

The Persistence of Arranged Marriage in Urban India:
New Evidence from the Delhi National Capital Region

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Abstract:

Utilizing new survey data from the Delhi National Capital Region as well as data from in-depth qualitative interviews with surveyed households, this paper explores the determinants of attitudes towards marriage arrangement. Most respondents reported an expectation that young people today will have more say in their partner selection than the previous generation. However, few people report an expectation for self-arrangement, often commonly known as “love marriage.” Most prefer some sort of “joint-arranged” marriage, where young people participate in selecting their partner alongside their parents. The survey shows that individual-level, household-level, as well as spatial factors play an important role in predicting what type of marriage arrangement style a family will use. Interview data highlights why young people are often the most outspoken advocates for arranged marriage, including joint arranged marriage. Involvement of parents in partner selection is seen by young people to provide more protection against uncertainty in marriage.

In India, marriage is nearly universal. Only 1% of women and 2% of men never married by age 45-9 (International Institute for Population Sciences and ICF 2017). Divorce and remarriage are also relatively rare so, for most Indians, marriage only happens once in their lifetime. Weddings are often central to the plotline in Bollywood cinema and, in real life, they are the single most costly and socially important event in an average Indian's life (Bloch, Rao, and Desai 2004).

Parent-arranged marriages have historically been the most common form of partner selection in India. The kinship system of India is structured around arranged marriage with the joint-family giving significant authority to family elders, including as decision-makers of a young person's spouse (Gough 1959; Kapadia 1955; Karve 1968). Arranged marriage was also dominant in many other Asian countries as well but sharp declines in the prevalence of arranged marriages have been documented in China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Taiwan, and Togo (Allendorf and Pandian 2016). India, however, has been slower to show patterns of arranged marriage decline.

Using new quantitative and qualitative data, this paper will attempt to explain why the decline of arranged marriage has been so slow focusing on the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR), the second largest urban agglomeration in the world (United Nation 2014). I will explore how expectations for marital arrangement styles differ between two groups- unmarried youth and those already married. Regression analysis using an innovative new survey of around 4,000 households reveals important factors in predicting marriage arrangement types including: 1) individual factors like education, 2) spatial factors like urbanity of residence, and 3) household-level factors like the practice of gendered behaviors such as veiling/seclusion. Data from in-depth interviews with some of the survey respondents sheds light on why marriage arrangement

practices reveal significant amounts of continuity over time and how marriage decisions are negotiated in the family.

Literature Review

Early theories of family change predicted a global convergence in family form across different societies. According to this perspective, as countries developed, urbanized, industrialized, and expanded education, their families and marriage behaviors would begin to look more like those in the West (Adams 2010). Families were expected to delay marriage and adopt self-choice in partner selection as they reject patriarchal family structures (Goode 1963, 1982).

Researchers have often emphasized the role of economic factors in shaping the family. They argue that many aspects of Indian marriage systems, such as arranged marriage and early age at marriage, are incompatible with the conditions of “modern” life in industrialized societies (Goode 1963). This may be due to the emphasis on individualism, the impracticality of large joint-family living, or the breakdown of the traditional age or gender hierarchy in so-called “modern” societies.

Declines in arranged marriage may be prompted by the expansion of education. As skill and education become increasingly important markers of status, age-based power hierarchies, which are essential to the arranged marriage system, may be challenged. Technological changes may devalue traditional skills, it is theorized, resulting in the older generations losing some power over the younger generation which is reaping the benefits of their higher education and skill on the labor market (Boserup 1993). Caldwell (1982) argued that mass education plays an important role in demographic changes such as fertility decline because of the changed direction

of wealth flows between generations and the breakdown of a “family morality” structured around respect for elders. However, Caldwell never anticipated the breakdown of arranged marriage in India, even with the expansion of education (Caldwell, Reddy, and Caldwell 1983, 1988).

Education may also be an important site for the global spread of ideas about the ideal family or marriage, leading to convergence of family forms. Thornton (2005) and others emphasize the ideational factors causing family change as normative beliefs about “the modern family” spread from the West to the developing world through schools, colonialism, travel, mass media, missionaries, international development aid, and other mechanisms. These normative beliefs include the idea that marriages should be self-arranged and that inter-marriage is good for society. There is some evidence that exposure to and endorsement of these ideas, often called “Developmental Idealism” by social scientists, is associated with changing marriage behaviors (Abbasi-Shavazi and Askari-Nodoushan 2012; Allendorf and Thornton 2015; Kavas and Thornton 2013; Lai and Thornton 2015; Thornton, Ghimire, and Mitchell 2012). For example, in the Darjeeling Hills, a region where elopements have become quite common, interview respondents reported that love marriages were more “inherently good” and more likely to be successful, in their opinion (Allendorf 2013). Increased education, technological change, and “foreign influence” were reasons given by respondents in the Darjeeling Hills for the move away from arranged marriage.

