The Influence of Developmental Idealism on Marriage:

Evidence from Nepal

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Abstract

We hypothesize that 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 marriage has been influenced by these ideas of development in Nepal, a country that has historically practiced young age at marriage, arranged marriage, taboos against intercaste marriage, polygamy, and almost no divorce as recently as the 1950s. Using qualitative and quantitative data from recent face-to-face interviews, we demonstrate that large fractions of Nepalis now endorse marriage behavior similar to that found in the West. The evidence suggested that preferred age at marriage has risen, tolerance for intercaste marriage has increased, divorce has become more permissible, young people are more likely to be involved in their spousal choice, and polygamy has greatly decreased. Further analyses examine potential mechanisms, such as education and media exposure, behind this recent change.

Introduction and Theoretical Motivations

This paper is motivated by the hypothesis that developmental ideas and models, specifically those concerning family life, have been disseminated widely around the world where they have become forces for both 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, the importance of modernity, and the necessity of development for the collective human good, with arguments for these ideas becoming increasingly pervasive around the world in the past century, so much so that the idea of development has recently been described as a central element of world culture (Meyer et al.1997). For example, the world's preeminent body, the United Nations, includes in the Preamble of its Charter the goal "to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples."[1] We believe that these notions of progress, modernity, and development originated in Western countries and in the past several centuries have spread to non-Western societies around the world, having a substantial influence on people everywhere, both through changing infrastructure and through changes in 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* reality and a model *for* reality. As models *of* reality, ideational frameworks provide perspectives for viewing and understanding the world. They provide classification systems for describing the world, models for interpreting both variation and change in human behavior and relationships,

[1] The United Nations Charter can be found on the following website: http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/.

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 Gordon 1994; Manuel 1962; Sanderson 1990; Harris 1968; Carniero 1973; Berkhofer 1978; 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 and often contracted at a young age. These societies also had considerable authority in the hands of parents and the elders, arranged marriages, and little opportunity for affection before marriage. With the developmental paradigm and the method of reading history sideways it was easy for generations of scholars to conclude 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.[2]

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. 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 extend to multiple arenas such as politics and economics, we note four that we suggest have been extremely powerful

[2] 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.

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 the aspects of family identified by generations of earlier scholars as modern, including the existence of many nonfamily institutions, individualism, 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; Wallerstein 1979, 1991; Thornton 2001, 2005).

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 changing a broad array of family structures and relationships, including childbearing, parent-child relationships, marriage, living arrangements, and relationships between wives and husbands. The spread and acceptance of developmental idealism gives people in non-Western populations a choice between two different and conflicting family models—the indigenous system received from the ancestors and the modern family valorized by developmental idealism. With the acceptance of developmental idealism, indigenous family systems in non-Western families are decried as traditional, are associated with a low standard of living and poor health, and are advertised as preventing economic progress. Simultaneously, developmental idealism associates its modern family with health, wealth, and progress and as something to be desired both in itself and as a means to socioeconomic development.

There have been many very dramatic changes in non-Western marriage and family behavior in recent decades. Particularly important have been changes from arranged marriages to love matches, from a young age at marriage to an older age 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. Although these numerous family changes have many potential causes, we only note here that they have generally been in the direction specified by developmental idealism and can probably be attributed at least in part to the spread of developmental idealism.

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 in Nepal, we recognize that such a goal is beyond the limits of current data and methods. Consequently, we embark on the more restrictive, although still ambitious, task of providing empirical evidence that, while not definitive, provides extensive support for the importance of developmental idealism on 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, historical 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; endogenous marriage within castes; restrictions on widow remarriage; polygamy; and non-existent divorce (Macfarlane 1976; Maskey 1996; Vaidya, Manandhar and Joshi 1993; Rijal 2003; Stone 1978).

Furthermore, Nepal was isolated from the West until the 1950s, meaning that 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 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). We will also discuss new mechanisms for the dissemination of those developmental ideas that have an effect on family life in Nepal.

