

New Multicultural Identities in Europe
Religion and Ethnicity in Secular Societies

Edited by: Erkan Toğuşlu, Johan Leman & İsmail Mesut Sezgin

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The cover features a decorative border composed of vertical columns of squares. The outermost columns are brown, while the inner columns are blue. The text is centered within the white space of the inner border.

Current Issues in Islam

New Multicultural
Identities in Europe

*Religion and Ethnicity
in Secular Societies*

Erkan Toğuşlu, Johan Leman
& İsmail Mesut Sezgin (eds)

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Edited by

Erkan Toğuşlu, Johan Leman & İsmail Mesut Sezgin

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CHAPTER 5

Manufacturing Self-Respect: Stigma, Pride and Cultural Juggling among Dalit Youth in Spain

Kathryn Lum

This chapter, which at first view may be seen as an outlier in this volume, has as its function to broaden our focus on the study of ethnic minority diaspora youth by considering the identity management strategies of a non-Muslim community, the Dalit Indian youth living in Spain. Dalit youth face a dual challenge: how to combat caste stigma and how to negotiate being a racialized ethnic minority in Spain. For former untouchables, intra-ethnic prejudice is just as important as external discrimination. This chapter discusses the importance of music and micro acts of social normalization in defying caste stigma. It then explores the various strategies for integrating a bicultural identity that Dalit Indian youth adopt, focusing on the concept of situational ethnicity. It concludes by considering what this case study of a Dalit Indian community in the diaspora can teach us about segmented integration and bicultural and multicultural identities.

Introduction

Much of the literature as well as popular discussion on the integration of ethnic minority second generation youth focuses exclusively on the axis of ethnicity or religion. This often ignores cleavages within ethnic groups and gives an impression of ethnic unity and homogeneity that does not exist in practice. In the case of the Indian subcontinent, caste is a significant driver of identity that competes with ethnic/religious identity both in India and the Indian diaspora.

This is particularly so for Dalit (lower caste) Indians who suffer from intra-ethnic discrimination from upper-caste groups. In fact, while it is frequently assumed that ethnicity will be the most important axis of identity for Indian ethnic minority youth, the caste stigma that Dalit youth must confront means that caste is at least as important as, if not more so than, their ethnic identities. While all Indian youth in the Spanish diaspora are racialized, this racialization is partially offset by a societal push to recognize and value all cultures equally. In contrast, the issue of caste remains taboo within the Punjabi community in Spain, making caste discrimination a more emotive issue for Dalit youth. This chapter will explore how youth from a 'minority within a minority', belonging to the Punjabi Dalit caste known as the Ravidassia, negotiate caste stigma and ethnic minority status in Barcelona. Grounded in an anthropological methodology, the aim of this research is to ascertain how youth subject to more than one form of discrimination overcome internalized stigma, while at the same time managing dual cultural influences.

The Ravidassia are a group of former untouchables in the regional caste hierarchy of the Punjab, located in Northwestern India, stigmatized by both Hindus and Sikhs' (although ritual impurity is not important theologically to the latter). The majority of the Ravidassia in the Punjab have adopted a heterodox version of Sikhism that incorporates the worship of their patron saint Ravidass who, despite being untouchable, achieved spiritual renown. Increased education, along with migration overseas, has enabled the Ravidassia community to achieve upward economic mobility in the Punjab, a process which has encountered strong resistance from traditionally dominant caste groups. In Spain, casteism has implanted and reproduced itself, forcing all Ravidassia youth to come to terms with the 'casted mind', despite living miles away from India, where caste politics is a daily reality. Most Ravidassia youth, defined as unmarried individuals under the age of thirty, are of an 'in-between' (Dronkers and van't Hof 1994: 9) or '1.5' generation, due to their status of being Indian born, yet partially raised in Spain: many came to Catalonia at a young age, generally before the age of sixteen. These youth are bilingual and increasingly trilingual: fluent in Punjabi, Spanish and Catalan and familiar with the Catalan school system. Like many other ethnic minority youth, they straddle two worlds – the Punjabi cultural universe of their family and the dominant culture of Catalan and Spanish society. However, as part of a stigmatized caste minority, they must also come to terms with their caste identity in a way that is not required of their upper caste peers. Using the examples of my interviewees, I discuss how Ravidassia youth view the

caste system and the impact of the new ‘Ravidassia pride’ movement that has emerged in the wake of the Ravidassia schism with Sikhism in 2009. I will then address how Ravidassia youth negotiate being an ethnic minority in Spain with multiple and often conflicting cultural expectations. I will conclude by analyzing the varied responses of Ravidassia youth to the challenges of biculturalism.

Methodology

The fieldwork for this chapter was carried out over a period of two years (2009-2011) in the greater Barcelona area and employed an anthropological methodology of ongoing participation observation in the Ravidassia temple and in family homes, as well as repeat, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with young men and women in the 18-30 age group from the Ravidassia community. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and involved the “1.5” generation of young men and women who had migrated with their families to Spain as schoolchildren or early adolescents. Interviews were held either at the university or in a public space such as a quiet café or a park, chosen by the interviewee. The decision to avoid interviews at the temple or in family homes was motivated by a desire for greater privacy and confidentiality. Initial contact with interviewees was made through the temple, as well as via the snowball method, resulting in a core sample of fifteen youth, with a preponderance of young men (11 men and four women). This gender imbalance is a result of both the masculine majority of the community and the greater willingness of young men to be interviewed for the study.

