DEMOGRAPHIC DESTINIES

Interviews with Presidents of the
Population Association of America

Interview with Arland Thornton
PAA President in 2001

This series of interviews with Past PAA Presidents was initiated by Anders Lunde
(PAA Historian, 1973 to 1982)
And continued by Jean van der Tak (PAA Historian, 1982 to 1994)
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ARLAND THORNTON

PAA President in 2001 (No. 64). Interviewed by Karen Hardee and Dennis Hodgson at the Hilton Hotel, 720 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL, April 27, 2017.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Dr. Arland Thornton is Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan, where he is also a Research Professor at the Population Studies Center and Survey Research Center. He received his B.A. in Sociology from Brigham Young University in 1968, and then his M.A. in 1973 (after a brief stint as an officer in the U.S. Coast Guard) and his Ph.D. in 1975 in Sociology, both from the University of Michigan. He has spent his entire academic career at the University of Michigan. His work focuses especially on the study of marriage, family, and life course structures and processes.

HARDEE: Good morning. This is the History Committee of PAA, and we're here to interview Dr. Arland Thornton, who was the past president of PAA in 2001. Welcome.

THORNTON: Thank you.

HARDEE: I'm Karen Hardee. I'm a senior associate from the Population Council. And this is Dennis Hodgson. I will be primarily asking the questions. And Dennis will add in—

HODGSON: Cut in occasionally.

HARDEE: Yes. So, the first question that we have is maybe you could tell us about where you grew up and then where you went to college.

THORNTON: Okay. Starting at the very beginning. I'm an Idaho farm boy; I grew up in southern Idaho, about twenty-thirty miles southwest of Boise, in a little town named Kuna. And my first introduction to population things was a sign as you went into town that said, "Welcome to Kuna. Population: 516".

HODGSON: Wow.

THORNTON: And when the next census came out, that sign was changed, and it said 534. I have no idea why I can still remember that. Maybe that was a gene that I had that played out later on as well. (I checked this after the interview and discovered that I had reversed the years and that the actual census population number was 534 in 1950 and 516 in 1960.)
   I was raised on a farm. We grew sugar beets, onions, sweet corn, and row crops on irrigated land. I had a very small world view growing up. But when I became a demographer, I discovered that knowing the ins and outs of farm life—the routines, what matters, what doesn't matter, the long hours, the family structure, and family modes of organization—was very useful as I traveled around the world twenty, thirty years later.

HARDEE: That's interesting, very interesting.

THORNTON: So, when I visit a farm in Taiwan and I see a flooded patty field, and when I see Nepali people farming mountains, I have a little feel for it that I think I got growing up milking cows, hoeing beets, changing water, and things like that.

HARDEE: Wow. And college?

THORNTON: College—I went to Brigham Young University. When I started as a freshman there, I thought I was going to be a math major. Although math came fine to me, I discovered this field called sociology and it pretty well hooked me. I discovered something called central place theory, about how population is distributed. It sounded very fascinating to me. I discovered Dudley Duncan [PAA President in 1968-69] and Don Bogue [PAA President in 1963-64] and a few other people who were important in that area. And I thought, I'd like to study that some more.

HODGSON: Was there an undergraduate population course?

THORNTON: Yes. But it wasn't titled "population". I don't think the word "demography" was yet in my vocabulary. And "population studies" was probably not either.

HODGSON: But the topic was covered?

THORNTON: The topic was there, yes.

HARDEE: So, you graduated with a degree in sociology?

THORNTON: Yes, a degree in sociology.

HARDEE: And did you go directly to graduate school, or did you do something in between?

THORNTON: I graduated with my undergraduate degree in the spring of 1968. I had applied to graduate schools and was accepted and received a fellowship from the University of Michigan. But 1968 happened to be the year that Lyndon Johnson decided that the country should be drafting college grads for the Vietnam War--not sending them off to more school and more college deferment.

HODGSON: That was one year before they came up with the lottery.

THORNTON: Was it? '68 was one year before?

HODGSON: Yeah. '69 is when they came up with, you're going to be subject to the draft for one year on the basis of your birthday.

THORNTON: Right, right.

HODGSON: So, you got in there.

THORNTON So I was going to be drafted, but ended up going to officer candidate school in the Coast Guard. I spent a beautiful fall in Yorktown, Virginia. The activities were a little rigorous and not quite what I was used to. After four months of Coast Guard training, they assigned me to go to Long Beach, California to be a training officer over Coast Guard reserve units on the West Coast. I assigned people to training programs and went out and inspected units, making sure shoes were shined and clothes were ship-shape. I did that for three years. I also took the opportunity to spend lots of evenings in the University of Southern California Library researching the Vietnam War.

HARDEE: Oh, interesting.

THORNTON: I discovered that we shouldn't have been in Vietnam. But there I was in the military. So, I said to myself, the best thing for me to do is to be a good, obedient, mouth-shut guy, so it went fine.

HODGSON: Okay.

THORNTON: I got out four months early. The Coast Guard made a snafu, in that they *thought* they were starting a big new program. They recruited a large group of new junior officers to handle it. That new program, however, didn't come through, so they were left with a surplus of junior officers and let some folks out early.

HODGSON: That was nice of them.

THORNTON: I volunteered and was released early and then started back at the University of Michigan in the fall of 1971.

HODGSON: So initially, did you spend like a semester, after you graduated?

THORNTON: I spent the summer semester in 1968 at Michigan.

HODGSON: The summer semester.

HARDEE: Before you went into the [military]—okay.

HODGSON: Gotcha. So, they were pretty fast catching you.

THORNTON: They were very fast.

HODGSON: I mean the draft.

HARDEE: Wow, they were.

THORNTON: Oh, yeah. I went and talked to the Draft Board the summer of 1968, and they assured me that my draft notice was coming.

HODGSON: I remember that. 1-S to 1-A.

HARDEE: Wow. But Michigan held your place.

THORNTON: They held my place. Michigan, wonderful training program.

HARDEE: So, when did demography enter your lexicon?

THORNTON: When I applied to graduate schools, I applied to sociology departments. I received a National Science Foundation fellowship, so I didn't need financial help. But I received a letter from either Dudley Duncan or Ron Freedman [PAA President in 1964-65] , saying, we think you might be a good candidate for being a student at our center. It was the Population Study Center.

HARDEE: It was the Population Study Center, yeah.

THORNTON: I still didn't know what population studies meant. Demography is a very vague word, an ever-expanding word. But anyway, I went to PSC. They treated me very nice. I took courses and people started calling me a demographer. It sounded good, and people had smiles on their faces when they said that. So, I became a demographer.

HODGSON: Now, the Center back then was still internationally focused on Taiwan, or was it more broad by that time?

THORNTON: Then it was very much funded by the Ford Foundation and focused on international fertility and family planning. Ron Freedman and Al Hermalin [PAA President in 1993] were studying Taiwan. David Goldberg was studying Turkey and Mexico. John Knodel joined fairly quickly with his research interests in Thailand.

HARDEE: You hadn't had any international experience then, so how did you shift to international work?

THORNTON: I took Ron Freedman's course as a graduate student and received his international focus, but did not devote much time to international things as a student. When I arrived at Michigan as a graduate student, my interests were almost entirely domestic. You know those maps that the Census Bureau used to put out? I don't know whether they still do, but these nice maps—

HARDEE: Yes.

HODGSON: Color coded.

THORNTON: Color coded with all the counties.

HODGSON: They were beautiful.

THORNTON: I put one above my desk that had the three-thousand-and-some counties in the U.S. on it. Some of them had gained population, and some of them had lost population. I was going to explain that map as a research project. I knew Dudley Duncan's work on population distribution and urbanization, but did not know that he had long moved on from that sort of research. I was a naive undergraduate and didn't know that. Also, Ren Farley [PAA President in 1988] was doing population distribution and urbanization research at Michigan. So, population distribution is what I went to Michigan to study.

When it came time to write a dissertation prospectus, I found that I couldn't think of anything to do with that map. A lot of people have done lots with census maps like that, but it wasn't clear what I was going to do with it. So, I had to look for something else.

At my very first PAA meeting, Paul Glick [PAA President in 1966-67] gave a very nice paper on changing family demography. There weren't very many sessions on that topic, but it captured my attention. Then, when I figured out that I wasn't going to research population distribution for my dissertation, I thought: How about the relationship between marital stability and childbearing? People get a divorce or a spouse dies, so fertility is interrupted. So, what is the effect of marital dissolution on fertility? Also, what's the influence of marital satisfaction on childbearing? And, what about causation in the opposite direction— the effect of fertility patterns on divorce?

HODGSON: And this came from a PAA session with Paul Glick.

THORNTON: Yes.

HODGSON: So, there wasn't anybody at Michigan who was really into this family—

HARDEE: Family studies?

THORNTON: Not an emphasis at the Population Studies Center.

HODGSON: Okay.

THORNTON: The Center faculty looked at me a little strangely when I announced my new interest, like what are you doing? But they were very supportive and helped me work through this new topic.

HODGSON: Because that's really become central to your work.

THORNTON: Yeah. That was life-changing. That was a very big shift for me.

HODGSON: But still related back to your growing-up years, the family structure.

THORNTON: Yes. It turns out that there were quite a few of us young folks getting into studying family demography at the same time.

HODGSON: We're going to be interviewing one tomorrow, too, Andy Cherlin [PAA President in 1999].

THORNTON: Yes. We have very similar interests.

HARDEE: We'll just cancel his interview. That's fine. [laughter]

THORNTON: Andy and I often attended the same meetings, the same family conferences. There were also Linda Waite [PAA President in 1995], Fran Goldscheider, Frank Furstenberg, and others. It was a wonderful and exciting cohort. When I moved into family demography, I didn't know other people were jumping in at the same time. It's a little bit like naming children. A lot of people say, I'm coming up with a unique name, and five years later, when that "uniquely-named" child arrives in kindergarten, he or she finds quite a few other people with the same name.

HODGSON: That's funny.

THORNTON: And that's sort of the way it turned out with family demography, which delighted me. The family quickly became an important area in demography.

HODGSON: I think Andy had Valerie Oppenheimer in grad school.

THORNTON: Yes.

HODGSON: I guess she was one of the big names in family demography at that time.

THORNTON: Yes.

HODGSON: Lot of women, work and fertility, those types of issues.

THORNTON: Yeah.

HODGSON: So, he had somebody at grad school. And you did it all on your own on the basis of interest.

THORNTON: Not on my own. Al Hermalin agreed to chair my committee. Ren Farley and David Goldberg were also on it, and Jim Morgan was the outside committee member.

HARDEE: And your bio says you're a social demographer. Can you talk about what a social demographer is, compared to a demographer?

THORNTON: I'm a social demographer? Well, I'm a sociologist.

HARDEE: And a demographer.

THORNTON: And a demographer. So that puts them together.

HARDEE: Okay.

THORNTON: I'm constantly inclined to come up with sociological theories that explain things.

HARDEE: Would you say you use more sociology in your work, or demography, or is it hard to split them apart?

THORNTON: I don't really split them apart. My career has had a lot of interactions with other disciplines as well. I worked with Deborah Freedman, an economist, and Tom Fricke, an anthropologist.

HARDEE: Were there any other grad students at Michigan at the time who influenced your career or what you studied?

THORNTON: Well, Linda Waite was there at the same time. I'm not sure we influenced each other. I'd like to see the title of her dissertation ["Working Wives and the Life Cycle"]. I'm not sure if it was a family demography dissertation or more of a fertility dissertation, but, in either case, she very quickly became a family demographer, and an outstanding one.

HARDEE: And what do you consider your current interests in demography, social demography, or the current focus of your work?

THORNTON: The current focus? Let me tell you the pathway to where I am now.

HARDEE: Yeah, yeah.