We then present new survey data collected in 2003, in an hour-long, face-to-face interview in Chitwan Valley demonstrating 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 them endorse several dimensions of Western marriage patterns rather than the indigenous Nepali pattern, supporting our belief that Nepalis today have marriage attitudes and values that are, in many ways, quite different from what they would have had in the past. However, the data also suggest that a large fraction of people still endorse many aspects of the indigenous Nepali marriage system, with some aspects of Western marriage being more accepted than others.

We will also use the survey data to examine differentials in endorsement of marriage patterns associated with the West. If there have been trends in marriage attitudes and values, as we expect, and if those changes have occurred at least partially through cohort replacement, we would expect that younger Nepalis will give answers more consistent with the modern model than older Nepalis. We also expect that more educated Nepalis will more frequently endorse

marriage patterns identified as modern, as will Nepalis living close to urban areas. Similarly, we expect that media exposure will be associated with marriage ideals accepted as modern, as will exposure to salaried jobs. We hypothesize these patterns because, for example, increased education leads to a greater awareness of Western ideas, and we believe that these Western ideas can lead to an increased endorsement of Western marriage patterns. This same idea holds true for increased media exposure, nearness to a major city, and having a salaried job. These investigations are relevant because they let us see if the evidence is consistent with ideational influences, albeit without the allowance for a definitive rejection of other influences.

Unfortunately, our survey evidence comes from a single cross-section and does not permit the documentation of actual trends across time. In order to ameliorate, at least partially, this shortcoming, we conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups in which we addressed the nature of social change in Nepal. We will discuss the evidence from this qualitative data and will demonstrate that Nepalis widely believe that the attitudes and values concerning marriage have changed—and have done so recently and in the direction predicted by developmental idealism. We will also review others scholars' ethnographic and survey evidence demonstrating that Nepalis have considerable information about the world, including ideas of development, the ways in which development is distributed around the world, and the causal factors associated with development.

Changing Family Life in Nepal

Nepal is the only Hindu Kingdom in the world. Hinduism, the dominant religion and cultural form in Nepal, has provided for centuries very strict religious prescriptions for family life. For a Hindu, marriage was obligatory and sacramental. Hindu society has historically considered marriage to be more than just a simple bond between two individuals. Rather,

marriage was considered to be a bond between several families and a promise of continuity of the family line in Hindu society and, therefore, had 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 prohibited youth participation in spouse selection and the virginity of a girl was considered to be the most essential qualification for marriage, 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, while divorce, inter-caste marriage, and widow marriage, particularly by women, were strongly condemned, polygyny was well accepted (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 Vedas, are *dharma* (practice of religion), *praja* (procreation), and *rati* (sexual pleasure). It was of the utmost importance that a man should have a son to give him a funeral fire at his death and continue his family line. Consequently, contraception was considered to be a sin, and childlessness was not only socially condemned but also had severe negative cultural repercussions, particularly for women (Stone 1978). High fertility was heavily emphasized in religious blessings from the elders of the family to their young. For example, the blessing "*Dhan Jana Briddhirastu*", which means "*let there be an increase of wealth and family members*", explicitly made a large family an important goal in life.

However, Hinduism has not always been the dominant religion and culture in Nepal. Historically Nepalese society varied greatly by ethnicity in family patterns, customs, rituals, values, norms, and behaviors (Bista 1972; Macfarlane 1976; Majupuria and Majupuria 1989).

