

An Indian-Australian research partnership

<b>Project Title:</b>	<b>Dynamics of Family Change in India</b>	
<b>Project Number</b>	<b>HSS0633</b>	
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## Research Academy Themes:

**Highlight which of the Academy's Theme(s) this project will address?**

*(Feel free to nominate more than one. For more information, see [www.iitbmonash.org](http://www.iitbmonash.org))*

1. Advanced computational engineering, simulation and manufacture
2. Infrastructure Engineering
3. Clean Energy
4. Water
5. Nanotechnology
6. Biotechnology and Stem Cell Research
- 7. Humanities and Social Sciences**

## The research problem

Of the major changes in Indian society in the last two to three decades, what is happening to, and in, the institution of family is of utmost significance. The 'traditional Indian family' has been going through fundamental changes in its structure, form and functions. The average family in urban India, in particular, is fast resembling the 'typical family' in the West: an average of 2 children per family; increase in divorce and informal living arrangements (co-habitation or de-facto living arrangement) among young people; the traditional functions of family (e.g economic sustenance, childrearing) increasingly being provided by non-familial institutions. These changes have significant and far-reaching consequence for individuals, social groups and for the society at large. The Indian family is undergoing these transformations amidst improvements in women's

autonomy and empowerment (e.g increases in education and economic independence) but in a system characterised by strong patriarchal ideology, norms and values. At the same time, the family dynamics vary along class, caste, religious and ethnic dimensions and we would like to look at and perhaps compare these changes among the middle and the working classes. This calls for new and innovative research on the Indian family. The knowledge generated in this project will not only contribute to new theoretical and empirical understandings of Indian family and society, but will also have important family policy implications including in the area of family and child support, inheritance, and marriage and divorce.

### **Project aims**

The major aims of the project are:

- 1) To Investigate the changing nature of family structure in the context declining family size especially among middle and/or working classes
- 2) To examine the extent and nature of marriage and cohabitation
- 3) To explore the extent and nature of divorce;
- 4) To examine the link between women's autonomy, empowerment, class, caste, religion and ethnicity, and how these in turn relate to/drive family changes
- 5) To study the broader social, economic, political, ideological- and cultural forces that underlie family;

### **Expected outcomes**

- 1) The project will generate new knowledge and understanding of:
  - i) Family form and structure
  - ii) Marriage and cohabitation
  - iii) Divorce/separation
  - iv) Women's autonomy and empowerment
  - v) The drivers (e.g. class, caste, gender, ideology) of changes in women's empowerment and family change
- 2) The findings will contribute towards family-related policy development (e.g. child support; inheritance; marriage and divorce)
- 3) The new knowledge generated will also lead to theoretical and methodological developments in family research in India

### **How will the project address the Goals of the above Themes?**

The project falls under the theme 'Humanities and Social Sciences'. The project will be supervised by a team of researchers with complementary specialisations: sociology of the family, demography, gender and violence. The project will also adopt a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) to address the research questions. The project is expected to break new grounds (empirically, theoretically and methodologically) on family research in India.

## Capabilities and Degrees Required

*List the ideal set of capabilities that a student should have for this project. Feel free to be as specific or as general as you like. These capabilities will be input into the online application form and students who opt for this project will be required to show that they can demonstrate these capabilities.*

The students will have completed a Masters in Sociology or social/cultural anthropology or in any related and relevant social science discipline from a top university/institute with a strong/excellent academic record. Demonstrated ability to apply relevant theoretical perspectives and employ methodological approaches will be essential. Prior research experience in the social sciences will be desirable.

## Potential Collaborators

Professor Rowena Robinson

Monash researchers met with Professors Robinson in February this year. This application was prepared collaboratively, and we look forward to working together.

Please provide a few key words relating to this project to make it easier for the students to apply.

Family change; changes in family size, form, functions; marriage, cohabitation and divorce; class, caste and family change;