THORNTON: I had done all my graduate work at the Population Study Center and the Sociology Department at Michigan. As a student, I knew there was a unit across campus called the Institute for

Social Research [ISR], but I knew little about it. Howard Schuman and Leslie Kish were sociologists at ISR, but there was not a strong demographic presence at that time. Midway through my dissertation work, a fellow graduate student, who was working at ISR in the Economic Behavior Program, told me that program was looking for somebody to help them with a project. Are you interested? I said, Well, not really. It's too early. And a couple months later, he came back and said, "They're still looking". The group of economists at ISR had received a grant from NIH to study Dick Easterlin's [PAA President in 1978] hypothesis about relative income and fertility, and they wanted somebody who had done fertility research to work with them. I decided that the proposal looked interesting, and working on the project would be the same as having a two-year post doc. I said to myself, "Why not" and accepted the position.

In the beginning of my time at ISR, Ron Freedman, who I hadn't interacted with very much as a graduate student—in fact, very little other than his course—contacted me. Ron, Lolagene Coombs, and David Goldberg had done interviews with a group of women in Detroit who had just had a baby.

HODGSON: The Detroit Studies Project.

THORNTON: The Detroit Studies Project. The study had started in 1962 and the last interview with these women had been in 1966. Ron and his colleagues had let this Detroit panel lie fallow because they had gotten involved in Taiwan under a program funded by the Ford Foundation. Deborah Freedman, Ron's wife, was very interested in picking the Detroit study back up. So, Ron and Deborah came to me and said, "It would be nice to have a junior person work with us on it. How about you being that person?" My wife and I thought about the offer extensively and decided, this is too good to pass up.

HODGSON: Now, was there a big policy concern at the time? If I remember, it was like '76, '77, when the total fertility rate had plummeted over a child. It was down to 1.8.

THORNTON: Right, right.

HODGSON: From way up.

THORNTON: From three and a half or something like that at its height.

HARDEE: Yeah, yeah.

HODGSON: And was that like a national concern that got you interested in fertility and what's happening to it in the U.S.?

THORNTON: I confess I was almost always driven by the scientific, substantive questions.

HODGSON: Gotcha. So, it wasn't a concern about what's causing this dramatic decline.

THORNTON: Well, interest in that question, but not so much driven by the policy thing--whether we should be concerned about it or not, or how we should deal with it if we were concerned. The decision to work with Deborah and the Detroit study turned out to be a wonderful decision. I worked with that panel study until—well, the capstone book came out of that in 2007--so that's 30 years of dealing with that project. And that project was all about different aspects of family demography. Our capstone book was *Marriage and Cohabitation* that I co-authored with Bill Axinn and Yu Xie.

HODGSON: I find that interesting because when I look at what you've done in the context of family issues, so you have marital instability, and you've got a lot on divorce, you've got a lot on what normally we would think of as hot topics at the time. And yet you said you really didn't have a policy concern that drove your research as much more straight research. How do you reconcile the fact that in terms of your career, you happened to be looking at rather big issues and dramatic family changes? And admittedly, when you read your research, it's very objective and very well done in the context of not—it doesn't look like policy-driven research.

HARDEE: But it's very policy relevant.

HODGSON: But when you look at the progression of it over time, you say you were picking up on really big trends that did have an element of concern.

THORNTON: Yes. Exactly. So, they were big trends, interesting trends, and policy related. I think I primarily was driven by them being huge trends that were changing the world in many ways.

HARDEE: Yeah. Absolutely.

THORNTON: I'm quite sure the policy part of that helped the funding stream. I think one of Jeff Evans' many contributions at NIH was helping to fund family demography. That would have been driven at least in part by the policy issues. So, my guess is there wouldn't have been as much money to fund this kind of research without the policy things. It was on this Detroit project that I discovered the relevance of values, beliefs, and attitudes.

HARDEE: Right, right. Interesting.

THORNTON: It was an amazing discovery for me. When Ron Freedman, David Goldberg, and Lolagene Coombs designed the first questionnaire for the Detroit panel in 1962, they put some questions about attitudes, values, and beliefs in the questionnaire. And when Deborah and I designed our first interview with these women in 1977, we repeated those questions. We got the interviews in, entered the data, and ran out the distributions of everything. I compared the distributions of the 1977 items about gender role attitudes, attitudes about divorce, and attitudes about childlessness with the '62 data. And I thought, Oh, my goodness. This is a different world.

HARDEE: Wow.

THORNTON: At that moment, my career changed, too. I decided this is too interesting not to study. So, the first paper we wrote out of that data set was "Changing attitudes towards sex roles" ["Changes in the sex role attitudes of women, 1962-1977: Evidence from a panel study"—ed.] I think we call them gender roles now, but we called them sex roles back then. Then I wrote a paper on changing attitudes about separation and divorce from the data. It just seemed so natural. That experience got me into the whole cultural/ideational research area, which I'm continuing to work on now.

In the late 1970s/early 1980s, I recognized that there is a lot going on internationally and I ought to check that out. So, I went to Ron Freedman and talked to him about how to get involved internationally-- where to go, what to do, and so forth. And sometime in that discussion, Ron said, "We're doing this project in Taiwan. We've had a good time working together with you on the American material. Would you like to join us in Taiwan?" So that's what took me to Taiwan.

HODGSON: Now, in that family planning literature, you had a tradition of KAP [Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice] studies, going back real early.

HARDEE: And the value of children.

HODGSON: Exactly. Admittedly, it was sort of mixed in with a policy orientation—you want to bring about fertility decline in Taiwan. You want to sort of track that stuff. And if you think in terms of developmental idealism, it seems that there is a connection there, that you came back to in the context of focusing on sort of family planning issues as one example of how this spreads across countries.

THORNTON: Yes, it was in my research in Taiwan where I discovered developmental idealism. It's obvious to me and I hope obvious to others that the international family planning program was an important example of developmental idealism being spread around the world. At the time of my Taiwan work, my vision wasn't broad enough to see that developmental idealism applied to lots of other things, but that recognition came later.

Our group (led by Hui-Sheng Lin and myself) wrote a book with the title of *Social Change and the Family in Taiwan* that came out in 1994. One of my jobs was to write a draft of the theory chapter. So, I was writing theory, and the more I wrote, the more uncomfortable I got. There were two reasons for that discomfort: first, all of the theory was coming from the West. I thought there ought to be some Asia-specific theory. And worse than that, I knew that the theory did not explain what had happened in the West. As a graduate student, I had learned about this amazing work being done in England by Peter Laslett, Alan Macfarlane, John Hajnal, and others there. They had discovered that what was believed for two hundred years about family change in England and other places—

HODGSON: Was not quite right.

THORNTON:—and it was not quite right by quite a ways. I thought, this is amazing. I can't keep going on in this way because I have a theory that's from the West, and I know that it doesn't apply to the West. So why am I applying it to Taiwan? At that moment, I thought, how could we have believed something so fundamentally wrong for two hundred years?

HARDEE: Wow.

THORNTON: How could that be? I thought, I ought to find out the answer. So that sent me off to the library where I read a bunch of old books and I discovered where those theories came from. They came from developmental models that said all societies go from not being developed to being developed. These development models, popular in the 1700s and 1800s, stated that all societies progressed from undeveloped to civilized and polished. All societies were on the same trajectory or pathway, but at different levels of development at any one time. These writers believed they knew who was on top of the developmental ladder at the time; that was England or France--depending on the writer. Various writers had different views for what society was at the lowest development level. Edward Tylor's version of it was that the bottom was represented by the aborigines in Australia, Robert Malthus said the lowest was the aborigines in Tierra del Fuego, and Thomas Jefferson said it was the aborigines in the Rocky Mountains of the U.S.

It was easy for writers who believed this model and believed that they had figured out how to place countries along this ladder from low to high development to believe that they could read and write the history of the world using cross-sectional data. And, many of them did so. It was these histories that people like Laslett, Macfarlane, and Hajnal discovered in the 1960s to be flawed.

I discovered these things around 1990, '91, something like that, and started writing a book. I

wrote the first half of it in my spare time, but this finally wore me out and I put this book aside. When I was elected president of PAA in 1999, I realized I had a presidential talk to give and decided to base my talk on this unfinished project. In the middle of talk preparation, I realized that I had to consider the role of these developmental ideas on fertility. That's when I went back and reread the international family planning literature and recognized the role of developmental idealism in the family planning movement. I also recognized the role of developmental idealism in the gender role revolution around the world and in the increase in age at marriage and rise in divorce. That's where the book *Reading History Sideways* came from.

HARDEE: Which is the one presidential talk that I remember the title of. Success.

HODGSON: Now, was demography perhaps somewhat responsible in the sense of we had demographic transition theory—

THORNTON: Yes.

HODGSON: —and we had the stages—

THORNTON: Yes.

HODGSON: —and we had a tradition going back to the '30s of placing societies on that continuum, and everyone is going to experience those changes. If you think about family planning—well, some might need help—

THORNTON: Exactly.

HODGSON: —to move them along this progression. And how I think about that, I think of Kingsley Davis [PAA President in 1962-63] in 1948, *Human Society*, and a real structural-functional way of analyzing change. It seems to give us still today some insight as to worldwide regularities and patterns of change. So, I don't think we've totally given up on it, but it does introduce a set of kind of knotty issues—

THORNTON: It does.

HODGSON: —about what's really going on here and why this belief in the inevitability of particular changes. Have you arrived at any conclusions—and this is a biggie because you started out early on in '91. I just read your really big article in that new journal, *Sociology of Development*.

THORNTON: Oh.

HODGSON: Yeah. Which brings me up-to-date in terms of what's going on there.

THORNTON: Yes. That's as up-to-date as I am.

HODGSON: And I was just curious because I remember your PAA address, at least in the *Demography* version of it, there was one paragraph where you said, "I wanted to say explicitly that this was an illegitimate way of analyzing change. But I didn't do it. I became more modest."

THORNTON: Yes. That's right.

HODGSON: So that stuck with me. Okay. Does anything cause you to reassess perceptions about what this might all be about?

THORNTON: You're very perceptive and have a good memory on that article. On the one hand, thinking everybody goes through the same stages of development and that where you start really doesn't matter is totally problematic. But one of my colleagues, Yu Xie, said to me, it's problematic, but what if you don't have anything else? I thought, Well, maybe if you don't have anything else, and you've got that, and you're very upfront on what you're doing, maybe that's better than nothing. I'm not sure I am really convinced of that, but that's where that little shift came from. Yu Xie convinced me it's an assumption. He is a very sophisticated methodologist, a person I've loved working with. He said, I deal with assumptions all the time. Just make that assumption very clear and make clear that lots of times, that assumption sends us down the wrong pathway. Yes, you were very perceptive in noticing that shift.

HODGSON: Now —

THORNTON: Oh, go ahead.

HODGSON: I was going to ask you if you could tell us, like, the few people that you might identify as being ones that you've closely worked with over time. I'm just thinking of the ones that sort of you felt a real resonance that you're working on the same wavelength and you enjoyed.

THORNTON: I have been delighted at the collaborations I've been able to have. They've been spectacular. I will always feel grateful that Ron and Deborah Freedman invited me to work with them on the Detroit project. We don't have very good ideas on where the paths we didn't take would have led.

HARDEE: Right, right.

THORNTON: I have no idea where an alternative path would have led, but it would have been different. The Freedmans introduced me to the Detroit panel study, and this led me to do panel analyses, which I hadn't done before. I also discovered event history analysis. This all came out of that collaboration. They were spectacular.

HODGSON: They were big.

THORNTON: Yes. And Ron, a giant in the field, turned the project over to Deborah and me. If we asked him for advice, he was happy to give it. But he turned it over to us.

HARDEE: Wow.

THORNTON: Also, the women participating in the Detroit panel study had just had a baby when they were first interviewed in 1962. This led me to think it would be nice to interview these babies, who were 18 in 1980.

HODGSON: Wow.

HARDEE: Wow.

THORNTON: So that turned out to be a good idea—you don't need very many good ideas.

HODGSON: No.

THORNTON: That was one good idea that I had. It was a good idea joining with the Freedmans to reinterview the Detroit women, and it was another good idea making the project intergenerational. That turned out to be very good.

HODGSON: That's where we see so much change, particularly in family trends.

