Title: Lateral and Vertical Intergenerational Exchange in Rural Malawi

Author: ALEXANDER A. WEINREB [1]

Address for correspondence: Alex A. Weinreb, Population Research Center, NORC/University of Chicago, 1155 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, USA
Phone (773) 256 6309; Fax number (773) 256 6313; E-mail awein@uchicago.edu

Abstract

Contemporary empirical literature on family resource flows in developing countries focuses on vertical flows between parents and children. Using data from the 1999 *Family Transfers Project* in Malawi this article examines a broader set of flows between adult respondents and their surviving parents, and paternal and maternal aunts and uncles. It compares the frequency and value of material and monetary flows, and the frequency of provision of other services, among these relatives. It also explores variation on these parameters across three ethnic groups, each of which has discrete normative patterns of descent, inheritance and postmarital residential arrangements. Results suggest that: (i) intergenerational support networks in Malawi are both vertical and lateral; (ii) in their transfer relationships, working aged adults have a net loss to parents, but a net gain to uncles and aunts, implying the existence of an institutionalized network for the transfer of resources among branches of the family; and (iii) lineal structures privilege kin of certain gender for certain roles. Maternal and paternal aunts are the largest source of material transfers among the matrilineal Yao, and paternal and maternal uncles are the largest source among the patrilineal Tumbuka.

Keywords: Africa, intergenerational support, Malawi, transfers

Introduction

Contemporary empirical research on familial resource flows in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), in particular research that involves the elderly, tends to focus exclusively on vertical relationships, that is, on the flow of resources between grandparents, their adult children, and their grandchildren (e.g., Adamchak et al 1991; Hoddinott 1992; Apt 1993, 1995; Gist 1994). Yet, as long noted, African families, for all of their structural variation, tend to be relatively extended (e.g., Goode 1963; Holy 1976; Schafer 1997).[1] This implies that familial resource flows in general, and intergenerational flows in particular, may include an important lateral dimension. Elders may legitimately expect support from nephews and nieces, as well as from their own children; and they may equally be expected to direct support towards nephews and nieces in addition to their own children.

This article explores the vertical and lateral components of intergenerational transfer relationships among three ethnic groups in rural Malawi. It has two key aims. The first is to compare the depth of individuals' embeddedness in these two types of relations, both in terms of the magnitude and monetary value of exchanges, and in terms of informal non-monetary assistance. The second is to explore variation in these patterns across ethnic groups, each of which has discrete normative patterns of descent, inheritance and postmarital residential arrangements. The article uses survey and qualitative data collected in 1999.

1. Significance

Incorporating a lateral dimension into the study of intergenerational transfers is important for two main reasons. First, the dominant paradigm in gerontological research in Africa for the last few decades has taken as its starting point the proposition that kin structures have deteriorated under the combined onslaught of numerous structural and ideational transitions. Most of these have their origin in nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial dislocations, with effects becoming heightened only in the post-WWII independence

era. They include the long series of economic crises, interstate and civil war, transitions in ownership, education, and marriage, the assertion of individualism, reductions in mortality, and higher rural-to-urban and rural-to-rural migration. Since the 1980s, AIDS has also been added to this list. In combination with the dearth of formal pension and old-age security schemes throughout sub-Saharan Africa (with the recent exception of South Africa, where publicly funded schemes were deracialized in 1992), many researchers have asserted that the deterioration in kin structures that these transitions have brought about has diminished the elderly's access to resources, their general social status, their mental health, and so on (e.g., Goode 1963; Traore 1985; Habte-Gabr, Blum and Smith 1987; Okojie 1988; Adamchak 1989; Adamchak et al 1991; Preble and Foumbi 1991; Rutayaga 1992; Ankrah 1993; Apt 1993; 1995; Kalibala and Anderson 1993; Seeley et al 1993; Ouma 1995; Kaseke 1996; Moller 1996; Cattell 1997; Foster et al 1997; Nyangweso 1998; Rugalema 1998; Mokone 1999).

The underlying proposition of this argument may be inaccurate. While kin structures have doubtless been affected by those structures and forces, it is not clear that they have deteriorated to the extent that traditional kin dependents, children and the elderly, no longer receive sufficient support. There is evidence to the contrary, stemming both from critical approaches to research on families (e.g., Murray 1980; Russell 1994) as well as from studies of socioeconomic or health outcomes. With respect to the former, for example, Hirschmann (1990), Peil (1991), Bozalek (1999), and Mtika (2000; 2001) emphasize how in response to illness, death, and frailties associated with old-age, food security is successfully maintained within local settings through reciprocal and redistributive transfers between households. Similarly, in relation to the health outcomes, Ainsworth and Dayton (2001) have shown that the death of a working-aged adult has no apparent long-term effect on the health of his/her elderly parent, as measured by the latter's body mass index (BMI). Moreover, short-term effects are observed only in wealthier households and only in the months prior to death (the elderly parents' BMI returns to normal levels after the death in these households).[2] To the extent that

extended families' continued success in caring for surviving family members is an indicator of maintenance of extended family ties involving transfers of resources, this refutes the more pessimistic accounts of a decline in extended family structures as a result of AIDS.[3]

The second reason that incorporating a lateral dimension into a study of intergenerational transfers is important is that while structural-functionalist approaches to familial relationships tend to equate kin/descent groups with "structures of jural obligations" (Holy 1976:108), researchers since Schneider (1968) have tended to emphasize the relative flexibility of kinship terms, and to assert their importance as systems of symbols rather than as determinants of interactional patterns. They have therefore tended to dissociate kinship terminology from deterministic patterns of social interaction, including transfers, in particular when the research is focused on relations among secondary kin, like uncles and cousins (see Peletz 1995 for a review).

Much of the existing empirical literature on intergenerational relations in sub-Saharan Africa has ignored this important theoretical development. From the perspective of the elderly it emphasizes assistance from children, not from nephews and nieces; and from the perspective of working-aged adults, it emphasizes assistance from elderly parents, not elderly uncles and aunts. Alternatively, even where there is some acknowledgment of these lateral intergenerational ties it tends to be in ways which are consistent with the equation of descent and Holy's structures of jural obligations, noted above. Thus, research on transfers associated with marriage and bridewealth tends to be focused on relations between, say, a prospective husband, his father, brothers, and paternal uncles. It does not explore relations with non-preferred kin such as maternal uncles, aunts or in-laws.

In short, studies of both socioeconomic and AIDS-related health outcomes among the elderly and broader developments in family theory as it relates to SSA tell a similar story. On one hand, transformations in kin and extended family life may have occurred in the last few decades under the cumulative effects of rapid structural and ideational change. Yet on the other, while many of these changes may appear to

represent a significant break from *preferred* arrangements of the past – Foster et al (1997:157), for example, note that AIDS "orphans are now being fostered by maternal rather than by paternal relatives" – they may not represent a break from *actual* arrangements since relations may always have been maintained in a more *ad hoc* fashion with non-preferred kin. Moreover, even where they have deviated from both preferred and actual arrangements in the past, such transformations may in fact be symptomatic of the *resilience* of extended family practices, rather than of its demise.

2. Background

i. Malawi as a research setting

Malawi is a relatively small sub-Saharan African country with a population of almost 11 million, 86 percent of whom reside in rural areas (World Bank 2001). Malawi's economic, demographic, political, institutional and health profile make it well-suited for the study of kin transfer systems. It is a poor country, even by African standards: its GNI per capita is $190 USD, in comparison to a sub-Saharan African mean of $480 (World Bank 2001). There are very limited alternatives to kin support networks in terms of social support. Nevertheless, a series of long-term changes in Malawi has been threatening the capacities of those kin networks (Malawi 1998; Mtika 2001). These include high labor migration rates, both rural-to-rural, rural-to-urban, and from Malawi to South Africa (Segal 1985; Kalipeni 1996), increasing levels of education (adult literacy rates, 42 percent for women and 72 percent for men, are roughly the same as the average for SSA [PRB 1995]). Finally, HIV/AIDS prevalence among adults is on the order of 16 percent (UNAIDS 2000).[4]

ii. Existing literature on intergenerational transfers in Malawi

No survey research has thus far been conducted on intergenerational transfers in Malawi. Yet insofar as such transfers are embedded in more general relationships among extended family members, the corpus of

ethnographic literature on familial relations in Malawi is useful. So, too, is the more recent research on other dimensions of inter-kin assistance networks.

Not surprisingly, all general accounts of family life in Malawi, from early missionaries' reports and histories to the first systematic ethnographic surveys, assert the importance of kin networks. The earliest of these accounts frame the discussion in largely descriptive terms, recounting numerous examples of sharing among kin and clan, of hierarchies among these kin (especially in relation to the free or slave status of parents), and of the inverse to transfers, that is, refusals to assist non-kin, or at least non-kin with whom one could or would not construct a relation (e.g., Frazer 1914; Johnson 1922; Coudenhove 1926; Young 1932/1970; Ntara 1949/1973).

More systematic research on familial relations also asserted the importance of these networks. Mitchell's (1956, 1962) research, in particular, is relevant since in his attempts to uncover both the normative structures that underlie behavioral patterns and social arrangements, as well as tensions engendered by those structures, he explored the effects of lineage and preferred marital and residential arrangements on transfer relationships among kin. In fact, Mitchell's research is in line with Holy's (1976) assertion noted above, since he argues that "marriage in both patrilineal and matrilineal societies serves to determine what sort of rights and responsibilities are apportioned to different types of kinsmen." (Mitchell 1962:30). This is because

> "A child in a patrilineal society has a jural right to assistance and support from his patrilineal kinsmen but may only obtain assistance and support from his mother's kinsmen as an act of grace on their part. Similarly, in a matrilineal society a child has claims by right to assistance and support from his matrilineal kinsmen but may obtain assistance from his father's people as an act of grace on their part." (*ibid*: p.30).

