BEING INDIAN IN POST-COLONIAL METRO MANILA:
Ethnic Identities, Class, Race and the Media

Jozon A. Lorenzana

This paper examines how young Filipinos of Indian origin describe and position their identities in autobiographical narratives and through talk about their experiences with local, global and transnational media. It draws on studies (Gillespie 1995; Madianou 2006) that conceptualize diasporic identities as a positioning in context and media as a symbolic space where meanings of nation, ethnicity and belonging are negotiated. Data were gathered using indepth interviews and content analysis of online personal sites of second generation Punjabis, Sindhis and Filipinos with one Indian parent. Initial findings suggest that participants tend to define themselves based on class distinctions that conflate ethnicity with class. They assert their 'Indian' identity when faced with stereotypes and misconceptions of India and Indians in everyday talk, news and entertainment media. Consumption of Filipino and global media enable them to participate in the local culture, while use of Indian media create exclusive spaces to claim affinity with Indian cultures. This study extends our understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of diasporas in the Philippines, identity politics among Indian diasporic communities in post colonial societies, and the role of the media in these processes.

Keywords: ethnic identities, Indian diaspora, media consumption, nation, belonging

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to the assumption that members of the Indian diaspora identify with a pan-Indian identity, current studies demonstrate that they have complex and plural identifications, constructed in gendered (Radhakrishnan 2008; Warikoo 2005), classed (Bhattacharya 2008), ethnic (Lock and Detaramani 2006) and 'racialized' (Bhatia 2008) terms. These dimensions may overlap and are complicated by individual and migration histories, the diaspora's sense of belonging and identifications, and the specific cultures of the Indian diaspora in the host society. Recent scholarship on the Indian diaspora has explored the roles media play in the lives and identity formations of its members. On one hand, consumption of media from the Indian homeland indicates a process of reterritorialization or how migrants 'recraft a sense of community and cultural identity in new socio-geographic contexts' (Punathambekar 2005: 151). On the other, it suggests identification with the popular culture of the host society (Gillespie 1995). Analyzing the role of the media in the diaspora, Roger Silverstone (2007) suggests that media offer diasporic groups various competing cultural spaces and alternative imaginaries (Silverstone 2007: 95-96). However, in relation to identity and community formations, media's influence is premature as identities by their nature are dynamic and changing (Silverstone 2007: 96). Ascertaining the roles of the media in identity productions of diasporas, without presuming its centrality, indeed needs further investigation. Warikoo (2005) finds that media, among other factors like school and family, affect ethnic identity choices among Indo-Caribbean youths in New York City. In similar vein this paper examines the role of the media in the identity formations of the Indian diaspora who are not in major cities of the global North, where most studies in the field of Indian diaspora studies originate, but those in the global South, like Metro Manila in the Philippines. This study therefore attempts to represent the experiences of the Indian diaspora or peoples of Indian origin (PIOs) in lesser known destinations or host societies and consequently provides evidence for comparisons between experiences of the Indian diasporas in 'First' and 'Third World' contexts.

I focus on the identity formations of young people or second/third generation members of the diaspora. What does it mean to be Indian in Metro Manila? How do the media, if ever, contribute to the meanings of being Indian? Mindful of the debates about identity (more on this below), I used ethnic identity as a spring board to explore the complex identity

formations and practices of this diasporic group. My interest in the role of the media here is not only an attempt to establish the conceptual link between media and identity but also as an empirical strategy to generate evidence for this sort of inquiry. Marie Gillespie's seminal work on television and youth culture among young Punjabi Londoners demonstrates how 'common TV (or media) experiences supply referents and contexts for talk which is explicitly or implicitly about identities and identity positions' (Gillespie 1995: 25).

This study builds on recent works on the Indian diaspora in the Philippines (Salazar 2008; Santarita 2008; Thapan 2002), which give little attention to young second/third generation members, including those with mixed parentage, i.e., Filipino-Indian unions. Instead of looking at consumption of media from the homeland, I turn to this generation's experiences with local and global entertainment media in the host society. During my initial queries and observations, I discovered that these youths were more engaged in either local (Filipino) or global (American) media and less engaged in Bollywood media culture. What enticed me was their constant reference to how Indians were represented in local entertainment media. I decided to take this direction as it presented an opportunity to probe into how Filipinos, at least in Metro Manila, imagine, represent and treat their immigrants. In so doing this study also provides a critique of Philippine society as 'host' to diasporas and its orientations towards ethnic (among other axes of) difference.

