

Social Capital's Dark Side and Patriarchy in India

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Abstract

Social capital is often extolled as a resource, but in India it may also work to enhance restrictions placed on women's autonomy, revealing a darker side. Using new data from the India Human Development Survey (N=41,544), I examine the relationship between social capital and women's autonomy. I argue that households which are well tied into their communities avail themselves to greater scrutiny and thus anticipate and react to the prescriptions of dominant, patriarchal norms. This study employs multivariate logistic and ordinal logistic regression to model the relationship between four measures of women's autonomy and the social capital of households: 1) wearing a veil; 2) eating order during meals; 3) mobility; 4) and decision making. A male-first eating order and restrictions on mobility are demonstrated to be associated with higher levels of social capital.

Much has been written recently on the empowering potential of social capital. As an enhanced ability to readily draw upon the resources of neighborhood and community, social capital is overwhelmingly portrayed as an unambiguous boon. Implicit in these arguments is that those who have been unable to draw upon their community, or are otherwise shut out, are deprived of a needful resource. Perhaps so, but social resources can be applied to any number of ends, and that which appears beneficial to a community can in fact hold detrimental if not unintended consequences for particular residents. Looking at individual households, one can not simply assume that emergent sources of social capital will affect all members, both men and women, of the household evenly. Rather, social capital is just as likely to empower as it is to constrain.

A burgeoning literature is nevertheless paying greater attention to the double-edged nature of social capital. For instance, it notes with irony that the social capital which characterized the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and 1930s was fairly robust (see Putnam 2000). Berman (1997) demonstrates that a rich associational life eventually served to undermine the Weimer Republic of the same era (Berman 1997), and paternalist forms of social capital have been shown to effectively preclude unionization in a mill town in the southern United States (Schulman & Anderson 1999). What is apparent from each of these cases is social capital's so-called "dark-side".

I similarly draw attention to the other side of the social capital coin and suggest that the associational membership of a community, the alliances and support networks built between households are related to patriarchal practices found throughout Indian society. Specifically I argue that the household's access to social capital—its engagement

with its community—is coterminous with constraints placed on women’s behavior and mobility.

There are two broad explanations for a relationship between social capital and constraints on women’s behavior. First, households which closely follow prevailing norms may be predisposed to engage with their community. Households, for example, recognize and anticipate a community’s power to sanction, which means that those who are already in compliance with dominant norms may be emboldened to forge greater access to social capital within their communities.

Second, the community can be regarded as engaging and having an influence on the workings of a household. Here the ties which bind a household to its community are also arrangements which accord the community enhanced access to household affairs. One’s neighbors, therefore, may play a supporting role to the household in enforcing norms and even monitoring compliance, and in a patriarchal context, influence on women may be facilitated by such networks. Thus the household’s role as a norm enforcement institution may be primary but is informed by the household’s social location within the broader community. Mere proximity to the benefits of social capital, then, sets the stage for greater enforcement of patriarchal norms.

Households *anticipate* and *react to* their communities, and those who are endowed with access to social capital may anticipate and react in ways which are markedly different than those who have less. I argue that more attention should be given to the dark side of social capital; that within such integrated households in India, women may comply more readily with dominant norms of appropriateness, which has the effect of sustaining patriarchy.

Social Capital and Its Dark Side

James Coleman's attention to the way in which communities or households create and apply social constraints is instructive for this analysis. From Coleman (1988) we find, for example, that Jewish diamond merchants in New York readily hand each other bags of stones to examine at their leisure, and the defection of any single merchant by an act of theft would be punished through a severance of ties. Here, Coleman sought to develop the concept of social capital, and submit it for use as a conceptual tool to aid in explicating the mechanics of social structure. The merchants' shared trust is clearly *social*, but takes shape as a type of *capital*, because like material capital it facilitates the attainment of certain goals—in this case, inexpensive collaboration among merchants (Coleman 1990).

Often forgotten is Coleman's elaboration that norms too can be similarly conceived as forms of social capital, because like trust, they also inhere in the relations between two or more individuals and facilitate goal attainment. Thus young children in Jerusalem, Coleman observed, were often allowed to stray beyond the constant supervision of their parents because of neighborhood social capital or normative prescriptions shared by the community that ensured local children would be looked after.

Norms represent an important attribute of social control, which facilitate the pursuits of some agents above others and create patterns of behavior, which are "appropriable by others as a resource" (Portes 1998, p. 7). Figures of authority create and maintain norms with their own interests in mind, and as Coleman (1993) points out, norms which impose negatively on certain individuals are often in the common interest of certain others. Furthermore, there is necessarily a degree of collusion involved in enforcing norms, as the costs incurred from doing so, must be shared evenly.

In writing of the norms typically associated with small communities, Coleman (1993) points to their often constraining and coercive character and uneven application:

They are inegalitarian, giving those with most power in the community freedoms that are denied others. They discriminate, particularly against the young, enforcing norms that are in the interests of elders; they inhibit innovation and creativity; they bring a grayness to life that dampens hope and aspiration...[and] the interests of different members of the community are weighted differently (p. 10).

Robert Putnam (1993, 2000) is often credited with expanding on the work of Coleman. While similarly recognizing that norms constitute a type of social capital, Putnam made the case that not only does social capital inhere between individuals but communities can be holders of it. Thus by measuring how readily households join community organizations, Putnam argued that one can discern how much social capital is “stocked” by a particular community, and by extension, how much civic-minded behavior one could expect a community to exhibit.

Like Coleman, Putnam acknowledged that certain norms may serve dubious ends. “Social inequalities may be embedded in social capital,” and adds that “A recognition of the importance of social capital in sustaining community life does not exempt us from the need to worry about how that ‘community’ is defined” (Putnam 2000, p. 358). Still the thrust of Putnam’s work, his focus on building strong democracies and the benefits of civic engagement, suggests that good social capital might nearly always outweigh the bad.

Indeed, a good amount of development literature extols the benefits of social capital, and is seemingly preoccupied with directing policymakers on how to better cultivate, harness, tap (Khan 2006), link or bridge (Woolcock 1998) it. The tendency to promote strategies aimed at exploiting social capital reveals an implicit assumption that

the benefits apportioned by social capital outweigh any impairments, or that the ends to which social capital is directed are, on balance, beneficial to communities and households.

In rural Tanzania, for example, households with greater stocks of social capital, as measured by degree of associational membership, were shown to have higher incomes. They are said to enjoy better public services, employ more effective agricultural practices, and they demonstrate a propensity to use credit when purchasing agricultural improvements (Narayan & Pritchett 1999). Reporting on data from northern India, Krishna (2001) asserts that in concert with capably trained leadership, villages with greater stocks of social capital are better able to reap the flow of public benefits.

In a similar vein, group-based micro-credit programs like the Grameen Bank are heralded as organizations that have successfully built or tapped social capital (Khan 2006, Pitt et al. 2003). Proponents of micro-credit emphasize social capital, not as a norm, but as network tie. They claim that it empowers women by creating and strengthening their economic networks, enhancing their ability to borrow, and ultimately increasing their incomes. In making a contribution to the household income, women are thought to be better able to negotiate change within their households. In Bangladesh, for example, the social capital built by micro-finance reportedly increased women's mobility, or "the odds that a husband will report that his wife travels alone outside the house, the odds that a woman reports traveling outside the house at all and that she reports traveling outside alone" (Pitt et al. 2003).

Critiques of such work are most incisive insofar as they note that some benefit more from social capital than others, and some are excluded from benefits altogether. Thus there is a tendency to focus on the benefits related to enhanced social capital while

ignoring the more primary issue of access, leading Beall (1997, p. 960, 2001) to criticize the concept as luring analysts to “ignore structural issues and obscure the issue of collective power.” Cleaver (2005) makes this point emphatic in her study of Tanzania when she concludes that the vulnerability of people most in need of social capital simultaneously excludes them from reaping its benefits.

Mayoux (2001) reports that women in Cameroon, for example, are often unable to profit from belonging to credit groups because physical segregation of the sexes means that women are unable to work freely in male-dominated, market spaces without making themselves vulnerable to sexual harassment or other forms of abuse. Thus, social capital does not on its own afford people the ability to meaningfully transcend structures of inequality organized along such lines as caste and gender; nor in the case of women living under patriarchal norms does social capital easily provide them with the means to renegotiate the power dynamics circumscribed by systems of kinship, family and household. Indeed, Mayoux (2001) asserts that “a particularly serious shortcoming in current discussions of social capital from a gender perspective is the uncritical treatment of relations within households,” and while “households and families may be important sources of social capital, there is also a need to address the norms which regulate relations within them” (p. 450, 453). Goetz and Gupta (1996) echo this concern when they note of women in Bangladesh that the micro-credit dispersment—a material “achievement” of their social capital—was often controlled by husbands or other men. Thus there is good reason to be suspicious that the benefits of social capital flow equally to all groups, or that women in particular are necessarily empowered through greater community engagement.