Qualitative reports discussed below suggest that, fifty years on, Mitchell's key distinction between "jural rights" and "acts of grace" still provides an accurate framework for the local discourse about transfers.

On the other hand, more recent ethnographic research in Malawi has emphasized the ambivalence of individual's official statuses within kin. These contributions are relevant because they imply that the

patterning of intergenerational transfers is, like the patterning of other familial relations, determined by fluctuating contingent factors in addition to, or rather than, by broad structural characteristics. Brantley (1997), for example, has disputed the extent to which inter-ethnic social influence, especially of the militarily dominant Ngoni over the Chewa, was unidirectional. She argues that changes in both the Chewa and Ngoni descent systems are more consistent with there having been mutual modifications of the lineage systems. If she is right, then preferred categories of kin are harder to distinguish from non-preferred categories than they may once have been. Similarly, Verdon's (1995) investigations of political relations among the Yao point to similar problems in the traditional account. In particular, he argues that Yao groups are organized more in relation to hierarchical alliances among people of varied relations than through matrilines. To the extent that some of these hierarchical alliances operate through paternal kin, they again weaken the claims of older categorical descriptions.[5]

A few systematic studies of household economy and subsistence, including aspects of kin support systems in which they are embedded, have also been conducted in the last two decades. Again, these all confirm the importance of kin networks insofar as they, as noted above, emphasize how food security is maintained within local settings through reciprocal and redistributive transfers between households. All three female Yao informants discussed in Mtika (2001), for example, referred to lateral intergenerational transfers. The first, a widowed elderly woman, reported receiving assistance from her nephews and nieces. The second, relatively young, but divorced and unhealthy, reported receiving repeated assistance from a maternal uncle. And the third, a currently married woman, had adopted 3 of her deceased sister's children. More generally, about half the women in Hirschmann's (1990) sample reported receiving supplementary food from relatives or friends, mostly sisters and mothers. And slightly less than half received cash assistance from relatives, mainly from men on the women's side of the family.[6] Hirschmann does not specify who these relatives were, but given the other sources discussed thus far, it is reasonable to assume that among them

were both parents, uncles and aunts.

iii. The local setting: infrastructure, economy, and transfers

I use data from the Malawi Family Transfers Project (FTP), a research project fielded in rural areas of Balaka, Mchinji and Rumphi Districts between June and August, 1999. These districts are, respectively, in Southern, Central and Northern regions.

Socioeconomically, the three areas are similar. Formal sector employment opportunities are equally limited. Almost all of families in the areas therefore make their living through petty trade, usually subsidized by the production of staples and cash crops on small patches of land, by remittances from family members, and especially at harvest times, by selling labor to local farmers who can afford to employ others, a system known as *"ganyu* labor." These sources of income are consistent with research in other areas (e.g., Hirschmann 1990; Mtika 2000).

Village-level data collected in combination with the main survey data indicate that there is also little variation between the areas in terms of access to commercial activities and institutions (daily markets, supermarkets, and banks), to health providers (hospitals, health centers, maternal and child health clinics) and to other state-related offices (post offices and police stations). Similarly, almost every village in each of the sampled areas is within a few kilometers of a road on which public transport – publicly owned buses as well as privately owned minivans and pick-up trucks – is available to take residents to the nearest large town. In fact, the most notable difference between the areas is in the ethnicity of the dominant group. I return to this below.

Informal conversations in the field prior to the main data collection and semi-structured interviews with 56 adults conducted in conjunction with the FTP provided a somewhat mixed message with respect to the current state of kin networks in the sampled areas. The majority of informants confirmed that transfer

relationships remain important with family members in general, and with uncles and aunts in particular. For example, out of the 56 semi-structured interview informants, virtually all reported having given, received, or exchanged assistance with family members and unrelated friends (the latter are typically in one's age group and are sometimes referred to as *chinjira*, a type of fictive kin), and 21 reported such interactions with an uncle or aunt.[7] These transfers ranged in size, from small resource flows such as the sharing of basic food items, to relatively time-consuming tasks like assistance with cooking or bathing, to important monetary flows such as the provision of school fees, or even the provision of housing and land.

Informants tended to frame their discussion of transfers around a distinction between obligational transfers – for example, those triggered by death and serious illness – and those which were considered to be more a question of choice. This discursive frame overlapped with Mitchell's (1962) distinction, discussed above, between transfers motivated by the exercise of "jural rights" and those motivated by "grace." During pretests of the survey instrument, for instance, local interviewers were quizzed about their projected transfer behavior under hypothetical situations. Most initially claimed that, outside of their parents and siblings, with whom they are mutually obligated, they would initially ask a preferred uncle for assistance – ie. a paternal uncle in a patrilineal area, and a maternal uncle in a matrilineal system – but that if they did not have a preferred uncle (or if he was too poor, too selfish, or insufferable), they would seek assistance from other relatives who, in an ideal sense, have lower ascribed positions in the kin hierarchy. Similarly, in the semi-structured interviews, informants often associated uncles and aunts with specific social roles and social labels, each of which traditionally translate into different positions in the kin hierarchy. Thus, several informants referred to preferred uncles and aunts with whom they had reported transfers as "young fathers" or "young mothers." A few Yao and Chewa informants claimed that *ankhoswe*, elders who mediate between a bickering husband and wife, are usually maternal uncles. And in response to a question about why he was assisting one of his sister's sons, another Chewa informant asserted that a child's maternal uncle "must" help

him if the child's father fails to, since this obligation is inherent in the Chewa's traditional *chikamwini* matrilineal/matrilocal inheritance system.

On the other hand, informants' also frequently reported transfer relationships with other family members who happened to live locally, irrespective of their lineal affiliation. These more closely reflect acts of "grace" than of obligation. They imply that normative preferences with respect to lineal descent and post-marital residential patterns appeared as only one of several determinants of actual transfer behavior. More generally, deviations from preferred transfer routes could be easily justified on a number of grounds. For example, a Tumbuka male reported helping a local maternal uncle, Chewa informants reported assistance to both paternal and maternal uncles and aunts who lived locally, and one female Yao informant, recently divorced, reported that her ex-husband's sister had requested that her son go and live with her: "I could not say "no" as she is his female father [*abambo ake aakazi*]," she explained. In each of these cases, the informant framed their transfer relationships with non-preferred kin in terms of obligation.

Finally, it is also worth noting the minority message in the qualitative interviews. Although all informants admitted to being involved in some type of transfer relationship with a family member, several groused about the weakening of such relationships and about the increasing unreliability of family members in these hard times. Moreover, signaling the perceived origin of this selfishness, one informant complained that the fact that an increasing number of people are not helping each other indicates that they are "following the English life." This "complaint discourse" is consistent with research in other areas in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Cattell 1997).

In summary, the bulk of the qualitative evidence suggests that kin transfer systems in general remain important, that most people participate in them, and that, more specific to this paper, uncles and aunts figure prominently in these networks. They also imply that although descent may determine a preferred route for within-kin transfer behavior, especially in relation to ritualized associations such as the provision of financial

assistance for funeral costs or bridewealth, other determinants of transfer behavior appear to be much more contingent: for example, the extent to which a given relative is geographically proximate, the extent to which the informants liked and were sympathetic to them. I now address the extent to which such patterns appear to be reflected in survey data.

3. Data and Characteristics of the Elderly

i. Data

Both the survey and qualitative components of the FTP drew on a cluster sample developed in 1998 for the first wave of the Malawi Diffusion and Ideational Change Project (MDIC), an ongoing social networks study focused on AIDS and Family Planning related behavior. The survey targeted about 50 percent of those on the original MDIC sample list, yielding interviews with 723 ever-married women aged less than 50 and 532 of their husbands (the sampling framework for each village was negatively correlated to the population of the village but on average drew about 1 in 5 available women). This represented an 84.5 and 77.9 percent response rate among women and men respectively (the lower response rate for men reflects both higher male labor migration and separation/divorce – in which case we interviewed the woman but not her ex-spouse; the lower number of men also reflects polygyny).[8]

Respondents were asked questions about themselves, questions about kin survivorship with respect to their father, mother, paternal uncles, paternal aunts, maternal uncles and maternal aunts, then questions specific to each of the surviving relatives.[9] These latter included questions about these relatives' basic sociodemographic characteristics and about 2 possible types of transfers made between the respondent and that relative (described below). On average, interviews took less than an hour.

