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Physical Versus Imagined Communities: Migration and Women's Autonomy in India

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ABSTRACT

India has about 400 million internal migrants (UNESCO, 2013). The proportion of permanent internal migrants in India has risen between 1983 and 2007–08, and much of this increase is attributed to female marriage migrants. However, there is limited literature analyzing the well-being of female marriage migrants in India. This paper seeks to examine whether women's autonomy in the public sphere is a function of: a) the geographical community where the woman resides, or b) imagined communities (the mindset of the communities to which the woman's family belongs), using multilevel mixed-effects logistic and ordered logistic regression. Analyzing data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS), 2012, for more than 34,000 ever-married women aged 15-49 years, the study finds that the communities of mind (norms about marriage migration in the caste/sub-caste to which the woman's family belongs) are more important than the physical communities to which the women have migrated, in relation to certain aspects of women's physical autonomy and autonomy to participate in civic activities. In contrast, a woman's economic autonomy is a function of both 'imagined' and 'physical' communities. Thus, the opportunities available to women who migrate for marriage are shaped by both geographical communities, and more importantly, by the norms in her community about marriage migration.

I. Introduction

The number of internal migrants in China was between 150 million and 440 million in 2011 (Chan, 2013), and in India, there are an estimated 400 million internal migrants (UNESCO, 2013). The total number of internal migrants in India and China is likely to be approximately three times the number of international migrants globally, and therefore, researchers have emphasized the importance of studying these internal migrants and examining the impact of migration on individuals (Rao and Finnoff, 2015). However, the nature of marriage migration in India is quite distinct from that in China (see, for example, Davin, 2007; Fan and Huang, 1998), an issue that has received relatively little attention.

Research on migration has been implicitly and often explicitly informed by male experiences (Hugo, 2000; Pedraza, 1991), leading to a focus on labor migration or distress-driven migration. Even when attempts are made to incorporate gender in the migration literature, this focus is often extended by examining the feminization of labor migration or the manner in which male labor migration affects women, either by encouraging tied migration or by influencing their lives in the absence of their partners (Desai and Banerji, 2008; Gulati, 1993; Menjivar and Agadjanian, 2007). Migration for marriage—a unique dimension of women's migration—has received attention only as a specialized phenomenon in the study of transnational migration (see Charsley and Shaw, 2006) with a focus on mail order brides (Kojima, 2001; Wang and Chang, 2002; Lu, 2006), or more recently, in studies of Internet brides.

The magnitude of women's internal migration for marriage can, however, be staggering. In India, in 2008, about 48 per cent of the females were migrants in rural areas as compared to only 5 per cent of male migrants. The corresponding rates of female and male migration for urban areas were 46 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively (National Sample Survey Organisation, 2010).

Moreover, this trend has been rising, possibly due to changes in the age structure. The National Sample Survey (NSS) data suggest that from 1983 to 2007–08, the proportion of permanent internal migrants as a percentage of the population of India had risen from 23 per cent to 29 per cent. About 87 per cent of this rise was due to an increasing percentage of female permanent migrants, particularly marriage migrants. In the same time frame, however, it has been seen that the percentage of women who migrated for economic reasons was low and decreased further from 2.6 per cent to 1.1 per cent. Moreover, data from the NSS shows that between 1993 and 2007–08, there was an increase in the incidence of marriage migration from 24.7 per cent to 43.5 per cent of the rural female population. These trends are supported by the Census data for 1991 and 2001. In urban areas, on the other hand, marriage migration for females increased from 12.1 per cent to 27.7 per cent between 1993 and 2007–08 (Rao and Finnoff, 2015). Rao and Finnoff (2015) posit that a rise in marriage migration is not necessarily a 'disguised economic migration of women'.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Figure 1 shows the reasons for migration for long-term female migrants using data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) (2004–05, 2011–12), where at least one member of the household was left behind to provide information about migration. It is important to note that these reasons for migration are fuzzy descriptions of the underlying processes. It can be seen that about 72 per cent of the female migration in India can be attributed to marriage, with marriage migration being most prevalent among women aged 25 years and below.

Marriage migration in India can be primarily attributed to various 'socio-cultural factors' (Kundu, 2009). Rao and Finnoff (2015) use data from the NSS to evaluate the socio-economic correlates of marriage migration between 1983 and 2008, and decompose this phenomenon by sector and distance of marriage. They find a greater likelihood of marriage migration occurring in households that have low per capita consumption. Their study also reports that urban inequality is an important determinant of female marriage migration.

While a few studies have examined female migration within India (Premi, 1980; Rosenzweig and Stark, 1989; Bhattacharya, 2000; Fulford, 2013), by and large, research on female migrants has been limited, mainly because most women report that they migrated because of marriage (Rao and Finnoff, 2015). However, as Fulford (2013) notes, the phenomenon of marriage migration has generally received little attention. The lack of attention to women's migration patterns is mostly due to a poor understanding of the issue of marriage migration, a gap that this paper seeks to fill.

Marriage-related migration in India is distinct from simple geographic mobility. It is caused by two forces: (1) in some castes and communities, all men in the natal village are considered to be relatives and there are strict prohibitions against the marriage of a woman within the same village; and, (2) where such prohibitions do not exist, women may still marry outside the village if it is difficult to find an appropriate match within the same village. Where marriage migration is part and parcel of the accepted kinship system, a complex web of social norms emerges that defines the relationship of a woman with her marital family and community. For example, in North Indian villages, the daughter of a village may leave her face uncovered, even if she is married, as her honor does not need protection against her actual or fictive natal kin. In contrast, a daughter-in-law must veil herself in her marital home.

These practices suggest that studies of marriage migration must distinguish between physical movement and the norms and social structures that evolve around the practice of marriage migration. In this paper, using data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) of 2011–12, for over 34,000 ever-married women aged 15-49 years, we examine the role of geographical movement vis-à-vis the social norms surrounding exogamous marriage practices in shaping indicators of women's autonomy in the public sphere.