I draw on studies (e.g., Ray 2001) that conceptualize identities as a positioning in context (Hall 1990/2003) and a process of defining boundaries (Barth 1969). Media contribute to this process by providing (symbolic) frameworks for inclusion and exclusion (Madianou 2005b; Silverstone and Georgiou 2005) that either weaken or reinforce boundaries. Following this framework, I analyzed how second/third generation members of the Indian diaspora in the Philippines talked about their identities in autobiographical narratives, including experiences with the media. I argue that informants of the study claim multiple affiliations but tend to position themselves based on class and gender. Participants' ethnic affiliations intersect with class and gender positions. Commercial media influence the symbolic environment where these identities are formed. Local entertainment media reinforce stereotypical images of Indian men that promote distinctions between members of the diaspora. Global entertainment media events like beauty pageants provide alternative images that facilitate inclusion in Philippine society especially among females. How these young people positioned their identities could

be traced to other contextual factors like class dynamics in the homeland and Philippine society, historical processes like colonization, the migration histories and trajectories of Indian immigrants and the classed/gendered culture of the Indian diaspora.

THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN METRO MANILA

Metro Manila (hereafter Manila) is a megapolis comprised of 13 cities and four municipalities, including the city of Manila, the capital of the Philippines, and Makati City, a central business district. It has an estimated population of 10 million that include a majority of Catholic Christians from different Filipino ethnic groups and a minority of Filipino Chinese, Muslims, Indians and expatriate communities. The ethnic diversity of the city is masked by the common use of Filipino, the national language, in media and everyday talk, and the strong influence of Roman Catholicism in every aspect of life. Aside from ethnic affiliation, class is the most salient mode of differentiation in Manila or Philippine society as a whole. This could be partly explained by its historical trajectory.

Since independence from Spain in 1898 and the United States in 1946, Philippine governments have embarked on national development and modernizing projects through democracy and capitalism. Evolving from a state-regulated capitalist economy (1950s-1970s) to a liberal market economy (late 80s to present), the Philippines, however, remains a society where economic gains and opportunities are concentrated within and controlled by the economic and political elites, most of them based in the capital. The uneven sociopolitical development in the Philippines is, according to historian E. San Juan Jr. (2008), compounded by Americanization or the lingering influence of the US in schooling, mass media, sports and music. Philippine sociologist Randy David observes that: 'In hierarchical Philippine society, we measure a person's worth by his (sic) family background, his educational attainment, his profession, his connections and visible wealth' (David 2008). This is, in broad strokes, the 'locality' and context where the second/third generation Indians were born and brought up.

People from India have come to Philippine shores as traders in the pre-colonial era, as sepoys or soldiers of the British East India Company during the British occupation of Manila in the 18th century and in the 19th and 20th centuries as traders or migrants 'in search of economic opportunities' (Santarita 2008). The small number of Indian migrants in Manila, compared to other

countries in the Southeast Asia region, could be explained by the voluntary nature of such migration (Thapan 2001) and the historical circumstances of the Philippines during the turn of the century. Manila, then a Spanish colony, had limited contact with the British Empire which populated its colonies in the region (e.g., Singapore and Malaysia) and elsewhere with indentured Indian laborers. During this period a small number of Indian immigrants in Manila worked for branches of Indian or British trading firms.

Punjabis, Sindhis and Indian professionals working in multinational companies and multilateral organizations comprise the present Indian diaspora in Manila. The Sindhis, who lost their homeland Sindh to Pakistan, have established themselves in cities across continents. Consistent with their occupation in Sindh and like their counterparts elsewhere, Sindhis in the country are known as traders and urban dwellers. Early Sindhi immigrants worked for Indian and British trading firms in Manila and other cities of the islands and consequently put up their own businesses. Inspite of the legal constraints imposed on foreign-owned entities in the Philippines, Sindhis have set a strong foothold in garments manufacturing, import and export.

The Punjabis, mostly Sikhs of rural backgrounds, are the biggest ethnic group in the diaspora. Driven by a desire to improve their economic situation, most of them have come to the Philippines to either engage in small-scale trading or money lending that usually caters to street or market vendors, working class Filipinos and small scale businesses. Relatives of successful Punjabis would follow them in the Philippines and similarly establish their own business in the same or another area. Money lending has earned them a moniker among the locals: 'Five-six' is the term used to describe the money-lending scheme of Punjabis where a borrowed amount earns 20 percent interest per month. This job entails riding a motorbike and personally collecting debts in the heat of the day. While the terms are perceived as very usurious, Filipinos still resort to 'five-six' because Punjabis do not demand any collateral and are often reliable (Olarte 2007). Unlike majority of Sindhis that tend to live in gated communities in big cities, Punjabis are more integrated into local communities. Majority of Sindhis and Punjabis are residents but not citizens of the Philippines.

Aside from describing the origins and situation of the Indian diaspora in Metro Manila, we also need to think about their condition in conceptual terms to facilitate a critical and complex understanding of the group being investigated. I propose that they are simultaneously ethnic, diasporic, and

transnational. In relation to peoples in their locality, they are considered ethnic groups, defined by Richard Schermerhorn (1978 as cited in Cornell and Hartmann 1998/2001) as self-conscious populations who see themselves as distinct and have common origin or symbol of their peoplehood. Based on my interviews, Indians see themselves as distinct from Filipino citizens and other ethnic groups like the Filipino Chinese and Muslims.

