



Research Report

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ABSTRACT

Developmental ideas and models concerning family life have been disseminated widely around the world where they have become forces for both ideational and behavioral change. In this paper, we examine the ways in which ideas about marriage have been influenced by these ideas of development in Nepal, where, for centuries, young age at marriage, arranged marriage, and polygamy have been common practice, and intercaste marriage and divorce have been virtually non-existent. Using recently collected data from face-to-face surveys and semi-structured interviews, we demonstrate that large fractions of Nepalis now endorse marriage behaviors more similar to those frequently heralded as “modern” or “developed” family behaviors. Our results suggest that preferred age at marriage has risen, tolerance for intercaste marriage, divorce, and the involvement of young people in the choice of their spouse has increased, and polygamy has become increasingly taboo. Cohort replacement, increasing education, media exposure, and urbanization help explain these changes. However, although there has been dramatic change in the attitudes Nepalis have about marriage practices, we do not find complete acceptance of so-called modern family attitudes. Developmental ideas and models of family life have been creatively and selectively integrated into the continuously evolving models of family life in Nepal.

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL MOTIVATIONS

This paper is motivated by the premise that developmental ideas and models, specifically those concerning family life, have been disseminated widely around the world where they have become forces for ideational and behavioral change (Thornton 2001, 2005). Models of development, modernity, and progress have provided a central interpretive framework, used by Western social scientists for the past several hundred years, for categorizing populations and societies, for interpreting cross-cultural heterogeneity, and for labeling and explaining social change. In addition, world leaders and policy makers have for centuries utilized the developmental framework to promote the need for progress, modernity, and development for the collective human good. Having become so pervasive, the idea of development is described as a central element of world culture (Meyer et al. 1997). We believe that these notions of progress, modernity, and development originated in Western countries and have spread to non-Western societies around the world, having a substantial influence on societal infrastructures and social attitudes.

In many ways this developmental framework has provided what Clifford Geertz (1973; also see Fricke 1997a, 1997b, and D'Andrade 1984) has described as an ideational model *of* and *for* reality. As models *of* reality, ideational frameworks provide classification systems for describing the world, models for interpreting both variation and change in human behavior and relationships, and definitions of the significance of various elements of social, economic, and familial life for the human condition. In this way they define the relevant actors in a system and the significance of specific behaviors and institutions for defining and shaping social structures and relationships. As models *for* reality, ideational systems provide frameworks for dealing with and reacting to the world, defining for actors a framework for identifying what is important and good in life and what appropriate methods are available for achieving desired goals. In this way, these models specify a framework detailing what is acceptable and moral, and they help to establish motivations for actors within a common context—prescribing both appropriate end goals and mechanisms for reaching those ends. As we specify below, developmental ideas have provided both models *of* and models *for* reality that have been disseminated widely around the world, have come into conflict with many indigenous ideational systems, and have been forces for extensive social change, particularly in the ways people marry and conduct their family lives.

As an ideational model *of* reality, we introduce the developmental paradigm, a model of social change that has dominated much of Western thinking from the Enlightenment of the 1600s and 1700s to the present. This paradigm suggests that all societies progress through the same natural, universal, and necessary stages of development (for detailed discussions, see Burrow 1981; Harris 1968; Stocking 1968, 1987; Nisbet 1969; Smith 1973; Sanderson 1990; Mandelbaum 1971; Thornton 2001, 2005). Scholars using this paradigm believed that the most advanced or modern societies were in northwest Europe and among the northwest European Diaspora, while other societies occupied less advanced positions of development. This notion was posited alongside the idea that those societies in less advanced positions had the potential to continue development along the same trajectory that more developed societies had journeyed. Through a comparative method we define as *reading history sideways*, these scholars believed that they could use this cross-sectional variation to infer the nature of developmental trajectories across time, assuming that at some time in the past the most developed nations had been like their less developed contemporaries and that at some point in the future the least developed nations would become like their more modern neighbors (for detailed discussions, see Berkhofer 1978; Carniero 1973; Gordon 1994; Harris 1968; Manuel 1962; Sanderson 1990; Sheehan 1980; Thornton 2001, 2005).

Scholars observed many dimensions associated with populations perceived to be at the peak of their development paths. Among these elements were industrialism, urban living, high levels of education and knowledge, high consumption, geographic mobility, secularism, democracy, and religious pluralism. Scholars believed that there had been actual increases in many of these dimensions of northwest European social and economic life, whereas these changes had not yet occurred in areas outside northwest Europe.

These scholars also observed many family characteristics associated with the societies that they labeled as developed or modern. Compared to northwest Europe, other societies could generally be characterized as family-organized, as having considerable family solidarity, and as extended. Marriage was frequently universal, arranged by parents, and contracted at a young age. Armed with the developmental paradigm and the method of reading history sideways, generations of scholars concluded that the process of development transformed family systems from the “traditional” patterns observed outside of northwest Europe to the “developed” patterns within northwest Europe (Thornton 2001, 2005).

These scholars created theories about the unique northwest European family system being causally connected to the northwest European social and economic system. Most saw this causation as being the influence of socioeconomic development on family change, but others hypothesized an effect of family change on socioeconomic development. These ideas and conclusions permeated the scholarly literature from the 1700s through the middle 1900s.¹

As we noted earlier, ideational models do not just provide an understanding of the world, but a framework for dealing with and reacting to the world; in other words, a model *for* reality. The developmental paradigm and reading history sideways were not just ideas and approaches used by several generations of scholars to interpret the world; rather, this conceptual paradigm and methodology were combined with the conclusions that social scientists derived from them to form a strong model—that we label developmental idealism—to guide and motivate subsequent social change. Developmental idealism came to provide motivations and approaches for social change in numerous contexts, ranging from politics to economics to demography, specifying how improvements in the human condition should be sought. In the family arena that is of central importance to this paper, developmental idealism helped to define which elements of marriage and family life were good and moral, how family life was causally connected with economic advancement, and how people could achieve what the model specified as desirable.

Although the propositions within the developmental idealism model extend to multiple arenas such as politics and economics, we note four that have been extremely powerful forces in changing family behavior around the world during the past two centuries: 1) modern society is good and attainable; 2) modern family is good and attainable; 3) modern society and modern family are causally connected; 4) freedom, equality, and consent are fundamental human rights in many domains, including the family. In this framework, modern society is defined as it has been by generations of scholars and policy makers as including the social and economic attributes of Western societies considered to be at the apex of development, including wealth, industrialism, urban living, and high levels of education and knowledge. Similarly, modern family is defined as encompassing the aspects of family identified by generations of earlier scholars as modern, including nuclear households, intergenerational independence and autonomy, monogamy, marriages arranged by mature couples, courtship preceding marriage, older and less universal marriage, a high valuation of women, and an emphasis on freedom and equality in family relationships. This framework of developmental idealism provides a set of ideas about modern society, modern family, and human rights and equality that are acknowledged as positive for societies, providing a model *for* achieving and living the good life.

Although the ideas of the developmental paradigm, reading history sideways, the conclusions of social scientists, and the propositions of developmental idealism originated primarily among the elite of the West, there have been many mechanisms for the dissemination of them throughout the world, both in the West and elsewhere. The ideas of the developmental paradigm and developmental idealism have been spread actively through the mass media, education, industrialization, and urbanization, as well as numerous social movements and organizations, such as Christian churches, European conquest and colonization, political democracy, Marxism and socialism, the foreign policy programs of the United States, the United Nations and other international government and nongovernmental organizations, women's movements, and international family planning programs. A growing body of information suggests that these ideas have, in many places, percolated down to the grassroots levels where they are believed and understood by ordinary people (Ahearn 2001; Amin 1989; Blaut 1993; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Dahl and Rabo 1992; Kahn 2001; Kulick 1992; Latham 2000; Lee 1994; LiPuma 2000; Nisbet 1980; Pigg 1992, 1996; Robertson 1992; Samoff 1999; Sanderson 1990; Thornton 2001, 2005; Wallerstein 1979, 1991).

As argued elsewhere (Thornton 2001, 2005), the dissemination and acceptance of developmental models have had an important effect on family life, both in the West and elsewhere. The acceptance of the ideas of developmental idealism can be a powerful force for altering a broad array of family structures and relationships, including childbearing, parent-child relationships, marriage, living arrangements, and relationships between wives and husbands. For people in non-Western populations, the spread and acceptance of developmental idealism often introduces models of family life that conflict with the indigenous models which have evolved through years of local experience and tradition. In contexts where the family-related tenets of developmental idealism become valorized, indigenous family systems in opposition to one or more of these tenets are decried as traditional, are associated with a low standard of living and poor health, and are advertised as preventing economic progress. These often competing forces of developmental idealism and indigenous family culture lead to unique constructions of models *of* and *for* family life, some more reflective of developmental idealism or local cultural tradition than others.

In recent decades, many non-Western societies have experienced dramatic change in patterns of marriage parallel to the kinds of change developmental idealism encourages. Particularly striking have been changes from arranged marriages to love matches, from young to older ages at marriage, and from universal marriage to the potential for extensive non-marriage. Also important have been dramatic increases in the use of contraception, rapid declines in childbearing, and increases in nuclear households. These numerous family changes have many potential causes, including structural impetuses such as shifts in the economy that alter family organization, thereby changing the value of spouses and children; however, many times, dramatic family change occurs in the absence of structural change, suggesting that change in family models can probably be attributed, at least in part, to the spread and creative implementation of new ideas about family life (Thornton 2005; Watkins 1986).

Although we believe that developmental idealism has had effects on many family relationships and behaviors in many parts of the world, the emphasis in this paper will be on one dimension of family life, marriage, in one part of the world, Nepal. Our goal is to provide new information and perspectives on changing marriage attitudes and behavior in Nepal, with particular emphasis on the extent to which those changes are interrelated with the spread of developmental idealism. Although our overall aspirations are for a definitive answer concerning the influence of developmental idealism on marriage attitudes and behavior, we recognize that such a goal is beyond the limits of current data and methods. Consequently, we embark on the more restrictive task of providing empirical evidence

that, while not definitive, provides extensive support for the importance of developmental idealism in changing marriage attitudes and behavior in Nepali society today.

Our goals are facilitated by the fact that Nepal has historically been a society with a family system that generations of social scientists have characterized as “traditional.” As we discuss in detail in the next section, evidence consistently shows that the predominant marriage system in Nepal can be characterized as historically having the following attributes: young and universal marriage (even child marriage); arranged marriage; endogamous (intra-caste) marriage; polygamy; and restrictions on divorce and widow remarriage (Macfarlane 1976; Maskey 1996; Rijal 2003; Stone 1978; Vaidya et al. 1993). Furthermore, Nepal was isolated from the West until the 1950s, so these historical aspects of Nepali family systems have existed well into the twentieth century. This makes Nepal an especially appropriate country in which to study the effects of relatively recent developmental models.