Increased time spent in school, employment away from the home, participation in youth clubs and residence in large urban areas increases the contact that young people have with non-relatives and this has also been associated with the adoption of self-choice marriages (Ahearn 2001; Allendorf and Thornton 2015; Corwin 1977; Ghimire et al. 2006). Other structural changes such female labor force participation, and overall women’s empowerment have been

linked to changes in marriage behaviors in empirical studies (Ahuja and Ostermann 2015; Desai and Andrist 2010). Giddens (1992) argues that there is a global trend towards a marriage ideal based on gender equality. This ideal came about due to a decoupling of sexuality and reproduction and an emphasis on personal choice in the formation of romantic relationships, both of which are associated with women's empowerment (Giddens 1992).

A related literature emphasizes the role of globalization and mass media leading to the spread of "Western" values such as individualism and companionate "love marriage" (Uberoi 2006). This literature often focuses on the changing depictions of family, marriage, and love in Bollywood cinema as a sign of changing social norms (Dwyer 2004).

Using data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS), Allendorf and Pandian (2016) published an overview of recent trends and patterns in arranged marriage in India. They conclude that "the practice of arranged marriage is shifting rather than declining... Rather than displacing their parents in the decision process, young women joined their parents in choosing husbands" (Allendorf and Pandian 2016:457). Self-choice marriages comprised less than 10% of all marriages in India during the 2000s, though this is a small increase from previous marriage cohorts. The authors document the rise of the "joint-arranged" marriage, where children are consulted by their parents in arranging the marriage. By the 2000s, joint selection was the dominant marriage form in India, comprising two-thirds of all marriages (ibid). Parent-arranged marriages were least common in urban areas, especially in the six largest metro regions. In metro regions, the proportion of joint-arranged marriages increased across marriage cohorts; but, self-arranged marriages were no more common in urban areas than in villages (ibid).

Ethnographic studies have also begun to document a growing ideal of joint-arranged marriages. Several authors have argued that there no longer is a clear demarcation between love

and arranged marriage in South Asia, rather marriages fall on a fluid continuum (Fuller and Narasimhan 2008; Kalpagam 2008; Marsden 2007). On the other hand, Grover (2018) argues utilizing ethnographic accounts from a low-income neighborhood in Delhi that a clear demarcation between love and arranged marriage remains salient, especially after the marriage. She finds that women in marriages which were based on a pre-marital romantic relationship, regardless of whether the couple secures the blessing of parents, are able to access less support from their natal kin after the marriage. Whereas in arranged marriages, women have a “right of refuge” in their parent’s home, women who selected their own spouse are not able to avail that right (Grover 2018). This, Grover argues, places women in a more precarious position in love marriages because natal support is an important source of power for women within their conjugal household.

This study will examine the role of individual, spatial, and household-level factors in predicting expected marriage arrangement style. The individual factors examined in the following analysis include gender, age, and education. The effect of education has been theorized extensively and is expected to be associated with greater endorsement of self-choice. Examining the difference in responses from young unmarried respondents and those already married, this paper will show how the role of education differs between the two populations. The role of gender and age have been less theorized in the literature but, in the analysis below, show interesting patterns. As mentioned above, urbanization is expected to be associated with a move toward self-arrangement in marriage because of increased contact with non-relatives, less rootedness in a bound community, and greater anonymity. In the analysis below, three spatial factors will attempt to capture the urbanity and rootedness of the respondent. The spatial factors include: residence in the most urban part of the region, rural birth, and whether the respondent

has shifted residence in the past 25 years. The final set of factors relate to household practices and family history. These include the wealth of the household, whether the previous generation practiced parent-only arranged marriage, whether the household practices female veiling, whether the household is nuclear, and the level of openness of the household to non-family sociality.