THORNTON: Yes, exactly. Across generations. And Duane Alwin taught me how to use LISREL in analyzing our Detroit data. We wrote a paper analyzing changing sex role attitudes and put the analysis in the LISREL format. That was a great learning experience and we wrote other papers, as well. My Taiwan colleagues were also significant. Ron Freedman had done a really nice job of being a true collaborator with his Taiwanese colleagues. And I got to inherit that good will and good relationships with wonderful people, great colleagues, including Hui-Sheng Lin, Ming-Cheng Chang, and Te-Hsiung Sun. Tom Fricke introduced me to Nepal. That was very nice. Tom took me for what he calls "a walk" up in the Himalaya.

HARDEE: How many days was that?

THORNTON: I was in Nepal for about a month. I went with Tom up to a village under a snow peak and then came back with a Nepali guide. And Tom stayed. That was a mind-boggling experience. That introduced me to anthropology. My first project at ISR had introduced me to economics, and Tom introduced me to anthropology and these amazing Nepalis.

     As we returned from that village, we walked down a river valley where the people were mostly Buddhists, and their prayer flags were out. The trees were blooming, the sun was out, and the snow-capped peaks were lit up. I'll never forget that. And being a former farm-boy, I knew that these people were farming land they shouldn't be farming.

HODGSON: The sides of mountains.

HARDEE: The sides of the mountains, yeah, the terraces, yeah.

THORNTON: And they weren't gentle mountains. They were very, very steep.

HARDEE: Yeah, yeah.

THORNTON: That was a marvelous experience with Tom. Bill Axinn joined us on that project as a graduate student, and he kept doing research in Nepal. I later worked with Bill, Dirgha Ghimire, and Prem Bhandari on their Chitwan Valley Family Study. Keera Allendorf and Nathalie Williams have been important recent collaborators on my Nepali research.

     Another very important colleague has been Yu Xie. I began collaborating on research with him on our marriage and cohabitation project (including the book). Then, he became an important collaborator on developmental idealism.

     I have also had the pleasure of collaborating with many other wonderful colleagues. The list of collaborators is very long, and these people are shown on my CV. Also, of importance are members of the research and administrative staff at the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, with Linda Young DeMarco, Judy Baughn, and Don Camburn being especially important across many

years.

THORNTON: When I was finishing my book on developmental idealism (*Reading History Sideways*), I thought I was done with this particular topic.

HODGSON: And then everybody started writing to you, saying, We want to work with you on this in X country and Y country.

THORNTON: I said to myself at the end of the book, I can document developmental idealism in the writings of the United Nations, the Chinese Communist Party, the international population movement, and other places; it's all pretty clear. That's what I had done in the book. Then, I thought, but I don't know what individual people around the world think. That guy on a farm in Nepal, does he know about development and does he have beliefs about how to get it? And, what about folks in China, and shopkeepers in Argentina. So, at the end of that book, I laid out a brief research agenda and decided that I should start it.

   I was delighted when several people came to me and said, Yeah, let's start. My first reaction was, I have some other things I have to finish up before I start this. They said, we're ready. So, I said, if you're ready, I'd better be ready too. The first invitation came from Bill Axinn, and the first project we did on developmental idealism was in Nepal.

   Then Kathryn Yount at Emory came to me and said, developmental idealism is a huge issue in the Middle East. It's part of the tension there. It's part of the conflict. She said, Let's do something in Egypt, and we did.

   A former graduate student, Georgina Binstock, said, Argentina would be an interesting place to study developmental idealism. So, we did some focus groups in Argentina and later did a survey.

   Then, I started giving talks on developmental idealism based on these materials. At the end of these talks, I'd say, if you have interest in joining on this kind of research, let me know. And people started stepping forward. Early on in this process was Yu Xie, who I have collaborated with on three developmental idealism data collections in China, Jalal Abassi-Shavazi, who I have collaborated with on a data collection in Iran, and Mansoor Moaddel, who I have collaborated with to collect data in several countries in the Middle East.

HODGSON: So, you have a small army now.

THORNTON: It has absolutely required collaboration of others. I was not going to be able to go to Iran on my own and study developmental idealism, or Turkey or Nepal. People stepped forward. And I said, "Yeah, let's do it. Let's try it." We've now done something in 19 or 20 countries.

   It's turned out to be absolutely delightful. It's been exciting. I've enjoyed it all. And one of the great things about it was that I got to meet many new and wonderful people. A partial listing of project collaborators is on my developmental idealism website: https://developmentalidealism.org/people/.

HODGSON: And we probably should say something —

HARDEE: I know, I know. Okay. But I do have to ask this question because you have so many important things that you've worked on. What would you say is your favorite or most influential publication?

HODGSON: You can name two if —

HARDEE: We've already heard three, the family—you don't have to answer that question.

THORNTON: Well, at the time, each one of them was the most important.

HARDEE: It's like asking which is your favorite child. It's okay. Yeah. Well, let's switch to PAA. You've talked about the first meeting that you went to and the influential paper. What are you seeing as the changes in PAA over the years that you've been attending?

HODGSON: It's been a long time.

HARDEE: It's been a long time.

THORNTON: Yeah, it has. That's a little scary, too. I first went in 1972—I think we met in Toronto that year.

HODGSON: Yeah. I remember that.

THORNTON: It would be nice to see that program. I think that program would have been dominated by international family planning.

HARDEE: Oh, interesting.

HODGSON: We wouldn't have had twenty-three simultaneous sessions going on.

THORNTON: That's true. So, it was smaller and more focused. I don't think there was very much on mortality or on migration. I think that there would have been things on these issues, but not a lot.

HODGSON: Right. But the focus on family or family planning?

THORNTON: I think the main focus was on family planning. I think that the 1972 session where Paul Glick had a paper in a session on the family was the only one on the topic we now call family demography. And now, PAA is much bigger. The list of topics is much, much bigger. I think I would have had a little bit of a hard time in 1975, '6, '7, '8, saying that divorce was part of demography. I think some people would have defined it as being outside demography. But with Andy and Linda and—oh, I didn't mention Larry Bumpass [PAA President in 1990] and Jim Sweet before.

HODGSON: Frank Furstenberg?

THORNTON: Yeah. It all soon became part of PAA.

HODGSON: Right. And that's a good thing.

THORNTON: Yeah. From my point of view, really good. And studying school and mobility and occupational attainment, I don't think there was very much of that at PAA in 1972. But Dudley Duncan was doing it, and if he was doing it, it almost had to be part of PAA. I think the expansion of topics at PAA has been amazing, and I'm delighted. I like demography being a big tent.

HODGSON: So, you're not worried about—I would say back then, most of the people attending a PAA meeting would have a definition of themselves as being a demographer. And I don't think that's true today. So you've got a lot of diversity. But you do probably have a lot more people, percentage-wise anyway, that have a discipline connection: I'm an economist, and I happen to be studying these

things, so I present—I'm a sociologist, and I happen to—is that something that is beneficial or something that's potentially problematic?

THORNTON: I think it's beneficial.

HODGSON: Okay.

THORNTON: I'm not coming up with downsides.

HODGSON: Okay.

THORNTON: I don't see downsides there. One thing that happens is, people say this is where good work gets done.

HARDEE: Yeah.

THORNTON: And good work that's related to our topics—we should be hearing about it. So, we recruit some people exactly on that.

HODGSON: Right.

THORNTON: Interesting topics at PAA, and the presentations are quite uniformly good.

HARDEE: I've also heard people say, and the people who go to PAA are so nice.

THORNTON: Yeah. It's a great group.

HARDEE: A great group.

THORNTON: After you've been participating in PAA a while, you just go out and stand in the main hallway and meet your friends.

HARDEE: I know. That's right.

THORNTON: You don't get the feeling of anonymity.

HARDEE: Right. Exactly. Yeah. And what issues did you deal with as PAA president?

HODGSON: Yeah. What were the big concerns back then in 2001?

HARDEE: In 2001.

THORNTON: 2001.

HODGSON: Do you remember anything that was something that you had to cope with?

THORNTON: I don't remember any emergencies or anything like that.

HODGSON: Okay. No financial problems that seemed to be—

THORNTON: The organization in my opinion is run amazingly well. Stephanie Dudley was wonderful to work with. The program was a big thing to put together. That's the job of the president-elect and the vice president-elect. That was big. But, you know, we had people who were very helpful in terms of passing on knowledge. Stephanie was wonderful. I don't remember any big issues.

HARDEE: And what do you think are the big issues facing PAA today?

THORNTON: One of them has to be keeping the journal going well. I think *Demography* is one of our major contributions. When you have a potential conflict between printed material and the web, you must make sure you keep the journal vital. I do think that keeping up with costs is a problem. My first PAA didn't cost me $250 for a hotel room.

HARDEE: Yeah. That's right.

THORNTON: I'm making more now than I did before, but $250 on a hotel room seems pretty —

HODGSON: But what a hotel room.

THORNTON: You're right.

HARDEE: Well, what do you see as the important issues facing the discipline of demography today?

THORNTON: I think the funding climate, of course, is important—

HODGSON: Particularly today.

THORNTON: Yeah, particularly today. We've also had other times that have been tough. Being able to train demographers with training grants and that sort of thing is crucial. People going through population programs get stamped with the label "demographer." And they don't lose that, so it's an important part. If people are worried about too many people coming in from other disciplines, the training programs at the demography centers are a counterbalance against that.

HODGSON: That's true. I'm just thinking that back—I went to Cornell's Population Center. And we had a distinctive methodology as a discipline. We had, you know, life tables. We had a set of demographic techniques that were ours. And we had a set of data sources that were ours. You know, we could do this. We could make a life table from mortality data. Now, when I look today, I don't think we have that anymore. Most of what we do tends to be with a shared methodology that crosses sociology and economics. And we have a heavy reliance on survey data. We don't really have that much of a reliance on a distinctive set of data sources. And we don't really have a reliance on a distinctive set of methodologies. If people take those courses, they generally don't use them when they do their research. Is that a potential issue or not, in terms of the discipline, to lose their distinctiveness in terms of data sources and methodology?

THORNTON: I think one could say that there's two key components defining demography. One is that today's population size is the same as yesterday's, plus births, minus deaths, plus or minus net migration—that's a fundamental thing in demography.

HODGSON: Right.

THORNTON: And those processes aren't particularly—

HODGSON: Complicated.

THORNTON:—related substantively.

HODGSON: Right.

THORNTON: The theory of fertility is different than the theory of mortality and the theory of migration, but that population equation is one thing that holds demography together. I think the life table is the second thing that unifies demography. I think we've been successful in exporting the life table.

HODGSON: Okay.

THORNTON: So now, many people are using life tables. The hazard modeling that many are doing is just a multivariate life table. Most researchers today studying anything that's a transition across time are using some kind of a life table extension. For example, this is true of my colleagues who are studying the dissemination of United Nations human rights treaties around the world. The treaty is signed in New York and countries around the world are invited to ratify it. And, some ratify it the next day, and some never do.

HODGSON: You've got a life table!

THORNTON: You've got a life table. And these people don't identify with the field of demography. Life tables are just how you analyze these processes.

HODGSON: Now, is there something we forgot to ask you that you would like to be included in this?

THORNTON: Oh, a good question.

HODGSON: Because we have about two minutes left, right? Oh, we've got four minutes left. So, we picked the questions, and that's not fair because you might have points that you would want to make.

THORNTON: You've done a very good job of asking me things that I think are highly relevant.

HODGSON: Any words of wisdom for our new entrants to the field today?

HARDEE: Yes, yes. Aspiring demographers.

HODGSON: We have a lot of young people who now are overwhelmingly female as opposed to what it used to be.

THORNTON: Yeah. The gender distribution has changed. What fraction female are we today?

HODGSON: I don't know—70 [percent]?

HARDEE: I'm not sure. Probably, yeah.

THORNTON: 70?

HODGSON: So, any words of wisdom for new entrants to this discipline who will be doing this in 2030, 2040, 2050, whatever this might be.

THORNTON: I tell graduate students and post docs—this might be worth saying—to pick things to study that you're passionate about.

HARDEE: Yes.

THORNTON: Do things that captivate you, that are enjoyable, that are fun. And if you do that, you're going to work all the time, but it won't seem like work.

HARDEE: Yeah. That's right.

HODGSON: And you pretty much followed that advice for yourself.

THORNTON: Yeah, even without knowing I was following it. I have followed what's interesting to me, for sure.