After reviewing the historical Nepali marriage system, we discuss how it has changed dramatically in recent decades, with a primary emphasis on the rapid increases in age at marriage and the involvement of young people in the mate selection process (Ahearn 2001; Axinn and Barber 2001; Axinn and Yabiku 2001; Fricke 1997b; Fricke et al. 1991, 1998; Ghimire et al. 2006; Morgan and Niraula 1995; Niraula 1994; Niraula and Morgan 1996). We also discuss likely sources of dissemination of those developmental ideas that have an effect on family life in Nepal.

We then present results from new survey data collected in the Chitwan Valley of Nepal during 2003 to demonstrate that Nepalis have embraced many dimensions of the second proposition of developmental idealism—that the modern family is good and attainable—as it relates to marriage. That is, we show that large proportions of Nepalis endorse what developmental idealism promotes as “modern” marriage patterns rather than behaviors more typical of historic Nepali patterns. However, the data also show that wholesale acceptance of all “modern” marriage behaviors has not occurred. Many Nepalis still endorse certain aspects of their indigenous marriage systems as favorable to the modern family model, highlighting the extent to which local actors take global models, such as developmental idealism, and creatively incorporate them into their models for family life. In addition to the patterns we show with our survey data, we include excerpts from a set of individual and group semi-structured interviews to demonstrate how people in Nepal describe their models for marriage and how and why these models have changed over time.

Finally, we use the survey data to examine differentials in the endorsement of modern marriage patterns based on education, media exposure, birth cohort, and distance from an urban center. Where examples of the roles of these factors emerge from our individual and group semi-structured interviews, we again provide quotes from semi-structured interviews to illustrate how the people themselves describe these dynamics.

CHANGING FAMILY LIFE IN NEPAL

Nepal is home to a variety of religio-ethnic groups; however, given Hinduism’s long-term reign as the official state religion, Hindu marriage values and norms have provided, for centuries, very strict religious prescriptions for family life. According to Hinduism, marriage is obligatory and sacramental, more than just a simple bond between two individuals. Rather, marriage is a bond between families and a promise of continuity in patriarchal family lines. Therefore, marriage has a history of deep religious, social, and institutional significance (Banerjee 1984; Bennett 1983; Berreman 1972; Bista 1972; Mace and Mace 1960; Majupuria and Majupuria 1989; Pothen 1989; Stone 1978). Hindu doctrine prohibits youth participation in spouse selection and considers the virginity of a bride-to-be the most essential qualification for marriage, therefore encouraging early marriage arranged by parents

(Banerjee 1984; Bennett 1976; Berreman 1972; Bista 1972; Mace and Mace 1960; Macfarlane 1976; Matthews 1989; Pothen 1989). In addition, other aspects of Hinduism prohibit divorce, inter-caste marriage, and widow marriage, particularly by women, and condone polygyny (Banerjee 1984; Bennett 1983; Berreman 1972; Bista 1972; Mace and Mace 1960; Majupuria and Majupuria 1989; Pothen 1989; Stone 1978).

The ultimate goals of Hindu marriage, according to the Vedas, are *dharma* (practice of religion), *praja* (procreation), and *rati* (sexual pleasure). Based on Hindu ideals, a man should have at least one son to execute his funeral and continue his family line. Consequently, contraception has been considered to be a sin, and childlessness has been condemned with severe negative cultural repercussions, particularly for women (Stone 1978). High fertility is heavily emphasized in religious blessings from the elders of the family to their young. For example, the often spoken blessing “*Dhan Jana Briddhirastu* (let there be an increase of wealth and family members)”, explicitly makes a large family an important goal in life.

However, Hinduism is not the only religion in Nepal, and family patterns, customs, rituals, values, norms, and behaviors show variance based on religio-ethnic identity (Bista 1972; Macfarlane 1976; Majupuria and Majupuria 1989). Throughout history, many non-Hindus married at older ages than Hindus, did not stress premarital abstinence, practiced cross-cousin or polyandrous marriage, and allowed youth more say in the choice of a spouse (Goldstein 1975; Macfarlane 1976; Shrestha and Singh 1987; Smith 1973). Some groups also had no social sanctions on divorce, remarriage, or widow marriage (Bista 1972; Blaikie et al. 1980; Macfarlane 1976; Shrestha and Singh 1987). Many non-Hindus generally had first births at older ages and extended families were less common when compared to most Hindus (Bista 1972; Macfarlane 1976). For these reasons, there is religio-ethnic variance in marriage practices in Nepal. On the other hand, in parts of Nepal, such as the Chitwan Valley where different religio-ethnic groups constantly interact, and High Caste Hindus—the highest caste in Nepal—have a history of power and privilege, many non-Hindu groups aspire to high caste status by imitating high-caste Hindu family patterns, customs, rituals, culture, and behaviors (Banerjee 1984; Berreman 1972; Dastider 1995; Hofer 1979; Guneratne 2001; Gurung 1988; Majupuria and Majupuria 1989; Maskey 1996; Sharma 1977).

Although Hinduism, both as an ideology and a normative force, has had important influences on both the attitudes about family life and family behavior, Nepalese family patterns, customs, rituals, values, norms, and behaviors have changed rapidly in recent years within all castes. Individual choices in marriage behavior, especially with regards to inter-caste marriage, late marriage, and divorce, are occurring more commonly than ever before (Acharya 1998; Ahearn 2001; Dahal and Fricke 1998; Dahal et al. Lama 1996; Ghimire et al. 2006; Gray 1991; NDHS 2002; Niraula 1994; Niraula and Lawoti 1998; Niraula and Morgan 1996; Rijal 2003; Suwal 2001). For example, in Nepal, where child marriage was quite common until the early 1950s, the proportion of women never married by ages 15 – 19 increased from 25.7 in 1961 to 59.7 in 2001, a 136 percent increase (NDHS 2002). Similarly, the average age at first marriage in Chitwan has increased from 13.5 years for those who married between 1950 and 1959 to 19 years for those who married between 1980 and 1989 (Ghimire 2003; Yabiku 2005). The proportion of individuals who participated in the choice of their spouse rose from virtually zero at the turn of the century to approximately 50 percent in the 1986-95 marriage cohort (Ghimire et al. 2006). Also, age at first birth and contraceptive use is increasing and family size is shrinking (Acharya 1998; Aryal 1991; Axinn and Barber 2001; Axinn and Yabiku 2001, Ghimire 2003; NDHS 2002; Satayavada and Adamchak 2000; Shreshta 1998; Subedi 1998; Suwal 2001; Thapa 1997; Tuladhar 1987).

There are, of course, a multitude of social and economic changes occurring in Nepal that could influence these changes in family behavior, making it difficult to identify with any precision the influence of new ideas. Yet, all of this dramatic family change has occurred in the direction that developmental idealism encourages. Further, these changes are not only occurring in urban areas, but in rural areas where educational attainment is not high and economic change is slow. Taken altogether, we suggest this is consistent with the idea that the spread of developmental idealism is playing an important role in changing marital behaviors and attitudes in Nepal. In the next section, we address the different mechanisms for the spread of developmental idealism in Nepal—mechanisms which we suggest play an important role in changing attitudes and behavior.

THE DISSEMINATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL IDEALISM

There have been many mechanisms for the spread of developmental idealism in Nepal, with the Nepalese government being one of the largest factors. In the 1950s, the government began a planned development process, with the primary goal being the modernization of Nepal. The government proceeded to publish a new set of goals every five years, with the most recent set of goals announced in 2002 (Hoftun et al. 1999; MOPE 2002; NPC 1992, 1998, 2002). Accelerating the rate of socioeconomic development and lowering the rate of population growth have been the main goals in each successive development plan of Nepal since the beginning of the planned development process. A continuous flow of foreign aid both in terms of grants and advisors from western countries has contributed to the process (Bista 1991; Pandey 1999).

Nepal's *Eighth Development Plan* (1992-1997) emphasizes the reduction of population growth, protection and conservation of environmental resources, and acceleration of economic growth as primary goals. Specific population targets included: 1) reduction of the total fertility rate; 2) increase of the contraceptive prevalence rate in married women of reproductive age; 3) raising of the life expectancy; 4) decreasing the infant mortality rate; and 5) reduction of the maternal mortality rate (Joshi 1995). In addition to these key health indicators, the following socio-economic development policy exemplifies the importance that the Nepali government has placed on changing family behaviors:

Information, education and communication programmes will be launched on a national scale which will help to promote female education, raise age at marriage, increase the value of the girl child and thus ultimately help to create the atmosphere of having two children per family (Joshi 1995, p. 498).

Since the development planning process was first introduced in 1952, Nepal has seen tremendous growth in mass education, science based allopathic health services, mass transportation, and mass communication. For example, although a formal public education system modeled after that in the West had not existed in Nepal before the 1950s (Sharma 1972), since 1954 there has been a rapid increase in the number of schools, the literacy rate, and the proportion of people attending school (Central Bureau of Statistics 2001). There have also been dramatic increases in the number of people employed outside the home (both locally and abroad), the number of Nepalis traveling within and outside Nepal, and the exposure to local and global media (Beutel and Axinn 2002; Central Bureau of Statistics 1995, 2002; Sharma 1994). There has also been a rapid increase in the number of diplomats and tourists visiting Nepal, with foreign travelers visiting most parts of the country—from Kathmandu to the remotest areas.

Evidence from prior research is consistent with the idea that developmental idealism has spread through the mechanisms described above, and that it is influencing Nepalis' models of and for reality on issues of family life and more. Using other measures from the same survey we use for our analyses in this paper, Thornton et al. (2004, 2005) show that developmental thinking has been disseminated widely in Nepal. Their findings indicate that the majority of Nepalis have considerable knowledge of the ideas of development, substantial knowledge about the major countries of the world, can rate countries on their levels of education and development, and believe that there is an association between socioeconomic development and family structure (Thornton et al. 2004, 2005).

Ahearn (2001) in her work in Western Nepal found important influences of schooling on youth, both as a source of new ideas and a means of communication. She argues that exposure to western schooling was an important source of ideas about "love marriage"—ideas uncommon in these youths' parent's generation, and that continued exposure to western-style education is considered to be the path to success:

Love letter writers believe that love enables them to achieve "life success," which they define as carving out lives for themselves that mirror the images they see and hear about in a diverse array of media, from textbooks and magazines to Hindi and Nepali films to Radio Nepal development programs. These images promote a lifestyle based on formal education, knowledge of English, lucrative employment, the consumption of commodities, and a sense of self founded on individualism (Ahearn 2001, p. 151).

Pigg (1992, 1996) eloquently describes how the spread of science-based allopathic health services in remote villages has introduced the idea of modernity and influenced the belief systems. She shows that even those Nepalis in remote parts of the country are familiar with the ideas of modernity and use them extensively in their understanding of both the larger world and their own lives.

Guneratne (2001) argues that interactions between tourists and local residents of Chitwan have transformed the historical ethnic supremacy of Brahmins over Tharus into a new educational scale with "educated" and "non-educated" at opposing points, thus providing new ways to look at ethnic relations and the social world. He argues that Tharus strongly believe in the model of Backwardness – Forwardness, attributing their own "backwardness" to their history of having less formal education than other groups.