Data and Methods

In 2016, the Center for the Advanced Study of India (CASI) at the University of Pennsylvania fielded a household survey in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). The National Capital Region (NCR) is the urban agglomeration organized under a common regional planning board. The 2013 definition of the boundaries of NCR are used in the sample. NCR includes the whole Delhi National Capital Territory (NCT) which is the capital city and a union territory (similar to the District of Columbia in the US) as well as the urban population of 18 adjacent districts from the states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. NCR includes Delhi's large neighbor cities of Faridabad, Gurugram, Noida, and Ghaziabad as well as its more distant cities such as Sonapat, Alwar, Meerut, Rohtak, and Bhiwani. NCR is a rural-urban region, which means that it includes areas classified as rural as well as those classified as urban. For the purpose of sampling for the CASI survey, only the areas classified as urban by the 2011 Indian Census were included, excluding about a third of the total population of the region. The survey is representative of an urban population of around 30 million according to the 2011 Indian Census.

The sampling method combines the use of the voter list and a "random walk" method. The NCR region comprises 179 assembly constituencies. The survey drew a random sample from 100 clusters from polling booths using the publicly available voter lists, which include the name, age, and address of all voters by polling booth. The voter list was also supplemented by a

random walk sampling method where a specific neighbor of a voter was sampled using the “right hand rule” of selecting the 10th dwelling away from the randomly drawn household from the voter list. In total 4,431 households were captured through the voter list and 1,045 were captured from the random walk.

To ascertain how young unmarried people’s perspectives on their own marriages differ from the perspectives of those who have already married, the sample was split into two groups. About 19% of the sample falls into the category of never-married and young, which I have defined as below the age of 36. Only 2% of the never-married sample is aged 36 and above. It is possible that this population does not plan to marry as marriage past the age of 35 is rare. The second subsample, about 80% of the total, includes all ever-married respondents, including those which are relatively young. Most of the ever-married sample are currently married. A small fraction of the group is separated, divorced, or widowed (about 2%). Only those cases with complete data on all variables used in the analysis are included in the dataset, reducing the sample size by about a third. The total number of never-married respondents is 643 and the total number of ever-married respondents is 2,971.

Table 1 provides some descriptive information about the two subsamples that will be used in the regression analysis. The ever-married sample is more female than the never-married group. The mean age of the never-married group is 23 and the mean age for the ever-married group is 41. The respondents range in age from 18 to 94. Table 1 shows how the younger unmarried subsample is significantly more educated than the older and married sample. 54% of young respondents had at least some college education compared to only 23% of the ever-married sample.

[TABLE 1 HERE]

Three dichotomous variables indicate spatial aspects of the household's mobility and urbanity. First, a variable distinguishes between those who reside within the core of NCR in the National Capital Territory and those who live outside of the NCT. A slightly smaller share of ever-married respondents live in the NCT. Another variable measures whether the respondent was born in a rural area. Few respondents were born in rural areas; only around 10% of the young unmarried sample and 15% of the ever-married sample were born in villages. A final variable captures whether the respondent had lived in any other residence since 1991. This data was collected from an extensive residential history module. Only 3% of the young respondents had lived in any other house compared to about half of all ever-married respondents. This indicates a high level of rootedness in specific neighborhoods, which, I hypothesize, may be associated with lower likelihood of shifting to self-arranged marriage.

A final class of variables are related to household-level traits. A measure of wealth is included in the analysis. Wealth is measured through a wealth index which uses principal components analysis (PCA) to weigh the importance of certain assets from a set list. The index scores are standardized with a mean of 0 so they have not been included in Table 1. A shift to nuclear family residence is considered part of family change anticipated through the Developmental Idealism perspective (Allendorf and Thornton 2015). A dichotomous variable captures whether there is more than one married couple living in the household as an indicator of whether the household is nuclear. A larger share of young respondents live in nuclear households. Previous research has highlighted the importance of practices of gender performance in predicting marriage patterns (Desai and Andrist 2010). Using the same definition used in the IHDS, a dichotomous variable in the NCR data captures whether the household practices any form of female veiling, known as *pardah*, *pallu*, or *ghunghat*. About two-thirds of households in

the Delhi NCR practice some form of *pardah*. It is anticipated that the practice of *pardah* will be associated with parent-only arranged marriage.

A final dichotomous variable comes from a section of the survey on commensality, the boundaries and practices of social eating. This variable measures whether the respondent said that they had invited any non-family member to their home to eat a meal in the past year. Subsequent questions asked about whether those invited into one's home were out-group members by religion or caste. Only 19% and 28% of the unmarried and married sample respectively had dined with a non-relative in their home in the past year. This measure captures the degree to which the household is family-centered compared to having a wider social network where friends and neighbors dine together. Dining with non-relatives may also be restricted due to purity and caste concerns. This commensality variable is expected to be associated with more child involvement in selecting their own spouse.