We use the concepts of physical and imagined communities to distinguish between these two phenomena. The term 'physical communities' refers to the geographical locations of women, specifically whether they continue to live in the localities where they grew up. In contrast, the term 'imagined communities' refers to the behavioral and kinship norms that develop around the practice of exogamous marriages. The question that is addressed here is: How are different markers of women's physical, economic and civic autonomy affected by these two different dimensions of marriage migration?

We begin by discussing the concepts of physical and imagined communities, and explaining the gap filled by this paper by comparing the role of these types of communities in shaping certain dimensions of women's autonomy in the public sphere. The following section examines the existing literature on kinship patterns, marital choice, and women's agency. In the subsequent sections, we define our research questions, operationalize autonomy in the context of this study, describe the data and methods used, elaborate on the results, and conclude and place this study in the context of the existing literature.

II. Physical Communities: Shaped by Women's Migration

Although geographical location is the key concept around which migration studies are centered, the way in which physical location affects individuals covers a broad terrain while encompassing changes in resources, opportunities, social support networks, and social constraints. Even if gender is not taken into account, the impact of migration on individuals remains contested (Portes, 1997). While in some cases, migration may be associated with higher income earning opportunities, opportunities to absorb new ideas and cultures, and the ability to reshape identities in a way that escapes traditional social control, in others, it may be associated with isolation, discrimination, and the continued adherence to traditional values.

The issue of whether migration empowers women is fraught with even greater challenges since it adds an additional layer of segmentation—that of gender (Hugo, 2000). Boyd and Grieco (2003) emphasize the importance of understanding gender and especially gender-specific migration experiences, in the context of migration. An important question relates to examining how patriarchal norms are changed or renegotiated after migration. Another issue that emerges is how migration impacts interpersonal relations and power dynamics within the family. Literature on international migration indicates that migrants who go to advanced economies such as the US have access to better job opportunities in the destination country as compared to the country of their origin. However, it is observed that female migrants often work as low-skilled laborers and become the primary earners for their families (Luke and Munshi, 2011). This process has sometimes been reported as empowering for women and increases their decision-making ability in their households (Boserup, 1970; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). In other instances, it has been found that even if women make large financial

contributions to the household, migrant women continue to follow traditional beliefs and abide by their husbands' decisions (see, for example, Zhou, 1992; Menjivar, 1999; Kibria, 1993; Parrado and Flippen, 2005).

The high incidence of migration of women in India due to marriage results in an abrupt change in women's day-to-day lives. Nearly 95 per cent of the female respondents in the IHDS started out their married lives by living with their husbands' parents. When women move from their own village or town to their husbands' home towns, they are compelled to change both their residence and culture. While before marriage they are surrounded by uncles and cousins, post-marriage they are surrounded by strangers and may experience an even greater constraint in venturing out to unfamiliar places. Their social support networks are transformed from that of their childhood friends, sisters and aunts, to mothers-in-law and relatives of their husbands who subject the new brides to intense scrutiny, and are often critical of the latter's actions and behavior even while expecting considerable deference from them (Raheja and Gold, 1994). This brief review, therefore, suggests that migration, particularly for married women, may be associated with a substantial curtailment of their autonomy.

III. Imagined Communities: Rooted in Kinship Norms

Physical movement is distinct from social and behavioral norms that emerge in response to marriage patterns, which either prescribe or proscribe marriage within the natal community. Anthropologists have long recognized the subtle power dynamics embedded in marriage arrangements in India (Oberoi, 1998). Arranged marriages remain common in the Indian context, with nearly 95 per cent of the women reporting that their spousal choice was made solely by their parents or jointly by the parents and bride (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016; Andrist, Banerji, and Desai, 2013). Jejeebhoy, et al. (2013) reported that while marriages arranged by the parents are still the norm, there is wide regional variation between the northern and southern states. These findings are consistent with earlier studies in other developing countries (Heaton, Cammack, and Young, 2001; Pimentel, 2000; Xu and Whyte, 1990; Hamid, Stephenson, and Rubenson, 2011; Niraula and Morgan, 1996), in that women in marriages arranged by the family experienced less agency, and had a lower level of communication and interaction with their spouses as compared to their counterparts in self-arranged or semi-arranged marriages.

These marital choices are located within the well-defined norms of who is an acceptable marriage partner. Kinship patterns in India are bifurcated along the lines of who is considered an appropriate partner with the major distinction pertaining to communities in which marriages may be permitted within a village or those in which they are not (Karve, 1965). The northern kinship pattern is built on the assumption that every family in a village is related to each other, and that this consanguinity prohibits marriage within the natal village of the bride. In fact, villages are often divided along the lines of

bride-givers and bride-takers, with the families selecting brides from villages defined as bride-givers (for example, villages to the east) and marrying their daughters into villages defined as bride-takers (for example, villages to the west). In contrast, the southern kinship pattern is built around consanguineous marriages with women not only being permitted to marry within their own village but the preferred partner often being a maternal uncle or cross-cousin (Bittles, 1994).

Curiously, village exogamy persists even when a family moves to an urban area. Families continue to identify with their place of origin and proscribe marriage with a partner whose family originates from their own village or set of villages. This suggests that the complex kinship rules embodied in who is an eligible partner have acquired symbolic meaning above and beyond where the bride and the groom physically reside.

This reification of the geographical location of permissible brides and grooms shares many characteristics with Benedict Anderson's description of an imagined community (Anderson, 1983). When talking of the nation as a socially constructed community imagined by people who perceive themselves as a part of that community, Anderson notes:

> *"It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.* " (Anderson 1983, p. 49)

In traditional Indian society, a community is used to define a conglomerate of a particular caste or religious groups that are closely bounded and where belonging to that community confers both status and norms of appropriate behavior (Srinivas, 1996). The membership of these communities is shaped by rules defining appropriate marriage partners. This distinction in marriage and kinship patterns is not simply that of the acceptable geographical location of a potential bride and groom but spills over into an interrelated complex of how families define themselves vis-à-vis others, how inheritance patterns are shaped, and how the families of the bride and groom relate to each other (Bloch, Rao, and Desai, 2004).