Two studies in particular have linked sources of the spread of developmental idealism, such as mass education, mass media, development programs, and wage labor opportunities outside the home, to changes in marital behavior including later marriage and more involvement of youth in the selection of marital partners. Niraula (1994), in his study of marriage change in the central hills of Nepal, has documented dramatic change in both the timing of marriage and marriage practices in Nepal, and how these relate to the mechanisms we argue spread developmental idealism. He found a positive association between older age at marriage and the spread of education, the commercialization of rural economy, the spread of mass media, and other development programs. He argues that the changes in marriage timing and marriage practices are brought by attitudinal changes that are a result of socioeconomic forces. In the same line, Ghimire et al. (2006), in their study of premarital experiences with non-family activities and participation in spouse selection, have found important influences of schooling, non-family employment, media exposure and participation in youth clubs. Indeed, exposure to media has a much stronger effect than many of the other socioeconomic changes such as schooling and employment, suggesting an important role for the ideational dimension of change. While these two studies focus on marital behavior outcomes, our work focuses on attitudes to explicitly look for evidence that developmental idealism is influencing models of marriage.

STUDY SITE AND METHODS FOR NEW 2003 DATA

In order to understand how people currently feel about marriage in Nepal, we collected both qualitative and quantitative data. We now turn to our discussion first to the data collection itself, and then to the findings in these data.

Setting in Chitwan, Nepal

We begin by noting that our data come from Nepal, currently ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world. Over 85 percent of the population still lives in rural areas, and more than half of the population is still illiterate. Our research was conducted in one region of Nepal, the Chitwan Valley, which lies in the south central part of Nepal. Before the 1950s, Chitwan was covered with dense tropical forest and world famous flora and fauna with only a few non-Hindu people such as Chepang Tharus, Majhis, and Botes, who earned their livelihood through hunting, fishing, and gathering forest products in Chitwan. In 1955, the Nepalese government opened this valley for settlement. The government distributed land parcels to people coming from adjoining districts of the country. In 1956, the government, in collaboration with the United States government, implemented a malaria eradication program, and Chitwan soon became a “melting pot,” receiving migrants from all over the country.

Although, up until the 1970s, the Chitwan Valley was very isolated from the rest of the country, since the late 1970s, the valley has undergone rapid changes in terms of both physical and socioeconomic conditions (Shivakoti et al. 1997). The valley has become connected to the rest of the country by all-weather roads making it one of the business hubs of the country. Most people who travel to the capital city, Kathmandu, from India pass through this valley. Furthermore, there has been a massive expansion of schools, health services, markets, bus services, cooperatives, and employment centers in Chitwan (Axinn and Yabiku 2001). This transformation, from an isolated valley to a busy business center and fast-growing valley, has had a tremendous impact on the daily social life of communities and individuals.

At the individual level, the massive expansion of services such as schools, health services, bus services, market, employment centers, cinema halls and communication facilities, resulted in more young people going to school, working outside the family, and interacting with mass media. Previous work in Chitwan shows that there has been a sharp increase in school enrollment, visits to health clinics, employment outside of the home, and exposure to different sources of mass media in recent birth cohorts (Axinn and Barber 2001; Axinn and Yabiku 2001; Ghimire et al. 2006).

Data and Methods

Turning now to data and methods, we note that the developmental paradigm and developmental idealism are complex concepts, which led us to use a mixed-method approach for our study. We first conducted a set of group and individual semi-structured interviews to ascertain how people speak about and interpret family life and various aspects of the developmental model. We then conducted face-to-face survey interviews with another set of respondents for more structured and standardized data with which to ascertain patterns of attitudes.

Two of the coauthors of this paper, one who is also a Nepalese citizen and a long time resident of Chitwan, and another who is not from Nepal, but speaks Nepali and is experienced in semi-structured interviewing in this setting, spent several weeks in the study area conducting our group and individual interviews. The insights gained from those loosely structured discussions were crucial in

guiding our survey data collection. In addition, they provided another unique set of stand-alone data to study the shape and form of models of family life and definitions of development in this setting. Further, the input and assistance from a dozen local research staff people representing all the major ethnicities residing in the valley were invaluable in shaping our study.

We conducted a total of twelve individual and ten group semi-structured interviews, lasting about 1-2 hours each, with individuals of different ethnic groups, genders and ages. These interviews were loosely structured, but focused on many aspects of developmental idealism, including ideas about family life and marriage practices. The interview guide was designed to elicit general discussions about what makes a good life and good society. When the opportunity arose, we probed on specific aspects of family life such as spouse choice, age at marriage, family size, and gender roles in the home, but generally we waited for mention of family life to emerge so we could see how respondents factored family life into their conception of everyday life and their thinking about morally preferable behaviors.

Next, we used the insights gained from the semi-structured interviews to construct individual questionnaire items concerning attitudes about marriage. Following two pretests, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 537 people aged 17 and above living in the Western Chitwan Valley.² Respondents were chosen using two different methods. First, the study area was divided into three distinct strata and a sample of 2 to 5 neighborhoods, each consisting of between 4 and 25 households was selected from each stratum. Once a neighborhood was selected, all the individuals age 17 and above residing in those neighborhoods were interviewed. This sampling procedure resulted in slightly more than 100 individuals being selected from each of the three strata, in a statistically representative manner. We then oversampled in two of the three strata for greater variance in the sample. One stratum was oversampled to include wealthy, highly educated people living in the largest city in the Chitwan Valley, Narayanghat. The other stratum was oversampled to include a sufficient number of respondents living at the edge of the valley—the farthest point from Narayanghat. Each of these oversamples resulted in about 100 respondents, bringing the total number of respondents to 537.³ Demographic characteristics of the sample population can be found in Table 1.

In our survey, we measured attitudes and preferences toward polygamy, inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage, age at first marriage, spouse choice, and marriage, divorce and singlehood (see Appendix Table 1). As noted in Appendix Table 1, we used two question formats: one asking respondents to *agree* or *disagree* with statements about a marriage behavior; and another asking whether one marriage behavior was *better* or *worse* than another marriage behavior.

For each question about marriage, respondents could endorse either an answer that developmental models define as *modern* or endorse an answer that is defined as *not modern*. For example, we asked Nepalis “Which is better, marrying at age 16 or 24?” The response “age 24” was classified as the *more modern* of the two, while the response “age 16” was labeled as *less modern*.⁴ Responses to each question were then recoded into a dichotomous measure of *modern* or *less modern*. Our expectation is that Nepalis will provide a mixture of answers that are classified by developmental models as *more modern* and *less modern*, with the distribution depending on the exact dimension of marriage being considered and the precise question wording. We also expect that the distribution of responses would be weighted more to the modern than they would have been in the past, although we do not have comparable data from the past to establish such a time trend definitively.

RESULTS

We begin by presenting univariate results from the survey combined with findings from the semi-structured interviews that both support and clarify the survey results. We then turn to multivariate analyses examining differentials in the endorsement of different marriage patterns by

education, media exposure, birth cohort, and distance from an urban center. We also discuss evidence of the roles of these factors that emerged from our semi-structured interviews. As we have outlined to this point, we expect that the recent influence of developmental idealism in Nepal will translate into high endorsement of certain modern family behaviors and the rejection of some historically Nepali ones. At the same time, we do not expect wholesale acceptance of developmental idealism and complete rejection of Nepali marriage systems. Instead, we expect individuals, families, and communities will selectively draw on various features of different family models.

Marriage Attitudes: Distributions and Meanings

The univariate distributions provided in Table 2 illustrate which tenets of the modern family model are more or less accepted by our respondents.⁵ Overall, for 15 out of 23 questions about marriage, a majority of respondents provided the more modern answer to the questions. We believe that this level of endorsement of family behaviors that are very different from those observed in this setting in the recent past is remarkable.

Polygamy

Although polygamy has been historically an acceptable part of Nepali society, today nearly two-thirds agree that a man should not have more than one wife at a time. Indeed, virtually 100% report that it is better to have one wife than multiple wives, and 64% agree that having multiple wives is not even acceptable and should not be practiced. Although we do not have comparable survey data from the past, we believe that this nearly universal preference for monogamy and widespread rejection of the acceptability of polygamy represents a rather sharp change from the past. Given the cultural acceptance of polygamy in the past, it is likely that many more than 36% of Nepalis a century ago would have agreed that having multiple wives is acceptable.

Polygamy was an aspect of family life that did not come up often in our semi-structured interviews. The handful of times the topic did emerge, it elicited laughter for being such an undesirable and outdated practice. When polygamy was brought up during one group interview with five men, a series of jokes and laughter followed:

- P1: If we have many wives, there will be trouble and life will not be happy and comfortable.⁶
- P2: We should only have one wife. (*Group laughs*)
- P1: If we have more than one wife, then we have to go from village to village carrying a bowl in our hand.

The participant is referring to a bowl which is used by street beggars as a begging pot. These men are joking that providing for one wife is enough. That the only mention of polygamy in our interviews was in this kind of joking matter suggests this form of marriage is rarely taken seriously in Chitwan these days. This is a dramatic change in people attitude about polygamy in a society where it was quite common to hear a saying, such as “A manly man can have ten wives.” just a decade back.

In one of our individual interviews, an older male informant explained how having a small family was not always the best strategy. He thought having fewer children was a good strategy for poor families, but that wealthy families, especially those with a lot of land, might need more family members. He goes on to say:

“But to be happy, if one has enough wealth...like if he is a rich man, I think it is well known that our ancestors used to marry more than one wife and they used to make different homes in different places and keep their wives in different homes. It is better for a man to have a big family, so that he is helped well from different angles. I do not mean that one should marry more than one wife, but he should have many children.”

In his clarification at the end of this statement, he clarifies that the only acceptable way of having a large family these days is by having many children with one wife, not multiple wives.

Intercaste Marriage

The next set of survey questions asked about intercaste marriage, which has historically been taboo in Nepal. In our data, one-half of respondents now report that intercaste marriage is not wrong, and a full three-quarters disagree that it is always wrong. However, only 17% of Nepalis indicate a preference for marriage with someone of a different caste. This set of questions demonstrates that although Nepalis appear to prefer intracaste marriage, they do not seem to regard it as a prescription in the way it has historically been considered.

