Arranged Marriage

Keera Allendorf
Indiana University

Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of the nature and scope of arranged marriage with a focus on India and South Asia more broadly - the region where such marriages are widespread. First though, I define arranged marriage and locate it over time and space on a global scale. Arranged marriage was practiced by much of the global population until relatively recently with the notable exception of Northwest Europe and its diaspora. This preface also touches on the complexities and ambiguities of arranged marriage, which leads to disagreement and confusion in both scholarly and popular circles. Turning to the focus on contemporary South Asia, I describe how the practice of arranged marriage varies across localities, religion/caste, and gender. I then discuss how marriage practices are shifting over time and do not neatly match the binary ideal types of arranged and self-choice marriage. I conclude by discussing the quality and longevity of arranged marriages, as well as noting areas for future research.

Keywords – marriage, arranged marriage, spouse selection, spouse choice, India, South Asia

Citation
Allendorf, Keera. "Arranged Marriage." 2024. Chapter 11 in *Research Handbook on Partnering across the Life Course*, edited by Dimitri Mortelmans, Laura Bernardi, and Brienna Perelli-Harris. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Arranged marriage is a partnership type of great conceptual significance, laden with ambiguity and even confusion. This chapter provides an overview of the nature and scope of arranged marriage, as well as its significance in scholarly and popular circles. I begin by defining arranged marriage and contrasting it with self-choice marriage. I then locate these practices across time and space on a global scale, while addressing how data and measurement challenges limit our understanding. The rest of the chapter focuses on arranged marriage in India and South Asia more broadly – the region in which such marriages are widespread at the start of the 21st century. I describe how marriage practices vary by region, social group, and gender. I also discuss how spouse selection practices changed and blurred into hybridized forms over time. I conclude by describing the longevity and quality of arranged marriages and touching on areas for future research.

Defining Arranged Marriage

Arranged marriage is defined by who chooses a spouse. In an arranged marriage it is parents, often with other senior family members, who choose a spouse for their child. This defining feature is typically accompanied by other characteristics. Such marriages usually have swift timelines with little to no interaction between the prospective bride and groom. A couple may meet only once or twice or not at all before marrying – they are expected to form a relationship after marriage. Further, parents' selection is often based on the social and economic standing of the prospective spouse and their family, including their lineage, wealth, ethnicity/caste, and religion. Individual characteristics of the prospective spouse are also considered, such as their age, education, occupation, domestic skills, and appearance. The bride and groom may also be young. When especially young girls are married, however, they usually start cohabiting with husbands only when they are older (Bloom & Reddy, 1986).

This ideal type of an arranged marriage contrasts with self-choice marriage, which has long dominated Northwest Europe and its diaspora in North America and Oceania. While royalty and aristocrats often had arranged marriages, ordinary people in Northwest Europe chose their own spouses (De Moor & Van Zanden, 2010; Macfarlane, 1986; Thornton, 2009). Historically, young people considered the social and economic standing of prospective spouses, but also based their choice on love, attraction, and companionship. Marriage was also preceded by a courtship period in which couples spent time together before deciding to marry. While premarital sex was not widely acceptable, non-trivial numbers of marriages were precipitated by prenuptial pregnancies (Lundh, 2013; Newton, 2014; Wrigley & Schofield, 1981). Parents were often involved in the marriages of their children. For instance, parents introduced prospective spouses and assisted with weddings. It was also customary for young people to ask parents for permission to marry. Individual consent of the bride and groom remained the crucial element of a marriage, however (Bennett, 2019; Newton, 2014). Couples could and did marry without parents' consent and a couple's declaration that they were married was sufficient to make it so.

The contrast in these ideal types is illustrated by the marriages of two famous men – one Indian and one British – in the 19th century. In 1883, 13-year-old Mohandas Gandhi married Kasturba Kapadia. Gandhi later described how his marriage came about in his autobiography. His description highlights how his parents and other elders decided when and whom he would marry, while he was only vaguely aware of the upcoming event:

> "I was told that two girls chosen for me had died in turn and therefore I infer that I was betrothed three times. I have a faint recollection, however, that the third betrothal took place in my seventh year. But I do not recollect having been informed about it. … The elders decided to marry my second brother, … a cousin, … and me, all at the same time. In doing so there was no thought of our welfare, much less of our wishes. … It was only through these [wedding] preparations that we got warning of the coming event. I do not think it meant to me anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum

> beating, marriage processions, rich dinners, and a strange girl to play with." (Gandhi, 1927, pp. 7-8)

Forty-five years earlier, in 1838, 29-year-old Charles Darwin wrote a list of the advantages and disadvantages of marriage as he wrestled over the decision to marry. Darwin's list highlights how the decision was his own and that his decision-making turned on how marriage would affect his own life. Darwin viewed companionship as a chief benefit of marriage, while reduced freedom and economic costs were drawbacks. His reasons to marry began:

> "Children – (if it please God) – constant companion, who will feel interested in one (a friend in old age), – object to be beloved and played with – better than a dog anyhow – Home, and someone to take care of house…" (Macfarlane, 1986, p. 3).

The reasons not to marry continued:

> "Freedom to go where one liked – choice of Society and little of it. Conversation of clever men at clubs – Not forced to visit relatives, and to bend in every trifle – to have the expense and anxiety of children – perhaps quarrelling – loss of time – cannot read in the Evenings…" (Macfarlane, 1986, p. 4).

A few months later Darwin proposed to Emma Wedgwood and they married in January 1839.