Attitudes towards the caste system

My interviews with upper-caste youth in India revealed that caste was often not particularly relevant for them until they reached university, where the issue of quotas for the lower castes has created a great deal of resentment on the part of upper-caste students. Many affirmed that they normally ‘did not think about caste’, a privilege that is not shared by the lower castes, many of whom grow up painfully aware that they are marked out as different and choose to pass when they reach university in order to avoid stigma. In the diaspora, although the vexed issue of educational quotas does not colour caste relations, the caste system is still very much socially present. Eleanor Nesbitt, in her study of perceptions of

caste among young British Indian youth of Gujarati and Punjabi origin, shows that both Hindu and Sikh youth are well aware of caste. By the ages of eight to thirteen, Sikhs and Hindus are able to identify other children by their caste (Nesbitt 1997: 212). Hindu children understand caste as a hereditary institution and vertically graded hierarchy that implies marriage endogamy. Attitudes to the caste system among non-Dalit Hindus range from their being openly critical to an idealized acceptance (Nesbitt 1997: 207). While the majority accepted intercaste marriage, if somewhat grudgingly, they repeatedly declared that caste was irrelevant when it came to friendship (Nesbitt 1997: 208). Among young Sikhs, both Dalit and non-Dalit, repeated reference was made to 'proper' Sikhs, a concept which was often linked to caste, with Jat Sikhs perceiving themselves as well as being perceived by Ravidassia youth as 'true' Sikhs (Nesbitt 1997: 211-212). Among Ravidassia and Valmiki youth (Valmikis are another Dalit group), some youths spoke of their fear of being discriminated against should their untouchable origins be discovered, and of having learned various passing strategies from their parents for dealing with the caste question (Nesbitt 1997: 212). Nesbitt concludes that caste and casteism is just as strong among young Punjabi Sikhs as it is among Gujarati Hindus. No longer considered relevant to friendship, it is still seen as central to marriage, although British Indian youth underline the fact that intercaste marriages are increasing (Nesbitt 1997: 213).

Another study, carried out in 2001 among predominantly Gujarati Hindu British youth by the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies (the caste makeup of their sample was unfortunately not indicated), found that 35% of the respondents affirmed that the caste system influences some of the decisions in their lives, and 43% agreed with the statement that "the caste system is important to my family" (Santosh & Vij 2003: 27). In this survey, while caste prejudice was condemned, the positive aspects of caste were also highlighted, such as caste-specific social/religious events, and the security and identity that caste bestows (Santosh & Vij 2001: 27). Brahmin youths rejected an ideology of Brahmin supremacy, but some did feel that being part of the Brahmin community made them different and special. Their sample was equally divided on the issue of cross-cultural friendship: 41% preferred to have friends from a similar religious/cultural background, while 41% stated that this was not important. However, with regard to marriage, 67% declared that it was important for them to have a "Hindu life partner" (Santosh & Vij 2003: 22-23).

How do Spanish Ravidassia youth² perceive and make sense of the caste system? And how do these perceptions compare with those of other Indian youth in

Europe? In Spain, I interviewed exclusively Dalit youth regarding their perceptions of the caste system and intercaste mixing. The caste system was universally condemned and frequently compared to racism. Indeed racism as a metaphor was used more often than casteism when describing upper caste discrimination. Ravidassia youth emphasized that upper caste racism was a bigger problem than racism originating from Spanish society. When asked about experiences of racism, very few offered any examples from Spaniards, whether at work or at school. This contrasts with the findings from an Italian case study of second-generation youth from the Maghreb and the Philippines, which revealed local racism, especially in the job market, rather than internal instances of bigotry (Ricucci 2010: 422).

The results from my Spanish interviewees have broadly echoed research already carried out in the UK on youth attitudes towards the caste system. All of my interviewees were in favour of inter-caste friendship, and considered caste to be immaterial in forming friendships. However, their flexible attitude towards friendship contrasted sharply with their views on marriage, where all but one interviewee favoured marrying within one's caste. As in the UK, caste was understood as a hierarchical and hereditary institution, but the legitimacy of this vertical hierarchy, in which Chamars are placed at the bottom, was continually contested. One articulate young man referred to caste as a 'trap', in which all castes, including Chamars, were ensnared: "[e]veryone believes that he is superior to someone else". Thus caste is also understood as a deeply rooted mentality that automatically categorizes and ranks the worth of others – even when the system itself is condemned and despised. The relevance of caste to humanity or to the human personality was consistently challenged. 'We all have the same blood' and 'I am first and foremost a human being' were common refrains. At the same time, Ravidassia youth find themselves operating within a social system in which caste is omnipresent and assumed fundamentally to determine an individual's personality traits. A system which automatically devalues the Chamar/Ravidassia identity and associates it with a number of negative characteristics such as being poor, illiterate, dirty and lazy/unreliable. The dominant caste in Punjabi society, the Jats³, were repeatedly criticized for their arrogance and superiority complex. Given that the Jats have traditionally dominated the Ravidassia both economically and culturally, there is a history of conflict between the two communities that has recently been accentuated with the rise of Ravidassia assertion in the Punjab. Many Ravidassia identify the Jats with collective and individual feelings of humiliation and lack of respect. It therefore comes as no surprise that negative stereotypes were voiced about Jats as a group, such as their propensity for drink,

their lack of education, and their lack of respect for women. Apart from the Jats, only the Lubanas (a generally prosperous intermediary caste) were singled out by the Ravidassia for being particularly casteist. In fact, some of my interviewees pointed out that the Lubanas were sometimes worse than the Jats, but the demographic dominance of the Jats both in the Punjab and the diaspora, means that casteism is most often associated with them. Ravidassia youth therefore find themselves simultaneously dreaming of a world in which caste does not exist and also dealing with the daily reality of caste stigma and the consequences of their low position in the caste hierarchy, which leads them to strike back with negative caste stereotyping of their own.

