demographic constraints on caste: a Fiji Indian example

CAROLYN HENNING BROWN—*University of Washington*

One of the questions that has most interested scholars looking at overseas Indian communities has been the issue of caste: Does the caste system survive implantation to soils outside South Asia? There is nearly consensus that the answer is no (Mayer 1967; Smith and Jayawardena 1967; Benedict 1967; Niehoff 1967; Kuper 1967; Schwartz 1967b; Dumont 1970). It is generally agreed that some elements of caste may survive. Examples of such survival include the following: a tendency toward informal relations of superiority-inferiority, a sense of "difference," a family tradition of caste identity, and a preference for marriage within caste. But, the consensus is that caste as a system of social organization cannot survive the migration process, for reasons which I believe have been left rather unclear.

I have elsewhere treated the issues involved in the transformations of caste society (Brown 1978); while not outlining them again here, I would just assert that the issues are not simple. The "immutable paradigm," as Tyler (1973) has termed caste ideology, is not transformed by any single cause, but by a multiplicity of factors, an "overdetermination" of contradictions accumulating both in the ideology and in the material base of Indian social life. In this paper I consider a single material factor, demography, and its impact on marriage ideology. This is a crucial issue, since it is endogamous marriage which produces those groups which

> are both distinguished from one another and connected together in three ways: 1) by gradations of status or hierarchy; 2) by detailed rules aimed at ensuring their separation, and 3) by division of labor and the interdependence which results from it (Dumont 1970:43).

It is usually assumed that caste, and with it caste-endogamous marriage, is disappearing in overseas Indian communities. This paper reexamines some previously published data on endogamous marriage among Indians in Fiji in an effort to determine whether endogamy is truly disappearing. Results of this study show that, as caste populations increase, so does the frequency of endogamy. These facts are discussed in terms of the structural theory of caste, particularly with regard to the relation between a structure of ideas and the material conditions of existence which determine the expression of the structure. The data also suggest that the desire for a larger subgroup population to meet ideal marriage rules may be an incentive to population growth, and therefore a matter of interest to those concerned with population dynamics and population control. [marriage, overseas Indians, demography, caste theory, structuralism]

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Reestablishment of these closed groups in the new Indian communities would have been one step, a major one, toward recreating caste society. I will reexamine some previously published demographic data from one overseas Indian community, the Fiji Indians. The questions I pose are simple: *Could* the Fiji Indians have reestablished a pattern of caste endogamy? And if they could, to what extent did they reestablish such a pattern? After examining the data, I go on to consider the implications of the answers to these questions for the structural theory of caste as brilliantly expounded by Dumont, especially in *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970).

Most Fiji Indians are the descendants of indentured laborers who went there between 1879 and 1916.[1] In all, 60,553 Indians migrated to Fiji, 75 percent of them from North India. No records of caste identity are available from Madras, but the record from Calcutta for the entire 1879–1916 period is summarized in Table 1. The figures show that there was not a gross disproportion of any one segment of the caste hierarchy. There may be some question about the Brahmin and high-caste figures, since such individuals were often promised civil service jobs in Fiji but were told to lie about their caste to the magistrates who rejected men of high caste who were not clearly accustomed to agricultural work. The emigrant population from South India probably contained a higher proportion of Christians and fewer high-caste individuals, judging from their proportions in Fiji today.

The population was also young. More than two-thirds of the Calcutta emigrants were between age 20 and 30, and the Madras emigrants may have been even younger. Tinker (1974:59) reports that 42 percent male and 45 percent female were under the age of 20. Most were single, and because of the pattern of early marriage in India, it is likely that many of the indentured laborers left spouses behind. Only one-third of the emigrants were female, for whom de facto marriages were arranged ("depot marriages") to satisfy the Government of India's ruling that women emigrants must have the permission of their families. From the start, regulation of marriage was a problem. A further impact of the age disproportion was the lack of elders to enforce traditional practices; and coming singly from all over India meant there was no continuity of specific traditional groups, either family, lineage, or caste.

In spite of this lack of group continuity, there is an accepted view (Mayer 1972; Brenneis 1973; Schwartz 1967a; Jayawardena 1971) that early in the development of Fiji Indian society, nearly everybody married within their own *jati,*[2] but that endogamous marriage, the last shred of caste-mindedness, is now withering away in Fiji's democratic environment. There are no early figures. Mayer (1972), who did fieldwork in 1950, did not publish marriage tables on the three settlements he studied, but said that "most people preferred not to marry outside their caste" (1972:63); he did not specify how many "most" are, and, in any case, preference and practice are not to be confused. Jayawardena (1971) accepts "most"

Table 1. Caste distribution of emigrants from Calcutta, 1879–1916.

