Arranged marriages are marriage agreements in which parents select their child's future spouse. In this article, learn about modern arranged marriages and the cultural and societal factors that impact the way we choose our spouses. As you read, take notes on how the author structures the information in the article.

[1] While they are unpopular in the United States, arranged marriages still exist in some places around the world today. An arranged marriage, as it's most commonly known, is one in which the parents select the spouse for their children. There are two different types of arranged marriages. The first type is a forced arranged marriage, when the parents or guardians select a spouse for their child, and the individual child has no say in the decision. In the second type, the child is allowed to meet the selected spouse in advance, and perhaps go on a few family outings together before they have the power to approve or reject their parents' selection. The latter type of arranged marriage tends to be more common, especially in the 21st century.

In either case, the marriage does not depend on any feelings of love between the couple beforehand; instead, their love for each other is expected to grow throughout the marriage.

Love and Marriage

From a Western perspective, we might think that marriages not based on love are doomed to failure or unhappiness, but this is usually not the case. One study done in India in the 1980s used the Rubin Love Scale to measure the amount of love in a relationship over the course of many years. In India, both autonomous and arranged marriages are fairly common, so the researchers compared and contrasted their results. They found that autonomous marriages start with a high amount of love, but the number goes down steadily in future years. In arranged marriages, on the other hand, the amount of love the couple feels starts relatively low, but it increases over time. By the ten-year mark, arranged marriages experienced twice the amount of love as autonomous marriages. Of course, some marriages are dysfunctional and even abusive, but according to the study, those in arranged marriages generally enjoy happier lives and lower divorce rates.
Who Arranges?

Millions of people have had arranged marriages in the past, and millions still engage in the practice today. Most modern arranged marriages take place in the Middle East and Far East, in countries like Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Bangladesh, Japan, and others. It has become less popular in places like China over the past few decades, as the culture rapidly Westernizes and young people are beginning to value individual choice more than family traditions and preferences.

Arranged marriage was much more universal in previous centuries, and was still quite common across Europe until the 1700s. Immigrant families brought the practice to America, where it still lingers among some minority groups. Today, some royal families and elites around the world still arrange their marriages, to preserve royal heritage or social status.

Reasons to Arrange

The reasons for arranging a marriage vary widely based on location and era. Often, families arrange the marriage of their child simply because it is the custom. The basic idea is that the parents know their children better than anyone else, so they will have the wisdom and experience to pick the perfect partner. It also gets the whole family more involved in the relationship, allowing the marriage to prosper with the help of respected elders and family members.

Arranged marriage usually has practical benefits as well. Parents will select a richer man for their daughter to marry to ensure her financial security and social standing. In many cultures, the right marriage can even raise the status of a whole family. Marriages can also be political actions, whether they further the family's position in politics, establish political alliances for the future, or smooth over some past conflicts. Poverty sometimes necessitates an arranged marriage when the parents can no longer afford to care for their own daughter. Among immigrant populations such as in the United States, parents set their children up with future spouses to ensure the child marries within their own ethnicity.

Arranged marriages might seem unfamiliar and strange to certain people, but they are actually fairly common around the world and have many individual and social benefits. Some young people in China have begun to realize this — when a single person 30 years of age or older and has not found a spouse, they will sometimes ask their parents to set up a marriage, because it is easier and more reliable than continuing to date on their own. So if you ever feel tired of the single life and would like to give married life a shot, you too could ask your parents to go ahead and set you up with that special someone.
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following statements best describes a central idea of the text?
   - A. Arranged marriages were popular in the past but have been replaced by autonomous marriages in nearly all societies.
   - B. Arranged marriages are about as successful as autonomous marriages because they are so widespread.
   - C. Arranged marriages are a non-Western practice that have not spread to westernized countries despite their positive benefits.
   - D. Arranged marriages allow love to emerge over time and can be more effective in the long-run than autonomous marriages.

2. PART B: Which phrase from the paragraph best supports the answer to Part A?
   - A. “In India, both autonomous and arranged marriages are fairly common, so the researchers compared and contrasted their results.” (Paragraph 3)
   - B. “By the ten-year mark, arranged marriages experienced twice the amount of love as autonomous marriages.” (Paragraph 3)
   - C. “Millions of people have had arranged marriages in the past, and millions still engage in the practice today.” (Paragraph 4)
   - D. “Arranged marriage was much more universal in previous centuries, and was still quite common across Europe until the 1700s.” (Paragraph 5)

3. Describe the relationship between love and marriage as depicted in this article, using evidence from the text in your answer. Be sure to describe both autonomous and arranged marriages in your answer.

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4. **PART A: Which of the following best explains how paragraphs 6-8 develop the ideas of the text?**
   
   A. by detailing how autonomous marriages have failed in westernized countries for those from cultures that traditionally arranged marriages
   
   B. by describing why arranged marriages are successful thanks to parents forming matches based on practical benefits
   
   C. by citing evidence that arranged marriages can result in true love and fewer divorces over time
   
   D. by explaining why arranged marriages work in some parts of the world and why they don't work in others

5. **PART B: Which phrase from the text best supports the answer to Part A?**

   A. “Often, families arrange the marriage of their child simply because it is the custom.” (Paragraph 6)

   B. “The basic idea is that the parents know their children better than anyone else, so they will have the wisdom and experience to pick the perfect partner.” (Paragraph 6)

   C. “Arranged marriages might seem unfamiliar and strange to a Western viewer, but they are actually fairly common around the world” (Paragraph 8)

   D. “So if you ever feel tired of the single life and would like to give married life a shot, you too could ask your parents to go ahead and set you up with that special someone.” (Paragraph 8)
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Would you ever want your family to choose your spouse for you? Why or why not?

2. If you could arrange a marriage for your closest friend, would you? Would you let them do the same for you?

3. The article states that love can develop before or after a marriage. Do you think these two types of love are the same, or are they different in some way? How so?

4. In the context of this text, what are some ways that love can emerge? How are these ways different? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.