IV. Kinship Patterns, Marital Arrangements and Women's Agency

Dyson and Moore (1983) noted the difference between endogamous and exogamous marriage systems as the key difference that shapes diversity in gender systems and demographic outcomes across India. Their seminal paper on female autonomy notes:

> *"In India, as in most other developing agrarian societies, kin relationships still constitute for the great majority of people the prime avenue of access to such scarce social resources as information, economic assistance, and political support. An individual's power, influence, and social ranking are often closely related to his or her ability to exploit kin linkages. Thus*

cultural practices—such as those of the north Indian system—that tend to constrain or erode the personal links between a married woman and her natal kin directly diminish the woman's autonomy. If, at the same time, norms of avoidance make it difficult for the woman to establish affective links within the household into which she marries, she is left socially almost powerless." (Dyson and Moore, 1983, p. 46)

A number of studies also report the prevalence of regional differences in kinship norms that dictate the amount of support a woman can expect from her natal family after marriage. In the north where patrilineal and exogamous marriages are prevalent, once women go to their husbands' homes, they are no longer expected to contribute to their natal family (nor can they expect support from them). In contrast, in the southern states where endogamous marriages are more common, women get greater support from their natal families (Chakraborty and Kim, 2010; Dasgupta, 2010). However, the literature on the relationship between regional location and women's autonomy is not uniformly consistent. While Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) find a strong divide between women's autonomy in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh and the southern state of Tamil Nadu, Rahman and Rao (2004) do not see this divide between women living in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. Thus, the strength of the relationship between marriage patterns and women's autonomy, after controlling for regional effects, remains an empirical question.

V. Research Questions

This brief review suggests that it is important to distinguish between the two aspects of marriage migration: the first shapes the woman's physical surroundings while the second shapes her normative framework. One of the challenges of studying the relationship between marriage migration, kinship patterns and women's autonomy lies in clearing the confusion between various levels of analysis. Migration and kinship patterns are not synonymous, nor are geographical locations and kinship patterns.

While there may be a normative preference for women to marry in the village or to marry a close relative in the southern kinship pattern, relatively few women seem to actually marry within the village even in South India; and even fewer actually marry close relatives. The preference for finding a groom within a closed community may be just that, a *preference*. This preference may be competing with the desire to find an educated groom, a groom closer to the bride's age, and perhaps one with a high income. Moreover, in urban areas, what is proscribed is not marrying off women within the same city but rather marrying someone from a family originating from the same ancestral village (Grover, 2018). Thus, a bride who grew up in Delhi may well marry a groom from Delhi as long as both their families do not originate from the same set of villages in Mathura district. Figure 2 maps the women's responses to the following two questions:

1. In your community (caste), in a family like yours, is it permissible to marry a daughter within her natal village? (Yes/No)

2. What was your childhood place of residence? (Same village or town as your current residence, another village, another town, a metro city)

The results show that about 12 per cent of the ever-married women belonging to a community wherein it is not permissible to marry a bride who shares a natal village with the groom, continue to live post-marriage in their childhood place of residence, while only 24 per cent of the couples belonging to communities in which within-village marriage is permissible actually grew up in the same village or town where they are currently living.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

If actual migration and kinship patterns are not perfectly aligned, geography and kinship patterns are even less correlated. For example, Muslims all around India are far more comfortable with consanguineous marriages, and hence, Muslim families in the North continue to practice endogamous marriages. Moreover, some of the areas at the junction of the North–South divide may belong either to castes or communities that follow exogamy or to those that do not (for example, in Gujarat and northern Karnataka) (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Fortunately, this lack of perfect correlation also provides us with a handle to statistically examine the relationship between women's own migrant status, the kinship system in which they were raised, and their autonomy.

This paper seeks to examine whether women's autonomy in the public sphere is a function of:

1. the geographical community where the woman resides; and
2. imagined communities or the mindset of the communities (caste or sub-caste) to which the woman's family belongs

VI. Defining Women's Autonomy

Research on women's empowerment notes the multidimensionality of gender (Desai and Andrist, 2010; Desai and Temsah, 2014; Malhotra, Schuler, and Boender, 2002; Mason, 1995; Narayan, 2006; Presser and Sen, 2000). A number of past studies have operationalized autonomy in terms of autonomy pertaining to household decision-making, physical autonomy, and economic autonomy (Jejeebhoy 2000; Koenig, et al., 2003; Rammohan and Johar, 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar, 2001).

In this paper, however, our focus is on those aspects of women's behavior that are in the public arena and that are most likely to be influenced by both the geographical and

imagined communities. Hence, we focus on the following three aspects of women's autonomy that are measured in the IHDS survey:

1. ***Physical autonomy***—Women in India often do not go out of the house alone but tend to be escorted by the husband, a female family member, or sometimes adolescent boys. In fact, in northern India, women are conspicuous by their absence in public areas. Families have various rationalizations for this such as the likelihood of assault or insult, lack of experience among the women in dealing with the external world, or preservation of family status. However, regardless of the reason, their inability to venture out to commonplace locations like the grocery store or a friend's home reduces women's physical autonomy.
2. ***Economic autonomy***—Women in India (and in South Asia, in general) have remarkably low labor force participation rates, and at least in India, these figures have either stagnated or declined a little instead of increasing over time (Desai, 2013). Even when women work, they often do so only on the family farm or in the family business. While this work also augments the overall household income and increases women's access to resources, it does not provide economic independence to women. Here we focus on women's wage work as a marker of their economic autonomy.
3. ***Autonomy in civic participation***—Increasingly women's civic participation in India has been rising. In this context, Self-help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as a particularly important force. Many of these SHGs are set up by development organizations, while others are set up with help from the government. As has been observed in Bangladesh, some of them have also been established as a part of the micro-credit movement in that country (Sanyal, 2014), wherein these have reportedly helped to empower women (Hashemi, Schuler, and Riley, 1996). Here, we explore women's participation in SHGs as a marker of their political, or more specifically, civic-participation autonomy.