In his useful review, Alejandro Portes (1998) goes beyond an analysis of whether the benefits of social capital are distributed equally, and instead summarizes work that suggests social capital is sometimes explicitly detrimental to individual interests. In total, he identifies four negative consequences of social capital. First, Portes notes that groups bounded in solidarity may exclude just as readily as they include, so for example male networks may be able to hoard and effectively deny women access to resources. In the second case, the closure and solidarity of a group may be the source of its undoing, as a successful individual from the group will be overwhelmed by the petitions of less successful members. Third, where “downtrodden” groups are formed based on a shared experience of adversity, individual success stories may prove to threaten the very basis of group cohesion. The result is the promotion of downward leveling norms, which prevent any single member from doing markedly better than the group. Finally, and most relevant to this paper, Portes recalls Coleman in suggesting that keeping an eye on neighborhood children and the surveillance which facilitates social control and norm enforcement are close cousins. “The level of social control in such settings is strong and also quite restrictive of personal freedoms, which is the reason why the young and the more independent-minded have always left” (p. 16).

In the community of Coleman’s example, where there exist norms of informal surveillance, members of the community have a direct means of influencing the behavior of individuals. The instance of a household, then, becoming integrated within such a community might only enhance the community’s leverage over the lives of individual household members. Similarly, I look at India in this paper and argue that a household’s social proximity to its community enhances the community’s access to household affairs.

Households which are inclined to interact closely with their communities avail themselves to greater scrutiny. They anticipate and react to the dominant norms of their community and comply with those norms as a means of avoiding sanction and sustaining their access to social capital. Insofar as dominant norms prescribe restrictions on women's autonomy, it stands to reason that social capital may be one very tangible way in which patriarchal systems of power sustain themselves.

Patriarchal Norms in India

There is a substantial literature devoted to explicating patriarchy in India, much of which draws attention to its emblematic outcomes, such as sex ratios that reveal a son preference and greater access to healthcare and education among males. As is pertinent to my argument, a portion of this work has been concerned with detailing practices and patterns of behavior that reinforce gender discrimination and constrain women's autonomy. Kinship systems constitute one unit of analysis that has received a fair amount of attention (Dyson & Moore 1983, Karve [1953] 1993, Trautmann [1981] 1993), but the Indian household and corporate family have also been identified as primary sites where patriarchy is created, sustained and reinforced (Beteille [1991] 1993).

Moreover, patriarchy is a multidimensional concept that demands a great deal of specification. For example, it encompasses both public and private settings. Public perceptions are considered, for example, when restrictions are placed on female mobility or women are compelled to wear a veil. On the other hand, patriarchy has been examined as something which pervades the private sphere, as when women are unable to make decisions for their household or must habitually eat last during meals.

Thus, as with eating order, patriarchy can be conceived of as entailing habitual or unexamined behaviors. For instance, the practice of wearing a veil, or what is referred to as practicing *purdah*, *ghungat*, or *pallu* among married women, constitutes another important means of restricting women's autonomy. While practicing *purdah* does not in itself seclude women, except in a symbolic sense, it denotes a complex of behaviors, which collectively preclude women from interacting with men as equals. Furthermore, practicing *purdah* denotes a context-sensitive interaction ritual that effectively prevents women from establishing direct access to resources (Sharma 1978).

The very architecture of a home and choreography of household members when visited by guests suggest *purdah* and reveal the underlying importance of seclusion and exclusion of women. That is, daughters and wives are given designated spaces or rooms, distinct from those of men, and on the occasion that the household receives a male visitor, women may be obliged to remain strictly segregated throughout the visit.

A second approach to examine patriarchy, in line with restrictions placed on household decision making, takes as its subject more direct affronts on women's autonomy. Adolescent and married women, for instance, are often obliged to stay in or near the household, and are restricted from entering public spaces unescorted by male kin. Their seclusion can be understood as a normative convention, but the household can be seen as an enforcement institution as well. In its capacity to surveil and redress behavior, as well as its direct role in granting or denying permission to travel unescorted to local destinations, the household secludes through direct restrictions on women's mobility.

Underlying public and private contexts are variations in women's autonomy stemming from status constructions. Among upper castes, physical seclusion may be

packaged more favorably as a departure of women from arduous physical labor outside the home. Thus women of high caste (and class) may experience greater seclusion than their lower caste counterparts (see Desai & Vanneman 2007).

Just as restrictions placed on women's autonomy and the enforcement of patriarchal norms vary by status group, such practices have also been observed to vary throughout the life course of women (Sharma 1978). In a patrilocal context, it is the abiding relationship a new bride forms with her husband *inside* the household that may be perceived as a threat against the patrimony. Bonding and intimacy between a new couple can be a subject of much concern, as it suggests the ability of a bride to drive a wedge between her husband and the patrimony. With time, however, especially after a woman has children, restrictions both inside and outside the household are typically lifted (Sharma 1978).

Geographic variations in women's autonomy are no less important, and the degree of women's autonomy and the normative constraints placed on women have also been observed to vary considerably from north to south (Dyson & Moore 1983, Karve [1953] 1993). Dyson and Moore (1983) convincingly argued that one salient line of demarcation can be sketched approximately along "the contours of the Satpura hill range, extending eastward to join the Chota Nagpur hills of southern Bihar." Wearing a veil or practicing *pardah* stands as a clear example of this regional variation. However, while restrictions on women's autonomy are generally noted to be most pronounced in the north as compared to the south, blatant deviations from this pattern can also be identified.

Sustaining Patriarchy

How is patriarchy produced and reproduced? Marriage and kinship practices have received a good amount of attention. In the north, in those states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, much has been made of the practice of exogamy and the way in which the power of women is undermined from the very start of a new marriage. There is the account of a new bride leaving her natal village, taking on daunting responsibilities in her new husband's home and often being subjected to the scrutiny of a watchful mother-in-law. Analysts point out that the moment a woman joins her husband's household, her natal ties begin to erode and a dependency is forged between her and her affinal kin (Kandiyoti 1988, Karve [1953] 1993). Thus women of families that practice exogamy are said to be disadvantaged and disempowered because they are deprived of personal leverage among their husband's natal kin.

If one turns to the south, to those states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, exogamy is practiced in fewer villages and the separation of a new bride from her natal family is less absolute. Gender discrimination and restrictions on women are correspondingly regarded to be less pronounced. In the southwest, in particular, matrilineal communities can even be found; however, as Patricia Uberoi (1993) notes, while "it is generally conceded that women have greater importance and autonomy in such societies, authority still resides primarily with men" (p. 114).

While focusing on marriage and kinship provides a compelling account of the structural preconditions that preclude women from gaining greater autonomy, it fails to adequately account for the continued incentives a household has to enforce normative constraints on women. On this score, a literature which examines the protecting and

controlling of women's sexuality in north and south India does a better job (Bennett 1983, Derne 1994, 1995, Liddle & Joshi 1986, Sharma 1980). At stake is the honor of the patrimony (*izzat*), and women's promiscuity outside the household, alleged or real, has been constructed as one very tangible means of threatening that honor (Derne 1994, Yalman 1963). Girls, therefore, find themselves spending more time inside their homes just as they enter adolescence, and once married, restrictions of behavior and autonomy continue (Standing 1991). In remarking on the determinants of fertility, for example, Dyson and Moore (1983) note that "from the male standpoint, the continual involvement of women in pregnancy and childcare activities can be seen as a way of reducing the risk of sexual violation of wives" (p. 48).

One tangible consequence of dishonor is boycott. That is, as Steve Derne (1995) has pointed out, a family that harbors a woman who is perceived to be promiscuous may find they have difficulty arranging marriages for their sons and daughters or brothers and sisters (see also Billig 1991, Kolenda 1978, 1993). Thus the mobility and behavior of women are not restricted simply because men and women internalize patriarchal norms as some have suggested (though norms most certainly are internalized) (see Derne 1995, Dyson & Moore 1983); rather, the very real consequences associated with failing to constrain women's autonomy justifies and maintains the continuation of a patriarchal social order.

I contend that households which have greater access to social capital or are better integrated within their communities tend to more rigidly adhere to patriarchal norms. Specifically, the relationship households maintain with their communities is central, and I

posit that women who belong to households which are better tied into their communities will incur greater constraints on their general autonomy.