Hindus	
Brahmins and High Caste	16.1
Agriculturists	31.3
Artisans	6.7
Low Castes	31.2
Muslims	14.6
Christians	0.1
	100.0

Source: Gillion 1962:209.

as a statement of early practice and assumes that there has been a decline in endogamous marriage, since in the two settlements he surveyed the rates of endogamous marriage were 48.5 percent and 43.3 percent. An even lower rate (38.7 percent) was found in Bhatgaon by Brenneis (1973). The only other data, a sample of 100 persons randomly interviewed by Schwartz (1967b), revealed a 44 percent rate of endogamous marriage. Regardless of whether the historical trend is a decline or a stable rate, there is no question but that these figures, all below 50 percent, are very low. Endogamous marriage in Fiji is a feeble shadow of its Indian counterpart, where *jati* endogamy is nearly 100 percent.

In trying to explain why the rate of endogamy is so low, it has been assumed by these authors that it is simply a matter of choice—that only 45 percent of Indian families arranging their children's marriages have placed *jati* identity high on the list of priorities in seeking a spouse. *Jati* endogamy has been viewed as an option, not a rule. I believe this interpretation is substantially in error for the following reasons.

It has long been realized that there is a correlation between population size and complexity of social organization (a matter receiving renewed attention; see Nag 1975). One form of societal complexity is the division of society into a large number of endogamous marriage categories, though this has seldom been treated systematically. Complex rules have certain minimal conditions. For example, there must be enough females in each segment for the group to continue to reproduce itself. The expression of ideal patterns will be affected by material conditions such as population size and indirectly by the determinants of population size. Conversely, insufficient population to meet normative standards may generate a sense of underpopulation and become a factor in population growth. Fluctuations in population size are normal, some segments enlarging while others shrink. Social systems usually have built-in mechanisms for adapting to such fluctuations, such as reclassification of individuals or temporary shifts in priority of some marriage rules over others (for example, an economically advantageous marriage being preferred over a marriage within the correct category).

North Indian marriage rules are exceptionally complex (Karve 1953; Lewis 1958; Gould 1960; Rowe 1960); a very large population is required for their full expression. In North India, for most groups the population is large enough to support full expression of the marriage ideology (though even so, elaborate procedures exist for finding a spouse whose categorization fully satisfies all the criteria of a "suitable match," and the search may be long and exhausting). In Fiji, as we shall see, the founding population of 60,000 was too small, the number of castes was too great, and generational depth was too shallow for full implementation of the marriage ideology brought by the Indian immigrants. But how many people does it take to make caste ideology work? What is needed is a model which would specify minimal conditions for the operation of the system of *jati* endogamy and its corollary, marriage rules, so that we can compare actual demographic data from Fiji against the model to discover whether the system *can* operate at the 100 percent level of endogamy.

There is no such model for India, although, working with Australian materials, Yengoyan (1968) studied demographic fluctuations and their effect on Australian marriage systems; his approach may assist us in understanding Fiji Indian marriage. Across the Australian continent are found tribes employing two (moiety), four (sections), and eight (subsections) marriage categories. Yengoyan was able to show correlations between complexity of the marriage system and demographic fluctuations. In establishing these correlations, he created a model which states the minimum requirements for the operation of moiety, section, and subsection systems. He derived 25 eligible mates as the number needed for the marriage system to function as idealized. With a constant pool of 25 potential mates, tribal size and social complexity vary as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Predicted and actual sizes of Australian tribes.

	Predicted size	Actual size
Moiety (2)	268	150-300
Section (4)	530	550-600
Subsection (8)	1070	1100-1150

Source: Yengoyan 1968

An exception to the above data was a group near the Gulf of Carpentaria which prescribed marriage into eight subsections but had a population of only 268. As a consequence only 57.9 percent of the marriages were regular, a fact which the people acknowledged with concern.

Yengoyan derived his figure of 25 eligible females in part empirically, and therefore it may be culture-specific to the Australians. An average of 25 insures that each man shall get a mate of the correct category and allows for specific fluctuations such as a shortage of girls in some age categories, individual preferences, wide distances which separate theoretically eligible mates, and disputes between potential wife givers and wife takers.

We shall have to examine the marriage ideology of North Indians and the Fiji Indian derivative before we can begin to ask what are the minimal demographic requirements for this particular ideology to function at 100 percent levels, and whether the Fiji Indian population meets these minimal conditions.

marriage ideology

As a start, we may conceptualize an inner circle of relatives who are too close to be married; rather extensive incest-avoidance rules specify who is within this circle. Alliances must be made within the outer circle which encloses the endogamous group and outside the inner circle. Further "prestige rules" are applied in this outer rim of potential spouses, reducing still further the number of available mates.