The supremely important institution of marriage in Indian culture can be regarded as a litmus test of evolving caste attitudes. The strong preference for marrying within one's caste, at all points along the caste continuum, has made marriage the preeminent institution for maintaining caste boundaries. The modern leader of India's Dalit movement, B. R. Ambedkar, recognized this and preached that ultimately only intercaste marriage could undo the caste system. Surveys of Indian youth show, despite expectations to the contrary, that they are surprisingly conservative with regard to the issue of marriage. A survey conducted by the national magazine *India Today*, for example, found that 73% of youth believe in arranged marriage (Bobb: 2006). This trend is echoed in the Spanish diaspora. The majority of Ravidassia youth accept the institution of arranged marriage (or at least the utility and ease of an arranged marriage), and prefer to marry a girl or boy of their own caste. As in India, the main reasons offered are the 'better understanding' within the same caste or *jat*, and the greater parental and community support that intracaste marriages enjoy. No one wished to marry a Spaniard; the strong preference was that their marriage partner should be Indian, preferably an Indian settled in Spain. In preferring to marry a fellow Chamar, youths frequently pointed out that mixed marriage (both out of caste and with Spaniards) was disapproved of by the community – particularly so on the part of girls. Indeed, one girl pointed out the dramatic gendered double standard regarding marrying out: '[i]f I marry a Spanish boy, it is horrible; it will be very badly seen. If a boy does it, it is normal, people will feel proud, that he has married a *gori* (a white girl)'. Intercaste marriages were primarily viewed as undesirable due to cultural differences – a theme also echoed repeatedly in India. 21-year-old Balminder spoke for many when he highlighted the cultural differences between Chamars and other *jats* and emphasized the *problematic* nature of marrying out of caste:

“Normally Chamars don’t marry with people from other castes. The Jats are not raised well. They drink a lot of alcohol, they do drugs, they have a lot of vices...people with problems. Not all are like that, but the majority yes. We prefer with another Chamar. They will be of the same culture, they will think in the same way, they will understand each other better... it will avoid problems.” (Balminder, male, 21 years, Barcelona)

The key difference in the relationship to the caste system experienced by the upper castes and Dalits is that while caste is particularly salient when it comes to marriage and community events for all caste groups, it does not pose the problem of stigma management that the lower castes face. Upper caste youth do not have to think about how a new acquaintance will react to their caste identity, whereas the lower castes are aware that they are potentially ‘discreditable’ at any time. In addition, while marrying within one’s caste is accepted across a wide spectrum of youth, the motives for doing so can be quite different for Dalits, who often fear that they will never be truly accepted by their in-laws if they marry out of caste.

“Putt Chamara De”- The Emergence of a Chamar Pride Movement

The term ‘Chamar’ in India is a highly stigmatized one, equivalent to the highly derogatory term used to humiliate African Americans. Under the SC/ST (Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe)⁴ Prevention of Atrocities Act of 1989, it is a legal offence to call someone a Chamar. However, in the wake of the attacks on the spiritual leaders of *Dera SachKhand Balland* (the leading religious centre of the global Ravidassia community), which resulted in serious injury to their most senior leader and the death of his much respected second-in-command, the term Chamar has since been reclaimed by the community. The attacks on their beloved leaders (the personal gurus for a number of Ravidassia both in India and the diaspora) led to immediate riots in the Punjab. However, more than three years after this tragic incident, which took place in Vienna in 2009 during a European tour by the gurus, the most visible change has been cultural. Starting in 2009, there was an explosion in songs that, imitating the pre-existing trend to exalt ‘Jatness’ in Punjabi folk music, sing the praises of the Chamar caste. Diaspora Ravidassia have played a key role in funding and promoting this musical renaissance (Dogra: 2011). Although the first such song “*Putt Chamara*

De" (Sons of Chamars) appeared in 1998, in the aftermath of the Vienna attacks, a veritable tide of songs has flooded the market, all with themes that speak of pride in being Chamar. Examples of songs include titles such as 'The Fighter Chamar', 'Hummer Chamar', 'These self-respecting Sons of Chamars', 'Think before Messing with a Chamar' and 'Young Lions of Chamars'. These songs have all been accompanied by videos that have been hugely successful among the Ravidassia community.

For the first time, Ravidassia youth are able to listen to songs that speak to their need to assert themselves culturally and claim collective self-respect, in a broader context in which they feel their identity is under attack. They are reclaiming *bhangra*, as Punjabi folk music is known, as a musical genre for their community after a long history of its being intimately associated with the Jat caste. Ethnographic studies of the Jat community show that *bhangra* is identified and claimed by Jats as being 'their music' (Mooney 2008: 113). Ravidassia youth use social media such as YouTube to listen to and share videos of their favourite songs. In the *gurudwara*, 'have you heard the latest song?' has become a common theme of conversation, and youths proudly discuss the number of songs now available. During the 2010 birthday celebration for Guru Ravidass in Barcelona, one of the most popular "*Putt Chamara De*" songs was sung during the religious ceremony, indicating how symbolically important such songs have become. It is important to point out however that it is predominantly male youth who are the most enthusiastic fans of these songs. The videos that accompany them show young, well-built, menacing Ravidassia men who often brandish swords or guns, in a clear message that Ravidassia men will no longer be bullied or made to feel inferior by upper caste men. Their common theme is 'we are just as manly as you'. Most of the titles make reference to Ravidassia boys and men only, such as the song 'I've heard that there is talk of Chamar boys everywhere'. As with 'Jat pride' songs, 'Chamar pride' songs are aimed at promoting a specifically male Chamar pride and bolstering Chamar masculinity. Thus far, no song addressing *Chamaris* (female Chamars) has been released. However, one of the most popular singers in the Chamar pride movement is a young Punjabi woman known as Miss Pooja, who has galvanized the collective consciousness of the Ravidassia Chamar community with her inspiring song "*Begumpura Vasauna*" ('Establish *Begumpura*', the paradise of social equality envisaged by Ravidass).