The term diaspora has become problematic and slippery and so I qualify my use of the term. In its original sense, diaspora 'had more to do with migration as colonization rather than with uprooting and deterritorialization' (Georgiou 2006: 47). The present understanding of diaspora not only emphasizes movement from a homeland but also grounding in a host society. According to James Clifford (1994) both displacement and dwelling constitute and characterize diaspora communities: for members of a diaspora ' . . . with varying degrees of urgency, they negotiate and resist the social realities of poverty, violence, policing, racism, and political and economic inequality' (p. 223-229). Clifford's definition not only acknowledges the immigrants 'grounding' in the host society but also paves the way to reflect on the conditions of diasporic groups.

With the increasing mobility of people, goods, capital and ideas through advancements in technologies of transport and communication, migrants and diasporas have become more connected to their places of origin. Thus scholars like Safran, Sahoo and Lal (2008) have argued that 'the transnational context is part and parcel of diaspora.' It is indeed necessary to acknowledge the links or 'social relations formed between the homeland and immigrants' adopted countries' (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992 as cited in Bhattacharya 2008) in analyzing the conditions of the members of the Indian diaspora in Manila.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My approach to identity assumes that it is plural and contextual. Individuals or groups can claim multiple affiliations (across ethnicity, class, gender, etc) which may contradict each other. Although identities could be essentialized under certain circumstances (Madianou 2005b), they are dynamic, transforming through space and time. Stuart Hall's conception of identity is therefore useful for this study. First, Hall (1990/2003) suggests that cultural identities are historical and therefore undergo constant transformation. They are subject to the continuous play of history, culture, and power

(p. 236). Second, cultural identity is 'not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position' (ibid. 237). This second definition recognizes the power relationships involved in the process of identification. Referring to the inherent diversity and heterogeneity of the diasporic experience, Hall argues that diasporic identities are 'constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and difference.' Furthermore, they are 'constituted not outside but within representation[1]' (ibid. 244-245) or constructed through meanings and meaning systems. In this conception identities are positioned and constituted in and through history, culture, power and representation.

Frederik Barth's (1969) theory of ethnic groups and boundaries becomes relevant here in expanding the meaning of identity positioning. This theory is consistent with the assumption that identities are flexible. According to Barth, ethnic groups define themselves through the maintenance of a boundary and 'not the cultural stuff that it encloses' (Barth 1969: 15). He acknowledges that both cultural features that signal the boundary and the cultural characteristics of the members may change and may be transformed (ibid. 14). Hence for Barth boundary maintenance is a process of self-ascription and ascription by others. Ethnic groups maintain these 'social boundaries' through interactions or relations with others in a process of 'determining and signalling membership and exclusion' (ibid. 15). Indeed, identities are not only positioned and claimed, but also maintained in relation to others.

And so I ask: How do young people from the Indian diaspora in Manila position themselves in autobiographical narratives? Following Taylor and Littleton (2006), I analyzed autobiographical talk—in the context of a depth interview—of these young people to reveal ways they positioned their identities. I looked for self-ascriptions (Barth 1969) or informants' self-assertions (Warikoo 2005), and ascriptions by others or how they are labelled in the host society.

What do media have to do with identity positionings? The link could be established using Hall's proposition that identities are constructed within representation. Media is a practice of representation that uses image, text, symbol and sound. Silverstone and Georgiou's (2005) argument becomes relevant: the media are seen not to be determining of identities, but contributing to the creation of symbolic communicative spaces in which identities can be constructed. Media influence this symbolic space through representations of minority or ethnic groups. Silverstone and Georgiou point

out that minorities often do not appear in mainstream media. However when they do appear they are often represented in stereotypical and alienating images. According to Hall (1997), stereotypes, a form of representation, 'get hold of the few simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change or development to eternity' (p. 258). The media space, where minority groups appear or not, becomes spaces where meanings about them are constructed. Such meanings 'provide frameworks for inclusion and exclusion' (Silverstone and Georgiou 2005). Indeed media contribute to the process of boundary maintenance through representations of minority groups that elicit either inclusion or exclusion (Madianou 2005b).

How groups are represented, whether in the media or everyday talk, relates to Barth's notion of ascription by others. Based on this assumption, I looked for threads about meanings, representations or stereotypes of being Indian and how they talked about these topics in the informants' life and media experiences. Scholars (Gillespie 1995; Madianou 2005a) who have investigated the role of the media in diasporic groups have used talk about media content and experiences as a strategy to examine identities. This approach assumes that informants are treated as media audiences engaged in the consumption, reception and production of media.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative design to data gathering. The main method was depth interviews and it was supplemented by participant observation of events of the Indian community (Diwali celebration in 2006 and 2007), visits to temples (Sikh and Hindu) and to a Bollywood-themed club. As social networking sites and online journals are popular among young people in Manila, I also visited the pages of some informants to know other biographical details.