Many non-Hindus married at much older ages than Hindus, did not stress marital virginity as a virtue, practiced endogamy and polyandry in their marriage, and bestowed upon youths full opportunity to choose their own spouse (Goldstein 1975; Macfarlane 1976; Shrestha & Singh 1987; Smith 1973). There were also no social sanctions on premarital sex or divorce, and remarriages and widow marriages were quite common (Bista 1972; Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon 1980; Macfarlane 1976; Shrestha & Singh 1987). Non-Hindus also experienced first births at older ages and extended families were more common when compared to high caste Hindus (Bista 1972; Macfarlane 1976). However, Indo-Aryan Hindus, who came to Nepal from India in several waves during the 14th century, seized political power and persuaded non-Hindus to follow their religion. Hinduism became a dominant religion and effectively modeled the family patterns, customs, rituals, values, norms, and behaviors around Hindu ideology (Banerjee 1984; Berreman 1972; Hofer 1979; Majupuria and Majupuria 1989). Thereafter, many non-Hindus and low-caste Hindus began to aspire to Hindu high caste status by imitating high-caste Hindu family patterns, customs, rituals, culture, and behaviors (Dastider 1995; Hofer 1979; Gurung 1988; 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. Individual choice marriage including inter-caste marriage, late marriage, and divorce, to some extent, are occurring more commonly than ever before (Acharya 1998; Ahearn 2001; Dahal and Fricke 1998; Dahal, Fricke and Lama 1996; 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 (Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (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 forthcoming). 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). Similarly, trends are also found in age at childbearing, number of children ever born, and contraceptive use (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). Consequently, family and fertility decisions that were once considered to be far too important to be left to young people have increasingly transferred to the hands of young people.

Mechanisms for Dissemination of Developmental Idealism

We theorize that there are many mechanisms for spreading developmental idealism in Nepal. The Nepalese government itself is arguably one of the largest such means for operationalizing developmental ideas. In the 1950s, the government began a planned development process, with a new set of goals every five years. Accelerating the rate of socioeconomic development and lowering the rate of population growth have been the main goals in each successive development plans 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 contributes to the process.

Nepal's eighth *Development Plan* (1992-1997) emphasizes the reduction in population growth, protection and conservation of environmental resources and acceleration of economic

growth as primary goals of the government. The specific population targets up to year 2000 have been set as follows: 1) reduction of the total fertility rate from 5.8 in 1992 to 4.0 per woman by year 2000; 2) increase of the contraceptive prevalence rate in married women of reproductive age from 23% in 1992 to 38 % by 2000; 3) raising of the life expectancy from 54.4 years in 1992 to 65 years by 2000; 4) decreasing the infant mortality rate from 102 per 1,000 live births to 50 infants deaths per 1,000 live births by the year 2000; and finally 5) reduction of the maternal mortality rate from 8.5 maternal deaths per 1,000 live births in 1992 to 4 maternal deaths per 1,000 live births by the year 2000 (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 with the first development plan, Nepal has made tremendous change in several socioeconomic fields such as education, science based allopathic health services, transportation, communication, and media technology. For example, a formal public education system modeled after that in the West had not existed in Nepal before the 1950s (Sharma 1972). For many centuries schooling was limited to Gurukul, Sanskrit schools, and monasteries which used religious instruction to achieve their main goal of training priests.[3] Since 1954, Nepal has made significant changes in the education sector. As a result, there has been a rapid increase in the number of schools and the literacy rate, the proportion of people attending school, the number of people employed outside the home, and in the interaction with the outside world through exposure to media and travel outside Nepal

[3] Gurukul/Guru Ashram is residential tutoring at a tutor's resident as an intern.

(Beutel and Axinn 2002; Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) 1995, 2002; Sharma 1994). For example, the literacy rate for women, which was less than 1% in the 1950s, increased to 50% by the year 2001 (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS] 2001). Similar trends are common in media, transportation, communication, business and commerce. There has also been a rapid increase in the number of people visiting Nepal as diplomats, advisors, and tourists. Tourism has been an especially important source of new ideas and income not only to the people who live in the major cities of Nepal but also to the people in the remotest parts of the country.

Attitudes about Marriage

We now turn to our discussion of the new survey evidence obtained in a 2003 Nepal data collection. As we discussed earlier in this paper, we believe that the influence of developmental idealism translates into increased endorsement of certain Western family patterns and rejection of historical Nepali ones. To examine the extent of endorsement of Western ideas, we collected data on a number of attitudes regarding marriage.