For youth raised on a constant diet of 'Jat pride' bhangra music, a cultural phenomenon which many previously took for granted, the new songs that speak positively of Chamars have greatly stimulated pride in their caste. Prior to the

Vienna attacks, some Ravidassia youth rued the fact that many famous singers were Chamars, but due to caste stigma were not open about their caste identity or, even worse, sang 'Jat pride' lyrics. Now Ravidassia youth were eager to list all the singers who were Chamar, and more importantly, singing Chamar lyrics. The psychological impact of these songs on the self-esteem of a group that has historically been both underrepresented and negatively portrayed in popular culture should not be underestimated. In the words of a seventeen-year-old computer science student enrolled in a professional training college, these songs represent a collective 'awakening' of the Ravidassia:

"I feel good when I listen to these songs. I feel a lot of pride – before also, but now more. Now we are more awakened. I listen to loads of songs every day; this music is ours, it makes me feel strong. I no longer listen to the songs of Jats...they speak about Punjabi culture like it was theirs, as if all important persons were Jat. These songs for the low castes are good to wake up our people. Now, there is more pride, I say, 'what's up Chamar' jokingly to my brother." (Nandeep, male, 17, Barcelona)

Although songs form the backbone of the emerging Chamar Pride movement, at the individual level important transformations are also taking place that have the potential to completely revolutionize the unequal power dynamics that structure social interactions between former untouchables and the upper castes. A growing number of Ravidassia youth, both male and female, are becoming micro ambassadors for Chamar pride in their daily lives through attempts to *normalize* their caste identity – that is, by declaring their caste identity as nonchalantly as their upper caste counterparts do. Just as Chamar Pride songs seek to make the Chamar caste like any other, declaring their caste identity with inner pride and confidence seeks the same in daily social life. For such normalization to take place, Ravidassia youth must first begin the process of 'de-Othering' themselves in their own minds, which enables them to embrace their stigmatized identity and feel comfortable with it despite its social devaluation. It is a process of defying stigma from within and coming to terms with stigma in such a way that it no longer provokes anxiety or feelings of inferiority. Goffman speaks of the 'moral careers' of stigmatized individuals, to describe the learning and socialization experiences of those who share a particular stigma. As in his definitions of discredited (visible) stigma versus discreditable (invisible) stigma, he is careful to distinguish between different types of 'moral careers', depending

upon the stigma in question. He also identifies two phases of socialization: that in which the individual acquires and internalizes the standards/norms of dominant society, and that in which he or she learns that he has a stigma, and the consequences of possessing it. Goffman calls the moment of stigma realization a 'moral experience' (Goffman 1963: 33). Most Ravidassia youth confessed that their strongest moment of stigma realization came when they moved to Spain and faced both subtle and open prejudice in Barcelona's *guruduwaras*. What Ravidassia youth are currently attempting is a brave new moment in their 'moral careers': that of stigma unlearning.

An example is offered by 24-year-old Surinder, a pharmacy student who also works part-time in a local health centre. Gone is the discomfort and unease that she used to feel when faced with the ubiquitous caste question. Reflecting on how she now feels internally when someone asks her about her caste, pharmacy student Surinder offered the following observations:

"I don't like to say that I am from a low caste, but rather that I have this caste, and that's it. If I ask someone from an upper caste about their caste, they feel proud, they feel good that you have asked them that question, so why should I feel bothered or angry because I am asked?...For a Chamar or a Chuhra on the other hand, they always reduce themselves and this should not happen. I think that in a situation in which the person before you thinks he is strong because of his caste, I think a low caste person has to be his equal...Now if someone asks for my caste it's as if they are asking me for my name and that's how I respond, I am proud to be Chamar." (Surinder, female, 24 years, Barcelona)

After several years of internal struggle, Surinder reached the conclusion that the only feasible alternative was to accept and value oneself fully:

"If I don't accept myself, what other options do I have?...None, and they are all negative. And they will affect you more. And what's more, you will suffer...you have to come to the realisation that you must accept yourself in your entirety. Otherwise you will always be on the defensive." (Surinder)

Surinder's path to self-acceptance came through the realization that she could claim a piece of upper caste privilege and enjoy the same social ease that they do by fully accepting her difference and considering herself entitled to the normality

that is usually the prerogative of the upper castes in social life. For Ravidassia youth in the Spanish diaspora, then, Chamar pride, both in songs, and internally, is transforming their self-image and giving birth to a new self-confidence and nascent assertiveness. In effect, Ravidassia youth, through music and in everyday social interaction, are creating a new language for thinking and feeling about their caste that is reclaiming the traditionally demeaning term of 'Chamar' and turning it into a term of self-respect, akin to 'Jat' or 'Brahmin'. The Chamar pride movement shows that stigma, no matter how deeply rooted, can be overcome, at least from below, from those who suffer from its psychological weight. It also reveals that popular culture, in this case music, can be a very effective tool for 'speaking back' to dominant groups and creating a self-affirming alternative narrative to that offered by mainstream Punjabi culture.