HODGSON: And what you're passionate about.

THORNTON: And what I'm passionate about, yeah. This has been a great field for me, because I have been able to do that. So, when it came time to implement the developmental idealism agenda in the *Reading History Sideways* book, I was able to go out and do that.

HARDEE: Yeah.

THORNTON: And it was enormous fun creating that, pretty much from scratch.

HODGSON: Well, thanks. Thanks so much for sharing your thoughts with us.

HARDEE: Yeah. Oh, no. I have one last question.

HODGSON: Quick.

HARDEE: What does the population sign say now in your town from Idaho?

HODGSON: You left it at 534.

HARDEE: 534.

HODGSON: Is it still there? Does the town still exist? That is the question.

THORNTON: Well, there's a lot of people living within the boundaries of that town now. It's become sort of a bedroom community of the city of Boise.

HARDEE: Oh, interesting, interesting.

THORNTON: So, I get back there. And my brother still farms there. He's a very good farmer, a very good person.

HODGSON: He's still doing beets, sugar beets and —

THORNTON: Yes.

HODGSON: Onions?

THORNTON: Not onions. Sugar beets. They've added mint. I think Kuna's population is probably around fifteen or twenty thousand. But, I don't remember that number being on a sign entering town.

HARDEE: They ran out of room. It's not big enough. They ran out of space. Oh, thank you so much. Thank you.

THORNTON: You're very welcome. It's been delightful.

HARDEE: Very interesting.

THORNTON: You've asked good questions. I've enjoyed the interaction. Thank you.

HODGSON: Thanks.

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THE DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM, READING HISTORY SIDEWAYS, AND FAMILY CHANGE*

ARLAND THORNTON

The developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, and cross-cultural data have converged to exert a profound influence on social scientists and ordinary people. Through the use of these tools, social scientists of the 1700s and 1800s concluded that family patterns in northwest Europe had undergone many substantial changes before the early 1800s. These conclusions were accepted until the last several decades of the 1900s, when almost all were seriously challenged; many were declared to be myths. Further, the developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, and the conclusions of generations of social scientists created a package of ideas—developmental idealism—that subsequently became a powerful influence for family change in many parts of the world during the past two centuries. This developmental idealism has been a substantial force for changing living arrangements, marriage, divorce, gender relations, intergenerational relationships, and fertility.

In this paper[1] I describe how the developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, and cross-cultural data converged to exert an overwhelming influence on both scholars and ordinary people. The paper has two strong theses. First, the confluence of these three elements has dominated the study of family change for centuries, and understanding this confluence is a prerequisite for understanding the history of scholarship about family change. Second, the developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, cross-cultural data, and the conclusions of generations of social scientists combined to form a package of propositions and ideas that have been a powerful force for family change over the past few hundred years.

The paper has three main parts. First, I describe the developmental paradigm as a conceptual framework and discuss the international cross-cultural data used by social scientists. Then I describe how reading history sideways was used as a method to describe societal change.

Second, I show how social scientists from the 1700s through the early 1900s used these tools to formulate many descriptions and explanations of family change. This approach led scholars to conclude that a great family transition had occurred in the West by the early 1800s and that this transition was caused by factors such as industrialization, urbanization, democratization, and the expansion of schools. The developmental paradigm and previous conclusions about the nature and causes of family change led demographers in the late 1800s and early 1900s to conclude that the fertility decline observed in Western populations at that time was determined by this great family transition, by social and economic change, and by a decline in mortality. In the past several decades almost all these conclusions have been challenged. Most elements of the great family transition have been declared myths, and the explanations of fertility decline have been challenged.

Third, I show that the developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, and the conclusions of social science about family change produced a package of ideas—developmental idealism—that became a powerful influence for family change. This developmental idealism has been a strong force for changing living arrangements, marriage, divorce, gender relations, intergenerational relationships, and fertility behavior in many parts of the world during the past few centuries.

I cover several centuries of the history of family scholarship and discuss the actual motivations and behaviors of ordinary people around the globe. Consequently I must paint with a very broad brush that reveals only the barest essentials of my argument.

I can only provide the highlights of individual authors' conclusions and approaches, set forth the essentials of the story, and illustrate some of the points. I apologize that this restricts my ability to provide caveats, examine nuances, provide detailed empirical data, and state appropriate exceptions. I make frequent reference to northwest Europeans, a

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term that I use to refer both to people living in that region—primarily England and northwest France—and to people whose ancestors lived there.

I discuss family topics that are important and meaningful to many people, but I do not take value or policy positions concerning these subjects. Although it is very difficult to be entirely value-free, I try to discuss these family issues in neutral ways rather than stating whether they are good or bad for individuals or populations.

Further, I am not advocating the developmental paradigm and reading history sideways as a conceptual framework and method for research. As I note in the conclusions, I am very critical of these approaches as research tools. My purpose is to show how they have combined with cross-cultural data to influence both social scientists' conclusions about family change and actual family change around the globe. I also note that the use of the developmental paradigm and reading history sideways has been ethnocentric in presuming that Western societies were superior to those outside the West. Although I object to such ethnocentric assumptions and language, it is impossible to discuss the conceptual model and methodology without using the language of the original literature.

THE PARADIGM, DATA, METHODS, AND SCHOLARS

The Developmental Paradigm

The developmental paradigm has a very long history: it was important in ancient Greece and Rome and was influential in the writings of Christian theologians. This paradigm was a model of change that has been applied at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. In this paradigm, change was pictured as natural, uniform, necessary, and directional. At the individual level, human beings were seen as developing through several necessary and uniform stages of growth and decline: birth, childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, full maturity, old age, and death. At the societal level, many versions of the model used a biological metaphor whereby societies were compared to individuals and viewed as developing through the same relatively uniform and necessary life cycle stages. In most versions of the paradigm it was also recognized that each society had its own individual circumstances, which produced variations in the trajectory. An important variant of societal development stripped the biological metaphor of decline and left only permanent improvement in the developmental trajectory (Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Ferguson [1767] 1980; Hegel [1837] 1878; Hume [1742] 1825; Millar [1771] 1979; Tylor 1871; also see Hodgen 1964; Mandelbaum 1971; Meek 1976; Nisbet [1969] 1975, 1980; Pagden 1982; Sanderson 1990).

The stages posited in the societal developmental cycle varied from one author to another: some scholars detailed numerous stages of development, while others were more sketchy (Mandelbaum 1971; Meek 1976; Nisbet [1969] 1975, 1980). Simple dichotomies also emerged: from rude to polished, from backward to civilized, from traditional to modern, and from undeveloped to developed. Describing this trajectory of societal development was the main activity of many scholars from the 1600s through the middle 1900s.

The speed of movement along this relatively uniform pathway was believed to have varied across societies. Some societies were perceived as progressing and then becoming static, others as progressing for a time and then falling back, others as remaining static virtually since the beginning of time, and yet others as starting slowly but then progressing rapidly to new heights of civilization (Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Ferguson [1767] 1980; Hegel [1837] 1878; Mill [1859–1869] 1989; Millar [1771] 1979; Montesquieu [1721] 1973, [1748] 1997; Tylor 1871; also see Nisbet [1969] 1975).

One consequence of this belief in the variable pace and consistency of development across human societies was the perception that many stages existed in a single cross-section. The great variety of human customs in the world was perceived not merely as simple variation, but as the result of differential growth along the pathway of development.

Cross-Cultural Data

European exploration and conquest in the past half-millennium dramatically expanded the international cross-cultural data available in northwest Europe. Europeans discovered whole new populations in America, Africa, Australia, and the islands of the Pacific. The accounts of explorers, travelers, missionaries, and colonial administrators accumulated, and books began to appear describing and explaining the customs of numerous groups around the world. Cross-cultural information continued to accumulate throughout the subsequent centuries until scholars had overwhelming quantities of data. In addition, individual scholars lived abroad or traveled extensively and collected their own primary data through community studies and ethnography (Le Play [1855–1881] 1982; Westermarck [1927] 1929; also see Blaut 1993; Gruber 1973; Hodgen 1964; Lehmann [1960] 1979; Nisbet [1969] 1975, 1980; Pagden 1982; Sanderson 1990).

These new international data produced major challenges to European worldviews concerning issues such as the definition of humanity, the origins of society, and the history of Europe and the larger world. Profound new questions were raised about societal development and fundamental beliefs and values. These new questions occupied many of the best minds of Europe. This new scholarship began in the 1500s, was crucially important during the Enlightenment of the 1600s and 1700s, and dominated the social sciences of the 1800s and early 1900s (Hodgen 1964; Lehmann [1960] 1979; Meek 1976; Pagden 1982). Although the scholarship addressed a variety of religious, familial, economic, and political institutions, I limit this paper to family change—both scholars' accounts of past family change and the influence of their paradigms and conclusions on subsequent family change.

Reading History Sideways

With appropriate historical data, description of societal change over time is a relatively straightforward matter. One arranges the historical periods for any given society in chro-

nological order and then describes the changes occurring throughout this chronological sequence. Many of the scholars interested in societal change understood this strategy and attempted to follow it when they could. Unfortunately, however, the data readily available for this task were very limited, a fact that some scholars lamented (Malthus [1803] 1986; Millar [1771] 1979).

With limited historical data, these scholars read history sideways as a method of employing the vast amounts of cross-cultural information to outline the world's history. Reading history sideways was a form of historical geography that substituted variations across space for variations across time, thereby converting spatial heterogeneity into homogeneous development. Various societies in the cross-section were identified as proxies for the various stages in a developmental trajectory. Once the contemporary societies were arrayed in their order of development, it was a straightforward task to read the history of the world from the beginning of human time to the present in this geographical-temporal sequence (Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Ferguson [1767] 1980; Hegel [1837] 1878; Millar [1771] 1979; L. Morgan [1877] 1985; Smith [1762–1763] 1978; Westermarck [1927] 1929; also see Hodgen 1964; Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet [1969] 1975, 1980; Pagden 1982; Sanderson 1990).

Reading history sideways, of course, required a system for ordering contemporary societies along the trajectory of development. We should not be surprised that ethnocentrism led the people of northwest Europe to believe that they were at the pinnacle of development. They were also aware of Western military and political ascendancy, and understood well which countries had the most wealth, guns, and power. They also knew that northwest Europe had experienced changes in the sciences, education, technology, and economics, and used these as criteria of development (Ferguson [1767] 1980; Tylor l87l; also see Blaut 1993; Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet [1969] 1975, 1980; Pagden 1982; Sanderson 1990; Stocking 1987).

Societies that were most different from Europe were used to represent the least developed end of the continuum; the rest of the world's populations were arrayed between the least and the most advanced societies. Edward Tylor (1871:24), an important English scholar of the era, suggested that "few would dispute that the following races are arranged rightly in order of culture: Australian (aborigines), Tahitian, Aztec, Chinese, Italian," with the English ultimately being the highest (Stocking 1987). Of course there were many variants on Tylor's developmental ordering of contemporary societies, but the general approach was the same (Ferguson [1767] 1980; Tylor 1871; also see Hodgen 1964; Meek 1976; Pagden 1982).

These scholars believed that they could describe societal change by reading history sideways on a trip around the world. Instead of reading the history of actual societies from the past to the present, they believed they could read the history of the European past in the non-European present. Furthermore, by looking at the trajectory implied by this developmental geography, they believed they could predict the future of Asia and Africa (Ferguson [1767] 1980; Millar [1771] 1979; L. Morgan [1877] 1985; Westermarck [1927] 1929; also see Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet [1969] 1975, 1980; Sanderson 1990).

The Scholars

Many social philosophers and scientists from the 1500s through the beginning of the 1900s utilized elements of international comparative data, reading history sideways, and the developmental paradigm in their scholarly descriptions and explanations. The list of scholars who used this approach and contributed to the literature on social development reads like a who's who of social, political, and economic thinkers of the 1500s through the 1800s. In the 1500s and 1600s it included influential figures such as Acosta, Hobbes, and Locke. From the 1700s we find giants such as Smith, Rousseau, Voltaire, Millar, Turgot, Condorcet, Hume, Ferguson, and Malthus. The developmental scholars of the 1800s include Comte, Tyler, Maine, Morgan, Spencer, Marx, Durkheim, Westermarck, and Le Play. Because the family is central in virtually all societies—and because of its strong connections to economics and politics—many of these developmental scholars were interested in family relationships and processes.

