

Research Briefing N° 28

Love and marriage amongst Gujarati Indians in the UK and India

This research explores and contrasts understandings of love and intimate relationships amongst young middle-class Gujarati Indians in the UK and India.

Key words: love; marriage; Gujarati; India, UK



Key findings

- Young Gujaratis in Baroda, India are negotiating new forms of courtship which fit in with global ideals of romantic love, but also with more traditional aspects of arranged marriage as a system of status maintenance. They want to be in love with their future spouse, but only within socially acceptable models of endogamous marriage.
- In contrast in the UK love marriage is idealised over arranged marriage. Young Gujaratis in London distanced themselves from any sense of 'arrangement' in their relationships, which seemed to call into question for them the veracity of their love.
- The social context of the UK both supports and facilitates love marriage amongst young people, while the converse is true in India.
- Largely men and women in both contexts have similar aspirations for their relationships, though women were likely to be more in favour of egalitarian values. What this means is interpreted differently in India and the UK. In neither setting, however, is gender equality fully realised in the lives of the participants.

What we did

This project was a PhD study conducted at City University London between 2006 and 2010. The study aimed to understand how the context in which young people grow up shapes their ideals and practices around love and relationships. For this reason I chose a comparative study, with members of the same cultural group (Gujaratis) who had been born and brought up in two different cities. The study emerged from previous research on the political economy of love, and the cultural construction of emotions. This research showed that romantic love is an ideal which is spreading around the globe, however I wanted to understand the contextual nuances of this ideal once it comes into contact with local ideals of relationships and love.

How we did it

I spent 18 months collecting data: nine months in a city called Baroda in Gujarat, India, and nine months in London, UK. The main means of data collection were in-depth interviews with 30 Gujarati Indians aged between 20 and 30 years of age. This age group was chosen to capture the views and experiences of those preparing for marriage and those recently married. I also interviewed some of their parents and others such as matchmakers, priests, university lecturers and so on. In addition to interviews, I held some group discussions with young people and conducted 'participant observation' (PO). PO entails 'hanging out' with my target group and attending relevant events – such as a marriage course in India and speed dating events here in the UK.

Further information

During an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) postdoctoral fellowship at the Institute of Education, University of London, the thesis was converted into publications. These are:

Twamley, K. (Forthcoming 2014). *A Suitable Match: Love, intimacy and marriage amongst Gujarati Indians in the UK and India*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Twamley, K. (2013). The globalisation of love?: Examining narratives of intimacy and marriage amongst middle-class Gujarati Indians in the UK and India. *Family, Relationships and Societies* 2(2): 267-283

Twamley, K. (2013). Love and desire amongst middle class Gujarati Indians in the UK and India. *Culture Health & Sexuality* 15(3): 327-340

Twamley, K. (2012). Gender relations among Indian couples in the UK and India: Ideals of equality and realities of inequality. *Sociological Research Online* 17(4) 5

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