

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AND
SOCIAL CHANGE:
THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF
DATING, MATING, AND COUPLING

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN FAMILY RESEARCH

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**INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS
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DATING, MATING, AND
COUPLING**

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FOREWORD

Across generations and culture, humans spend a significant part of their lives in a relationship with a romantic partner, also known as coupling. Physical appearance and sexual desire may be the focus of initial coupling selection, especially among adolescents and young adults who are often eager to explore their sexuality with a romantic partner. While sexual coupling may provide reinforcement of sexual appeal, desirability, and attractiveness in its earliest stages, shared values and goals are typically more important factors in establishing successful long-term relationships. Marriage offers many individuals committed companionship, financial stability, and the prospect of conceiving children, which may be even more salient motivations for those with less education and financial security. Religious faith may also promote marriage as the primary outcome in coupling; however, each subsequent generation has become increasingly more accepting of cohabitation either prior to or in place of marriage. Traditional gender roles from breadwinning to childcare are continually challenged and redefined globally as more women pursue higher education and financial autonomy. Understanding the complex dynamic nature of intimate relationships and social change is the focus of the 11th volume of *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research*. Contributions from researchers from eight countries explore the process of initiating, maintaining, and strengthening long-term and marriage relationships.

From their earliest memories of childhood, most individuals have witnessed coupling through parents, grandparents, and members of the community. These early memories shape how relationships are defined and understood in adulthood. In many cultures, relationships are formed through arranged marriages, where parents and trusted family members are responsible for choosing a suitable spouse. In “*Enjoy the Heat of a Log, and Heed the Advice of the Elders*”: *Religious, Educational, and Neighborhood Determinants of Parental Influence on Spousal Choice in Nepal*, Emily McKendry-Smith examines the importance that young adults in Nepal place on religious faith and their decision to enter an arranged marriage or choose their own life partner. She concludes that as Nepalis become more educated, the effect of their neighbors’ religious faith is reduced and they are more likely to gain greater autonomy from their families when choosing a spouse.

In order to better understand the salient factors in mate selection from the initial dating period to marriage, Olufemi Adeniyi Fawole and Olasunkanmi Adebisi Osho sampled 19 married couples who had courted for at least seven

years before marriage and had been married for no less than ten years. Although shared values and core beliefs are typically considered to be essential components in romantic relationships, Fawole and Osho's chapter, "*And Here We Are...*": *Influencing Factors of Intimate Partner Preference among Married Couples in Nigeria*, noted that ethnic and educational backgrounds were not significant factors in intimate partner preference in their sample. Through a series of focus groups investigating couples' choice of partner, how they met, and length of dating and courtship, Fawole and Osho suggest that the couples' personality traits and family of origin may be more important factors in coupling formation.

Family dynamics may have a direct impact upon relationship formation and specifically one's choice of partner as explored in the chapter, *Intergenerational Conflicts and Resistance of Daughters in Suburban Turkey* by Aylin Akpınar. Raised by dominant fathers and subordinate mothers, the coupling experiences of three young women are examined from the formation of the arranged marriages, to the decision to divorce or separate as a means of individuation. Using a narrative approach, Akpınar examines the cultural standard of the "virgin bride" in suburban regions of Turkey, as a patriarchal means of oppressing women's sexuality and its effects on young women across generations.

Established gender roles continue to be challenged across the globe, as seen in Kadri Raid and Kairi Kasearu's chapter, *Changing Gender Role Expectations in the Family Formation Process through the Lens of Ambivalence*. Interviews with both married and cohabitating couples revealed that while most couples openly embrace egalitarian values, traditional gender role expectations are pervasive throughout Estonian culture. Since 1998, more than half of children in Estonia, a former socialist country, have been born outside of marriage, suggesting a more accepting and open approach to coupling. Despite the changing family structure, Raid and Kasearu suggest that gender norms persist, making family life in Estonia more diverse, but also more uncertain.

Traditional gender roles continue to be questioned in *Educational Assortative Mating and Female Breadwinning Trajectories: A Group-Based Trajectory Analysis* by Yue Qian. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979), she suggests that the gender gap in education in the United States may have a direct impact on marriage and family life. Women with considerably more education than their male partners reported a continuously higher probability of being the primary breadwinners and were more likely to become the primary earners, even if they were not initially. Qian proposes that education may place women in a "wife advantaged" position of providing for their families notwithstanding traditional gender role expectations.

Despite higher education and a greater acceptance of egalitarian values with each new generation, an acceptance of traditional gender roles can be predictive of healthy versus unhealthy relationships. For adolescents, who are first exploring dating and coupling, gender roles may provide some structure and guidance in what to expect in a new relationship, but they may also impact the dynamic

of power between individuals. Giovanna Giancesini proposes a theoretical model which evaluates the dynamic of power within the dyad and predicts healthy versus unhealthy relationship outcomes, in her chapter *Dating & Mating in Adolescence: A Model to Predict Pathways of Relationship Outcomes*. A greater self-awareness of power in a relationship and its link to dating and partner violence has not only clinical applications, but Giancesini suggests that her model was also intended to become a mobile app for adolescents to evaluate their own relationships.

With each subsequent generation, marriage has been progressively delayed in favor of cohabitation. Couples may choose to live together out of financial necessity or simply to better evaluate the compatibility and longevity of their relationship before committing to marriage. In *The Transition to Adulthood in Individualistic and Collectivistic Cultures: Prevalence and Timing of Premarital Cohabitation and Direct Marriage in Germany and China*, Barbara E. Fulda explores national differences in the timing and prevalence of premarital cohabitation and direct marriage. In addition to factors such as wealth, economic modernization, and education, Fulda offers insight into cohabitation preferences in China and Germany and between collectivistic and individualistic cultures.

Expanding the research on cohabitation and marriage preferences across the globe, Ana Josefina Cuevas details her findings in *Marriage and Cohabitation among Rural and Urban Women in Western Mexico*. Based on 48 qualitative interviews, her findings suggest that two-thirds of women chose a civil or religious marriage in order to start a family. Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those with less education may have felt that marriage was their only option. In contrast, women living in permanent or alternate cohabitation were more likely to avoid marriage. Narrative responses suggest that attitudes toward premarital sex and the definitions of family are changing especially with each subsequent generation of women.

As attitudes surrounding gender roles and marriage continue to broaden, some partners may choose to establish non-marital committed relationships in separate households. Defining these relationships as “live-apart-together” (LAT), Jacquelyn Benson, Steffany Kerr, and Ashley Ermer, conducted a grounded theory study of 22 older adults in *Living Apart Together Relationships in Later Life: Constructing an Account of Relational Maintenance*. Choosing to live independently from each other, the participants emphasized the importance of protecting their autonomy and remaining flexible about the expectations of time spent in the physical presence of their partner. While LAT relationships might be temporary for younger adults, who may be separated by the demands of their careers or financial considerations, Benson, Kerr, and Ermer examine the factors involved in choosing a more permanent LAT relationship in older adulthood and the impact living apart may have on the stability of these relationships.

