived just before we conducted our survey, but that seems unlikely, as there

is reason to believe that it was actively disseminated in Iran for much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Although some elements were opposed by the government after the 1979 revolution, other elements have been vigorously disseminated in the recent two decades. It is thus likely that knowledge and acceptance of developmental idealism have been increasing in Iran for a long time and may have played an important role in many family changes in the country.

It is important to note that while our research is motivated by a desire to understand the knowledge and acceptance of developmental idealism nationally in Iran and beyond, our data come from only one city, Yazd. This makes it impossible to generalize directly from our data to the larger population of Iran. As we discussed above, some characteristics of Yazd suggest that this city may be above average on developmental idealism, but other attributes suggest the opposite. Our expectation is that these features of Yazd may counter-balance each other so that viewpoints in Yazd are probably not very different from elsewhere in Iran. These data from Yazd also add to the small but growing body of evidence—from both Argentina and Nepal—that many elements of developmental idealism have spread widely. Future research is required to investigate how closely Yazd fits with the rest of Iran and how widely developmental idealism has spread internationally.

The relevance of our findings is not limited to explaining past trends in family behavior, but in evaluating possible future trends. The commitment of individuals to many of the elements of developmental idealism indicates that these ideas will be important for future trends in Yazd and probably in Iran as a whole. The fact that so many women are expecting a wide array of family changes is likely to foster those changes or reduce motivations to mobilize against them. We close with the observation that developmental idealism research is very new and there is much that we do not understand about this schema and its endorsement or rejection. We have

already mentioned the need for research beyond Yazd and beyond Iran to more international settings. We also believe that there is a need for more methodological work concerning developmental idealism—how to measure it and how to interpret the results. We also need to learn more about why some elements of developmental idealism are endorsed more than others and to measure the strength of beliefs as well as the ways in which such beliefs are applied in life. Also important are additional data and analyses investigating which individual, familial, and social factors encourage people to accept, modify, or reject developmental idealism. We also need research concerning how and under what conditions developmental idealism influences actual levels and trends in various family attributes.

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Table 1:

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

		Number	Percent
Marital Status			
	Ever married	548	78.0
	Never married	155	22.0
Age-group			
	15-29	274	39.0
	30-44	246	35.0
	45+	183	26.0
Education (years)			
	0-5	196	27.9
	6-9	117	16.7
	10-12	239	34.0
	12 +	151	21.5
Employment			
	Employed	88	12.4
	Unemployed	615	87.6
Birthplace			
	Urban	541	77.0
	Rural	161	23.0
Total		703	100.0

Table 2:

Percentage Distribution of Respondent Perceptions of Whether Certain Family Attributes Are More Common in Developed or Not Developed Places

	Not Developed	Developed	About the Same	χ^2	p-value
Married children living with their parents or in-laws	**80.8**	6.0	12.8	271.56	.000
Females marrying before the age of eighteen	**81.9**	7.1	10.8	288.46	.000
Family unity and loyalty	**40.4**	43.8	15.4	--	--
Elderly parents living with their adult children	**59.7**	20.6	18.6	29.79	.000
Arranged marriages	**86.3**	9.0	4.7	373.22	.000
Couples having many children	**95.0**	1.8	3.0	572.58	.000
Divorce and marriages breaking up	38.1	**47.2**	14.5	--	--
Equality between women and men	12.1	**73.1**	14.5	152.54	.000
Babies born to unmarried mothers	34.4	**51.9**	13.5	1.12	.572
Opposite sex couples living together without being married	26.7	**64.3**	8.5	59.45	.000
Romantic love between a husband and wife	17.4	**56.0**	26.5	10.54	.005
Premarital sex	24.2	**56.8**	18.8	13.42	.001
Respect for elders	**48.8**	35.0	15.9	--	--

Note: For each item, the difference between 100% and the sum of the reported percentages is due to the item-missing data.

Table 3:

Percentage Distributions of Responses about the Effects of Development on Family Attributes

	Increase	Decrease	About the Same	χ^2	p-value
Married children living with their parents or in-laws	12.2	**79.9**	7.8	252.12	.000
Females marrying before the age of eighteen	16.1	**78.8**	5.1	233.32	.000
Equality between women and men	**74.5**	11.7	13.8	169.31	.000
Family unity and loyalty	58.3	**29.2**	12.2	--	--
Marriages breaking up	**39.7**	52.9	7.0	--	--
Arranged marriages	13.7	**80.9**	5.3	270.79	.000
Couples having many children	8.0	**89.9**	2.1	447.68	.000
Respect for elders	51.8	**33.7**	14.4	--	--
Romantic love between a husband and wife	**62.3**	20.2	17.1	44.25	.000
Premarital sex	**49.6**	42.7	7.3	--	--

Table 4:

Percentage Distribution of Respondent Perceptions Concerning the Effects of Reducing Fertility and Increasing Age at Marriage on Development

	Reducing fertility					Increasing age at marriage				
	Increase	Decrease	About the Same	χ^2	p-value	Increase	Decrease	About the Same	χ^2	p-value
Overall standard of living	**94.5**	3.3	2.3	555.65	.000	**74.8**	12.9	12.2	173.25	.000
Families having television in their homes	**72.0**	4.4	23.0	140.15	.000	**63.2**	2.8	33.9	49.28	.000
The fraction of children dying before their first birthday	5.1	**89.2**	5.5	434.05	.000	9.2	**81.8**	9.0	284.22	.000
Being educated	**94.5**	2.1	3.4	555.65	.000	**92.5**	3.6	4.0	506.98	.000
The fraction of people working on farms	20.6	**53.1**	26.3	2.63	.268	15.9	**49.2**	34.7	--	--

Table 5:

Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Expectations about the Future of Family Change

	Increase	Neither/ same	Decrease	χ^2	p-value
Average age for a woman to first get married	**86.3**	5.0	8.7	371.44	.000
Married couples who live with their parents or in-laws	7.5	3.1	**89.3**	434.05	.000
Marriages ending in divorce	**76.7**	3.7	19.5	200.60	.000
Number of children a woman gives birth to	6.6	2.0	**91.5**	482.51	.000
Status of women	**94.7**	2.0	3.3	560.81	.000
Fraction of elderly parents who live with their adult children	12.4	3.7	**83.9**	323.65	.000
Relative (consanguineous) marriage	7.4	17.8	**74.7**	172.51	.000
Premarital relationships between unmarried boys and girls	**88.2**	3.4	8.4	410.19	.000

Note: To calculate percentage in the table, the "don't know" answers (missing cases) were omitted, because for every item the percentage of "don't know" answer was less than 0.3. In other words, the percentages are actually percent of valid answers.

Table 6:

Standardized regression coefficients of the effects of predictor variables on developmental idealism beliefs

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
Birth cohort	-0. 089	-0.141**	-0.078
Urban Birth Place	-0.030	-0.040	-0.050
Childhood community resources	0.045	-0.043	-0.042
Parental Education	0.230***	0.118*	0.068
Respondent's Education		0.279***	0.230***
Family income			0.178***
Media Exposure			0.025
R^2	0.040	0.076	0.105
F for Full Model	6.933***	10.742***	10.693***

*** Sig. at 0.001 ** Sig. at 0.01 * Sig. at 0.05