Households where women are inclined to partake of restrictive norms may be more likely to join community organizations. Insofar as associational membership is regulated, households may be granted membership based on their conformity with dominant norms. Here there is a very straightforward recognition that people who are deemed to behave “inappropriately” or in ways that challenge dominant modes often confront barriers to integration within the broader community.

An alternative explanation focuses more on the role of households as playing a key role in enforcing community norms. Households, in anticipation of the social benefits of greater community integration, may be inclined to more closely monitor the degree in which household women visibly conform to received norms. On the end of associational membership, I argue that households, once they have forged multiple alliances with the residents of their community more readily avail themselves to the monitoring and influence of that community. Thus the event of a household forging new and deeper links within vicinal networks exposes that household to greater scrutiny and lays bare its chosen level of compliance with dominant norms.

Insofar as the community can be conceived of as controlling access to the benefits of social capital, it is able to wield influence over the affairs of a particular family. Damaging gossip, for instance, concerning the improprieties of a patrimony looms as a constant threat. In a patriarchal context, the independent behavior of women and that which may be construed as noncompliant are ready subjects for gossip. Charges of female promiscuity, for example, may uncouple hard-won alliances between families,

and unleash a collective boycott on the household, but gossip is not aimless chatter, for well-tied households are likely to be early recipients of such talk and might be expected to react quickly to curb the offending behaviors. Failure to act has real consequences, and on this score, the patrimony has much to lose; a woman who oversteps her bounds may not only jeopardize existing ties, but also the household's ability to form alliances in the future.

Thus households themselves can be seen as primary sites of norm enforcement, and those with greater proximity to community stocks of social capital (e.g., households that are engaged in community groups) are more inclined to prohibit and clamp down on behaviors that may threaten the honor of the patrimony. The behavior of women is closely scrutinized, and restrictive norms are more rigidly applied because the household perceives itself to be more visible to the community (see Figure 1).

<Figure 1 about here>

The nature of the relationship between community integration and conformity begs consideration. To what degree are conforming households more likely to engage with their communities, and to what extent do communities levy influence over the affairs of member households? My analysis will not attempt to definitively sort out causality, but instead, I focus on establishing whether there is empirically a positive correlation between social capital and restrictions placed on women's autonomy.

Public and Private Behaviors

Not all behaviors are allotted equal concern, and one can scarcely anticipate the constraints applied to specific measures of women's autonomy without first placing the behavior of interest in an appropriate context. Recent work by Desai and Vanneman (2007) suggests one salient distinction to be made is that between private and public behaviors (see Table 2). In so far as norm conformity may be a performance or display, one might expect that women's autonomy is especially curtailed in a public context.

Therefore, the event of a woman traveling unaccompanied to the local health center, to the home of a friend or relative, or a local store is a potential liability for which the household might be called to account. It follows that well-integrated households—those who perceive themselves to be more closely scrutinized—would be inclined to rigidly enforce public norms concerning women's mobility.

H1a: among households which are better integrated with their communities, women experience greater restrictions on their mobility outside the home.

Similarly, women of integrated households should be more inclined to abide by habitual, but equally visible, norms such as *pardah* practice.

H1b: among households which are better integrated with their communities, women are more inclined to practice pardah.

On the other hand, characteristically private matters, such as who decides what to cook, whether an expensive item is purchased, what to do if a child falls sick, and to whom one's children should marry—all of these decisions can be made with a measure of relative discretion and without jeopardizing the honor of the patrimony.

H2a: among households which are better integrated with their communities, women are not more likely to experience restrictions on their decision making.

Similarly, women of integrated households should *not* be more inclined to abide by habitual norms if such norms unfold most typically in a private setting.

H2b: among households which are better integrated with their communities, women are not more inclined to practice a male-first eating order during meals.

Data and Methods

The above hypotheses are related in that they posit a relationship between a household's access to social capital through integration within the community and restrictions on women's autonomy. To test these hypotheses, I use new data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS), collected from 2004 through late 2005. The data set is comprised of over 40,000 households and spans 33 states and Union

Territories. Both urban and rural households were selected to compose a nationally representative sample.

Independent Variables

I employ a regression analysis in order to test the relationship between social capital and restrictions placed on women. My analysis is rather straightforward in that it follows the work of others in operationalizing social capital as associational membership (Grootaert & Narayan 2004, Haddad & Maluccio 2003, Narayan & Pritchett 1999). Households are deemed to have greater or lesser access to social capital based on the number of groups or associations in which they claim membership. The questionnaire asked respondents if “anybody” in the household belonged to a particular group; thus, any single individual’s membership counted for the entire household, and in this way I will measure social capital at the household level.

Other researchers examining social capital have preferred using measurements of trust and participation in informal networks. Krishna (2001, 2004), for example, has stated that the use of formal membership as a proxy for social capital is particularly inappropriate in the context of Rajasthan, India. There, he observed that the creation of formal organizations is rarely a voluntary initiative. Indeed, local officials are often judged on the basis of how many groups they can set up each year, and he adds that “People sign up to get the benefits; the target is achieved; then everyone goes home” (Krishna 2001, p. 931). While this observation is well taken, it is reasonable to expect that even short-lived, involuntary participation among households may yield important consequences for individual households and the members of those households.

My analysis is aided in that data collected in the IHDS is not restricted to a single state, and the organizations vary in their degree of formality. Respondents were asked to consider themselves and others in the household when answering nine yes-no questions, each for a different organization. “Does anybody in the household belong to”: 1) “youth club, sports group, or reading room”; 2) “trade union, business or professional group”; 3) “self help group”; 4) “credit or savings group”; 5) “religious or social group or festival society”; 6) “caste association”; 7) “development group or NGO”; or 8) “agricultural, milk, or other co-operative.” I use these nine dichotomous variables to construct an additive index of the associational membership of households. A preliminary look at Cronbach’s alpha suggests that the index has a reasonable estimate of reliability (0.60). Figure 2 illustrates the incredible amount of variation in associational membership. Wholly 63.9% of households did not belong to any associations, and only 0.04% of the population claimed membership in all 9 associations.

<Figure 2 about here>

Mean membership varies considerably by state as well. As Table 1 demonstrates, households in Kerala reported belonging to nearly two associations on average, while households in Punjab/Chandigarh were members of fewer than one association on average.

<Table 1 about here>

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables used in my analysis are taken from questions in the “Gender Relations” component of the questionnaire and were posed to one eligible woman in each household. I specifically address four indicators of women’s autonomy: 1) whether the eligible woman practices *purdah*; 2) her physical mobility; 3) whether the eligible woman makes common household decisions; and 4) whether men in the household take their meals before women.

As Table 2 indicates, the dependent variables I have chosen are intended to represent both the *public* and *private* contexts. In choosing these variables, I suggest that variation in the restrictions placed on women will pivot on whether the particular normative behavior is subject to *public* scrutiny or is characteristically *private*. For example, while household decision-making and eating order are largely beyond the community’s gaze and therefore may be considered private, walking unescorted to the health center or spurning the veil are relatively conspicuous and readily available for public consumption.

<Table 2 about here>

I first look at *purdah* practice. Women were asked, “Do you practice *ghungat/purdah/pallu*?” As this variable is dichotomous (yes or no), I will employ a logistic regression to test the predicted probability that a woman will practice *purdah* for any given level of household associational membership. By calculating an odds ratio, I estimate that when a given independent variable increases one unit, the odds that a

woman practicing *purdah* will increase or decrease by a given factor, when other variables are controlled.

As discussed earlier, *purdah* exists as the most visible of a complex of behaviors, which teach married women when it is particularly important to be passive and whom to regard with deference. As a convention that is contextually specific and contingent on the status of the person with whom a veiling woman finds herself confronted, *purdah* seems designed to limit a woman's ability to communicate with powerful individuals, and therefore, it limits too a woman's access to resources. Thus, although I will explicitly test the relationship between household integration and the probability of women practicing *purdah*, the results are intended to suggest one aspect of the relative ability of women to access social resources more generally. I expect that higher associational membership is related to a greater likelihood of *purdah* practice.

The habitual, often unexamined character of *purdah* stands in contrast to more straightforward exclusions women face, such as those which result from restrictions placed on physical mobility. Restricting a woman's movement beyond the enclosures of the home constitutes one very direct way in which a patrimony may cultivate dependency, as it reduces a woman's ability to gain leverage in affairs beyond (and within) the household. Like *purdah*, constraints placed on mobility have a uniquely public character in that they derive from the household's concern with its honor vis-à-vis the community.