Technology has directly impacted the frequency and nature of communication across most relationships, especially for young adults. From online dating, to tweets and texts, the Millennial generation has never known a world without the Internet. In *Technology Use and Its Association with Romantic Relationships*, Lacey A. Bagley and Claire Kimberly investigate how interpersonal relationships are directly affected by the Internet. Their findings suggest that men may be more likely to utilize technology to search for a partner, flirt, and maintain a long-distance relationship, than women. Furthermore, as compared with Caucasians, African American participants may view the Internet as negatively impacting the quality of a relationship.

Coupling requires compromise, communication, and commitment, but sometimes partnerships reach a natural conclusion. Whether it is due to irreconcilable differences or infidelity, couples become individuals again. Therefore, learning how to identify unhealthy relationships and end them successfully is a critical lesson, especially in emerging adulthood. Jerika C. Norona and Spencer B. Olmstead conducted article searches on 18- to 29-year olds in *The Aftermath of Dating Relationship Dissolution in Emerging Adulthood: A Review* to better understand the ramifications of relationship dissolution. Ranging from physical and emotional abuse to self-discovery and growth, young adults experienced a wide range of emotional reactions at the end of their relationships. Norona and Olmstead examine the developmental needs within romantic relationships and how educational programs might encourage healthier relationships in young adults.

Methodologically and geographically diverse, 11 chapters have explored the cultural and generational challenges of intimate relationships across all phases of coupling behavior. From Mexico to Nigeria, this volume has examined the strength of family and cultural influence, traditional gender norms, education and socioeconomic status in mate selection across eight countries. Although a large body of research exists about romantic relationships in Western societies, particularly in the United States, additional research is essential to better understand this dynamic from a global perspective. Expanding the empirical research and theoretical frameworks through a cross-cultural lens is essential to better understanding the complex nature of coupling behaviors. This volume is one step toward that goal and we wish to thank all the authors who provided important contributions to this volume, and all the anonymous reviewers who provided thoughtful and detailed reviews.

Christina L. Scott
Sampson Lee Blair
Editors

“ENJOY THE HEAT OF A LOG, AND HEED THE ADVICE OF THE ELDERS”: RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL, AND NEIGHBORHOOD DETERMINANTS OF PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON SPOUSAL CHOICE IN NEPAL

Emily McKendry-Smith

ABSTRACT

The relationship between religious belief and spousal choice in Nepal is examined, looking at how the importance that individuals place on their own religious faith influences their decision either to allow their parents and other relatives to arrange a marriage for them or to initiate their own love marriage. How the importance attached to religious faith within the individual's family and neighborhood affects this decision, and how education modifies the relationship between religion and spousal choice are also looked at.

Ordinary least squares regression models are used to examine the relationship between spousal choice and key independent variables. Interaction terms are used to examine how education may moderate the relationship between personal, family, and neighborhood religious salience and spousal choice.

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It is found that the effect of one's neighbors' faith operates differently based on one's own level of education. The "moral communities" thesis is used to theorize that in neighborhoods where religion is regarded as very important, individuals need to expend more effort to maintain respectability, adhering to tradition by having arranged marriages. In neighborhoods where religion is less important, the weaker demands made by the "moral community" render individuals more free to choose their own spouses. For highly educated individuals, the effect of their neighbors' religious belief is considerably reduced.

As Nepalis become more educated, they not only move out of the sphere of family influence, as discussed in previous research, but also away from being influenced by their neighbors.

Keywords: Arranged marriage; love marriage; spousal choice; Nepal; moral communities thesis

INTRODUCTION

A Nepali proverb instructs its audience to "enjoy the heat of a log, and heed the advice of the elders." Like a mature log is a consistent source of heat when it is burning, elders are viewed as a consistent source of good advice. One venue where this has been considered to be the case in Nepal is that of marriage. In the past, the most common form of marriage in Nepal has been arranged marriage, where an individual's spouse is selected by his or her parents or other relatives. However, individuals increasingly have the opportunity to participate in the selection process. They can also elope, bypassing the family selection process entirely in what is known as a "love marriage." This paper focuses on the relationship between education, religious salience, and parental or individual spousal choice – whether individuals "enjoy the heat of a log" or not.

Family scholars have demonstrated that the transition from marriage and family based on economic considerations to marriage and family based on companionship is a phenomenon that has occurred across many societies. In Western contexts, many scholars note the dynamic changes that occur as families transition away from functioning as an economic production unit (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988; Waite, 2000). One such change is related to the emotions associated with marriage; Rothman (1984) notes that only by the 1800s did Americans expect to love their prospective spouse prior to marriage. The transition to marriage based on some sort of affection or choice between prospective spouses has been documented in locales including Korea (Kenall, 1996), Spain (Collier, 1997), Egypt (Hoodfar, 1997), Brazil (Jankowiak, 1995; Rebhun, 1999), India (Caldwell, Reddy, & Caldwell, 1982; Dyson & Moore, 1983),

Turkey (Fox, 1975), China (Xiaohe & Whyte, 1990), and Nepal (Ahearn, 2001; Ghimire, Axinn, Yabiku, & Thornton, 2006).

Theoretical Context: Family Mode of Social Organization

To theoretically situate the relationship between spousal choice and factors such as religious salience and education, I use the family mode of social organization framework (Axinn & Yabiku, 2001; Beutel & Axinn, 2002; Thornton & Fricke, 1987; Thornton & Lin, 1994). As Gray and Mearns (1989) note, the family or household is a particularly useful means of understanding social change in South Asia. The family household “is the primary place for socialization and for the constitution of a person’s identity in South Asian society” (p. 15). Because of the primacy of the family for organizing daily life, a key way of understanding social change is to examine its impact on the social organization of families. Social change may shift some aspects of social life so they take place outside the family, leading to repercussions for both people’s social relationships and the structures of social interaction. As Beutel and Axinn (2002) note, “no society is expected to be completely organized inside or outside families, but the nonfamily and family modes of social organization are two ideal types that aid our understanding of social change and the family” (p. 113). In this paper, I examine religion and education in Nepal as two phenomena that influence the degree to which an individual’s life takes place inside or outside the family’s locus of control. Religion in Nepal, which focuses greatly on the “householder’s path” and the sanctity of family, is expected to inspire a strong connection between individuals and their families. On the other hand, an increasing level of education, a social change occurring in this context over the past several years, exposes individuals to new people and ideas within a nonfamily social institution. I use spousal choice, or the extent to which an individual chooses his or her own spouse or has family members involved in the selection process, as a means of measuring these two phenomena’s relative impact on the family as a locus of social life and organization in Nepal. The study of these relationships will increase understanding of religion’s relationship to family outcomes and how this is played out in non-Western contexts. As marriage is a “central family process in Nepal” (Barber, 2004, p. 237), understanding changes in spousal choice and family formation is critical to understanding the relationship between social change and the family mode of social organization.