These indicators have been chosen because they are hypothesized to be affected by both migrations at an individual level and exogamous kinship patterns at a community level. Women who grow up in a locality know it well enough to be comfortable while travelling in it, may have greater contacts to find wage work, and may have connections that lead them to participate in group activities. At the same time, the normative aspect of belonging to castes and religious communities that encourage within-village marriages may not have any direct effect on these variables via connections and knowledge but may have an ideational impact that may affect the families' willingness to allow women greater autonomy and women's own expectation of this autonomy. The North Indian kinship pattern of village exogamy rests on the notion that all women born and raised in a village are part of a common family while those raised outside are 'others', who may be treated differently. For example, while travelling through a village in the northern state of Haryana, when one sees two married women in their twenties walking through the village, one with her face covered with her sari and another whose face is not covered, it is quite reasonable to assume that the veiled woman is the wife of a local resident while the

unveiled woman is a daughter in a village household, who is visiting her pre-marital home (Chowdhry, 1993).

VII. Data and Methods

The present study uses data from the second round of the IHDS, a nationally representative panel data wherein the first round of the survey was conducted in 2004–05. The first round comprised a sample of 41,554 households spread across all the States and Union Territories of India (except for Andaman and Nicobar, and Lakshadweep Islands), covering 384 districts, 1503 villages, and 971 urban blocks. The second round of the survey, which was conducted in 2011–12, sought to re-interview each of the 41,554 households interviewed in 2004–05, as long as any of the members of the household lived in the same locality. In 2011–12, 83 per cent of the households that had been interviewed in 2004–05, in addition to split households in the village or city, were re-interviewed. Thus, during the second round of the survey, a total of 42,152 households were interviewed.

While the questionnaire on income and social capital was answered by the head of the household, who had the necessary information about the income and expenditure, and related matters of the household (often a man), ever-married women aged 15-49 years answered questions on health beliefs, gender relations, and marital and fertility history. The IHDS has, therefore, collected data on income, social capital, employment, gender relations, and prevalent community norms.

In 2011–12, 35,335 ever-married women aged 15–49 years were interviewed. The survey also contains 4,242 women above the age of 50, but they have been excluded for the present analysis due to the select nature of this sample as part of a panel design. The final sample for each analysis differs slightly due to the missing data that differs across different outcome variables, but in each case, the sample comprises over 34,000 cases.

Dependent Variables

We focus on the following three dependent variables:

1. ***Physical Autonomy***: In order to measure the physical autonomy of women, the present study poses questions on whether women can go out of the home without taking permission from senior members of the household or their husbands. Further, the women are asked questions on whether a woman can go alone to the local health center, the homes of relatives/friends in the neighborhood, and the *kirana* (grocery) shop, or travel a short distance alone by bus or train. An index for physical autonomy is created by adding these mobility variables. Each of these variables takes a value of 1 if a woman can go out alone and takes a value of 0 otherwise. The index takes a

value between 0 and 4, where 4 indicates that a woman has full autonomy to go out alone, and 0 indicates that she cannot go out alone anywhere without permission.

2. ***Economic Autonomy***: Women's economic autonomy is measured by whether the respondent undertook casual or regular employment that generated cash income during the year prior to the survey. Here we exclude work on the family farm or in family businesses because our focus is on women's independent work. Only women who worked for wages for at least 240 hours during the year preceding the survey are counted as being employed.
3. ***Civic Participation Autonomy***: The IHDS collected information on whether women participated in an SHG, a credit society, a women's association, or in a political organization. We focus on SHGs because these are the most development-oriented institutions in India while both women's associations and women's credit groups (when devoid of self-help aspects) are often more social in nature.

Independent Variables

We focus on the following two main independent variables associated with migration as discussed above:

1. Whether women grew up in the same village/town where they are currently residing; and
2. Whether women's community (caste or sub-caste) allows for marriage within the village.

Control Variables

Some of the important control variables used in the present study are the woman's age, education, and marital status, the number of household assets owned as a proxy for household wealth, family size, caste and religion, and place of residence.

VIII. Statistical Model

Our first outcome variable is the number of places that women can visit alone, reflecting that physical autonomy ranges from 0 to 4, and is estimated by using ordinal logistic regressions. The other two outcomes are binary variables, modelled via the logit function.

However, it is important to point out one caveat—all the outcomes that we are interested in are affected by the place of residence. It is not possible to join an SHG if one does not exist in the village or locality. Certain states have set up SHGs while others have not; some villages are close to urban areas and have more voluntary organizations than others (Desai, et al., 2010). Similarly, some villages are located near industries like brick

kilns or textile weaving centers that provide wage employment to women, while others offer few opportunities for work. This geographical clustering occurs at both the state and village levels. We model this clustering by locating individual women within the villages or urban blocks that are nestled within states and estimate hierarchical models using the Mixed Command in STATA, and include random intercepts for both the state of residence and the village/urban block of residence.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the variables used in this paper.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

IX. Results

For each dependent variable, we estimate three models. Model 1 includes only the variable indicating whether the respondent grew up in the same village or town as the place of current residence. Model 2 excludes the migration status for the respondent herself, but includes a variable showing whether her caste and community allows for marriage within the village. Model 3 includes both these variables. We also control for age, education, marital status, number of children, household size, number of assets owned by the household, and caste/religion in each of the three models.

