

## ABSTRACT

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A TRANSITION TOWARDS  
AUTONOMY IN PARTNER CHOICE?  
A CASE STUDY OF INDIA

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This paper examines if self-arranged marriages (or love marriages) have replaced parent-arranged marriages as the dominant form of marriage in India. In particular, I examine if women of recent cohorts (born around 1980) are less likely to report arranged marriages than women of older cohorts (born around 1956). I also examine if educated women are less likely to report arranged marriages than their less educated counterparts. Results from multinomial regression analysis suggest that women of recent cohorts are more likely to report a parent arranged marriages with their consent. Education is associated with greater autonomy in partner choice decision but it is most strongly associated with parent arranged marriages with consent. I conclude that in a context where a dating culture is not normative, parent arranged marriages with consent may be the best way to accommodate individual choice while retaining some of the traditional parental control over spouse choice.

IS EDUCATION ASSOCIATED WITH A TRANSITION TOWARDS  
AUTONOMY IN PARTNER CHOICE? A CASE STUDY OF INDIA

By

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## **Introduction**

Although marriage is a phenomenon of key demographic interest, it has been difficult to theorize about it, largely because it is far from clear as to who are the decision-makers (Desai and Andrist, 2008). Some of the most fruitful work in this area has come from studies which see marriage as a process (Meekers, 1992). This paper adds to this literature by examining the process surrounding marriage decisions in India. While other aspects of the institution of marriage in India, such as age at marriage and dowry have received some attention from scholars, the literature on type of marriage is comparatively sparse. Anthropological literature on kinship patterns examines marriage as cornerstone of kin and caste relations (Oberoi, 1998) and a few other studies have examined individual attitudes towards arranged and love marriages and the socio-cultural milieu that explains and perpetuates the system of arranged marriages in India (Medora, 2003). However, trends in mate selection patterns have been largely ignored<sup>1</sup>.

Marital relations are associated with the type of marriage- self-arranged marriages are considered more egalitarian than parent arranged ones. In the latter, since kin-members play an important role in the spouse selection process, husband-wife relationship is de-emphasized. Instead as Fox (1975: 188-189) following Blood

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<sup>1</sup> A previous study (Kurian, 1961) that explored trends in marriage partners among 125 Syrian Christians in Kerala found that nearly two-thirds of the marriages were parent-arranged with consent of the respondents. Around one-fourth reported self-selecting their spouses with the consent of the parents and 2 percent self-selected their spouses without parental consent. The residual 7 percent reported parent-arranged marriages with no consent from the respondent.

(1972) suggests greater emphasis is placed on the “individual’s vertical linkage with and responsibility to antecedent kinsmen and his progeny”. Self-arranged marriages, on the other hand, are based on personal qualities and quality of inter-personal relationships. Therefore, it is likely that such marriages emphasize what is described by Fox (1975) as a “horizontal bond” between marital partners.

The argument on the relation between type of marriage and marital relations within the household is particularly relevant in light of evidence on the importance of intra-household gender relations. Household gender relations are related to fertility levels and intra-household resource allocation. Egalitarian relations within a household, in contrast to hierarchical gender relations, are associated with outcomes as lower fertility levels and equal resource allocation (Basu, 1992; Miles-Doan, R. and L. Bisharat, 1990; Dyson, T and M. Moore 1983). It seems likely that self-arranged marriages lead to more egalitarian gender relationships by strengthening the bonds between spouses while de-emphasizing generational hierarchies. Consequently, research on marriage types might illuminate a key process which mediates the context of intra-household gender relations and household decisions.

India is an interesting case in the study of marriage arrangements- marriage arrangements are diverse and have functions other than providing a socially legitimate association of unrelated persons of the opposite sex. In many parts of the country, marriage arrangements are such that bride givers enjoy a lower position vis-à-vis the bride takers (Oberoi, 1998; Madan, 1975). Marriage arrangements have also formed an important aspect of caste relations- it has served as a way of moving up the caste hierarchy through hypergamy (Milner, 1994). When marriage is a key element

of the kinship structure, it is not surprising that parents have a strong preference for selecting mates for their children. However, increased levels of modernization and globalization in India may pit this parental control in spouse selection against increasing individualism and preferences on the part of individuals to choose their life partners. Increasing education may well bring young men and women in contact with each other solidifying their preferences to choose their life partners and bringing them in contact with potential mates. This suggests a possibility that marriage arrangements may have changed across succeeding cohorts with increasing involvement of the bride and the groom in mate selection. However, few studies have empirically examined this issue. Moreover, any research on this topic must grapple with secular period effects and compositional effects associated with increasing education in succeeding cohorts.

This paper seeks to contribute to this literature by examining trends in marriage type by looking at birth cohorts 1956-1980 using data from the recently conducted India Human Development Survey (2005) with a focus on distinguishing between changes associated with period effects and those of compositional change due higher educational attainment among younger cohorts. The paper is structured as follows: Section II presents background literature and research hypotheses. Section III presents data and methods. Section IV presents descriptive statistics and results from multivariate analysis. Section V discusses these results.



## Section II: Background

Previous research from many countries- China (Xia and Zhou, 2003; Xiahoe and Whyte, 1990), Egypt (Sherif-Trask, 2003), Japan (Murray and Kimura, 2003; Blood, 1967), Turkey (Hortacsu, 2003), Trinidad and Tobago (Seegobin and Tarquin, 2003)-suggests that self-arranged marriages have replaced parent-arranged marriages as the most dominant form of marriage type. In China, for instance, traditionally marriages across all classes of society were arranged. Retrospective data from a probability sample of 586 ever married women in Chengdu in Sichuan province suggest that over the period 1933 to 1987 the proportion of arranged marriages was around 70 percent in the pre-1949 period but declined and was negligible by 1966-76 and 1977-87 (Xiahoe and Whyte, 1990). Takyi (2003) summarizes the mate selection process in contemporary Ghana as follows:

In the most recent years for which data is available, it is apparent that individualistic ties, as opposed to communal ties, are becoming the norm when it comes to mate selection. [...] a sizable proportion of men and women who were surveyed in southern Ghana reported selecting their own partners, a finding that is at odds with earlier ethnographic evidence. Among those sampled, 75.9% of the men and 69.0% of the women reported selecting their current partners themselves. Such a development is consistent with some recent reports to the effect that, in urban areas in particular, it has even become common for couples to be married without informing their respective parents at all [...].