Sociologists have long been aware of the interconnections of religion and family as social institutions. Families serve as a key source of religious socialization, while religions, in turn, often promote the importance of family within society and promote certain family-formation behaviors. Previous research in Western contexts has shown that religion is related to a wide variety of family

outcomes, including mother–child relationship closeness (Pearce & Axinn, 1998), parenting and child discipline (Bartkowski & Wilcox, 2000), and marital stability (Call & Heaton, 1997; Heaton, 1984; Heaton & Pratt, 1990). Also in Western contexts, individuals' religious characteristics have been shown to be of great utility in understanding their marriage behavior (Lehrer, 2000, 2004). This paper adds to this literature by considering the relationship between religious salience and a previous unexamined family outcome, spousal choice. Focusing on spousal choice will add to our understanding of how religion relates to family outcomes in non-Western contexts. In addition, because arranged marriages are traditional whereas choosing one's own spouse is often perceived as "modern" in Nepal, examining the relationship between religion and spousal choice will aid us in understanding how religion mediates between the traditional and the modern.

Spousal Choice and Religion in Nepal

In the context of Nepal, connections between religion and family are particularly strong. Until recently, Hinduism was the state religion of Nepal, and as of 2001, 81% of Nepal's population identifies themselves as Hindus. Other religious groups in Nepal include Buddhists (11%), Muslims (4%), Kirants (4%), Christians (0.5%), and Jains (0.05%) (CBS, 2001). However, the religious landscape is not as straightforward as this might suggest, and many people practice multiple religions. Certain ethnic groups are traditionally Buddhist, but have become "Sanskritized" over time, adopting Hindu ideology and practices (Gurung, 1998) in addition to their own Buddhist traditions. Other ethnic groups that originally practiced indigenous animist religions have also experienced this "Hinduization" process (Guneratne, 2002). Nonetheless, for all the religions practiced in Nepal, there are strong reasons to expect connections with family, particularly with family formation behaviors such as spousal choice.

Of the religious traditions discussed here, Hinduism is most explicit in its prescriptions for daily life in general and spousal selection in particular. Traditionally, it is expected that Hindu marriages will be arranged, with Cameron (1998) going so far as to state "all first marriages in Hindu society are arranged by parents (or other adults should the parents be unable or deceased) for their children" (p. 193). Improper marriages, such as "love" marriages, cannot be validated by Brahman priests, and children produced by such unions may take on a ritually impure status. The selection of a spouse by parents is considered to be a religious obligation; arranging a *kanyadan*, or "gift of a virgin" in marriage, is a virtuous act undertaken by parents (Bennett, 1983; Gray, 1995; Maskey, 1996; Stone, 1997). Maskey (1996) explains that in the context of Nepal, "traditionally marriage is a socially desirable act which is

strongly encouraged by religion” (p. 105). While arranged marriage is the predominant form of marriage in Nepal, young adults are increasingly given opportunities to consult in the selection process or even veto the selections of their families. Some couples, however, will bypass this process entirely and elope, a process that is referred to as “love marriage.”

In addition to discouraging participation by individuals in the choice of their own spouse, Hinduism also promotes the centrality of the family in society more generally through its ideology of the “householder’s path.” Hindus who do not become society-renouncing ascetics are expected to become householders, fulfilling their spiritual duties by marrying and raising a family (Gray, 1995).

Certain ethnic groups in Nepal, such as the Hill Tibeto-Burmese and some Newars, traditionally practice Mahayana Buddhism. In contrast to Hinduism, Buddhism is both less prescriptive regarding everyday life in general and contains fewer specific guidelines regarding marriage (Ling, 1969; Macfarlane, 1976). Other ethnic groups, the Terai Tibeto-Burmese, traditionally follow indigenous animist religions. However, scholars suggest that both of these groups have become “Hinduized” over time, part of a process known as “Sanskritization.” Nepal was officially a Hindu kingdom for many decades, and Hinduism became part of the civic religion, with Hindu holy days becoming national holidays. On a more individual level, Terai Tibeto-Burmese individuals frequently use (Hindu) Brahmin priests for religious rituals, such as marriages, naming ceremonies, and funeral rites. Perhaps because of this Sanskritization, ethnographic evidence suggests that both hill Tibeto-Burmese (Ahearn, 2001; Allendorf, 2013; Desjarlais, 2003) and Terai Tibeto-Burmese (Guneratne, 1999) groups practice arranged marriages. While Buddhism itself may be less prescriptive regarding marriage, the adoption of Hindu norms and practices by Buddhist and animist ethnic groups has led to their practicing arranged marriages.

Sociologists have long recognized that religion is multidimensional (Cornwall, Albrecht, Cunningham, & Pitcher, 1986; Pearce & Denton, 2011). Three major dimensions of religion are beliefs/ideology, practices, and salience/centrality. In this paper, I focus on the relationship between religious salience and spousal choice. Because arranged marriage is a practice that is encouraged by Hindu ideology, I expect individuals with greater religious salience, or to whom religion is more important in everyday life, to participate less in the choice of their spouse as opposed to parents or relatives.

Religious salience is a particularly useful measure of religion, as practices may be influenced by social pressure or the extent to which religious venues are available. Previous research in a Western context has indicated that religious salience is often strongly related to family-related attitudes and behaviors (Regnerus & Burdette, 2006).

In addition to the religious centrality of individuals, I also expect the religiosity of their parents to be relevant to their spousal choice. As discussed earlier,

parents with greater religious salience are likely to be interested in carrying out the practice of arranged marriage, due to the religious merit that this confers. Parents are also likely to prefer an arranged marriage for other, non-religious reasons; these marriages are seen as ensuring the stability of the household because parents will have control over daughters-in-law (Cameron, 1998). On the other hand, love marriages are seen as potentially destabilizing, as loyalty to a spouse may pull individuals away from the broader concerns of the household and patriline (Stone, 1997).

Parents' and family's religiosity is also relevant to spousal choice, in that they are primary agents for the religious socialization of individuals. Previous research in Western contexts indicates that parental religious characteristics exert a strong influence on the religiosity of youth (Myers, 1996). Parents may influence their children's religious characteristics through the mechanisms of modeling (Bandura, 1986; Campbell, 1969; Chodorow, 1978) and actively socializing children (Baumrind, 1978; Gecas & Seff, 1990). In addition, Bengtson (1975) adds that in a more passive process, both parents and children may be affected and shaped by other factors that influence their religiosity. Based on this previous research, I hypothesize that in households with greater average religious salience, individuals are likely to display less participation in their spousal choice, in deference to parents or other family members.

Finally, the religiosity of neighborhoods is also of interest when examining the relationship between an individual's religious salience and their degree of participation in spousal choice. Sociologists have long been interested in examining the relationships between neighborhood or community-level phenomena and individual-level behavior. In the Nepali context, this relationship may be particularly relevant. Neighborhoods in Nepal (known as *tols*) often share common water pumps and pasture land for grazing animals. These common areas become centers for people to meet and talk (Valente, Watkins, Jato, Van der Straten, & Tsitsol, 1997). Neighbors' beliefs and attitudes are well known. Many family activities, including religious practices, are performed in open-air courtyards. Personal items, such as toothbrushes and birth control pills, are frequently stored in the thatched roofs of houses, where others can observe them (Barber, 2004). In addition, previous research observes that community-level religious characteristics are associated with individual behavior in both Western and South Asian contexts (Brewster, Billy & Grady, 1993; Maimon & Kuhl, 2008; Uddin, 2007; Wallace et al., 2007; Welch, Tittle, & Petee, 1991).