In general, all the control variables operate in the direction that one would expect, with more educated and older women having greater autonomy than their peers. Women in metropolitan cities have greater autonomy than those in the least developed villages. However, it is noteworthy that household wealth is associated with less rather than more autonomy, but even this is not surprising given that certain studies have noted that poorer women often have more autonomy than richer women since they cannot afford the luxury of seclusion (Sharma, 1980). In each instance, the variance for the random intercept for state of residence and village/urban block are significantly different from zero, suggesting considerable heterogeneity in the outcomes across states and villages/blocks.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Physical Autonomy*:* Table 2 shows the results from the hierarchical ordinal logit. The results show that the difference between migrants and non-migrants is not statistically significant. However, the addition of community acceptance of endogamous (within-village) marriage has the significant effect of increasing women's physical autonomy. Moreover, when both variables are included in the model (Model 3), the effect of community norms and individual migration status does not vary, suggesting that the correlation between each of these factors and women's physical autonomy stems from different sources.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

***Economic Autonomy**:* Table 3 shows results from the hierarchical logit regressions for women's participation in wage work. Once again, random intercepts for both the state of residence and the village/urban block of residence are included. This table shows that both dimensions of migration—individual migration status and whether endogamy is permitted in the community—are statistically significant determinants of women's wage work. Once again, these appear to tap into very different dimensions of migration and controlling for one does not seem to substantially change the coefficient for the other.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

***Autonomy in Civic Participation**:* Results from the hierarchical logit regressions for women's participation in SHGs are shown in Table 4. The impact of two migration variables in this table is similar to that observed in Table 2 for women's physical autonomy. While belonging to a caste that allows endogamous marriages increases women's participation in civic activities, the same is not the case for women's own migration status. The difference between migrant and non-migrant women is not statistically significant.

X. Discussion

The results presented above provide an interesting picture of the way in which migration shapes or does not shape women's autonomy. The issue of whether the respondent is a migrant or whether she grew up in her current community is associated with her higher participation in wage labor but has no impact on women's physical autonomy or their autonomy to participate in civic activities. However, women who belong to communities which allow for marriage within their natal villages are far more likely to score higher on all the three dimensions of autonomy—physical autonomy, economic autonomy and civic participation.

These results take us directly to the question we began with: Is autonomy a function of women's own geographical community or is it defined by the communities of mind to which their families belong? Our results seem to suggest that the latter is far more important than the former. Long-time residence in a community may offer women greater knowledge about the community and the available infrastructure, and help them improve their social networks. Nonetheless, these are not sufficient to improve their autonomy. In contrast, marriage patterns that are oriented towards village endogamy develop norms and ideologies that permit far greater autonomy than those that are oriented towards village exogamy.

In communities where exogamy is pervasive, a social distance between young brides and their parents-in-law is developed, even encouraged, as a result of which women's autonomy is routinely curtailed. In contrast, in communities where village endogamy and close relative marriages are encouraged, young brides may be treated with greater

latitude, and their freedom of movement may be taken for granted. These changes do not take place in a single generation but evolve over a long time and become entrenched as a part of gender norms in a community, thus affecting both migrant and non-migrant brides. These results parallel the observations by Alaka Basu in her work on migrants from North India and South India living in New Delhi. She found that in spite of both groups being migrants and both living in the same slum, women from South India (where kinship patterns are governed by endogamy) experienced far greater autonomy than their peers from North India (Basu, 1992).

These results also make us reflect on, and explain to some extent, the conflicting results of existing studies on regional differences in women's autonomy in India. For example, we can reconcile to some extent, the divergent findings of Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) with those of Rahman and Rao (2004). The former study examines differences in women's autonomy and other aspects of gender empowerment between Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, and finds large differences; in contrast, the latter study examines the differences in similar outcomes between Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka, and finds relatively small differences. If village exogamy casts an overarching shadow over women's autonomy, the states with a lower degree of exogamy (and a greater degree of endogamy) may be more likely to have outcomes that are more favorable to women. Since only 46 per cent of the women in Karnataka come from communities where endogamy is permitted, as compared to a corresponding figure of 92 per cent in Tamil Nadu, it is not surprising that the contrast between Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu is sharper than that between Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka.

It is also important to note that personal migration status is not totally irrelevant, particularly when we examine participation in wage labor. Non-migrant women are far more likely to be employed than migrant women, even when other factors including village endogamy are held constant. This may be due to differences in the cost and the benefits offered to the extended family by women's economic autonomy, on one hand, and women's physical autonomy and civic participation, on the other. In general, women's participation in the public sphere is seen to reflect negatively on their family's status. In fact, families often gain higher status by restricting women's participation in the external world, or what the noted Indian sociologist Srinivas has called 'women's immurement' and 'Sanskritization' (Srinivas, 1977). However, economic autonomy in the form of wage employment also brings benefits to the whole family by increasing household income. Thus, there may be lower restrictions on this type of autonomy than autonomy in women's movement and civic participation. In this case, women's local knowledge and connections may help them in finding work.

While interpreting our results, it is important to recognize that we have focused only on a few indicators of the public behaviors of women. These results say nothing about private behaviors such as women's control over resources within the household, their relationship with their family members, and domestic violence within the household. These behaviors may well be shaped by the kinship system but they are not easily visible

to the world, and may contain a greater element of individual heterogeneity than public behaviors which are easily seen and emulated. If some women are free to participate in an SHG, their neighbors can see and emulate these behaviors. In contrast, if some women in a village have a greater say in making decisions regarding household expenditures, others may not easily see these internal household dynamics and hence, emulation in this case may not be nearly as important.

A second limitation of this study is also noteworthy. Although this study uses data from 2011–12, a large proportion of the women in this sample got married in the twentieth century, before the occurrence of massive educational expansion along with tremendous economic growth and the explosion of cable television. As research on developmental idealism (Thornton, 2001) and on globalization (Appadurai, 1996) suggests, it is reasonable to expect that these changes may dampen the impact of kinship patterns on women's autonomy. Thus, it is possible that Indian kinship patterns may be undergoing a process of transformation, a fact that has not been captured by our survey data.

Eugene Hammel, in an influential paper titled, *Theory of Culture for Demography*, (Hammel, 1990) noted, '*Without putting too fine a point on it, the use of "culture" in demography seems mired in structural-functional concepts that are about 40 years old, hardening rapidly, and showing every sign of fossilization*'(p 456). As the results presented above suggest, concepts of geography as they relate to culture are even more fossilized.