Prior to analysis I restructured the data in two ways. First, I merged the women's and men's data in order to create a "household" data file in which, from the woman's perspective (at least where we

successfully interviewed the husband so were able to collect information on his kin), there was information on transfers to both natal and affinal kin. Information was collected from both the wife and her husband in 494 out of the 723 cases. Second, I then reshaped this household dataset in order to nest data on each relative/transfer dyad within the data on that particular relative. As presented in Table 1, this procedure yielded data on 5,728 elderly natal and affinal relatives of the interviewed wives and their husbands or an average of 11.6 intergenerational dyads per household. These data are, by construction, limited to households of currently married women with non-absent husbands. Although women-headed households in Malawi have different income bases and subsistence practices (e.g., Berheid and Segal 1994; Brouwer, Hoorweg and van Liere 1995), which likely has some implications for the study of intergenerational relations, I leave the identification of such differences to later work.[10]

Table 1 about here

ii. Ethnicity

The FTP data were merged with MDIC data collected in 1998 in order to identify a larger array of respondents' characteristics including, crucially, their ethnicity. As mentioned above, this is the most notable difference between the areas. We did not ask for either the respondent's ethnicity or that of their relatives in the 1999 FTP survey, however. All tables and models which differentiate between ethnic groups therefore use 1998 MDIC data. This reduces the size of these datasets somewhat, to 4,836 and 1,079 dyads for the larger and smaller samples respectively (because some people on the sample list were found in 1999 who were not interviewed the previous year). Also, because we did not ask respondents to report their kin's ethnicity we make the assumption that it is the same as their natal relative. Thus, the natal kin of a female respondent were assigned her ethnicity, and her husband's kin were assigned the ethnicity of the man. Since there is no apparent "conversion" from one ethnic group to another, and interethnic marriage occurs relatively

infrequently in these areas – in our sample, 15 percent of Yao women, 22 percent of Chewa women, and 13 percent of Tumbuka women were married to men of a different ethnicity; and among the older generation the rates are likely lower still – it is a reasonable assumption to equate older kin's ethnicity with that of the working-aged respondents.

Table 2 presents data on the ethnicity of surviving parents and uncles and aunts, by respondent's region of residence. It shows that 61 percent of the Balaka District sample is Yao, 84 percent of the Mchinji sample is Chewa, and 90 percent of the Rumphi sample is Tumbuka. The main other ethnic groups represented in the data are the Ngoni (9 and 6.5 percent of the Balaka and Mchinji samples respectively), and the Lomwe (19 percent in Balaka). The remainder in each of the sites are represented by Sena, Tonga, Senga, and a few unspecified others.

Table 2 about here

Aside from being among the three largest ethnic groups in Malawi, the Yao, Chewa and Tumbuka are said to vary on a number of dimensions, as mentioned above. This is important given the project's overall aim of describing changes in intrafamilial relations, since researchers have traditionally emphasized the variation in normative structures of descent, inheritance and postmarital residential arrangements among the sampled ethnic groups. Thus, notwithstanding some attempts to complicate these traditional descriptions (reviewed above in the discussion of Verdon [1995] and Brantley [1997]) the Yao and Lomwe are said to be largely matrilineal and matrilocal, the Tumbuka and Ngoni tend to be patrilineal and patrilocal, and the Chewa are said to have either long practiced aspects of both types of descent systems (Nurse 1978), or to have gradually substituted patrilineal descent and patrilocal post-marital residence practices for traditional matrilineal and matrilocal practices, mainly under the influence of their Ngoni neighbors (Mitchell 1956; Phiri 1983; Vaughan 1983).

iii. Reported survival, and residential, health and marital status of the elderly

Table 3 presents data on elderly kin's reported survival by ethnicity. It presents the data both in terms of numbers of reported kin, and in terms of ratios among the groups. Identifying variation in these reports by ethnicity is important for two reasons. First, the overall size and structure of kin networks may affect distributive patterns, but it is itself a product of historical fertility levels and of the cumulative effect of mortality, both of which tend to vary across ethnic groups. Second, apparent biases in reported survival are themselves an indicator of behavioral dimensions that underlie kin structures, since we expect under- and over-reports to be correlated with the frequency of a given relational dyad. Again, these may vary by ethnicity. Finally, biased reporting with respect to kin survival allows us to explore the extent to which aggregate transfers are biased since the survey questionnaire progressed from a section on kin survivorship to a section on the characteristics of those kin. A given relative therefore needed to have been reported as alive in order to have associated data.[11]

Table 3 about here

The general substantive finding in Table 3 is that, on average, respondents have 3.9 times as many surviving uncles and aunts as parents, though with some ethnic variation (it ranges from a low of 3.2 among the Tumbuka to 4.5 among the Yao) as well as gender variation, especially among the Yao (3.9 for women, 5.2 for men). These estimates appear to be at least partly affected by differential reporting of kin survival, however.

Data on parents' survivorship appear to be unbiased. There are a number of indicators. First, both men and women report higher survival of mothers than fathers and these reports are consistent across ethnic groups. The ratio of surviving mothers to fathers are 1.28 in women's reports and 1.25 in men's. This is consistent with expectations given that, on average, respondents' mothers are 7 years younger than their fathers. Second, wives, who are on average 6 years younger than their husbands, have more surviving

parents – the 494 women respondents report 332 and 260 surviving mothers and fathers; their husbands report 214 and 171, respectively. Again, this is consistent across ethnic groups. In fact, reported parental survival of both men and women fits closely with U.N. model life table (West) with life expectancy at birth (e_0) set to 50. This is a reasonable level given that the lower current life expectancy of 38.5 in Malawi is due mainly to AIDS in the 20-49 and under-5 age groups, so has had minimal effects on these working-aged respondents' parents. In fact, using 1998 Malawian census data, Doctor (2001) has shown that life expectancy in the 60+ age group for both men and women has continued to rise in the 1990s, even as that of working-aged adults diminished rapidly.

Data on reported survival of uncles and aunts are not quite as good, and imply that there is some underreporting. The lack of data on uncles' and aunts' ages – 1998 pretests of the questionnaire had shown that too few respondents claimed to know them – means that life table procedures cannot be used to verify this. Similarly, because the number of reported uncles and aunts is dependent both on grandmother's fertility, cumulative mortality and migration – in addition to possible reporting bias – all of which could vary by ethnicity, the ratio of uncles and aunts to parents is not fully informative.

That there is some undercount of uncles and aunts is not surprising, however. Several informants and survey respondents reported having heard of an aunt (or, to a larger extent, an uncle) about whom they knew nothing. Usually this was because these kin had migrated long ago and lost touch with their natal families. Some loss of contact of this type is to be expected given the relatively high levels of migration in Malawi, both within and outside the country, and the fact that relatively poor educational and communications infrastructure would inhibit written communication. A few informants also reported loss of contact caused by a family rift.

On the other hand, Table 3 suggests that the problems with the reported distribution of surviving uncles and aunts are related less to a general undercount than to two types of biases. The first is a gender

bias. Irrespective of ethnicity, women in general tend to report more surviving aunts than uncles (an overall ratio of 1.05), and men the inverse (a ratio of 0.86). And the second is an interaction between gender and ethnicity insofar as the ratio of aunts to uncles is highest among Yao women respondents (1.19) and lowest among Tumbuka men respondents (0.68).

These apparent biases support both a more traditional and more constructivist reading of kin relations. For example, to the extent that people act in accordance with norms related to marital exogamy and marital residential arrangements, we can expect Tumbuka males to live closer to paternal kin and, therefore, to be kept abreast of news about kin on that side of the family. Similarly, we can also expect Yao women to reside closer to maternal kin, especially maternal aunts. In each case, then, the bias is consistent with the traditional structural arrangements that have been criticized in more recent scholarship on kin in general and kin in Malawi in particular.

On the other hand, there also appears to be a gender dimension in the way that kin survival is reported. Irrespective of ethnicity, men report more surviving uncles, and Tumbuka and Yao women report more surviving aunts. I examine the extent to which these apparent biases affect reported transfers below.

Reported residential characteristics of surviving kin are consistent with theoretical expectations concerning the effects of structural characteristic, and with the apparent ethnic-specific undercounts of selected uncles and aunts. These data are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 about here

At one end of the residential spectrum, and as a testament to the ongoing rural-to-urban migration mentioned above, about 20 percent of uncles and aunts live in cities, and 10 percent of uncles and 5 percent of aunts were reported to be residents abroad. There is little ethnic variation in either of these distributions.

More variable residential patterns appear at the local level. Specifically, on one hand, there is very little coresidence (ie. same household) between these working-aged respondents and their uncles and aunts.

Female respondents reported being coresident with only 3 out of their 2,377 uncles and aunts, and men reported being coresident with only 21 of their 2,202 uncles and aunts. On the other hand, a large proportion of both male and female respondents live in the same village as their elderly relatives, and ethnic variation in this coresidence at the village-level is once again consistent with traditional theoretical expectations. Matrilocal Yao women respondents, for example, live in the same village as 66 percent of their mothers, 44 percent of their maternal aunts and 34 percent of their maternal uncles. Among the patrilocal Tumbuka women, the equivalent distributions are 10.6, 1.1 and 2.5 percent. In contrast, Tumbuka men live in the same village as 83 percent of their fathers and 53 percent of their paternal uncles. The equivalent distributions among Yao men are 13.5 and 10.9 percent.

Moving beyond the village to the level of Traditional Authority (TA) – a relatively small geographic area with multiple villages that represents the administrative level between a village and district – suggests that although marital residential arrangements may privilege interactions with wife's maternal kin among the Yao and husband's paternal kin among the Tumbuka, both maternal and paternal kin tend to live in the same areas among both the Yao and Tumbuka. Table 4 shows, among other things, that 52 percent of Yao women's paternal uncles and 29 percent of Tumbuka men's maternal uncles live in the same TA. This implies that although village level coresidence is low for both these types of non-preferred relatives (11.0 and 1.8 percent respectively), they remain relatively proximate.[12]

There are considerable gender differences in both current marital and health status of surviving relatives, presented in Table 5. Specifically, between 84-91 percent of the four types of paternal uncles are currently married, and 62-69 percent of aunts. This gender differential in reported marital status is consistent with the average spousal age difference of 7 years since the latter imply that women are more likely to be widowed than men.