In the "northern zone,"[3] as delineated by Karve (1953) in her classic work on Indian kinship, the following rules generally pertain:

1. *The* sapinda *rule.* All castes, from highest to lowest, prescribe avoidance of marriage with anyone who is less than seven degrees from one's father and five degrees from one's mother, the point being that spouses should not be chosen from among those with whom any blood relation may be traced.

2. *The four-*gotra *rule.* Most upper castes are organized into *gotras* (clanlike categories), and in most cases, marriage into father's, mother's, father's mother's, and mother's mother's *gotra* is to be avoided. This rule has much wider actual currency than the *sapinda* rule.

3. *The rule of village exogamy* (sasan). Marriage with members of one's own village, who are village *bhai* and *bahan* (brother and sister) to each other, is forbidden.

4. *The vicinity rule.* Avoidance of nearby villages is also practiced, although the rule for exclusion is variable. In Rampur (Lewis 1958:161), a set of 20 villages dominated by a local Jat *gotra* was to be avoided. Karve (1953:119) cites another case where any village whose boundary touches on the boundary of one's own village was to be avoided, a somewhat less stringent avoidance.

5. There is also sometimes avoidance of villages with whom previous marriage alliances have been contracted, on the grounds that members of that village are now *bhai* to one's own village. This rule is variable; it operates in Rampur (Lewis 1958:161), with the result that Rampur has affinal ties with over 400 villages in the region. However, Rowe (1960:301), writing about Senapur, reports the existence of "popular" villages with which four or five marriage alliances have been made.

There are other rules, which we can call "prestige rules," that also prohibit many potential alliances within an endogamous *jati.* These depend far more on the social, economic, and political circumstances of given families than do the incest-avoidance rules. Prestige rules include, among numerous other considerations, the desire to: marry a daughter "up" in Rajput *jatis* whose lineages are ranked; find a boy with a good education or a civil service appointment; seek a beautiful girl; or make an alliance with a prestigious family.

The general tendency of these rules is to disperse marriage alliances widely throughout the *jati* and the region, maximizing the number of families with which kinship ties have been made and hence obligations can be claimed. In a society which is still fundamentally familial, where even in the formal sectors of commerce, government, and public institutions a cousin here or an uncle there is a prime tool in advancing one's own interests, the dispersive principle in marriage alliances is highly functional. However, despite the practical, strategic value of the dispersive marriage rules, behind them all is a moral and religious position, which is their true ideological basis; namely, that any blood relationship, or any appearance of a blood relationship, must be avoided. "A damsel who is neither a Sapinda on the mother's side, nor belongs to the same family on the father's side," must be found, according to the Laws of Manu; that is, no blood-relationship may be traceable between the two families (Buhler 1964:75-76). This avoidance is not based on genetic grounds, the modern rationale, but on the religious necessity for husband and wife to perform the holy rites together. The rule is ideologically interpreted so strictly in North India that under circumstances where unrelated persons come to be called *bhai* by one another, marriage between their children is by extension also forbidden. Hence the exclusion of village *bhai.*

Fiji Indian marriage ideology is largely derived from these North Indian patterns, though modified by the facts of their genealogical shallowness and the lack of kinship continuity with India. South Indians in Fiji also follow North Indian practices, though with a few significant variations to be noted below.

Fiji Indians also cite the *sapinda* rule, some saying that relatives up to the seventh degree must be avoided, others saying that relatives up to the third generation must be avoided. We might say that it is at present a moot point, since there are only three generations of Fiji Indians, and that with the coming of a few more generations, the point will need to be clarified. However, the real point—the essence of the *sapinda* rule—is that whatever the genealogical depth, no relationship may be traceable between the two families.

The terms *pariwar* and *natedar* are used to denote a wide range of relationships; some apply the terms only to patrilineally related persons; others include relatives through females, and still others include their own affinal relationships. At present, Fiji Indian kinship somewhat resembles the Western bilateral kindred, since in the three generations there has not been sufficient time and population growth for more complex groupings to develop. It is difficult to say whether patrilineages will develop in the future since, at present, all such potential lineages are hardly more than extended families composed of sons and grandsons of a founder. Incest-avoidance rules are extended to *all* of these persons, including anybody to whom any relationship may be traced, on both father's and mother's sides, and including persons related by long chains of affinity. Here, too, the exogamic rule includes certain special forms of Fiji Indian fictive kinship, such as the *jahaji bhai* (ship brother) relationship developed on the passage to Fiji during indenture days.