Survey Setting and Data

The developmental paradigm and developmental idealism are very complex concepts, which led us to use a multi-method approach in our study. One of the coauthors of this paper, who is also a Nepalese citizen and a long time resident of Chitwan spent several weeks in the study area holding informal discussions with people in Chitwan. The insights he gained from those informal discussions in individuals' back yards, teashops, and chautars (resting places) during early morning and evening hours were crucial to guide our other investigations. In addition, the input from a dozen local research staff representing all the major ethnicities residing in the valley were invaluable in shaping our study.

Guided by the insights we gained from the informal discussions we conducted a total of 12 in-depth interviews of 2-4 hours length with individuals representing different ethnic groups, genders and ages. Although these interviews were unstructured and informal, they were focused on the issues of developmental idealism and family life. In addition, because these in-depth interviews were conducted on an individual basis, it was possible to probe and clarify several issues that were ambiguous during informal discussions in larger groups.

Similarly, we conducted ten focus groups concerning developmental models, with five groups consisting of women, four groups consisting of men, and one group including both women and men. Each of the groups of women and men individually consisted of one major ethnic group in the valley: Hill Tibeto-Burmese, Terai Tibeto-Burmese, High Caste Hindus, and Low Caste Hindus. These individual ethnic group discussions were purposefully designed to understand the ethnic variations in conceptualizing developmental idealism and family life. These in-depth interviews and focus groups were very useful in providing information about the ways Nepalis think about development, families, socioeconomic structures, and causal relationships between families and socioeconomic change.

We used the information from our conceptual understanding of developmental models and the insights we gained from the in-depth interviews and focus groups to construct individual questionnaire items concerning attitudes about marriage. Following the construction of our initial survey questionnaire, we conducted two pretests with a modest number of respondents. Each pretest provided information about questions that were ambiguous or difficult to understand. This provided the necessary information to refine the questions, leading to the questionnaire that we used in our survey.

The survey was conducted with 537 people aged 17 and above living in the Western Chitwan Valley. These people were chosen using the following strategy. First, based on the distance from the primary urban center within the Chitwan Valley, the study area was divided into five distinct strata. Second, a sample of 2-4 neighborhoods, consisting of 4-25 households from each stratum, was selected. Finally, 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 five strata. These people were interviewed in face-to-face interviews in the Nepali language using paper and pencil format. Three respondents who could not be interviewed in Nepali were excluded from our analysis. The field period lasted for six weeks and resulted in a 97 percent response rate.

For each question about marriage, respondents could provide either an answer that developmental models define as *modern* or 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] 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.

Univariate Distributions

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

Table 1 provides the distributions of responses to questions about marriage.[5] The univariate distributions provide a pattern that shows those portions of the modern family of developmental idealism that are more acceptable to Nepalis. 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 endorsement of family behaviors that are very different from those observed in the past is remarkable.

Looking more specifically at various aspects of marriage, we see that although polygamy has been historically a part of Nepali society, today nearly two-thirds agree that a man should not have multiple wives, that is, more than one wife at a time. Indeed, virtually 100% report that it is better to have one wife than multiple wives. That is, nearly 100% demonstrate a preference towards monogamy, 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.

The next set of questions asks 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 to marry within their own caste, they do not seem to regard it as a prescription in the way it has historically been considered. We found other evidence of this preference in the pre-tests for this questionnaire, wherein we included several

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

questions that were later excluded from the final questionnaire. We asked pre-test respondents about other attitudes concerning castes, for example: "Would you be very happy, somewhat happy, somewhat unhappy, or very unhappy to share food with a Sarki person?"[6] And, we asked respondents how they felt about their child marrying a Sarki. These questions 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 the data about intercaste marriage from the full study 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.

In the past, widow remarriage was forbidden among Hindus, and widows were even killed.[7] However, prior to our data collection period, our Nepali cultural expert advised us not to even ask respondents about whether widow suttee 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 suttee, 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.

As mentioned previously, young age at marriage, particularly for women, has also historically been very common in Nepal, but the distributions in Table 1 suggest that predilection is no longer true. Currently, three-quarters of respondents disagree with marriage occurring

[6] The Sarki caste is among the lowest castes in Nepal, generally comprised of shoe makers.
[7] *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).

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.[8] 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 1). 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 15 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.[9] 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.