For each of three common destinations—local health center, the home of relatives or friends, and the kirana shop—interviewers asked women, “Can you go alone?” (yes or no). 66.2% of respondents could travel unescorted to the local health center, while 68.7%

of respondents could go to a friend's home alone. The highest percentage of women reported being able to travel alone to the local market or kirana shop at 75.2%.

Using these three variables, I propose to construct a mobility scale ranging from 0 to 3, where women who are able to go alone to all three locations would be considered the most mobile with a score of 3.

<Table 3 about here>

In order to model the effects of associational membership on women's mobility, I employ ordinal logistic regression (OLR).

<Figure 3 about here>

The ability of women to make decisions for the household constitutes another dimension of women's autonomy. However, unlike *purdah* practice and mobility, household decision making is not often the object of public spectacle. Whether a woman customarily makes household decisions or is bypassed entirely is a dynamic largely concealed from public view.

The IHDS asked women, "*Please tell me who in your family decides the following things?: 1) What to cook on a daily basis; 2) Whether to buy an expensive item such as a TV or fridge; 3) How many children to have; 4) What to do if a child falls sick; 5) To whom your children should marry?*" The eligible female respondent was able to consider the questions and offer a yes or no response for each of five types of household members

(*respondent, husband, senior male, senior female, and other*). The respondent could also answer “not applicable” or that “no one” decided. If more than one person was indicated to make the decision, then the respondent was asked, “*Who has the most say?*”

For each type of household decision, I create a dichotomous variable, set to 1 if the respondent makes the decision and 0 if any other person makes the decision. If more than one person makes the decision, I code the variable using the respondent’s answer of who had the most say. Women clearly had the most say regarding what to cook on a daily basis (74.3%); however, only 10% had the most say in regards to whom their child should marry (see Table 4).

<Table 4 about here>

Taking the resulting five dichotomous variables, I create a scale of women’s decision making ranging from 0 to 5. 19.5% of women respondents reported that they did not have the most say in any of the aforementioned decisions, while only about 5% had the most say in all five of the decisions asked. Most women surveyed, however, only had the most say in one decision (43.9%).

Much like women’s mobility, I model the effects of associational membership on women’s decision making using ordinal logistic regression. Here, household decision making constitutes private behavior, and as such, I have hypothesized that it should not co-vary with the household’s associational membership.

<Figure 4 about here>

The order in which men and women take their meals within a household constitutes a second private measure of women's autonomy. Eligible women were asked, "When your family takes the main meal, do women usually eat with the men? Do women eat first by themselves? Or do men eat first?" Four response options were given: 1) *eat together*; 2) *women first*; 3) *men first*; and 4) *varies, other*. I will dichotomize this variable such that 1 captures households where women eat first or men and women eat together. Households in which men eat first or the order varies will be coded 0.

As is appropriate for a dichotomous dependent variable, I will model the relationship between associational membership and eating order using logistic regression. The eating order a household takes can be conceived of as a habitual behavior. It constitutes one of many daily interaction rituals which serve to draw clear lines between men and women, and in this way it resembles the practice of *purdah*. Unlike *purdah*, however, the eating order of a household is essentially private, and therefore, should not co-vary with associational membership.

Control Variables

I include controls for caste, tribe and religion. If, for instance, higher caste households demonstrate a propensity to forgo joining associations, this relationship might conflate an understanding of the relationship between associational membership and women's autonomy (see Figure 5). In addition, restrictions on women's autonomy may vary by caste. Based on the answers provided from the "household head," each household has been classified as belonging to one of six categories: high castes (21%), other

backward castes (36%), dalits or scheduled castes (22%), adivasis or scheduled tribes (8%), Muslims (11%), and other religions (e.g., Christians, Sikhs, and Jains) (3%). I create a dummy variable for each category, omitting high caste as the reference.

<Figure 5 about here>

The level of education within a household may also affect the associational membership, as when households with relatively high education may be more inclined to subscribe to sentiments of egalitarianism and thus less likely to enforce restrictions on women's mobility or *purdah* (see Figure 6). Thus, in order to effectively capture the response of my dependent variable to changes in associational membership, I control for education. I operationalize educational attainment as the highest years of education of any adult male and of any adult female in the household. The result is two distinct gender-specific, continuous measures of education. The range in each variable spans from 0 years to 15 years or more.

<Figure 6 about here>

I control for two characteristics of household structure. First, households with extended families may be, *ceteris paribus*, more likely to have high levels of associational membership by virtue of having a larger number of household members. Also, norms which restrict women's autonomy may be more readily enforced in these households due to the presence of more senior family members, such as the husband's

mother or father or a mother-in-law. To control for joint family structure, I include a variable which represents a count of the number of ever married women in the household.

Associational membership may be greater among households which can afford to participate; therefore, I have included a control for household wealth (see Figure 7). This is approximated with an assets index, which is composed from 30 dichotomous variables, each indicating the presence or absence of a distinct household item (e.g., television, refrigerator, car, etc.).¹

<Figure 7 about here>

The level of empowerment a woman experiences should not be regarded as a fixed endowment, but instead as periodically changing during the life course. Restrictions on mobility outside the home or the imperative of wearing a veil may differ considerably for new brides as compared to mothers; therefore, I attempt to control for this variation by adding a female age variable into the models.

Finally, following the work of other researchers who have analyzed Indian society (see Vanneman et al. 2006), I control for regional diversity by adding state dummies. As Table 1 demonstrates, state variation in associational membership is considerable in India. Similarly, I control for regional effects along urban and rural lines. Rural households claimed membership in 0.72 associations on average, whereas urban households were members of 0.54 associations.

Results

I have argued that households with greater access to social capital can be expected to conform more closely to prevailing norms, as these households *anticipate* and *react to* enforcement pressures which emanate from the larger community. Conforming households may also be predisposed to engage with their communities, thus gaining more access to extant social capital than their non-conforming counterparts.

While my theoretical discussion has broadly focused on cornerstone norms, which uphold prevailing systems of stratification, empirically, I examine just four restrictions on women's autonomy—mobility, *purdah*, decision making, and eating order.

Mobility. One publicly visible restriction often levied against women in India is on movement outside the home, and hypothesis H1a anticipates that among households which are better integrated with their communities, women experience greater restrictions on their mobility outside the home.

<Table 5 about here>

The results which model the association between women's mobility and social capital using ordinal logistic regression are presented in Model 1 of Table 5. Net of controls, the associational index coefficient is statistically significant and supports my argument that women who belong to households with greater social capital are more likely to experience restrictions on their autonomy. With each additional association a household belongs to, one can expect a 0.06 decrease in the log odds of women's mobility.

Turning to the controls, the educational attainment of men appears to undercut women's mobility. For every additional year of education held by the male head of household, one can expect a 0.02 decrease in the log odds of women's mobility. In stark contrast, higher educated women are more likely to travel to local destinations, and the magnitude of the coefficient of women's educational attainment appears to trump that of male education. Here, for every additional year of education held by the female head of household, one can expect a 0.04 increase in the log odds of women's mobility. In regards to caste and religion, Muslims—in comparison to upper caste—are less likely to travel unaccompanied to local destinations. Women appear to enjoy greater mobility if they belong to a scheduled tribe, scheduled caste, or other backward caste. Finally, older women are more mobile than their younger counterparts.

Purdah practice. As I have argued, the practice of veiling also denotes restrictions placed on women's autonomy in a very publicly accessible form. Hypothesis H1b anticipates that women from households which are more integrated with their communities—those with greater access to social capital—are more likely to practice *purdah*.

In Model 2, *purdah* is regressed on associational membership using multivariate logistic regression. While the coefficient is in the expected direction, the coefficient is not statistically significant, and I can not conclude that women who belong to households with greater social capital are more inclined to practice *purdah*.

The household assets index coefficient is statistically significant, however, and demonstrates that with an increase in a single household asset, one can expect a 0.02 decrease in the log odds of practicing *purdah*. Expressed in terms of an odds ratio, with

each additional asset, the odds of women practicing *purdah* can be expected to decrease by a factor of 0.98.

Turning to education, women are more likely to practice *purdah* in households with highly educated men. For each one-year increase in the education among male heads-of-household, one can expect the odds of a woman practicing *purdah* to increase by a factor of 1.03. As with mobility, women's education appears to have a countering effect on *purdah* practice. With each one-year increase in the education of the eligible female, the odds of practicing *purdah* decrease by a factor of 0.95.