The first proposition that I examine in this paper predicts that self-arranged marriages are increasingly replacing parent arranged marriages as the most dominant form of marriage in India.

*Hypothesis I:* Women of recent cohorts (born around 1980) are less likely to report their marriages as arranged than women of older cohorts (born around 1956).

The second proposition in this paper examines the linkages between education and the likelihood of self-arranged marriages. Research suggests that higher the women's level of education, higher is the likelihood of self-arranged marriages. Education is argued to operate through three distinct channels to increase the chances of self-determined marriages- (1) education is a means through which a person acquires new ideas leading to greater individuation and reduced familial control; (2) education has an indirect impact on spouse choice by increasing the likelihood of wage employment and thereby encouraging a person to live away from parents and (3) educational institutions at the secondary level or higher stages provides a setting for meeting potential mates (Malhotra, 1991). Empirical evidence from Turkey (Fox, 1975) confirms the association between educational attainment and the likelihood of self-arranged marriages- the proportion of love matches among women with post-primary education was 51 percent compared to 20 percent among women with primary or lower levels of education. Similarly, evidence from Indonesia (Malhotra, 1991) suggests that 19 percent of the rural women with no education had love matches. The comparable proportion for women with secondary education is 47.8 percent. In urban areas, the proportions of love marriages are 25 percent with no education and 44 percent with secondary education.

Previous research from India suggests that attitude towards marriage type differ by educational groups. Gore (1968) found that 73 percent of respondents

without a formal education approved of the traditional form of arranged marriages; whereas the approval rate was only 9 percent for those with graduate education. Other studies that have focused on the attitudes of college students towards marriages also found that educated respondents favored greater say in choice of spouse (Cormack 1961; Shah, 1961). The second proposition that we examine in this paper, therefore, is:

*Hypothesis II:* Women who are more educated are less likely to report their marriages as arranged than less educated women.

### **Section III: Data and Methods**

I use data from the Indian Human Development Survey (2005) to evaluate the above hypotheses. This is a survey of 41,554 households across 33 states in India (the exception are the island states of Andaman and Nicobar & Lakshadweep). Of a total of 602 districts in India, 383 were included in the sample. The number of villages in the sample is 1,504 and the number of urban blocks is 970. The sampling procedure adopted in the survey aimed to ensure a nationally representative sample. The districts were selected using stratified random sampling to represent a range of socio-economic conditions. Villages and urban centers and households were selected using a cluster sampling technique. The survey asks ever-married women in the age group of 15-49 years (N=33,478)<sup>2</sup> a wide range of questions about education, health, income and consumption patterns, and gender relations and most importantly for the purposes of this paper, questions on mate selection process. This is the only nationally representative data to contain information on marriage process and mate selection. Therefore, it offers a unique opportunity to examine change in marriage patterns across different cohorts.

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<sup>2</sup> The sample size in this paper is around 21,000. The sample size is smaller than the original survey sample of 33,478 ever-married women because we have restricted the study sample to women in the ages 25-49 and entering first marriages between the ages 15-24. The first restriction excludes 5,550 women (women below 25 and in first marriage) and the second restriction (women entering marriages before age 15) further excludes 5,126 women.

### ***Dependent Variable: Marriage Type***

The outcome variable is marriage type. Ever-married women in the age group of 15-49 years were asked in the survey “Who chose your husband?” The responses are divided into 4 categories: arranged by the respondent herself; arranged by the respondent and parents together; parents arranged marriages; and a miscellaneous category of “other,” which refers to cases where extended family members or members outside the family have played a role in the choice of spouse. For the purpose of this analysis, the “others” category is combined with parent-arranged marriages. Women who had parent-arranged marriages or their marriages were arranged by extended family members (i.e., whose marriages were categorised as “others”) were further asked “Did you have any say in choosing him?” to which they responded either “yes” or “no”. Based on answers to these two questions there are four marriage type categories:

1. Parent-arranged marriages with no consent of the respondent,
2. Parent-arranged marriages with consent from the respondent,
3. Jointly-determined marriages and
4. Self-arranged marriages.

The focus of this paper is on women in their first marriages; women who have married more than once are excluded from the analysis. A very small number- only 344 out of the 33,478 ever married women- are excluded based on this criterion. I also focus on first marriages occurring before age 25. The rationale behind focussing on first marriage before age 25 is that women in the youngest cohorts were in their mid and early-20s at the time of interview; therefore, they could not have married

prior to age 25. Nearly 95 percent of the Indian women are married by the time they reach 25.

The distribution of marriage types for women between ages 25 to 49 entering first marriage at ages 15-24 is: parent-arranged with no consent from the respondents (35 percent), parent-arranged with some consent in the choice of the partner (23 percent), jointly-determined marriages (36 percent) and self-arranged marriages (5 percent). This suggests that spouse selection is a process rather than a binary choice ranging from all decisions made by parents to all decisions made by the respondent with a vast majority falling in between.

### ***Explanatory variables***

#### ***Birth cohorts and age at marriage***

Age at marriage is correlated with marriage type (Fox, 1975). Among women who marry at younger ages, the likelihood of parent-arranged marriages is higher and conversely, it is lower for women who marry at older ages. This paper uses retrospective data on marriages from the India Human Development Survey (2005) in which one can observe only those who have married at younger ages in recent cohorts. Hence, in order to discern the long term trends towards self-arranged marriages I have restricted the analysis to women who are between the ages 25 to 49 at the time of marriage and also to women who marry between the ages 15-24. I also control for the age at marriage in the regression analysis. Data from IHDS indicates

that there has been a marginal increase in the age at marriage from the youngest to the oldest cohort. Around a third of women in all ages enter first marriage at ages 15-16 and majority across all birth cohorts are married by the time they are 20.