Situational biculturalism

In addition to overcoming caste stigma, Ravidassia youth living in Spain face a number of challenges related to their cultural identity. Whilst Spanish youth also deal with identity issues and must work out 'who they are', they do so supported by the majority culture. Native youth in Catalonia are more likely to report a Catalan/Spanish dualism, a cultural frame that is largely absent for Ravidassia youth, for whom the Spanish/Catalan binary is less emotionally salient than the India/Spain binary. Similarly, Ravidassia parents have the anchor of Punjabi culture to help them weather the stormy seas of adapting to a new culture, language and way of life. Ravidassia youth, on the other hand, must negotiate two different, and often diametrically opposed, sets of cultural values. They find themselves inhabiting a psychological 'borderland', much like the Mestizo community in the United States described by Anzaldúa (Anzaldúa: 1987). They receive contradictory messages regarding how to behave and identify – one at home and within the community, and the other, at school and in broader society. How do they resolve the psychological conflicts resulting from having dual cultural influences? Some theorists, such as Phinney (1999), posit a developmental model of ethnic minority identity that sees ethnic minorities proceeding neatly from one stage to another. He identified five stages: 1) conformity, characterized by a preference for the dominant culture; 2) dissonance, characterized by conflict between the dominant culture and the culture of origin; 3) resistance and immersion, characterized by rejection of the dominant culture and acceptance

of the culture of origin; 4) introspection, during which the previous trend is intensified; and finally 5) integration, characterized by a synergy between the two cultures. I believe that this developmental model is of limited use in helping us to understand the complex process of identity development among ethnic minority youth. In practice, individuals do not proceed in a linear fashion from one stage to another, but rather may be juggling several stages at the same time, depending upon the issue in question. My research reveals that ethnic identity for Ravidassia youth is very much situational in nature and is much more fluid than Phinney's model allows for.

Marcia (1980), who identified four statuses of ethnic minority identity, offers a more flexible, non-developmental model: 1) identity achievement, in which an identity is committed to after a period of exploration; 2) foreclosure, in which an identity is chosen without personal exploration, following family and community prescriptions; 3) moratorium, during which one is in the process of exploration; and 4) diffusion, in which no effort is made to explore or make an identity commitment. While Marcia's model is an improvement on Phinney's, it speaks of identity commitment in monocultural, as opposed to bicultural terms – it does not appear to allow for a dual identity commitment. It shares the limitation of Phinney's model in that it does not contemplate the possibility that all four stages may be present simultaneously depending upon the identity issue that a particular youth may be facing. Like the previous model, Marcia's model is too static and fails to capture the complexity and constantly changing nature of ethnic minority identity dilemmas. I argue that the fourth stage of diffusion is more likely to apply to majority than to ethnic minority youth, since most ethnic minority youths are forced to reflect upon the nature of their ethnic identity and to make certain choices in order to be accepted both within their community and within the majority culture. Usually, it is only dominant culture youth who have the luxury of being non-reflexive and non-explorative, since they take their cultural references and values for granted and do not feel the need to interrogate them.

I find the model proposed by Berger, who studied the coping strategies of Jewish adolescent immigrants from the former Soviet Union in New York, to be more useful in helping us to understand how adolescent immigrants make sense of their dual identities. Berger (1997) identified four patterns for dealing with what she calls adolescent immigrants' 'double identity crisis': 1) clingers: those who hold on to their native culture and either passively or actively refuse to adopt the host culture; 2) eradicators: those who erase their culture of origin

and wholeheartedly embrace the norms of the new culture; 3) vacillators: those who oscillate between both cultures, finding it difficult to choose either one; and 4) integrators: those who concurrently balance aspects of both cultures, defined by Berger as truly bicultural (Berger 1997: 268.268). Berger points out that both individual factors, such as the perception of the place of their culture within the majority culture, and social factors, such as family dynamics, impact upon the coping patterns of ethnic minority youth (Berger 1997: 266). I would also add the critical factor of gender, since female Ravidassia youth have less scope for identity exploration than their male counterparts due to the patriarchal gender norms that govern Punjabi culture, leading to greater restrictions on their mobility and free time (most girls are expected to come home directly after school or work). The reputation of girls is much more fragile and Ravidassia girls are thus less able to take risks when managing their dual identities.

My research among Ravidassia youth living in Spain reveals that Ravidassia adolescents exhibit aspects of all four patterns outlined by Berger, although with very few eradicators, since the vast majority of Ravidassia youth are proud of their Punjabi/Indian heritage and value their culture. Ricucci, in her case study of North African and Filipino adolescents in Italy, also found that it was 'very important' for them to maintain their culture and language (Ricucci 2010: 422). Strong social and family control also means that most Ravidassia youth are not free to eradicate, even if they wished to do so. Thus, rather than represent only one of the patterns defined by Berger across the board, Ravidassia youth tend to adopt different identity strategies and levels of Spanish/Indian identification depending upon their physical environment and the situation in which they find themselves – performing a situational ethnicity. In the gurudwara, at home and in the street (particularly in areas with a large Indian/Pakistani population), they will enact a Punjabi ethnic identity (for example, through dress in the gurudwara and by taking care not to be seen speaking with someone of the opposite sex in public). At school, work or with non-Punjabi friends they will enact more syncretic ethnic identities. They live in two different cultural worlds, which they are adept at managing and keeping separate when necessary, performing a variety of ethnic identities simultaneously. Okamura, in his study of situational ethnicity, defines it as the ability of 'actors' either to affirm or obscure their ethnic identities in specific situations, ideally to their advantage, but with the caveat that such choices are always circumscribed by the overall structure of ethnic relations (Okamura 1981: 454-455). In recognizing the fluid and at times strategic nature of ethnic identity, we avoid the reification trap, and also capture

the fundamental contradictions inherent in all identities: just as women may strategically emphasize or downplay their ‘femininity’ in the workplace, ethnic minorities also adopt social situation-specific strategies for managing ethnicity.

