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“Grab your Culture and Walk with the Global”: Ladakhi Students’
Negotiation of Cultural Identity in the Context of Globalization-based
Acculturation

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Abstract

The globalization-based acculturation process in the Indian Himalayan region of Ladakh represents a highly complex network of intercultural interactions. Ladakhi youth negotiate their cultural orientation and identity in relation both (a) to indirect intercultural exposure through media and (b) to intermittent cultural contact through tourism in Ladakh. Additionally, many Ladakhi students take sojourns in large Indian cities. Like other Eastern populations exposed to cultural globalization, young Ladakhis are influenced by several local and global cultural streams. Within this acculturative process, Ladakhi youth are caught between ambiguous societal pressures toward both tradition and change. Through in-depth interviews, in the present study we investigated the negotiations of eight Ladakhi students' cultural identity in Leh (Ladakh) and Delhi. In doing so, we draw pragmatically on theories of multiculturalism and dialogical self. Participants reported negotiating their cultural identity through dialogue among various personal, cultural, religious, and social voices, where these voices require selectively incorporating various cultural elements within the parameters established by societal constraints. Results indicate the vast complexity and dynamics within the Ladakhi acculturation process, with multiple interacting cultural streams, religions, and significant sociohistorical factors calling for an in-depth qualitative approach to elucidating the processes underlying globalization-based acculturation.

Keywords: Cultural identity, Globalization, Acculturation, Dialogical Self Theory, Ladakh, India

“Grab your Culture and Walk with the Global”: Ladakhi Students’ Negotiation of Cultural Identity in the Context of Globalization-based Acculturation

Globalization has emerged as a major force through which individuals can acculturate to other cultural streams¹ within the context of their homelands. Although the study of cultural adaptation has been ongoing for several decades, the vast majority of this work has focused on immigration (e.g., Berry, 1997). Only recently have researchers begun to focus on globalization-related acculturation, wherein people are exposed to new cultural elements without leaving their countries of origin (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008; Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). In today’s globalized societies, individuals interact with a multitude of cultural streams transmitted through technology and media. From a psychological perspective, continuous adaptation to a culturally heterogeneous environment can create a multiplicity of occasionally incompatible or conflicting cultural positions within the self (König, 2009). Contemporary, many Eastern societies have been significantly influenced by cultural globalization and by successive reactions of defensive localization with increasing awareness of culture-specific history and values. Accordingly, the younger generation, especially, has been exposed to, and must balance and integrate, various cultural streams and traditions. Such integration requires tradition and family on one hand, and attention to their own personal aspirations and autonomy on the other hand. As a result of globalization, a cultural gap between youth and the parents may arise regarding authority and autonomy – which are central issues in the development of one’s cultural identity (Jensen, Arnett, & McKenzie, 2011).

¹ The term *cultural stream* is applied to acknowledge the fluid character of *culture* comprising great variance and continuous change.

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The Ladakhi region in Northern India has been increasingly globalized through the last 50 years, and consequently, young Ladakhis are negotiating their cultural identities in relation to the accelerating processes of intercultural connectivity. In anti-globalization discourse, Ladakh has often been used as an exemplification of the negative and culturally homogenizing effect of globalization, where global culture is cast as eradicating traditional Ladakhi culture (Norberg-Hodge, 1999). However, recent research indicates that young Ladakhis are able to integrate various cultural streams (Dinnerstein, 2013; Gupta, 2014; Ozer, 2015). In the present study, we investigated Ladakhi college students' negotiation of multicultural identity challenges during the process of globalization in a local Ladakhi town (Leh) and in the Indian capital (Delhi). Through exploration of variations, dynamics, and nuances fundamental to the integration of multiple cultural streams among young Ladakhis – nuances that require qualitative investigation (Ozer & Schwartz, 2016) – we investigated experiences of globalization-based acculturation among young Ladakhis. Drawing pragmatically on psychological theories about *multicultural identity formation* and *dialogical self theory* (DST), we aimed at elucidating the complex and dynamic mechanisms underlying cultural identity development in the context of a specific Eastern indigenous population exposed to the multidirectional, globalized flow of cultural elements.

Multicultural Identity Development in an Acculturating and Globalized World

With the rapid acceleration of connectivity between and among cultures, globalization exerts pivotal influences on identity development among youth. Through identity development, young people find their place in the world by exploring and committing to certain goals, values, and beliefs along with ideals attitudes, and behaviors reflecting the cultural groups to which one sees oneself as belonging. These identity processes of developing a coherent sense of self can be challenged within contexts of interaction between various cultural streams (Schwartz,

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Montgomery, & Briones, 2006). Let us first define what we mean by globalization. *Globalization* is conceptualized as the process of increasingly complex connectivity across geographical distance (Tomlinson, 1999). In line with this definition, *globalization-based acculturation* represents direct and/or mediated exposure to new cultural influences that is not caused by international migration but rather through other channels such as media, trade, education, and tourism (Chen et al., 2008). As traditional cultural practices and beliefs are altered by, or integrated with, global influences, the development of young people's cultural identities becomes challenging as they integrate both local and global cultural streams within a hybrid or multicultural sense of self (Arnett, 2002).

Berry (1997) developed an influential theoretical framework for investigating psychological processes of acculturation by crossing the assumedly independent dimensions of orientations toward ethnic and new cultural streams. Within Berry's model, four *acculturation strategies* are delineated: (a) *integration* (also termed biculturalism; high ethnic and new cultural endorsement), (b) *assimilation* (high new and low ethnic cultural preference), (c) *separation* (high ethnic and low new cultural preference), and (d) *marginalization* (low on both ethnic and new cultural endorsement). Cultural identity has been conceptualized as a central aspect of one's acculturation strategy (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Specifically, the acculturation approach that one endorses is, at least to some extent, an expression of who one is in a cultural sense.