In the quantitative analysis that follows, multinomial logistic regressions will be used to predict the expected marriage arrangement type. Multinomial regression analysis is used because there are three potential outcomes- parent-only arranged marriage, parents with child approval, and child-led arrangement style.

Qualitative data from interviews were collected from 16 of the households which participated in the survey. A semi-structured interview guide was used and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for later analysis. The households which agreed to participate in the interview study included 4 SC/ST Hindu households, 2 Sikh households, and 10 upper or intermediate caste Hindu households. No Muslim families participated in the interview project. The case study households could broadly be categorized as middle class and reside within the Delhi NCT. A total of 21 interviews were conducted with members of these families including 9

interviews with young unmarried individuals. This group can be compared to the young unmarried subsample from the survey data. The remaining 12 interviews were conducted with family members of the young unmarried persons, mostly with parents. Some interviews were conducted with multiple family members present.

Findings from Survey Data

Table 2 depicts descriptive results on marriage arrangement type across three generations. Respondents were asked who arranged their parents' marriage, their own marriage, and who they expect will arrange the marriage of boys and girls in their household today. This data gives a unique picture of how and why marriage practices change between generations of the same family. The Delhi NCR data distinguished between different types of "joint-arranged" marriages, giving us more granularity than other datasets permitted. Respondents could distinguish between 1) parents selecting a spouse and seeking the approval of the choice by the child from 2) children selecting their partner and then seeking the approval of their parents for the match.

[TABLE 2 HERE]

Two other options included in the survey- "love marriage" and "parent's look only if child cannot find"- were only selected by a few respondents and therefore these options were collapsed into the category of "self-led" marriage arrangements. The low response rate for "love marriage," the popular term for self-arranged marriages based on an existing romantic relationship, reveals how taboo this form of marriage remains. Interview data revealed that the term is primarily used for marriages which happen without parent approval.

Most ever-married respondents reported that they had a parent-only arranged marriage (82%). About 17% were consulted for their approval of their parent's selection of their marriage

partner. Less than 1% reported that they were the sole or primary decision-maker in who they would marry. Comparing the NCR data to the national trends analyzed by Allendorf and Pandian (2016) shows the relative share of marriages which are arranged only by parents is much higher in the NCR region than the national average.

However, a large change occurs between these responses and respondents' reported expectation for who would arrange marriages today. They were asked their expectation for boys and girls separately and there was a statistical difference in how respondents answered, granting slightly more decision-making power to boys than girls, for both the unmarried and married samples. The modal response was that young people today would have joint parent-arranged marriage where their parent selects the partner but seek their child's approval before the match is fixed. Joint-arranged marriage was endorsed by 66% of ever married respondents. About 10% of them expected girls from their family today to lead the process of selecting their partner and 11% expected boys to do the same. The rest did not foresee any changes from the parent-only arrangement type.

The expected marriage type is separated by gender of the never-married population with the assumption that the respondent is referring to the expectation in the family for their own marriage. 15% of young unmarried men indicated that young men like themselves will probably choose their own spouse with their parent's approval. Only 11% of the young unmarried females gave the same response. Interestingly, no young persons indicated an expectation for a "love marriage."

Predictors of Expected Marriage Arrangement Type

Tables 3 and 4 report results from multinomial logistic regressions predicting expected marriage type. Table 3 depicts what the married sample reports as the expected marriage type for girls in their family today. Table 4 shows the expected marriage type in their family for unmarried individuals below the age of 35. For the multinomial logit used to produce Table 4, the expected marriage type for persons of the respondent's gender was used in the analysis (See Table 2). Results are presented as average marginal effects. Each column depicts the changes in probability for a given marriage type for individuals of different characteristic. Standard errors are clustered by polling booth cluster. These models control for religion and caste of the head of household.

[TABLE 3 HERE]

A number of individual characteristics of the married sample were significant predictors of expected marriage arrangement type. Women were 4.6% more likely than men to report an expectation that girls in their family would have a parent-only arranged marriage controlling for the other variables in the analysis. This fits with some of the qualitative data which shows that mothers are often the ones with more “conservative” attitudes about marriage than their husbands. Interestingly, older married respondents were more likely to expect joint arranged marriage and less likely to endorse parent-only arranged marriage. This is probably a mechanical function of including young married persons in this sample. Young married respondents were more likely to come from families where parent-only arrangement and early marriage is the norm. Education generally had a negative impact on expectation of parent-only arranged marriage and a positive impact on expectation of child-led marriage decision-making but this effect was not statistically robust.