Cultural jugglers

21-year-old Balminder, a mechanical engineering trainee, is a good example of this cultural juggling and individual mixing of the four patterns described by Berger. Balminder is a leading member of the community due to his language skills and is very active in the gurudwara. He is a confident integrator, who at times also demonstrates aspects of clinging and eradication, depending upon the cultural conflict with which he is faced. He describes Ravidassia youth as “iguanas”, skilled at changing their self-presentation depending upon whether they are at home, at school, in the street or in the gurudwara. He himself affirms that he feels completely bicultural, adopting ‘half of Indian culture and half of Spanish culture’. However, there are times when the collision between the two is so great that he feels ‘radical, extremist’ and chooses either Indian culture or Spanish culture in order to resolve the conflict. A dramatic example of eradication is when he and his younger brother took the momentous decision to move out of the family home despite being quite young and unmarried, a taboo even for boys in Punjabi culture (and completely unthinkable for girls). In taking this decision, he challenged not only the sacrosanct authority of his aunt and uncle, but also the injunction of his culture against youth independence prior to marriage. In putting his individual wishes ahead of those of his family, he was able to draw upon Spanish culture in order to support his case and validate his decision, although he confessed that he continued to feel guilty for several months after the move.

In contrast, in an example of “clinging”, Balminder refers to his personal discomfort about showing physical affection in public. Whilst asserting that seeing other Indian or Pakistani boys kissing their girlfriends in public did not bother him, he declared that he personally would never dare to do so. Some things, he said, ‘just don’t change, no matter how long one has lived in Spain’. Interestingly, for both Balminder and other Ravidassia boys it is often round issues of gender values and behaviour that culture conflict arises. A number of boys mentioned the dress of Spanish women or customs such as kissing in public as examples of cultural clashes that provoke unease – clashes that are usually

resolved in favour of Punjabi gender norms in one's personal life. Balminder offered an example of when his two cultural worlds collided simultaneously, and he was confronted with the difficult situation of having to balance both at the same time. He related how once when he was walking with his aunt in the street, he met a former Latin American classmate who gave him an enthusiastic traditional kiss, as they had not seen each other for some time. He went bright red, and felt deeply embarrassed at his (shocked) aunt having witnessed such an intimate display with a classmate of the opposite sex. At the time he felt acutely uncomfortable, since he could not enact his usual environment-specific identity strategies. Later, however, he questioned why he should have felt so embarrassed, showing that the question of ethnic identity for Ravidassia youth is continually in flux.

Ravidassia girls face the same identity dilemmas as their male peers, but have less freedom when it comes to cultural juggling and balancing. Girls, as the repositories of both community and family *izzat* or honour, must jealously guard their reputations. This means that they are more limited in the extent to which they can be culturally syncretic. The findings of Remennick, however, show that without such restrictions, it might well be young Indian women who sought to balance the two cultures more. Remenick studied the integration processes of the 1.5 generation of Russian immigrants in Israel, and discovered that young women were more open to social adaptation, learning Hebrew and forming friendships with other Israelis, than their male peers, who showed greater cultural conservatism (Remennick 2003: 59).

24-year-old Surinder is an excellent example of an integrator. She is fluent in both Punjabi and Spanish/Catalan, has a number of Spanish acquaintances and incorporates aspects of both Indian and Spanish culture in her daily life. She both works and studies pharmacy, and is determined to be financially independent. Yet, as a girl, she has faced additional hurdles in carving out her dual identity. In secondary school, she fought a major battle with her parents, particularly her father, for the right to wear jeans. Her parents had initially forced her to wear traditional Punjabi dress at all times, and it was only with much debate and discussion that she managed to secure the right to wear jeans. She is currently resisting their persistent attempts to marry her off, for she is nearing the age at which Punjabi girls' value on the marriage market begins to 'expire'. Thus far, she has managed to delay marriage with her studies and her insistence on first establishing herself professionally. Many of the freedoms that Spanish girls take for granted, such as the right to go the beach, go out at night or have male friends,

are denied to Surinder and other Ravidassia girls. Her desire to balance Spanish and Indian culture in her life is often frustrated by unspoken gender norms that proscribe certain activities for girls. For example, although Surinder would like to distribute *langar* (vegetarian food served at the end of religious services) in the *gurudwara*, she does not dare attempt to, fearing the reactions of her community. In the Ravidassia *gurudwara*, *langar* distribution is a task that has been monopolized by boys and men, based on the assumption that it would not be appropriate for girls to come into 'close' contact with males via serving food.

Therefore, Ravidassia girls, in addition to juggling the norms and expectations of two very different cultures, must also operate within a restrictive gender ideology which, while also affecting boys, is far more punishing for and effective at policing girls. Surinder feels bicultural, but affirms that it 'depends on the situation', once again revealing the importance of situational ethnicity. Surinder also experiences significant vacillation as she struggles to integrate the two cultures. She declares that she feels as if there were 'two Surinders', and confesses that committing to one is difficult. She describes how the opinions of each culture are so different that she does not see how she can reconcile them at times. For Ravidassia girls, the challenge of cultural reconciliation can be greater due to the expectation that they will remain faithful to Indian gender norms. Since the Punjabi community in the Spanish diaspora has effectively used gender norms as a cultural boundary marker, cultural and gender boundaries are often coterminous. Thus the way 'their' women and 'our' women dress and behave is used to distinguish the culture of origin from the majority culture, and also to value the culture of origin positively as morally superior. This makes girls' juggling acts all the more difficult, since transgressing a cultural boundary automatically implies transgressing a gender boundary as well, all too easily bringing with it the accusation of being 'bad girls.'