### ***Education***

The level of education of a woman in the survey is measured as the highest years of education completed. It is a continuous variable that ranges from 0 years (implying illiteracy) to 15 years (implying college or higher academic degree). Data from IHDS (2005) shows that there has been improvement in women's education level between the oldest and the youngest cohort. The proportion of illiterate in the oldest birth cohorts (1956-60 and 1961-65) was around 50 percent. In comparison, the proportion of illiterates in the youngest birth cohort (1976-80) is 35 percent. The proportion of college graduates have increased from 5 percent in the oldest to around 6 percent in the youngest cohort. If higher educational level is associated with increased chances of self-arranged marriages and educational attainment of women has increased over time, it follows then that women born in younger than older cohorts will have some input or full discretion in choosing their spouse.

### ***Other covariates***

#### ***Rural or urban residence***

Urbanization is a facilitator of individual modernity through the linkages it provides to job opportunities in the modern economic sector (Fox, 1975). Jobs in the modern economy (such as wage labor) tend to be located in urban settings and are associated with migration of young adults from native villages to urban areas and thereby, weakening parental control over them (Goode, 1963). Parent control on children is a necessary condition if they have to exercise some say over the choice of spouse of their son/daughter. Exposure to western cultural influences through the mass media is often greatest in urban environments. Medora (2003) argues that this exposure weakens the traditional norms of arranged marriages. This suggests that women living in urban areas are less likely to report arranged marriages than women in rural areas. Empirical evidence from India conforms to a greater pre-disposition towards love matches among urbanites than rural population (Gore, 1968; Goode, 1963). Around 69 percent of the sample women (25-49 years) entering first marriage at ages 15-24 reside in rural areas and the remaining 31 percent in urban areas.

#### ***English speaking ability, an alternative variable for urban or rural residence***

The IHDS, however, did not capture the woman's residence status prior to her marriage. , therefore, use an alternate variable- eligible woman's degree of proficiency in speaking English to measure the same concept underlying residence in urban areas- an individual's exposure to modern ideas. Its advantage over current residence is that it is not solely her post-marriage attribute. English speaking ability is



also a marker of a relatively more elitist education associated with private schooling (Rana, Santra, Mukherjee, Banerjee and Kundu, 2005). The distribution of English speaking abilities of women (25-49 years) entering first marriage at ages 15-24 is: not at all fluent (87 percent), somewhat fluent (11 percent) and fluent (2 percent).

### ***Tribal affiliations***

Cultural norms pertaining to marriage are more favorable towards love marriages in tribal communities than non-tribal communities in India. Tribal women are considered to enjoy higher social status than their non-tribal counterparts as reflected, for instance, in their participation in agricultural activities alongside men and decision making bodies and in better sex ratios implying lower levels of discrimination against daughters. Ethnographic accounts indicate that marriages in tribal societies are choice based and women have greater freedom in personal spheres as pre-marital sex, divorce and remarriage (Xaxa, 2004). In contrast Medora (2003: 219) makes following observations about the cultural context surrounding marriages in non-tribal Indian communities:

The influence of stern movies, stern television shows, and the internet has caused many Indian youth to desire and emulate their stern counterparts. A minority of urban youth belonging to the middle and upper middle social class, who are educated, independent-minded, and sternized, are selecting their own prospective mates and so are involved in “love marriages”. Most Indian parents do not approve of their children having love marriages. It is a great source of anxiety and concern to them.

In this paper I control for tribal affiliations by creating a dummy which takes on a value 1 if a woman's husband<sup>3</sup> belongs to a tribal community and takes on a value 0 otherwise. A small proportion of the sample (7.5 percent, N= 1580) belong to tribal communities. The remaining sample belongs to the majority Hindu community and other minority religious groups.

### *Current state of residence*

Since educational improvements are disproportionately located in southern India where there is also evidence of less restrictive gender norms (Dreze and Sen, 2001), the paper also controls for current state residence.

This paper uses multivariate regression analysis to model the relationship between education and marriage type. Specifically, there are three models in this paper. The first model is the reduced model. It has the main coefficients of interest-birth cohorts. Model 1 would demonstrate if there has been a shift to increased autonomy in partner choice across the different birth cohorts.

Model 2 adds years of education to Model 1. This model would explain to what extent the trends of a shift in increased autonomy in partner choice (as shown in Model 1) are explained by years of education.

Model 3 is the full model. It adds to Model 2 a dummy for urban residence, English speaking ability and age at marriage. It will demonstrate to what extent

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<sup>3</sup> Note that the tribal/ non-tribal categorization is based on the husband's and not the woman's caste background. However, this is unlikely to affect the regression results since only a small proportion of all marriages are outside one's caste/religious and tribal communities.

greater autonomy in choice of marriage partner across birth cohorts is explained by years of education, net of additional variables in Model 3.

The regression technique that I employ in this paper is multinomial regression technique. The base category in these models is parent arranged marriage with no consent of the respondent in partner choice. I have three sets of multinomial coefficients for each of the regression models that give the log odds of reporting a parent arranged marriage with consent as opposed to parent arranged marriage with no consent of the respondent, the log odds of reporting a marriage jointly determined by the respondent and her parents as opposed to a parent arranged marriage with no consent of the respondent and finally, the log odds of reporting a self-determined marriage as opposed to parent arranged marriage with no consent of the respondent.

<Table 1 about here>

***Other variables not included in this model***

I estimated separate models with dichotomous controls for caste and religious affiliations (instead of tribal versus non-tribal affiliations) and the results remain substantively the same as discussed below.