Most of the informants were recruited through referrals by friends and by the research participants themselves. Ten (five females and five males) youths, between the ages 19 to 24, consented to participate in the study. The main criterion for their selection was that they were born of first generation Indian or Indian-Filipino parentage. The informants belonged to middle and upper middle class households, with occupations ranging from a student, social worker, company executive to an information technology professional.

In terms of ethnic background, three were Punjabis, three were Sindhis and four had mixed parentage (Filipino mothers and Indian fathers) coming from different ethnic or religious backgrounds (Bengali, Konkan, Muslim). All of them knew and spoke Filipino and English. Only the Punjabis could speak the language of their parents. I also interviewed two officials of local Indian trade associations: Gurpreet Sethi, a Punjabi and president of Indian Business of Bulacan; and Ram Sitaldas, a Sindhi and president of the Indian Chamber of Commerce. Table 1 provides some biographical details of the informants.

Table 1   Profile of Respondents

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Sex	Parentage	Citizenship
Usha	24	Manager	Female	Sindhi parents	Indian
Preity	19	Undergraduate student (psychology)	Female	Sindhi parents	Indian
Monika	19	Undergraduate student (management)	Female	Sindhi father and Filipino mother	Filipino
Deepa	26	TV writer	Female	Bengali father and Filipino mother	Filipino
Priyanka	22	Computer programmer	Female	Punjabi (Sikh) parents	Indian
Jeet	23	Social worker	Male	Indian father (from Karnataka), Filipino mother	Filipino
Sonny	18	Undergraduate student (integrated marketing communications)	Male	Punjabi (Sikh) parents	Indian
Ahmed	17	Fourth year HS student	Male (gay)	Indian (Muslim) father, Filipino mother	Filipino
Raja	24	Technology consultant	Male	Sindhi parents	Indian
Vikas	22	Sales executive	Male	Punjabi (Sikh) parents	Indian

I identified themes from the interview narratives and interpreted these data based on the framework and related literature. To protect their privacy, pseudonyms were used to refer to the informants' responses. As this work is limited to a specific locality, results are provisional and tentative. Conclusions apply only to this purposive sample.

FINDINGS

Self ascriptions: Class, ethnic and gender identifications and boundaries

Data suggest that informants consciously and unconsciously expressed multiple affiliations and claimed (contradictory) identity positions across dimensions of ethnicity, class, gender and religion. Class was a dominant theme that often intersected with ethnicity and gender. Caste, a relevant identity position in the Indian homeland, was mentioned only twice by two Punjabis. Most of them asserted their ethnicities (being Filipino, Indian, Punjabi, Sikh, etc). However, during the introductory phase of the interviews other aspects of their identities like gender, personal traits and occupation were uttered before their ethnic identifications. Eight of ten claimed more than one ethnic affiliation as part of their ethnic background (e.g., half-Filipino, half-Indian, quarter Spanish) or as a matter of affinity. Informants tended to choose positions, categories or affiliations that have high symbolic power. While informants claimed positions and affiliations they simultaneously drew classed and gendered boundaries between and within their ethnic groupings.

I observed that the informants' understanding of class was consistent with how the term is defined in the homeland, the Indian diasporas and host society. In India 'social class is often considered to be a combination of wealth and occupational status' (Bhattacharya 2008). For Hindu Punjabis in London, it is expressed through 'commodities, housing, travel and preferences for occupation, leisure and lifestyle' (Raj 2003 as cited in Batnitzky; McDowell and Dyer 2008); and for Sindhis in Manila, Hong Kong and Jakarta class is about 'the value of one's wealth, occupational position and lifestyle' (Thapan 2002). According to Thapan (2002) education enhances one's class standing. For Filipinos, class could mean occupation (Kerkvliet 1990); family background, educational attainment, connections and visible wealth (David 2008); lifestyle, behavior, consumption codes and practices, and ethnicity (Pinches 1999). From this review of definitions, Filipinos and Indians generally understand class in terms of occupation, wealth, lifestyle and consumption. Patterns in the personal narratives of informants reflected *combinations* of the meanings of class as: occupation, wealth, lifestyle, performance/behavior, education or family background.