Biculturalism strategies

Ravidassia youth tend to respond in one of three ways to the challenges of biculturalism: they become positive jugglers, anxious jugglers or comfort zone jugglers. Regardless of the shifting intensity of their ethnic identification(s), or whether they have achieved the position of integrator defined by Berger, all must to some extent balance the demands of living in two different cultures. Positive jugglers are those who see the benefits of biculturalism in their

lives, despite its stresses and difficulties. An example of a positive juggler is Balminder. He consistently highlights the positive aspects of biculturalism, despite acknowledging its inherent difficulties, as well as the problems that come from having to deal with families that are not 'modern' and gossipy members of the community that make it their business to keep an eye on the youth. Balminder defines having two cultures as 'fun', pointing out that he has twice the options when it comes to entertaining himself: he can choose both Spanish and Bollywood films. He emphasizes the advantages of being able to choose the best of both cultures, the superior linguistic capital that having two cultures provides, a wider friendship network and the ability to connect with a wider range of people due to greater cultural knowledge. In other words, he feels that being bicultural has significantly enhanced his cultural, social and linguistic capital. Indeed, he believes that his biculturalism will also bring him practical benefits in the job market. 22-year-old Akalpreet, who has completed her studies and now works in a fast food restaurant, echoes Balminder's sentiments when she underlines that she has been able to learn many things thanks to her biculturalism, and above all, enjoy greater liberty as a girl than would have been possible in the Punjab.

However, there are those for whom the stress of constantly having two cultural options and messages becomes overwhelming, resulting in biculturalism being viewed through a negative as opposed to a positive prism. These youths find that the inner turmoil of cultural juggling outweighs its possible benefits. They are self-reflexive, and hence are aware of the psychological effects of biculturalism in their lives. This is particularly the case for female youth, who are subject to a multiplicity of gender pressures.

Surinder is a good example of how double standards for sons and daughters in the diaspora create additional anxiety for young women. Surinder states that, until now, having to juggle two cultures has made her depressed, and refers to the juggling as a constant struggle that causes stress and anxiety. While she hopes that in the long term at the age of forty or fifty she can say that being bicultural has benefited her, she currently feels overwhelmed by having to deal with diametrically opposed values on a daily basis, particularly in the field of gender. She gives the example of make-up to illustrate her case. In the Punjab, unmarried girls generally do not wear make-up, but after marriage they are socially expected to apply make-up in order to advertize their married status publicly. In Spain, by contrast, girls generally start wearing make-up at an early age, but are not expected to follow a particular make-up protocol after marriage. Surinder cited this example as just one of many

with which she is faced (should she wear make-up to the *gurudwara*?) and finds difficult to resolve satisfactorily, leading to chronic anxiety. Another thorny area was marriage:

“My parents want to marry me with someone with a high level of studies – he should be from my caste. I don’t care about his level of studies or his colour (skin tone). My goal is not to marry someone from my caste – it is my struggle. Every time we go to India they want to marry me. All my female cousins were married at the age of eighteen – for them I am old! My argument is this: I want to be independent and provide for myself... It is already difficult to decide with whom you want to marry. Imagine with a person from another caste. It is difficult, but not impossible. It is the young generation that has to change. I think that if we young people give a good example to children, those children will have an easier time when they become youth.” (Surinder, female, 24 years, Barcelona)

Surinder was one of the few youths who spoke candidly of the conflict between following one’s heart and obeying one’s parents and conforming to broader community pressure:

“[t]he *izzat*, the dignity of my parents, their image in the community is important. The decision depends upon them. What do I want? That they decide for me? I could not be happy if I obey my parents, I would be killing all my dreams, what I want...what is more important: happiness or dignity?” (Surinder, female, 24 years, Barcelona)

Surinder is not alone in experiencing an intense internal struggle to reconcile conflicting desires – following her own heart and pleasing her parents. Her dilemma has been studied in the psychological literature on second generation diaspora youth. Srinivasan, in her comparative study of Indian origin female university students in the US and India, found that psychological stress was highest among Indian females and Americans of Indian origin who most identified with Indian culture. Indian American and Indian females reported high stress levels (much higher than their European American counterparts), due to marriage/career pressure and a psychological discrepancy between their publicly stated values and their ‘inner’ attitudes (Srinivasan 2000: 148-49).

The strong pressure to be ‘good Indian girls’ to which they are subject gives them a much heavier psychological burden.

A third trend is represented by comfort zone jugglers, who are less self-reflexive than the previous two groups. Their response to the stress inherent in combining the two cultures and defining their ethnic identity is to remain within a Punjabi cultural ‘comfort zone’, effectively avoiding the often intense inner conflict experienced by anxious jugglers. Such youths frequently deny the presence of cultural stress in their lives and maintain that they have no problems with Spanish culture. 17-year-old Nandeep is an example of a comfort zone juggler. Apart from one Pakistani classmate who is an acquaintance, all his friends are Ravidassia. He goes to the *gurudwara* every Sunday, and his cultural references are predominantly Punjabi. He watches Indian films, listens to Punjabi music and eats exclusively Indian food. While comfort zone jugglers do not actively reject Spanish culture, psychologically they distance themselves from it and are often critical, especially of its gender norms. Nandeep, for example, while claiming that everyone is free to do as he or she pleases, speaks critically of Spanish woman bathing ‘naked’ at the beach or being scantily dressed. They exhibit more neutral attitudes towards biculturalism, precisely because they seek to avoid the sort of questioning – and the inner doubt/uncertainty – characteristic of Ravidassia youth who confront the challenges of biculturalism head-on. Thus while almost all Ravidassia youth affirm that they incorporate aspects of both Indian and Spanish culture into their lives and feel ‘both from here and from India’, their responses to the difficulties involved in cultural juggling vary.