Spatial factors also predicted marriage arrangement type. Respondents in Delhi NCT were 7.7% less likely to expect a parent-only arranged marriage suggesting that the norm in the most urban area has moved towards inclusion of children in partner selection. Rather, it was in the NCT that respondents were statistically more likely to endorse the child-led marital arrangement style. Compared to their counterparts in urban areas of the NCR region outside of the city of Delhi, Delhiites were 4.1% more likely to expect young people to select their own partner. Controlling for other factors, individuals born in rural areas were less likely to expect self-arrangement for girls in their family. The rural-born, which constitutes around 15% of the married sample, were more likely to expect joint-arranged marriage but not more likely to expect parent-only arrangement. Only about half of the married sample shifted residences at least once, suggesting that a significant portion of the sample may be highly embedded in their residential community. Embeddedness was expected to impact family's willingness to change family customs. Individuals who had shifted residence at least once in the past 25 years were found to be less likely to report that girls would have a parent-only arranged marriage and were more likely to report that girl's approval would be sought. Having lived in more than one place was associated with a 6.2% higher likelihood of expecting a joint arranged marriage controlling for other factors.

The multinomial logistic regressions also included family or household-level factors, which proved to be some of the most important in impacting responses to this question. Unsurprisingly, respondents who themselves had a parent-only arranged marriage were 19.4% more likely to say they expected the same for the next generation. However, these respondents were also more likely to expect children to lead the spouse hunt themselves. What they were less likely to report is an expectation for the middle category of joint-arranged marriage. This

puzzling finding may be due, in part, to the way that respondents' feel about the success of their own marriage arrangement. Having a parent-only arranged marriage may lead respondents to have very polarized views on the practice, leading them to either reject it altogether or endorse its continuation.

Nuclear households were more likely to expect children to select their own life partner and less likely to endorse parent-only arranged marriages. This finding fits with existing research on nuclearization of households and changing household power-dynamics (Debnath 2015). In the qualitative interviews it was found that joint-family living was associated with more family elders playing a direct role in marriage decision-making.

Surprisingly, greater wealth (as measured by the assets index) was associated with decreased probability of having children select their own partner, controlling for other factors. Wealthier families may have more at stake when it comes to their child's marriage, thus leading to their aversion of self-choice. Wealthy families may intend to bequest significant assets to their children and are concerned about who may also gain access to their resources through their children. Furthermore, the interview data suggested that wealthier households tended to see marriage as an important site for social advancement and alliance building. This fits with emerging literature about elite marriage alliances in India (Bhandari 2017).

Gender behavior was also important. Households where some form of head covering around senior male household members (called *pardah*, *pallu*, or *ghunghat*) was practiced were 10.3% more likely to intend for parent-only arranged marriages. Finally, households which invited non-family members to eat at their home were more likely to endorse joint-arranged marriage. They were statistically less likely to expect either parent-only arranged marriage or self-arranged marriage.

Table 4 depicts the average marginal effects from the model of expected marriage type for young unmarried individuals. Many of the relationships are similar to those of the older married respondents. Young unmarried women were less likely to report an expectation of a self-arranged marriage which fits with the descriptive finding that families are slightly more likely to expect men in their family to select their partner than women. Older unmarried persons were more likely to report an expectation of self-arrangement. Those who have late marriages seem to be more likely to expect that they have gained the right to select their own partner. The effect of education was more dramatic for young unmarried respondents. Those who did not attend college were significantly less likely to expect parent-only arranged marriage. They are also more likely to expect self-arrangement. This result fits with the Developmental Idealism paradigm. Youth who are exposed to more education, develop preferences for self-arrangement in marriage.

[TABLE 4 HERE]

Spatial factors were less important for young individuals. Young people are perhaps able to gain exposure to a wider range of cosmopolitan spaces than their parents do in places like their university, the mall, or at a local hangout spots. This may explain why NCT residence did not have any statistically significant relationship with young unmarried person's marriage expectations. Rural origins were associated with parent-only arranged marriage and negatively associated with self-arrangement. If the youth of the household were born in a rural area then that means that the family likely only moved to Delhi recently. This could explain why rural birth for young people is associated with parent-only arranged marriage while, for older persons, it is not. Most of the young people surveyed have lived in the same house for most, if not all, of

their life. Having lived in any other location was associated with 29.7% higher likelihood of expecting joint-arranged marriage.