Arranged and self-choice marriages are interwoven into the logics of broader family systems. In Hajnal's (1965, 1982) classic typology, the joint household system is reinforced by arranged marriage. In this patrilineal and patrilocal system, a young bride joins the household of her husband after marriage. A marriage represents the incorporation of a daughter-in-law into a pre-existing family and household under the tutelage of her mother-in-law. A bride's future children also belong primarily to her husband's family. By contrast, in the bilateral household system of Northwest Europe neolocal residence was the norm and marriage signaled formation of a new household. In turn, couples needed the economic means to form a household. Young people often worked as servants in other people's households to earn the means to marry, which served to push up the age at marriage and expose them to potential spouses (Bennett, 2019).

Arranged Marriage Across Time and Space

Historical and ethnographic sources suggest arranged marriage was practiced by much of the global population around 1900 (Therborn, 2004). It was dominant in India and China – two places that have long been home to much of the world's population. It was also widespread in the rest of Asia (Applbaum, 1995; Bahramitash & Kazemipour, 2006; Emran et al., 2014; Malhotra, 1991). Arranged marriage was also common in parts of Africa (Cole & Thomas, 2009; Smith, 2001), as well as Southeastern Europe. Marriages were often arranged in much of the Balkans, including Greece and Albania, as well as neighboring Turkey (Gjonça & Thornton, 2019; Kaser, 2008; Tapia & Raftakis, 2022). Northwest Europe and its diaspora are a notable exception. As noted above, arranged marriage was not widespread among ordinary people in Northwest Europe around 1900. Further, while aristocrats had arranged marriages, ordinary people in that region did not practice arranged marriage dating back to at least 1300 (Macfarlane, 1986).

The absence of arranged marriage in the Northwest European past remains a source of contention and confusion in both scholarly and popular circles. Many mistakenly believe arranged marriage was widespread in Northwest Europe until relatively recently. In 2006, 70% of respondents in a nationally representative survey of US adults said arranged marriage was more common in England in 1600 than 1800 (Richardson & Allendorf, 2023). Further, 65% believed most husbands were chosen by women's parents in colonial North America around the year 1700, while only a third said most colonial women chose their own husbands through a process of courtship. Such beliefs stem in part from influential work by early scholars who looked to non-Western societies in their own time to understand Northwest Europe's past (Thornton, 2001, 2005). Early scholars mistakenly concluded arranged marriage was practiced historically in Northwest Europe because it was common in contemporary India and China. Such approaches

also appear in more recent scholarly sources. Notably, Stephanie Coontz's (2005) widely read *Marriage, a History* suggests Northwest Europe transitioned away from arranged marriage sometime between the 14th and 18th centuries. However, the evidence for arranged marriage in the earlier period is based on people from places outside Northwest Europe and European aristocrats (Thornton, 2009, p. 14).

Ambiguity – or disagreement – in the meaning of arranged marriage is also behind the mistaken belief that arranged marriage was common in Northwest Europe. Social scientists usually consider parents choosing a child's spouse as the defining feature of arranged marriage, but others focus on love as the basis of marriage or view any parental involvement as consistent with arranging. For example, historian Barbara Hanawalt (2007, p. 70) declared "many medieval [English] marriages were arranged." Her conclusion appears based on young people taking economic considerations into account when choosing their spouses – rather than marrying solely for love – and parents introducing prospective spouses and negotiating marriage contracts. Hanawalt (2007, p. 71) further emphasized individual consent of the people marrying was essential to medieval English marriage - "an individual had the final choice of marriage partner … what was essential for the validity of a marriage was the "present consent" of the parties, that is, they said in the present tense that they took each other to be "my wedded husband" or my "wedded wife."" While Hanawalt uses the word arranged, the practices she describes would not qualify as arranged marriage under a more typical definition.

After 1900, arranged marriage declined in many places where it was previously widespread (Jones, 2010; Therborn, 2004). In East Asia, arranged marriage fell precipitously, virtually disappearing in the 20th century (Applbaum, 1995; Retherford & Ogawa, 2006; Xu & Whyte,

1990; Yan, 2003; Zang, 2008). In China, about a fifth of those born in the 1920s and 30s had arranged marriages (Liu & Mu, 2023). This share declined to nearly zero among those born in the 1990s. The percent of marriages decided by Taiwanese parents was 62% in 1955-59 and then plummeted to 13% by 1980-84 (Thornton et al., 1994). Similar declines are documented beyond East Asia. In Togo, the share of women who said their family chose their husband fell from 46% of those married in the 1960s to 24% in the 1980s (Meekers, 1995). More recently, the share of marriages that were arranged declined from about a third in 1980-1995 to about 15% in 2006-11 among ethnic Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan (Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). Similar declines occurred in Southeast Europe (Kaser, 2008; Tapia & Raftakis, 2022), other parts of Africa (Cole & Thomas, 2009; Smith, 2009), and Asia (Emran et al., 2014; Ghimire et al., 2006; Heaton et al., 2001; Malhotra, 1991; Smith-Hefner, 2005).

At the start of the 21st century, it is impossible to rigorously assess the prevalence of arranged marriage at global, regional, and even national levels. Surveys include questions about spouse choice only on an ad hoc basis. Further, many surveys are representative of localities, rather than national populations. For example, the Vietnam Longitudinal Survey provides estimates for 10 communes around the Red River Delta (Emran et al., 2014) and the Chitwan Valley Family Study gives estimates for the population living in a large valley in south central Nepal (Axinn et al., 2008; Ghimire et al., 2006).