Conclusion

For Indian diaspora youth from Dalit castes, striving to achieve self-acceptance and overcome caste stigma goes hand-in-hand with cultural juggling. They face not only the social and psychological challenges of biculturalism, but also, unbeknown to the host society, internal prejudice and discrimination. Their experiences show that an exclusive focus on ethnicity alone as an axis of integration is mistaken: the internal cleavages of immigrant communities must always be taken into account, particularly in policy-making. The situational ethnicity approach of Ravidassia youth reveals that although Indians are always racialized in the diaspora, they can affirm their ethnic identities in ethnic-majority spaces, and enact a variety of social performances in majority spaces,

which can vary from emphasizing a Spanish identity to combining both Indian and Spanish identifications depending upon the situation. This gives flexibility but also gives rise to identity management strategies. Broadly, whether positive, anxious or comfort-zone jugglers, the integration process of the 1.5 generation of Ravidassia youth in the Spanish diaspora can be described as segmented, in which most youth are ‘Punjabi’ at home but ‘Spanish’ to varying degrees in public life. Srinivasan describes the first generation of Indian immigrants to the US as ‘dichotomizing’ their lives between the family and the outside world, while the 1.5 second generation and second generations consider the US their home (Srinivasan 2000: 138). However, this case study has shown that segmented integration and compartmentalization also occurs in the 1.5 and subsequent generations, which can in part be attributed to the different sociocultural contexts of Spain and the US: the former is a relatively new immigrant country and continues to maintain a citizenship policy based on *ius sanguinis*. My findings coincide with those of Remennick, who also found that the 1.5 generation of Russian immigrants in Israel remained firmly connected to their co-ethnic circle in the private realm, for friendships, a social safety net and intimate relationships (Remennick 2003: 60). Rather than interpret these findings as an indication that the Ravidassia community is not integrating as desired into Spanish society, I would argue that segmented integration need not be viewed as ‘holding immigrants back’. Success in education and employment can co-exist with social networks that are principally co-ethnic. Indeed, despite not being established for very long in Spain, some members of the 1.5 generation have started to enter university, while others are setting up their own businesses.

Paul Scheffer, in his book “The Open Society and Its Immigrants”, argues that migration entails a shared experience of loss and alienation on the part of migrants and of natives, since both lose familiar worlds and must come to terms with a new reality. According to Scheffer, this mutual loss is akin to the process of grieving, in which there is initially resistance to and denial of loss, followed by anger and finally acceptance (Scheffer 2010: 17). He also stresses the difficulty that particularly the in-between generation faces in finding a sense of belonging, rootedness and ‘home’. However, in emphasizing a discourse of loss, Scheffer ignores both the tangible and intangible gains that the in-between generation reaps, despite the stress of cultural juggling. While it is true that, as Scheffer puts it, ‘it takes a great deal of effort to balance on a slack rope slung between the country of origin and the country of arrival’, cultural juggling also produces cultural richness and resilience (Scheffer 2010: 31). I argue that we need to adopt

a new paradigm for viewing integration and migration, one in which having multiple identities is increasingly normalized for all citizens, both native and migrant, rather than viewed as problematic or as an obstacle to integration. The ‘imagined community’ of all citizens needs to be expanded in order to make room for multiple identifications and affiliations. While we speak about a ‘globalized world’, the reality is that nations, like religions, are keen to stake out exclusive psychological territory, as witnessed by many nations’ unwillingness to recognize dual nationality. Similarly, at the social level, the ubiquitous question of ‘where are you from?’ that the in-between generation faces reveals that at the micro level we continue mentally to perceive and classify individuals according to their ethnicity, implicitly making those of the in-between and subsequent generations feel out of place in their own country. While the results of my research show that cultural juggling can be unsettling and anxiety-provoking, it ultimately serves as a creative source of social and emotional capital that will hopefully lead to more open, tolerant and creative citizens in the long term. Whether positive, anxious or comfort zone jugglers, all Ravidassia youth are active in carving out a cultural path for themselves in which they can claim pride in their various identities. They are true ‘cultural workers’ in a world that still privileges monoculturalism. This case study of Ravidassia youth living in Spain shows that the future of a strong Europe will be one in which all citizens move away from monoculturalism, which can be viewed as a form of cultural deficit, and adopt what one international movement of highly mobile individuals calls the ‘third culture’, to characterize their plural cultural and psychological identifications. Bi- and multiculturalism at the individual level should no longer be exclusively identified with migrants and their offspring, but rather as a resource for all citizens.

Notes

- 1 Sikhism is a religion that was born in 1469, founded by Guru Nanak in the Punjab. Although influenced by certain aspects of Hindu culture, its ten Gurus condemned the caste system, *purdah* (the segregation of women) and ritualism, all common features of Hindu society at the time.
- 2 Throughout this article I employ Indian English usage when referring to unmarried youth: boy for unmarried young man and girl for unmarried young woman.

- 3 The Indian caste system is extraordinarily complex, with different regional manifestations of caste that do not always place the Brahmins at the pinnacle of the local hierarchy, but rather regional castes whose power often derives from their ownership of land.
- 4 Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe are official Indian government terms used to refer to the former untouchables in the case of the scheduled castes and to various tribal communities in the case of scheduled tribes.

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