DESCRIBING AND EXPLAINING FAMILY CHANGE
Cross-Sectional Differences in Family Patterns

The scholars from the 1500s through the early 1900s found that human beings have been incredibly innovative in creating many different family structures and relationships (Alexander [1779] 1995; Hume [1742] 1825; Malthus [1803] 1986; Millar [1771] 1979; Montesquieu [1721] 1973, [1748] 1997; L. Morgan [1877] 1985; Westermarck [1891] 1894). The variation in family patterns across the world's geographical and cultural regions was especially great, but variation also existed within regions. Although some scholars focused on the full range of family types in their analyses, others primarily contrasted the family system existing in their own region—northwest Europe—with those existing elsewhere. I follow the same approach as many earlier scholars and focus on the contrast between northwest Europe and the rest of the world. One difficulty with this approach is that it artificially downplays variation both within northwest Europe and in the rest of the world; the artificial homogenization of the rest of the world is especially marked.

These scholars discovered many differences between the family systems existing in northwest Europe and elsewhere (Alexander [1779] 1995; Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Engels [1884] 1971; Ferguson [1767] 1980; Hegel [1837] 1878; Hume [1742] 1825; Le Play [1855–1881] 1982; Maine [1861] 1888; Malthus [1803] 1986; Mill [1859–1869] 1989; Millar [1771] 1979; Montesquieu [1721] 1973, [1748] 1997; L. Morgan [1877] 1985; Robertson 1783; Smith [1762–1763] 1978; Westermarck [1891] 1894). They found societies outside northwest Europe that were generally family-organized and marked by extensive family soli-

darity. They discovered that households frequently were extended. Marriage often was universal and frequently was contracted at a young age. These scholars also found extensive parental authority, arranged marriages, and little opportunity for affection before marriage. In addition, in some societies they documented extensive male authority, foot binding, the transfer of money at marriage, child marriage, and polygyny. These elements, as well as a perception that women were more heavily involved than men in hard labor in some societies, were interpreted as denoting low status for women in societies outside northwest Europe.

By contrast, the societies of northwest Europe were less family-organized and more individualistic. They also were characterized by more nuclear households, marriage at older ages, less universal marriage, more youthful autonomy, and more affection and couple autonomy in the mate selection process. These scholars were aware of the gender differences in authority, activities, and status in northwest Europe, but the perception of less female involvement in hard labor and the absence of elements such as foot binding, child marriage, polygyny, and money payments to the wife's family at marriage made them believe that women's status was higher in northwest Europe than elsewhere.

Interpretations Based on a Developmental Trajectory

Because of the developmental paradigm and reading history sideways, the scholars of the 1700s and 1800s found it easy to transform these cross-sectional differences into a developmental sequence that Kingsley Davis (1948) later called "the great family transition." Although the approaches and methods were more complex, the label *less developed* or *traditional* essentially was substituted for *non-northwest European*, and the label *developed* or *modern* was substituted for *northwest European*. Development was seen as the process that transformed traditional families into modern ones (Alexander [1779] 1995; Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Durkheim [1892] 1978; Engels [1884] 1971; Le Play [1855–1881] 1982; Maine [1861] 1888; Malthus [1803] 1986; Millar [1771] 1979; L. Morgan [1877] 1985; Smith [1762–1763] 1978; Westermarck [1891] 1894).

These scholars concluded that in the past, northwest Europe had possessed many of the traditional family features currently characteristic of other parts of the world, and that these family forms had been transformed into the modern forms of northwest Europe. They also knew from the historical record that nonfamilial organizations had increased somewhat in northwest Europe (Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Engels [1884] 1971; Le Play 1855–1881 [1982]; Millar [1771] 1979; Smith [1762–1763] 1978). Further, they believed that development would transform family systems outside northwest Europe from traditional to modern, as had occurred in northwest Europe. These ideas were understood by the collective of scholars by the middle 1850s at the latest, and probably by the very early 1800s. Because these scholars were reading history sideways, they could not date these family transitions precisely, but the fact that

they were discussing them by the early or middle 1800s meant that they believed the transitions had already occurred by that time. These ideas survived intact well into the latter half of the 1900s.

Theoretical Explanations

Scholars from the 1700s through the early 1900s were quite interested in the causes and consequences of modern family structures and relationships. At least some of them were sensitive about the possibility of reciprocal causation (Ferguson [1767] 1980); some focused on family patterns as causes, while others regarded them as effects of other forces. Here I discuss family change as an effect; later I consider it as a cause of other factors. Although most of the family changes these scholars set out to explain were observed by reading history sideways, many of the changes in the explanatory variables were observed as well by reading history from the past to the present (Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Le Play [1855–1881] 1982; Millar [1771] 1979; Smith [1762–1763] 1978).

Scholars formulated a wide array of explanations for the perceived shift in northwest Europe from a traditional to a modern family; explanations varied from one scholar to another. Frequent explanations included industrialization, urbanization, increases in education and knowledge, and increased consumption and mobility. Other factors offered as explanations were democratization, Christianity, religious pluralism, and secularism. The scholars also believed that more prudence and foresight existed in northwest Europe than elsewhere. In short, many suggested that the transition from a traditional to a modern society led to the modern family in northwest Europe (Billings 1893; Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Durkheim [1893] 1984; Engels [1884] 1971; Ferguson [1767] 1980; Hegel [1837] 1878; Le Play [1855–1881] 1982; Malthus [1803] 1986; Millar [1771] 1979; L. Morgan [1877] 1985; "Why Is Single Life Becoming More General?" 1868).

The Northwestern European Decline in Marital Fertility

Beginning in the late 1800s, real historical data showed a substantial decline in marital fertility in northwest Europe; this produced a geographical picture that was similar to the previously existing geographical family patterns. Scholars eventually ruled out the possibility that the decline was due to physiological capacity, and attributed it to the use of contraception and abortion. This controlled, low fertility was sometimes labeled as modern fertility (Billings 1893; Brentano [1910] 1992; Carr-Saunders 1922, 1936; Kirk 1944; "The New England Family" 1882; Notestein 1945; Ross 1907, 1927; Spengler [1932] 1991; Sumner and Keller 1927; Thompson 1929, 1930a; Ungern-Sternberg 1931; Wright 1899).

The theoretical apparatus available in the late 1800s and early 1900s provided a ready framework for interpreting the marital fertility decline in northwest Europe. Scholars of that period explained this decline by incorporating it into the existing explanatory models as the product of socioeconomic and family development (Billings 1893; Brentano [1910]

1992; Carr-Saunders 1922, 1936; Davis 1948; Kirk 1944; Knibbs 1928; "The New England Family" 1882; Notestein 1945, 1950; Ross 1907, 1927; Spengler [1932] 1991; Sumner and Keller 1927; Thompson 1929, 1930a, 1930b; Ungern-Sternberg 1931; Wright 1899). Socioeconomic development was viewed as producing modern fertility both directly and indirectly through its influence on modern family patterns. Changes in the family were regarded as crucial intervening determinants of fertility decline.

Theorists of the late 1800s and early 1900s also expanded this model by adding mortality decline as a predictor of the decline in fertility (Brentano [1910] 1992; Thompson 1930a; United Nations 1953). Mortality had declined substantially in northwest Europe in that period, and this decline was seen as a major motivation for the decline in childbearing. The mortality decline was viewed as both an outcome of socioeconomic development and an intervening variable transmitting the influence of socioeconomic change to the fertility decline. This model of the decline in mortality and fertility became known as the demographic transition; it remained intact through most of the 1900s.

New Historical Studies

In the second half of the 1900s new empirical studies were launched, in which the actual historical record was used to study family change in northwest Europe. Many of these new investigations reached back to the limits of even moderately reliable data. The new evidence showed that earlier scholars had been correct in stating that northwest Europe had become more organized around nonfamily institutions over time, but this change was not as large as previously believed. These new studies found more nonfamilial institutions in the northwest European past than had been suggested by the earlier reading of history sideways (Demos l970; Gies and Gies 1987; Hajnal 1982; Hareven l977; Kussmaul 1981; Laslett [1965] 1984; Lesthaeghe l980; Macfarlane [1978] 1979).

The new historical studies also showed that most other family dimensions of northwest Europe in the 1700s and 1800s had existed for a very long time (Brundage 1987; Cott 2000; d'Avray 1985; Donahue 1983; Gies and Gies 1987; Gillis 1985; Goode [1963] 1970; Gottlieb 1980; Hajnal 1965, 1982; Hanawalt 1986; Hareven 1977; Herlihy 1985; Ingram 1981; Laslett [1965] 1984, [1972] 1974; Macfarlane [1978] 1979, 1986; Mount l982; Noonan 1973; O'Hara 2000; Ozment 1983; Pollock [1983] 1985; Rothman 1984; Ruggles 1987; Shahar 1983; Sheehan 1978; Ulrich 1982; Wrightson 1982). For hundreds of years before 1800, late marriage, frequent celibacy, and young people's active involvement in courtship had been present in northwest Europe. Extensive individualism and considerable independence among young people also were found to be ancient patterns. In addition, extensive historical continuity existed in the relationships between men and women in northwest Europe; women's status in the past was higher than previously believed. This historical research also showed that nuclear households had predominated for centuries in northwest Europe. In addition,

very few of the extended households that did exist contained multiple married people from the same generation. The new evidence, however, suggests that high mortality, high fertility, and late marriage and childbearing limited the fraction of households that could contain parents and one married child, even though such stem families were common when the necessary people were available (Ruggles 1987, 1994). Certainly some family changes beside an increase in nonfamily organization occurred in the centuries before the early 1800s, but nothing remotely resembling the changes described by earlier generations of scholars through the sideways reading of history.

In short, most of the so-called "great family transition" that previous generations of scholars believed had occurred in northwest Europe before the early 1800s could not be documented in the European archives. In fact, the evidence suggested that much of this transition was simply a myth—the myth of the extended household, young and universal marriage, arranged marriage, and no affection before marriage. The theme of historical family myths has been important in the last several decades (Goode [1963] 1970, Laslett [1965] 1984, [1972] 1974; Macfarlane [1978] 1979, 1986; Mount 1982; Pollock [1983] 1985; Ruggles 1987).

Of course, the discovery that the timing and nature of family changes in northwest Europe were different than originally believed had great implications for theories about family and fertility change (Cleland and Wilson 1987; Coale and Watkins 1986; Demeny 1968; Goldscheider 1971; Knodel and van de Walle 1979; Mason 1997). It challenged earlier conclusions that the modern northwest European family—as defined by the scholars of the 1700s and 1800s—was the product of a modern society. It also challenged earlier conclusions that this modern family was a cause of modern fertility. Many writers have also emphasized that the historical record does not indicate a consistent and precise link between fertility decline and social, economic, and mortality changes.

Dramatic family changes actually have occurred in northwest Europe; I have written extensively about some of these changes (Thornton 1989, 1994; Thornton and Freedman 1983; Thornton and Young-Demarco forthcoming). Yet almost all the substantial changes that have been documented in northwest European history in the direction expected by the earlier generations of scholars occurred *after*, *not before*, *the early 1800s*. Of course, any changes occurring after the early 1800s are irrelevant to the earlier scholars' claims because they occurred after many of these scholars already had reported the changes from reading history sideways. The substantial family changes after 1800 nevertheless are highly relevant to the hypothesis that the developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, and conclusions of scholars writing from the 1600s through the 1800s had substantial power for changing family ideas and behavior. In fact, the central thesis of the next section is that the ideas of developmental idealism produced by these factors have contributed to substantial and important family change in the past 200 years.