Within self-categorization theory, cultural identity can be conceptualized as a kind of social identity (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Specifically, cultural identity is grounded in people's tendency to regard themselves as member of a specific cultural group entailing a collective system of meaning. Bicultural and multicultural identities are developed

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through the exposure to - and consequently internalization of - cultural streams other than one's native or primary culture. This process of acculturation can occur through migration, globalization, or living in a multicultural community (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). With the great extent of multicultural exposure in today's globalized urban societies, cultural identity has become far more multidimensional. Multicultural exposure and interactions with new cultural streams offers a multitude of potential life trajectories and cultural identifications.

Negotiation of cultural orientation and identity through the process of selectivity is said to characterize globalization-based acculturation as a voluntary process of multicultural integration (Chen et al., 2008). That is, whereas immigration-based acculturation is somewhat compulsory because one is surrounded by the new culture, globalization-based acculturation is more selective and agentic (Ferguson, Tran, Mendez, & van de Vijver, in press). Negotiating a bicultural or multicultural identity is not always a smooth process, however. A crucial aspect of developing a bicultural or multicultural identity involves the degree to which the cultures in question are perceived as being able to be integrated in a harmonious and/or blended way (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). *Bicultural identity integration* (BII) pertains to the individual's perceived degree of bicultural harmony and blendedness when managing two cultural identities and can be measured using the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale (BIIS-2R; Huynh & Benet-Martínez, 2010). The BIIS-2R is a self-report scale containing two subscales with 11 items assessing cultural harmony versus conflict and nine items measuring blendedness versus compartmentalization. Participants indicate their responses using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Sample items include "I feel torn between 'ethnic' and American culture" and "I do not blend my 'ethnic' and American cultures" (Huynh & Benet-Martínez, 2010).

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Although integration of a bicultural or multicultural identity has been found to be generally adaptive (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013), others have suggested that an acculturating individual can find her/himself caught between two cultural contexts – especially if these cultures are perceived as dissimilar and incompatible (Rudmin, 2003; Schwartz, Birman, Benet-Martínez, & Unger, in press). The quantitative approach to studying acculturation may be circumscribed by a limited ability to include concrete information about the dynamic process of integration or the content of the component cultural streams. Situating the challenges of biculturalism in its specific sociohistorical contexts may best be addressed through qualitative research.

Globalization-based acculturation has been related to an experience of increasing uncertainty caused by the increased number of distinct cultures to which people are exposed, with the associated difficulties in possible cultural conflicts within the acculturating individual (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). Youth from rapidly changing non-Western countries are especially vulnerable to cultural globalization. This could result in (cultural) identity confusion reflecting diminished ties with their changing local cultural stream together with an experienced lack of meaning related to a global cultural stream that may contradict their cultural traditions (Arnett, 2002). Delocalization and a lack of cultural certainty can result in identity confusion rather than the successful negotiation of an identity that provides the basis for living in the local culture while participating in the global culture (Arnett, 2002).

Identity research has incorporated the postmodern notion of continuous contextual change and has considered the intersection of multiple contexts that increase the difficulty of developing a strong, stable, and coherent identity. When people are exposed to multiple cultural influences, there is a need for multicultural, dynamic, or dialogical sensitivity relating the various contexts

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(Schachter, 2005). This need has been elucidated by research on the dialogical self, which has conceptualized the multiplicity of self-positions within the individual person and stressed the importance of dialogue among various internal and external cultural, social, and personal positions within the self. This conception can be applied to elucidate the acculturative dynamics related to cultural identity negotiations among Ladakhi students.

The Dialogical Nature of Acculturative Dynamics

The relatively young discipline of acculturation psychology has been marked by ongoing discussion addressing the question of how to study the complex phenomenon of acculturation. Within this discussion, it has been recommended that the study of acculturation can be advanced by a qualitative methodology that could complement the widespread quantitative approach by capturing more of the complexity and dynamics characterizing acculturation (Chirkov, 2009; Ozer, 2013). *Dialogical self theory* (DST) represents a promising framework capturing the multiplicity, complexity, and dynamics of various personal, social, and cultural positions within the self that are activated through acculturation. DST proposes a mutual inclusion of self and culture through dialogical relationships expressing the potentials and multifacetedness of a multi-voiced self. Such a multi-voiced self is viewed as capturing the many nuances of society – that is, the complexity of society is reflected within the self that is extended to the environment. Through this conjunction of internal and external positions within this extended self, identity is constructed as a dynamic process that reflects interactions between the local and the global (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

Dialogical Self Theory and the Proliferation of Cultural Voices

According to DST, the “I” (self-as-knower) moves between and among various spatial and temporal positions within an imagined self-space, where each position is related to a specific set

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of personal, social, or cultural positions. This movement results in self-negotiations, self-contradictions, and self-integration across a great variety of meanings (Hermans, 2001). This internal dialogue occurs as I-positions are constructed and positioned in dyadic dialogue with an audience, which can include actual others (heterodialogue) as well as imagined others within the self (inner-others; autdialogue) (Aveling, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2014). The process of dialogue can be marked by competition and cooperation between and among the various I-positions. Such dynamic processes within the self contribute to one's sense of identity through revision and change of the positions. In relation to acculturation and the interplay among various cultural streams, the self-system is organized and re-organized with regard to the heterogeneous internal positions that may be in conflict, co-exist independently, or emerge as hybrid multiple identities. In this field of activity, an asymmetric power hierarchy emerges as a central force underlying the dominance of certain I-positions over others. This positioning is relevant for the process of acculturation in that social power in relations organizes and constrain interactions within and across different cultural groups' collective voices (Hermans, 2001).

A consequence of the increasingly globalized world is a high density of heterogeneous positions within the self, representing the interconnectedness of cultures worldwide. These positions engage in negotiations, including agreement and disagreement and resulting in both positive and negative aspects of uncertainty experienced through increasing complexity, ambiguity, and unpredictability. These aspects of uncertainty include exploration of the unknown through innovative intercultural contact, as well as identity confusion resulting from unsuccessful reconsolidation of conflicts between one's local and global cultural affiliations. Compared to earlier times that were characterized by greater cultural homogeneity, this heterogeneity entails greater conflict, contrast, or shifts within the self necessitating a refined

capacity for dialogue (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). In relation to DST, cultural identity can be defined as “a system of positions derived from or organized around a cultural group” (Adams & Markus, 2001, p. 289), and DST provides a framework for understanding how these multiple identities are negotiated within the self.