Nepal also has a history of arranged marriage for both young men and young women. However, we expect to see a substantial endorsement of child involvement in the marriage process today. The distributions in Table 1 show that Nepalis today 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

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

[9] 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.

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 1 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.

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 unmarrieds. 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 quite a significant minority reporting 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 1 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 1, even substantial minority

agreement with ideas labeled modern likely represents a fundamental shift in Nepali family attitudes.

In addition to the attitudes about marriage detailed in Table 1, we also attempted to ask about several other family attitudes, with only limited success. In the pretests for this data collection, the questionnaire included several questions about premarital sex, such as "If Nepal were more educated, would young people having sex before marriage be more common, less common, or about the same?" Some pre-test respondents were offended by these questions and said that they would not participate in a survey that asked such questions. Thus, we decided that it would be unwise to include questions about premarital sex in the study because of concerns of alienation and possible refusals. We resorted to asking "Is it ok for a researcher to ask about the pre-marital sexual behavior of your neighbor's children?" and "Is it ok for a researcher to ask people about who they have sex with?" In the full survey, 62% responded that it was alright to ask about the sexual behavior of neighbor's children, and 60% responded that it was alright to ask people who they were having sex with. In other words, 40% of Nepali respondents thought that it was inappropriate to even ask about sex. The opposition we encountered to questions about premarital sex and intercaste relationships (mentioned earlier in this section) provide evidence that although there have been many family changes in recent years, certain attitudes have not undergone universal change.

Estimating Effects on Attitudes

The univariate distributions 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 developmental idealism labels as modern? To address this question, we created a series of models which include a variety of variables, some of

which we consider simply as controls, and some which we examine as substantively interesting predictors. We include gender as a standard control, and we include four dummy variables for caste, with "High-Caste Hindus" as the reference category.[10] We do not attempt to interpret the caste coefficients in our analyses for several reasons. First, with a sample size of only 537, of which half are high-caste Hindus, there is simply not enough variance available to analyze the coefficients with any significant degree of certainty. Second, statistical tests for differences in means between groups (High-Caste Hindus vs. all other castes) showed differences that are not generally very great—thus controlling simply controlling for caste is sufficient in this paper. And lastly, caste is an extremely complicated matter in Nepal, a discussion of which would necessitate an entirely separate paper. Thus, we will control for caste, but will not attempt to explain its predictions in this paper.

In addition to including caste and gender as controls in our analyses, we examine birth cohort, education, exposure to media, and distance from a large city. The birth cohort variable represents single years of birth from 1920 to 1986.[11] 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, of course, 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

[10] The four variables are Hill-Tibeto Burmese, Low-Caste Hindu, Newar, and Terai.
[11] 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.

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".[12] 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.[13]

Lastly, we expect education to impact 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

[12] 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.

[13] 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.

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 variables is education, which itself is expressed as two dummy variables (1-10 years education and 11+ years education), with "less than one year education" as the reference category. Its bivariate effect is shown in Equation A of Table 2. The first three odds ratios listed in Equation A (1.000, 0.812 and 2.155) are the estimated predictors of attitudes toward polygamy using education. 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 2 show that educated respondents generally endorse those ideas about marriage that we characterize as modern.[14] Many of these effects are very large. For example, respondents with eleven or more

[14] The reader will likely notice that the univariate analyses in Table 1 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.

years of education are twelve times more likely to agree that it is 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 3. For example, respondents with ten years of media exposure, compared to respondents with only one year of media exposure, are eight times more likely (8.29) to agree that intercaste marriage is not wrong.[15] And, a respondent with ten years of media exposure, compared to just 5 years of media exposure, is nearly twice as likely (1.98) to endorse love marriage.

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 4. For example, a person born in 1983 is nearly three times more likely (2.89) than a person born in 1953 to condemn marriage before first menstruation, and nearly twice as likely (1.87) to condone separation for arguing married couples.