It can be seen that the rules of exclusion require a large *jati* group if marriage is to be endogamous within the *jati*. Mayer (1954:170) foresaw the coming difficulty when he wrote:

> An exogamous group which is bilateral and includes distant affines cannot continue for long. After two or three generations the exogamous boundaries would be bound to coincide with the endogamous caste boundaries of the group. The increasingly rapid spread of affinal relations means that it will eventually become impossible for people of the same caste not to stand in some sort of classificatory relationship. The eligible partners, according to these wide standards of exogamy, are decreasing in number.

South Indians brought with them to Fiji a wholly different form of marriage ideology, the most striking characteristic of which was the potentiality for cross-cousin marriage. This custom was so odious to North Indians, who regarded it as out-and-out incest, that South Indians soon abandoned it. They did not, however, adopt the North Indians' obsession to avoid alliance with anyone to whom a remote connection could be traced. The result is that they are not using up the pool of potential mates within the *jati* as are the North Indians.

demographic data

division of the population by *jati* A pie may be divided, at least theoretically, into an infinite number of pieces, but there is a limit to the number of divisions a population may have, if those segments are to be both endogamous and contain a smaller exogamous section. Looked at in this way, North Indian marriage ideology may be seen to be population demanding in the way that American technological dependency on fossil fuels is energy demanding. We do not know what the minimum size per *jati* is for the system to operate as idealized, nor at what point continuity begins to require some laxity of the rules, nor what sorts of modifications are then made. I am now investigating these questions in North India. For the present, I can only make comparisons of extant data for Fiji and North India.

Table 3 presents data from three rural settlements in Fiji; for comparative purposes I include similar data from Rampur, the village in U.P. studied by Lewis (1958). I chose Rampur because of the relatively complete demographic data which Lewis provides. Bhatgaon is a rural Indian settlement on the island of Vanua Levu studied by Brenneis (1973); Wainikoro and Raralevu, studied by Jayawardena (1971), are located in southwestern Viti Levu.

In compiling the information for the table, it was necessary to merge rank orders given by three different authors, who did not always agree on the placement of particular *jatis*. Of course, any rank order is regionally specific in India, the order varying from place to place and even from informant to informant in a single village. It is certain that this is not explicit for Indians in the settlements, who are prevented by the egalitarian ideology from doing any open jockeying for position. I believe that they do not actually care very much. One knows generally who is high, middle, and low, and rank order really contradicts the emic view, which does not make refined distinctions. So, where there were contradictions, I have followed the Rampur order, where considerations of rank matter more.

Table 3 shows a remarkably large number of *jatis* for a very small population in the Fiji case as compared to the Rampur case. There are from 22 to 30 *jatis* for married populations of only 132 to 156. Compare those figures with 12 *jatis* in a married population of 486 in Rampur. Moreover, the *jatis* are extremely small: the average *jati* size per settlement is 5, compared to an average of 40 in Rampur; 21 *jatis* have only a single representative in a settlement. The largest *jati* group in a settlement is the 51 Chamars in Bhatgaon, which in no way matches the 312 members of Rampur's largest *jati*, the Thakurs. The Fiji *jatis*, then, compared to Rampur, are numerous, small, and dispersed.

Table 3. *Jatis* and *Jati*-endogamous marriages in Fiji and India.

Jati	Bhatgaon[a]		Wainikoro[b]		Raralevu[b]		Rampur[c]	
	No.	No. married endogamously	No.	No. married endogamously	No.	No. married endogamously	No.	No. married endogamously
Brahmin	14	10	1	0	19	14	44	44
Thakur	9	4	1	0	36	22	312	312
"Rao"					1	0		
Raju			2	0				
Morai	1	0						
Gossai			1	0	6	2		
Bania	2	0	1	0	3	0	2	2
Jat					1	0		
Kurmi	7	0	1	0	2	0		
Murau	7	2	1	0				
Nai	1	0	2	0		6	6	
Ahir	16	6	6	2	9	0		
Mali					2	0		
Barhai	2	0			1	0		
Chetti			5	2	2	0		
Pillai					1	0		
Vaish	3	0						
Teli	3	0						
Kapu			8	2	4	0		
Gaundan			7	4	20	18		
Padayachi			2	0				
Balija			9	4	7	0		
Chipi							4	4
Kamma			3	0				
Golla			2	0	7	0		
"Marathi"			2	0				
Naiker			3	0	1	0		
Khati							8	8
Lohar	1	0	1	0			2	2
Kumhar							20	20
Kewat	3	0	1	0	4	0		
Bujuwa	1	0						
Redas	4	0						
Loniya	2	0						
Kahar					5	0		
Mutracha			2	0				
Odda			1	0				
Musahar					1	0		
Kori	7	2	5	2				
Jhinvar							10	10
Bhar			6	2				
Dhobi			8	6			10	10
Chamar	51	36	33	26	9	6	42	42
Bhangi							26	26
Dusad			1	0				
Pasi	12	0	2	0	1	0		
Kawar	5	0						
Kalwar	1	0						
Katik	3	0						
Sale					1	0		
Shanan			1	0				
Madiga			14	14	13	12		