As one might expect, Muslims are more likely to practice *purdah* in comparison to upper caste individuals. While the magnitude of the coefficient is less, this also appears to be true for people who reported to belong to an other backward caste or scheduled caste. In line with expectations, those who reported belonging to a scheduled tribe or reported themselves as Christian, Sikh, or Jain, are less likely to practice *purdah*.

Women who reported living in urban areas were less likely to veil than those in rural areas, and supporting the findings of previous research, restrictions on autonomy may lessen as women transition from being daughters to mothers. Older women were less likely to veil than younger women. With each added year in age, one can expect the odds of practicing *purdah* to decrease by a factor of 0.99.

Finally, women who belonged to households where more than one married woman resided were more inclined to veil than women who did not live with other married women. Households with two or more married women are likely to represent joint families, and this statistically significant coefficient suggests that, net of controls, women of such households experience greater restrictions on their autonomy.

Decision Making. As a more private dimension of patriarchy, I have suggested in hypothesis H2a that the degree to which women are able to make household decisions should not co-vary with household access to social capital. The results of Model 3 demonstrate the relationship between social capital and women's decision making, using ordinal logistic regression. Women who belong to well-integrated households do not appear to be more or less likely to have the most say in household decisions. This supports my argument that greater access to social capital does not necessarily bear on more private restrictions placed on women's autonomy.

The coefficients for men and women's education are again statistically significant. Women who belong to households with highly educated men appear to be less likely to have the most in household decisions. Women's education may work in an opposite manner. With each additional year of education reported by the eligible female, one can expect a 0.03 decrease in the log odds of women's decision making.

Finally, older women appear to enjoy more decision making power than their younger counterparts, as do women who live in urban areas. In contrast, women who live in joint family households appear to be less likely to have the most say in household decisions.

Eating Order. In Model 4 I test the association between household access to social capital and the outcome variable eating order. In line with women's decision making, I have suggested in hypothesis H2b that among households which are better integrated with their communities and have greater access to social capital, women are not more inclined to practice a male-first eating order during meals. The coefficient demonstrates that households with greater access to social capital are in fact more likely

to practice a male-first eating order during meal times. With each additional association to which a household belongs, one can cautiously expect a 0.12 decrease in the log odds of men and women eating together, women eating first or the order varying. In terms of the odds ratio, net of control variables, each association to which a household claims membership can be expected to decrease the odds of eating together by a factor of 0.88.

Thus there is evidence to suggest that eating order is associated with social capital in a way contrary to the expectations outlined in hypothesis H2b. One reason for this unexpected finding is that eating order, much like *purdah*, may be representative of a complex of behaviors and can not be straightforwardly assumed to be a private dimension of patriarchy.

Turning to the control variables used in Model 4, the household assets index is statistically significant and demonstrates that with an increase in a single household asset, one can expect a 0.04 increase in the log odds of men and women eating at the same time, women eating first, or the order varying. The odds-ratio suggests that with each additional asset, one can expect the odds of eating together to increase by a factor of 1.04.

Once again, the signs are different on the coefficients for men and women's education; however only the coefficient for women's education is statistically significant. Men are not as likely to eat first as a matter of daily practice in households where women are highly educated.

Muslims and people who claimed to belong to a Scheduled Caste were less likely than Upper Caste persons to practice a male-first eating order. Those who belong to a scheduled tribe are less likely to practice a male-first eating order by a factor of 1.70.

People who live in urban areas are less likely than their rural counterparts to practice a male-first eating order during meals, and the practice of an eating order appears to vary by family structure as well. Women in joint families are more likely to practice a male first eating order as compared to women from nuclear families.

Discussion

As with any resource, it stands to reason that social capital can be used to disempower just as easily as it empowers. The benefits reaped by well integrated families exist just beyond the grasp of those families poised on the edges of their community, and these benefits may exist as a carrot for those seeking to better their lot. But just before and just after forging deeper access to vicinal resources, a household's presentation of itself is likely assessed, and if necessary, changed. My argument has focused primarily on how the second order consequences of "tapping" social capital, are such that dominant norms are reaffirmed. In a patriarchal context, it follows that norms which restrict women's autonomy may be most pronounced in those households with the greatest access to social capital.

While the cross-sectional nature of the IHDS data does not allow me to draw conclusions regarding sequence and timing, I have theorized that a household's compliance with dominant norms, and particularly those regarding women's autonomy, may stem from the household's anticipation of benefits to be received, its reaction to the threat of benefits withheld, and the experience of benefits revoked by the larger community.

Moreover, if a household's interaction with its community is paramount, I have hypothesized that public restrictions on women's autonomy will likely be more salient than those which occur largely in the home and which are beyond the purview of public scrutiny. Thus the likelihood of a woman wearing a veil or traveling to local destinations with a male escort should covary with the social capital of her household. The more private matter of her eating order and whether she has a say in household decisions should not.

In support of my hypotheses, this analysis has demonstrated that women who belong to well integrated households tend to be less mobile. In contrast to expectations, however, I did not find evidence to support the hypothesis that women of such households also tend to veil. Of the four dimensions of women's autonomy, *purdah* is arguably the easiest to locate as spanning both public and private spheres. If the public and private distinction is as important as I have supposed in this analysis, then it follows that if a large number of women primarily practice *purdah* in a private setting, this may serve to mask an underlying relationship among households who publicly practice *purdah*.

Turning to private dimensions of women's autonomy, as expected there appears to be no statistically significant relationship between women's household decision making and community integration; however, the same is not true for eating order. Women of well-integrated households appear to be more likely to eat last when taking a meal.

In sum, there is moderate support for the dark side of social capital. In contrast, there was very little support in this analysis that when analysts examine the dark side of

social capital, they should draw a meaningful distinction between public and private restrictions on women's autonomy.

The correlation between eating order and social capital was unexpected and best highlights the apparent irrelevance of drawing a careful distinction between public and private spheres. Furthermore, the propensity of women to practice an eating order in a private setting poses a *prima facie* challenge to the depiction of the household as an instrumental entity, which largely responds to pressures emanating from its community. If men and women are obliged to display their adherence to dominant norms so as not to jeopardize access to the community's resources, then the question is begged: if nobody is watching, why display? I offer two explanations. Both are alternative explanations for the results, and both are accounts for why community integration may have an impact on women's autonomy in private and public settings.

The observed relationship between eating order and social capital suggests that households might be conceived of as more arrantly coercive entities, which compel women to conform to dominant norms, even when women do not perceive such conformity in their own immediate interests. Instead women recognize that eating last during meals is of little benefit to their household's standing within its community, yet the eating order in well-integrated households is nonetheless observed.

This may be due to a tacit acknowledgment, on the part of household members, that the work of norm enforcement is easier to uphold in public settings if it is also reinforced in private. While restrictions placed on certain private dimensions of autonomy, such as household decision making, may be inefficient in illustrating for men

and women their respective “places”, restricting more symbolic dimensions of autonomy, such as an eating order, make the point in a manner difficult to miss.

Women, by this logic, can be perceived as engaging in self-regulation (primarily when in the public sphere) but they are also coerced (primarily in the private sphere). Furthermore, by taking seriously the idea that a women’s self-regulation and a household’s coercion work in tandem, the once important distinction made between public and private forms of autonomy appears to fall away.

A second way to reconcile the correlation between eating order and social capital supplements a conception of households as primarily instrumental entities, which are oriented to the task of maximizing resources, with a recognition that households sometimes reflexively adopt and promote the dominant norms of their communities, even without an identifiable resource to be gained. If as West and Zimmerman (1987) famously suggested that conceptions of gender are an emergent feature of interaction among actors, the household is an entity which may direct the kind of conceptions of gender which emerge. Drawing from the idea of “doing” gender, it may be that households provide the setting which helps to ensure that gender is consistently done in a particular way.

The household manipulates its surrounding environment in such a way as to reify understandings of gender as a natural and hierarchical division. For instance, some households adjust physical spaces in order to designate rooms within the home to be for the exclusive use of men (see Mehta 1990), but go further by reinforcing physical demarcations with both informal and formalized rules and practices. By propagating symbolic acts, such as a strict eating order during meal time or the practice of veiling or

pardah, households are key entities for maintaining patterns of deference and demeanor between men and women; however by this theory the motivation for doing this is not principally instrumental.

Here, private restrictions are not placed on women exclusively to reap benefits, but instead well-integrated households, through their engagement with their communities, are more inclined to regard prevailing norms as givens and adopt them as official household “rules” without question. Through more frequent interactions with more people, members of well-integrated households may be more thoroughly indoctrinated members of their community, and to the extent dominant norms are called into question, well-integrated households may be better versed in justification and argumentation which upholds the utility of such norms.