Existing estimates of the prevalence of arranged marriage are also not strictly comparable because they rely on different measures. For example, in the Vietnam Longitudinal Survey, respondents were asked: “Was your spouse chosen by your parents (or your family) or by yourself?” Response options included: 1) arranged solely by parents or family, 2) arranged by

parents, but with my approval, 3) chose own spouse, but with approval of family, and 4) chose own spouse without influence of family. The Chitwan Valley Family Study asks: "Who selected your spouse? Your parents/relatives, yourself, or both?" If respondents chose parents/relatives or yourself, they were then asked, "Who had more influence in choosing your spouse?" with response options of parents/relatives, myself, and equally. A much different measure appeared in the China Family Panel Study (Liu & Mu, 2023). The question – "How did you get to know your first spouse?" – had eight response options, including "arranged marriage by parents" – the category used by Liu and Mu (2023) – as well as "met on our own at school," "introduced by relatives or friends," and five others.

Arranged Marriage in Contemporary South Asia

While rigorous global measurement is lacking, one region where arranged marriage is clearly prevalent in the contemporary period is South Asia. The India Human Development Survey provides nationally representative estimates for Indian women. In India, brides' parents chose a husband for their daughter, without her having a say, in 31% of marriages occurring from 2000 to 2012 (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). In 63% of marriages, parents gave their daughter a say in their decision or the two generations worked together to choose a husband. Only 6% of women married during this period chose their husbands themselves. Parental control did decline over time. In the 1970s, parents chose husbands without their daughters' say in half of marriages, which is substantially higher than the 31% figure of the 2010s. However, the small share of self-choice marriages suggests daughters are joining, not displacing, parents in arranging marriages.

To my knowledge, national-level estimates are not available for the rest of South Asia. Other studies suggest arranged marriage is widespread in Pakistan and Bangladesh (Marsden, 2007;

Peterson et al., 2011; Schuler et al., 2006). In Nepal's Chitwan Valley, arranged marriage has declined substantially, but not disappeared (Axinn et al., 2008; Ghimire et al., 2006). Among those married in 2008-12, a fifth said parents chose, half chose on their own, and the remaining third chose jointly with parents (Allendorf, 2017; Allendorf & Thornton, 2015). Sri Lanka has long stood out from the rest of South Asia with more flexible marriage practices similar to Southeast Asia, but parental involvement also declined in Sri Lanka in recent decades (De Munck, 1996; Jones, 2010; Malhotra & Tsui, 1996).

Variation in Marriage Practices

The prevalence of arranged marriage varies and maps onto well-known demographic divides within India and South Asia more broadly (Dyson & Moore, 1983; Karve, 1965; Kolenda, 1987). North India has the highest levels of arranged marriage. In the 2000s, brides had no say in the choice of husband in over half of marriages in North India (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). In the South, by contrast, daughters and parents jointly chose husbands in nearly 90% of marriages; both self-choice and strictly arranged marriages were rare in the South. States at the borders of this famous North-South divide, including West Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, have intermediate levels of arranged marriage. Sizable majorities of husbands were jointly chosen by daughters and their husbands, while parents alone chose in about a fifth of marriages. Northeast India stands out as the only place with sizable numbers of self-choice marriages. In this less populated region, over a third of women married in 2000-12 chose husbands on their own. India's rural/urban divide in marriage is far more muted. Strictly arranged marriages – with parents alone choosing husbands – are only slightly more prevalent in urban areas (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). Self-choice marriages are also equally rare in rural and urban areas.

Marriage practices also vary across social groups defined by caste/ethnicity and religion. Differences across aggregate groups that can be compared at the national level – comprising upper caste Hindus, other backward castes, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and other religious groups – are relatively small (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). Adivasis – also known as Scheduled Tribes – stand out with higher levels of self-choice marriages at about 15% nationally, while other groups are below a tenth. Sikhs and Christians, as well as Upper Caste Hindus to a lesser extent, also have higher levels of parents and brides choosing jointly, rather than alone. Apart from these differences, however, the extent of arranged marriage is similar across these aggregate groups.

There is important variation by ethnicity and caste (*jati*) at more precise, local levels. Ethnographies document more self-choice marriages and generally more flexible marriage practices in Dalit and Adivasi communities in some Indian localities (Allendorf, 2013; Grover, 2011; Saavala, 2001). Markedly high levels of self-choice marriages in the Northeast are ascribed to longstanding differences in marriage practices of groups living in that area. Many indigenous groups, known collectively as Adivasis in India and Janajati in Nepal, have long histories of young people of different sexes mixing more freely and exercising much more autonomy over their marriages (Ahearn, 2001; Gorer, 1967 [1938]; Macfarlane, 1976). High levels of self-choice marriage among Janajati populations are also confirmed by the Chitwan Valley Family Study (Allendorf & Thornton, 2015; Ghimire et al., 2006).

The experience of arranged marriage also varies by gender with parents exercising more control over daughters' marriages than sons' (Allendorf, 2017; Allendorf, 2019; Malhotra, 1991). In other words, men have more influence over choosing wives than women have choosing husbands. For example, among women born in rural Java from 1953 to 1960, 56% said their

parents chose their husband without their approval (Malhotra, 1991). Only 18% of the men married born during the same period said the same. More recently, among those married in Nepal's Chitwan Valley in 2008-12, a third of women and only a tenth of men said parents alone chose their spouse (Allendorf, 2017). To be clear, these gender difference hold even within couples, with brides typically having less choice than the grooms they marry (Jennings, 2014; Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). National level data for Indian men is not available, but ethnographic studies suggest this gender divide applies to India as well (Kaur & Palriwala, 2014; Mody, 2008).