The advantage of using DST in studies of acculturation is that it goes beyond Berry’s (1997) fourfold acculturation model, which focuses on more general and abstract patterns. DST shifts the focus from a static operationalization to a process-oriented understanding of acculturation that is both situated and negotiated. Thus, DST focuses on the increasing complexity of culture and on issues of conflict and power relations. Furthermore, understanding the negotiation of multiple cultural identities as a more fluid, dynamic, interminable, and often contested and unstable process illuminates some important aspects of acculturation that are not well captured by traditional acculturation models that posit the existence only of specific categories and processes (Bhatia & Ram, 2001).

In the present study, we assume an integrative and pragmatic approach suggesting that various modern and postmodern theoretical approaches studying acculturation and identity reflect a difference in emphasis rather than a difference in the studied phenomena. That is, we acknowledge the pragmatic utility of approaching both quantitative-generalizable and qualitative-specific information (Schwartz et al., 2006; Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). Thus, the previous broader findings on acculturation in Ladakh extracted from Berry’s framework (Ozer, 2015; Ozer & Schwartz, 2016) will be complemented by our qualitative study providing insights in relation to idiosyncratic experiences, processual complexity, and cultural content.

Globalization and Acculturation among Ladakhi Youth

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Youth in urban contexts within India exemplify contemporary sociocultural changes in many people's daily lives resulting from globalization. These changes integrate traditional Indian values and behavior such as interdependence, collectivism, and religious participation with Western values and behavior such as independence, individualism, and material consumption (Rao et al., 2013). The situation in Ladakh, however, is more complex because Ladakhis are an indigenous minority group within India.

The Ladakh region, with approximately 300,000 inhabitants, covers 86,904 square kilometers of the North Indian border area within the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Ladakh is divided into the primarily Muslim Kargil district and the predominantly Buddhist Leh district. The majority of the Ladakhi population is registered as Scheduled Tribe under India's positive discrimination system for disadvantaged communities. Ladakh was historically isolated in the Himalayas, with intercultural contacts occurring primarily through wars and trade, especially with the neighboring regions of Tibet and Kashmir. The cultural influence of globalization has marked Ladakhi history with accelerating intercultural contact throughout the last five decades. In terms of recent events, Ladakh has been influenced primarily after the Indian independence from Britain, and especially by border conflicts with neighboring nations. Located along the disputed borders to Pakistan and China, Ladakh has become immensely militarized and further integrated into the Indian nation, leading the Indian government to further develop the area (Bray, 2005). Furthermore, in 1974 Ladakh was opened to tourism, and the region has emerged as a popular tourist destination – attracting nearly as many tourists annually as there are inhabitants in the region (District Statistical Handbook, 2011). These significant changes have boosted the local economy and made traveling – and young Ladakhis studying in major Indian cities – possible.

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Globalization-based acculturation in Ladakh comprises the interaction of three superordinate cultural streams: (1) local Ladakhi culture, (2) national Indian culture, and (3) a global culture characterized by Western approaches to dress, language, cuisine, child-rearing, etc. (Ozer & Schwartz, 2016). These cultural streams are present in various degrees throughout the Ladakhi context, and thus the complex process of globalization-based acculturation in Ladakh can be broken down into various degrees and types of exposure (Ozer, 2015). Some Ladakhi students attend college within the Ladakhi region or in other major Indian cities such as Jammu, Chandigarh, and Delhi. Ladakhis also differ in terms of their place of origin (e.g., villages versus more urban areas in either Leh or the Kargil district) and in terms of time spent away from Ladakh. Both Buddhism and Islam are prominent in Ladakh, suggesting that Ladakhis must negotiate not only cultural identity, but also religious identity and the interplay between one's religious tradition and modernity (Williams-Oerberg, 2014), as well as possible inter-religious disputes between Buddhists and Muslims (Smith, 2013).

Within Ladakh, young Ladakhis are exposed to cultural influences from the great number of tourists (both domestic and foreign), integration into the larger Indian nation, and remote acculturation influences (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012) such as entertainment, television, and the Internet. Anthropological research has described Ladakhi cultural identity development as heavily influenced by increasing contact with other cultural groups and the political struggle for greater regional autonomy, thereby representing Ladakhi culture as a fluid, ambiguous, and heterogeneous construct comprising many elements such as tribal communities, endorsement (or not) of Indian nationalism, affiliation with Tibet, and religiosity (Muslim or Buddhist in interaction with Hinduism, which is the majority religion in India as a whole; van Beek, 2003). Encountering the new environment outside Ladakh, students cope with both marginalization and

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discrimination by forging diasporic ties and creating a cosmopolitan sensibility related to the feeling of national exclusion and alienation (Smith & Gergan, 2015). Ladakhi students in Delhi often reside with other Ladakhi students or with family members. Within the Ladakhi diasporic communities, students maintain traditional cultural and religious ceremonies and events as a way of dealing with being away from their home region. Further, in the acculturation context of large multicultural cities such as Delhi, Western cultural elements such as American fast food restaurants and coffee shops, reliable Internet, and Western media – including Hollywood movies, Western music, and European soccer – are easily accessible.

The accelerating processes of cultural interconnectivity have spurred strong local and international discourses regarding the outcome of globalization in Ladakh and the fear that traditional culture will be eroded. Within these discourses, the process of globalization in Ladakh is regarded as cultural homogenization as Western culture replaces Ladakhi culture (Norberg-Hodge, 1991, 1999). These discourses have generated a strong sentiment for localization as opposition to the global and for conserving what is perceived as Ladakhi culture, which permeates young Ladakhi's cultural negotiations and civic engagement (Ozer, 2015).