By this logic, the restrictions women experience on their autonomy should not necessarily vary along public and private dimensions. Households are conceived to be less instrumental and not compelled to place restrictions on autonomy as a pragmatic consideration. Indeed, if “doing” gender was something that could be routinely activated and deactivated depending on whether others were watching, it would likely hold less sway as a process that posits natural divisions between men and women.

While I have provided two very plausible explanations for why women in well integrated households practice a male-first eating order and face restrictions on their mobility, by rejecting the public/ private distinction, the problem is restated and can be taken up in the next analysis. Why was a similar relationship not observed regarding decision making and *pardah* practice? More broadly, future analyses would do well to better account for the multidimensionality of patriarchy. I have demonstrated that a full

examination of social capital provides some insight into the reproduction of patriarchal norms.

**Figure 1. Household-Community Interaction and Its Implications for Women's
Autonomy**

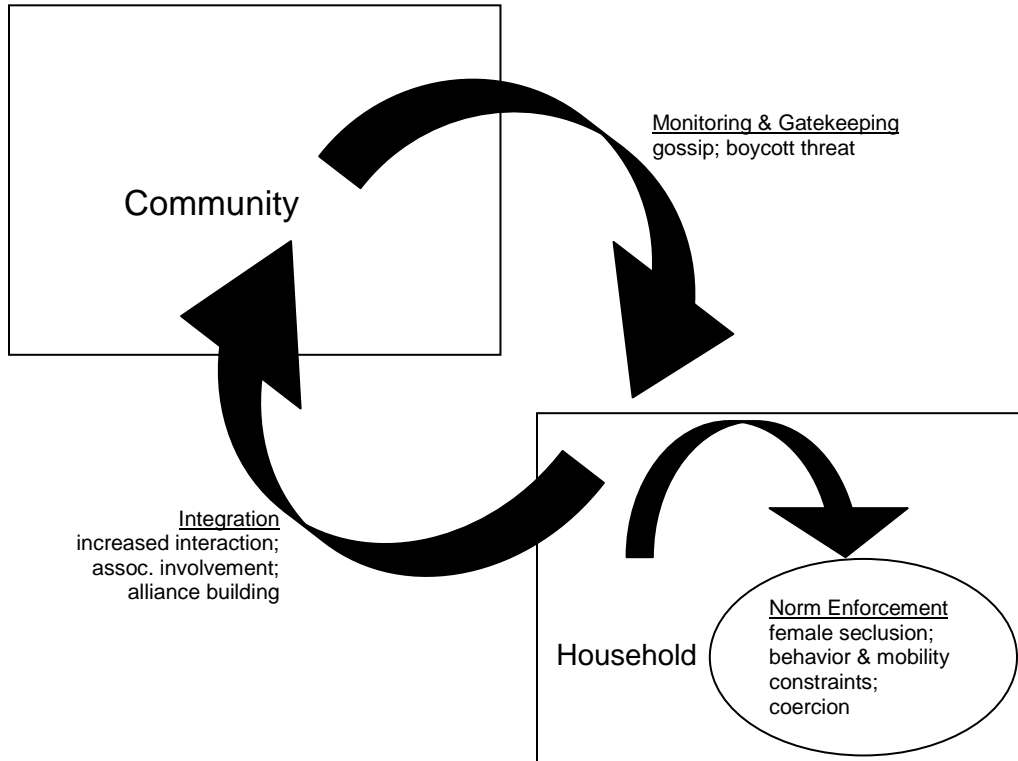


Figure 2

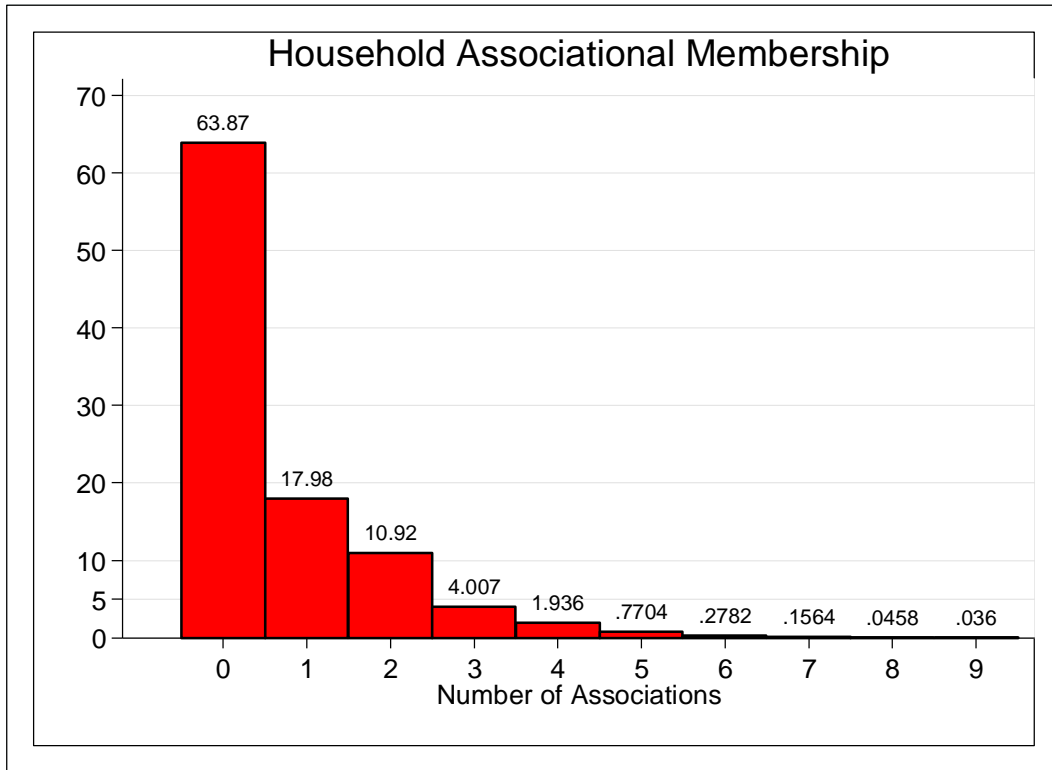


Figure 3

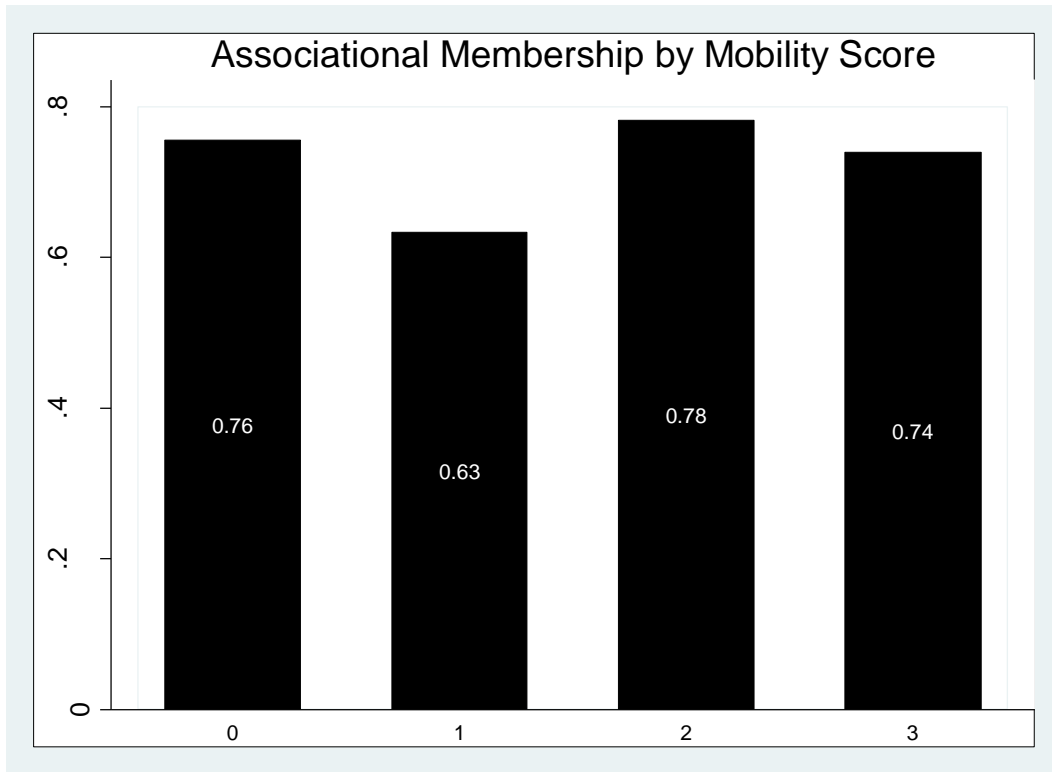


Figure 4

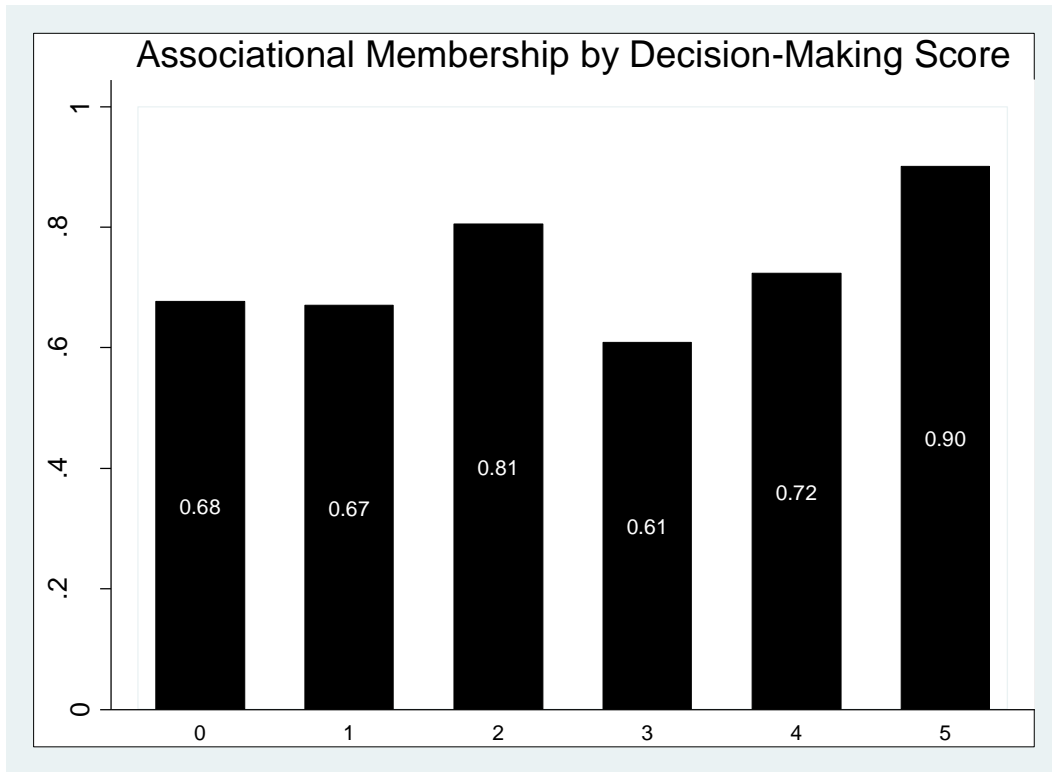


Figure 5

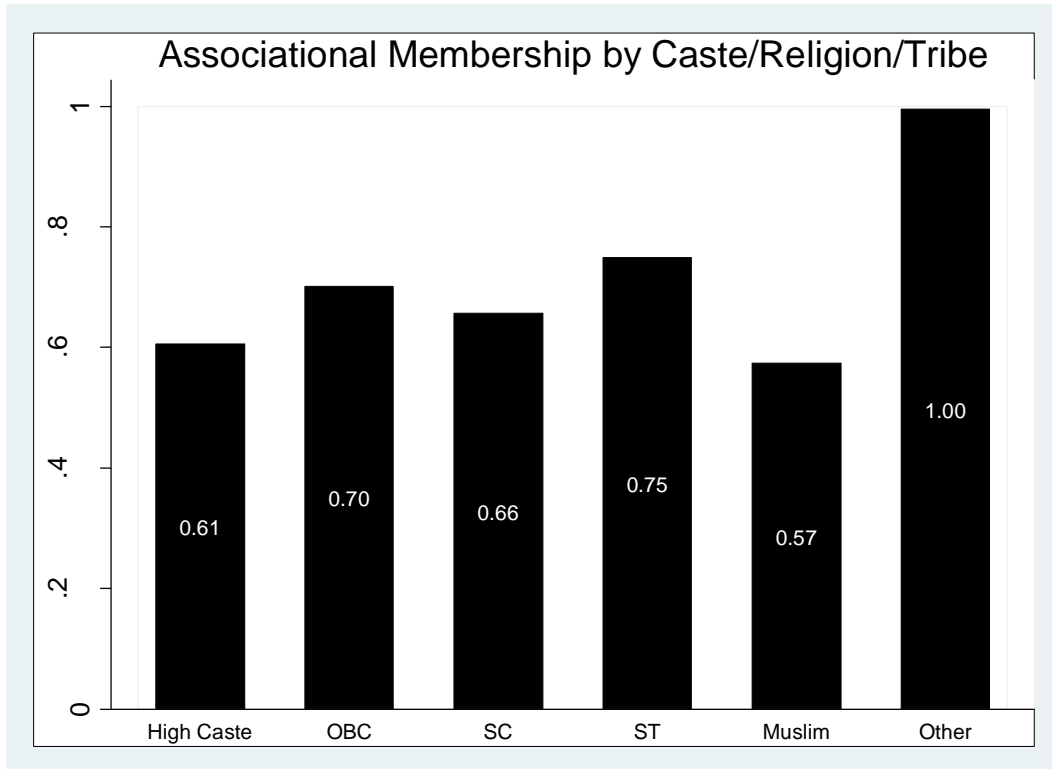


Figure 6

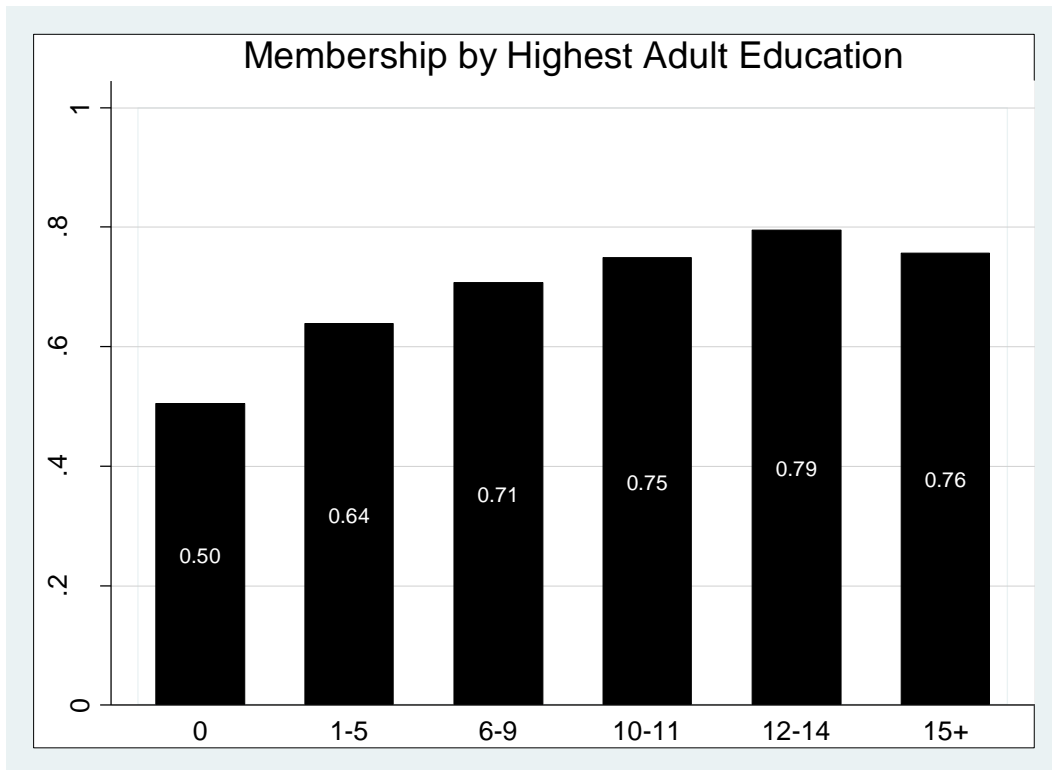


Figure 7

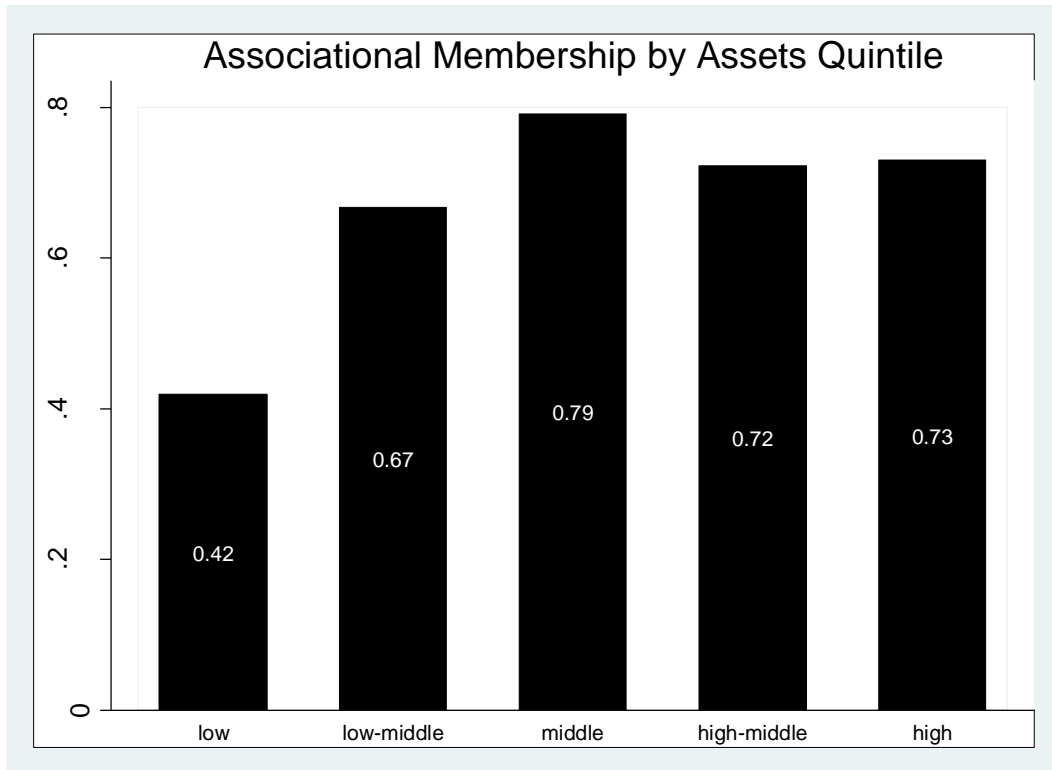


Table 1. Associational Membership by State

North India	mean membership
Punjab/Chandigarh	0.0884
Haryana	0.2285
Uttar Pradesh/Uttaranchal	0.1220
Rajasthan	0.3240
Madhya Pradesh/Chhatishgarh	0.4444
Gujarat, Daman, Dadra	0.5796
Jammu & Kashmir	0.2629
Himachal Pradesh	0.5057
Delhi	0.2325
Bihar/Jharkhand	0.8391
West Bengal	0.2053
Assam	1.6931
North East	1.6993
Orissa	0.5779
Maharashtra	0.9422
Andhra Pradesh	0.8844
Karnataka/Goa	1.1678
Tamil Nadu/Pondicherry	0.7807