These survey findings are corroborated by the analysis of our semi-structured interviews. In all but two of our interviews, participants indicated some support for the idea of intercaste marriage, citing values of freedom, equality, and tolerance. Here is how two young men voiced their strong and total support of intercaste marriage:

- P1: I am not against the lower castes. I don't like to discriminate against any caste. They are all equal, you know, Kami, Damai, Sarki, they are also people. They also have red blood, don't they? The caste system was not created by God. It was created by humans, actually a king. A king divided different groups of people into different occupations. Brahmins should work in religion and give education. Chhetris should work as guards. Their work was to save the country, to defend in war. Kamis and Sarkis also had their own work to do. So, old people have this strong concept of higher caste and lower caste, and they want follow the old tradition of discrimination of people by caste. I think it is wrong. When I arrange the marriages of my daughters I will not be concerned with the caste of a potential husband. I will only be concerned with his education and his habits. *Male, aged 30*
- P2: Honestly, I think intercaste marriage is a good thing. When people from different groups marry each other, everyone can learn more about other cultures and ways of life. I think caste means nothing. In the world there are only two types of people--they are male and female--that's it. So I think we should not pay attention to caste.
- I: What about people from the highest castes marrying people from the lowest castes?
- P2: Nowadays it is not easy to do this. People in the city are starting to accept it, but in the village, people are still not accepting. It's difficult for them to forget at once. Change will happen slowly. *Male, aged 19*

These two young men were the only respondents to voice such open acceptance of intercaste marriage. Most other interview participants were only accepting of certain types of intercaste marriage, marriages in which the husband and wife both come from within the higher castes or both come from within the lower castes. Respondents would generally start by telling us that intercaste

marriage was totally acceptable, but when we probed about marriages involving one spouse from the higher castes and one spouse from the lower castes, here is how the conversations tended to unfold. A 58-year old woman told us:

“We all belong to one caste so there is no value of caste...we all eat with the same stomach...rich people don't eat gold or diamonds. They eat rice, and poor people also eat rice. All should be thought of equally as humans. If this is the case we can have a good, healthy and sound society.”

She then goes on to say,

“Oh, one thing about our culture is that there are lower caste people. We do not drink water they have touched. For example, tailors, cobblers, blacksmiths, we do not marry these people. There's no problem to marry people of other castes from whom we can take water.”⁷

A 57 year old man also explained to us the limits of accepting intercaste marriage.

I: Nowadays, people of different castes are marrying each other. What do you think of this?

P: Suppose you are Brahmin (high caste Hindu) and I am Damai (low caste Hindu). Suppose I have a son to marry and you have a daughter. A daughter of a Brahmin, how can she go to a Damai's house? People of the lower castes can't go to the house of a Brahmin and stay with them, and the daughter of a Brahmin, how can she come to a Damai's house and live there. It is not possible. There are many traditions of each group which differ from each other.

I: What about marriage between different higher castes?

P: Within the higher castes, the castes that are allowed to share water and food, marriage is alright. But in the past, even that was not allowed. It was not possible. Now it has become normal. The boys and girls now say there are only two castes: male and female. What can we say to that?

I: What do you think of that? Do you agree?

P: People say this, but in my opinion, what I think is that marriage between a person of one of the highest castes and a person of one of the lower castes is not suitable. If two people of the same caste marry, then their tradition and culture are shared and there will not be problems in the family. *Male, aged 57*

These quotes are representative of what most of our participants expressed. They generally embrace ideals of equality and tolerance, notice recent and growing support for intercaste marriage, but stop short of full acceptance of the marriage model put forth by developmental idealism and hold strong to the restriction on lower caste people marrying higher caste people.

As further evidence of the remaining strong taboo against those from the highest caste groups marrying those from the lowest caste groups, we note that when we included survey questions on these topics in our pretest questionnaire, we were met with strong opposition. “For example, questions like, “How happy or unhappy would you be if your son or daughter married a Sarki?,”⁸ were met with considerable resistance—so much so that asking about them caused some respondents to threaten to

break off interviews. Consequently, we excluded the questions from the final interview schedule. Both this experience and our data about intercaste marriage demonstrate that while Nepalis are probably not as caste-oriented as they once were, they are certainly not blind to caste differences, especially when the focus shifts from someone else's hypothetical life to the respondent's own life and family.

Widow Remarriage

In the past, widow remarriage was forbidden among Hindus, and widows were even burnt in their husbands' funeral fires, a practice referred to as "sati".⁹ However, prior to our data collection, we were advised not to even ask respondents about whether sati should be practiced, because there is absolutely no remaining support for the practice, and that to even ask about the subject would discredit our organization. Although we removed the question directly referencing sati, we included a question asking about the acceptability of widow remarriage. Nowadays, 61% of our respondents report that a young widow should remarry. Again, we believe this represents a substantial change in normative attitudes, and one in the direction encouraged by developmental idealism. In our semi-structured interviews, we did not specifically probe about the acceptability of widow remarriage and in discussions of what makes a modern and happy family, the topic never arose. Respondents were instead more focused on first marriage practices and family size.

Age at Marriage

As mentioned previously, young age at marriage, particularly for women, has also historically been very common in Nepal, but the distributions in Table 2 suggest that predilection is no longer true. Currently, three-quarters of respondents disagree with marriage occurring before first menstruation, while more than 90% of Nepalis believe that it is better to marry at age 24 than at age 16. There is a significant disparity in the responses to these two questions. That is, as 75% of respondents disagree with marriage before menstruation, one might expect no more than 75% to also prefer marriage at age 24, rather than age 16. However, that may be related to the differences in the questions—marriage before menstruation refers only to females, while the question about marriage at age 16 versus age 24 refers to both males and females.¹⁰ Thus, it seems that gender plays a role in the preferred age at marriage.

Further evidence for gender's role can be found in the responses to two other questions—what respondents felt was the ideal age for a man and for a woman to be married (results not reported in Table 2). The mean for the ideal age at marriage for males is 24.6, with responses ranging from 15.5 to 35.5, while the mean for women was lower—21.2, with a range from 10 to 35. Only 0.2% of respondents reported an age below 16 for men, while 3.0% reported an age below 16 for women. The combined average of these two responses provides a distribution of nearly 50% reporting the ideal age at marriage to be age 23 or greater.¹¹ These distributions demonstrate that while the ideal age at marriage is now higher than the marriage age historically has been, it is still lower for women than for men.

Age at marriage was a common topic of discussion in our semi-structured interviews. When discussing changes in family life that result from development and increases in education, participants would often cite later ages at marriage. Here's how one female (aged 58) describes changes in marriage ages:

- I: These days some people think that marriage practices in Chitwan are changing, do you think so?

- P: Of course, do you not think so? Think about you and your parents. Did you marry in the same way as your parents? Do you know how old your mother was when she got married? She must have been very young, maybe seven or eight. My mother married at seven. There is a lot of change. In the old days people married while they were still very young, parents and relatives looked for boys and girls, sometimes there used to be a match-maker. Nowadays boys and girls do not marry until they are 18 or 20. If parents start talking about marriage, they say “No, no, I am not ready yet.”
- I: Why do you think this has been happening?
- P: Oh everyone knows. It’s in the air now, everyone wants to be married late, and with a person they know and love. I do not know from where it came, but there is a new wind blowing. Every child goes to school now. They read stories about all this, they go to movies and see the hero and heroine falling in love...Also, I think young people these days want to go far in school, become an important person, and earn lots of money. Therefore they keep going to school, then to college, and do not have time to marry.

In our interviews, when we posed questions about what makes an undesirable life, people often replied, “a young marriage.” Four young women who are students at a college in the urban part of our study area feel early marriage is one of the worst practices in their native villages. They believe early marriage blocks all educational opportunities, especially for girls, and contributes to alcoholism and family violence. They blame parents for not protecting their children from early marriage and discouraging education. One of these young women said,

“Now I am in college, only after standing on my own two feet will I marry. I have to show society I am something. I will show. I can show. This is the advice I would give.”

Our sense from these interviews is that the major factor driving the approval of (and practice of) later marriage in Nepal is the high value placed on educational attainment, and the view that an education should be completed before marriage. Several stories are told in the transcripts about participants being married themselves, or marrying their children, at young ages only because they had given up on education. One 39 year old woman told us that she had hoped her daughter would go far in school and marry around 22 or 23, but her daughter gave up on school, and then proposals started coming in, so she felt she had to arrange a marriage before her daughter’s reputation could be ruined by rumors that she was spending time with boys.

“People came to propose to her very often, and even her friends were encouraging her to marry. The boys and their families were also applying pressure, bringing marriage proposals...that's why she was married so early, when she was 18.”

In sum, people are generally in favor of later marriage as a means to provide time for a much valued education. If one’s education is finished, it is assumed marriage will follow as soon as possible. Therefore, the part of developmental idealism encouraging educational attainment at the price of later marriage seems to have gained wide favor in Nepal, but a general value of delayed marriage so that anyone (educated or uneducated) can mature to the point of making a wise spousal choice does not prevail. It is still assumed that uneducated youth will have a marriage arranged for them by their older and wiser parents, before they can bring shame to themselves or their family.

Spouse Choice

Nepal has a history of arranged marriage; however, in our recent data, we expect to see substantial endorsement of involving youth in the arrangement of their marriages. The distributions in Table 2 show that Nepalis currently endorse the strong involvement of young people in marriage arrangements. More than three-quarters of Nepalis agree that both young men and women should have control over *when* they marry. In addition, about half say that men and women should have control over *who* they marry. Apparently, there is more endorsement of young adult control over when to marry than there is who to marry. However, two-thirds of Nepalis reported that it is better for young people to choose their own spouse than for parents to choose for them.

The next two items in Table 2 reveal that the vast majority of Nepalis believe that both parents and children should be involved in the mate selection process. This is evident in the fact that more than 90% of Nepalis agree both that young people who choose their own spouse should get consent from their parents and that parents who choose their child's spouse should get consent from their children. This shows that although many people are willing to relinquish at least partial parental control of the marriage process to their children, they are reluctant to surrender complete authority. In addition, two-thirds of respondents agree that love marriage is good, again an indication that children should at least have some input into who they marry. While still different from the West, Nepalis are now clearly seeing the question of *who to marry* as a joint intergenerational decision, rather than solely a parental decision.

In every group and individual interview we conducted, the general sentiment was that it is acceptable and even desirable for both parents and their young adult offspring to be involved in the spouse selection process at some level. We found no public preference for an arranged marriage system where parents make all the decisions, keeping children out of the process. This does not mean these attitudes no longer exist. In fact, some respondents told us they had heard recent reports on radio and television describing present day occurrences of arranged child marriage in remote districts of Nepal. One group of informants had heard of a nine-year old girl being married to a sixty-year old man. They were strongly disapproving and quick to label this a "backward practice."

Although there is agreement that neither parents nor children should make marriage choices alone, there is a range of views regarding who should have more power in the process. In the semi-structured interviews, our informants showed similarly high disapproval for "forced" marriage (which is a marriage completely arranged by parents with no input from the children) and "elopement" (which refers to a marriage where two young people marry unbeknownst to both sets of parents). A young woman in her mid-thirties said to a man who had just described occurrences of forced marriage when he was a young man,

"Back in your time, you got married without knowing it was going to happen. These days, if young people are not happy with a proposed marital arrangement, no one should be forced. This we should understand. (*A male participant adds: "Yes, we should understand."*) In today's day and age, spouses should not be married by force. Let them marry in situations of agreement. If we marry them forcefully, then they will hang themselves. (*Group laughs*)"

By ending her comment with this remark about suicide, she is trying to get a laugh out of the group, but she is also illustrating the concern for youth who are made to do what they do not want for themselves. There are occasional stories of youth who have committed suicide over marriage issues, so while partly a joke, these people do fear that they may lose their children and grandchildren to estrangement or worse by not involving them in the marriage decision-making process.