The results in this paper show that communities of mind (norms about marriage migration in the caste/sub-caste to which the woman's family belongs) are more important than physical (or geographical) communities to which a woman has migrated in relation to certain aspects of women's physical and political autonomy in the public sphere. In contrast, a woman's economic autonomy is a function of both 'imagined' and 'physical' communities. Thus, the opportunities available to women who migrate for marriage are shaped by both geographical communities and more importantly, by the norms in their communities (caste/sub-caste) about marriage migration. Finally, while demographic research has tended to focus on the importance of geography, geography and culture are closely linked and can provide a more nuanced understanding of demographic processes.

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Tables

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Analyses

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
No. of places can go alone	34,527	2.661	1.461	0	4
Engaged in wage work	35,281	0.245		0	1
Member of self-help group	35,246	0.136		0	1
Grew up in the same village/town	35,032	0.187		0	1
Belongs to caste/community that allows endogamy	35,129	0.553		0	1
Age	35,281	34.079	8.521	15	49
Marital Status					
Married but husband absent (Omitted)	35,281	0.076		0	1
Married	35,281	0.869		0	1
Widowed	35,281	0.044		0	1
Separated/divorced	35,281	0.011		0	1
Respondent's Education					
None (Omitted)	35,279	0.457			
Class 1-4	35,279	0.072		0	1
Class 5	35,279	0.090		0	1
Class 6-9	35,279	0.229		0	1
Class 10-11	35,279	0.101		0	1
Class 12 and some college	35,279	0.068		0	1
College graduate	35,279	0.037		0	1
Post-graduate	35,279	0.018		0	1
No. of children	35,267	2.428	1.519	0	13
No. of assets owned	35,269	15.163	6.444	0	33
Household size	35,281	5.744	2.730	1	33
Place of Residence					
Metro city (Omitted)	35,281	0.075		0	1
Other urban	35,281	0.224		0	1
Developed village	35,281	0.316		0	1
Less developed village	35,281	0.384		0	1
Caste/religion					
Forward castes (Omitted)	35,270	0.201		0	1
Other Backward Classes	35,270	0.358		0	1
Scheduled Caste/Dalit	35,270	0.221		0	1
Scheduled Tribe/Adivasi	35,270	0.079		0	1
Muslim	35,270	0.123		0	1
Christian, Sikh, Jain, etc.	35,270	0.019		0	1

***Source*:** India Human Development Survey II (2011-12).

Table 2. Determinants of Women's Physical Autonomy; Results from Hierarchical Ordinal Logit Regressions

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Variables	***Coeff.***	***SE***	***Coeff.***	***SE***	***Coeff.***	***SE***
Grew up in the same village/town	-0.003	0.032			-0.014	0.032
Belongs to caste/community that allows endogamy			0.146	0.033**	0.146	0.033**
Age	0.043	0.002**	0.043	0.002**	0.043	0.002**
Married	-0.509	0.051**	-0.517	0.051**	-0.519	0.052**
Widowed	0.471	0.081**	0.468	0.081**	0.464	0.081**
Separated/divorced	0.375	0.134**	0.362	0.133**	0.38	0.134**
Class 1-4	0.236	0.046**	0.238	0.046**	0.238	0.046**
Class 5	0.155	0.042**	0.159	0.042**	0.159	0.042**
Class 6-9	0.383	0.034**	0.382	0.034**	0.384	0.034**
Class 10-11	0.547	0.046**	0.547	0.046**	0.552	0.047**
Class 12 and some college	0.717	0.055**	0.721	0.055**	0.723	0.055**
College graduate	0.943	0.073**	0.945	0.073**	0.944	0.073**
Post-graduate	1.057	0.099**	1.06	0.099**	1.068	0.099**
No. of children	0.115	0.010**	0.116	0.010**	0.116	0.010**
No. of assets owned	-0.013	0.003**	-0.013	0.003**	-0.014	0.003**
Household size	-0.057	0.005**	-0.057	0.005**	-0.057	0.005**
Other urban	0.066	0.114	0.07	0.113	0.067	0.114
Developed village	-0.125	0.114	-0.111	0.113	-0.116	0.114
Less developed village	-0.303	0.115**	-0.291	0.115*	-0.291	0.115*
Other Backward Classes	-0.023	0.037	-0.028	0.037	-0.025	0.037
Scheduled Caste/Dalit	0.073	0.041	0.07	0.041	0.073	0.041
Scheduled Tribe/Adivasi	0.062	0.06	0.053	0.06	0.057	0.061
Muslim	-0.286	0.055**	-0.342	0.056**	-0.34	0.056**
Christian, Sikh, Jain, etc.	-0.09	0.091	-0.11	0.091	-0.098	0.092
Ancillary parameters++						
cut1	-1.596	0.222**	-1.529	0.224**	-1.523	0.224**
cut2	-0.793	0.222**	-0.726	0.223**	-0.72	0.224**
cut3	0.043	0.222	0.11	0.223	0.116	0.224
cut4	1.074	0.222**	1.14	0.223**	1.147	0.224**
var(_cons[level 3 state of residence])	0.639	0.199**	0.648	0.202**	0.649	0.202**
var(_cons[village/block nested within state])	1.081	0.046**	1.067	0.045**	1.076	0.046**
Sample Size	34,255		34,341		34,110	

***Notes*:** * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; ++: These are cut points that are used to differentiate the adjacent categories of the index on women's physical mobility. For example, **cut1** is the estimated cut point on the latent variable that differentiates those with no mobility from those with a score of 1, 2, 3 or 4 on the mobility index, when values of the independent variables are zero.

Source: India Human Development Survey II (2011–12).