## Section IV: Results

I begin with descriptive statistics of the range of responses women gave when asked how their marriage partner was chosen. Table 2 shows the weighted distribution of responses first for the overall sample, then broken down by birth cohorts and selected characteristics of the wives. The most common responses were that the marriage was jointly arranged, or arranged by the parents with no consent by the wife, with 36.52 and 35.36 percent of all responses respectively. 23.18 percent of wives reported that their parents chose the husband with their consent, and only 4.94 percent of wives reported a fully self-arranged marriage.

<Table 2 about here>

The table also gives trends in marriage types across birth cohorts from women born between 1956 and 1960 to women born between 1976 and 1980, a span of about two decades. As might be expected, the proportion of women who report that their parents arranged their marriage *without* their consent has declined from 38.39 percent to 33.23 percent, a drop of just over five percentage points. The greatest increase in marriage type has been for women who report that their parents arranged their marriage *with* their consent, an increase of over five percentage points from 19.39 percent to 25 percent. Hence, the greatest shift in marriage types has been within the category of parent arranged marriages, as more women report having consented to the husband their parents chose. In contrast, there was little movement to self-arranged marriages across this time period; an increase from 4.48 percent to

6.25 percent or less than 2 percentage points. Surprisingly, jointly arranged marriages *decreased* in prevalence across this time span from 37.74 percent to 35.53 percent.

Comparisons across education groups in Table 2 confirm that the greater a woman's education, the more likely she is to report autonomy or consent in her marriage choice. Compared to women of lower education levels, women of higher education levels are less likely to report parent arranged marriages without consent and more likely to report all other marriage types. Again, there is the surprising pattern where the highest education levels are not associated so much with full autonomy in marriage choice as with having consent after the parents select a potential husband. For example, college-educated women are 21.73 percentage points more likely to report a parent-arranged marriage with consent than are women with no education (37.41 percent versus 15.68 percent, respectively). The corresponding education differences are only 3.35 percentage points for self-arranged marriages and 11.01 percentage points for jointly arranged marriages.

Table 2 also shows comparisons across other characteristics of women, such as age at marriage, rural or urban residence, and English fluency. The greatest group differences are always in parent-arranged marriages without consent. For most but not all groups, the greatest offsetting differences are in the category of parent arranged marriages with daughters' consent. There are some exceptions to this pattern. For differences between tribal and non-tribal affiliations the greatest offsetting difference is not in parent arranged marriages with daughters but in jointly arranged marriages. Jointly arranged marriages also differ greatly between women who are fluent in English and women with no English fluency. Lastly, state level

differences show a wide variety of marriage patterns across all marriage categories, including North-Eastern states that reported more than 44 percent self-arranged marriages.

### ***Respondents outside the main analyses***

To maintain comparability across cohorts, the analysis presented here excludes three kinds of respondents. These are women who first married before age 15, women who first married after age 25 and women who married more than once. These women are a small proportion of the original survey sample. 6,634 respondents or about 20 percent of the original sample were excluded by these constraints. The greatest proportion of exclusions is women marrying under age 15 (15%). Since my focus is on marriage choice, it seemed appropriate to exclude very young brides since their age makes the issues of “choice” and “consent” somewhat problematic.

In separate analyses, I found that the distribution of marriage types for women entering first marriage at ages 25+ differs somewhat from the main sample. Around 10 percent of the marriages are self-arranged, 44 percent jointly determined, 33 percent parent arranged with consent and 13 percent parent arranged without consent (Table not shown). The distribution of the level of autonomy in choosing the present spouse for the 370 women who have married more than once indicates that 39 percent of these women had parent arranged marriage without consent, 19 percent parent arranged marriage with consent, 30 percent jointly arranged marriage and 11 percent

self-arranged marriage (Table not shown). Note that these responses are for the current marriage, not the first marriage.

### ***Results of Multinomial Regression Analyses***

The descriptive analyses indicated educational differences and other group differences in marriage types, along with shifting trends in marriage types. The descriptive analyses also showed an unexpected pattern for education and other covariates in which the greatest differences were in the level of consent within parent arranged marriages. In contrast, there were fewer educational differences and much weaker trends in whether the parents or the daughter arranged the marriage.

I examine these findings further using a multinomial regression analysis, with the results shown in Table 3. In all models, the first column of coefficients (A) compares the predicted log odds of a parent arranged marriage where the woman consented to the spouse choice versus a parent arranged marriage where the woman had no such consent. The second column of coefficients (B) compares the predicted log odds of a jointly arranged marriage versus a parent arranged marriage with not consent, and the third column (C) compares the predicted log odds of a self arranged marriage versus a parent arranged marriage with not consent.

<Table 3 about here>

Model 1 is a simple model with estimates for successive birth cohorts and a dichotomous control for each state. The coefficient of .604 for the 1976-1980 cohort in Model 1A indicates that the log odds of a parent-arranged marriage with daughter's consent (as compared to a parent-arranged marriage without daughter's consent) are

.604 times higher for women born in 1976 – 1980, compared to women born in 1956 – 1960. Statistically significant and positive coefficients for successive cohorts in Model 1A show that this trend toward parent-arranged marriages with the daughter's consent has been persistent over time. The coefficients for the state controls are not shown to save space, but are available on request. Briefly, the coefficients suggest that there is a regional pattern to type of marriage. BIMARU states which share social norms that inhibit women's autonomy (Jejeebhoy and Sathar, 2001) are more likely to report parent-arranged marriages without consent.

Coefficients for Model 1B also show an increasing trend in the odds that a marriage will be jointly arranged over time rather than arranged by the parents without the daughter's consent. The coefficient of .254 for the 1976-1980 birth cohort is much smaller than the corresponding coefficient in Model 1A, reflecting the much smaller shift in jointly arranged marriages than the shift in parent-arranged marriages with the daughter's consent. The positive trend coefficients in Model 1B do not show that jointly arranged marriages are becoming more common, but only that jointly arranged marriages are declining more slowly than parent-arranged marriages without a daughter's consent.