Sindhi informants tended to differentiate themselves from Punjabis whose common occupation, small-scale money lending or 'five-six,' has become a

stereotype of Indians in Philippine society. Not only Sindhis but the rest of the informants pointed out that Filipinos readily assume that either they or their parents do 'five-six' for a living. This assertion came out strongly when I asked them to talk about a locally produced music video about a Punjabi hawker. Preity found the portrayal "funny . . . (and) true, although it's degrading. When I saw it, I was really laughing out loud. I am not Punjabi." Usha and Raja claimed their class position by citing Sindhis' reputation in (large-scale) trading and manufacturing and their contribution to the Philippine economy. Being Sindhi has high symbolic value; becoming part of this community through wealth and lifestyle, as Jeet revealed, indicates a change in class position and social status:

> Jeet: When we first came to Manila, we weren't very well off. My parents really worked hard . . . Only now we're doing pretty well financially. We moved to a village (a gated community) that has a lot of Indians. It's only now that we are able to connect with Sindhis.

Punjabi informants mutually distanced themselves from Sindhis not on the basis of occupation but in terms of lifestyle and gendered performance/behavior.

> Priyanka: I was brought up in a very simple manner. My mother is simple and she had a hard life before. They were not rich but they were not poor either . . . I know Sindhis are rich. It's automatic. But if you talk about us, we're just simple folks.

> Sonny: I always tell my friends that I am different from them, 'Don't ever make the mistake of associating me with Sindhis' . . . They speak English like girls do. We don't speak English at home . . . .

Similarly on the aspect of behavior, a female Sindhi informant commented that: " . . . Punjabi guys are not civilized . . . They ogle at you." These remarks suggest that class distinctions between these two ethnic groups also index meanings of femininity and masculinity. Certain classed behaviors which are construed in gendered terms are attributed to ethnic groups. In this configuration Punjabi and Sindhi masculinities have both high and low symbolic value at the expense of being feminine (speaking English like girls do). While acknowledging that their parents are into money lending, Punjabi informants, however, were conscious of the fact that their generation has gone beyond this occupation and is now pursuing other interests. For example, Sonny is a marketing communications student in an Opus Dei-run university and Priyanka is an information technology professional.

Data also suggest that within Punjabi and Sindhi communities distinctions were based on the presence/lack of education, wealth, lifestyle preference and behavior. Sonny perceived newly arrived Punjabis as "not modernized, not conscious of their looks , and not aware of what the world really is because they were from rural villages." Senior members of the Indian community like Gurpreet Sethi, a Punjabi, and Ram Sitaldas, a Sindhi, attribute such behaviors to the lack of education among newly arrived immigrants. Indeed for the Indian diaspora in the Philippines education is used to distinguish themselves from each other and to counter the 'five-six' stereotype. Priyanka's reaction "Are all Indians who have been educated here five-six?" demonstrates how second/third generation members assert their difference from other members of their ethnic group that still do money lending and trading. For Sindhis boundaries are drawn based on a combination of value of wealth, lifestyle preferences and behavior. Preity distinguished herself from those who "show-off " and "are not rich anymore but still have to maintain their lifestyle." For Sindhi informants distinctions within their group are about the maintenance of status as signified by a certain level of wealth, lifestyle and consumption.

Informants from mixed parentage drew boundaries in relation to Sindhis and Punjabis and Indian citizens. Aside from the 'five-six' label, they usually distinguished themselves from portayals of Indians in foreign media. Images of poverty attached to Mother Teresa of Kolkata have strong resonance among Catholic Filipinos. Informants with one Indian parent, like Sushmita, pointed out that they have an upper class family background in India: "My grandfather belonged to a landed class . . . all his life he just sat down and servants kept him cool."

Why would class matter among these second/third members of the Indian diaspora in Metro Manila? Punjabi and Sindhi informants, including those with one Indian parent like Monika, cited their community's preoccupation with status and reputation. Improving or maintaining one's (high) class position contributes to their standing (individually or as a family) in the community.

The tendency to draw class boundaries among members of the Indian diaspora is not uncommon. Bhattacharya (2008) observes that participants of her study were conscious of a social class system among Indians in New York City that replicated the one in India (Bhattacharya 2008: 76). I would like to suggest that this class differentiation is as much a reflection of the homeland as the host society's class hierarchy and relations. Based on their identity discourses, the occupational positions of ethnic groups in the Indian

diaspora loosely correspond to lower/upper class positions in Philippine society. Doing trade for centuries, both in the Sindh and overseas, most Sindhis in the Philippines have set up successful businesses and consequently have identified with Filipino elites which reside in gated communities in Manila. To some extent their historical context—losing their homeland Sindh during partition in 1947—has also contributed to their establishment and settlement in the Philippines. On the other hand, Punjabis, by the nature of their occupation, are more in touch with the Filipino masses, their usual clients, and are indeed identified with them. However, the case of informants with Filipino and Indian parents challenges this suggested binary between Punjabis and Sindhis. Based on these informants' life stories the class/ethnic backgrounds of both or one of the parents consigns them to the class hierarchy in India or the Philippines.