Lastly, distance to Narayanghat (the largest city in Chitwan Valley), is also significantly associated with attitudes toward marriage, as demonstrated by Equation A of Table 5. 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

[15] The difference between 10 years of media exposure and 1 year of media exposure is "9 years". This number is calculated by ($1.265^9 = 8.29$), as the increase is not linear but rather exponentiated.

indeed operate as expected, demonstrating that increased distance from Narayanghat lessens the likelihood of endorsement of Western-like marriage patterns. For example, respondents who live 15 miles from Narayanghat, as opposed to 5 miles, are less than half as likely to report that widows should remarry (0.47). And, these same respondents are also less than half as likely to agree that arguing couples should divorce (0.47).

Caste also is associated with attitudes, but as mentioned earlier, will not be interpreted in this paper. And, we will only mention gender here by noting that women were generally less likely than men to endorse those attitudes developmental idealism characterizes as more modern.

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 1—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 2 through 5 demonstrate that many demographic 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 independent variables (education, media exposure, birth cohort, nearness to Narayanghat, caste, and gender). 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 slightly complicated, we have four separate tables—one for each predictor. Table 2, 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 3, which examine 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 4 and 5, which examine the effects of birth cohort and distance to Narayanghat, mirror the approach taken in Table 3.

Several patterns are apparent across Tables 2 through 5. First is the powerful influence of education that holds up throughout most of the analyses. As recorded in Equation A of Table 2 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 2 reveals that most of these education effects remain strong, although often decreased, even with 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 3 showed us, 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 3), 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 3 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 suggest 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 4). 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 4). In addition, including only the controls for education also reduce the observed effects of birth cohort substantially (Equation C of Table 4). 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 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 5 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 5). 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 5). 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.

Further Evidence of Developmental Idealism in Nepal

Thus far, we have discussed how Nepali marriage has changed, how attitudes have changed, and how socioeconomic conditions have changed. We have also argued that the cohort effect found in our survey data appears to indicate historic change. In this section of the paper, we provide evidence from other scholars which supports our argument that developmental thinking is widespread in Nepal, and that there have been many mechanisms for the proliferation of these ideas.

Widespread Evidence of Permeation of Developmental Ideas within Nepal

There is evidence to support our contention that developmental thinking has been disseminated widely in Nepal. The survey we reported in the previous section contained additional data about the respondents' understanding of developmental models—data that have been reported elsewhere (Thornton et al. 2004, 2005). These data indicate that most people are familiar with the ideas of development and use them extensively in their understanding of the world. Most ordinary people 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).

Furthermore, there is extensive ethnographic evidence that developmental thinking is widespread in Nepal (Ahearn 2001; Pigg 1992, 1996; Guneratne 2001). Nepalis frequently use the categories of traditional and modern to define social, family, and personal attributes and relationships. This use of developmental models and language is observed even in very remote parts of the country. In addition, many people in Nepal now believe that there is a causal connection between economic success and what they define as modern family life (Ahearn 2001).

Furthermore our own ethnographic work (focus group discussions and in-depth interviews) and the work of others in Chitwan provide support to our theory that ideas born out of developmental idealism are quite common, strongly held, and powerful in shaping the social relations among the residents of Chitwan. The interactions that residents of Chitwan have with the avenues of developmental idealism, which were uncommon in Chitwan just a few decades ago, have not only been important sources of these ideas but have also functioned as a framework to define the preexisting social relations in new ways that are consistent with the developmental idealism. Although we have a great deal of information collected during the focus group discussion and in-depth personal interviews, for the sake of brevity here we present below only one brief excerpt from our in-depth interviews:

> Interviewer: These days some people think that marriage practices in Chitwan are changing, do you think so?
>
> Respondent: (High Caste Hindu 58 year old Female)
> 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, may be seven or eight. My mother married at seven. There is 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." It is very difficult know why they say "no", is it because they do not want to marry or because they have some one they want to marry and can not tell the parent.
>
> Interviewer: Why do you think this has been happening?
>
> Respondent: Oh everyone knows. It's in the air now, every one wants to be married late, and with the person they know and love. I do not know from where it came but there is a new wind blowing, you know every kid goes to school these days. They read stories about these things, they go to movies and see the hero and heroine loving each other. Both boys and girls go to school, go to watch movies, sometimes they go to picnic and they get together. I think the first thing is that everyone wants to read a lot and be a big person, earn lots of money, so they do not stop going to school, then college and do not have time to marry. My own son married a girl like that. First I heard a rumor that my son and a girl from another village sat together in school and walked together, went to see a movie and picnicked. I asked my son but he told me there is nothing like that but accepted that they went to see a movie and picnicked together. Then after some time a relative of the girl come to visit me and told me that since their daughter and my son were getting together, they should get married soon. Then I asked my son and this time he said he liked her and we decided that he would marry the girl.

Mechanisms for the Spread of Developmental Ideas

Previous research, resulting in both ethnographic and quantitative data from Nepal, indicates a strong co-linearity between socioeconomic changes, the spread of new ideas and values, and changes in the marriage practices in the latter half of the 21st century, particularly after the 1950s. A large body of literature has documented the important influence of Nepalese interactions with these new avenues of ideas on both the prevalence and influence of these new ideas on the values and belief systems, views about social world, and ideas about family. For example, Pigg (1992, 1996) in her landmark work on interethic relations in "healing", 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 showed that even those

Nepalese 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.

Similarly, Ahearn (2001) in her decade long work in Western Nepal found important influences of schooling, both as a source of new ideas and a means of communication, on the youth of Junigau. Ahearn 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:

> Junigau 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).

Although he opposes the argument that globalization produces global culture, Guneratne (2001), an anthropologist who studies the "Tharus" (an indigenous group near Chitwan and near the bottom of the caste system) uses an example of ethnic hierarchy between Bhramins and Tharus in Chitwan, and argues that interaction with the global culture provides a framework used to reshape pre-existing systems of thoughts in new ways that are consistent with new ideas. He vividly presents how the interaction of these Tharu people with the outside world, that is represented by tourists, transforms the preexisting Hindu ideology of caste hierarchy into a model like that in the West. Guneratne argues that interactions between the tourist and the local resident of Chitwan have transformed the historical ethnic supremacy between Bhramins and 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. While the historical model of the Hindu caste hierarchy is embedded in their belief system, these Tharus strongly believe that this is because of their illiteracy, and a model of educated versus uneducated has now emerged.

One of Guneratne's Tharu informants, a well-to-do landowner but still at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, states this view below more precisely. The informant is arguing that education can trump the existing caste hierarchy. An inherently low-caste Tharu who has attained a high level of education will invariably be superior to an uneducated Brahmin (a high-Caste Hindu). This is a striking change from the past, where the caste system was the absolute power for ordering people within Nepali society.

> [Respondent] Our old people weren't educated. If you look at our old custom, it's our old people who made Bhramin into superiors [*Burāharulé uniharulāi thūlo banaéko*]. Those customs are being observed even today. But those who are educated, they don't share those views, they don't accept that [Bhramin] are superior [*hāmi bhandā thūlo chhā bhanerā māndainā*],
>
> [Interviewer] How can one *jāt* [caste] be superior to another?
>
> [Respondent] How can they be superior? They aren't [*Kaseri huné? Hudainā*]. All jat are equal. But when you take education into consideration, they appear *thūlo* and *sāno* (i.e. great and small].

In line with the recent superseding of education over caste discussed by Guneratne, we note here some surprising results from our recent survey data. As Brahmins are the most esteemed group in Nepal, we expected them to hold opinions different than other castes. Specifically, we expected them to hold more conservative, traditionally Nepali views toward marriage behaviors (Bista 1991). However, a contrasting hypothesis to Bista is that because Brahmins are also more likely to have more contact with the West through media exposure,

exposure to tourists, and education, they actually may be more likely to endorse Western marriage behavior.