Household factors remain important for young people's perceptions of marriage as well. Young people's responses reflected the same polarized view on marriage arrangement as the previous generation. Young people whose parents' marriage was arranged without consulting them were more likely to expect both self-arrangement and parent-only arrangement for themselves. This effect was of substantial magnitude. In fact, if their parents had an arranged marriage, they were nearly 40% less likely to expect joint-arranged marriage. Young people living in nuclear household's were 7.7% more likely to expect self-arrangement. Like the older sample, wealth had an inverse association with self-arrangement. Wealth was associated with young unmarried people being more likely to expect parent-only arranged marriage, in addition to less likelihood of expecting self-arrangement.

The practice of *pardah* had a slightly different relationship with marriage arrangement type for young people. In addition to *pardah* being associated with parent-only arranged marriage, it also has a marginally significant positive relationship with self-arrangement. It is unclear why this happens for the young sample but not for the older married sample. It may be related to the fact that the young sample is more Muslim than the older sample. The young unmarried Muslim respondents were significantly more likely to expect self-arrangement than older Muslim respondents. Like the older group, young unmarried people who dined with non-relatives in their home were more likely to expect joint-arrangement.

Preliminary Findings from Interviews

The interview data has just been collected and is in the process of being analyzed. This section will highlight some of the emerging findings from the interview data. This section will be expanded to include more information about the role of individual, household-level, and spatial factors.

The interview data from young unmarried people and their parents provides some perspective on why self-arrangement is so slow to gain popularity in Delhi NCR. Parents spoke of arranging their child's marriage as their duty and right. However, it was the young unmarried people who were the most outspoken advocates for the system of arranged marriage. None of the middle-class youth interviewed reported that they wanted a love marriage. A number of reasons were given for why young people felt it was important that their parents play a large role in selecting their marriage partner.

Young people often reported that it was their love for and sense of duty to their parents that made them feel that arranged marriage was the best route. They spoke about how elopements and love marriages against one's parents' wishes was a form of "betrayal" and caused "hurt" to family members. During one of the interviews with an 18-year-old female college student, she explained:

"I've seen a lot of love marriages, but I don't agree with them, because it hurts parents a lot. They've loved and supported you your entire life, but now you're just not asking them and getting married, you're betraying them."

This desire to defer to parents' choice may also come from a place of respect for their parents' wisdom. As one male college student emphasized, "if they're saying no, that person is not good for you." This respondent, whose sister had eloped against her parents' wishes causing

her to be estranged from the family, is expressing a belief that parents generally know best when it comes to who their children should marry. Ignoring this wisdom is not only disrespectful but ill-advised.

A related reason given by young people for why they wanted their parents to select their marriage partner is due to a desire to share the burden of responsibility for the life decision. Some respondents spoke about the magnitude of the decision and how the arranged marriage process provides more insurance that the couple will stay together. Here, romantic love was described as volatile and irrational, too unpredictable to form the basis for married life. To these young people, the marriage arrangement process is more likely to lead to an optimal result because both families inquire into the character of the potential spouse and the family. The decision is not blinded by emotions of love, which they fear could lead them down a wrong path. Furthermore, because families are involved, there is a greater guarantee that both families will put pressure on their children to make the marriage work.

Some respondents told stories of couples who eloped only to have one of the partners (often the man) abandoned the other later when marriage difficulties arose. This cautionary tale emphasized how the abandoned partner was left in a “shameful” position. Respondents explained that they felt that arranged marriage could prevent such an outcome because the family would not allow their son (or daughter) to abandon the marriage. The family could most likely pressure them into not taking such a drastic action or could pressure their child to correct their ill behavior toward their spouse.

Even if abandonment or other forms of mistreatment does occur in an arranged marriage, no blame could be placed on the abandoned party because they did not select the marriage

partner. A young male respondent describes how young people face extra social scrutiny if they select their own spouse,

“But then when you choose someone, you have to be their guarantor, because you chose them. If my mother chooses someone, that’s easier, there’s more scope for compromise. I can blame her. It’s like if I break a mirror, I get yelled at, but if my mother breaks it, no one says anything.”

This respondent describes how, if the marriage decision is taken by his parents or if it is decided jointly between him and his parents, then he does not have to take full responsibility for the choice of the girl. Social censure of love marriages especially elopements in India is high. People are often eager to look for any indication that the love marriage was a mistake. In this way, failed love marriages are frequently made into examples of the perils of moving away from the arranged marriage system. These examples become important rhetorical tools for preventing more self-arranged marriages. The respondent above does not wish to expose himself to this heightened scrutiny and elects to instead go for an arranged marriage.