Kerala	1.9180
Total	0.6690

Table 2. Dimensions of Female Autonomy

<i>Private</i>	<i>Public</i>
decision making	mobility
eating order	pardah

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	St Dev
pardah	0.5482	0.4977
women's mobility	2.1781	1.1574
women's decision making	1.4587	1.2498
male-first eating order	0.6596	0.4738
male education	6.5208	5.0974
female education	4.1910	4.8472
# of married females	1.2191	0.7023
# of married males	1.1689	0.6864
household assets	11.2741	6.0636
women's age	32.8130	8.0537

Table 4. Percent of Women with “Most Say” by Decision

Decision Items	% with Most Say
what to cook on a daily basis	74.3
whether to buy an expensive item	11.1
how many children to have	20.1
what to do if a child falls sick	30.7
to whom a child should marry	10.0

Table 5: Mobility, Purdah, Decision Making and Eating Order Regressed on Household Assoc. Membership

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Mobility			Purdah			Decision Making			Eating Order		
	Coeff.	S.E.		Coeff.	S.E.		Coeff.	S.E.		Coeff.	S.E.	
household assets	0.005	0.01		-0.018	0.01	**	0.002	0.00		0.039	0.01	***
male education	-0.017	0.01	***	0.027	0.01	***	-0.023	0.00	***	-0.003	0.01	
female education	0.037	0.01	***	-0.052	0.01	***	0.027	0.00	***	0.030	0.01	***
Other Backward Caste	0.128	0.05	*	0.203	0.06	***	-0.131	0.04	**	0.012	0.05	
Scheduled Caste	0.136	0.06	*	0.172	0.06	**	0.034	0.05		0.232	0.06	***
Scheduled Tribe	0.256	0.08	**	-0.845	0.09	***	0.040	0.07		0.538	0.09	***
Muslim	-0.322	0.07	***	2.214	0.09	***	-0.083	0.05		0.312	0.08	***
Sikh, Christian, Jain	0.212	0.11		-0.681	0.13	***	-0.122	0.09		0.352	0.14	**
(Upper Caste omitted)												
urban residence	0.254	0.04	***	-0.552	0.07	***	0.106	0.04	**	0.383	0.05	***
Number of married females	-0.108	0.07		0.312	0.07	***	-0.419	0.08	***	-0.325	0.07	***
Number of married males	-0.312	0.07	***	-0.067	0.07		-0.513	0.08	***	-0.409	0.07	***
Age of eligible woman	0.041	0.00	***	-0.012	0.00	***	0.030	0.00	***	0.007	0.00	**