Uncles' and aunts' health status was also reported to be slightly better than parents' health by both

male and female respondents. Using a 10-point scale on which a "1" referred to very poor health and a "10" to very good health, respondents reported a mean score of 6.0 for their mothers, 6.4 for their fathers, 6.9 for aunts, and 7.4 for their uncles. There is no significant ethnic difference in either of these reports.

Table 5 about here

In summary, there appears to be some ethnic bias in reported survivorship of uncles and aunts insofar as there are relatively few maternal aunts among the Tumbuka and paternal uncles among the Yao. This bias will likely affect ethnic-specific analyses and estimates but I assume that its effect on analyses in which the whole dataset is used will be relatively neutral since the net effect of the ethnic-specific undercounts is a general undercount of both maternal and paternal kin.

In addition, the bulk of aunts and uncles who are reported tend to live within the same TA, irrespective of lineage and ethnicity, and uncles are more likely to be married and score higher on health reports than aunts and than respondents' parents.

4. The Likelihood and Size of Transfers

Survey respondents were asked about two types of transfers. The first referred to material goods and money that (a) could be assigned a monetary value, and (b) had occurred "since the beginning of the last growing season," roughly 9 months before data collection. The second referred to the provision of services over the last month which could be assigned some time value. I explore each in turn.[13]

i. Intergenerational transfers of material goods and money

a. Frequency of material/monetary transfers

Most of the transfers in this category were not monetary. The most common examples were assorted quantities of agricultural products like maize, groundnuts, rice, and cassava, and other goods, especially

clothes, shoes, and soap. Where the respondent did not report the cost of these gifts, a monetary value was assigned based on the reported quantity of goods and local market prices. Where the respondent did not specify the amount of a monetary gift (in less than 10 percent of cases), those gifts were assigned the value of 50 Malawi Kwacha, equivalent to the value of monetary gifts whose value had been specified by the respondent.[14] It should also be noted that "since the beginning of the last growing season" was specified because prior research by one of the investigators had indicated that this reference period would be more easily understood than the more open-ended "since this time last year."

Table 6 about here

Table 6 presents data on both the likelihood and value of transfers between sampled households and associated elder kin. It distinguishes between three types of monetary transfers: unilateral resource flows from the respondent to his/her kin; unilateral flows in the opposite direction; and bi-directional flows. The first panel contains the observed distribution of these transfers by type of relative, the second the value of these flows.

In the aggregate, both women and men report having been involved in one of these three types of transfers with 77.1 percent of surviving parents and 38.4 percent of surviving uncles and aunts. There is minimal (and statistically insignificant) gender difference in these reported transfer behaviors with respect to parents (74.9 and 79.8 percent of women and men respectively [Pearson's $\div^2$=3.74; Pr=.053]), but men were significantly more likely than women to report transfer behavior with uncles and aunts (38.4 versus 30.9 percent; Pearson's $\div^2$=13.90; Pr<.001).

Gender variation is more marked in the type of transfer behavior.[15] First, although both men and women are more involved in two-way transfer behavior than in either type of unilateral transfer, men's overall participation (40.3 and 11.1 percent with respect to parents and uncles/aunts, respectively) is significantly higher than the equivalent distributions for women (34.1 and 8.4 percent). Second, men tend to give

unilaterally more frequently than women, to 33.9 percent of parents and 16.4 percent of uncles/aunts, respectively, compared to 22.2 and 11.6 percent among women. Pearson's χ^2 tests (not shown) confirm that this gender difference is significant across both parents and 3 of the 4 types of uncles and aunts (the exception is maternal uncles). Finally, men report far fewer unilateral receipts from both mothers and fathers. Gender differences in transfers to/from uncles and aunts were not statistically significant.

Consistent with both the traditional structural-functionalist and newer theoretical paradigms discussed above, we expected to see some effects of traditional structural arrangements on the patterns of resource flows, but also observe significant relations with non-preferred kin. Thus, we expected the patrilineal Tumbuka to emphasize ties with paternal rather than with maternal uncles and aunts, that the matrilineal Yao, in contrast, would emphasize ties with maternal rather than with paternal uncles and aunts, and that there would be fewer lineal differences among the Chewa. But in each of these cases we also expected relatively intensive transfer relationships with kin from the non-preferred lineage.

Figure 1 presents a set of graphs that depict the percentage of surviving kin with whom, respectively, currently-married female and male respondents report having had a transfer relationship in the preceding 9 months, by type of kin and ethnicity. Due to the relatively small number of Lomwe and Ngoni in the sample, data are only presented for the Tumbuka, Chewa, and Yao.

Figure 1 about here

At a general level the distributions highlight three points. First, they confirm that aunts and uncles appear to be significant players in working-aged adults transfers networks across all ethnic groups, although they also suggest that such relationships are most frequent among the Tumbuka, and least frequent among the Chewa. Second, in all groups, people report transfers with both preferred and non-preferred kin (though there are some differences which I describe below). And finally, transfers relationships with parents tend to be more intensive than those with uncles and aunts, and are also similar across the three ethnic groups, at

least with respect to unilateral transfers from the respondent to the parent. Thus, between 44-50 percent of men and 35-43 percent of women claim to have made a unilateral transfer to their mothers, and 37-45 percent of men and 24-32 percent of women made an equivalent transfer to their fathers.

The distributions also highlight some differences, however. In particular, ethnic differences in transfer relationships with preferred and non-preferred uncles and aunts appear to be both consistent with, and antithetical to, structural expectations. The consistency stems from the fact that respondent's two-way relationships with uncles and aunts tend to be higher with preferred kin. For example, Yao men tend to have more two-way transfer relationships with maternal uncles and aunts than Tumbuka men. Similarly, Tumbuka men tend to have more two-way relationships with paternal uncles and aunts, and Tumbuka women have far more two-way relationships with, and make many more unilateral transfers to, paternal aunts.

But there are also some antithetical patterns. Among the matrilineal Yao, for example, the most frequent source of unilateral receipts was from men's paternal uncles. Yao women's paternal uncles were also much more likely to have been a source of unilateral transfers than a recipient. The same pattern can be seen among the patrilineal Tumbuka, since both men's and women's maternal uncles are the most important source of unilateral transfers (equivalent to the woman's father). Similarly, across the three ethnic groups, the three types of transfer relationships are comparable for women's maternal aunts.[16]

In summary, underlying kin structures appear to affect the patterning of lateral intergenerational transfers through the relative balance of gifts, receipts, and bilateral exchanges. In general, one is more likely to be engaged in bilateral exchanges with preferred kin. Non-preferred kin show up most prominently as sources of unilateral support for both male and female respondents.

b. The value of material/monetary transfers

Thus far, I have only concentrated on the reported distribution of lateral and vertical intergenerational transfers irrespective of the value of the actual transfer. This overlooks the extent to which the value of transfers can themselves vary systematically. Giving a relative a single kilo of maize, for example, may fulfill an obligation to share one's wealth in narrow symbolic terms, but in terms of the provision of actual assistance, it is far less helpful than giving that relative a 50 kilogram bag of maize. Both of these were relatively common material transfers and have thus far been treated equally.

In order to differentiate between the value of these types of gifts, I now shift the focus of the analysis in order to explore the relative magnitude of these flows between a working-aged respondent and his/her older kin. These data are presented in Table 7. In accordance with Table 6, there is a differentiation between 3 types of transfers: unilateral flows from the respondent to kin, unilateral flows from kin to respondent, and two-way flows. The latter is the value of gifts received minus the value of gifts given in a two-way transfer.

Table 7 about here

Three aggregate patterns can be observed in Table 7. First, the value of unilateral receipts is larger than unilateral gifts across all types of relatives with the exception of women's parents. Second, the net value of two-way intergenerational transfers is negative. Again, this is true in relation to all older relatives with the exception of men's mothers and maternal aunts. And third, the value of husbands' transfers is higher than wives'.

Intra-kin and gender-specific patterns can also be observed. In particular, differences in the average value of a transfer between parents and uncles and aunts are specific to the type of transfer. For example, the value of a unilateral transfer made by both female and male respondents to their mothers and fathers was higher than an equivalent transfer made to all 4 types of uncles and aunts. But there was no equivalent difference in the value of unilateral receipts in the women's data (148 and 142 Kwacha for gifts from parents

and uncles/aunts, respectively). And in the men's data, the value of gifts received from paternal uncles exceeded the value of gifts from fathers.

Second, there appear to be differences among parents. While women gave more valuable transfers to their fathers than to their mothers, men gave more valuable transfers to their mothers than to their fathers. In addition, the value of unilateral transfers that women receive from their parents is less than the value of transfers that they unilaterally give (the difference is most significant in relation to fathers). The opposite is true for men. Finally, while the net value of women's two-way transfers with both fathers and mothers is close to zero (-2.5 and –1.8, respectively), the equivalent value of men's two-way transfers are very different, -186.9 for fathers, and 115.8 for mothers.

The distributions by type of transfer in Table 7 raise two sets of questions. The first is the extent to which the overall distribution of resources between different type of kin varies. And the second is the extent to which there is ethnic variation in these patterns. Table 8 attempts to answer both these questions. It presents the total, aggregated value of exchanges between respondents and older kin, measured in Malawi Kwacha, by type of kin and ethnicity. It was estimated using the algorithm

$$TV_k = (N_k{}^*Pr_g{}^*V_g) + (N_k{}^*Pr_r{}^*V_r) + (N_k{}^*Pr_m{}^*V_m)$$

where TV_k refers to the total net value of all transfers to and from a given relative of type k, N_k refers to the number of reported relatives of type k, Pr to the proportion of these with whom the respondent reported a transfer relationship, V to the monetary value of the transfers, and subscripts $_g$, $_r$, and $_m$ refer to the direction of the transfer, respectively, unilateral gifts from the respondent to kin, unilateral receipt of gifts from kin by respondent, and two-way exchanges.