More generally, the "religious ecology" or "moral communities" hypothesis suggests religious characteristics of a neighborhood or community may be related to the behavior of individuals within that community. Lee and Bartkowski (2004) explain this thesis by noting that "communities characterized by a proreligious climate will experience fewer crime problems" (p. 1,007). Other research in this vein has focused on the relationship between community/neighborhood religious characteristics and individual behavior related to crime or deviance (Cochran & Akers, 1989; Junger & Polder, 1993; Stark,

Kent, & Doyle, 1982; Welch et al., 1991). One possible mechanism for this thesis suggests that the decrease in crime/deviance is due to the positive effects of congregations, which may encourage community integration and discourage criminal and deviant behavior (M. Lee & Bartkowski, 2004). Other explanations place a higher focus on the matter of deterrence. Warner (2000) theorizes that within the moral boundaries of groups, “it is incumbent on the individual to maintain his or her respectability” (p. 302). I theorize that in Nepal, it is this latter mechanism that offers more fertile grounds for explaining the relationships between neighborhoods and individuals. As Nepali religions tend not to follow a congregational model, explanations that focus on the beneficial effects of congregations are of limited use in the Nepali context. However, neighborhood religious characteristics, such as average neighborhood religious salience, may impact individual behavior through the mechanism of deterring deviance in order to maintain respectability. Ahearn (2001, p. 61) and McHugh (1998, p. 163) both note observations from their fieldwork where love marriages and elopements lead to gossip and family “dishonor.” Similarly, Jones (1977) notes that in a Hill Tibeto-Burmese community, courtships were “the subject of endless gossip and discussion” (p. 288).

I expect this effect to be more pronounced in neighborhoods with higher average neighborhood salience, that is, in neighborhoods that are more pro-religious and that have a stronger moral community, than in neighborhoods with lower average salience of religious faith. I also anticipate that the effect of the moral community will be more strongly felt by less-educated individuals than it is by more highly educated Nepalis, who will be somewhat insulated from the demands of respectability by both the increased personal and family status that comes from receiving education, as well as by the values of individuality and self-determination that they learn in school.

Education and Spousal Choice

In addition to religious salience, education is another individual-level factor that theory suggests would influence an individual’s degree of participation in spousal choice. In many parts of the world, changes in education have been found to be related to changing marital processes and family dynamics. Education levels are related to cohabitation and marriage trends in the United States (Cherlin, 1981), as well as differences in the ordering of life course transitions (Hogan & Astone, 1986).

Nepal is an interesting case with respect to education, as secular education was unavailable prior to the 1950s. Prior to this time, children could be educated in religious settings, such as in Hindu *pathsalas* or Buddhist monasteries (Ragsdale, 1989). In the 1950s, during Nepal’s interim democratic phrase, the Nepali government expended great effort to promote education as a mechanism

for development (Graner, 2006). Education in Nepal remained largely administered by the government until the Education Act in 1980, which led to a moderate increase in the number of private schools in the early and mid-1990s. These private schools were largely concentrated in Kathmandu and in major urban areas in the Terai, including in Chitwan district. Despite the involvement of government in education, Nepal is one of the few nations which has not introduced compulsory primary education. The first school in Chitwan, the district of Nepal that is the focus of this paper, was built in 1954. By 1995, there were 123 schools serving 43,785 students in Chitwan district (Beutel & Axinn, 2002). The education system in Nepal is modeled off the British system. Students attend school for 11 years, at which point they must take a national examination in order to receive a “School Leaving Certificate” (SLC), equivalent to a high school diploma.

Improvements in educational infrastructure in Nepal have not necessarily resulted in increased educational attainment; Shrestha (1989) observes “the big gap between national aspirations and actual reality” (p. 82) in this matter. Graner (1998) notes that many students begin class 1 but do not proceed to higher grade levels. There are extremely high drop-out rates throughout the primary school levels (grades 1–5) and extremely low rates of transition from primary education to secondary education. In 1996, according to Graner, the national average was 2.25 years of schooling for boys and 1.13 years of education for girls.

Education is likely to impact participation in spousal choice as it changes the balance of how life is lived inside and outside the family. Prior to the availability of educational institutions, children would spend most of their time at home with the family, helping with household tasks. Enconced within the family, they were unlikely to encounter new people or ideas that did not meet with familial approval. With the advent of schooling, however, children spend long periods of time outside their families’ supervision. This allows youth to form new social relationships and encounter new ideas with non-family sources. Carney and Madsen (2009) write that for Nepali youth, schools “provide resources with which to craft new identities” (p. 171). In addition, education opens up new occupational possibilities and status mobility routes (Beutel & Axinn, 2002). Macfarlane (1994) notes that employment physically removes individuals from the family by requiring them to eat meals away from home or live outside the family home, separate from other members. Separation from family at both school and work affords individuals more opportunities to meet new people that are unknown to their other family members, including potential spouses. In addition, the income that comes with employment gives individuals a sense of independence, where a family head may no longer be able to exert effective control over them. Similarly, Ahearn (2001) writes that education not only increases the possibility of love marriages by allowing individuals to communicate privately via love letters, it also gives the literate an increased sense

of agency, or their ability to act to control their own destiny, albeit within cultural constraints.

The Religion/Education Connection

Research in the American context suggests that education and the various dimensions of religiosity, including salience, are closely interrelated. This previous research suggests that a moderating relationship between religious salience and education may also be present in the Nepali context. In general, in the American context, religion has been positively associated with educational attainment, with the exception of adherents of Conservative Protestantism (Beyerlein, 2004; Darnell & Sherkat, 1997; Fitzgerald & Glass, 2008; Glass & Jacobs, 2005; Lehrer, 2004; Massengill, 2008; Muller & Ellison, 2001). However, some research has noted an association between higher education and diminishing religious involvement and salience (Albrecht & Heaton, 1984; Lee, 2002; Mayrl & Oeur, 2009).

Outside the American context, there is comparatively little research on the religion/education relationship. In rural India, Borooah and Iyer (2005) find differences in school enrollment rates between Hindu and Muslim children. In a multi-country study, Norton and Tomal (2009) find that the proportion of a country’s residents who practice Hinduism, Islam, or “ethnoreligions” is negatively associated with female educational attainment. Previous research on religion and education in the Nepali context also suggests a connection between the two. Sibbons observes that Nepal contains

cultural and religious diversity from Buddhist to Hindu with many variations and other religions making up the rich tapestry of difference; and numerous ethnic groups, associated with location and religious-cultural systems. It is this rich and varied mix that influences perceptions toward education and, consequently, educational outcomes. (1999, p. 189)

I expect that the effect of religious salience on spousal choice will differ for less-educated and more-educated individuals. Additionally, I expect that the effect of education on spousal choice will depend on the level of religious salience, so that education will have a different effect for low-salience and high-salience individuals and in low-salience and high-salience households and neighborhoods. The hypothesis of moderation at the neighborhood level is consistent with the moral communities theory I discussed previously, through either or both the processes described.