	Bhatgaon[a]	Wainikoro[b]	Raralevu[b]	Rampur[c]
Total married persons	156	132	156	486
Total *jatis*	22	30	24	12

(Table 3 continued)

Percent endogamous	38.7	48.5	43.3	100.0
Average persons per *jati*	7	4	6	40

Sources: [a] Brenneis 1973.
[b] Jayawardena 1971.
[c] Lewis 1958.

marriage region The crucial demographic entity is not the settlement, however, but the region within which marriages are made. There would be scant chance of finding a mate of the correct *jati* within one's settlement, though unlike Rampur there is no requirement to marry outside the settlement. Jayawardena (1971:111) reports a trend to marry farther and farther away from one's locality. In a study of marriage registers in Nadroga District, he found that 81 percent of the brides came from the area between Siqatoka and Nadi. Using census data from this area it is possible to set up a model of the regional network of *jati* relationships. We will then be in a position to discover what the probable number of available females actually is for various *jatis*. The area under consideration is shown in Figure 1. According to the 1966 census, the first to enumerate Indian settlements, the total population of the area is 32,071 divided among 67 settlements. These settlements are small, averaging 478 individuals (we are now using population totals, not just the married population). Since the *jatis* pertain only to Hindus, we can subtract 15 percent (Muslims) from both figures, giving 407 Hindus per settlement and a total regional population of Hindus of 27,261.

Wainikoro and Raralevu both lie in this region; to fill out the data, which are somewhat

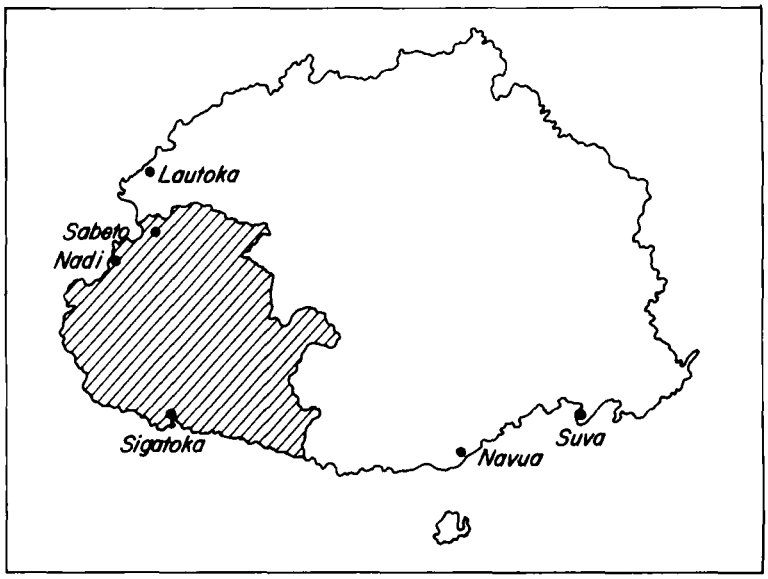

Fig. 1. Hypothetical marriage network region.

scant, I will treat Bhatgaon as if it, too, were in the Nadroga region. When we estimate the likely regional population of these 47 *jatis* (Table 4) based on extrapolation of their percentage of the total population for which empirical data are available, we see further reasons why it is unlikely that these *jatis* could be either fully endogamous or function as groups in any other sense. The largest of them, the Chamars, contains only 6670 individuals dispersed over the area. Of all the groups, Chamars would be least likely to want to reorganize in Fiji along caste lines since they are among those who have suffered most from its injustices in India. Nevertheless, they tend to marry among themselves, and, at least in Bhatgaon, the Chamars are nucleated in an area of the settlement known as Chamar-*toliye* (Chamar ward). The two next largest groups are Brahmins and Thakurs, privileged and high in the hierarchy, who could well have an interest in reorganizing by caste; but their numbers are only one-third that of the Chamars. In fact, only 7 of the 47 *jatis* have populations over 1000 in the region.

Table 4. Population of *Jatis* by settlement and region.