Table 8 about here

The most notable result to emerge from Table 8 is that, from the perspective of these working-aged adult respondents, there is a net loss of resources to parents and a net gain from uncles and aunts. Moreover,

notwithstanding ethnic differences in the structure of these respondents' intergenerational support networks, discussed above, the direction of this gain to loss ratio is the same across all three ethnic groups. Among the Yao, Chewa and Tumbuka, respectively, net transfers with parents amount to loss of 3,491, 3,653 and 28,964 Kwacha, and net transfers with uncles and aunts amount to a gain of 7,418, 11,295, and 28,313 Kwacha.

Table 8 also highlights some ethnic differences in type of support that signal an interaction between descent systems and gender, with the latter operating both in the older generation, and among working-aged adults. Specifically, the effect of lineage on the patterning of resources manifests itself not in terms of divisions between paternal and maternal kin, but in divisions among uncles and aunts. The combined husband's and wife's data show, for example, that among the matrilineal Yao, the primary gain to respondents' households comes from husband's maternal and paternal aunts. In contrast, the primary gains to both Tumbuka and Chewa households come from paternal and maternal uncles.

On the other hand, with the exception of the Chewa, among whom net flows to all four types of uncles – husband's and wife's paternal and maternal uncles – are positive, and those to all four types of aunts are negative, these patterns tend to be concentrated in the men's data. In fact, among Tumbuka women, a slightly different pattern can be seen. They report net losses to paternal uncles and aunts, and net gains to maternal uncles and aunts. This is consistent with the patterns discussed above in reference to Figure 1 since it implies that one draws on support from non-preferred kin while being more likely to be involved in bidirectional exchanges with preferred kin.

ii. Intergenerational transfers of services

The second type of transfers data captured transfers of services over the last month. Common examples of women's assistance included cooking, collecting firewood and childcare. Men, in contrast, focused more on agricultural duties and various building maintenance or improvement tasks. Because of differences in the

format of the question used for parents and uncles and aunts, the comparisons discussed here focus on the frequency of assistance rather than qualitative differences in the specific type. The latter has been reviewed elsewhere (Weinreb et al 2001).

Table 9 describes the distribution of this type of assistance in the last month in these Malawi data. It distinguishes between "no reported transfers of services" whatsoever, and the same three directional types of assistance noted above: unilateral assistance from the respondent to the relative, vice-versa, and bilateral assistance.

Table 9 about here

According to Table 9, the intergenerational transfer of services occurs much more frequently among vertically than laterally related kin. For example, respondents reported no provision of services whatsoever (in the last month) with 79.2 percent of surviving uncles and aunts, but only 34.2 percent of parents. There was also minimal difference in this distribution by type of kin among female and male respondents.

Among the three directional types of assistance, respondents were most likely to report that they had unilaterally assisted their relative in the last month, and least likely to report that they had received unreciprocated assistance. Bilateral assistance represented an intermediate category. The respective distributions were, in relation to parents, 39.5, 19.5, and 7.8 percent, and for uncles and aunts, 10.0, 5.9, and 4.9 percent. Here, too, there was little variation between female and male respondents.

Third, although there are marked differences in the frequency with which respondents assist their parents as opposed to their uncles and aunts – respectively, 38.5 and 10.0 percent for in terms of unilateral assistance and 19.5 and 5.9 percent in terms of bilateral assistance – there is little difference in the frequency with which respondents receive assistance from these sources. Overall, 7.9 percent reported receipt of unilateral assistance from parents, and 4.9 from uncles and aunts. The difference was even smaller for women: 6.6 and 4.9 percent respectively. In short, while uncles and aunts are much less frequent recipients

of services from these working-age respondents than the respondents' parents, they appear to play almost as large a role as unilateral donors of services.

Finally, there appear to be some minimal gender differences in the distribution of this type of service-based assistance. With the exception of maternal aunts, men appear more likely than women to informally assist uncles and aunts, women are more likely than men to unilaterally assist their mothers (43.7 and 32.4 percent respectively), and men are more likely than women to have received unilateral assistance from their mothers (11.8 and 7.1 percent respectively).

The last of these in particular may be an important result since it highlights an important structural constraint on women's ability to play a leading role as caregiver even in the face of the commonly acknowledged facts that women in rural sub-Saharan African societies are both much more likely to have a caregiving role, and to work longer hours than men. As shown in Table 4, these working-aged respondents are rarely coresident with their uncles and aunts. Non-coresidence places women at a disadvantage with respect to the provision of this kind of assistance because the burden of work in the domestic sphere falls much more heavily on them than on men, which means that there is some competition between working in or around one's own home and providing intergenerational assistance elsewhere. In contrast, because men tend to have more free time, it is much easier for them to provide such assistance if the need arises. Indeed, the higher female than male assistance to mothers, with whom coresidence tends to be much higher, further validates this interpretation.[17]

It is useful to explore ethnic variation in these patterns. Figure 2 presents these data disaggregated, as above, by the three main ethnic groups. Four main patterns can be observed.

Figure 2 about here

First, male and female respondents in all three groups report themselves more likely to have assisted parents than uncles and aunts with the exception of Yao husbands. The assistance the latter direct towards

their mothers is roughly equivalent to the assistance they direct to their maternal and paternal aunts and paternal uncles; but their assistance to fathers is less frequent than these lateral intergenational transfers.

Second, five of the six vertical intergenerational transfers that women make in these data (ie. to parents among the three groups) emphasize giving of such assistance over an exchange. The exception, once again, is found among the Yao. Roughly the same percentage of Yao women both direct services to, and exchange it with, their mothers (37.5 and 39.6 percent, respectively). The same is true of Yao men in relation to both parents, and of Chewa men in relation to mothers. In short, only among the Tumbuka do both men and women report more unilateral transfers of services to both parents than exchanges of assistance with those parents.

Third, while there appears to be little difference in the frequency with which respondents receive assistance, this is more true with respect to the Tumbuka than to the Yao or Chewa. Yao women report significantly more receipts of services from maternal aunts and uncles and parents than from paternal aunts and uncles. Yao men report fewest unilateral receipts from fathers. Similarly, Chewa men report significantly more receipts from mothers than from all other kin.

Finally, the gender differences in the distribution of services also vary somewhat by ethnicity. In particular, while both Yao and Tumbuka men report higher assistance to uncles and aunts than their wives, there is no apparent difference among the Chewa.

Discussion

A number of results have emerged from this analysis. First and foremost, both vertical and lateral intergenerational transfers are common. Working-aged adults have frequent transfer relationships with parents, uncles and aunts in all three settings. The article therefore confirms that a narrow focus on vertical intergenerational relations in these settings misses a large part of the intergenerational transfer system. It is

likely that this is also the case in other societies with extended family systems.

There are also systemic patterns in the direction of resource flows. In terms of material transfers and goods there appears to be a net flow of resources from uncles and aunts to parents but, in terms of the overall network, that flow operates through a working-aged adult link. This emphasizes the extent to which vertical intergenerational transfers are embedded in a wider set of lateral intergenerational relations. And it also implies the existence of an institutionalized network for the transfer of resources among branches of the family. In a simple version of this network, for example, resources could go from uncle_1 to nephew_1 to father_1, then to father_1's nephew_2 to father_2 to nephew_3, and so on. Specific types of time-series transfer data would be needed to capture these flows empirically. But the idea is theoretically appealing.

Analyses have also shown that while these transfer systems have distinct ethnic-specific features, they are at least partly contingent on preexisting lineal structures. For example, data presented in Table 8 imply that these preexisting structures privilege kin of certain gender for certain roles. Thus, among the matrilineal Yao, both maternal and paternal aunts are the largest source of material transfers, and among the patrilineal Tumbuka, both paternal and maternal uncles are the largest source. This is notable because it treads a middle path between both the older "structure of jural obligations" paradigm and newer interpretive paradigms discussed above. Specifically, it shows that traditional definitions of "preferred kin" that emphasized the centrality of lineage do not accurately capture the distribution of transfer relationships within the extended family. The actual level of transfers is rarely higher with preferred than non-preferred uncles and aunts, even if the legitimating discourse that underlies those transfers differs from "obligation" to "act of grace." On the other hand, lineage systems appear to have a greater effect than is recognized in more contemporary scholarship by predisposing individuals to transfer relationships along gender lines.

Gender is also important for another reason. That is, there appear to be distinct gender differences in the frequency and magnitude of transfers. Men tend to be more likely than women to act as donors of both

formal and informal assistance, whether in their roles as fathers or uncles. In addition, men give more valuable gifts than women. This is the case both according to both the reports of men and women (ie., the latter report that they receive more valuable goods, and receive them more often, from male than female relatives). While this gender difference may reflect men's greater control of family resources in these settings, it also has implications for the relative well-being of elderly men and women. It implies that elderly men may potentially be in a more precarious position than women because their network of donors is smaller. That is, they provide more material goods to their extended kin, and to the extent that the structure of norms follows the frequency of behavior, if it is more common for them to give than to request assistance, their requests for assistance may fall lower on the hierarchy of transfer obligations than, say, the requests of their sisters. These effects may be particularly noticeable among widowed men, since where they are still married they can presumably claim some rights to transfers received by their wives.