Elopement is another form of marriage that our interview participants overwhelmingly frowned upon. The fact that parents and family members would be completely left out of marriage decisions and the marriage ceremony was disturbing to almost everyone. Here is a conversation between three participants in one of our group interviews that shows a major reason elopement is seen to be problematic:

- P1: You cannot say what will happen when a boy and girl choose each other for marriage. The girl cannot go to her mother's house to complain, she cannot claim that she was not accepted by him or his family. She also cannot say, "The boy hit me or did not give me shelter." They are on their own and the only thing they can do is hang themselves. Suicides are increasing nowadays due to this.
- P2: It is happening like this. It is, sir. There have been reports on the radio.
- P3: Yes, there has been a report of a girl who eloped with a boy, went to live with his parents, and the boy's parents were unhappy with her. The boy also decided he didn't like her. In this case, even if the husband and his parents are treating her poorly, when she goes to her parents' home, her parents will certainly say, "You chose on your own, it must be right for you, it is not our problem."
- P1: The parents of a boy will say to him, "You have married on your own, through your own love, so why do you say to us your wife isn't good? You have brought her home by your own selection."
- P2: (*Partly joking*) And the misery of this situation means they have nowhere to go but to hang from a tree or drown in the water.

This conversation illustrates how elopement is unacceptable, because it leaves the husband and wife to fend for themselves when problems arise. Part of the appeal of the arranged marriage system to our informants is that it involves family support—a value repeatedly reinforced in our interviews. Our interview participants explicitly worry that accepting "modern" family models will lead to undesirable effects seen in other countries such as disrespectful children who do not support their parents in old age. Another informant, an older male, articulates another valued aspect of family involvement that is lost in cases of elopement:

"Arranged marriage is better than elopement. Even though it is expensive to go through the traditional arranged marriage process, I think it is the best way to marry, because all of the relatives are involved, know about it, and are invited. The relatives come to the marriage ceremony and become happy. If it is the marriage of a daughter, the relatives come with gifts. Some relatives give money. Really this type of marriage is the best. Every relative has a chance to be together and enjoy the moment."

The kind of arranged marriage this older man is describing is not the kind where parents force their children into a marriage with no say in the matter, but a family process where parents and children have veto power, and generally go through a series of steps where parents solicit or receive proposals to other families, and when parents and other older relatives agree on a possible match, the young adults are consulted with and allowed to meet briefly (often alone in a room to see each other and talk about themselves and their plans for the future). There are, of course, variations on this pattern, with some arrangements involving more of a say from parents and some with more of a say from the youth. Regardless, the clear theme in the interviews is that it should be an intergenerational process.

Often times, the two young people who marry are the ones that met each other first and then approach their parents about getting married. That kind of situation is called a love marriage regardless of whether it turns into a process where the family gets involved and arranges all the usual rituals, or whether the two youth elope on their own. Regarding love marriages in which families are involved in the process, here are some examples of how our interview participants conveyed the value of spouses choosing each other.

- P1 “In love marriage, the boy and the girl can get to know and observe each other before they decide to marry. This means they have time to evaluate and to understand each other. They can be in love before marrying, and as a result, their life can go happily forever. They will have a deep love for each other, and although problems may come, there will be a good understanding between them. But in arranged marriage, in the past, the boy and girl could never observe or know each other before marriage. So, there was a large chance of disliking each other. One might not like his or her behavior, style of speaking, or appearance. Due to that, they might not be happy in life. There might be a distance between the new husband and wife, and as a result, their life might be uninteresting after marriage. Previously, people didn’t use to think much about the characteristics of the girl or boy. They used to think about the boy or girl’s family property and assets. They thought that if there was a lot of wealth then their daughters would not be hungry. And on the boy’s side, the parents used to think that if the girl’s family was rich, then they would receive a huge dowry.” *A middle-aged man*
- I: Does love marriage or arranged marriage make for a happier life?
- P2: In my opinion, love marriage is better than arranged marriage. Because, in love marriage the boy and the girl get to know each other well, but in arranged marriage that opportunity is not there. Only the parents observe the young people and make the decision about their marriage, and this is done quickly. In that short amount of time, no one can ascertain the real character of a boy or girl. So, I think love marriage is better. In love marriage, the boy and the girl can get to know each other for a long time before the marriage. This way everything, like a person’s nature, the kind of things he/she likes, and the habits one has are clear before marriage. Then, one can make a good decision about how one fits into a family or not. *Male, aged 19*

These quotes illustrate how values of personal choice, freedom, and responsibility—key values in developmental idealism—have pervaded the spouse choice process. Many Nepalis have begun to express the value in young people having a say in their own marriage process. And while the entire arranged marriage system and its rituals are far from abandoned, Nepalis are finding ways to recreate the marriage system to incorporate new and old values.

Divorce and Singlehood

The last panel of questions asks about the desirability of marriage in general—marriage in a country where 50 years ago, nearly everyone married. First we discuss whether Nepalis think that singlehood is preferable to marriage. Only 5% of Nepalis responded that being single is better than being married, and only about one-quarter disagreed that married people are happier than unmarried. However, 40% of Nepalis said they would be bothered only a little bit or not at all if things turned out so that a child of theirs did not want to marry. Considering that historically Nepalis practiced near-

universal marriage, 40% is a significant minority reporting a relative lack of concern for a child not marrying. Together, however, these three responses demonstrate a strong support for the practice of marriage itself.

The final distributions reported in Table 2 detail Nepali attitudes toward divorce—a practice that historically was taboo. Almost 40% of Nepalis responded that divorce is better than an unhappy marriage, and about 30% said that arguing married couples should separate. However, in a slightly different question, nearly 60% report that it is a good idea for arguing couples to divorce. The discrepancy between these numbers may have several explanations. First, as in the West, divorce and separation are not equal in Nepal. When Nepali couples separate, the husband often continues financial support for the wife. However, divorce is more final—there is no contact and no maintenance payments. In cases of both separation and divorce, all children but the very young will stay with the father rather than the mother, who will return to her ancestral home. Thus, because of the increased autonomy that comes with divorce, it may be more preferable to respondents than separation, leading to the disparity we see in the responses. Also, the tone differs slightly between the two questions. The question about separation is slightly negative, asking respondents to judge whether separation *should not* occur, whereas the question about divorce asks the respondent to agree that divorce is a good idea in times of marital trouble.

Thus, the data on these two questions are not directly comparable. However, this paper is about family life in Nepal, where even seemingly slight change is actually very significant and where divorce was unheard of only a half-century ago. Bearing this in mind, 40% agreement that divorce is preferable to marriage indicates the likelihood of an enormous shift in attitudes. Likewise, 30% agreement that unhappy couples should separate is very significant. Finally, that nearly 60% of Nepali respondents agree that it is a good idea to divorce is extremely compelling evidence for change. Like many of the other variables in Table 2, even substantial minority agreement with ideas labeled modern likely represents a fundamental shift in Nepali family attitudes.

In our semi-structured interviews, we did not probe directly on people's attitudes towards singlehood versus marriage, or feelings about divorce. In the context of questions about what makes a happy family or changes in family life over time, no respondents directly mentioned increasing openness to remaining single or being alright with divorce, but this is not surprising. Marriage is still nearly universal and so culturally valued, and divorce is so rare that neither topic would necessarily come to mind as an important or dramatic change in these kinds of conversations.

Factors Related to Variance in Marriage Models

Our univariate results and interview findings demonstrate a pattern toward acceptance of ideas characterized as modern, with some family behaviors more acceptable than others. But what are the driving forces behind the acceptance of ideas about marriage that developmental idealism labels as modern? To address this question, we examined the relationship of several marriage variables to birth cohort, education, exposure to media, and distance from Chitwan's largest city.

The birth cohort variable represents single years of birth from 1920 to 1986.¹² This variable tells us to what extent historical trends are associated with marital attitudes. Of course, we are using cross-sectional data, and birth cohort also represents age. Later in the paper we will return to the question of whether the effects of the birth cohort variable are stemming from age effects or cohort effects. Meanwhile, we expect birth cohort to predict attitudes because those in more recent birth cohorts will have had more exposure to Western influences in their formative years.

In the questionnaire, we included items measuring the age at which respondents first watched television, first watched a movie on a VCR, first went to a movie hall, and first listened to a radio. We were particularly interested in the amount of exposure Nepalis had before age 17. Thus, for each respondent, we subtracted the age of first exposure for each of these four variables from “17”. If for any variable the respondent had never had the exposure, or was 17 or older when he or she first experienced the media, the resulting value for that variable was “0”.¹³ Using these four variables, we calculated a composite variable for the average number of years of exposure to media for each respondent. We hypothesize that increased exposure is positively associated with expressing attitudes at the modern end of developmental idealism.

Additionally, we expected that nearness to Narayanghat, the largest city in Chitwan Valley, would predict attitudes because of increased exposure to those things more Western. We operationalized this variable as the number of miles from Narayanghat to the respondent’s neighborhood.¹⁴

Lastly, we expect education to affect ideas, through at least two avenues. First, we expect that an increase in educational attainment will be associated with modern responses because of the differential impact on actual family experiences. For example, a woman with ten years of education may delay marriage because of this, and thus may believe that later age at marriage is preferable. Second, education leads to an increase in exposure to Western ideas, also leading to more modern responses. Education is measured using two dummy variables: having completed between 1 and 10 years of education, and having completed 11 or more years of education (having completed less than 1 year of education is the reference category).

Bivariate Analyses

We begin our analysis by first considering the estimated effects of each of the explanatory variables on attitudes without any controls for other variables, that is, in a bivariate framework. In order to investigate differences across groups, we examined the bivariate effects of our explanatory variables on marriage attitudes through the use of logistic regression. Logistic regression is used because all dependent variables are dichotomous—responses are categorized as more modern (1) or less modern (0). The regression coefficients for the effects of the independent variable obtained through logistic regression are expressed as odds ratios. An odds ratio less than 1.0 is indicative of a negative association between the predictor variable and the attitude, while an odds ratio greater than 1.0 indicates a positive relationship.

Our first predictor variable is education. Its bivariate effect is shown in Equation A of Table 3. The estimated three odds ratios for 1-10 years and 11+ years of education are 0.812 and 2.155 for predicting attitudes toward polygamy. Limited education (1 to 10 years) reduces the odds of opposing polygamy when compared to no education (although effect not statistically significant), while 11+ years of education more than doubles the odds of opposing polygamy when compared to those with no education. That is, compared to respondents with no education, highly educated respondents are more than twice as likely to oppose polygamy.