The desire to insure oneself in the event of an “bad marriage” takes on a special meaning for women. The same young woman quoted above goes on to say:

“Later the boy says things to the girl about leaving her family, and can have any demands later, there’s nothing the girl can do or say, because she chose this, she didn’t do it with her parent’s permission ... If we do something with our parents’ permission, then we know they’re there, if the boy tortures you or something, you can tell your parents, they can help you.”

Here, the young woman describes a situation where the husband mistreats his wife, criticizing her moral character because she left her family, even though she left her family to be with him. She explains how, because the woman chose to elope, her family will refuse to provide

her support or refuge if she faces trouble in her marriage, such as in the event that her husband “tortures” her. In India, women often rely on their parents and other family members as protection from domestic violence or other adverse situations in their marriage. It is not uncommon to find young women returning to their parent’s household after an especially bad marital dispute. In fact, Grover (2018) calls this the “right of refuge” and describes how informal family courts negotiate marital disputes not between individuals, but primarily between families. Electing to elope closes off that “right of refuge” to women, placing them in a more vulnerable situation in the marriage (Grover 2018).

Discussion

Utilizing a new survey data of around 4,000 households in the Delhi NCR, an urban region with a population of over 30 million, as well as interviews with selected households, this paper has highlighted the persistence of arranged marriage in urban India. As documented in the national trends, joint-arranged marriages have become the dominant form of marriage arrangement as parent-alone arranged marriages are slowly falling out of fashion. However, the Delhi NCR data separates joint-arranged marriages which are led by parents from those which are led by the children themselves thus revealing that most joint-arranged marriages are led by the parents. In these joint-arranged marriages, children are allowed to veto choices made by the parents. A much smaller proportion of marriages follow the opposite pattern, with children selecting a partner and seeking the approval of parents. Almost no respondents endorsed a system where parents had no involvement in selecting a spouse.

The interview data shed light on why young people continue to endorse parent arranged marriages. Young people defer to their parents’ choice because they see their parents as possessing more wisdom and disobeying their parents’ wishes as an act of immorality. They also

seek to insure against a bad marriage by deferring the “blame” for the partner choice to their parents. This allows them to maintain a “right of refuge” to return home or seek parental help later, especially if the marriage goes sour.

Parent involvement in marriage partner selection remains strong mainly because the intergenerational bond between parents and children remains the basis of family life in India. India has yet to acquire the emphasis on conjugality seen in many Western countries, despite the influence of Developmental Idealism in many aspects of family life. The data from the surveys and interviews confirms that arranged marriage is far from retreating in Indian society. Rather, it is taking new forms which allow for greater involvement of individuals in their own partner selection while still giving parents a significant role.

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Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Never Married and Ever Married Samples

	Never Married ^a	Ever Married ^b
Female	40%	57%
Mean Age	23	41
<i>Highest level of education</i>		
No education	4%	16%
Primary school	4%	21%
Secondary School	3%	20%
Higher secondary	35%	20%
At least some college	54%	23%
Reside in Delhi National Capital Territory	49%	59%
Born in a rural area	10%	15%
Had any other residence since 1991	3%	53%
Lives in nuclear household ^c	79%	47%
Household practices <i>pardah</i>	69%	65%
Invite non-family members to eat in home	19%	28%
<i>Caste and Religion</i>		
Upper caste Hindu	30%	31%
Intermediate caste Hindu	35%	36%
Dalit Hindu	14%	15%
Adivasi	5%	6%
Muslim	13%	11%
Sikh	2%	2%
Other	<1%	<1%
Total Persons in Sample	643	2,971

^a Only includes never married persons aged 35 and younger, excluding about 2% of never married persons

^b 98% of the ever-married sample is currently married. The rest are mostly separated from their partner with a minuscule amount divorced or widowed.

^c Here nuclear households are defined by having no more than one married couple residing there.

Table 2: Marriage Arrangement Types by Gender and Generation

	Ever Married ^a	Never Married ^b		
		Total	Women	Men
<i>Expected marriage type for girls</i>				
Family decides alone	24%		27%	
Family decides with child approval	66%		61%	
Family looks if child can't find	<0%		<0%	
Child chooses as long as family approves	10%		11%	
"Love marriage"	<0%		-	
<i>Expected marriage type for boys</i>				
Family decides alone	23%			24%
Family decides with child approval	66%			61%
Family looks if child can't find	<0%			<0%
Child chooses as long as family approves	11%			15%
"Love marriage"	<0%			-
<i>Own marriage type</i>				
Family decided alone	82%			
Family decided with child approval	17%			
Family looked after I wasn't able to find	<0%			
I chose with family approval	<0%			
"Love marriage"	<0%			
<i>Parents' marriage type</i>				
Family decided alone		86%		
Family decided with child approval		14%		
Child chose as long as family approves		-		
"Love marriage"		-		
Total Persons	2971	643	247	386

^a Only includes never married persons aged 35 and younger, excluding about 2% of never married persons

^b 98% of the ever-married sample is currently married. The rest are mostly separated from their partner with a minuscule amount divorced or widowed.