Conclusion

These results in turn beg several follow-up questions. Are rural Africans aware of the aggregate patterns in their relationships with parents, uncles and aunts? What criteria do they use to choose transfer partners from the universe of possible kin? How do they justify such choices publicly (and how do they justify non-transfer relationships)? How do they actively strategize to ensure adequate support for themselves and their dependents in both the short and long-term? On whom do they rely if they lack a favored type of kin? To what extent are these intergenerational patterns contingent on multiple sets of relations in a wider network involving brothers and sisters, cousins, and unrelated friends? More broadly still, how, if at all, do these patterns vary across matrilineal and patrilineal societies? And to what extent will the ongoing fertility and mortality transitions, which are both reducing family sizes throughout SSA, but also, through AIDS, changing age structures among adults, affect prospective intergenerational transfer systems? These and other

questions remain unanswered. But it is useful to pose them, if only to reemphasize the key substantive point of this article, the fact that intergenerational transfer relations with parents are embedded in more encompassing systems of family transfers, and the particular form of the latter is itself responsive to broader cultural and structural transitions.

Figure 1. **The percentage of surviving kin to whom women and their husbands have given, from whom they have received, or with whom they have exchanged material goods or money in the preceding 9 months, by type of kin and respondent's ethnic group.**

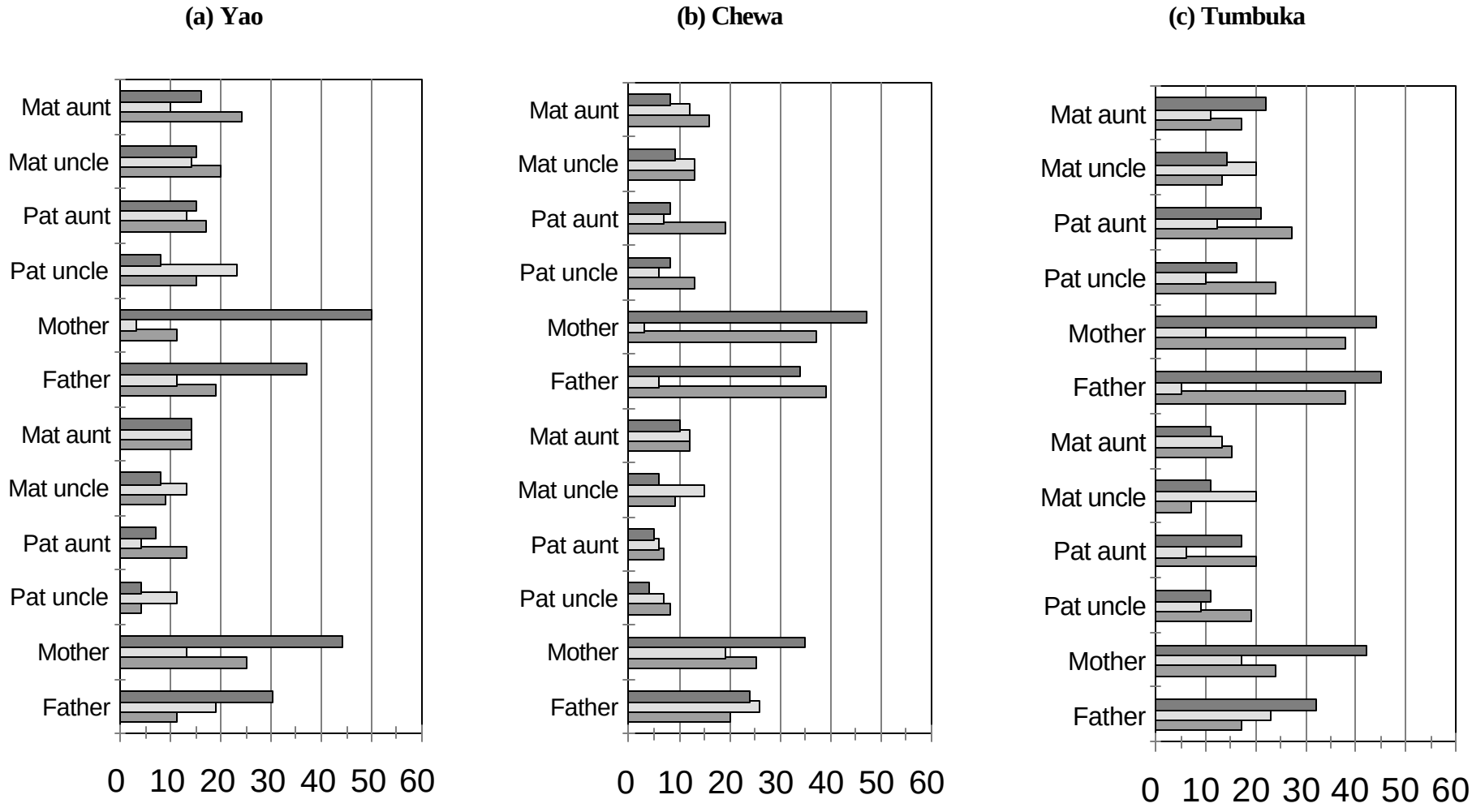

Figure 2. **The percentage of surviving kin to whom women and their husbands have given, from whom they have received, or with whom they have exchanged informal assistance in the last month, by type of kin and respondent's ethnic group.**

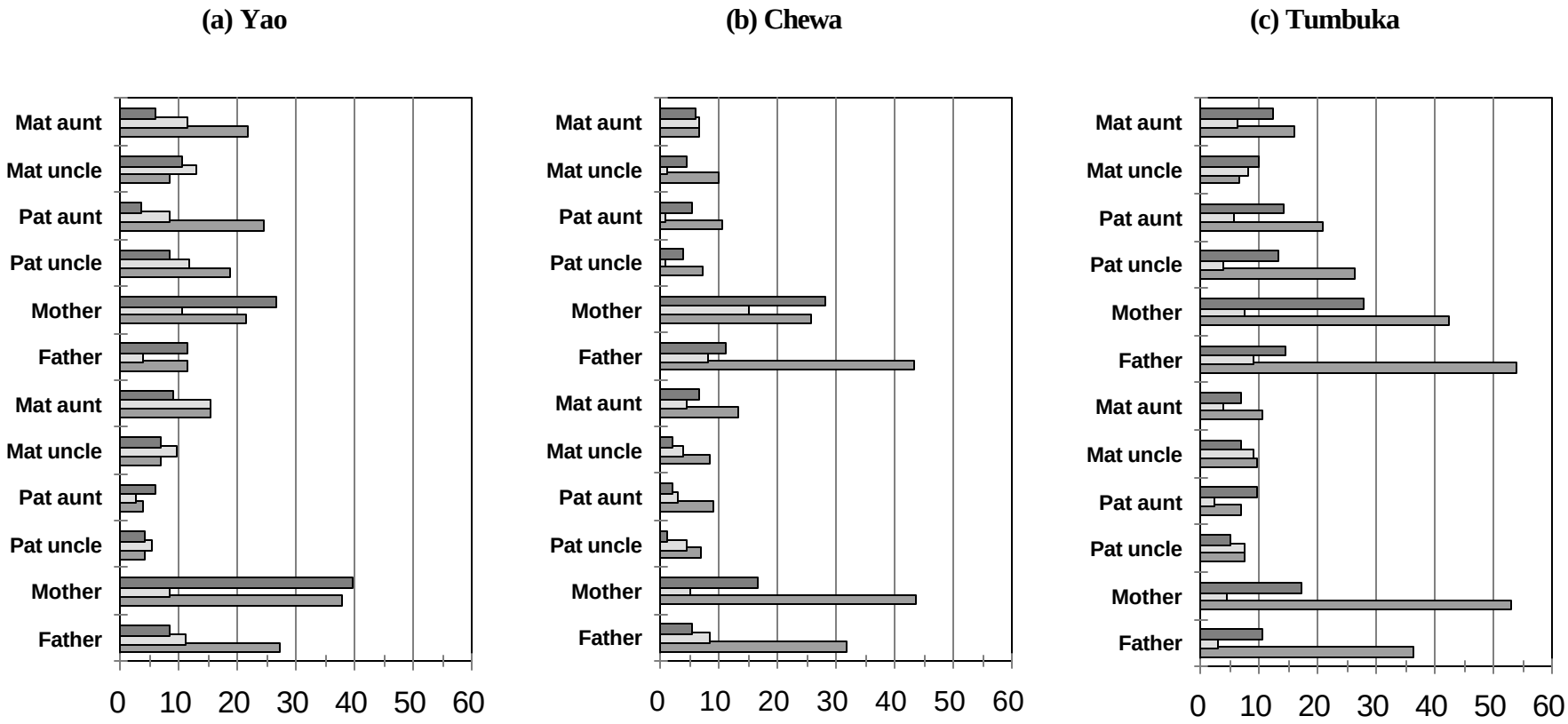

Table 1. Number of Surviving Relatives (And Transfer Dyads) Associated with Households, by Category

	Currently married women	
Type of kin	**Husband interviewed**	**Husband not interviewed**
Wife's natal kin:		
Father	279	110
Mother	355	140
Paternal uncles	540	229
Paternal aunts	559	196
Maternal uncles	621	227
Maternal aunts	668	257
Wife's affinal (Husband's natal) kin:		
Father	223	
Mother	281	
Paternal uncles	538	
Paternal aunts	489	
Maternal uncles	623	
Maternal aunts	552	
Number of surviving kin in older generation	5,728	1,159

Table 2. **Ethnicity of surviving parents and uncles and aunts, by respondent's region of residence**