Table 3. Determinants of Women's Economic Autonomy; Results from Hierarchical Logit Regressions

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coeff.	***SE***	***Coeff.***	***SE***	***Coeff.***	***SE***
Grew up in the same village/town	0.131	0.043**			0.123	0.043**
Belongs to caste/community that allows endogamy			0.102	0.044*	0.098	0.044*
Age	0.027	0.002**	0.027	0.002**	0.027	0.003**
Married	0.125	0.072	0.107	0.072	0.121	0.072
Widowed	1.222	0.097**	1.218	0.097**	1.22	0.097**
Separated/divorced	1.252	0.156**	1.307	0.154**	1.26	0.156**
Class 1-4	-0.008	0.059	-0.008	0.059	-0.01	0.059
Class 5	-0.286	0.058**	-0.287	0.058**	-0.284	0.059**
Class 6-9	-0.511	0.048**	-0.516	0.048**	-0.513	0.048**
Class 10-11	-0.584	0.070**	-0.568	0.070**	-0.587	0.070**
Class 12 and some college	0.072	0.08	0.066	0.08	0.077	0.08
College graduate	0.931	0.096**	0.94	0.096**	0.932	0.097**
Post-graduate	2.013	0.113**	2.042	0.113**	2.029	0.114**
No. of children	0.133	0.014**	0.133	0.014**	0.135	0.014**
No. of assets owned	-0.129	0.004**	-0.13	0.004**	-0.129	0.004**
Household size	-0.097	0.008**	-0.094	0.008**	-0.096	0.008**
Other urban	0.439	0.126**	0.458	0.126**	0.466	0.126**
Developed village	0.651	0.125**	0.663	0.125**	0.682	0.126**
Less developed village	0.53	0.128**	0.534	0.127**	0.559	0.128**
Other Backward Classes	0.352	0.053**	0.336	0.053**	0.345	0.053**
Scheduled Caste/Dalit	0.954	0.056**	0.941	0.056**	0.955	0.056**
Scheduled Tribe/Adivasi	0.752	0.075**	0.726	0.075**	0.74	0.076**
Muslim	-0.218	0.080**	-0.256	0.081**	-0.258	0.081**
Christian, Sikh, Jain, etc.	0.235	0.124	0.204	0.124	0.235	0.124
Constant	-1.296	0.246**	-1.303	0.246**	-1.365	0.247**
var(_cons[level 3 state of residence])	0.625	0.195**	0.613	0.191**	0.613	0.191**
var(_cons[village/block nested within state])	0.781	0.045**	0.776	0.045**	0.781	0.045**
Sample Size	34,995		35,090		34,846	

***Note*:** * p<0.05; ** p<0.01

***Source*:** India Human Development Survey II (2011–12).

Table 4. Determinants of Women's Civic Participation Autonomy; Results from Hierarchical Logit Regressions

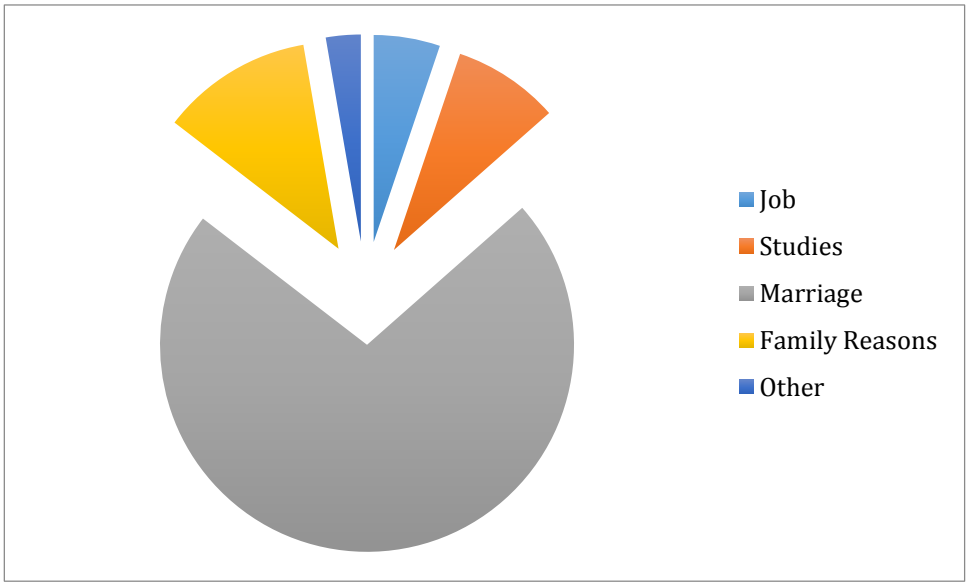
Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coeff.	***SE***	***Coeff.***	***SE***	***Coeff.***	***SE***
Grew up in the same village/town	0.065	0.052			0.047	0.052
Belongs to caste/community that allows endogamy			0.21	0.057**	0.205	0.057**
Age	0.031	0.003**	0.031	0.003**	0.031	0.003**
Married	0.126	0.095	0.133	0.095	0.127	0.096
Widowed	-0.107	0.131	-0.088	0.131	-0.105	0.132
Separated/divorced	-0.294	0.216	-0.248	0.215	-0.279	0.216
Class 1-4	0.348	0.075**	0.346	0.075**	0.346	0.075**
Class 5	0.265	0.076**	0.264	0.076**	0.27	0.076**
Class 6-9	0.371	0.060**	0.366	0.060**	0.37	0.060**
Class 10-11	0.358	0.081**	0.365	0.081**	0.356	0.081**
Class 12 and some college	0.206	0.101*	0.213	0.100*	0.211	0.101*
College graduate	-0.32	0.145*	-0.313	0.144*	-0.3	0.145*
Post-graduate	-0.835	0.225**	-0.909	0.229**	-0.878	0.229**
No. of children	0.14	0.019**	0.142	0.019**	0.141	0.019**
No. of assets owned	-0.009	0.005	-0.009	0.005	-0.009	0.005
Household size	-0.04	0.010**	-0.04	0.010**	-0.039	0.010**
Other urban	1.249	0.187**	1.228	0.186**	1.257	0.187**
Developed village	1.83	0.186**	1.826	0.185**	1.851	0.186**
Less developed village	1.911	0.189**	1.905	0.188**	1.931	0.189**
Other Backward Classes	0.105	0.068	0.101	0.068	0.101	0.068
Scheduled Caste/Dalit	0.317	0.072**	0.313	0.072**	0.314	0.073**
Scheduled Tribe/Adivasi	0.073	0.1	0.062	0.1	0.058	0.1
Muslim	-0.347	0.100**	-0.38	0.100**	-0.383	0.101**
Christian, Sikh, Jain, etc.	-0.03	0.164	-0.001	0.162	-0.022	0.164
Constant	-6.143	0.396**	-6.25	0.392**	-6.271	0.393**
var(_cons[level 3 state of residence])	2.306	0.702**	2.192	0.669**	2.183	0.667**
var(_cons[village/block nested within state])	1.483	0.097**	1.465	0.096**	1.468	0.097**
Sample Size	34,963		35,056		34,815	