Jati	Percent Endogamy	Settlement population[a]	Regional population[b]	Percent of total	Females 15–19
Chamar	62	93	6670	20.8	380
Thakur	56•	46	2807	10.3	159
Brahmin	70	34	2071	7.6	118
Ahir	25	31	1853	6.8	105
Gaundan	81	27	1635	6.0	93
Madiga	96	27	1635	6.0	93
Pasi	0	15	1063	3.9	60
Balija	25	16	981	3.6	55
Kapu	16	12	736	2.7	41
Kori	33	12	736	2.7	41
Kurmi	0	10	699	2.2	34
Golla	0	9	545	2.0	31
Murau	25	8	490	1.8	27
Kewat	0	8	490	1.8	27
Dhobi	75	8	490	1.8	27
Gossai	28	7	408	1.5	23
Chetti	28	7	408	1.5	23
Bania	0	6	517	1.9	29
Bhar	33	6	517	1.9	29
Kahar	0	5	299	1.1	17
Kawar	0	5	299	1.1	17
Naiker	0	4	218	0.8	12
Redas	0	4	218	0.8	12
Nai, Barhai, Vaish, Teli, Kamma, Katik	0	3	163	0.6	9
Raju, Mali, Padayachi, Marathi, Lohar, Loniya, Mutracha	0	2	109	0.4	6
Rao, Morai, Jat, Pillai, Bujuwa, Odda, Musahar, Dusad, Kalwar, Sale, Shanan	0	1	54	0.2	3

[a] Figures for married persons only in Wainikoro, Raralevu, and Bhatgaon.
[b] Figures extrapolated to include married and unmarried persons.

It is possible to estimate the number of girls of marriageable age for each *jati* by taking 5.7 percent of their total regional populations, since this is the percent of the Indian population which would be females in the 15–19 age bracket, according to the 1966 census. Here we see that there are 380, 159, and 118 girls available among Chamars, Thakurs, and Brahmins, respectively. This seems like a plentiful supply until we remember the extremely wide extension of incest-avoidance rules, which makes many of these girls unavailable; the extent to which the boundaries of the exogamous group and of the endogamous *jati* approach each other, as Mayer foresaw, is a question which requires empirical investigation. We know that, even beyond this excluded group, prestige requirements for Indian marriage making are also complex; by these demands, many more girls may fail to be acceptable.

endogamy and *jati* size A further point of significance emerges from these data. If we examine the six largest *jatis*, those with populations of more than 1500 in the region, we see that their average rate of endogamy is 65 percent, or 20 percent higher than the average of all the *jatis* taken together. This indicates that as *jatis* become more populous, they more nearly approach the ideal patterns (see Table 5).

Perhaps most significant of all are the figures for the two South Indian *jatis*, the Gaundan (81 percent) and the Madiga (96 percent); the latter reaches nearly full expression of the endogamous rule. These groups exclude far fewer potential alliances under the incest-avoidance rules. Therefore, even though they have a smaller pool of girls in the right age category than the North Indian groups (both have 93 girls available), they are able to come closest to meeting the ideal pattern.

discussion

What is the minimal population size required for full expression of the marriage rules? I have only partly been able to answer this question, though there is some suggestive evidence. The Madigas, a South Indian group, can achieve almost full endogamy with a regional population of only 1635 and a pool of 93 available girls, but this is accomplished by the reduction of the number of persons excluded under incest-avoidance rules. This suggests that smaller endogamous groups are possible if the groups are willing to relax some of these rules. Brahmins achieve 70 percent endogamy with a pool of 118 girls; but after three generations of marriages, a large number of these girls would be considered too closely related to make appropriate potential spouses for their sons. So long as precedent still allows an exogamous match for prestige or other reasons if no better endogamous match is

Table 5. Endogamous marriages in six largest *jatis*.

Jati	Total	No. married endogamously	Percent married endogamously
Chamar	93	58	62
Thakur	46	26	56
Brahmin	34	24	70
Ahir	31	8	25
Gaundan	27	22	81
Madiga	27	26	96
Average			65

available, families need not be in the uncomfortable position of having to make do with the few choices that are still open to them within the *jati*. It would be good to know how large a pool is necessary in order to assure there being enough girls (1) who fall outside the prohibited degrees of relationship and (2) with sufficient variation in socioeconomic status, beauty, educational attainment, religious sect affiliation, etc., so that a choice may always be made within the *jati*. Such information will have to come from studies in India. I think it unlikely that any of the Fiji *jatis* are at present large enough.

One thing is clear, however; as the Fiji Indians' economic condition has improved since indenture days, the trend has been to recover aspects of Indian culture which had necessarily been in abeyance in the days of oppression and poverty during and after indenture. The elaborate three-day celebration of the *shadi* marriage, for example, is held as a mark of prestige by the family with affluence and rising fortunes. That ceremony and an endogamous match mutually reinforce one another, as the ceremonies seem hollow if the bride and groom are not "well chosen," and the efforts of making a worthy match call for the full panoply of celebration. "We Singhs always marry Singhs," a Rajput gentleman proudly told me. While the point is not technically true, the facts that such practices are cited with pride and that the high-prestige families (i.e., high caste in Fiji's "casteless" society) practice endogamous alliance making when they can are further impetus toward the strengthening rather than the weakening of the principle in the future.