DEVELOPMENTAL IDEALISM AND FAMILY CHANGE

Developmental Idealism as a Causal Force

I now shift from the influence of the developmental paradigm and reading history sideways on interpretations of history to their influence in changing the future of social, economic, cultural, political, and familial relationships. The developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, and the conclusions of generations of social scientists were powerful in changing human institutions—including those centered on family relationships—because the descriptions of the past that they provided were meaningful, potent narratives of the origin and history of human beings. These developmental histories also provided criteria for evaluating the legitimacy and value of the many existing ways of organizing human society. The pinnacle of history in these narratives—northwest Europe—became, for many, the standard for judging the value of human institutions and the mechanisms for attaining the good life. The developmental model, as well as the conclusions drawn from reading history sideways from cross-sectional data, also provided a model and a blueprint for the future. It showed the direction for future change and the mechanisms that human beings could employ to facilitate progress and well-being. In addition, these understandings and narratives made the defining elements of northwest Europe part of the inexorable march of history, signifying both the developments of the past and the course of future progress (Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Hegel [1837] 1878; Mill [1859–1869] 1989; also see Baker 1990; Kraditor 1965; Offen 2000; Rendall 1985). In this way the developmental paradigm and the conclusions of generations of scholars were powerful influences for political, social, cultural, economic, and familial change, both in the West and in many other parts of the world (Amin 1989; Bailyn 1967; Baker 1990; Blaut 1993; Cott 2000; Dahl and Rabo 1992; Ekirch 1951; Fliegelman 1982; Myrdal 1968; Nisbet 1980; Offen 2000; Pigg 1992; Rendall 1985; Sanderson 1990; Traer 1980; Wood 1969).

Thus a package of powerful propositions and aspirations concerning human life emerged from the developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, international data, and the conclusions of generations of scholars. This package included a set of ideas identifying the good life, a means for evaluating various forms of human organization, an explanatory framework identifying the good life as both cause and effect of various social patterns, and statements about the fundamental rights of individual human beings. These ideas and beliefs extended to virtually all areas of human life. They have been especially powerful in governing economic development around the world, as numerous individuals and governments have sought education, technology, industry, and a higher standard of living. Further, they have been driving forces behind political change, as indicated by their role in the American, French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions.

Below I describe how these ideas and beliefs have been especially powerful in changing family structures and relationships around the world. For conciseness I group the main ideas, beliefs, and propositions concerning family life into a package that I call developmental idealism. My main thesis is that developmental idealism has been disseminated broadly and has become a powerful force for changing family ideas and behavior in virtually every part of the globe during the last few hundred years.

The Propositions of Developmental Idealism

Developmental idealism entails at least four basic propositions. The first is that modern society is good and attainable. I designate as *modern society* the aspects of social and economic structures identified by generations of scholars and ordinary people as developed: for example, being industrialized, urbanized, highly educated, highly knowledgeable, and wealthy. Although some observers have pictured development as including decline and decay in the final stages, the overwhelmingly predominant view in recent times has eliminated the decay and has viewed development as unending progress toward wealth, health, and power (Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Hegel [1837] 1878; also see Ekirch 1951; Meek 1976). These socioeconomic factors are conceptually distinct; I make no assumptions about causal connections among them.

The second idea in developmental idealism is that the modern family is good and attainable. By *modern family* I mean the aspects of family identified by generations of earlier scholars as modern, including the existence of many nonfamily institutions, individualism, nuclear households, marriages arranged by mature couples, youthful autonomy, courtship preceding marriage, and a high valuation of women. I also include family planning and low fertility. Although I group all of these factors into one family category, they are conceptually distinct; again I make no assertions about any causal connections among them. These dimensions of family life have been portrayed as modern and desirable by Western culture for hundreds of years.

The third idea in developmental idealism is that a modern family is a cause and an effect of a modern society. As I explained earlier, previous generations of scholars suggested that the transformation from traditional to modern society was the ultimate force creating modern family systems. This causal conclusion suggests that those who want a developed society should be prepared to accept, even embrace, a modern family system.

Scholars have posited two additional important causal connections between a modern family and socioeconomic development. The first, which was adopted hundreds of years ago, suggests that a modern family system is not simply a product of social development but an important force for social progress. That is, modern family relationships were viewed as important influences for achieving the good life in a modern society and economy (Alexander [1779] 1995; Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Mill [1859–1869] 1989; also see Offen 2000; Rendall 1985). This view was reinforced in recent decades by the discovery that the family system of northwest Europe had existed for centuries and could not have been caused by the development of a modern society. This point added force to the explanation that a modern fam-

ily system is a cause of a modern society (Blaut 1993; Goode [1963] 1970). Many posited freedom, equality, and women's rights and autonomy, in both familial and political spheres, as central forces in the past and future progress of human experience (Alexander [1779] 1995; Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Hegel [1837] 1878; Hume [1742] 1825; Mill [1859–1869] 1989; also see Baker 1990; Ekirch 1951; Tomaselli 1985).

A second important causal link between family change and socioeconomic progress was posited by Malthus ([1803] 1986) 200 years ago when he suggested that later marriage and lower fertility would enhance economic well-being. This causal idea became especially powerful when a neo-Malthusian wave swept the academic and policy communities in the mid-1900s. Remarkable declines in mortality led to rapid population growth in non-Western countries (Carr-Saunders 1936; Kirk 1944; Notestein 1950; Ross 1927; Thompson 1930b; United Nations 1953), and many worried that social and economic development would be restricted. Thus many academics and policy makers concluded that reducing birth rates through family planning could enhance prospects for socioeconomic development (Critchlow 1999; Donaldson 1990; Greenhalgh 1996; Hodgson 1983, 1988; Hodgson and Watkins 1997; Johnson 1994; Notestein [1964] 1983; Piotrow 1973; Szreter 1993; United Nations 1953).

The fourth idea in developmental idealism is that individuals are free and equal, and that social relationships are based on consent. Although the ideas of freedom, equality, and consent were not invented in the past few hundred years, they received considerable strength from conclusions about human life generated, at least in part, by reading history sideways. From the 1500s on, some Europeans believed that some of the populations of America, Africa, and Australia had advanced very little, if at all, since their creation—or had regressed—and could be used to indicate what life was like all over the world at the beginning of time (Hobbes [1642] 1991, [1651] 1996; Locke [1690] 1988; Rousseau [1755] 1984; Tylor 1871; also see Hodgen 1964; Meek 1976; Pagden 1982). Some influential scholars believed that from their perspectives, these people lacked even the basic rudiments of society and civilization, such as governments, laws, social organizations, or communities, and that in such a state of nature everyone was equal and free. Civil society was formed, according to these writers, when these free and equal people joined together by consent in a contract to have society, rules, and government (Hobbes [1642] 1991, [1651] 1996; Locke [1690] 1988; Montesquieu [1721] 1973, [1748] 1997; Rousseau [1755] 1984; also see Ashcraft 1987; Baker 1990; Pagden 1982; Schochet 1975).

Most important for our purposes, many scholars of the 1600s and 1700s extracted revolutionary new moral and normative principles—what ought to be—from the conditions they perceived to exist in the state of nature (Butler 1978; Schochet 1975; Tarcov 1984). Relevant here is the idea that people were created with freedom and equality, and retained these natural rights forever. The inalienable rights of freedom, equality, and consent were attached to all human relationships; they applied to interactions between the govern-

ment and the governed, between husbands and wives, and between parents and children (Locke [1690] 1988; also see Butler 1978; Fliegelman 1982; Schochet 1975; Tarcov 1984). This original state was believed to give individuals rights that could be assigned to others only because of the immaturity of childhood or through the free exercise of consent. These new ideas were contradictory to the previous view that in the Biblical beginning, people were created in hierarchical relationships of authority and inequality which had continued legitimately to the present. Thus these new ideas defined as illegitimate all social relationships—including those in the family—that were not based on individual freedom, equality, and consent (Condorcet [1795] n.d.; Montesquieu [1748] 1997; Wollstonecraft [1792] 1975; also see Butler 1978; Cott 2000; Schochet 1975; Traer 1980).

Many of the elements of developmental idealism, of course, are very old and deeply rooted in the historical cultures of Western societies. These include the ideas that Western culture is at the pinnacle of development and that Western society, religion, and family patterns are superior to those of other societies. Therefore these elements of developmental idealism were well established and available to motivate family ideas, behavior, and beliefs before the period of extensive European exploration and expansion in the 1400s. Other elements of developmental idealism grew out of the application of the developmental paradigm and reading history sideways to the cross-cultural data that emerged during subsequent centuries. The centuries from the 1600s through the 1800s were especially important in this evolution.

The Power of Developmental Idealism

I have not presented these propositions of developmental idealism as verifiable statements about the way the world is, but as normative and motivational propositions about the world and people's place in it. My argument is that the four propositions provide a system of beliefs that can guide a broad array of behaviors and relationships. If the ideas of developmental idealism are widely believed, they can become powerful forces for changing family patterns including marriage, parent-child relations, childbearing, living arrangements, and gender relationships. Thus the important issue here is not whether the propositions are true or false but whether people believe and are motivated by these propositions.

The power of developmental idealism of course would be greatest if all four propositions were widely believed. Yet even if only some of the propositions were generally embraced, they would still have considerable power to change family ideas and behavior.

The first proposition of developmental idealism—that a modern society is good and attainable—would, by itself, possess great power for family change because it could lead governments and individuals toward social and economic change, which in turn would influence family behavior. It also could lead (for example) to increased aspirations regarding consumption, to a heightened demand for education, and to increased costs of rearing children.

The second proposition of developmental idealism—that a modern family is good and attainable—also would inspire the family aspirations of those who endorsed it wholeheartedly. It would give legitimacy to some family ideals and behaviors over others: most notably, individualism over familism and autonomy over authority. It would create a preference for independent living and nuclear households over family living and extended households. This proposition would value a marriage system with courtship and control by young people over a system controlled by parents. It would give preference for controlled and limited fertility over natural fertility and large numbers of children. Female rights and autonomy also would receive new support and emphasis. Note that not all elements of the modern family need be endorsed for developmental idealism to be powerful.

The third proposition—that a modern family is a cause and an effect of a modern society—could be a powerful influence for family change if people linked it directly to the first proposition. Together the first and the third propositions would motivate family change because they causally link the good life of socioeconomic development to modern families. The power for family change would be especially strong for those who believed that modern family behaviors are required for socioeconomic development.

The fourth proposition—that individuals are free and equal and that social relationships are based on consent—also would be a powerful force for family change. By designating freedom, equality, and consent as basic human rights, this proposition provides profound legitimation of those rights, which challenges in fundamental ways relationships based on coercion and on inequality of authority, roles, and opportunities.

The ideas and propositions in developmental idealism have been disseminated widely in both northwest Europe and other parts of the world (Amin 1989; Blaut 1993; Dahl and Rabo 1992; Myrdal 1968; Pigg 1992). They have permeated many government policies and programs as well as typical citizens' thinking. These ideas and propositions have been influential at both individual and community levels and have been key forces in important social movements. Operating as they have for hundreds of years, they have been powerful in changing family ideologies and behaviors around the world. Therefore we must take them into account in understanding family changes in virtually all parts of the world in recent centuries.

It is highly likely that the diffusion of developmental idealism and the mechanisms of its influence would be very different for the populations of northwest Europe than for those in other parts of the world. For one thing, the ideas of developmental idealism originated in northwest Europe. For another, northwest Europe was presumed to possess modern family and social systems when the ideas generating developmental idealism were formulated, whereas the rest of the world was not. In addition, northwest Europe for centuries greatly exceeded the rest of the world in terms of power and resources, which greatly affected the ability of the various world regions to influence one another. Thus, for the purposes of discussion, I divide the world into the same two regions—northwest Europe and non-northwest Europe—used for centuries in social science. I first consider northwest Europe.

Effects of Developmental Idealism in Northwest Europe

Developmental idealism provides an ideational framework for evaluating different components of the family in northwest Europe. The fourth element of developmental idealism—that individuals are free and equal and that social relationships are based on consent—was postulated as early as the 1600s and became a powerful force in northwest Europe in subsequent centuries. This idea was applied to both political and familial relationships. In the political arena, it was influential for the rights of individuals and for governments based on the consent of the people (Ashcraft 1987; Bailyn 1967; Baker 1990; Cott 2000; Schochet 1975; Traer 1980). Freedom, equality, and consent became important ideological justifications for the French and American revolutions and for the creation and expansion of democratic institutions. They helped power the movement to eliminate slavery and to bring racial freedom and equality. In the family arena, these ideas played an important role in delegitimizing hierarchies based on both gender and generation. They also were essential in legitimizing and powering the drive for equal status and rights for women and men (Abray 1975; Hole and Levine 1984; Rendall 1985).