***Note*:** * p<0.05; ** p<0.01

***Source*:** India Human Development Survey II (2011–12).

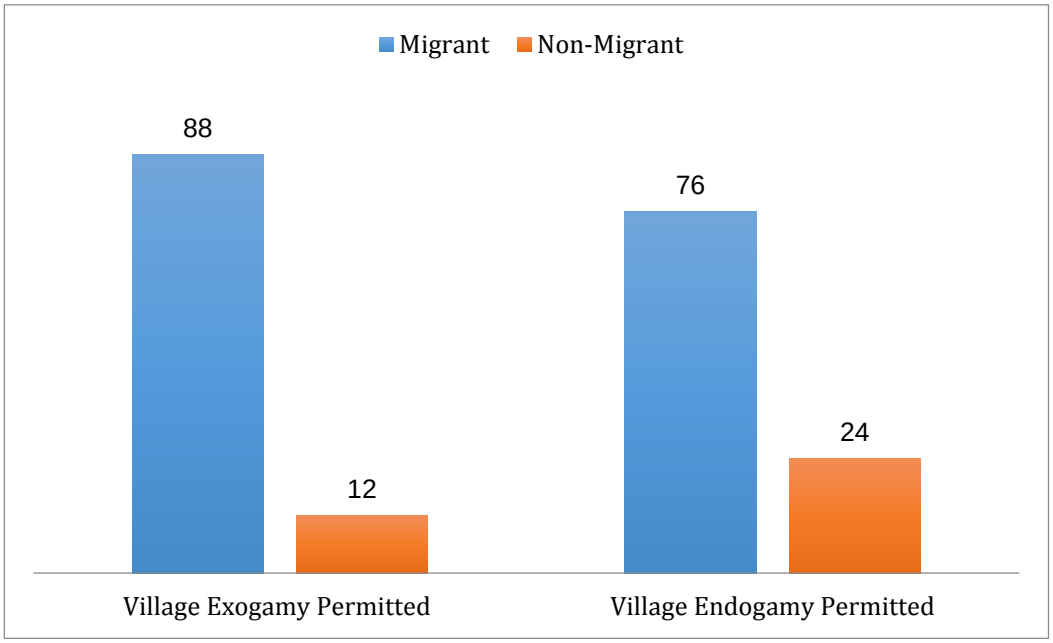
Figures

Figure 1: Reasons for Long-term Migration (Rural Females)



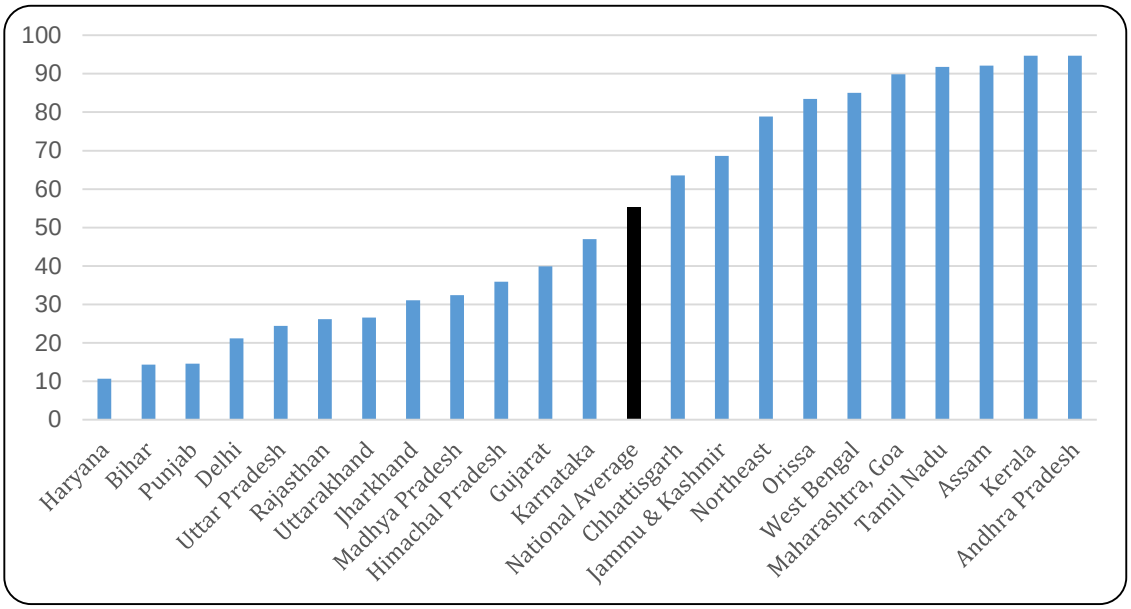
Source: Indian Human Development Survey I and II.

Figure 2: Distribution of Migrant Women by Whether Village Endogamy Is Permitted in Their Caste/Community



Source: India Human Development Survey II (2011–12).

Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Whose Communities Permit Endogamy by State



***Source*:** India Human Development Survey II (2011–12).