Many Ladakhi students face the challenge of balancing strong influences from their family and traditional Ladakhi society, on one hand, and the desire for modernity and freedom on the other (Ozer, 2015). They face the paradox of being sent out for modern education to ensure development in Ladakh, and at the same time being criticized for becoming modern while forgetting their ethnic Ladakhi culture (Aengst, 2014; Williams-Oerberg, 2014). Consequently, negotiating cultural identities in the Ladakhi context of globalization-based acculturation can be challenging, involving a balancing of influences from society, peers, and family – as well as involving at least three distinct cultural streams (Ladakhi, mainstream Indian, and Western).

The Current Study

The purpose of our study was to examine the complex negotiation of cultural identity among Ladakhi students exposed to globalization-based acculturation either within Ladakh or in the Indian capital of Delhi. Using a qualitative approach can provide a nuanced understanding of complex processes underlying globalization-based acculturation in Ladakh. Furthermore, this approach allows us to examine the developmental dynamics of intergenerational (parent-youth) cultural gaps caused by globalization-based acculturation (which affects young people more than it affects their parents; Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). We employed a primarily deductive approach to qualitatively examining the processes of multicultural integration, and in doing so, we developed hypotheses regarding the Ladakhi acculturative experience. We expected that the acculturative experiences of negotiating cultural identity would reflect substantial variation between Ladakhi students studying within the Ladakhi society living together with family and those temporarily studying in a highly cosmopolitan Indian city. Furthermore, we expected cultural identity integration to occur through internal dialogue, including ambiguity and conflict vis-à-vis reconciling the local and the global cultural stream.

Method

Participants

Participants were Ladakhi college students studying in either Leh (the largest town in Ladakh) or Delhi (India; see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). Eight participants were included as interviewees based on their scores on the BIIS-2R (Huynh & Benet-Martínez, 2010) from a larger quantitative data collection. The scale measures the perceived degree of bicultural harmony and blendedness and was modified to fit the Ladakhi context, excluding four of the original 20 items (two items from each subscale). The excluded items made explicit reference to

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immigration or to living in a new society – which does not apply to Ladakhi individuals studying in Leh (and perhaps even those studying in Delhi). Additionally, the wording was changed to refer to Ladakhi and Western cultures as the two streams that might or might not be integrated. Because bicultural identity integration involves two intersecting cultural streams, we selected the two streams that appear to be the most opposing and incompatible – Ladakhi and Western. Traditional Ladakhi values and behaviors are focused on modesty, and family and community hierarchy (Ozer, 2012). In contrast, Western cultural streams are generally characterized by a focus on the individual person and a personally constructed life course (Gelfand et al., 2011). Purposive sampling was employed through extreme case sampling, such that we recruited interviewees within the 10% highest and lowest BII scores (using an aggregation of the two BIIS-2R subscales) within a total sample of 395 Ladakhi students from the quantitative dataset. Students with the highest and lowest scores were invited to participate in an interview. If they declined, the next person on the list was invited until all eight participants were recruited. This sampling approach was chosen to provide significant insights into the harmonious ways of combining cultural identities as well as the challenges of cultural identity integration. Two high and two low BII participants were recruited in each cultural setting (Leh and Delhi) to reflect the diversity in responses to multifaceted exposures to globalization and in the significance of society within the self (Hermans, 2001). Participants in Leh all lived with their parents in either the town or a village, whereas participants in Delhi resided at various locations, often together with other Ladakhi students. Two of the participants in Leh had previously been attending boarding school outside the Ladakh region but had returned for their tertiary studies.

Procedure

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In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in April 2015 with all eight participants on campus at various colleges in both Leh and Delhi. Participants were offered the choices of speaking in Ladakhi (in the presence of a Ladakhi interpreter who would translate into English during the interview) or speaking in English. English is taught from first grade in Ladakh, and all college textbooks are in English. Five (including all students in Delhi) chose to speak in English, and three students in Leh chose to speak in Ladakhi. The duration of the interviews ranged from 53 to 71 minutes, with a mean of 67 minutes. The interviews followed a script, with questions focusing on five superordinate dimensions: (1) perception of culture and change, (2) opinions regarding culture and change, (3) engagement with cultural streams, (4) harmonizing multicultural identities, and (5) social influences on cultural identity formation. These dimensions were chosen to elucidate both general metacognitive strategies for multicultural identity integration and specific I-positions that were considered important within the context of globalization-based acculturation in Ladakh. Sample questions include: “Could you describe a typical day in your life (for example yesterday) and how you meet different cultures during this day (what did you do/who did you meet)?”, “Describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which you participate in different cultures at the same time”, and “Do you feel that you have the freedom to choose your cultural identity?”

Within the interview setting, the sociocultural position of the interviewer can situate and affect the dialogue within the interviewee, with the goal of activating specific I-positions. All interviews were conducted by the first author, a Danish psychologist. The presence of a Western interviewer might have activated themes related to foreign NGO workers’ and culturally attentive tourists’ concerns about new cultural influences and compassion toward traditional Ladakhi culture. Furthermore, the presence of a Ladakhi translator, and thus multiple

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interviewers, during three of the interview sessions might caution the interviewee and strengthen Ladakhi I-positions. Likewise, communicating in English could activate Western I-positions. We attempted to limit these potential biases by asking concrete questions about individual everyday experiences and examples. Additionally, participants might downplay some of their I-positions, and instead reproduce societal discourses, in presenting themselves to a researcher. Although an outsider position can be helpful in keeping an open mind throughout the interviews, it was important for the interviewer to establish an insider position regarding his understanding of Ladakhi culture (Chaudhary, 2008). The interviewer established an insider position by sharing his experiences during his previous one-year fieldwork in Ladakh and by being a young adult himself (Singla, 2004).