Ethnic group	Southern region	Central region	Northern region	All
Yao	786	18	14	818
Chewa	84	1,823	53	1,960
Tumbuka	2	30	1,233	1,265
Lomwe	245	13	0	258
Ngoni	119	142	29	290
Other	49	154	42	245
Total	1,285	2,180	1,371	4,836

Table 3. Number of Surviving Kin by Ethnicity, and Reported Survival Ratios Among Given Groups

Type of kin	Yao	Chewa	Tum	All[1]
Wife's natal kin:				
Father	37	95	78	260
Mother	48	127	95	332
Paternal uncles	75	212	123	495
Paternal aunts	86	191	147	515
Maternal uncles	76	261	150	576
Maternal aunts	93	260	162	614
Ratio of:				
wife's mother:father	1.30	1.34	1.22	1.28
wife's uncles/aunts:parents	3.88	4.16	3.36	3.72
wife's aunts:uncles	1.19	0.95	1.13	1.05
wife's paternal uncles/aunts: maternal	0.95	0.77	0.87	0.85
Wife's affinal (Husband's natal) kin:				
Father	27	65	56	171
Mother	38	75	69	214
Paternal uncles	86	145	116	405
Paternal aunts	95	134	73	364
Maternal uncles	87	217	113	489
Maternal aunts	70	178	83	401
Ratio of:				
husband's mother:father	1.41	1.15	1.23	1.25
husband's uncles/aunts:parents	5.20	4.81	3.08	4.31
husband's aunts:uncles	0.95	0.86	0.68	0.86
husband's paternal uncles/aunts: maternal	1.15	0.71	0.96	0.86
all mothers:fathers	1.34	1.26	1.22	1.27
all uncles/aunts: parents	4.45	4.41	3.24	3.95
all aunts:uncles	1.06	0.91	0.93	0.96
all paternal uncles/aunts: maternal	1.05	0.74	0.90	0.86
Number of surviving kin in older generation	818	1,960	1,265	4,836

[1]Includes all ethnic groups listed in Table 2.

Table 4. Residential proximity of older kin to respondent, by type of kin and, where kin resides in the same village or TA, by ethnicity (%).

Type of kin	Same village[1]				Same TA[2]				Other TA	City	Abroad
	Yao	*Che*	*Tum*	All[3]	*Yao*	*Che*	*Tum*	All[3]			
Wife's natal kin:											
Father	*27.9*	*17.5*	*7.1*	17.3	*25.6*	*55.7*	*69.4*	52.7	18.4	7.9	3.6
Mother	*65.5*	*29.5*	*10.6*	32.0	*23.6*	*52.7*	*69.2*	48.7	11.1	5.4	2.8
Paternal uncles	*11.0*	*6.1*	*2.2*	6.7	*52.4*	*32.8*	*23.7*	34.4	32.0	17.8	9.1
Paternal aunts	*16.1*	*7.0*	*3.1*	8.3	*48.4*	*34.0*	*22.4*	32.9	37.8	17.6	3.4
Maternal uncles	*34.4*	*10.0*	*2.5*	10.6	*30.0*	*36.1*	*21.9*	32.0	25.5	21.8	10.2
Maternal aunts	*43.8*	*16.0*	*1.1*	15.6	*29.5*	*33.2*	*24.7*	29.5	30.4	17.4	7.1
Husband's natal kin:											
Father	*13.5*	*46.3*	*82.8*	48.4	*46.0*	*20.7*	*3.1*	22.8	15.7	10.8	2.2
Mother	*53.1*	*52.2*	*77.9*	60.9	*32.7*	*26.7*	*5.8*	21.7	11.4	5.0	1.1
Paternal uncles	*10.9*	*16.2*	*52.7*	24.5	*22.7*	*28.6*	*4.7*	20.6	24.5	24.9	5.4
Paternal aunts	*11.8*	*17.3*	*15.7*	14.1	*43.6*	*29.1*	*25.5*	31.1	32.9	19.2	2.7
Maternal uncles	*13.8*	*18.7*	*5.2*	13.6	*32.8*	*24.5*	*24.2*	25.4	29.5	20.9	10.6
Maternal aunts	*24.3*	*21.0*	*1.8*	17.8	*32.4*	*26.9*	*28.8*	29.2	29.7	16.5	6.9

[1]Includes coresidence in the same household ; [2] TA refers to Traditional Authority, and administrative unit between the village and district; [3]Includes all ethnic groups listed in Table 2.

Table 5. **Current marital status and health status of uncles and aunts, by type of kin.**

Type of kin	currently married (%)	current health status[1]
Wife's natal kin:		
Father	n/a	6.5
Mother	n/a	6.0
Paternal uncles	84.3	7.5
Paternal aunts	62.4	6.8
Maternal uncles	85.6	7.4
Maternal aunts	68.6	7.1
Husband's natal kin:		
Father	n/a	6.3
Mother	n/a	5.9
Paternal uncles	88.1	7.3
Paternal aunts	65.2	6.9
Maternal uncles	90.2	7.5
Maternal aunts	67.0	6.9
All fathers	n/a	6.4
All mothers	n/a	6.0
All uncles	87.1	7.4
All aunts	66.0	6.9

[1] Derived from a 10-point scale in which 1 refers to very poor health and 10 to very good health

Table 6. Percent of Older Relatives (K) with whom Respondents (R) had Monetary Transfer Relationship, by Type of Relative $_k$ and Direction of Transfer

	Unilateral $R \rightarrow K_k$	Unilateral $K_k \rightarrow R$	Two-way	All
Wife's (natal) kin:				
Father	19.1	22.7	27.4	69.3
Mother	24.9	15.6	39.4	79.9
Paternal uncles	10.6	8.5	5.9	25.0
Paternal aunts	13.7	6.5	9.9	30.0
Maternal uncles	10.2	15.4	8.3	33.9
Maternal aunts	12.3	12.3	9.5	34.1
Both maternal parents	22.2	18.6	34.1	74.9
All maternal uncles/aunts	11.6	10.9	8.4	30.9
Husband's (natal) kin:				
Father	33.2	6.7	37.2	77.1
Mother	34.5	4.3	42.7	81.8
Paternal uncles	16.0	11.0	8.9	35.9
Paternal aunts	19.8	8.4	11.7	39.9
Maternal uncles	13.6	13.3	11.7	38.7
Maternal aunts	16.7	10.3	12.1	39.1
Both paternal parents	33.9	5.6	40.3	79.8
All paternal uncles/aunts	16.4	10.9	11.1	38.4
Wife's and husband's kin:				
All parents	27.4	12.8	36.8	77.1
All uncles	12.5	12.2	8.8	33.5
All aunts	15.3	9.5	10.7	35.5
All uncles and aunts	13.9	10.9	9.7	34.5
All kin	16.6	11.3	15.1	42.9

Table 7. Value of Monetary Transfers Between Respondent (R) and Older Relatives (K) in Malawi Kwacha, by Type of Relative $_k$ and Direction of Transfer

	Unilateral R –> K_k	Unilateral K_k –> R	Two-way[1]
Wife's (natal) kin:			
Father	299	141	-2.5
Mother	183	156	-1.8
Paternal uncles	108	177	-16.9
Paternal aunts	118	137	-7.5
Maternal uncles	118	152	-13.4
Maternal aunts	117	112	-47.4
Both maternal parents	226	148	-2.0
All maternal uncles/aunts	116	142	-23.0
Husband's (natal) kin:			
Father	295	375	-186.9
Mother	433	492	115.8
Paternal uncles	147	480	-233.8
Paternal aunts	125	301	-46.4
Maternal uncles	149	245	-137.5
Maternal aunts	139	270	48.6
Both paternal parents	373	429	-8.0
All paternal uncles/aunts	140	318	-84.3
Wife's and husband's kin:			
All parents	307	202	-4.9
All uncles	134	252	-110.2
All aunts	125	194	-11.5
All uncles and aunts	129	227	-56.7
All kin	188	221	-31.6

[1] Value of two-way gift = (Value of gifts given) *minus* (value of gifts received)

Table 8. **Total Net Value of All Transfers Between Respondents and Older Kin, Summed Over all Respondents, by Type of Kin and Ethnicity (unit=Malawi Kwacha).**

	Yao	Chewa	Tumbuka
Wife's (natal) kin:			
Father	218	-457	-1,250
Mother	-1,843	1,292	-5,300
Paternal uncles	-37	2,172	-100
Paternal aunts	-958	-435	-2,207
Maternal uncles	83	4,618	5,716
Maternal aunts	-299	-779	2,412
All parents	-1,625	835	-6,550
All uncles and aunts	-1,211	5,576	5,820
Husband's (natal) kin:			
Father	1,368	1,174	-1,545
Mother	-3,234	-5,662	-20,869
Paternal uncles	0	5,523	13,582
Paternal aunts	6,298	-1,811	904
Maternal uncles	-2,355	6,517	7,083
Maternal aunts	4,685	-4,511	924
All parents	-1,867	-4,488	-22,414
All uncles and aunts	8,629	5,719	22,493
Wife's and husband's kin:			
All parents	-3,491	-3,653	-28,964
All uncles	-2,308	18,830	26280
All aunts	9,726	-7,535	2033
All uncles and aunts	7,418	11,295	28,313
All kin	3,926	7,642	-651

Table 9. **Percent of Older Relatives (K) with whom Respondents (R) Exchanged Services in the Last Month, by Type of Relative $_k$ and Direction of Assistance**