Spouse Selection Criteria and Ambiguities in Arranged Marriage

These gender differences highlight another point of confusion in popular and scholarly understanding. Spouse choice is often conceptualized as a binary characteristic of the marriage or couple. As seen in the ideal types described above, parents of both the bride and the groom choose in an arranged marriage, while both the bride and groom choose each other in a self-choice marriage. In reality, the amount of control an individual has over choosing their spouse is more of a continuum and often differs from that of the person they marry. For instance, a bride may have no say, while the groom negotiated the match with his bride's parents or his parents let him choose her from among a few women they found suitable. Similarly, a couple may wish to marry, but do so only after the bride's parents, but not the groom's, approve the match. Ethnographies emphasize the complex processes that do not fit neatly into a simply binary of arranged versus self-choice (Allendorf, 2013; De Munck, 1996; Fox, 1975; Grover, 2011; Kaur & Palriwala, 2014; Pande, 2015; Reed, 2021). In fact, despite being a common finding, this point is often framed as novel. Such framing points to the conceptual power of the arranged versus self-choice binary. Ethnographers know their predecessors found similar complexities – and even

the survey measures described above incorporate some complexity. This complexity is not incorporated into theoretical frameworks and common understanding, however, which likely motivates ethnographers to make the point anew.

In contemporary South Asia, arranged marriages often have other hallmarks of the ideal type described above. Swift timelines in which couples meet only a few days or weeks before marrying, or at the wedding itself, are common. Nearly 90% of Indian women whose parents chose their husband met their husband on their wedding day (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). Of those who jointly chose with their parents, over half met their husband on their wedding day and another fifth met less than a month before marrying. Lengthy premarital relationships and engagements are rare. Ethnographic studies document a growing dating culture in which young women and men mix more and have romantic relationships (Aengst, 2014; Brunson, 2014). Such relationships are often hidden from parents and viewed as youthful entertainment or "timepass," rather than a means of finding a spouse however (Abraham & Kumar, 1999; Alexander et al., 2006; Osella & Osella, 1998). Many Indian youth still expect and prefer arranged marriages. In 2012, 88% of girls and 80% of boys aged 15-18 interviewed in the India Human Development Survey wanted an arranged marriage (author's calculations).

Arranged marriages also generally follow rules of caste and religious endogamy. In India, only 5% of arranged marriages are inter-caste (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). Notably, this figure applies to marriages in which parents chose the husband without giving their daughter a say, as well as marriages in which the bride and her parents jointly chose. Of the women who chose on their own, 16% married a man of a different caste. Thus, a large majority of self-choice marriages are also endogamous, but not universally so. Similarly, in Nepal's Chitwan Valley, 5%

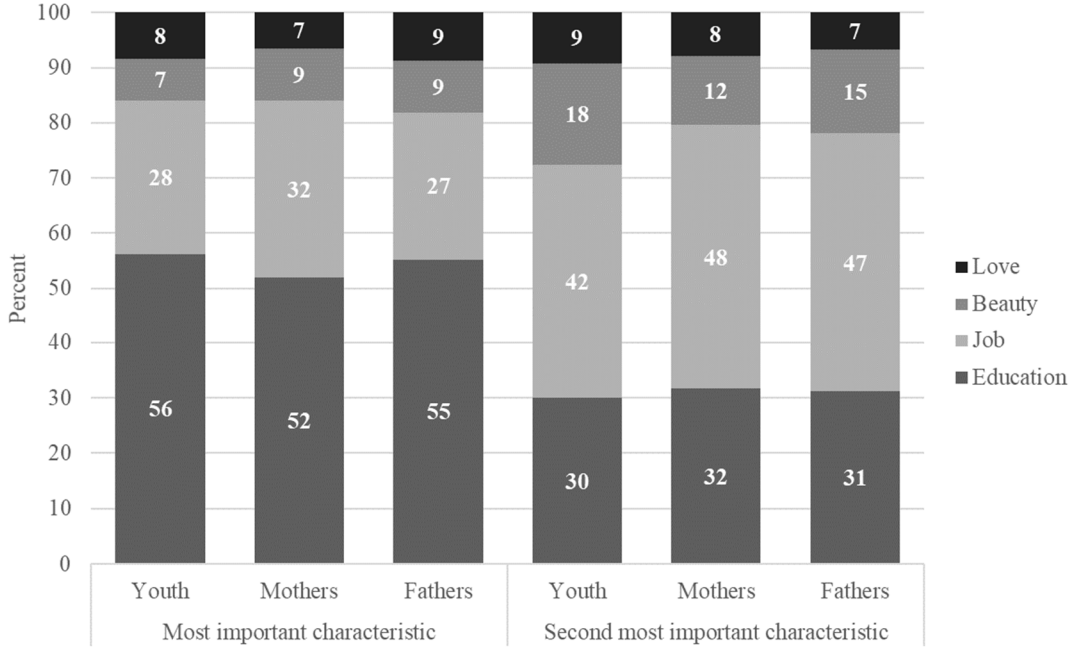
of arranged marriages in 2008-12 were inter-caste compared to 42% of self-choice marriages (Allendorf & Thornton, 2015).