Secondly, we may consider the relationship between population growth and endogamous marriage. We see that only the very largest Fiji *jatis*, those with over 1500 regionally, can attain even a 50 percent level of endogamy. In 1920, when the Fiji Indian population was only 16 percent of its present size, these *jati* sizes were correspondingly smaller, though the age proportion was different and more of the females were of marriageable age. As the *jatis* grew in size, it became more possible to meet the norms governing marriage.

This reexamination of the figures on caste endogamy shows that we may have been hasty in concluding that traditional Indian marriage patterns are dying out in overseas Indian communities. While not conclusive, they at least suggest that a historical, demographic dynamic is at work whereby a few basic principles for forming marriage alliances are operating on a population still too small for them to produce their usual empirical results; but, as the population grows, the pattern comes closer to what we expect to find.

We see here yet another example of the dialectical relationship between culture and the material conditions of existence. Indians brought with them to Fiji an ideology governing marriage making and family formation, but it was confounded by the absolute limits placed on their expression by the pattern of immigration under the indenture system. Few of the normative patterns of marriage making were possible. There were no fathers or brothers to arrange marriages, since the vast majority of immigrants came singly; on the plantations, there was only one woman to every three or four men, so those who could get a woman at all did not quibble over caste. In any case, these relationships were often thought of as temporary alliances, not marriages at all. They were never sanctioned by ceremony, but only by the passage of time and the coming of children. Many a man had a properly married wife at home, waiting for a husband who would never return. Moreover, the women on the plantations in Fiji suffered under the moral stigma that attaches to Indian women who are not kept unquestionably protected by their male kinsmen, and that stigma was exacerbated by genuine offenses against them by overseers, *sardars*, and coworkers (Europeans and Indian alike). The reinstitutionalization of marriage norms has been a lengthy process, beginning with reestablishing family control over women, including the arranging of their marriages, and continuing in the present with the increase in endogamous marriages as population increase permits.

So far the treatment of this material has been rather traditionally structural-functional, but I would like to make explicit a few implications of the study for structural theory as it has been applied to the sociology of India. Unfortunately, there is not space here for a full treatment of the important questions which might be raised, but a few points can be made.

First, let me point out what may only be described as a nervousness on the part of Fiji Indians about the failure of their marriage ideology to fully explain the facts, or of the facts to conform to the model. "We Singhs always marry Singhs" was certainly not a statement of fact, but of what *should be* true. While I was interviewing a Brahmin family, the son turned to his father's mother to ask, "Is mother a Brahmin?" His question was really the normative statement and strategic question, "Mother *should* be a Brahmin; shall we admit that she isn't?" Statements which indicate that the frequency of endogamous marriage was higher in the past cannot be true for demographic reasons, suggesting instead that claims to conformity with the rule have been made ex post facto. But while such footnotes to the data suggest discomfort with the failure of Fiji Indians to follow the model, I believe it would be going beyond the data to try to claim any systematic manipulation of the facts to give the model the appearance of working. This would be one way of satisfying the moral demands of the model; but the moral dimension is handled in another way.

We need to restore these facts to their historical setting, a setting which is morally interpreted by Fiji Indians in a way that leads us back to the pure and the impure, the logical opposition which is the basis of all the gradations of the caste hierarchy. The period of indenture from 1879 to 1920 was, as they view it, a period of *narak* (hell), when the moral order of Indian life was reduced to chaos, first by the crossing of the *kala pani* (black water; i.e., the ocean) which, symbolically, was socially annihilating, and then by the reduction of everyone to a degraded equality as coolie, structurally equivalent to untouchable but in a different hierarchical system dominated by Europeans. This period was seen as a time of moral decay (*adharma*), a major symptom and symbol of which was the condition of women, described earlier. So long as women were transferred from one man to another with no regard for caste boundaries or lineage purity, so long as a woman could leave one man to go to another one, so long as women could be violated by strangers with impunity, then all of society suffered moral decline. The moral decline of society was viewed as the basis of the political weakness of Fiji Indian society, wherein the political order and the moral order were indivisible reflections of one another.

There is no space in Indian social thought for a division of sacred and profane, or religious and secular spheres, as Marglin (1977) has correctly argued, contra Dumont. Power, although it has many forms, is not opposed to purity; it is encompassed in purity. The impure are also weak, even (or especially) in the political realm. While much more research needs to be done on the nature of power in caste ideology, it is clear that Fiji Indians equate their politically weak position during the indenture period with the immorality of the social order, even while recognizing that external circumstances forced this immorality on them. As early Indian leaders were learning to wage successful political struggles against the colonial government, they were urging their own society to return to a collective purity that would give them the moral power to succeed in the political struggles.