The Nepali Context: Chitwan Valley

In order to examine these questions, this paper utilizes survey data collected in the Chitwan Valley of Nepal. Chitwan is one of Nepal’s administrative districts and is located in the country’s south central region, approximately 90 miles

from Nepal's capitol, Kathmandu. Chitwan is a particularly suitable setting for examining social change, as prior to the 1950s, the Valley consisted of dense jungle, inhabited only by the indigenous Tharu ethnic group, who are believed to be resistant to malaria. In the 1950s, the Nepali government, aided by the US government, implemented a program of malaria eradication, deforestation, and resettlement. People came from all over Nepal to seek land in this area, and the Valley is now home to a variety of ethno-religious groups. This makes the Chitwan Valley an ideal location for research, as it contains inhabitants from all ethnic and religious groups present in Nepal. Schools, health centers, markets, roads, electricity, and communication infrastructure are spreading throughout the region, radiating from Narayanghat, an urban area in the north end of the district. Because of its central location within Nepal, Narayanghat has also become something of a national transportation hub, with roads extending to other Nepali cities and to India. On the other end of the Valley lies Chitwan National Park. This protected area remains jungle, and nearby residents continue traditional practices, such as entering the park to gather thatching materials to repair their homes.

Social life in Chitwan is organized into neighborhoods, or *tols*. These neighborhoods usually consist of 5–15 households, which have daily face-to-face contact and may share water sources or grazing land. Several neighborhoods then combine to form larger administrative entities, known as Village Development Committees (VDCs). Towns in Chitwan often consist of several VDCs. Each town will have a bazaar located in a central area, usually along the main road. The bazaars give nearby residents access to services including shops, restaurants, bus service, and other places of business.

DATA AND METHODS

In these analyses, I employ data from the Chitwan Valley Family Study (CVFS). The CVFS is a neighborhood-based study situated in a western portion of Nepal's Chitwan district. In order to collect this data, a systematic probability sample of 171 neighborhoods was selected in 1996; these neighborhoods were identified in the field and consisted of clusters of between 5 and 15 households. Individuals living in those neighborhoods between 15 and 59 years of age were interviewed, as well as any spouses living elsewhere (Barber, Shivakoti, Axinn, & Gajurel, 1997). The CVFS includes data from 5,271 individuals and has a response rate of 97 percent. These interviews were conducted in Nepali, so interview questions presented here are English translations. In 2008, respondents who were unmarried in 1996 were surveyed again on the topic of marriage. My dependent variable comes from this 2008 data, while the independent variables are from the 1996 dataset. My sample includes 620 respondents who were not married in 1996 but had married for the first time by 2008. In

1996, these respondents’ ranged from 15 to 34, with the average respondent being 18.1 years old. In 2008, these respondents had aged to be between 27 and 46, with a mean age of 30.1.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in these analyses is an ordinal variable related to spousal choice. Respondents were asked “in your case, who selected your (first) spouse? Your parents/relatives, yourself, or both?” If both the individual and parents/relatives were involved in spouse selection, respondents were asked a follow-up question as to who had more influence. These questions have been coded to form an ordinal variable with five categories: parents/relatives only select spouse, both parents/relatives and respondent select spouse – mostly parents/relatives, both parents/relatives and respondent select spouse equally, both parents/relatives and respondent select spouse – mostly respondent, and only respondent selects spouse. Respondents in this sample gave a mean response of 2.98, roughly equivalent to both parents and respondents having equal say, on average. The distribution of my dependent variable is shown in Fig. 1.

Religious Salience Variables

I include three measures of religious salience in these models – individual religious salience, average household religious salience, and average neighborhood religious salience. Respondents were asked “how much do you believe in

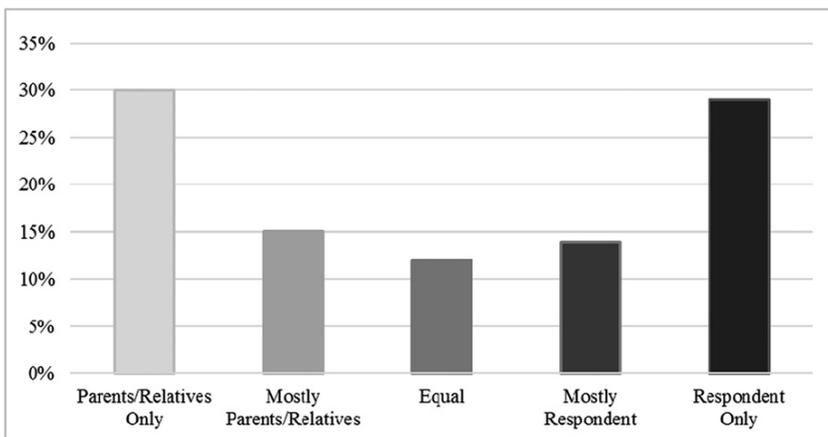


Fig. 1. Frequency Distribution of Spousal Choice.

dharma (religion)? Would you say it is very much, somewhat, or not at all?” Respondents’ answers ranged from 1 (“not at all”) to 3 (“very much”) with an average response of 2.39. I constructed measures of average household religious salience by averaging the responses to this question for all household members age 15 and older who participated in the CVFS study. I similarly obtained measures of average neighborhood religious salience, including all neighborhood residents age 15 and older who participated in the study. In both of these averaged measures, the respondents’ own religious salience was deleted from the calculation, making each the average of *the other members* of the respondent’s household and neighborhood, respectively. Respondents in this sample lived in households whose other members had an average salience of 2.58, and in neighborhoods whose other members had an average salience of 2.55.

Education Variable

Respondents were asked about the highest grade in school or year of college they had completed. In Nepal, students must complete 11 years of education in order to receive their School Leaving Certificate, or SLC. Respondents in this sample received, on average, 7.17 years of schooling, and about 15.52% completed enough education to earn an SLC. Women in this sample received an average of 7.91 years of education, while men received 6.65 (a difference that is statistically significant, $t = 5.02^{***}$). High-caste Hindus in this sample received an average of 8.35 years of education, low-caste Hindus received 5.45 years, Hill Tibeto-Burmese 5.97 years, Terai Tibeto-Burmese 4.90 years, and Newars received 8.10 years of education ($X^2 = 215.53^{***}$, $df = 52$). Respondents who completed less than 11 years of schooling lived in households whose other members had an average religious salience of 2.60 and in neighborhood whose other members had an average salience of 2.55. Respondents who completed 11 years of education or more lived in households whose other members averaged 2.51 and neighborhoods whose other members averaged 2.54 (differences in household salience for respondent below and above 11 years of education are significant, $t = 2.04^*$; however, their neighborhoods are not significantly different, $t = 0.63$).

Control Variables

I control for several phenomena that are known to be related to education, religious salience, and spousal choice. Individual controls include respondent gender, ethno-religious group, age at marriage, and the type of agricultural land that may be owned by the household. Research indicates that gender is related to both education and religious salience, in Nepal and elsewhere

(Beutel & Axinn, 2002). South Asian families may be reluctant to invest in a daughter’s education, as she will move to her husband’s household after marriage and any benefits of education will not go to her natal family (Ashby, 1985).