We divided the sample into two subgroups, high-caste Hindus and non high-caste Hindus, to look for significant differences in means. After testing for statistically significant differences between the two groups, it was apparent that when significant differences were observed, it was high-caste Hindus who provided the more modern answers, and even when differences weren't significant, they still provided more modern answers to the majority of questions. This evidence contradicts the hypothesis of high-Caste Hindus having the least modern attitudes. Instead, it provides even more evidence to support the importance of education and how it can influence even the ideas held by those long regarded as the least modern as defined by developmental idealism.

Niraula (1994), in his study of marriage change in the central hills of Nepal, has also documented dramatic change in both the timing of marriage and marriage practices in Nepal. 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. However, he argues that the changes in marriage timing and marriage practices are brought by attitudinal changes which in turn are affected by the 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.

As we have argued earlier in the paper, we believe that the spread of developmental models, particularly developmental idealism, has dramatic implications for family change. It is likely that as these ideas have spread, they have become causal factors in facilitating change. However, it is too early to draw definite conclusions about the sources of these ideas in Nepal or about their implications for family change, and further data analysis will be required for answering those questions.

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, suttee 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.

A short fictional story will give an example of the long-term direct and indirect effects that education can have on Nepalis. The Nepali child who attends school for twelve years is exposed to more Western ideas through her textbooks and teachers than her counterpart who leaves school at age 10 to help his father in the fields. After finishing school, she obtains a relatively well-paying job in a neighborhood just one mile from Narayanghat, and with her salary can afford to buy a television and frequent the movie hall with her girlfriends, affording her the opportunity to perhaps meet a young man her age, and even one day enter into a love marriage. Her uneducated counterpart in the fields, however, will never have enough money to afford a television, rarely goes into Narayanghat or to a movie hall, and has little exposure to young women outside his small neighborhood. Eventually, his parents choose a young woman for him to marry, and they remain at his parents' house working in the fields, as may his eventual children.

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. This heretofore lack of overt opposition likely means that we can expect to see Nepalis marriage patterns continue to move toward those in western societies.

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Table 1
Percentage Giving More Modern[a] Answers to Questions Regarding Marriage

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

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

Table 2
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 (agree)	Better marrying own caste or different caste	Intercaste marriage not wrong (agree)	Widow should remarry (agree)	Marriage should be before first menstruation (disagree)	Ideal age at marriage (< 23 or >=23)	Better children or parents choose spouse	Love marriage is good (agree)	Married people happier than never married (disagree)	Accept child not marrying	Better divorce or unhappy marriage	Arguing couples should divorce (agree)
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 true for all analyses reported in this paper and shown in Tables 2 through 5.

Table 3
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 (agree)	Better marrying own caste or different caste	Intercaste marriage not wrong (agree)	Widow should remarry (agree)	Marriage should be before first menstruation (disagree)	Ideal age at marriage (< 23 or >=23)	Better children or parents choose spouse	Love marriage is good (agree)	Married people happier than never married (disagree)	Accept child not marrying	Better divorce or unhappy marriage	Arguing couples should divorce (agree)
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 4
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 (agree)	Better marrying own caste or different caste	Intercaste marriage not wrong (agree)	Widow should remarry (agree)	Marriage should be before first menstruation (disagree)	Ideal age at marriage (< 23 or >=23)	Better children or parents choose spouse	Love marriage is good (agree)	Married people happier than never married (disagree)	Accept child not marrying	Better divorce or unhappy marriage	Arguing couples should divorce (agree)
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]	0.988	1.013	1.010	0.986	1.018**	0.984	0.994	1.016**	1.022**	1.018***	0.999	1.002
Cohort												

* 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 5
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 (agree)	Better marrying own caste or different caste	Intercaste marriage not wrong (agree)	Widow should remarry (agree)	Marriage should be before first menstruation (disagree)	Ideal age at marriage (< 23 or >=23)	Better children or parents choose spouse	Love marriage is good (agree)	Married people happier than never married (disagree)	Accept child not marrying	Better divorce or unhappy marriage	Arguing couples should divorce (agree)
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]	0.974*	0.963	0.970*	0.964**	0.971	0.955***	1.023	1.017	0.944***	0.977	0.970*	0.990
Distance												

* 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)

Marriage, 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.