For self-arranged marriages, the coefficients for Model 1C show an increasing trend in the odds that a marriage will be self-arranged as compared to parentally arranged without daughter's consent. The coefficient of .719 is slightly larger than the corresponding coefficient in Model 1A (albeit with a larger standard error), but the results do not show up as clearly in the descriptive statistics because a proportionate



increase in self-arranged marriages has relatively little overall effect when self-arranged marriages still constitute only a very small percent of all marriages.

The cohort coefficients in Models 1A to 1C confirm a statistically significant shift in marriage types across about a twenty year span. As a rough standard, a coefficient of .7 in log form reflects a doubling in the odds of one outcome compared to another, so these results indicate approximately a doubling in the last twenty years in the odds that a woman will have a parent-arranged marriage with consent instead of a parent-arranged marriage, as well as a doubling in the odds that a woman will have a self-arranged marriage instead of a parent-arranged marriage. Because parent-arranged marriages with daughter's consent currently outnumber self-arranged marriages by more than five to one, it is likely that daughter's consent rather than daughter's arrangement of the marriage will be the most important distinguishing criterion for marriage types in the near future.

The three columns for Model 2 add controls for years of education and for tribal affiliation to the variables in Model 1. The critical interest is in the coefficients for education, which show a statistically significant association with each marriage type. A comparison of the education coefficients across shows that education matters *most* as a predictor of parent-arranged marriage with daughter's consent as compared to parent arranged marriage without daughter's consent (coefficient of .127, compared to .078 for jointly arranged marriages vs. parent-arranged without consent, and .107 for self-arranged marriages vs. parent-arranged without consent.)

By comparing the cohort coefficients in Model 2 to those in Model 1, I can estimate the proportion of the overall cohort shift in marriage types that is explained

by increases in levels of women's education. The coefficients for the 1976 – 1980 cohort in Models 2A, 2B, and 2C are .391, .140, and .558, respectively, which are smaller than the corresponding coefficients from Models 1A, 1B, and 1C of .604, .254, and .719. This result suggests that just under half of the trend away from parent-arranged marriages without consent is explained by increases in women's years of education.

The estimates for Models 3A, 3B, and 3C include covariates that are interesting but are a potential problem for causal interpretation. Residence and English fluency are measured at the time of the interview rather than at the time of the marriage, so the dependent variable (marriage type) precedes the independent variables for these coefficients and makes causal interpretations problematic. Similarly, given that marriage choice generally involves both who and when a woman marries, it is not clear how to interpret the predictors of a marriage type *net* of the woman's age at marriage.

With the caveats given above, the results of Model 3 do not change the main story. In Model 3, the coefficients for older age at marriage, urban residence, and English fluency all have the expected (positive) signs, and the cohort and education coefficients retain their positive signs.

## Section V: Discussion

Descriptive results and multinomial analyses confirm the main hypotheses, but also suggest some new interpretations. I had predicted a trend toward greater autonomy in partner choice in marriages, mediated by rising women's education. My results showed exactly that; parent arranged marriages without daughter's consent have declined across a twenty-year span of marriages, and just under half of this trend is explained by the statistical control for years of women's education.

However, the results also showed a pattern not predicted by standard theories of modernization, women's education, and women's autonomy applied to marriage. I found that the greatest trend, and the greatest difference between college educated women and their less educated counterparts, was *not* in the extent to which daughters arranged their own marriages or even shared the marriage search jointly with their parents. Instead, I found that parents in India are still doing the major share of arranging marriages (including many families where the daughters have college degrees), but that daughters' autonomy is being expressed in their increased power of consent once their parents have arranged a marriage for them.

Parent arranged marriages with consent of the daughter in partner choice is best suited for a cultural context that does not have a dating culture of the kind existing in the West. Such a "dating culture" requires that it be socially acceptable for the young to "romantically link up with each other without any kind of adult supervision in a setting that is not defined directly as leading to marriage" and to "try out" different potential mates before deciding on a marriage partner (Xiaohe and Whyte, 1990: 716).

There is indirect evidence that a stern style dating culture is not widely prevalent in the country. The IHDS did not ask women respondents if they ever had considered marrying another person besides their current husbands but there is information on how long they had known their husbands prior to their eventual marriage (see Table 4). If women exercise some or complete discretion in the choice of her marriage partner, it is likely that they would have known their eventual husbands prior to their marriage. However, Table 4 indicates even though as expected those with self-arranged marriages were most likely to have known their husbands for more than a year (25 percent) and those who had parent arranged marriage with no consent were most likely to meet their husband on the wedding day (86 percent), a majority of women across all marriage types were likely to meet their husband on the day of wedding or knew their husbands for less than a month or year. What is most surprising that even among women who claim to have a self-arranged marriage, a significant proportion had no real contact with their husbands prior to their marriage and substantial proportion met husbands only on or around the wedding day. This suggests that the “self-arranged” marriage for these individuals involves developing an interest in a particular mate but then leaving actual negotiations and arrangements to family members.

<Table 4 about here>

This evidence suggests the importance of seeing spousal choice as a continuum rather than a binary choice with focus on the “middle ground” in which the individual partners and their parents have a role in the marriage arrangement process. This is particularly important in the absence of social structures and norms supportive of

stern type dating environment. Under these circumstances, it seems most likely that parents carry out the marriage searches while their daughters have full or some discretion over her partner choice. Medora (2003: 219) confirms

“Researchers have concluded that most young adults in India favor the system of an arranged marriage over a love marriage or a free choice marriage. Researchers found that although young men and women prefer an arranged marriage, most of them want to be consulted and want a final say in whom they marry. If they happen to fall in love and so select their own prospective mates, approval from parents is deemed of paramount importance for a large majority of Indian youth.”

Indeed, Lessinger (2002: 103) notes that parent arranged marriages with consent of the daughter in spouse choice, appropriately termed as “semi-arranged marriages”, have the advantage of suitably modifying the traditional system of arranged marriage so that parents can retain some control over the choice of spouse of their children while accommodating “youthful yearning for romantic love”. Under this system of marriages, *pre-screened* young men and women are *permitted* a brief period of courtship during which they can decide if they want to get married to each other.