Race and ethnicity must also be considered with respect to education and religious salience. In Nepal, it is most useful to think of the various ethnic groups in Nepal as parts of five broader ethno-religious categories. These include high-caste Hindus (Brahmins and Chhetris) and low-caste Hindus (such as Damais, Sarkis, and Kamis), Hill Tibeto-Burmese (such as Gurungs, Magars, and Tamangs) who are traditionally Buddhist but may have adopted Hindu beliefs and practices, Terai Tibeto-Burmese who traditionally practice indigenous animist religions but may also have become Hinduized, and Newars (an ethnic group from the Kathmandu Valley), who may practice Hinduism, Buddhism, or a mixture of the two.

With respect to education, certain ethnic groups, such as high-caste Hindus and Newars, often have more opportunities and higher economic status compared to other groups, and are more likely to be enrolled in school and to reach higher levels of education (Ashby, 1985).

Age at marriage tends to be related to spousal choice, as people whose marriages are arranged tend to marry at early ages, while those who select their own spouse tend to marry later. Marrying later also gives individuals more opportunities to meet prospective spouses and to reach higher levels of education (Ghimire et al., 2006). Alternatively, older unmarried individuals may be more likely to accept the counsel of their parents and other relatives if they have been unsuccessful in locating a spouse for themselves. Desai and Andrist (2010) note that gender also plays a role in decision-making regarding age at marriage.

While ethno-religious group can be an indicator of economic status, I also control for socioeconomic status more explicitly by examining what type of agricultural land, if any, is owned by the household. A member of each household was asked about two types of land: *bariland* (land that cannot be used to grow rice), and *khet* (land on which rice is grown). *Khet* is considered more valuable and more desirable than *bariland*. For each type of land, respondents were asked “does your household own the land, is it sharecropped, is it mortgaged, is it on contract to you, are you the tenant of the land or are there some other arrangements?” I have operationalized this as two dichotomous variables, where households either own *bariland* or do not, and either own *khet* or do not. This is a more meaningful measure of socioeconomic status than income, as most people in the sample are engaged in farming and do not have bank accounts. Previous research in other South Asian context also indicates that measures of ownership are useful measures of socioeconomic status, as they are relevant measures of social status for people living in this region (Malhotra & Tsui, 1996). This is the only household-level control I employ in my analyses. The descriptive statistics for all variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Spousal choice	2.981	1.633	1	5
<i>Gender – Male</i>	<i>0.582</i>	<i>0.493</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>
Female	0.418	0.493	0	1
<i>Ethno-religious group – High-caste Hindu</i>	<i>0.541</i>	<i>0.499</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>
Low-caste Hindu	0.079	0.270	0	1
Hill Tibeto-Burmese	0.118	0.322	0	1
Terai Tibeto-Burmese	0.185	0.389	0	1
Newar	0.077	0.267	0	1
Age at marriage	22.549	3.869	15	36
Own <i>bari</i> land	0.642	0.480	0	1
Own <i>khet</i> land	0.662	0.473	0	1
Years of education	7.174	3.154	0	14
Individual religious salience	2.392	0.544	1	3
Average household salience	2.588	0.389	1	3
Average neighborhood salience	2.553	0.151	2.143	2.933

Note: Reference categories shown in *italics*.

Analytic Strategy

I use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression in these analyses.¹ A description of the OLS regression models, and how they will progress, can be found in [Table 2](#).

In the first model, I consider the relationship between the dependent variable and the control variables – gender, ethno-religious group, age at marriage, and land ownership – as well as the education variable – highest level of education completed. The second model includes all variables from the first model as well as individual religious salience. The third model considers the control variables, years of education, and average household religious salience. In the fourth model, I consider the control variables, years of education, and average neighborhood religious salience. Model five includes the control variables, years of education, and measures of religious salience at all three levels – individual, household, and neighborhood.

My remaining models each include the effect of an interaction term, and are shown in [Table 3](#). The sixth model includes the control variables, years of education, all three measures of salience, and an interaction between individual religious salience and years of education. The seventh model considers the control variables, years of education, individual, household, and neighborhood salience, and interactions between average household religious salience and years of education. My final model includes the control variables, years of

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Results.

Variable	Model 1 Control	Model 2 Individual Salience	Model 3 Household Salience	Model 4 Neighborhood Salience	Model 5 Full Salience
Female	1.278*** (0.128)	1.290*** (0.127)	1.291*** (0.128)	1.285*** (0.129)	1.300*** (0.128)
Low-caste Hindu	0.028 (0.217)	0.022 (0.218)	0.007 (0.222)	0.004 (0.225)	0.002 (0.227)
Hill Tibeto-Burmese	0.840*** (0.198)	0.837*** (0.195)	0.824*** (0.197)	0.834*** (0.198)	0.825*** (0.195)
Terai Tibeto-Burmese	0.910*** (0.162)	0.927*** (0.163)	0.908*** (0.160)	0.935*** (0.156)	0.930*** (0.161)
Newar	0.381 (.199)	0.407* (0.201)	0.382 (0.201)	0.382 (0.201)	0.405 (0.207)
Age at marriage	0.031 (0.016)	0.036* (0.016)	0.033* (0.016)	0.032* (0.016)	0.037* (0.016)
Own <i>bari</i> land	0.102 (0.118)	0.087 (0.121)	0.097 (0.117)	0.096 (0.116)	0.085 (0.120)
Own <i>khet</i> land	0.174 (0.128)	0.195 (0.129)	0.163 (0.129)	0.168 (0.130)	0.165 (0.130)
Years of education	0.010 (0.023)	0.011 (0.022)	0.013 (0.023)	0.011 (0.023)	0.014 (0.023)
Individual religious salience		0.195 (0.117)			0.177 (0.119)
Average household salience			0.180 (0.149)		0.126 (0.174)
Average neighborhood salience				0.338 (0.403)	0.080 (0.476)
Constant	2.989*** (0.385)	3.552*** (0.512)	3.509*** (0.621)	3.859*** (1.157)	4.073*** (1.174)
<i>N</i>	620	620	620	620	620
<i>R</i> ²	0.214	0.218	0.216	0.215	0.219

Note: **p* < 0.05, ****p* < 0.001.

education, all three levels of religious salience, and an interaction between average neighborhood salience and years of education.

Because the CVFS contains data from individuals, neighborhoods, and households, I account for the non-independence of observations at the neighborhood level by using the cluster option in Stata. By accounting for non-independence, I avoid underestimating standard errors and thus avoid overestimating the significance of my coefficients.

Table 3. Regression Results with Interaction Terms.