The second proposition of developmental idealism—that a modern family is good and attainable—provides a traditional-modern continuum for ordering various aspects of northwest European families. At the modern end of the continuum are individualism, mature and consensual marriage, independent living, personal freedom, high status for women, and controlled fertility. Developmental idealism legitimizes and empowers these ideas and behaviors by associating them with some of the most powerful words in the English language: *progress, enlightenment, development, civilization*, and *modernity*. At the traditional end of the continuum are familism, extended households, young and parentally arranged marriage, parental control, low status for females, and natural fertility; these are discredited and disempowered by association with backwardness, traditionality, and lack of development. Developmental idealism thus provides a strong ideational force for change in the direction of the modern family.

Developmental idealism also can change expectations about future family change, as individual and government actors assume that family change from traditional to modern will continue into the future. It also makes the creation of modern family behaviors part of the grand—and virtually inevitable—sweep of history. Those aligned with developmental idealism thus enjoyed the comfort and legitimacy of knowing that the power of history was on their side, while their opponents were left mentally swimming against the currents of history.

This is not to say that everyone in northwest Europe jumped on the bandwagon to support family forms designated as modern. Instead there has always been a range of family ideals and behaviors supported by different people: many oppose the trends labeled as progressive. In fact, the social, political, familial, and economic systems of the Western world in the 1600s were deeply entrenched; powerful forces supported the status quo. Thus the progressive changes that have occurred have usually come as a result of extensive struggle and conflict (Abray 1975; Baker 1990; Cott 2000; Ekirch 1951; Kraditor 1965; Offen 2000; Phillips 1988; Rendall 1985; Schochet 1975; Traer 1980). Yet when some family forms were labeled backward, traditional, old-fashioned, and behind the times, people who favored such forms were at a considerable disadvantage relative to those whose positions were labeled progressive, modern, and enlightened. This difference in the perceived legitimacy of family forms can exert an important influence when it exists for hundreds of years.

The themes of freedom, consent, and the value of women were linked directly to the Enlightenment of the 1600s and 1700s and have extensively influenced many dimensions of family change in the Western world since then (Alexander [1779] 1995; Hume [1742] 1825; Mill [1859–1869] 1989; Montesquieu [1721] 1973; Rousseau [1755] 1984; Smith [1762–1763] 1978; also see Cott 2000; Hole and Levine 1984; Kraditor 1965; Offen 2000; Phillips 1988; Rendall 1985; Tomaselli 1985; Traer 1980). Therefore it should not be surprising that these themes have been central elements in actual family changes in northwest Europe in the past two centuries (Alwin 1988; Bumpass and Lu 2000; Kobrin 1976; P. Morgan 1996; Phillips 1988; Ruggles 1994; Thornton 1989; Thornton and Freedman 1983; Thornton and Young-DeMarco forthcoming; van de Kaa 1987). Among the long-term changes consistent with this aspect of developmental idealism in northwest Europe are the substantial weakening of the norms against divorce, the overwhelming liberalization of divorce laws, and the dramatic increases in divorce itself. There has also been a dramatic weakening of the norms against premarital sex, cohabitation, and childbearing, with substantial increases in the levels of sex, cohabitation, and childbearing among the unmarried. Independent living also has increased dramatically among both the young and the elderly. Independent thinking among children is valued increasingly, while strict obedience has been downplayed. The norms against voluntary childlessness among married couples also have weakened substantially. In addition, whereas morality and the public regulation of personal and family behavior were previously important elements of legal control, we now see a focus on individual rights and on restraint from the regulation of individuals' private lives by the larger community (Schneider 1985). Many of these changes are also evident in the emergence of the norm of tolerance as an essential feature of life for many people of northwest Europe (Caplow, Bahr, and Chadwick 1983; Roof and McKinney 1987).

I am not claiming that developmental idealism is the only force producing these family changes. I am suggesting, however, that these changes in family attitudes and behaviors are consistent with developmental idealism and probably were influenced greatly by it.

Effects of Developmental Idealism Outside Northwest Europe

I now turn our attention away from northwest Europe; there, I argue, the acceptance of developmental idealism undermines indigenous family forms by suggesting that they are traditional rather than modern and that they are impediments to socioeconomic development. This motivational package also provides a new modern family model seen both as good in itself and as a facilitator of socioeconomic development. Although developmental idealism in non-Western populations comes from the outside, it has many of the same effects as in northwest Europe. It aligns progress and development with individualism, independent living, personal freedom, equality, mature and autonomous marriage, high status for women, and controlled fertility, while associating traditionality and underdevelopment with familism, extended households, hierarchy, parental control, young and parentally arranged marriage, low valuation of women, and natural fertility.

In many parts of the non-Western world, numerous people understand and accept at least some of the ideas of developmental idealism, and these ideas have changed their lives. Many elements of the family system portrayed as modern compete with indigenous family forms. This theme is particularly pervasive in discussions of family systems in Africa and south Asia (Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; Caldwell 1982; Caldwell, Reddy, and Caldwell 1988; Dahl and Rabo 1992; Watkins 2000). Susan Watkins (2000) and others have suggested that in some places in Africa, ideas about family have moved from those indigenous to Africa toward those of the West (Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; Dahl and Rabo 1992). Watkins argued that recently the idea of the small Western family has become domesticated as a legitimate and powerful force in at least one area of Kenya.

In addition, many parts of the non-Western world have seen dramatic changes away from indigenous family patterns toward those portrayed as modern in developmental idealism. These include substantial shifts from extended to nuclear households, from arranged marriage to consent and courtship in the younger generation, from young age at marriage to an older age at marriage, and from uncontrolled fertility to controlled, low fertility. Many of these family changes are consistent with the hypothesis that developmental idealism has exerted an enormous influence in many populations outside northwest Europe (Bongaarts and Watkins 1996; Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; Caldwell et al. 1988; Chesnais 1992; Cleland and Hobcraft 1985; Goode [1963] 1970; Guzmán et al. 1996; Jones et al. 1997; Lee and Wang 1999; Thornton and Lin 1994).

Developmental idealism has not simply overwhelmed the non-Western world in a mindless tidal wave of ideational exports. Instead, like any commodity or idea, it cannot be exported willy-nilly; it must be imported, ignored, resisted, or

modified as circumstances permit and require. Non-Western actors have had to construct their own reactions: they resist, modify, or accept as the various aspects of developmental idealism do or do not fit their personal ideals and circumstances. These reactions are contingent on the characteristics of the non-Western population, including its religious and cultural heritage, social and economic organization, and historical experience. Reactions also are contingent on international factors including position in the world economic and political order, communication networks, and the cultural traditions and use of force by the Westerners involved. Thus the influence of developmental idealism can vary greatly across groups and individuals. Frequently the ideas of developmental idealism are resisted strongly, and adaptations of previous patterns are exceptionally slow or the result of coercion.

There are numerous governmental pathways through which developmental idealism can change family ideals and behavior. Governments can change structural constraints, resources, and opportunities that influence family behaviors. They also can disseminate developmental idealism through various formal and informal ideational channels.

A particularly important example of a governmental effect is the era of European colonization that began in the 1500s and extended into the late 1900s. Almost every country of the world experienced this colonization and saw at first hand the power, resources, and family systems associated with Europe (Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; Nisbet 1980; Watkins 2000). The messages of developmental idealism were disseminated to many in these colonial populations (Blaut 1993).

Many family reform movements were initiated in the colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Americas to make indigenous family systems more like those of the colonial powers. These movements often were accompanied by new laws and philosophies regulating various aspects of family and social relationships. Many of these reform movements continued after independence (Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; Buxbaum 1968; Cooper 1997; McNicoll 1994; O'Malley 1941).

In many times and places, the policies and laws of colonial and national governments probably were not widely known or enforced, and had little direct effect on the general population (Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; McNicoll 1994; O'Malley 1941). Even then, however, these policies and laws probably played a significant educational and legitimization role for family change (Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; Buxbaum 1968; Singh 1976). This influence probably was especially important among the urban educated elite, who often became forces for change themselves.

South and Central America were particularly transformed by European reform efforts: the program for the Christianization and fundamental transformation of the American natives accompanied Columbus and other explorers and conquistadors to Spain's new world (Blaut 1993; Burguière et al. [1986] 1996). Especially important, these efforts at social change were quite vigorous—and coercive—because they were backed by military power and deadly diseases. They strongly shifted the social, religious,

linguistic, and familial systems of many segments of the indigenous population toward those of western Europe. Within a century of the European conquest, many parts of these populations became Christian, were speaking European languages, and had family systems that were much closer to those of western Europe.

The ideologies and policies of numerous governments also have been influenced by the ideas of developmental scholars such as Comte, Spencer, and Marx (Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; Nisbet 1980; O'Malley 1941; Zheng 1999). It is particularly noteworthy that the version of the developmental paradigm advocated by Marx has been the motivating ideology and public policy of communist movements and governments, including those of China and the former Soviet Union (Davis and Harrell 1993; Meijer 1971; Zheng 1999). This developmental model motivated the replacement of indigenous family forms by the socialist version of the modern family (Davis and Harrell 1993; Meijer 1971; Whyte n.d.).

At the beginning of the 1900s many people in China enthusiastically embraced nearly all the main ideas of developmental idealism as a response to the incursions of Western military, technological, and economic power (Zheng 1999). They believed that the transformation of China's indigenous political, economic, and familial systems was necessary for prosperity and independence (Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; Meijer 1971; Whyte n.d.; Zheng 1999). These ideas led to two political revolutions, enormous economic change, and substantial changes in family behavior. For most of the 1900s, China's various political parties and governments campaigned actively against many aspects of the historical Chinese family; the efforts were particularly energetic and effective after the Communists came to power in the middle of the century (Burguière et al. [1986] 1996; Davis and Harrell 1993; Lee and Wang 1999; Levy 1966; Meijer 1971; Whyte 1990, n.d.; Wolf 1986; Zheng 1999). During the 1900s, foot binding, concubinage, adoptions of daughters-in-law, and authority based on lineage virtually disappeared. Age at marriage, youthful autonomy, and gender equality increased, while arranged marriage and fertility declined substantially.

The family planning movement has been another mechanism of influence. In the 1960s and 1970s, the idea that contraception and low fertility are necessary for development captured the allegiance of many demographers, foundations, and Western governments, as well as the United Nations (Caldwell and Caldwell 1986; Critchlow 1999; Donaldson 1990; Finkle and McIntosh 1994; Greenhalgh 1996; Hodgson 1983, 1988; Hodgson and Watkins 1997; Johnson 1994; Piotrow 1973; Szreter 1993; Watkins 2000). Together these individuals and organizations provided intellectual justification, legitimacy, and financial and organizational resources for a family planning movement. Some have suggested that the West promoted these programs with missionary zeal and used both incentives and sanctions to encourage contraceptive programs and the decline of fertility. International aid for socioeconomic development sometimes was linked directly to the adoption of family planning programs (Caldwell and Caldwell 1986; Donaldson 1990; Finkle and McIntosh

1994; Jones et al. 1997; Lee et al. 1995; Locoh and Hertrick 1994; Rogers 1973; Watkins and Hodgson 1998).

The movement has been very effective in spreading family planning programs. Everett Rogers (1973:6), an expert on diffusion, commented that "probably no other idea in...history has spread so rapidly from nation to nation." In 1996, 90% of the governments in the so-called developing world provided direct or indirect support for provision of contraceptive services (United Nations 1998; also see Banister 1987; Finkle and McIntosh 1994; Freedman 1979; Guzmán et al. 1996; Hodgson and Watkins 1997; Johnson 1994; Jones et al. 1997; Lapham and Simmons 1987; Watkins 2000; Watkins and Hodgson 1998).