As Fiji Indian economic and political conditions have improved since the days of indenture, there has been a corresponding return to purity, though there is still a consciousness of a "fall," or impurity, in relation to India. The Fiji dialect of Hindi is sadly compared to the "chaste" Hindi of Northern India; Fiji's saints and priests are said to be inferior to those of India; and there is a constant and conscious effort to reconstruct the lost *dharma* of the old social order.

A contradiction enters here, because few Fiji Indians would say that they want to see a return to a full caste system. They consider themselves advanced over India in this one

sphere. Yet, it is precisely here where we seem to find empirical support for Dumont's (1970) view that the principle of pure and impure underlies and gives form to (i.e., generates) the caste system, for these very religious principles which Fiji Indians still endorse show signs of recreating that system, some of the distinguishing characteristics of which they would not want to see return. One must be cautious in making such an assertion. The demographic (i.e., material) conditions for a reconstructed system of fully endogamous *jatis* have not, so far, existed. As a consequence, the economic conditions for the caste system to be reconstructed do not exist. Particularly crucial is the fact that 83 percent of the land area of Fiji is by law restricted to indigenous Fijian landholding groups, and Indians, who are 50 percent of the population, own only 1/60th of the land. These conditions are unlikely to change in the near future.

The demographic recuperation of Fiji Indian society is instructive, however, for besides revealing increasing endogamous marriage, which would have the correlative result of clarifying *jati* boundaries (another return to wholeness and purity), we see also the two higher *varnas* leading the way in the maintenance of *dharma*. It is the Brahmins and Kshatriyas who have most interest in renewing endogamous marriage, even if viewed merely from narrow self-interest. But it is also an element of the old structure for the priestly and ruling *varnas* to cooperate in interpreting and enforcing *dharma* for the rest. So it is that the two lowest *jatis*, Chamars and Madigas, find themselves returning to the old system—their high rates of endogamous marriage are only partly by choice; they are also, in large part, the result of exclusion by others. Once again, the system is forced on them by those higher and more powerful in the hierarchy.

Many questions remain, of course. Here I have only attempted to understand certain interesting statistics on Fiji Indian marriage in light of current theory. I have addressed the vexing question of the relation between ideological structures and the material conditions of existence. There are also certain practical questions that the data raise. When it came to marriage making, *dharma* was confounded by demography. There simply were not enough individuals of the right category for *dharmik* matches to be made regularly. The sense that "there aren't enough of us" would impinge on consciousness when the time came to "find a suitable boy." There has been phenomenal population growth in this century, from the original population of 60,000 to the present 277,000, and part of the incentive to population growth may well have been the actual awareness of inadequate numbers within marriage categories. Moral purity and marriage ideology, on the one hand, and population growth on the other hand, may be mutually reinforcing forces.

This mutual reinforcement is significant for those concerned with population growth and control. There are societies, such as India, with marriage ideologies so complex that large populations are required to maintain them. A sense of underpopulation among small marriage categories may be a negative incentive toward practice of birth control, even though the total society may, by other criteria, be overpopulated. Further, as population control programs become successful in the future, populations may drop to the point where the marriage ideology once again is pushed to its limits. At that point, the rules will have to be relaxed or population growth may once again occur. This dialectic is, of course, only one factor among many in the determination of population fluctuations, but one which has received little attention so far and deserves further investigation.

notes

[1] There are actually two other much smaller groups of Indians who came to Fiji under free immigration—a trading community of Gujaratis, located largely in the townships of Fiji, and Sikhs, who

have settled in rural areas with the descendants of the indentured laborers and are primarily agriculturists.

[2] "Caste" is a Portuguese term applied to the Indian system, a word which is used in many ways: as a gloss for the total social system; in reference to the four *varnas* of the all-India classification (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra); in reference to the functional groups at local and regional levels (Rajputs, Dhobis, Telis, etc.); or in reference to the endogamous subgroups of the latter (Vadama Smarta Brahmins and Brihaccharana Smarta Brahmins). The term *jati,* a very general term meaning "kind" or "species," carries the sense that, as with species, people of different *jatis* cannot intermarry. Here I will use *jati* to refer to the group from which people feel spouses for their children must be chosen. I will continue to use "caste" as a reference to the total social system.

[3] The "northern zone" includes the regions of Sind (West Pakistan): Punjab, Kasmir, Delhi, U.P., part of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, and Nepal.

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