In much of South Asia, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are widely disliked and the most adverse reactions to elopements occur when the couple are of different castes or religions (Basu, 2015; Chowdhry, 2007; Mody, 2008). Reactions to such marriages include forcible separation, public shaming, ostracism, and murder. Some parents also pursue cases of kidnapping with police and judicial courts against men who elope with their daughters (Basu, 2015; Mody, 2008; Rukmini S., 2021). Several Indian states also recently passed ordinances outlawing inter-religious marriages or require special registration of such marriages. These laws were passed in response to concerns about Muslim men converting Hindu women to Islam through marriage, known as "love jihad" (Gupta, 2009).

Criteria for selecting spouses in contemporary arranged marriages also emphasize economic standing, especially for prospective grooms and their families (Allendorf, 2017; Basu & Kumar, 2022). Educated men with remunerative employment are especially prized in the marriage market. Often, wives are expected to care for the home and family after marriage, especially once they have children. Rather than a labor market credential, women's education is valued as a marker of social status and a signal that a women would be a good companion for an educated husband and raise successful children. Matrimonial ads typically seek slim, fair-skinned homemakers as brides and financially stable grooms (Dhar, 2022; Rajadesingan et al., 2019; Ramasubramanian & Jain, 2009).

Emphasizing social and economic criteria is not unique to parents, however. The characteristics that unmarried youth value in future spouses resemble those of their parents. In Indian matrimonial websites, 24% of profiles posted by people looking for a spouse for themselves were open to a spouse of a different caste compared to 21% of profiles posted by parents looking for a spouse for their child (Rajadesingan et al., 2019). This difference of three percentage points was statistically significant, but tiny. Similarly, Still (2011) describes rural, Dalit women looking for husbands on their own because they wanted to marry wealthy, urban residents – men their parents also wanted, but could not provide them. In Nepal's Chitwan Valley, large majorities of never married youth and their parents agreed (high) education and (remunerative) employment are the most important characteristics of a spouse (Allendorf, 2017). Less than a tenth chose love as the most important consideration. Young men were more likely than young women to say love was important, but most men said education and employment were most important (ibid).

Figure 1. The first and second most important characteristics of a future spouse according to never married youth aged 15 to 24 and their parents in the 2008 Chitwan Valley Family Study (authors calculations).



Love is part of marriage discussions in contemporary South Asia, but it often intersects with spouse choice in ways that do not match the binary ideal types (Kaur & Palriwala, 2014; Netting, 2009; Uberoi, 2006). The alternative to an arranged marriage is colloquially known as "love marriage," which implies the alternative to parents choosing one's spouse is marrying for love. As noted above, however, many young people who choose their own spouses do so based primarily on the same social and economic considerations that parents emphasize. Further, even when young people choose for love – or perhaps more accurately based on attraction – marriages often have the swift timeline of an arranged marriage. Nearly half of Indian women who had self-choice marriages knew their husband for less than a month before they married (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). Many couples who elope do so after meeting only once or twice (Allendorf, 2013). Other couples elope without meeting in person at all – before marrying they may communicate solely by phone or online. Further, when arranging marriages for their children many parents increasingly take the potential for love and interpersonal compatibility into account (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2008).

More broadly, hybrid marriages that blend South Asian and Northwest European customs are growing in popularity. Such "arranged love marriages," "love-cum-arranged marriages," or "semi-arranged marriages" bring together what many view as positive aspects of both marriage types (Allendorf, 2013; Diamond-Smith et al., 2020; Marsden, 2007; Netting, 2009; Pande, 2015). Such marriages can combine the prestige and family support of an arranged marriage with the youthful autonomy, premarital relationships, and love (or attraction) of self-choice marriage. Such hybrid marriages come about in multiple ways. Many enjoy the honor and ease of choosing from among suitable candidates selected by their parents. Some young couples meet and decide to marry, but approach parents to organize the marriage so it appears to be arranged. In other

cases, young people openly choose on their own, but limit themselves to partners they know their parents would approve.

Quality and Duration of Arranged Marriages

Many arranged marriages are high quality with couples achieving the ideal of developing strong, loving relationships after marriage. For instance, 45% of Nepalis whose parents chose their spouse said they loved their spouse very much in the 2008 Chitwan Valley Family Study (authors calculations). This figure is virtually identical to those who chose their spouse on their own (44%) and those who chose jointly with parents (43%). More rigorous assessments find a mix of nonexistent to modest associations between marital quality and spouse choice (Allendorf & Ghimire, 2013; Hoelter et al., 2004). For example, Nepalis with arranged marriages scored a third of a standard deviation lower on marital satisfaction than those who chose their own spouse, but there was no difference in communication (Allendorf & Ghimire, 2013).

Arranged marriages rarely end in separation and divorce. In India, the percent of ever married adults who were currently divorced or separated was less than one percentage point from 1961 to 2011 (Dommaraju, 2016). More recently, in 2019-21, only 1.4% of women aged 15-49 and 0.9% of men aged 15-54 were divorced, separated, or deserted (IIPS & ICF, 2021, p. 216). These strikingly low percentages for current marital status could reflect high rates of remarriage. However, lifetime estimates are also tiny; only two percent of Indian marriages end in divorce or separation within 20 years (Dommaraju, 2016).