This [sort of dating] is different from American-style dating in that parents and extended family members (e.g. grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins) are still involved in the initial screening, the courtship is much shorter, little or no premarital sex is involved and there is realistic recognition that the purpose of meeting is marriage (Medora, 2003: 218)

India’s experience is, however, neither unusual nor peculiar. There is evidence from other countries where parent arranged marriages *were* but currently *are* not the most common form of marriage type that it may be some time before such a “dating culture” in the sternized sense of the term gets established. In Japan, for instance, the

cultural environment in the mid-1950 was “hostile to dating” (Blood, 1967:10) even though arranged marriages in which parents wielded all the power and young couples had no role were not the dominant form of mate selection. Xiaoho and Whyte (1990) similarly note in their study of China that in spite of the higher prevalence of love marriages in the period of their study (1933-87), very few women have dated a person other than their future husbands and the decision to marry almost always preceded dating rather than succeeding it. In Turkey, self-arranged marriages is preceded by a stern style courtship but conservative social norms such as concern of the parents of young women that dating compromises a woman’s marriage prospects and/or family honor may cause them to exert considerable pressure on young couples to get married (Hortacsu, 2003).

In fact, it would be interesting to examine whether India in the coming decades makes the transition to complete autonomy in marriage types or parent arranged marriages with consent emerges as the most common marriage type. Such a transition will in turn raise further questions about structures and norms that facilitate the emergence of a particular marriage type as the most common type.

Second, further research is needed to explain the difference in marriage type patterns across states. The variables included in this model do not account for large inter-state differences. It is also not clear from the above results if jointly arranged marriages are an intermediate marriage type between parent- arranged marriages with consent and self-arranged marriage or an independent marriage type by itself. Last, I examined marriage types only from the perspective of the woman respondent. Autonomy in marriage types also has to be examined from the perspective of men as

well. For instance, it would be interesting to analyze if men enjoy greater autonomy than women in marriage decisions. Indeed, a study of marriage types would be complete only if we have perspective of both the partners as well as their parents.

Table 1: Outline of Multinomial Regression Models with Marriage Type as the Dependent Variable

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
<b>Categorical Dependent Variable:</b> Parent-arranged marriage with no consent of the respondent Parent-arranged marriage with consent of the respondent Jointly arranged marriage and Self- arranged marriage.			
<b>Independent Variables</b>			
	1. Birth Cohort	1. Birth Cohort	1. Birth Cohort
	2. State	2. State	2. State
	3. Tribal versus non-tribal affiliation	3. Tribal versus non-tribal affiliation	3. Tribal versus non-tribal affiliation
		4. Years of Education	4. Years of Education
			5. Current rural or urban residence
			6. English speaking ability
			7. Age at marriage



Table 2: Distribution of marriage types for women (25-49) entering first marriage at ages 15-24, by selected characteristics

	N	Type of marriage			
		Self-arranged	Jointly-arranged	Parent-arranged with consent from the respondent	Parent-arranged with no consent from the respondent
<i>Full sample</i>	21,614	4.94	36.52	23.18	35.36
<i>Birth cohort</i>					
1956-60	2,621	4.48	37.74	19.39	38.39
1961-65	3,790	4.64	36.57	22.24	36.55
1966-70	5,148	4.4	37.27	22.23	36.09
1971-75	5,047	4.67	36.08	25.01	34.25
1976-80	5,008	6.25	35.53	25.00	33.23
Trend from Earliest to Latest Cohort		+1.77	-2.21	+5.61	-5.16
<i>Level of education</i>					
Illiterate	9,648	4.1	33.31	15.68	46.91
Primary	3,704	4.79	36.54	24.33	34.34
Upper primary	3,002	4.45	38.24	28.24	29.07
Secondary	2,988	6.57	39.68	34.05	19.69
Senior secondary	1,053	7.24	43.31	31.74	17.71
College	996	7.45	44.32	37.41	10.83
Difference: Lowest to Highest Education		+3.35	+11.01	+21.73	-36.08

Table 2 (continued)

	N	Type of marriage			
		Self-arranged	Jointly-arranged	Parent-arranged with consent from the respondent	Parent-arranged with no consent from the respondent
<i>Age at (current) marriage</i>					
15-16 years	7207	4.36	29.6	19.64	46.4
17-18 years	7063	4.04	38.61	21.81	35.54
19-20 years	4261	5.7	41.4	25.56	27.34
21-22 years	1955	6.6	39.35	30.46	23.59
23-24 years	1127	8.59	44.36	32.71	14.34
Difference: Youngest to Oldest Marriage Age		+4.23	+14.24	+13.07	-32.06
<i>Current residence</i>					
Rural	14,815	5.07	34.5	20.34	40.09
Urban	6,799	4.66	40.93	29.36	25.05
Urban – Rural Difference		-0.41	+5.43	+9.02	-15.04
<i>English speaking ability</i>					
None	18,327	4.62	35.57	21.48	38.33
Little fluent	2,300	6.78	40.28	33.85	19.09
Fluent	447	10.04	50.22	30.18	9.56
Difference: No English to Fluent English		+5.32	+14.65	+8.70	-28.77

Table 2 (continued)

	N	Type of marriage			
		Self-arranged	Jointly-arranged	Parent-arranged with consent from the respondent	Parent-arranged with no consent from the respondent
<i>Tribal affiliation</i>					
Scheduled Tribes	1,505	11.33	37.75	17.22	33.7
Non Scheduled Tribes	20,109	4.46	36.43	23.62	35.48
Scheduled - Non-Scheduled Difference		-6.87	-1.32	+5.40	+1.68
<i>States</i>					
Jammu and Kashmir	245	3.41	16.41	22.83	57.34
Himachal Pradesh	159	6.43	8.9	49.55	35.12
Uttarakhand	416	1.28	6.47	35.8	56.45
Punjab	632	0.6	36.63	24.52	38.26
Haryana	419	2.19	56.6	6.89	34.32
Delhi	381	1.46	30.12	31.58	36.85
Uttar Pradesh	2402	2.71	21.72	8.44	67.13
Bihar	1117	2.86	15.24	3.64	78.26
Jharkhand	818	6.56	17.91	12.6	62.93
Rajasthan	825	0.21	15.89	7.09	76.82
Chattisgarh	471	1.01	59.71	7.77	31.51
Madhya Pradesh	919	0.69	43.53	8.17	47.61
North-East	243	44.01	19.66	14.09	22.25
Assam	582	7.87	52.25	35.72	4.16