Analytic Strategy

All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed by the first author. Transcriptions were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), which combines phenomenology and hermeneutics with the aim of capturing participants' subjective experiences and meaning-making through a process of interpretation. Transcripts were read and re-read, case by case, with the coder writing exploratory notes and comments. Subsequently, through the process of allocating themes capturing the essential quality of the text, one interview at a time, 61 emerging themes were identified. This list of emerging themes was then reviewed, merging four themes that were extremely similar to one another. After this revision, the remaining 57 emerging themes were clustered into six superordinate themes through abstraction and in accordance with conceptual similarities, as a way of identifying common patterns from among the emerging themes. The five result sections are derived from five of these six superordinate themes. Throughout the process of analyzing the

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data, communicative validation was established by asking the participants themselves to review the interview transcription and the results section. No objections were made to the transcriptions and interpretations. Excerpts from the interview transcripts are presented in the results section together with the interpretations. The excerpts were chosen based on their clarity in illustrating the depth of participants' spoken words that were central for the experience and meaning-making of cultural identity negotiations.

The IPA approach to qualitative data analyses aligns well with dialogical self theory in terms of an idiosyncratic focus, and indeed dialogical self theory has been linked to phenomenological experiences regarding cultural positions (Cunha & Gonçalves, 2009). The analysis of multi-voicedness and dialogue was based on the suggested guidelines presented by Aveling, Gillespie, and Cornish (2014), in terms of identifying and coding I-positions, inner-other positions, and interactions between positions in relation to the plurality of cultural interactions.

Results

The eight participants were equally divided between Muslims and Buddhists. Overall, our analysis ranges from scrutinizing metacognitive approaches to integrating multiple cultural identities to more complex and detailed processes of cultural identity development through dialogue between various I-positions encompassed by aspects of agency and societal constraints. The variations in responses among participants suggested immense discrepancies in acculturation experiences, cultural positions, and negotiation of cultural identity across individuals.

Integrating Multiculturalism as a Ladakhi Student

With regard to multicultural identity integration, participants focused on the need to balance new cultural influences with conserving ethnic Ladakhi identity. Not coincidentally, this theme

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also frequently emerges in local discourse and politics. All eight participants highlighted conservation of the Ladakhi culture during the process of globalization-based acculturation as crucial, reflecting the widespread fear of Ladakhi culture disintegrating through the process of globalization. “I think that the past was nice, there was a touch of typicality in everything and now it is just a showcase...now, because of tourism, people are again trying to come back to the cultural ways.” In this quote, Fatima expressed ambiguity regarding the current effort to preserve Ladakhi culture as a response to tourism that was perceived as an artificial cultural revival. This revival was framed as positive in the sense that it emphasizes Ladakhi culture, but as negative in the sense that it is inauthentically done for the sake of making money from tourists. Her low BIIS-2R score most likely reflect her endorsement of the Ladakhi cultural stream and discomfort regarding the Western cultural stream. However, she recognized that being grounded in one’s ethnic culture provides a platform for new cultural communication and multicultural integration in which being both cultural (Ladakhi) and modern is not experienced as conflictual: “we are modern but still cultural. With the coming time, we have gathered our culture, so I think it is fine”. This reflects her situation living within Ladakh just outside of Leh, where new cultural influences are still limited. Her living situation may therefore have enabled a “both” position that allows for a hybrid identity that is both Ladakhi and modern at the same time. In contrast, Ladakhi students living in Delhi experienced enhanced new cultural influences, and some were struggling to sustain their connections with Ladakhi culture (Ozer, 2015).

Resenting cultural change in Ladakh, Nasir, who scored low on the BIIS-2R, described various ways of preserving Ladakhi culture through both communication and technology. One method of cultural conservation was through communication with elders, along with teaching children and friends about traditional Ladakhi culture as a way of cultivating a general cultural

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awareness. Another way of preserving Ladakhi culture was through searching for information on Ladakhi culture on the Internet. Nasir described one situation of cultural learning in which he met a Ladakhi-dressed Frenchman in Ladakh who could teach him about “Ladakhi culture”. Nasir ascribed this situation to the Frenchman being more cross-culturally aware, even though he was “French by heart”. The Ladakhi-tourist interaction emerged as a site of cultural identity conservation or (re)construction in which the Ladakhi cultural position can arise from Ladakhis imagining the standpoints of tourists (Gillespie, 2006). This interaction can be linked to Nasir’s description of the Internet and cross-cultural communication as a way of both learning and preserving the Ladakhi culture. The self-reflections aspired by impressions of the culturally knowledgeable tourists and media positions the challenges of adopting “modern culture” and at the same time preserve and demarcate their distinct cultural identity. Nasir stressed that conservation of ethnic culture should not proceed in any way that diminishes the positive aspects of globalization and development, such as higher education, new technology, etc.

We should try [our] best to conserve our culture but, – conserve our culture but with the mindset of Western – you know – ideology because we have to cope up with the globalization. We cannot like – you know – hold the culture and we should let go of the development and everything. I think it should run parallel.

In this excerpt, Nasir’s reflections stressed the importance of globalization facilitating positive and necessary development, while the ethnic culture was perceived as fixed. The stable and unchanging core of traditional Ladakhi culture was presented by Nasir as an aspect of his cultural orientation, permeated by a Western way of thinking. He was thus suggesting conserving the local through the global. Even though Nasir recognized intercultural interaction between Ladakhi and global culture as being important, for him a preservation and balance in this

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interaction was related to compartmentalizing the cultural streams and restraining cultural mixing – as evidenced by his low BIIS-2R score: “I try to keep it separate...because if you merge a culture into another culture, I feel that the basic – you know – the base of your culture fades away”. Such a description reflects the experience of bicultural identity development including compartmentalized local and global identities rather than hybridity.