Marital dissolution is more common in South Asian communities where young people exercise greater choice over spouses. Divorce is universally low across India, but relatively high in the

Northeast where self-choice marriages are most common and higher in the South where joint decision-making with parents is dominant (Dommaraju, 2016). Low levels of dissolution reflect the logic of the broader family system in which women's sexuality is tightly controlled and marriages represent continuation of existing families. In contexts where arranged marriage is strongly preferred and practiced, divorce is also highly stigmatized. Family support is also tied to how the marriage came about. Typically, women return to their natal families when marriages breakdown due to violence or abandonment. Families are responsible for a daughters' future well-being when they arrange her marriage, but if she chooses on her own she is seen as relinquishing her rights to their future support (Allendorf, 2013).

This longevity of arranged marriages is not universal, however. Notably, Muslim Southeast Asia provides a striking contrast in which couples in arranged marriages had extremely high rates of divorce in the early 20th century (Jones, 1997). Parents in that context typically arranged marriages when their children were young, but it was widely acceptable for either spouse to end the marriage later if they were not entirely satisfied. Divorce was also easily accomplished under the Muslim practice of triple talaq (but later became difficult). In turn, as arranged marriage declined over the 20th century in Muslim Southeast Asia, divorce also fell (ibid).

Future Research

There is much scope for future research on family involvement in spouse selection and marriage more broadly. Providing better estimates of prevalence by incorporating questions about spouse choice in more surveys would be highly valuable. Even cross-sectional surveys can provide a window into recent changes over time by examining differences across marriage cohorts. Greater standardization of survey measures would also provide comparability across studies. It is also

important to continue to explore the complex and shifting process of family involvement in marriage through ethnographies and interview-based studies in a variety of contexts. The growing South Asian diaspora in North America, Europe, and elsewhere is a burgeoning and particularly important context for such investigations. The South Asian diaspora is embedded within populations with different marriage practices, which provides important tests of how and why marriage practices shift and persist. The elite social and economic status of Indians settled in the United States, Great Britain, and other wealthy countries may also make them trendsetters in India and more broadly. Further work on connections between spouse choice and marital quality and dissolution is also needed. Relatively few studies address such links, which are likely to differ over place and time as support for such marriages varies.

References Cited

Abraham, L., & Kumar, K. A. (1999). Sexual experiences and their correlates among college students in Mumbai City, India. *International Family Planning Perspectives*, *25*(3), 139-152. https://doi.org/10.2307/2991963

Aengst, J. (2014). Adolescent movements: Dating, elopements, and youth policing in Ladakh, India. *Ethnos*, *79*(5), 630-649. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2013.817459

Ahearn, L. A. (2001). *Invitations to love: Literacy, love letters and social change in Nepal*. The University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404505310116

Alexander, M., Garda, L., Kanade, S., Jejeebhoy, S., & Ganatra, B. (2006). Romance and sex: Pre-marital partnership formation among young women and men, Pune district, India. *Reproductive Health Matters*, *14*(28), 144-155. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0968-8080(06)28265-X

Allendorf, K. (2013). Schemas of marital change: From arranged marriages to eloping for love. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *75*(2), 453-469. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12003

Allendorf, K. (2017). Conflict and compatibility? Developmental idealism and gendered differences in marital choice. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *79*(2), 337-355. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12339

Allendorf, K. (2019). Parents' valuation of approving a child's spouse in a context of marital change. *Journal of Family Issues*, *40*(15), 2097-2122. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x19849634

Allendorf, K., & Ghimire, D. J. (2013). Determinants of marital quality in an arranged marriage society. *Social Science Research*, *42*(1), 59-70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.09.002

Allendorf, K., & Pandian, R. K. (2016). The decline of arranged marriage? Marital change and continuity in India. *Population and Development Review*, *42*(3), 435-464. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2016.00149.x

Allendorf, K., & Thornton, A. (2015). Caste and choice: The influence of developmental idealism on marriage behavior. *American Journal of Sociology*, *121*(1), 243-287. https://doi.org/10.1086/681968

Applbaum, K. D. (1995). Marriage with the proper stranger - arranged marriage in metropolitan Japan. *Ethnology*, *34*(1), 37-51. https://doi.org/10.2307/3773862

Axinn, W. G., Ghimire, D. J., & Barber, J. S. (2008). The influence of ideational dimensions of social change on family formation in Nepal. In R. Jayakody, A. Thornton, & W. G. Axinn (Eds.), *International Family Dhange: Ideational Perspectives* (pp. 251-280). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bahramitash, R., & Kazemipour, S. (2006). Myths and realities of the impact of Islam on women: Changing marital status in Iran. *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, *15*(2), 111-128.

Basu, A. M., & Kumar, S. (2022). Bride price, dowry, and young men with time to kill: A commentary on men's marriage postponement in India. *Population Studies,* 76(3), 515-534. https://doi.org/10.1080/00324728.2022.2080858

Basu, S. (2015). *The trouble with marriage: Feminists confront law and violence in India*. University of California Press.

Bennett, J. M. (2019). Wretched girls, wretched boys and the European marriage pattern in England (c. 1250-1350). *Continuity and Change*, *34*(3), 315-347. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0268416019000328

Bloom, D. E., & Reddy, P. H. (1986). Age patterns of women at marriage, cohabitation, and first birth in India. *Demography*, *23*(4), 509-523.

Brunson, J. (2014). 'Scooty girls': Mobility and intimacy at the margins of Kathmandu. *Ethnos*, *79*(5), 610-629. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2013.813056

Chowdhry, P. (2007). *Contentious marriages,eloping couples: Gender, caste, and patriarchy in Northern India*. Oxford University Press.

Cole, J., & Thomas, L. M. (2009). *Love in Africa*. The University of Chicago Press.