Taken together, the twelve estimates produced by Equation A in Table 3 show that educated respondents generally endorse those ideas about marriage that we characterize as modern.¹⁵ Many of these effects are very large. For example, respondents with eleven or more years of education are twelve times more likely to agree that intercaste marriage is not wrong compared to those who have never been to school. They are also 26 times more likely to reject marriage before first menstruation. And, highly educated respondents are more than ten times more likely to agree that arguing couples should divorce. Those respondents with one-to-ten years of education are also generally more likely to endorse modern answers, although the effects are not nearly as large.

In general, an increase in years of media exposure before the age of 17 is also positively and often strongly, associated with marriage attitudes, as demonstrated in Equation A of Table 4. For example, each additional year of media exposure prior to age 17 is associated with a 20% increase in likelihood of endorsing intercaste marriage (column 2). And, the addition of just one year of media exposure is connected to a 21% increase in the probability of endorsing divorce (column 12).

Birth cohort is also, in general, significantly associated with the endorsement of those attitudes we characterize as modern, as shown in Equation A of Table 5, with later-born respondents more likely to endorse modern attitudes. For example, each succeeding birth year is associated with 3% increase in agreement that intercaste marriage is not wrong, and a nearly 4% increase in rejecting marriage before first menstruation (columns 2 and 5, respectively). This may appear to be a minimal effect, but is significant when one considers the difference this makes for those born in widely separate years.

Lastly, distance to Narayanghat (the largest city in Western Chitwan Valley), is also significantly associated with attitudes toward marriage, as demonstrated by Equation A of Table 6. We note that unlike the other predictor variables, we hypothesized that the regression estimates for “distance” would be negative—respondents who live further from Narayanghat will hold less-modern attitudes toward marriage. Like our other predictor variables, the estimates for distance indeed operate as expected, demonstrating that increased distance from Narayanghat lessens the likelihood of endorsement of Western-like marriage patterns. For example, each additional mile of distance between a respondent’s residence and Narayanghat is associated with 7% decrease of both endorsement of widow remarriage and of divorce (columns 4 and 11, respectively).

Before turning to the multivariate analyses, we note that the Nepal survey data included four other questions pertaining to marriage that we analyzed, and were included in the univariate discussion of Table 2—two questions about women choosing who they marry and when they marry, and two questions about men choosing who and when to marry. We used these variables in both bivariate and multivariate analyses, but unlike the other variables we discussed, they operated in the opposite direction from what we theorized, and some of the resulting estimates were statistically significant (results not shown in tables). In bivariate analyses, educated respondents were less likely than their uneducated compatriots to endorse unconditional freedom for spousal choice, and this was true for respondents of all levels of education, when compared to those with no education. Increased media exposure was negatively associated with the endorsement of young men and young women choosing entirely on their own who and when to marry. Birth cohort was also negatively associated with approval of exclusive spouse and timing of marriage decisions by young people. Lastly, respondents living closer to Narayanghat were less likely to endorse spousal choice by young people. These unexpected results were puzzling to us, and we do not yet understand why these specific attitudes about marriage operate contrary to the developmental model that Nepali otherwise seem to use as a framework for other attitudinal variables. Further research is needed to understand the effects of the predictor variables on spouse choice attitudes.

Multivariate Models

The bivariate regression models in Tables 3 through 6 demonstrate that many of the predictor variables have an association with marriage attitudes. To better understand the effects, we performed a multivariate analysis for each attitude toward marriage, which included all of our predictor variables (education, media exposure, birth cohort, and nearness to Narayanghat). In addition, we also controlled for ethnicity/caste and gender in order to take into account any effect. Caste/ethnicity is coded as four dichotomous variables: Hill Tibeto-Burmese; Low-Caste Hindu; Newar; and Terai Tibeto-Burmese. High-Caste Hindus compose the reference category.

Interestingly, although most of these independent variables were significant predictors in the bivariate models, education was the only variable that in general remained consistently significant in the multivariate models. This suggested a preeminent role for education in affecting family attitudes. In order to see if education was truly the driving force in producing family attitudes, we performed another set of analyses in which we included only one predictor variable (either media exposure, birth cohort, or distance to Narayanghat) in addition to education.

Because this process of comparing coefficients across models is complicated, we have four separate tables—one for each predictor. Table 3, which examines the effects of education and which we have already discussed in terms of Equation A, includes only one additional equation—Equation B, a multivariate regression model including all control variables. Table 4, which examines the effects of media exposure and which we have already discussed in terms of Equation A, includes two additional equations. Equation B is a multivariate regression model including all control variables, while Equation C includes only media exposure and education. Tables 5 and 6, which examine the effects of birth cohort and distance to Narayanghat, mirror the approach taken in Table 4.

Several patterns are apparent across Tables 3 through 6. First is the powerful influence of education that holds up throughout most of the analyses. As recorded in Equation A of Table 3 education has strong positive effects on the attitudinal variables in the direction of modernity. That is, increased education is strongly associated with the endorsement of modern family behaviors. Furthermore, Equation B in Table 3 reveals that most of these education effects remain strong, although often decreased, even when controls for all the other variables are included. These results suggest that education is a strong independent influence on whether respondents endorse marriage behavior defined by developmental idealism as modern.

The estimated effects of our other key explanatory variables operate quite differently than does education. First, as Equation A in Table 4 showed, media exposure frequently has a significant positive effect on the endorsement of modern marriage behavior. However, with the full multivariate controls (Equation B of Table 4), almost all of the estimated effects of media are reduced substantially. In fact, with full controls, there are only three positive statistically significant effects—increased media exposure remains significantly and positively associated with an endorsement of the statement “intercaste marriage is not wrong”, of “love marriage”, and of the statement “arguing couples should divorce”. This suggests that the overall independent effects of media may be modest. Furthermore, Equation C of Table 4 with only education and media in the equations indicates that media exposure has positive significant effects only on the aforementioned three attitudes and two others: “it is better to marry a different caste” and “married people are happier than never married”. These results suggest that much of the reason for media being positively correlated with attitudes labeled modern is the strong association between education and media exposure. If we make the plausible assumption that education is causally prior to both attitudes about marriage behavior and media exposure and that media exposure is prior to the attitudes, this pattern of results suggests that education strongly affects both attitudes and media exposure, while media exposure has only moderate effects on attitudes.

In many respects the associations between birth cohort and marriage attitudes are similar to those between media and marriage attitudes (see Table 5). Many of the bivariate estimates of the effects of birth cohort are positive and significant, but most of these are substantially reduced, even to statistical insignificance, in the full multivariate equation (Equation B of Table 5). In addition, including only the controls for education also reduces the observed effects of birth cohort substantially (Equation C of Table 5). These results suggest that the effect of birth cohort independent of education is modest. Furthermore, because cohort is causally exogenous to education, these results suggest that there is a substantial effect of birth cohort that operates through education in affecting marital attitudes.

That is, it appears that birth cohort influences marital attitudes primarily through its effect on education which, in turn, increases modern marriage attitudes as defined by developmental idealism. This can occur because education has been increasing dramatically across birth cohorts in Nepal.

This pattern of results also provides support for our hypothesis that marital attitudes have been changing in Nepal. Our bivariate results indicate strongly that marital attitudes are associated with birth cohort, but our inclination to interpret these birth cohort relationships with marital attitudes as historical trends is dampened by the realization that birth cohort and age are perfectly correlated, meaning that our observed cohort-attitude relationships could reflect age effects just as easily as time effects. However, we know that education is a substantive variable that is related to year of birth and socialization and not to age. By this, we mean that education is a consequence of the year that a person was born—and the consequent years in which the person was socialized. In Nepal, where there is extremely little adult education, the aging process after adolescence cannot change educational attainment, meaning that there can be no causal effect from age itself to education. All of this means that education in Nepal is causally the product of when a person was born and socialized and not the number of adult years lived. This relationship is important because it means that it is birth cohort and not age that is having its influence on marital attitudes transmitted through education. This also suggests that at least the part of the birth cohort effect that is transmitted through education is a reflection of historical trends in marital attitudes. Thus, this analysis provides further support to our argument that marital attitudes have been changing in Nepal in the direction defined by developmental idealism as modern. In addition, this analysis also suggests that increasing education is a major factor accounting for these historical trends.

The observed effects of distance from the city display a somewhat different pattern. We see in Equation A of Table 6 that distance from the city is, as expected, significantly negatively related to ten of the marriage attitudes. In addition, six of these ten statistically significant negative effects hold up in the full multivariate analysis (Equation B of Table 6). This suggests the likelihood of general independent effects of distance from the city on attitudes. As individuals have more city exposure, their attitudes are observed to be more in the modern direction of developmental idealism. However, in virtually every case the statistically significant negative effects of distance are reduced with education controlled (Equation C of Table 6). This probably reflects the fact that people far from the city receive less education, which leads to less modern attitudes. However, this is not the entire reason for more distant dwellers having less modern attitudes because many of the distance effects remain statistically significant with full controls.

Of course, we must indicate that the validity of our interpretations depend upon the validity of our models. If we have omitted important influences on marriage attitudes that are correlated with our observed explanatory variables, our estimated effects will be biased. In addition, if our attitudinal variables are not completely endogenous, as our models assume, our estimates will be biased.

Taken altogether, our multivariate results suggest that developmental idealism seems to have most influenced the youngest cohorts of Nepalis, most likely because they have received much more formal education. These conclusions drawn from the survey data are fully corroborated by our analyses of the qualitative data. Although there is high acceptance of “modern society” and “modern family” practices in our interviews, there is fuller acceptance of these tenets of developmental idealism from our younger, more highly educated, participants. Further, across the board—young and old, educated and uneducated—everyone cites education as a perfect solution to any social ill and the source of all positive social change. The most clear and blatantly accepted tenet of developmental idealism in Nepal is that mass education is the gold standard, a desire for every child, and a sure

solution to all problems. Here are some examples of how quickly our interview participants turned to the topic of education when we asked what makes for a happy family:

I: What is needed to make for a happy family?

P: A happy family is an educated family. All the family members must have a common understanding and get along well. *Male, aged 19*

I: What makes a person happy?

P: To be happy, for one, a person must be educated. Then, after being educated, a person is able to understand his limitations and strengths. And, this person can convince others of anything. Educated parents can guide and reason with their children properly. Uneducated parents can't do that. They mostly beat their children if their children make mistakes. The children from educated families are sober and helpful, but children from uneducated families may be cruel or selfish. Education is very important for people to be successful and happy in life. *Male, aged 50*

P: A small family is a happy family. The saying goes, *Dui santan ishwor ko bardan* (two children are a gift from God). My sons are aware of this and they have only a daughter and two sons. We are only nine altogether.

I: In the past, people had four or five children, so where has the new idea of having smaller families come from?

P: This idea has recently come with development. Our new tradition is to have few children and have them work to help themselves and the nation. This concept of small families is all around the world. If a family has too many members, more food and land is required to survive. Now, to control population growth, this idea of having a small family has been introduced, and to be good members of society, we should follow the suggestion.

I: But were the large families of past times not happy?