To a large extent, participants found it possible to balance various cultural influences while still maintaining a cohesive sense of cultural identity. Padma expressed her fluctuation among various cultural involvements yet still experienced a stable and integrated self-conception: “I do wear Western clothes and all. I hang out with kids, like students from other cultures. But then, like at the end of the day, I know who I am, where I come from, and why I've come to here”. This open-minded approach to acculturation reflects her high BIIS-2R score. Likewise, Sanah expressed the situational dependency of cultural orientation: “according to the situation we have to follow the culture. Suppose there is something else to be done Western way, we cannot do it Ladakhi way. It would look very odd”. This was exemplified by dressing according to the present cultural context, reflecting her low BIIS-2R score and her preference for compartmentalizing the cultural streams. Tsering linked this perspective to the contrast in acculturative context inside Ladakh and in Delhi: “We participate in different ways. In Ladakh we used to get to the Ladakhi events only, Ladakhi way...but in Delhi, we used to get the mix of foreign Western and Indian”. Even though Nasir advocated cultural compartmentalization, he recognized the cultural blendedness within him related to his sojourn in the context of Delhi illustrating the inexplicit balance between a bicultural and a hybrid identity.

I think right now in Delhi, because – you know – for a short amount of time, I feel Indian, Ladakhi, and Western culture is all mixed up in me right now. Right now,

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it is all mixed up in me, but – you know – in a broader sense, I'm more Ladakhi than I'm Indian or Western.

In general, the eight participants reported few experiences of difficulties related to integrating multiple cultural streams. The experience of multicultural integration was widely described as a process of selectivity with the ambition of adopting the favorable components of Indian and Western cultural streams, and discarding the negative cultural elements of these streams.

Reflective Selectivity in Cultural Identity Negotiations

Selectivity was generally conceived as a primary mechanism of cultural integration among the Ladakhi students through the experience of being able to mix those cultural elements that individuals found most appealing. All participants perceived both positive and negative elements in each of the three cultural streams. In the Ladakhi context, this understanding of multifaceted cultures and cultural change has, in previous research, been related to a selective process of incorporating cultural elements and to the importance of agency (Ozer, 2015). As experienced by Tashi, a participant residing in Leh after spending a few years at a boarding school outside Ladakh, a cohesive multicultural integration is realizable in a harmonious manner by employing circumspect observation and reflection, followed by selectivity regarding which cultural elements to adopt.

No, with me it doesn't happen – conflict – it has never happened with me.

Specially when it comes to culture. How, why is this? One thing, I keep observing things. So when I observe, I keep both things aside first and observe both and I can tell which is right and which I should do, and then decide and ignore the other and follows whichever I have chosen, whichever I think is right. And that kind

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have proven to be good so far.

This excerpt was related to the beneficial and harmonious cultural integration based on selectivity reflecting his high BIIS-2R score. However, Tashi also acknowledged guidance from family and influences of modernized peers with regard to mixing cultural elements.

Both general patterns and individual differences centered around integration of cultural elements. Participants generally gravitated toward education, independence, confidence, and open-mindedness, which they associated with the Western cultural stream. Likewise, they endorsed the cultural diversity and multicultural interaction in India. Preferred cultural elements from Ladakh concerned politeness, family-orientatedness, humility, ethnic cuisine, and religiosity. Participants varied in terms of sentiment toward Western entertainment, female clothing, gender roles, and the degree to which various cultural elements should be integrated. Some found Western music to be displeasing and the love scenes in Hollywood movies to be disturbing. Dolma expressed her positive inclination toward Western clothing and design, whereas Ali denounced Western clothing for females as immodest and improper.

The selection of various cultural elements can cause uncertainty as the complexity of, and distance between, multiple cultural voices within the individual increase. Fatima, from Leh, initially experienced difficulty in (a) choosing between diverging cultural behaviors and (b) combining cultural elements when possible. “There are times when I get confused. So I feel like should I do it this way, our way or their way. So sometimes I end up doing both ways; take little of this and that”. This excerpt was exemplified with the increasing popularity of fusion cuisine representing the various interacting cultural streams. Together with Tashi’s excerpt above, Fatima’s description reflects endorsement of cultural positions that handle cultural conflict and confusion through selectivity and integration.

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The cultural identities negotiated by the eight participants varied but tended to favor an ethnic Ladakhi self-conception. Padma and Tsering denoted themselves as Ladakhi, whereas Ali, Fatima, and Sanah characterized themselves as being Indian-Ladakhi. Dolma described herself as Ladakhi-Western, and Tashi and Nasir denoted themselves as Ladakhi-Indian-Western.

The degree of freedom and possible selectivity varied according to where participants lived. Sojourning away from their home region while studying in the multicultural context of Delhi promoted a sense of independence and freedom in the Ladakhi students. Such freedom was otherwise described as limited within Ladakh, where parental protection and cultural guidance were more influential. Tsering stated: “Like every decision I have to make in Delhi it's my choice whether I'll do it or not...if I feel like to stay at my friend's home I'm staying, but in Leh the decision - first I have to call my parents and then I'm taking permission from my mother”. Living in Delhi, Padma likewise stressed her self-determination and autonomy while acknowledging influences from society: “there are restrictions from society, or maybe parents also would say like you should not, but then ultimately it depends on me, like what I want to do or like how I want to live my life”. Recognizing an experience of a high level of selectivity and self-determination marking the process of acculturation in Ladakh and especially among Ladakhi students in Delhi, social constraints and influences should be taken into consideration as framing and limiting the individual's range of choice.

The Mutually Inclusive Mind and Society: Social Influence and Restrictions

All participants stressed the importance of family and society regarding cultural negotiation. The inner-other voices, reflecting the internalized voices of external positions within the extended domain of the self (the positions of societal, parental, and significant others), emerged in dialogue with various personal I-positions through the interviews.

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Dolma, who resided within Ladakh, reported conflict between her Western I-position and a coalition of various societal or inner-others positions representing traditional Ladakhi culture and the older and more traditional generation. These discordant voices caused some cultural identity confusion.

I feel totally conflicted within my thoughts. Sometimes, I feel this is right, sometimes I feel that is right - like even - I get confused... They [Rinpoches²] tell the young people not to get too much westernized, but I like being westernized. So I feel that should I follow what they said or should I follow what my heart say? So like there is a conflict, because my inner instinct say that you should follow them as well, but sometimes it's like so confused.