The migration histories and trajectories of these Punjabis, however, provide a way to think about their class beyond their identity positionings. Coming from rural farming backgrounds, first generation Punjabi immigrants, immigrants in the Philippines become money lenders or traders. Since their goal is to achieve financial security they would scrimp and settle for what informants referred to as a 'simple lifestyle.' For those who have settled here, their second generation would acquire education and some job experience. According to Gurpreet Sheti, a senior figure in the Punjabi community in Manila, the Philippines is a transit point for Indian immigrants. For one the immigration and citizenship laws of the country discourage foreigners from taking roots. This is evident not only in the citizenship by blood principle but also in the citizenship requirements for owning businesses and practicing government regulated professions like medicine, law, accounting and engineering. For this reason and the limited economic opporunities in the Philippines educated children of first generation Indian immigrants tend to migrate to wealthier countries. A Punjabi informant, who is now in Australia, calls this an 'upgrade.' This observation reflects a similar trend called 'twice migration' among Indians in countries like South Africa (Singh 2008). It also implies that Manila is just a stop enroute to the final destination, a city in the global North. Although Punjabis, in relation to Sindhis, have less symbolic value because of their group's reputation as money lenders and rural folks, their financial status—assuming their success in the business—in the Punjab or in their localities in the Philippines earn them a measure of respect and adulation. Joefe Santarita (2008) finds that Punjabis in Western Visayas, central Philippines are treated as saviors by the locals more than their kin.

What came out in this study is the salience of class and its intersections with ethnicity and gender among the youth of the second/third generation Indian diaspora. In Metro Manila, class affiliation is not only evident and important, but ethnic relations in the diaspora somehow mirrors the relations between upper and lower classes in the host society and in the homeland. Ethnicity and class intersect to produce new identifications. Gender complicates this process through its relationships with classed performances. At the same time the migration histories, contexts and trajectories provide a way to see the dynamic and fluid positions of the second/third generation members of the Indian diaspora. This is not to suggest that class alone is the primary mode of identification among the participants of the study; generational differences, caste and religion may also come to play. My focus on the theme of class and its intersections with ethnicity and gender is therefore a limitation of the study.

Ascriptions by others: race and the media

In this section I focus on how Filipinos label Indians based on the personal and media experiences of the informants. I examine racialized representations of Indians in everyday talk and the media, and explain how they relate to the informants' positionings. In so doing I ascertain the roles media play in the identity formations of the second/third generation members of the Indian diaspora.

Racialized and pathological bodies

As discussed earlier Indians are labelled based on the occupational stereotype 'five-six' which has low symbolic value in a class and status oriented society like the Philippines. Such stereotype contributes to boundary making along the axes of class, ethnicity and gender among informants. What this study finds equally interesting and revealing is the connotation of another stereotype, *bumbay*. This term is derived from the former name of the Indian city of Mumbai, Bombay. Anita Thapan (2002) suggests that early Indian immigrants during the American colonial period sailed from the port of Bombay and named their stores after the place. Early Filipinos identified these immigrants with their place of origin and shop's name. I argue that bumbay and its meanings suggest a 'racialized' and 'pathological' Indian body.

Informants understood their experiences in childhood and school as 'racism' or 'the display of contempt or aggressiveness toward other people

on account of physical differences' (Todorov 1986: 370 as cited in Go 2004). Being physically different was a basis for exclusion (and inclusion) in Philippine society. Participants remembered being called bumbay or five-six by peers and strangers. Floya Anthias (1990/2001) labels such experiences as discursive racism: a set of representations embodied in daily language, texts, and practices. According to Avtar Brah (1996) racisms intersect with other axes of difference, primarily gender. Informants' experiences of racism support this claim.

Half of the informants experienced verbal and physical forms of abuse on the basis of the meanings of their bodies. Jeet observed that: "after 9/11 strangers assume I'm Arab and make terrorist-flavoured jokes." Priyanka disclosed that her schoolmates picked on her facial and body hair and called her ugly. "For a girl this (being hairy) is not normal." Her understanding of how *her* body 'ought' to be illustrates how gendered racism works: ' . . . the female may be represented as embodying 'male qualities' which were thought to set them apart from the gentility of white womanhood' (Brah 1996: 156). This implies that Filipinos also expect female bodies in genteel form. Priyanka felt that people already pre-judged her character based on her physical attributes. She recalled being excluded from working groups in school. Similarly, strangers kept their distance from Jeet.

> Jeet: I . . . was swimming in a public pool at around age 8 and seeing a girl about my age drag her two brothers away from me while saying, in a voice dripping with revulsion, '*Wag tayo lalapit dyan, mga* bumbay *'yan, ang baho-baho*' (Let's not go near him, he's bumbay, he stinks).