^c This option not included for question on parent's marriage type.

- Indicates that no respondent gave that response.

Table 3: Average Marginal Effects from Multinomial Logit Models Predicting Expected Marriage Arrangement Type for Girls for the Ever-Married Respondent Sample

	Parents alone decide		Parents decide with child approval		Children primarily decide ^a	
	AME ^b	SE ^c	AME ^b	SE ^c	AME ^b	SE ^c
Female	0.046*	0.022	-0.037	0.025	-0.009	0.02
Age	-0.002*	0.001	0.002*	0.001	-0.000	0.001
<i>Highest level of education</i> (Reference group: at least some college)						
No education	0.001	0.029	0.015	0.031	-0.016	0.021
Primary	-0.008	0.025	0.037	0.029	-0.029	0.018
Secondary	0.028	0.025	0.008	0.028	-0.036†	0.019
Higher secondary	-0.009	0.025	0.017	0.029	-0.008	0.02
Lives in Delhi NCT ^d	-0.077*	0.032	0.036	0.042	0.041†	0.024
Rural birth	0.004	0.03	0.104**	0.04	-0.108**	0.03
Had any other residence	-0.073**	0.021	0.062*	0.026	0.011	0.02
Had parent arranged marriage	0.194**	0.035	-0.320**	0.043	0.126**	0.036
Nuclear household	-0.049*	0.021	0.018	0.022	0.031*	0.016
Wealth in assets	0.014	0.016	0.019	0.021	-0.033**	0.012
Practice <i>pardah</i>	0.103**	0.034	-0.069†	0.037	-0.035†	0.019
Invite non-family to eat in home	-0.089**	0.033	0.147**	0.037	-0.058**	0.021

^a Combines responses- family looks if child cannot find, child chooses as long as family approves, and “love marriage”

^b Average marginal effect

^c Standard errors clustered by polling booth

^d National Capital Territory

Note: This analysis controls for caste and religion of head of household. Total sample size 2,971 individuals. Data from the CASI Delhi NCR Survey 2016. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.1

Table 4: Average Marginal Effects from Multinomial Logit Models Predicting Expected Marriage Arrangement Type for Self for the Young and Unmarried Respondent Sample

	Parents alone decide		Parents decide with child approval		Children primarily decide ^a	
	AME ^b	SE ^c	AME ^b	SE ^c	AME ^b	SE ^c
Female	0.032	0.032	0.016	0.041	-0.048*	0.024
Age	-0.011*	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.006†	0.003
<i>Highest level of education</i> (Reference group: at least some college)						
No education	0.240*	0.113	-0.134	0.111	-0.106*	0.044
Primary	0.048	0.095	-0.009	0.087	-0.039	0.066
Secondary	0.239*	0.108	-0.130	0.107	-0.109*	0.053
Higher secondary	0.031	0.04	-0.003	0.038	-0.028	0.028
Lives in Delhi NCT ^d	-0.042	0.048	0.046	0.055	-0.004	0.043
Rural birth	0.115*	0.054	0.084	0.088	-0.199*	0.096
Had any other residence	-0.234	0.168	0.297*	0.134	-0.063	0.109
Parents had parent arranged marriage	0.264**	0.084	-0.399**	0.074	0.135†	0.077
Nuclear household	-0.035	0.042	-0.042	0.044	0.077*	0.038
Wealth in assets	0.050*	0.022	-0.010	0.026	-0.040*	0.02
Practice <i>pardah</i>	0.136**	0.05	-0.206**	0.048	0.069†	0.04
Invite non-family to eat in home	-0.170**	0.057	0.299**	0.054	-0.129*	0.061

^a Combines responses- family looks if child cannot find, child chooses as long as family approves, and “love marriage”

^b Average marginal effect

^c Standard errors clustered by polling booth

^d National Capital Territory

Note: This analysis controls for caste and religion of head of household. Total sample size 643 individuals. Data from the CASI Delhi NCR Survey 2016. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.1