Trying to follow the admonishment of inner-other voices from society and recognizing them within herself would create an experience of conflict and confusion reflected in two I-positions – one that wants to be westernized and one that wants to follow the Ladakhi cultural directive. The conflicting voices within Dolma were also related to women's roles and to expressing a Western cultural orientation endorsing fashion and tight clothes. Westernization was described in terms of the increasing popularity of English phrases, Western clothes, the use of cell phones and the Internet, and an independent and open mindset (e.g., allowing young couples to express affection publicly as opposed to the communion-oriented, simple, and humble living that characterizes traditional Ladakhi culture). In Ladakh, social mores are often challenged through wearing Western dress, and Ladakhi girls are regarded as particularly vulnerable to new cultural influences. Girls with desires for material goods are often regarded as selfish and immoral, resulting in a culturally gender-specific constrained position of agency (Aengst, 2014). Dolma

² Highly respected, reincarnated Lamas who teach religion within Tibetan Buddhism.

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was struggling to improve her Ladakhi language and learning the Ladakhi female role after being away from the region for 7 years while attending a boarding school in Himachal Pradesh.

In Ladakh, the perception being a decent girl means not wearing jeans, not using cell phones, especially, not talking to boys. But I can't restrict myself from all this, so I feel conflicted. Like what should I do and what shouldn't I...whatever I'm doing my mom will always say like "see what you are wearing" so sometimes I feel that everyone look at you. She's asking, telling me all the time "what are you wearing", so there is a conflict okay... I don't have the full freedom to be westernized or Indian or whatever. Obviously, they like the idea of Ladakhi typical, but not the Western... Obviously the parents will care most about the society, they will think about the family reputation.

Dolma's inner-other voices, reflecting her parents and the culturally conservative Ladakhi society, were opposed by another societal voice, presumably reflecting young peers' position. These opposing voices enhance the experience of being in cultural limbo; concurrently balancing the traditional and the modern. The inner-other voices promoting the modern and global were strongly represented in Dolma's self-reflection, shaping her self-image and accentuating her youthful sensitivity to peer approval.

If you adopted Western culture, then people will think like you are civilized, you are, if you are up to date with the latest fashions, if you are on Facebook, if you are on WhatsApp, then they will think that you are cool. But if you are not on Facebook, then they will think you are dumb.

Dolma's experience of cultural conflict and confusion was inconsistent with her BIIS-2R score indicating harmony and blendedness between her Western and Ladakhi cultural

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orientations. This discrepancy could relate to the qualitative study of cultural processes capturing more of the ambiguous dynamics – for example, her self-perception might be of cultural harmonious mixing although her actual behavior may be conflicted regarding the voices of various inner-others. This could, furthermore, reflect a temporal distance between the quantitative and qualitative data collection, suggesting dynamics and change within and between her I-positions. At the time she filled the BIIS-2R, she had just returned to Ladakh. Even though the conflictual voices were pulling her in different directions with regard to parental and religious positions representing traditional Ladakhi culture versus Western dress and use of the Internet, Dolma perceived herself as mixing the cultural positions and recognizing their validity within herself: “I’m praying early in the morning, I wear jeans, and even I have feeling of the nationality that we are Indians; so like mixed together”. This practice of combining cultural elements was designated as modern, as opposed to the traditional, monocultural, unchanging Ladakhi culture.

Parental voices were often experienced as conservative guidelines limiting the I-positions of curiosity and a proclivity to explore. Concurrently, parents were described as encouraging communication with people from other cultural backgrounds, as long as youth retained their Ladakhi heritage. These perceived parental desires reflect the broader societal discourses concerned with both social progress and the deterioration of Ladakhi culture. Nasir explained: “I was pretty much told by my dad: ‘Look, do not go to the other culture, speak with the people from other cultures, but do not let your culture go.’” This excerpt illustrates the source of Nasir’s endorsement of cultural compartmentalization, as reflected in his low BIIS-2R score. Ali expressed an inner-other position reflecting his parents as liberal: “Like me my parents are also liberal and they never force me to be like that and this and that”. However, another position

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adopted by his parents would reflect the conservative perception of Western culture influencing his negotiation of cultural identity: “to some extent I may choose and no one will be restricting me. But if I'll [participate] most in that Western culture my parents may call me back”. This reflects the ambiguity of preserving the local while adopting the global, and may account for his low BIIS-2R score suggesting cultural conflict and compartmentalization. Female students residing with their family in Leh reported the most substantial amount of family obligations, housework, or farming duties. Tashi, studying in Delhi, acknowledged the important guidelines emerging from the ethnic culture as a moral compass: “there should be someone who navigates us - you know - I think culture does that, and this is good and that is bad”. This group-oriented position affirming the collective orientations and decisions of the Ladakhi community through cultural guidance opposes Tashi's former position advocating agency in multicultural selectivity and cultural integration. With numerous inner-other voices reflecting the interpersonal and societal dimension and intrapersonal I-positions exploring various possibilities, identity negotiation was characterized by all participants as a highly dynamic process with ambiguous fluctuations between traditional-conservative and modern-liberal voices reflecting the mutual inclusive relationship between the mind and society.

The Complex Dynamics of Proliferating I-Positions

Multicultural integration was catalyzed by continuous negotiations of autonomy and social constraints occurring through a dialogical process among various I-positions. The three cultural streams representing ethnic, national, and global cultural elements were present in participants' cultural positions; however, they were accompanied by other positions related to other cultural streams, religion, gender, family, relationships, and political orientation.

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As a Ladakhi student studying in Delhi with exposure to multiple cultural streams, Nasir presented the relationship between culture and identity in a way in which loss of culture would result in a loss of identity. This loss of identity was something to which the Ladakhi youth were especially vulnerable while studying away from their traditional home: many of them found themselves embracing the new and modern rather than the old and traditional. The Ladakhi process of globalization-based acculturation reflects an intergenerational negotiation of Ladakhi cultural preservation and youthful agency toward exploring new cultural possibilities. The position of being betwixt and between cultures has generated a great concern among the diasporic Ladakhi students about conserving traditional Ladakhi culture, which is viewed as being threatened by the processes of modernization and cultural globalization.