Variable	Model 6 Education × Individual Salience	Model 7 Education × Household Salience	Model 8 Education × Neighborhood Salience
Female	1.297*** (0.127)	1.289*** (0.128)	1.265*** (0.130)
Low-caste Hindu	0.003 (0.226)	0.001 (0.228)	0.001 (0.231)
Hill Tibeto-Burmese	0.825*** (0.196)	0.817*** (0.196)	0.794*** (0.195)
Terai Tibeto-Burmese	0.930*** (0.162)	0.938*** (0.160)	0.965*** (0.156)
Newar	0.405 (0.207)	0.397 (0.205)	0.391 (0.206)
Age at marriage	0.036* (0.016)	0.036* (0.016)	0.033* (0.016)
Own <i>bari</i> land	0.084 (0.120)	0.084 (0.119)	0.070 (0.121)
Own <i>khet</i> land	0.165 (0.130)	0.175 (0.129)	0.165 (0.128)
Years of education	0.001 (0.074)	0.132 (0.138)	0.776** (0.287)
Individual religious salience	0.140 (0.234)	0.176 (0.119)	0.173 (0.118)
Average household salience	0.126 (0.173)	0.456 (0.410)	0.126 (0.174)
Average neighborhood salience	0.080 (0.477)	0.087 (0.477)	2.266* (0.972)
Interaction – Education × Individual salience	0.001 (0.030)		
Interaction – Education × Household salience		0.046 (0.052)	
Interaction – Education × Neighborhood salience			0.297** (0.111)
Constant	3.983*** (1.259)	4.951*** (1.546)	9.641*** (2.516)
<i>N</i>	620	620	620
<i>R</i> ²	0.219	0.220	0.226

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

RESULTS

First, I present the results for the OLS regression model including control variables. In this model, the variables representing women, the Hill Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group, and the Terai Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group are associated with higher levels of individual choice. Women have 1.28 categories more individual involvement in spousal choice than men. Members of the Hill Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group have 0.84 categories more spousal choice than high-caste Hindus, and members of the Terai Tibeto-Burmese group have 0.91 categories more involvement. These results, and the results of all subsequent models, are reported in [Table 2](#).

Next, I examine the relationship between individual religious salience and the degree of individual involvement in spousal choice. Similar to the control model, women, Hill Tibeto-Burmese, and Terai Tibeto-Burmese have greater individual involvement in spousal choice. Two new control variables, the respondent's age at the time of marriage and membership in the Newar ethnic group, become statistically significant in this model. A one-year increase in age is associated with a 0.04 category decrease in individual involvement in spousal choice. In this model, Newars have 0.41 categories more individual choice than high-caste Hindus; however, this is the only model in which Newar ethnicity is significantly different from the reference group. Individuals' religious salience, the variable of interest in this model, does not have a statistically significant effect on the degree of individual involvement in spousal choice.

The third model considers the effect of average household religious salience on respondent spousal choice. In this model, the control variables representing women, Hill Tibeto-Burmese, Terai Tibeto-Burmese, and age at marriage continue to be significant in the same manner as before. Household religious salience, however, does not appear to be significantly related to an individual's degree of participation in spousal choice.

The fourth model examines the effect of average neighborhood religious salience on spousal choice. As in the previous models, the indicator variables for women, Hill Tibeto-Burmese, Terai Tibeto-Burmese, and age at marriage are statistically significant. Average neighborhood religious salience, the variable of interest in this model, is not shown to have a statistically significant relationship with participation in spousal choice.

In the fifth model, which includes individual religious salience, average household religious salience, and average neighborhood religious salience, the previously predictive control variables continue to be statistically significant. These include variables for women, Hill Tibeto-Burmese, Terai Tibeto-Burmese, and respondent age at marriage. None of the measures of religious salience had a statistically significant relationship with participation in spousal choice in this model.

In order to better understand the interplay between education and religious salience, I specified models with interaction terms for education and each level of religious salience, individual, household, and neighborhood. These models were otherwise similar to the fifth model, in that they contained all control variables and all levels of religious salience. In order to better understand the results of these models, I also calculated predicted y -values.

I do not report predicted y -values for models focused on the interactions between individual religious salience and years of education or average household religious salience and respondent's years of education, as these interactions are not related to participation in spousal choice in a statistically significant manner. However, in a regression model examining the interaction between respondent's years of education and average neighborhood religious salience, education, neighborhood salience, and the interaction term are all statistically significant. In this model, the control variables for female, Hill Tibeto-Burmese, Terai Tibeto-Burmese, and respondent age at marriage were all still significant, in the same directions as previously. To understand the relationships between spousal choice, average neighborhood religious salience, and respondent's years of education, I estimated predicted y -values using the following equation, taken from the results² of Model 8 in Table 3:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{\text{SpousalChoice}} = & 1.26x_{\text{Female}} - .01x_{\text{LowCasteHindu}} + .79x_{\text{HillTibetoBurmese}} \\ & + .96x_{\text{TeraiTibetoBurmese}} + .39x_{\text{Newar}} - .03x_{\text{AgeAtMarriage}} \\ & + .07x_{\text{OwnBariLand}} - .16x_{\text{OwnKhetLand}} - .78x_{\text{YearsOfEducation}} \\ & - .17x_{\text{IndividualSalience}} - .13x_{\text{HouseholdSalience}} - 2.27x_{\text{NeighborhoodSalience}} \\ & + .30x_{\text{YearsOfEducation*NeighborhoodSalience}} + 9.64 \end{aligned}$$

Fig. 2 shows the predicted level of spousal choice for people with different amounts of education living in neighborhoods with different average levels of religious salience. To calculate the predicted y -values, I assigned medium, low, and high values to years of education and average neighborhood religious salience, corresponding to the mean value, one standard deviation below the mean, and one standard deviation above, respectively. The value of the interaction term is always the product of the other two assigned values. All other variables were set to their mean values for these calculations. In Fig. 2, one can see that both the magnitude and the direction of the effect of each variable depend on the value of the other.

The effect of the average religious salience of the other residents of the neighborhood on the respondent's own spousal choice depends heavily on the respondent's level of education. For individuals with comparatively less education, the effect of increasing neighborhood salience is to *decrease* individual influence on spousal choice (making an *arranged* marriage more likely.) However, for individuals with comparatively more education, the effect of

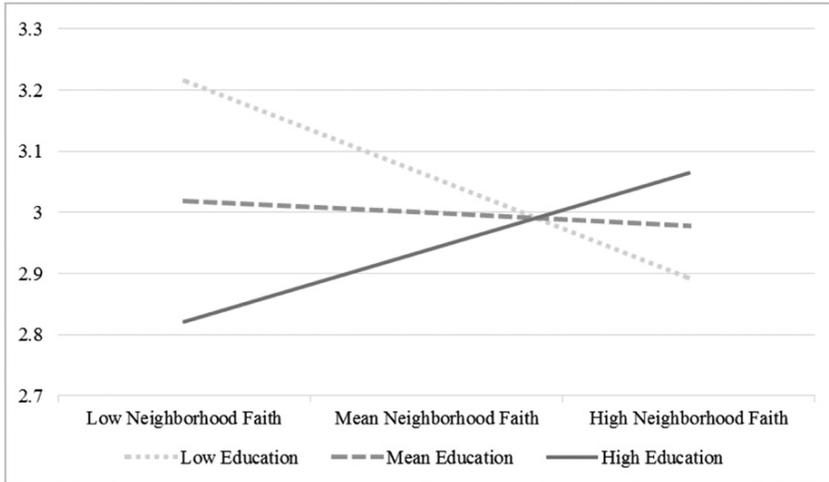


Fig. 2. Predicted Level of Spousal Choice.

increasing neighborhood salience is to *increase* individual choice (making a *love* marriage more likely). For a respondent with low education, the predicted value of spousal choice declines from 3.22 in lower salience neighborhoods to 2.89 in neighborhoods with comparatively higher levels of average salience of religious faith. For respondents with high education, the predicted value of spousal choice increases from 2.82 in neighborhoods with low average religious salience to 3.06 in higher salience neighborhoods.