Himachal Pradesh	0.377	0.14	**	-0.143	0.21		0.197	0.15		1.400	0.19	***
Punjab / Chandigarh	-0.260	0.14		-0.395	0.21		-0.220	0.16		-0.463	0.17	**
Haryana	-0.132	0.14		1.506	0.21	***	-0.676	0.15	***	1.118	0.19	***
Delhi	0.000	0.14		0.082	0.22		-0.379	0.15	**	-0.143	0.17	
UP / Uttaranchal	-0.717	0.13	***	1.233	0.20	***	-1.032	0.14	***	-1.874	0.14	***
Bihar / Jharkhand	-1.313	0.13	***	0.967	0.21	***	-0.146	0.15		-2.321	0.15	***
Rajasthan	-1.043	0.12	***	2.684	0.21	***	-0.848	0.15	***	-0.910	0.15	***
MP / Chhatisgarh	-0.959	0.12	***	1.468	0.20	***	-0.843	0.14	***	-1.131	0.14	***
West Bengal	0.084	0.13		0.682	0.20	***	-0.230	0.14		-0.343	0.15	*
Orissa	-0.390	0.14	**	0.545	0.21	**	-0.272	0.15		-1.661	0.16	***
Assam	-0.365	0.18	*	0.379	0.23		-0.365	0.17	*	-0.532	0.22	*
North East	0.861	0.19	***	-0.657	0.22	**	1.579	0.18	***	1.642	0.27	***
Gujarat, Daman, Dadra	0.233	0.15		1.406	0.21	***	-0.563	0.16	***	1.984	0.20	***
Maharashtra	0.599	0.14	***	-0.404	0.20	*	-0.127	0.14		0.049	0.15	
Andhra Pradesh	0.037	0.13		-2.415	0.21	***	-0.622	0.14	***	-0.337	0.15	*
Karnataka / Goa	0.023	0.13		-2.257	0.21	***	-0.457	0.14	***	1.312	0.18	***
Tamil Nadu / Pondicherry	0.007	0.15		-2.275	0.37	***	1.250	0.17	***	0.734	0.18	***
Kerala	0.671	0.16	***	-2.065	0.21	***	-0.597	0.15	***	0.901	0.19	***
(Jammu & Kashmir omitted)												
membership index	-0.056	0.02	**	0.023	0.02		-0.013	0.02		-0.124	0.02	***
Constant				0.338						1.370		
Observations	27,730			33,278			30,801			33,281		

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Notes

¹ The full list of items includes: cycle/bicycle, sewing machine, generator set, mixer/grinder, car/motorcycle/scooter, black & white television, color television, air cooler, clock/watch, electric fan, chair or table, cot, telephone, cell phone, fridge/refrigerator, pressure cooker, car, AC, washing machine, computer, credit card. at least two pairs of clothes, shoes/chappals, LPG use, pucca wall, pucca roof, pucca floor, separate kitchen, flush toilet, electricity, piped indoor water