Coontz, S. (2005). *Marriage, a history: How love conquered marriage*. Penguin Books.

De Moor, T., & Van Zanden, J. L. (2010). Girl power: the European marriage pattern and labour markets in the North Sea region in the late medieval and early modern period. *Economic History Review*, *63*(1), 1-33. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0289.2009.00483.x

De Munck, V. C. (1996). Love and marriage in a Sri Lankan Muslim community: Toward a reevaluation of Dravidian marriage practices. *American Ethnologist*, *23*(4), 698-716.

Dhar, D. (2022). *Indian matchmaking: Are working women penalized in the marriage market in India?* Working paper.

Diamond-Smith, N. G., Dahal, M., Puri, M., & Weiser, S. D. (2020). Semi-arranged marriages and dowry ambivalence: Tensions in the changing landscape of marriage formation in South Asia. *Culture Health & Sexuality*, *22*(9), 971-986. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2019.1646318

Dommaraju, P. (2016). Divorce and separation in India. *Population and Development Review*, *42*(2), 195-223. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2016.00127.x

Dyson, T., & Moore, M. (1983). On kinship structure, female autonomy, and demographic behavior in India. *Population and Development Review*, *9*(1), 35-60. https://doi.org/10.2307/1972894

Emran, M. S., Maret-Rakotondrazaka, F., & Smith, S. C. (2014). Education and freedom of choice: Evidence from aranged marriages in Vietnam. *Journal of Development Studies*, *50*(4), 481-501. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2013.841884

Fox, G. L. (1975). Love match and arranged marriage in a modernizing nation: Mate selection in Ankara, Turkey. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 180-193. https://doi.org/10.2307/351042

Fuller, C. J., & Narasimhan, H. (2008). Companionate marriage in India: the changing marriage system in a middle-class Brahman subcaste. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *14*(4), 736-754. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2008.00528.x

Gandhi, M. K. (1927). *An autobiography or the story of my experiments with truth*. Navajivan Publishing House.

Ghimire, D. J., Axinn, W. G., Yabiku, S. T., & Thornton, A. (2006). Social change, premarital nonfamily experience, and spouse choice in an arranged marriage society. *American Journal of Sociology*, *111*(4), 1181-1218. https://doi.org/10.1086/498468

Gjonça, A., & Thornton, A. (2019). The spread of ideas related to the developmental idealism model in Albania. *Sociology of Development*, *5*(3), 265-285. https://doi.org/10.1525/sod.2019.5.3.265

Gorer, G. (1967 [1938]). *Himalayan village: An account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*. Basic Books.

Grover, S. (2011). *Marriage, love, caste, and kinship support: Lived experiences of the urban poor in India*. Social Science Press.

Gupta, C. (2009). Hindu women, Muslim men: Love jihad and conversions. *Economic & Political Weekly*, *44*(51), 19-25.

Hajnal, J. (1965). European marriage patterns in perspective. In D. V. Glass & D. E. Eversley (Eds.), *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography* (pp. 101-143). Aldine Publishing Company.

Hajnal, J. (1982). Two kinds of preindustrial household formation systems. *Population and Development Review*, *8*(3), 449-494. https://doi.org/10.2307/1972376

Hanawalt, B. A. (2007). *The wealth of wives: Women, law, and economy in late medieval London*. Oxford University Press.

Heaton, T. B., Cammack, M., & Young, L. (2001). Why is the divorce rate declining in Indonesia? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *63*(2), 480-490. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00480.x

Hoelter, L. F., Axinn, W. G., & Ghimire, D. J. (2004). Social change, premarital nonfamily experiences, and marital dynamics. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *66*(5), 1131-1151. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00083.x

International Institute for Population (IIPS), & ICF. (2021). *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-21: India*. IIPS.

Jennings, E. (2014). Marital discord and subsequent dissolution: Perceptions of Nepalese wives and husbands. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *76*(3), 476-488. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12104

Jones, G. (2010). *Changing marriage patterns in Asia* (Working Paper Series No. 131). Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.

Jones, G. W. (1997). Modernization and divorce: Contrasting trends in Islamic Southeast Asia and the West. *Population and Development Review*, *23*(1), 95-114. https://doi.org/10.2307/2137462

Karve, I. (1965). *Kinship organization in India*. Asia Publishing House.

Kaser, K. (2008). *Patriarchy after patriarchy: Gender relations in Turkey and in the Balkans, 1500-2000*. Lit.

Kaur, R., & Palriwala, R. (Eds.). (2014). *Marrying in South Asia: Shifting concepts, changing practices in a globalizing world*. Orient Black Swan.

Kolenda, P. (1987). *Regional differences in family structure in India*. Rawat Publications.

Liu, H., & Mu, Z. (2023). Mate selection in China: Trends and determinants. *Family Relations*, *72*(3), 755-773. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12718

Lundh, C. (2013). The geography of marriage: Regional variations in age at first marriage in Sweden, 1870-1900. *Scandinavian Journal of History*, *38*(3), 318-343. https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2013.804003

Macfarlane, A. (1976). *Resources and population: A study of the Gurungs of Nepal*. Cambridge University Press.

Macfarlane, A. (1986). *Marriage and love in England: Modes of reproduction 1300-1840*. Blackwell.