	No Informal Assistance Reported	Whether Informal Assistance Reported		
		Unilateral R –> K_k	Unilateral K_k –> R	Two-way
Women's kin:				
Father	45.9	36.4	6.9	10.9
Mother	26.6	43.6	6.9	23.0
Paternal uncles	86.4	6.1	4.5	3.3
Paternal aunts	81.7	8.8	2.8	6.4
Maternal uncles	81.0	7.0	7.3	4.7
Maternal aunts	76.1	11.8	5.1	6.3
Both wife's parents	35.0	40.5	6.9	17.7
All women's uncles and aunts	81.1	8.5	5.0	5.2
Husband's kin:				
Father	41.7	39.9	5.8	12.6
Mother	31.3	31.3	12.1	25.3
Paternal uncles	76.4	13.0	5.2	6.5
Paternal aunts	76.3	14.3	3.7	6.8
Maternal uncles	78.4	9.2	5.0	7.4
Maternal aunts	75.9	12.3	6.7	6.7
Both husband's parents	35.9	35.1	9.3	19.6
All men's uncles and aunts	76.7	12.0	5.2	6.9
Wife's and husband's kin:				
All parents	35.3	38.4	7.8	18.5
All uncles				
All aunts				
All uncles and aunts	79.2	10.0	5.1	5.9
All kin				

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1. This variation is both "real" and, in certain situations, a function of variation in researchers' data collection and analytic techniques. Refer, for example, to the ongoing debates about nucleation of family ties in South Africa that pit, among others, Russell (1994) and Siqwana-Ndulo (1998) against Burman (1996) and Steyn and Viljoen (1996).

2. Ainsworth and Dayton (2001) use data from the Kagera region of Tanzania. These are the best data on socioeconomic consequences of AIDS for the elderly in Africa currently available. They are drawn from a relatively large population-based sample, are longitudinal, and they therefore avoid size and selectivity issues that typically plague other studies of AIDS effects.

3. Note that the more general literature on the effects of parental morbidity and death on surviving children shows largely parallel better-than-expected effects. Although parental death from AIDS appears to have increased the number of street children in urban areas throughout Africa (Ryder et al 1994), virtually all orphaned children in rural areas remain under the care of kin, including the few who remain in a child-headed household proximate to their kin (Urassa et al 1997; Ntozi et al 1999), and with the exception of some stunting, which peaks and then begins to normalize in the 4-6 and 7-9 month period respectively, these orphans appear little different to non-orphaned children in terms of general health characteristics (Ainsworth and Semali 2000).

4. More generally, Malawi has a relatively high dependency ratio, consistent with both high (though falling) fertility of 6.7 children per woman, and with the impact of AIDS on the middle generation of working-aged adults. Roughly 5 percent of the total population is over 60, and that proportion is increasing rapidly (World Bank 2001; United Nations 2001). Malawi has been relatively stable politically, both under the 30-year rule of Hastings Banda and his Malawi Congress Party, and since a multiparty system was introduced in 1994 (Kaspin 1995).

5. Some of the differences between Mitchell on one hand and Brantley and Verdon on the other may stem from some linguistic confusion as well as local variations in familial relations. Nurse (1978:25), for example, suggests that among the Chewa the *pfuko* or lineal clan name is inherited directly from the mother while the *ciëongo* or address/praise name is inherited from the *pfuko* of the father. Individuals' social identities are therefore derived from both parents' natal kin, underscoring the legitimacy of links to both sets of kin.

6. Hirschmann does not mention the ethnicity of his informants, but as his fieldwork was conducted in the areas around Zomba, which are predominantly Yao or Lomwe, these results are consistent with underlying matrilineal structural characteristics identified by Mitchell (1956, 1962).

7. Transcripts of these interviews are available from the author upon request.

8. As in the other rounds of the MDIC, local high-school graduates were selected and trained as interviewers in each of the three areas. On average, eight candidates applied for each interviewer position, and selections were made on the basis of written tests and interactions with supervisors, all of whom were University of Malawi social science graduates, and each of whom was made responsible for 5 interviewers. There was strict supervision of both interviewers and supervisors in the field. Questionnaires with missing items or inconsistencies were sent back to the field the same or next day.

In addition, because the FTP is part of a longitudinal project a small gifting strategy was practiced in order to maintain the goodwill of the respondents. Soap and 1 kilogram of kitchen salt was given to every respondent. Supervisors and interviewers repeatedly asserted that this methodological strategy was

the main reason for the high response rate – in particular, for the fact that no-one claimed to be "too busy" – and for what they asserted was the high data quality. I discuss these data quality issues as I introduce different sections of the data below.

9. Questions were also asked about the respondents' siblings. These data are discussed in Weinreb, Behrman and Mtika (2001).

10. There are two reasons for limiting the analysis in this way. The first is that this article is, in large part, concerned with establishing some baseline results for a single standard population. Women whose husbands were not interviewed only have "half" of the available intergenerational kin network represented in these data, which makes them inherently different. The second reason is that, as indicated above, this article is also concerned with highlighting ethnic differences in transfer behavior. Because only 203 women were interviewed whose husbands were not interviewed the "single" woman's dataset contains data on only 1,159 of these women's elderly kin (5.7 intergenerational dyads per household). Given that these are spread over a relatively large number of types of kin it provides too little leverage to identify ethnic differences.

Finally, it should also be noted that of the 723 women who were interviewed, a further 26 were currently unmarried. Data from these women are also not used in this article since they, too, are missing half of their potential intergenerational network.

11. This methodology was adopted in order to generate transfers data on all relational pairings in a predetermined universe of kin, including kin with whom there were no transfers. This type of data is necessary in order to allow us to identify characteristics of those involved in a given relational pairing – for example, between a woman and her maternal uncle – both where transfers were and were not reported. Such identifications cannot be made where, as is more common in research on non-vertical transfers, respondents' free-list the people with whom they exchange money, goods and assistance, and ignore those with whom they have no exchanges.

12. These residential characteristics also introduce some relatively complicated epistemological issues since they make both the structure of one's family support network and related characteristics like place of residence partly endogenous. For example, if, as shown in Table 4, the residential proximity of one's relatives has large effects on one's transfer relationship with them, then this leaves open the choice of where one should choose to live. One could, for example, remain in one's natal village with a relatively miserly uncle, move to another village in which a more generous uncle has some spare land, move to a large tobacco farm where another uncle is a foreman, go to the city with or without kin, or divide the household, leaving one's wife in the natal village and going to the city to work. In short, residential choices, I suspect, are affected by expectations of support from different types of kin; but once made, they in turn affect the subsequent structure of the support network. Estimating multivariate relations in this context is difficult.

13. While fieldstaff asserted that respondent's general level of motivation was high, it is impossible to externally validate the accuracy of people's responses to questions about the level and value of transfers. There are positive signs, however. For example, in pre-tests the year prior to fieldwork I repeatedly asked if there were "cultural barriers" to reporting transfers. The universal response was that the danger of bias was much less in data on whether a transfer had occurred than in data on the value of the reported transfer. Second, there was no item non-response on these questions that we are aware of (that is, no-one explicitly refused to answer these questions), and no-one ended the interview once we reached these questions. Third, the general distribution of transfers among different family members in the survey data largely correspond to the distribution reported in qualitative interviews (with the exception of fathers,

who have a somewhat diminished role in the qualitative interviews, and other types of kin and unrelated individuals for whom survey data were not collected). Finally, while men appear to have an augmented role in the transfer system in terms of the frequency of their gifts and the value of those transfers, this does not seem to be evidence of a social desirability bias since women respondents report the more frequent receipt of transfers from male relatives, and these transfers are more valuable.

That said, there are clearly some other data quality issues here, in particular those related to memory problems with respect to transfers over a relatively long 9-month period, and to the fact that our methodological approach overlooks differences between single and multiple gifts in the reference period. On the other hand, these problems should not undermine the main aims of this paper, which are to explore group-level variation in transfer relationships (both between ethnic groups and among different types of kin) since there is no apparent reason that either of these two problems was better or worse in one group or another. In short, I assume that whatever the level of measurement error, it does not differ across any of these groups.

14. At the time of fieldwork, there were about 55 Malawi Kwacha to the U.S. dollar. While there was some variation across the 3 sites in Kwacha purchasing power – related both to variation in agricultural products and in proximity to South Africa, from where most durable goods in Malawi are imported – on average 50 Kwacha would buy about 10 kilograms (kg) of maize, 7 kg of fertilizer, 5 kg of rice, 1 kg of sugar, a second-hand t-shirt, a one-way bus ticket to a town about 50 miles away. In other words, it would provide only minimal subsistence.

15. All reported gender differences are statistically significant at the 5 percent level, according to Pearson's $\div^2$ tests. Results are available from the author upon request.

16. Some differences in transfer relationships with parents are also worth noting. Among Yao and Tumbuka women, for example, transfers to fathers are more frequent than transfers from fathers, which are in turn more frequent than bilateral transfers. Among Chewa women there is no difference between these three types of transfers. More important, while Chewa and Tumbuka men are more likely to be involved in a two-way transfers relationship with their parents than with any uncle or aunt, the same is not true for Yao men. They are more likely to be in this type of two-way relationship with both maternal and paternal aunts and uncles.

17. These gender differences may also be valid because of the selectivity of rural residence. Specifically, higher male out-migration typically means that there are fewer working-age males than females in these rural areas. Because of the relatively entrenched gender-divisions associated with given tasks – for example, men tend to plough and re-thatch roofs, and women tend to weed and cook – there may be relatively higher demand for these few men.