Although the effectiveness of family planning programs has varied across places and times, it is widely agreed that they have helped to reduce fertility in numerous countries (Banister 1987; Bongaarts 1993; Caldwell and Caldwell 1986; Donaldson 1990; Finkle and McIntosh 1994; Freedman 1979; Guzmán et al. 1996; Jones et al. 1997; Lapham and Simmons 1987; Leete and Alam 1993; Locoh and Hertrick 1994; Thornton and Lin 1994; Watkins 2000; Watkins and Hodgson 1998). One essential way in which these programs have influenced fertility is structural: through the widespread establishment of clinics and infrastructure providing contraceptive supplies and information to meet demand for controlled childbearing (Freedman 1997; Thornton and Lin 1994).

Most family planning programs also have tried to increase the desire for smaller families and to legitimize, encourage, and support the use of contraception. These efforts have been made through the mass media, educational programs, and fieldworkers. Probably they have crystallized desires for reduced fertility into acceptance of contraceptive services (Caldwell et al. 1988; Critchlow 1999; Donaldson 1990; Freedman 1997; Hodgson and Watkins 1997; Johnson 1994; Jones et al. 1997; Lapham and Simmons 1987; Leete and Alam 1993; Locoh and Hertrick 1994; Rogers 1973; Thornton and Lin 1994; Watkins 2000; Watkins and Hodgson 1998).

In some places, incentives and coercion have been another avenue of programmatic influence. Coercion has been particularly important in the very large populations of China, India, and Indonesia (Banister 1987; Caldwell et al. 1988; Hodgson and Watkins 1997; Jones et al. 1997; Leete and Alam 1993; Wolf 1986).

Some instances of continued high fertility can be explained by opposition to developmental idealism. In some places where populations are isolated from the West or antagonistic toward Western ideas, fertility reductions have been especially slow (Chesnais 1992; Cleland 1985; Cleland and Wilson 1987; Finkle and McIntosh 1994; Lee et al. 1995; Leete and Alam 1993; Watkins 2000; Watkins and Hodgson 1998). For example, several scholars have suggested that in some parts of Africa and the Middle East, people have been distrustful of the West and family planning programs.

Most national and international bodies have adopted the first proposition of developmental idealism: that modern so-ciety is good and attainable. This has resulted in numerous social changes including dramatic increases in schools, industries, and cities. These socioeconomic changes structurally affect individual opportunities and constraints, thereby leading to changes in family motivations and behavior (Banister 1987; Dahl and Rabo 1992; Donaldson 1990; Finkle and McIntosh 1994; Lapham and Simmons 1987; Notestein [1964] 1983; Szreter 1993; Watkins and Hodgson 1998).

These new social and economic institutions also provide ideational pathways for family change because the new social and economic structures are infused with developmental idealism, which affects individual ideas and behaviors. The new institutions are conduits for the very ideas that motivated them.

Particularly important in the diffusion of developmental idealism is the remarkable expansion of mass education. Large fractions of the world's children now attend primary and secondary schools and, in some cases, even colleges (Bledsoe et al. 1999; Caldwell et al. 1988; Chesnais 1992; Jones et al. 1997; Lapham and Simmons 1987; UNESCO 1999). In many parts of the world, schools are permeated by images of socioeconomic development, the advantages of Western family life, and the link between family and socioeconomic development (Bledsoe et al. 1999; Caldwell 1982; Caldwell et al. 1988). Substantial numbers of non-Westerners also have gone to Western countries for education; there they have learned about developmental idealism. They have returned home to occupy influential government and academic positions (Caldwell and Caldwell 1986; Myrdal 1968; O'Malley 1941; Thornton and Lin 1994).

Extensive research demonstrates that socioeconomic factors, such as schools, factories, and urban living, are related empirically to family patterns; education is usually the strongest socioeconomic predictor of these patterns (Axinn and Yabiku 2001; Bledsoe et al. 1999; Chesnais 1992; Cleland and Wilson 1987; Ghimire, Axinn, and Thornton 2001; Jones et al. 1997; Leete and Alam 1993; Pritchett 1994; Thornton and Lin 1994). Education is similar to factories and cities in that it changes structural relationships, but it is also designed explicitly to disseminate ideas and information.

Research has shown that changes in these socioeconomic factors explain a substantial part of family change. Educational change alone accounts for most of the family changes explained by all socioeconomic factors (Ghimire et al. 2001; Thornton and Lin 1994). I suggest that one of the most important reasons for this is that education is much more powerful than factories and cities as a pathway for ideational change. It is also likely that other socioeconomic changes, such as urbanization and industrialization, have been avenues for ideational as well as structural change. These considerations support the importance of developmental idealism in producing family change.

Research also shows that changes in socioeconomic factors do not explain all family change (Ghimire et al. 2001; Thornton and Lin 1994). I cannot refute the possibility that a more complete investigation of socioeconomic structural factors might explain more of this change, but it seems likely

that much of the unexplained family change is the result of unmeasured ideational forces.

The mass media are another mechanism for diffusion. National and international news and programs now penetrate many of the most remote corners of the world (Caldwell et al. 1988; Guzmán et al. 1996; Thornton and Lin 1994; UNESCO 1999). Like education, the mass media are permeated with the messages of developmental idealism regarding the attractiveness of modern society and family life (Casterline forthcoming; Faria and Potter 1999; Kottak 1990). These messages can directly influence individual media consumers and can infiltrate informal networks, where they are transmitted to other people and influence them.

Research suggests that exposure to mass media is a strong predictor of family patterns. Estimated effects remain strong, even when substantial batteries of social and economic factors are controlled. Some evidence suggests that ideas about family relationships may be among the elements most susceptible to media influence. It is likely that media effects are particularly strong when exposure is intense, extends over many years, and is reenforced by other factors (Axinn and Yabiku 2001; Barber and Axinn 2001; Casterline forthcoming; Faria and Potter 1999; Freedman 1997; Ghimire et al. 2001; Jato et al. 1999; Kottak 1990; Westoff and Bankole 1999; Westoff and Rodriguez 1995).

Changes in mass media exposure alone can explain substantial family change. In fact, one analysis conducted in Nepal suggests that these changes may be the most important source of transformation in marriage arrangements, accounting for about three-fifths of the substantial shift toward young people's involvement in spouse selection (Ghimire et al. 2001). By contrast, only about one-fourth of the transformation in spouse selection can be explained by numerous other socioeconomic changes.

Other factors certainly transmit developmental idealism. International travel diffuses it, as do formal and informal networks operating through friends, relatives, neighbors, and coworkers (Casterline forthcoming; Rogers 1973).

CONCLUSIONS

The Importance of Ideas for Both Scholars and Ordinary People

My overarching conclusion is that ideas matter tremendously in the social sciences: they affect both scholars and the people we study. The developmental paradigm and reading history sideways have exerted a great influence on social scientists' conclusions and ordinary people's motivations and behaviors. The history of social science has been influenced strongly by the paradigm and by its methodological offspring, reading history sideways. As we have seen, the developmental paradigm and reading history sideways were essential in producing at least two centuries of conclusions about family change in northwest Europe; these conclusions were discovered, in the late 1900s, to enjoy little support in the actual historical record.

Ordinary people around the world have been influenced by developmental idealism, which is the offspring of the developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, international comparisons, and the conclusions of social science. The developmental idealism produced by these factors has been a powerful force in changing family relationships and processes around the world during the last two centuries. These factors clearly must be taken into account if we are to understand the history of both family studies and family change.

This conclusion also suggests that ideas need not be true to be powerful for both scholars and ordinary people. In addition, the most influential ideas in both scholarship and everyday life are often those we think about the least. This suggests that it would be very useful for us, as social scientists, to be more introspective about our unstated beliefs and their influence on our conclusions.

The Developmental Paradigm

These conclusions have important implications for the social sciences in general and for family studies and demography in particular. I join many others in concluding that the developmental paradigm, as I have defined it, is fundamentally flawed and should be totally rejected (Davis and Harrell 1993; Goldscheider 1971; Greenhalgh 1996; Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet [1969] 1975; Szreter 1993). I am pleased that the paradigm has been abandoned as an explicit conceptual framework in most analyses.

Nevertheless, the developmental paradigm is more than a historical curiosity: it continues to influence us in subtle but powerful ways. We often assume that things associated with development are good. We often divide the world into developing and developed societies, and we think and write in developmental language. Sometimes we describe individuals and societies as moving through developmental stages, and we speak of grand developmental epochs: the first demographic transition, the second demographic transition, and, more recently, the postmodern demographic transition.

Our generation also has inherited from our scholarly ancestors a set of concepts and theoretical formulations about family change that remain influential. Further, we have inherited preferences for structural explanations of family change over ideational explanations. Of course, not all the concepts, theories, and preferences that we have received from our ancestors are bad, but they may enjoy an unfortunate advantage over competing concepts and ideas. We must be explicitly aware of our heritage to eliminate any continuing negative effects of the developmental paradigm and its products. We have much unfinished business in this regard.

Reading History Sideways

What about reading history sideways as a methodology? When I began preparing this paper, I intended to say that reading history sideways should be discarded entirely, along with the developmental paradigm. I now adopt a more conservative conclusion, however, because we face many of the same problems today as did our intellectual ancestors. Our data are frequently inadequate to provide definitive answers

to the questions we ask; and we, like our ancestors, frequently must rely on problematic data and assumptions. In this context, reading history sideways is simply a method that requires strong assumptions; violation of these assumptions can lead to faulty conclusions. Social scientists today, of course, are far more methodologically sophisticated than our ancestors. Moreover, our methodological humility should be increased by remembering the enormous negative impact of reading history sideways on the history of family and demographic studies. Thus I conclude that cross-sectional approaches may be acceptable for exploratory purposes if we are clear about the assumptions and exceptionally cautious about the results.

Developmental Idealism

Finally, many family changes have been documented in the past two centuries. Many of these—both in the West and elsewhere—have been in the direction of the modern family as defined by developmental idealism. I suggest that the principles and ideas of developmental idealism may be the single most powerful explanation for many family changes in many places inside and outside northwest Europe during this period; thus developmental idealism is essential to understanding many of these changes throughout the world.

Also, despite these extensive family changes, many aspects of indigenous family patterns persist. Thus we see an important continuing diversity in family systems across geographical and cultural boundaries. This diversity attests to the power of historical cultural systems in the face of the homogenizing forces of developmental idealism.

My emphasis on developmental idealism is consistent with calls for increased attention to ideational influences in family and demographic studies (Caldwell 1982; Chesnais 1992; Cleland and Wilson 1987; Coale and Watkins 1986; Freedman 1979; Jones et al. 1997; Knodel and van de Walle 1979; Lesthaeghe 1983; Mason 1997; van de Kaa 1996). Developmental idealism is especially important because it is a powerful force for family change both inside and outside northwest Europe. Also, the influence of developmental idealism outside northwest Europe is much more than the simple spread of Western ideas: it provides people outside the West with detailed, extensive motivation to adopt Western family patterns. If these Western family patterns were not linked to development, most non-Western people would probably believe that the Western family is strange and not to be emulated.

Developmental idealism is exogenous to many factors in models of family change outside northwest Europe. As I mentioned previously, many of the social, economic, and governmental changes that have occurred in the non-Western world are the direct result of developmental idealism. That is, in many settings these changes are largely endogenous to developmental idealism. This means that their effects ultimately must be attributed to the ideas that powered them in the first place. In addition, these changes do more than structurally modify resources, opportunities, and constraints; they also serve as powerful mechanisms for transmitting developmental idealism.

Although I believe that developmental idealism is essential for understanding many recent family changes around the world, I am not claiming that it is a complete explanation of family change. Many other potential influences can be forces for such change, including wars and changes in mortality, wealth, and land distribution. In addition, some family changes probably have no relationship to developmental idealism or have occurred in the opposite direction.

Finally, I conclude that the power of developmental idealism dictates its inclusion as a potential factor in studying nearly all family changes throughout the world in the past few centuries. Explicating the ways in which developmental idealism has or has not changed family patterns is a high priority for the social sciences. As we have seen, developmental idealism affects family changes by numerous complex and interrelated pathways. Studying the interrelated structural and ideational mechanisms through which this motivational package has influenced family changes will be difficult, but it is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of these changes. Creation of the data and analytical tools for studying these effects is one of the key opportunities and major challenges for social scientists today.

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