This construction of an abnormal, pathological Indian body takes an overt expression in the experiences of Ahmed and Deepa. When Ahmed was in second grade at a Catholic school for boys his peers chased him over the field, pricked him with a pen and called him "Aids virus." Looking back, he did not expect such behavior and treatment from his schoolmates who come from affluent families. Deepa, who studied in an exclusive Catholic school for girls, had a similar incident:

> Deepa: I had this classmate in second grade. We had a letter writing exercise to a relative. I have been writing to my relatives in India . . . to my *ima*, my grandmother, and so my letter was addressed to Mrs. Bakti George.[2] She grabbed it and said Bakti! Bakti! Bacteria! I was so mad!

Aside from this incident Deepa also got teased by her name which in Filipino means 'not yet' (*di pa*):

Deepa: People also make jokes about my name. Deepa! *Di pa naliligo, di pa kumakain, di pa nagtotooth brush* (Deepa! Haven't taken her bath, haven't eaten, haven't brushed her teeth). I still get it until now . . . Not from people who are close to me.

Being called bumbay, bacteria, Aids virus and ugly, and being bullied in school generated feelings of isolation, rejection and low self-worth among participants. However, in time they learned to deal with these taunts. Incidents of discrimination became rare as they attended the university or joined the workplace. Distance from the experience allowed Deepa to view teasing as a Filipino's way of establishing a connection: "I just know that Filipinos have these images of Indians. This is just what they know. Sometimes people just want to build a rapport with you. They'll just tease you like "You're so fat! It's just a form of that."

How do we account for these racial attitudes of Filipinos and their 'pathological' representations of Indians? Avtar Brah (1997/2001) suggests that racisms have historical origins. Warwick Anderson's (2007) work on American colonial public health and medical practices in the Philippines is instructive in explaining such racial bias among Filipinos. It reveals a racialized and pathological construction of Filipino bodies, which was the basis for the US colonial policy on public health and hygiene. By extension, I argue that Filipinos have internalized these attitudes and prejudices towards other 'races' or peoples.

The colonizers who regarded themselves as 'clean and ascetic' imagined and represented Filipino bodies as 'dirty and infected, open and polluting.' They institutionalized sanitation and hygiene by setting up sanitary commissions, instructing the local inhabitants in personal hygiene, home cleanliness and the care of the sick (Anderson 2008: 117). According to Anderson in order to become 'self-governing subjects,' Filipinos had to be clean and hygienic in their surroundings and their bodies (ibid. 109). Victor Heiser, director of public health during the 1910s, found imitation . . . wherever he went in the colonial Philippines (ibid. 181)[.3]

Filipinos' present preoccupation with hygiene and cleanliness (especially body odor) could be traced to this historical event. To be acknowledged as civilized, modern and Filipino citizen subjects, one has to demonstrate proper hygiene. The case of Preity exemplifies the prevalence and internalization of such attitude: "Some Indians say they are teased because they smell bad. Since my nanny is so particular about cleanliness, until now I have it in me:

(I) brush my teeth after eating, even small things it's just imbibed in me." Preity mentioned that she had an easier time fitting in and befriending Filipino schoolmates compared to *other* Indian girls in school. This finding suggests that attitudes toward 'race' or difference on the basis of the body and physical features could be influenced by colonization. Filipinos' understanding and practice of hygiene, a colonial legacy, has become a means of inclusion and exclusion in society.

Media as agents of inclusion and exclusion

Informants' experiences with local and global media point to classed and gendered representations of Indians that have contradictory consequences. In 2006 Michael V, a popular comedian and gag show host, came up with a compilation of his music videos that make fun of marginalized peoples in Philippine society. Produced by GMA Network, the second largest TV and news organization in the Philippines, each song from the album features Michael V spoofing gays, Indians, ugly people, etc. In the song *VJ Bumbay*, he mimics a male Sikh Punjabi who wears a fake beard and wraps a length of white cloth around his head to resemble a turban. Shot in black and white, and set in rap, the character of Michael V, a hawker, persuades the audience to buy his original but defective wares.

Most informants responded to *VJ Bumbay* as critical audiences. Male informants were particularly affected by this portrayal. However others did not say much about the video and were reflexive of its genre as an entertainment product: "it was funny and not to be taken seriously." Regardless of ethnic background, informants pointed out that the video stereotyped Indians as bumbay, referring to its classed and racialized meanings. Informants debunked this stereotypical image by asserting their class/occupation (owners of big businesses for Sindhis) and changing status (Punjabis taking other professions). They also cited the cultural heritage and achievements of Indians, especially the nation's recent economic performance. As discussed earlier this media representation has reinforced boundaries between Punjabis and Sindhis, and Indians and Filipinos.

Informants also criticized the media organization (GMA 7) for its treatment of ethnic minorities. Jeet deplored how the production, airing and marketing of the music video by a major media organization indicated an institutionalization of racial discrimination. Both Raja and Jeet observed that the music video reinforced the occupational stereotype, especially among

the masses. Jeet, who works with street children, shared that they teased him with the song: "They pick up this message from the media which says that it's okay to make fun of people who are different." Indeed the music video has influenced the symbolic space that is Philippine entertainment media and has become a reference for imagining Indians.