P: In those times, people were totally uneducated... They did not know anything because they did not study books and learn science. They only followed the tradition of their forefathers. They thought that having 12 or 15 children was not a problem. Nowadays, because people are more educated, we know that small families are better. *Male, aged 60*

Another interesting theme coming out of our interview analysis is the recognition of how things are changing over time and that although slow, change is inevitable and in the direction expected from the spread of developmental idealism. Many times when interview participants made the distinction between some levels of intercaste marriage being acceptable and some being unacceptable, they would use similar language to say change is slow. They would predict that someday anyone will be able to marry anyone else, but for now change is slow and limited to some intercaste arrangements, with others being very taboo. Here, interestingly, we find evidence that local actors are using agency in determining to what degree they will endorse modern family change; on the other hand, they clearly engage in a major tenet of developmental idealism, that unilineal change is occurring over time. These interview participants believe that change is occurring and over time, a move towards total freedom to choose a spouse will result. Here are some examples of the way our informants describe "slow change."

“We had a revolution, which is called *Halo Kranti* (Plough Revolution). After that revolution, Brahmins (the highest Hindu caste) started ploughing. Then it was also possible for Brahmins to marry Chhetris, Jaishis and Upadhayas (other high caste Hindus). Between these three castes, marriage is possible. Such intercaste marriage may not be digested at once, right? But slowly and gradually it will be normal for anyone to marry anyone. We can see that in foreign countries...they don't care about caste when it comes to marriage.” (*An older male*)

“There will be slow development. The smell of development is coming towards us.” (*An older male*)

“In the past people used to laugh at love marriage. They used to look down on it and speak negatively about those who married in that way, but now, slowly, it is becoming accepted.” (*A middle-aged woman*)

“To make our society better, we have to realize that we are all the same and equal. If we try to grow rice in a place where rice doesn't grow, can we be successful? The traditions which we have been following since our grandfathers' time cannot be broken by one or two people at once. For that we must work slowly and co-operate with all people. We have to make people understand the problems with some traditions. If we work in that way, then everyone will cooperate and help us. Suppose there is a place where everyone is Hindu, and, if the people of that place are told to follow Christianity, will they do it? If they are forced, then they will follow Christianity on the outside, but inside their soul, they still believe in Hinduism. To change completely, we have to win the hearts of people slowly, but not in forceful manner.” (*A middle-aged woman on how patriarchal gender norms can change*)

In sum, many of interview informants agree that change is happening with regards to marriage arrangements and other family practices. They describe change in many manners that stem directly from the developmental idealism model. Change is slow, unilineal, and in the direction experienced previously by other societies seen as more modern.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We began this paper with the hypothesis that the developmental paradigm and developmental idealism have wrought dramatic changes in attitudes about marriage in Nepal. Our argument is that developmental ideas and developmental idealism have had an enormous impact on attitudes and behavior in Nepal. In the paper, we have provided considerable evidence for the influence that these ideas have had on marital behavior and attitudes in recent years. Nepali marriage patterns have changed such that they now, much more so than in the past, resemble marriage patterns found in the West. Child marriage is now uncommon, *sati* has vanished, polygamy is less popular, young people are much more involved in spouse choice, and divorce is increasingly seen as preferable to prolonging an unhappy marriage.

This paper has documented the various pieces of an argument for the widespread influence of developmental ideas. There is substantial empirical evidence that marriage behaviors have changed in the past half-century. Our recent survey data documents that Nepalis frequently endorse Western marriage behavior they define as modern—behavior that is vastly different from that historically found

in Nepal. We unfortunately do not have longitudinal attitudinal data to empirically demonstrate an attitude shift, but our analyses of the data suggest that cohort plays an important role in predicting attitudes, providing evidence for our argument that, like actual marriage behavior, attitudes have indeed changed in recent years. Finally, substantial evidence from both other scholars and other work that we have done in Nepal demonstrates the permeation of developmental ideas in Nepal and the mechanisms through which these ideas travel.

Our analyses support the contention of other scholars—that is, the importance of education in spreading developmental ideas. Other mechanisms of change which we hypothesized would influence attitudes—that is, media exposure, birth cohort, and distance to Narayanghat—were strongly correlated with education rather than having strong independent effects on attitudes. Education appears to be the most powerful influence on marriage attitudes.

As Nepalese people are exposed to new ideas, the marriage system is likely to continue to change. As Thornton (2005) discusses, developmental ideas and models are often met with resistance, and the end results of their effects seldom mirror societies in the West. However, thus far, developmental ideas have not yet met with outright resistance, although our analyses have shown variation in the acceptance of Western marriage patterns. What does this mean more generally for family change in societies around the world? Given that the results from our analyses show a great chasm between Nepalese marriage behavior 50 years ago, and Nepalese marriage attitudes in most recent years, we expect that these developmental ideas have spread elsewhere as well. A future systematic data collection of such data would greatly enhance our understanding of the ways in which developmental ideas are spreading and affecting attitudes toward families in societies around the world.

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Endnotes

¹ In the second half of the 1900s studies that used the northwest European historical record to read history from the past to the present rather than from cross-sectional variation revealed that there was no such historical transformation of family forms in northwest Europe (for examples, see Hajnal 1965, 1982; Laslett 1965; Laslett and Wall 1972; Macfarlane 1978, 1986; Wrigley and Schofield 1981). This new scholarship revealed that the modern family systems of northwest Europe observed in the 1700s and 1800s had been in place for centuries. This discovery discredited the idea that societies progressed over time from the traditional family systems outside of northwest Europe to the modern family systems of northwest Europe. It also cast doubt on the idea that modern family systems were the products of modern socioeconomic systems. However, while this information has been recognized among scholars specializing in family history, it has received little attention in other fields of academia, and probably almost no attention in the larger world.

² The field period lasted six weeks and resulted in a 97 percent response rate.

³ We also analyzed only those cases from the three statically representative strata—that is, we excluded the cases resulting from oversampling—and the results were nearly identical, with the exception that significance levels were lower and standard errors were higher due to the reduced number of cases, to those found in the analyses of the full sample, which will be discussed in the next section. We also note here that our analyses do not take into account the clustered nature of this sample, but previous work in the Chitwan Valley demonstrate that clustering effects due to sample design are trivial (Ghimire et al. 2006).

⁴ Historically, Nepalis married at young ages. Thus, fifty years ago, age 16 was an average, if not old, age at marriage.

⁵ The full question wordings are provided in Appendix Table 1.

⁶ In the quotes we provide from qualitative work, participants will be labeled with a “P”, and the interviewer will be labeled with an “I”.

⁷ The Hindu caste system considers individuals from low castes to be too impure and too polluted, and individuals from high castes will not take cooked food or water served by members of the low castes.

⁸ The Sarki caste is among the lowest castes in Nepal, generally comprised of shoe makers.

⁹ *Sati*, (popularly known by the Indian word *suttee*) the custom of a Hindu widow willingly being cremated on the funeral pyre of her husband as an indication of her devotion to him, was believed to be historically practiced among Hindus in Nepal (Regmi 2002).

¹⁰ These two questions also appeared at different points within the questionnaire, which can also lead to inconsistency.

¹¹ Respondents answered two separate questions: the ideal age at marriage for a woman and the ideal age at marriage for a man. We computed the average of these two responses for each respondent to create one variable for the ideal age at marriage.

¹² The birth cohort variable was calculated by subtracting the respondent’s age in 2003 from the year 2003. Thus, the birth cohort for a respondent reporting her age to be 45 during the data collection year of 2003 was calculated to be 1958.

¹³ For example, a 45-year old respondent has given the following responses to the four questions about age at first media exposure: 8 years old for radio, 14 years for movie hall, 35 years for television, and has never seen a VCR movie. Her average number of years of media exposure prior to age 17 is calculated as follows: $[(17-8) + (17-14) + 0 + 0]/4 = 3$ years of media exposure before age 17.

¹⁴ Neighborhoods in Chitwan Valley are generally comprised of only 5 to 15 households—thus, the size of the neighborhood does not impact the measurement of the variable.

¹⁵ The univariate analyses in Table 2 included a discussion of 23 different marriage attitudes. Given space constraints, we have chosen to discuss only twelve. We have also deliberately excluded four variables listed in the category of “Choice of when and who to marry”, and will discuss our reasons for this at the end of this section.

Table 1
Summary Statistics of Independent Variables

Variable	
Education	
No education	39.9%
1-10 years	38.0%
11+ years	22.1%
Media exposure prior to age 17	
Less than 1 years	23.2%
1 to 3 years	30.8%
3 ¼ to 5 years	19.7%
5 ¼ to 10 years	23.0%
More than 10 years	3.3%
Birth cohort	
1920 to 1944	10.6%
1945 to 1960	18.8%
1961 to 1970	18.6%
1971 to 1980	30.5%
1981 to 1986	21.4%
Distance to Narayanghat	
Less than 1 mile	27.6%
1 to 5 miles	15.3%
5.1 to 10 miles	28.5%
More than 10 miles	28.7%
Gender	
Female	55.3%
Male	44.7%
Caste/Ethnicity	
High-Caste Hindu	47.6%
Low-Caste Hindu	11.8%
Terai Tibeto Burmese	20.7%
Hill Tibeto Burmese	14.4%
Newar	5.6%

Table 2
Percentage Giving More Modern^a Answers to Questions Regarding Marriage

	<u>More Modern</u>
Polygamy	
Better having <u>one wife</u> or multiple wives	99.8 %
Man should not have plural wives (<u>agree</u>)	63.7 %
Intercaste marriage	
Better marrying own caste or <u>different</u> caste	16.6 %
Intercaste marriage always wrong (<u>disagree</u>)	75.7 %
Intercaste marriage not wrong (<u>agree</u>)	53.2 %
Widow remarriage	
Widow should remarry (<u>agree</u>)	61.1 %
Age at marriage	
Better marrying at age 16 or <u>24</u>	91.2 %
Marriage should be before first menstruation (<u>disagree</u>)	76.6 %
Ideal age at marriage (< 23 or <u>≥23</u>)	48.4 %
Choice of when and who to marry	
Women should control when they marry (<u>agree</u>)	86.0 %
Men should control when they marry (<u>agree</u>)	79.8 %
Men should choose who they marry (<u>agree</u>)	56.7 %
Women should choose who they marry (<u>agree</u>)	51.6 %
Better <u>children</u> or parents choose spouse	65.7 %
Parental consent required (<u>disagree</u>)	5.6 %
Children's consent required (<u>agree</u>)	91.9 %
Love marriage is good (<u>agree</u>)	66.7 %
Divorce, and singlehood	
Better <u>single</u> or married	5.3 %
Married people happier than never married (<u>disagree</u>)	23.0 %
<u>Accept</u> child not marrying	39.9 %
Better <u>divorce</u> or unhappy marriage	36.3 %
Arguing married couples shouldn't separate (<u>disagree</u>)	30.5 %
Arguing couples should divorce (<u>agree</u>)	58.5 %

^a We have indicated the response that is considered most modern by underlining it.