Table 2 (continued)

	N	Type of marriage			
		Self-arranged	Jointly-arranged	Parent-arranged with consent from the respondent	Parent-arranged with no consent from the respondent
Orissa	929	5.56	19.18	14.4	60.86
Gujarat	1283	9.83	79.86	5.13	5.17
Maharashtra	2496	3.11	33.75	34.45	28.7
Andhra Pradesh	1736	4.74	30.2	45.19	19.88
Karnataka	1156	4.62	63.75	23.88	7.75
Kerala	825	7.16	54.38	37.23	1.23
Tamil Nadu	1886	6.46	52.7	29.04	11.8
West Bengal	1675	8.21	28.55	41.11	22.12

Table 3: Results of Multinomial Regression Models

	Model 1: Birth cohorts, tribal affiliations and state dummies			Model 2: Birth cohorts, education, tribal affiliations and state dummies			Model 3: Full model		
	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	3a	3b	3c
	With no consent v consent	With no consent v shared determination	With no consent v self arranged	With no consent v consent	With no consent v shared determination	With no consent v self arranged	With no consent v consent	With no consent v shared determination	With no consent v self arranged
Birth Cohort (Ref category: 1956-60 birth cohort or 45-49 years)									
1976-80 birth cohort or 25- 29 years	0.604*	0.254*	0.719*	0.391*	0.140	0.558*	0.442*	0.191*	0.606*
	0.08	0.07	0.12	0.08	0.07	0.13	0.08	0.07	0.13
1971-75 birth cohort or 30-34 years	0.484*	0.174*	0.327	0.359*	0.114	0.233	0.415*	0.164	0.278
	0.07	0.07	0.13	0.08	0.07	0.13	0.08	0.07	0.13
1966-70 birth cohort or 35-39 years	0.23*	0.113	0.100	0.214*	0.110	0.07	0.252*	0.147	0.105
	0.07	0.06	0.13	0.08	0.07	0.13	0.08	0.07	0.13
1961-65 birth cohort or 40-44 years	0.199	0.003	0.15	0.196	0.005	0.153	0.201*	0.01	0.168
	0.08	0.07	0.13	0.08	0.07	0.14	0.08	0.07	0.14
Tribal/Non-tribal affiliations (Ref category: Tribal Affiliations)									
Non-tribal affiliations	-0.035	-0.015	-0.73*	-0.319*	-0.183	-0.949*	-0.359*	-0.19	-0.91*
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.11)	0.09	0.08	0.12	0.09	0.08	0.12
Years of Education				0.127*	0.078*	0.1007*	0.097*	0.037*	0.05*
				0.005	0.004	0.008	0.006	0.005	0.01

<i>Current residence (Ref category: Rural areas)</i>									
Urban residence							0.428*	0.285*	0.13
							0.05	0.05	0.09
<i>English speaking ability (Ref category: Unable to speak English)</i>									
Speaks English little							0.232*	0.442*	0.659*
							0.08	0.08	0.13
Speaks English fluently							0.448	1.18*	1.46*
							0.20	0.19	0.26
<i>Age at marriage (years)</i>									
							0.05*	0.06*	0.06*
							0.01	0.009	0.02
Constant	-2.41*	-1.38*	-3.58*	-2.50*	-1.41*	-2.91*	-3.37*	-2.39*	-4.07*
N= 20854									
p< 0.01									

\* All models also included controls for state of residence.

Table 4: Distribution of period of time knew the husband before marriage for women (25-49 years) entering first marriage at ages 15-24, by type of marriage

Period of time	N	Type of marriage			
		Self-arranged	Jointly arranged	Parent arranged with consent from the respondent	Parent arranged with no consent from the respondent
On wedding day	14,506	38.97	59.55	56.75	86.07
Less than one month	2,194	7.81	15.95	11.22	3.84
More than one month but less than a year	2,459	13.49	14.15	16.47	4.93
More than one year	839	25.39	3.18	4.56	1.18
Since childhood	1,371	14.34	7.16	11.00	3.98

### Appendix 1: Results of Multinomial Regression Model

	Model 1: Birth cohorts, tribal affiliations and state dummies			Model 2: Birth cohorts, education, tribal affiliations and state dummies			Model 3: Full model		
	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	3a	3b	3c
	With no consent v consent	With no consent v shared determination	With no consent v self arranged	With no consent v consent	With no consent v shared determination	With no consent v self arranged	With no consent v consent	With no consent v shared determination	With no consent v self arranged
Birth Cohort ((Ref category: 1956-60 birth cohort or 45- 49 years)									
1976-80 birth cohort or 25- 29 years	0.604* 0.08	0.254* 0.07	0.719* 0.12	0.391* 0.08	0.14 0.07	0.558* 0.13	0.442* 0.08	0.191* 0.07	0.606* 0.13
1971-75 birth cohort or 30-34 years	0.484* 0.07	0.174* 0.07	0.327 0.13	0.359* 0.08	0.114 0.07	0.233 0.13	0.415* 0.08	0.164 0.07	0.278 0.13
1966-70 birth cohort or 35-39 years	0.23* 0.07	0.113 0.06	0.1 0.13	0.214* 0.08	0.11 0.07	0.07 0.13	0.252* 0.08	0.147 0.07	0.105 0.13
1961-65 birth cohort or 40 -44 years	0.199 0.08	0.003 0.07	0.15 0.13	0.196 0.08	0.005 0.07	0.153 0.14	0.201* 0.08	0.01 0.07	0.168 0.14
Tribal/Non-tribal affiliations (Ref category: Tribal Affiliations)									
Non-tribal affiliations	-0.035	-0.015	-0.73*	-0.319*	-0.183	-0.949*	-0.359*	-0.19	-0.91*