The effect of the respondent’s education on spousal choice is also dependent on the average religious salience of respondent’s neighborhood’s other inhabitants. In neighborhoods with comparatively low salience of faith, relatively less-educated respondents exercise *more* individual influence over spousal choice than do respondents with higher education, and the effect of increasing education is a reduction in individual choice. In neighborhoods with higher average religious salience, this trend is reversed, and the effect of increasing education is to make a love marriage more likely. In such neighborhoods, respondents with low education experience *less* individual influence than respondents with more education do.

Overall, these models illustrate that gender, ethno-religious group, and age are consistently strong predictors of a respondent’s participation in spousal choice. Being female and being from either a Hill Tibeto-Burmese or a Terai Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group all increase a respondent’s likelihood of having a “love” marriage, or having more participation in the selection of their spouse. Being older at the time of marriage, on the other hand, increases a respondent’s

likelihood of having an arranged marriage, or having parents or other relatives play a more influential role in their spousal selection process. Years of education and average neighborhood religious salience are also related to an individual's level of participation in his or her spousal choice, but each of these effects is moderated by the other.

DISCUSSION

The results of these analyses indicate that factors that have long been influential in Nepali society continue to influence the spousal selection process for individuals living in the Chitwan Valley between 1996 and 2008. Nepali society has long been stratified on the basis of gender, ethno-religious group, and age, and these results indicate that those factors continue to be important in determining the amount of participation an individual will have in selecting his or her spouse. This is consistent with previous analyses of Hill Tibeto-Burmese and Terai Tibeto-Burmese groups, who have not always traditionally practiced Hinduism and may not be as strongly tied to its prescriptions regarding marriage, such as parental selection of an individual's spouse. The finding regarding gender is similarly not unexpected. As Nepal is traditionally patrilocal, meaning that a heterosexual couple will live with the man's family after marriage, men may want more participation by parents or relatives in their choice of spouse in order to ensure a comfortable living situation after marriage.

With respect to the family mode of social organization theory, these analyses indicate that the family, another institution that has historically been important for organizing and shaping Nepali lives, continues to be relevant with respect to spousal choice. Of the individuals who married in Chitwan between 1996 and 2008, about a third married a spouse selected entirely by parents or other relatives, about a third had a spousal selection that involved both the individual and relatives, and about a third entered "love" marriages where spousal selection did not involve relatives at all. The lack of a significant influence from household religious salience is not a reason to dismiss the importance of the family/household in this context. Instead, these results suggest that households can influence spousal choice by influencing religious salience at the neighborhood level. Families select the neighborhoods in which they will live, thus helping to determine the religious milieu that family members will be exposed to. However, independent of this influence, household religious salience seems to have no effect.

The interaction between respondent's years of education and average neighborhood salience indicates that the effect of average neighborhood salience operates differently for respondents with comparatively lower versus comparatively higher levels of education. For individuals with relatively low levels of education, average neighborhood religious salience operates in a manner that

the religious ecology/moral communities thesis would suggest. Individuals with fewer years of education living in neighborhoods with lower levels of average religious salience are more likely to exert individual choice in selecting a spouse, or have a “love” marriage. However, individuals with fewer years of education living in neighborhoods with higher levels of average religious salience are more likely to have their spouse chosen by parents or other relatives, or have an “arranged” marriage. The magnitude of this effect is a roughly half-category increase in the amount of individual choice exerted by respondents with lower levels of education living in less-religious neighborhoods versus those in neighborhoods with higher average religious salience. The moral communities thesis, taken in concert with observations about neighborhood gossip made by other Nepal researchers, suggests a possible mechanism for this. In more-religious neighborhoods, individuals may need to expend more effort to maintain respectability, thus adhering to tradition by having marriages that are largely arranged by parents or other relatives. In neighborhoods with lower levels of average religious salience, individuals may have less need to free themselves from neighborhood gossip, and are thus able to exert more agency in selecting a marriage partner.

For respondents who have achieved relatively high levels of education, on the other hand, the magnitude of the effect of neighborhood salience is considerably reduced. The effect of average neighborhood religious salience on the spousal choices of more-educated individuals is about half that of the effect on less-educated respondents. This is consistent with the expected effects that increasing years of education will have on Nepali individuals. Previous research has noted that education serves to move Nepalis outside the sphere of their families, providing them with both tangible benefits such as increased career paths, earning potential, and opportunities to meet new people, and with more abstract advantages such as new ideas, the ability to craft new identities, and an increased sense of agency. These results indicate that in addition to impacting the family mode of social organization in Nepal, education may also have ramifications for the neighborhood mode of social organization. As Nepalis become educated, they not only move out of the sphere of influence of their families, as has been discussed in previous research, but also away from being influenced by their neighborhoods. Similarly, as higher education provides its recipients with higher levels of status, this status may protect educated individuals from having their reputations damaged by having a love marriage.

I theorize that increasing years of education may lead to Nepalis becoming less concerned with maintaining respectability according to the religious “moral communities” in which they live. The new ideas and sense of agency that pull individuals outside the sphere of their families may also lead them away from their neighbors’ influence. In addition, in Nepal, increasing years of education leads to increasing levels of status. Individuals can achieve higher status simply by having attended school, but also through the potential employment, earnings, and connections that they may attain as a result. As Nepalis develop

higher status through education, this may inoculate them somewhat from the threat of being perceived as “unrespectable” by having a love marriage.

Whether or not Nepalis “enjoy the heat of a log” with respect to choosing a spouse depends both on their individual characteristics and on the nature of the hearth where the “log” is located. Understanding of this issue would benefit from further research examining how education confers status in the Nepali context. A better understanding of status would allow us to understand how higher educational attainment might serve to free individuals from the demands that their “moral communities” place on them.

With respect to years of education and religious salience (at all levels), these results suggest the need to consider factors that are typically viewed as either “modern” or “traditional” in a more sophisticated and complex manner. These elements of life do not simply pull individuals toward the traditional or the modern but influence social lives in a complex and intertwined way. This is in keeping with Malhotra and Tsui’s (1996) observations that “social change is not a linear shift from traditional to modern but a complex interaction...in many Asian societies, traditional as well as modern ideas and motivations for marriage processes tend to coexist” (p. 477).

NOTES

1. Because my dependent variable is categorical, I also tested my models using ordered logistic regression. My findings are robust – the results of each model are substantively identical across both types of regression. I present the OLS results here due to the greater ease of interpretation in discussing increases in the value of the dependent variable as compared to increases in the odds of a respondent being in a higher category of the dependent variable.

2. Although I have rounded the coefficients in the equation presented here, my calculations are based on the unrounded coefficients from my Stata output. Likewise, the variable means I used in my calculations are directly from Stata, rather than the rounded figures seen in Table 1.

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