Malhotra, A. (1991). Gender and changing generational relations - spouse choice in Indonesia. *Demography*, *28*(4), 549-570. https://doi.org/10.2307/2061422

Malhotra, A., & Tsui, A. O. (1996). Marriage timing in Sri Lanka: The role of modern norms and ideas. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *58*(2), 476-490. https://doi.org/10.2307/353511

Marsden, M. (2007). Love and elopement in northern Pakistan. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *13*(1), 91-108. https://doi.org/DOI 10.1111/j.1467-9655.2007.00415.x

Meekers, D. (1995). Freedom of partner choice in Togo. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *26*(2), 163-178.

Mody, P. (2008). *The intimate state: Love-marriage and the law in Delhi*. Routledge India.

Nedoluzhko, L., & Agadjanian, V. (2015). Between tradition and modernity: Marriage dynamics in Kyrgyzstan. *Demography*, *52*, 861-882. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-015-0393-2

Netting, N. S. (2009). Marital ideoscapes in 21st-century India: Creative combinations of love and responsibility. *Journal of Family Issues*, *20*(10), 1-20.

Newton, G. (2014). Clandestine marriage in early modern London: when, where and why? *Continuity and Change*, *29*(2), 151-180. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0268416014000137

Osella, C., & Osella, F. (1998). Friendship and flirting: Micro-politics in Kerala, South India. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *4*(2), 189-206. https://doi.org/10.2307/3034499

Pande, R. (2015). 'I arranged my own marriage': arranged marriages and post-colonial feminism. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *22*(2), 172-187. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2013.855630

Peterson, B. E., Kim, R., McCarthy, J. M., Park, C. J., & Plamondon, L. T. (2011). Authoritarianism and arranged marriage in Bangladesh and Korea. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *45*(6), 622-630. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2011.08.012

Rajadesingan, A., Mahalingam, R., & Jurgens, D. (2019). Smart, responsible, and upper caste only: Measuring caste attitudes through large-scale analysis of matrimonial profiles. Working paper. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1904.04176

Ramasubramanian, S., & Jain, P. (2009). Gender stereotypes and normative heterosexuality in matrimonial ads from globalizing India. *Asian Journal of Communication*, *19*(3), 253-269. https://doi.org/10.1080/01292980903072831

Reed, M. (2021). Marriage: When, to whom, and how people get married. In S. Chakravorty & N. Sircar (Eds.), *Colossus: The Anatomy of Delhi* (pp. 251-272). Cambridge University Press.

Retherford, R. D., & Ogawa, N. (2006). Japan's baby bust: Causes, implications, and policy responses. In F. R. Harris (Ed.), *The Baby Bust: Who Will Do the Work? Who Will Pay the Taxes?* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Richardson, D., & Allendorf, K. (2023). Developmental idealism and beliefs about marriage in the United States. *Sociology of Development*, *9*(1), 78-108. https://doi.org/10.1525/sod.2022.0007

Rukmini S. (2021). *Whole numbers and half truths: What data can and cannot tell us about modern India*. Westland Publications.

Saavala, M. (2001). *Fertility and familial power relations: Procreation in South India*. Curzon Press.

Schuler, S. R., Bates, L. M., Islam, F., & Islam, M. K. (2006). The timing of marriage and childbearing among rural families in Bangladesh: Choosing between competing risks. *Social Science & Medicine*, *62*(11), 2826-2837. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.11.004

Smith-Hefner, N. J. (2005). The new Muslim romance: Changing patterns of courtship and marriage among educated Javanese youth. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *36*(3), 441-459.

Smith, D. J. (2001). Romance, parenthood, and gender in a modern African society. *Ethnology*, *40*(2), 129-151. https://doi.org/10.2307/3773927

Smith, D. J. (2009). Managing men, marriage, and modern love: Women's perspectives on intimacy and male infidelity in Southeastern Nigeria. In J. Cole & L. M. Thomas (Eds.), *Love in Africa* (pp. 157-180). University of Chicago Press.

Still, C. (2011). Spoiled brides and the fear of education: honour and social mobility among Dalits in South India. *Modern Asian Studies*, *45*(05), 1119-1146. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749x10000144

Tapia, F. J., & Raftakis, M. (2022). Sex ratios and gender discrimination in modern Greece. *Population Studies*, *76*(2), 329-346.

Therborn, G. (2004). *Between sex and power: Family in the world, 1900-2000*. Routledge.

Thornton, A. (2001). The developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, and family change. *Demography*, *38*(4), 449-465. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088311

Thornton, A. (2005). *Reading history sideways: The fallacy and enduring impact of the developmental paradigm on family life*. The University of Chicago Press.

Thornton, A. (2009). Historical and cross-cultural perspectives on marraige. In H. E. Peters & C. M. K. Dush (Eds.), *Marriage and family: Perspectives and complexities* (pp. 3-32). Columbia University Press.

Thornton, A., Chang, J. S., & Lin, H. S. (1994). From arranged marriage toward love match. In A. Thornton & H.-S. Lin (Eds.), *Social change and the family in Taiwan* (pp. 148-177). University of Chicago Press.

Uberoi, P. (2006). *Freedom and destiny: Gender, family, and popular culture in India*. Oxford University Press.

Wrigley, E. A., & Schofield, R. S. (1981). *The population history of England 1541-1871*. Edward Arnold.

Xu, X., & Whyte, M. K. (1990). Love matches and arranged matches: A Chinese replication. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *52*(3), 709-722.

Yan, Y. (2003). *Private life under socialism: Love, intimacy, and family change in a Chinese village*. Stanford University Press.

Zang, X. (2008). Gender and ethnic variation in arranged marriages in a Chinese city. *Journal of Family Issues*, *29*(5), 615-638. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x07308039