If local entertainment media contributed to the exclusion of Indians, global media, to some extent, influenced the symbolic environment to their advantage. The US-based annual Miss Universe pageant, a media event and contest taken seriously in Philippine society, in Thapan's (2002) observation, has helped boost the image of Indians locally. Held in Manila in 1994, the Miss Universe organization partnered with the Philippines' largest TV network, ABS-CBN, which gave full media coverage for three weeks. Sushmita Sen, an 18-year old Bengali and Indian national, won the crown. Female participant shared how this media event helped change Filipinos' perceptions of Indians, especially women. Deepa, who claimed to be half-Bengali, noticed that people were "remarking how smart they were at such a young age...they sounded like philosophers." She felt proud and identified with the Miss Universe's Bengali identity.

Parameswaran (2004) reveals that Indian print media's representations of global Indian beauty queens are classed and are constructed in the context of a nation that is renegotiating its marginal position in the global economy (p. 346). The female informants' identification with Indian beauty queens reflect not only an affiliation with an Indian identity but also a desire to be recognized as Indians in a privileged class position. The changing image of Indian women in Philippine society, however, was mediated by the symbolic power of a global media event that is owned and produced by an American media outfit. The sudden warmness experienced by Deepa and other female informants suggests that their symbolic inclusion in Philippine society is *still* enabled by American global media, which has the power to reward and create models of cosmopolitan (ethnic) identities. They promote, among others, upper class, English-speaking, achieving women – traits desired by modern Filipinos.

CONCLUSION

This study was premised on the need to investigate identity formations of young members of the Indian diaspora in cities of the global South like Metro Manila, and what media might have to do with this process. Data

suggest that being Indian in this context is not so much about one's ethnic affiliation alone but a combination of class, gender and race. Boundaries among Indian ethnic groups are drawn along class and ethnicity; distinctions between Filipinos and Indians are based on racialized and classed representations. These identifications and distinctions are gendered and thus results into contradictory experiences of difference.

The salience of class could be traced to the influence of the social organization of the host society, class hierarchy in the homeland and the status conscious culture of the local Indian communities. Racialized representations of Indians in popular discourse have historical origins that influence identity positionings and formations. The commercial orientation of local and global media exploits stereotypes and gives ethnic or national identities classed and gendered meanings. These media representations either reinforce or break boundaries within Indian ethnic groups and between Indians and Filipinos. This is how identities of the second/third generation Indian diaspora are formed in the context of postcolonial Manila.

Safran, Sahoo, and Lal's (2008) speak of the Indian diaspora developing 'institutions, orientations and patterns of living specific to the institutional structures and socio-political contexts of the different hostlands.' What this study finds is more continuities than peculiarities in the experiences of young people of Indian origin in Metro Manila, a city in the global South, in relation to other hostlands in the global North. Class identifications and distinctions have become significant among Indians in the UK and US (Bhattacharya 2008; Radhakrishnan 2008; Raj 2003). Peoples of Indian origin, whether from the Caribbean or the subcontinent, are also subject to gendered and racialized experiences (Bhatia 2008; Warikoo 2005; Gillespie 1995) in these cities. In a study of Indo-Caribbean youths in New York City, Warikoo (2005) notices that females benefit from cosmopolitan representations of Indian women and males resist classed and racialized labels like being associated with taxi drivers and Arabs after 9/11.

Indeed my findings only strengthen James Clifford's (1994) argument that the diasporic condition is a classed, gendered, and racialized phenomenon. Informants of the study who are second/third generation members of the Indian diaspora tend to experience contradictory attitudes towards ethnic difference that is constituted by class, gender and race. Such attitudes could be traced to a colonial past that imagined and treated people based on racial hierarchies that privileged white foreigners. On one hand

Filipinos have imbibed the racial prejudices of their American colonizers and have treated ethnic groups such as Indians accordingly; on the other Filipinos have looked up to 'white' Americans and Europeans, and have provided them preferential treatment. The members of the Indian diaspora are both beneficiaries of Filipinos' hospitality and victims of their prejudices. Indeed, the influence of colonization and the symbolic power of the colonizer linger and inform the experiences of the Indian diaspora in Philippine shores.

NOTES

1   Hall (1997) defines representation as 'the process by which members of a culture use language . . . to produce meaning' (p. 61).

2   I changed the surname to protect the privacy of the participant.

3   This is not to suggest that Filipinos had no practices of hygiene during that period. Anderson (2008) notes that Filipino elites who also worked for the colonial health agencies thought that the 'disease stigma more properly belonged not to race but to social class' (p. 192-193). Indeed since the American colonial period class differences and boundaries are already in place.

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