	-0.09	-0.08	-0.11	0.09	0.08	0.12	0.09	0.08	0.12
Years of Education				0.127*	0.078*	0.1007*	0.097*	0.037*	0.05*
				0.005	0.004	0.008	0.006	0.005	0.01
<i>Current residence</i> (Ref category: Rural areas)									
Urban residence							0.428*	0.285*	0.13
							0.05	0.05	0.09
<i>English speaking ability</i> (Ref category: Unable to speak English)									
Speaks English little							0.232*	0.442*	0.659*
							0.08	0.08	0.13
Speaks English fluently							0.448	1.18*	1.46*
							0.2	0.19	0.26
Age at marriage (years)							0.05*	0.06*	0.06*
							0.01	0.009	0.02
<i>State (Reference state: Uttar Pradesh)</i>									
Jammu and Kashmir	1.2*	0.16	0.44	1.2*	0.04	0.46	1.2*	-0.03	0.34
	0.18	0.19	0.402	0.18	0.19	0.404	0.19	0.19	0.41
Himachal Pradesh	2.5*	-0.03	1.6*	2.2*	-0.21	1.4*	2.3*	-0.16*	1.4*
	0.19	0.31	0.37	0.204	0.31	0.38	0.21	0.31	0.38
Uttarakhand	1.64*	-0.88*	-0.503	1.6*	-0.94*	-0.58	1.6*	-0.92*	-0.61
	0.13	0.21	0.46	0.13	0.21	0.46	0.13	0.21	0.46
Punjab	1.7*	1.2*	-1.06	1.4*	1.1*	-1.3	1.3*	0.89*	-1.5*
	0.13	0.109	0.61	0.13	0.11	0.61	0.14	0.11	0.61
Haryana	0.48	1.8*	0.45	0.38	1.7*	0.38	0.37	1.7*	0.38

	0.22	0.12	0.37	0.22	0.12	0.37	0.22	0.12	0.38
Delhi	1.9*	1.1*	0.09	1.6*	0.89*	-0.16	1.3*	0.63*	-0.37
	0.15	0.14	0.45	0.15	0.14	0.45	0.15	0.14	0.46
Bihar	-1.03*	-0.38*	-0.03	-1.04*	-0.39*	-0.04	-0.95*	-0.29*	0.06
	0.18	0.01	0.22	0.18	0.1007	0.22	0.18	0.102	0.22
Jharkhand	0.45*	0.02	0.75*	0.42*	-0.009	0.71*	0.44*	0.03	0.77*
	0.13	0.85	0.19	0.14	0.11	0.2006	0.14	0.11	0.201
Rajasthan	-0.27	-0.31*	-2.7*	-0.24	-0.29*	-2.7*	-0.27	-0.29*	-2.7*
	0.16	0.11	-0.78	0.16	0.11	0.78	0.16	0.11	0.78
									-
Chattisgarh	0.69*	1.9*	-0.44	0.63*	1.8*	-0.49	0.64*	1.89*	0.40007
	0.201	0.12	0.49	0.203	0.12	0.49	0.204	0.12	0.49
Madhya Pradesh	0.32	1.2*	-1.1*	0.33	1.2*	-1.1*	0.301	1.18*	-1.1
	0.15	0.09	0.42	0.15	0.09	0.42	0.15	0.09	0.42
North-East	1.7*	1.2*	3.5*	1.3*	0.91*	3.2*	1.3*	0.87*	3.2*
	0.24	0.21	0.22	0.24	0.21	0.23	0.24	0.21	0.23
Assam	4.2*	3.8*	3.8*	4.1*	3.7*	3.7*	4.1*	3.7*	3.7*
	0.23	0.22	0.28	0.23	0.22	0.29	0.23	0.22	0.29
West Bengal	2.7*	1.5*	2.3*	2.7*	1.5*	2.2*	2.7*	1.5*	2.3*
	0.09	0.09	0.16	0.101	0.09	0.16	0.101	0.09	0.17
Orissa	0.61*	0.1	0.72*	0.59*	0.07	0.69*	0.62*	0.11	0.74*
	0.12	0.102	0.19	0.13	0.103	0.19	0.13	0.104	0.2003
Gujarat	2.1*	3.9*	3.8*	1.9*	3.9*	3.7*	1.9*	3.9*	3.7*
	0.19	0.14	0.201	0.19	0.14	0.202	0.19	0.14	0.203
Maharashta, Goa	2.3*	1.4*	0.99*	2.01*	1.3*	0.78*	1.9*	1.3*	0.81*
	0.09	0.07	0.18	0.09	0.08	0.18	0.09	0.08	0.18
Andhra Pradesh	2.9*	1.7*	1.8*	3.03*	1.8*	1.9*	3.1*	1.8*	1.9*
	0.1	0.09	0.18	0.102	0.09	0.18	0.102	0.09	0.18
Karnataka	3.3*	3.4*	2.8*	3.2*	3.3*	2.7*	3.2*	3.3*	2.7*
	0.15	0.13	0.22	0.15	0.13	0.22	0.15	0.13	0.22
Kerala	5.5*	5.05*	5.1*	4.9*	4.6*	4.6*	4.9*	4.7*	4.6*
	0.32	0.32	0.36	0.33	0.32	0.37	0.33	0.32	0.37

Tamil Nadu	3.01* 0.11	2.8* 0.09	2.8* 0.18	2.9* 0.12	2.8* 0.09	2.7* 0.18	2.9* 0.12	2.8* 0.09	2.7* 0.18
Constant N= 20854 p< 0.01	-2.41*	-1.38*	-3.58*	-2.50*	-1.41*	-2.91*	-3.37*	-2.39*	-4.07*

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