Table 3
Logistic Regression Estimates^a of the Effects of Education on Marriage Attitudes (Odds Ratios)^b

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Man should not have plural wives (<u>agree</u>)	Better marrying own caste or <u>different</u> caste	Intercaste marriage not wrong (<u>agree</u>)	Widow should remarry (<u>agree</u>)	Marriage should be before first menstruation (<u>disagree</u>)	Ideal age at marriage (< 23 or <u>>=23</u>)	Better <u>children</u> or parents choose spouse	Love marriage is good (<u>agree</u>)	Married people happier than never married (<u>disagree</u>)	<u>Accept</u> child not marrying	Better <u>divorce</u> or unhappy marriage	Arguing couples should divorce (<u>agree</u>)
Equation A ^c												
No educ.	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
1-10 years	0.812	3.730***	3.314***	2.671***	3.141***	1.278	1.562**	1.477*	1.380	0.892	1.953***	2.617***
11+ years	2.155***	8.632***	12.065***	8.472***	26.184***	3.556***	3.589***	2.054***	2.145***	2.815***	7.422***	10.083***
Equation B ^d												
No educ.	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
1-10 years	0.768	1.865	2.192***	2.104***	1.646*	1.285	1.327	0.985	0.912	0.598*	1.572	2.300***
11+ years	1.658	3.743***	6.399***	4.378***	9.942***	2.244**	3.066***	1.359	1.204	1.631	4.329***	7.145***

* p < .10
 ** p < .05
 *** p < .01^e

^a The dependent variables (Variables 1 through 12) are coded so that the response considered to be *more modern* is “1”, and the response considered to be *less modern* is “0”. The modern responses are indicated in the underlining.

^b The coefficients reported in the table are odds ratios—that is, the exponentiated log odds obtained from the logistic regression equation.

^c Equation A is a bivariate logistic regression and includes only the variable ‘education’.

^d Equation B is a multivariate logistic regression and includes all control variables, including education, media exposure, birth cohort, distance to Narayanghat, caste, and gender.

^e We note that this system of indicating statistically significant estimates was not used if the resulting estimate was in the opposite direction from that hypothesized, even if that opposite result was statistically significant. That is, we performed only one-tailed hypotheses tests, not two-tailed. This is true for all analyses reported in this paper and shown in Tables 2 through 5.

Table 4
Logistic Regression Estimates^a of the Effects of Media Exposure Prior to Age 17 on Marriage Attitudes (Odds Ratios)^b

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Man should not have plural wives (<u>agree</u>)	Better marrying own caste or <u>different</u> caste	Inter caste marriage not wrong (<u>agree</u>)	Widow should remarry (<u>agree</u>)	Marriage should be before first menstruation (<u>disagree</u>)	Ideal age at marriage (< 23 or <u>≥23</u>)	Better <u>children</u> or parents choose spouse	Love marriage is good (<u>agree</u>)	Married people happier than never married (<u>disagree</u>)	<u>Accept</u> child not marrying	Better <u>divorce</u> or unhappy marriage	Arguing couples should divorce (<u>agree</u>)
Equation A ^c												
Media	1.033	1.202***	1.265***	1.144***	1.268***	1.072**	1.055	1.146***	1.131***	1.103***	1.098***	1.209***
Equation B ^d												
Media	1.033	1.089	1.109**	1.080	1.037	1.070	1.016	1.010**	1.053	0.998	0.955	1.104**
Equation C ^e												
Media	1.003	1.099**	1.122***	1.014	1.098*	1.008	0.977	1.119***	1.105**	1.057	0.974	1.080*

* p < .10
 ** p < .05
 *** p < .01

^a The dependent variables (Variables 1 through 12) are coded so that the response considered to be *more modern* is “1”, and the response considered to be *less modern* is “0”. The modern responses are indicated in the underlining.

^b The coefficients reported in the table are odds ratios – that is, the exponentiated log odds obtained from the logistic regression equation.

^c Equation A is a bivariate logistic regression and includes only the variable “media exposure prior to age 17”.

^d Equation B is a multivariate logistic regression and includes all control variables, including education, media exposure, birth cohort, distance to Narayanghat, caste, and gender.

^e Equation C is a multivariate logistic regression and includes only “media exposure” and “education”.

Table 5
Logistic Regression Estimates^a of the Effects of Birth Cohort on Marriage Attitudes (Odds Ratios)^b

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Man should not have plural wives (<u>agree</u>)	Better marrying own caste or <u>different</u> caste	Intercaste marriage not wrong (<u>agree</u>)	Widow should remarry (<u>agree</u>)	Marriage should be before first menstruation (<u>disagree</u>)	Ideal age at marriage (< 23 or <u>>=23</u>)	Better <u>children</u> or parents choose spouse	Love marriage is good (<u>agree</u>)	Married people happier than never married (<u>disagree</u>)	<u>Accept</u> child not marrying	Better <u>divorce</u> or unhappy marriage	Arguing couples should divorce (<u>agree</u>)
Equation A ^c Cohort	0.992	1.032***	1.030***	1.009	1.036***	0.997	1.005	1.020***	1.025***	1.019***	1.016***	1.021***
Equation B ^d Cohort	0.992	1.019	1.008	0.989	1.026**	0.980	1.001	1.016*	1.017	1.023**	1.011	0.993
Equation C ^e Cohort	0.988	1.013	1.010	0.986	1.018**	0.984	0.994	1.016**	1.022**	1.018***	0.999	1.002
	* p < .10	** p < .05	*** p < .01									

^a The dependent variables (Variables 1 through 12) are coded so that the response considered to be *more modern* is “1”, and the response considered to be *less modern* is “0”. The modern responses are indicated in the underlining.

^b The coefficients reported in the table are odds ratios – that is, the exponentiated log odds obtained from the logistic regression equation.

^c Equation A is a bivariate logistic regression and includes only the variable “birth cohort”, coded in single years from 1920 to 1986.

^d Equation B is a multivariate logistic regression and includes all control variables, including education, media exposure, birth cohort, distance to Narayanghat, caste, and gender.

^e Equation C is a multivariate logistic regression and includes only “birth cohort” and “education”.

Table 6
Logistic Regression Estimates^a of the Effects of Distance from Narayanghat on Marriage Attitudes (Odds Ratios)^b

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Man should not have plural wives (<u>agree</u>)	Better marrying own caste or <u>different</u> caste	Intercaste marriage not wrong (<u>agree</u>)	Widow should remarry (<u>agree</u>)	Marriage should be before first menstruation (<u>disagree</u>)	Ideal age at marriage (< 23 or <u>>=23</u>)	Better <u>children</u> or parents choose spouse	Love marriage is good (<u>agree</u>)	Married people happier than never married (<u>disagree</u>)	<u>Accept</u> child not marrying	Better <u>divorce</u> or unhappy marriage	Arguing couples should divorce (<u>agree</u>)
Equation A ^c												
Distance	0.961***	0.918***	0.924***	0.928***	0.926***	0.933***	0.991	0.996	0.935***	0.955***	0.927***	0.943***
Equation B ^d												
Distance	0.990	0.965	0.991	0.967*	0.965*	0.965**	1.016	1.019	0.946**	0.964*	0.950***	0.995
Equation C ^e												
Distance	0.974*	0.963	0.970*	0.964**	0.971	0.955***	1.023	1.017	0.944***	0.977	0.970*	0.990
	* p < .10											
	** p < .05											
	*** p < .01											

^a The dependent variables (Variables 1 through 12) are coded so that the response considered to be *more modern* is “1”, and the response considered to be *less modern* is “0”. The modern responses are indicated in the underlining.

^b The coefficients reported in the table are odds ratios – that is, the exponentiated log odds obtained from the logistic regression equation.

^c Equation A is a bivariate logistic regression and includes only the variable “distance to Narayanghat”.

^d Equation B is a multivariate logistic regression and includes all control variables, including education, media exposure, birth cohort, distance to Narayanghat, caste, and gender.

^e Equation C is a multivariate logistic regression and includes only “distance to Narayanghat” and “education”.

Appendix Table 1 – Questions about marriage attitudes^a

Polygamy

Better having one wife or multiple wives: (Which is better) For a man, having one wife or having multiple wives? (one; multiple)

Man should not have plural wives (agree): A man should not have more than one wife at a time. (agree [A]; disagree [D])

Intercaste marriage

Better marrying own caste or different caste: (Which is better) Marrying within one's own caste or marrying someone of another caste for Nepalese? (one's own caste; another caste; about the same)

Intercaste marriage always wrong (disagree): Marrying someone from a different caste is always wrong. (A; D)

Intercaste marriage not wrong (agree): There is nothing wrong with marrying someone from a different caste. (A; D)

Widow remarriage

Widow should remarry (agree): A young widow should remarry another man. Do you agree or disagree? (A; D)

Age at marriage

Better marrying at age 16 or 24: (Which is better) Marrying at age 16 or marrying at age 24 for Nepalese? (age 16; age 24)

Marriage should be before first menstruation (disagree): A girl should be married before her first menstruation. (A; D)

Ideal age < 23 or ≥ 23: What do you feel is the ideal age for a man/woman to get married these days? (< 23 or ≥ 23)

Choice of when and who to marry

Women should control when they marry (agree): Unmarried young women should have control over when they marry. (A; D)

Men should control when they marry (agree): Unmarried young men should be able to decide when they marry. (A; D)

Men should choose who they marry (agree): Unmarried young men should be allowed to choose entirely on their own who they marry. (A; D)

Women should choose who they marry (agree): Unmarried young women should be able to choose entirely on their own who they marry. (A; D)

Better children or parents choose spouse: (Which is better) Young people choosing their own spouse or parents choosing a spouse for them? (young people choose; parents choose; about the same)

Parental consent required (disagree): If young people choose their own spouse, they should get consent from their parents before they get married. (A; D)

Children's consent required (agree): If parents choose a spouse for their child, they should get consent from their children before they decide about the marriage. (A; D)

Love marriage is good (agree): Love marriage is good. (A; D)

Singlehood, and divorce

Better single or married: (Which is better) Being single or being married for Nepalese? (single; married)

Married people happier than never married (disagree): Married people are happier than those who go through life without getting married. (A; D)

Accept child not marrying: Suppose that things turned out so that a child of yours does not want to marry, would that bother you a great deal, some, a little bit, or not at all? (a great deal [GD]; some [S]; a little [L]; not at all [N])

Better divorce or unhappy marriage: (Which is better) Unhappy marriage or divorce? (unhappy marriage, divorce)

Arguing married couples shouldn't separate (disagree): Even if a husband and wife cannot get along, they should not separate. (A; D)

Arguing couples should divorce (agree): If a husband and wife cannot get along, it is a good idea to get divorced. (A; D)

^a Several survey questions in this list included the category “about the same” as a third response option. The number of respondents answering “about the same” was only ever between 0.2% and 5.2%. Because it was not clear whether the response “about the same” should be coded as *more modern* or *less modern*, we chose to exclude the small number of cases for which this was an issue.



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