Nasir's cultural identity fluctuated through various cultural and sub-cultural positions related to being a student, with a continuous openness to intercultural engagement and psychological development, yet with a strong representation of a demarcated Ladakhi cultural identity and stressing the metacognitive idea of compartmentalized cultures.

I'm from Ladakh, Ladakh by heart. I know about my people, I know about my culture, but at the same time I'm interacting with people from other cultures also.

I'm being westernized also. I'm studying, you know, but still ultimately I'm a Ladakhi, but I'm pursuing global knowledge also.

This acculturative fluctuation was described as being prompted and strongly influenced by the sociocultural context with cultural influences from interaction with other students originating from various Indian regions and Western countries and more broadly from the multicultural and westernized city of Delhi. Participation in other cultural as well as Hindu religious celebrations such as Holi and Diwali could produce momentary changes in Nasir's cultural identity: "I feel

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more Indian rather than Ladakhi, [but] just on a temporary basis”. With a great interest in learning about other cultures and motivation for intercultural interaction, Nasir perceived great benefits related to the process of acculturation and intercultural communication. At the same time, he expressed the importance of keeping cultures compartmentalized and “stereotypical” in order to preserve what he expressed as “pure culture”. Generally, participants described dialogue between the dichotomies of tradition and modern, or conservative and liberal, or narrow-minded and open-minded. Dolma articulated the ambition and ambiguity of integrating both I-positions of Ladakhi and being open-minded: “I don't want to lose my own identity; I just want to hold on to my roots, but then - yeah - I just want to be open to accept new changes and all”. This ambition may be reflected in her high BIIS-2R score. Nasir stressed the point that the unchanging Ladakhi culture should be kept alongside the processes of globalization and modernization. He maintained that this could be done through Internet and social media as a way of propagating the Ladakhi culture in open and international competition with global or Western cultures:

I think it is better to grab your culture and walk with the global. Like the Internet and everything, you should propagate your culture; go to the Internet just update your status and everything. I believe all the [Ladakhi] students who are studying outside Ladakh and throughout India and throughout the world, they should have a grasp over the [Ladakhi] culture, so I believe we should – you know – grab the culture and try to bring Ladakh and – you know – take it to the international level.

This excerpt suggests that the “I as Ladakhi” position is experienced as compatible with the position of “I as global” through open dialogue. Within the multicultural context of Delhi, including various Indian cultures as well as Western cultural streams, the cultural mixing was

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reflected in Nasir's understanding of himself and his cultural identity. This next excerpt illustrates this mixing:

I think right now in Delhi, because – you know – for a short amount of time, I feel Indian, Ladakhi, and Western culture is all mixed up in me, right now. Right now, it is all mixed up in me – but you know – [in a] broader sense, I'm more Ladakhi than I'm Indian or Western. I'm more a Ladakhi.

For many Ladakhis, changing cultural I-positions were also related to the differing conceptions of culture, expressed by participants as internal (e.g., mindset and values) versus external (e.g., clothing, food, and language). The internal/external distinction was linked to the domains that were more easily (or less easily) changed by the experience of globalization-based acculturation: “Just my exterior self [is changing], not the mentality or the interior, because I'm still a Ladakhi from heart”. This distinction was expressed in relation to the understanding of having to mold oneself according to the surrounding society but that one is born with a core cultural identity that does not change as easy as one's behavior (Schwartz et al, 2015). Tashi expressed two dominating I-positions and related sets of behavior framed by interpersonal dimensions: “there are two ways: one is the family life that I'm living and the other is with friends who are very modernized”. Likewise, Fatima frames the “I as a family member” position as constraining other positions: “whenever I go back to my village, I have to retain myself because I go back to my family life”. Padma expressed the internalization, ambiguity, and confusion related to the “I as Delhiite” position and the clash of this position with remaining loyal to the ethnic Ladakhi context and the inner-other position of her mother.

when I'm like here, I'm also like that [materialistic and selfish Indians] and I become more angry and all. When I go home, my mom tells me "what's going on,

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what's wrong with you, you shout a lot, like what's wrong with you". So I'm here, I don't know what, I'm much more, my mind is always occupied with things and all. I'm always kind of, it's like some kind of anxiety.

Ali expressed that, from his conservative position, he experienced that some of his Indian and Ladakhi friends had an “inferiority complex” by choosing the popular and modern while feeling ashamed of the traditional. The various voices were reflected in Ali as he was wearing Western clothes and described his own cultural mixing of clothes: “I wear Kurta and not pajamas and then I use pants - it becomes mixture of Western and Islamic type. It's a new tradition evolving, I think”. From a cosmopolitan Delhiite position he could complement the position of the inner-others from his hometown by expressing ambiguous changes in relation to returning to Kargil:

they [people in Kargil] have a different way of – you know – a bit different way of clothing, way of behavior and I feel a bit – ehh – it's not good, but I feel a bit superior over them, because I have come from Delhi, from the capital – so I feel a bit superior. But that is not good. I should not feel like that.

In this excerpt Ali's Ladakhi I-position denounces his cosmopolitan Delhiite I-position, as it differentiates him from his cultural origin, indicating disharmony in integrating various cultural positions as indicated in his low BIIS-2R score.

The experiences of acculturation among Ladakhi students generally appear to echo the ambiguous societal discourses around preservation of the Ladakhi culture on the one hand and promoting education, intercultural exposure, and development on the other. These societal discourses increasingly complicate the dynamics and ambiguity related to the proliferation of voices within the self.

The Neglected Voice of Religion

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Acculturation psychology has generally not attended to the importance of religion, especially influential in Eastern contexts. Religious positions played an important role in most participants' lives. Within our sample of eight participants, the Buddhists reported more harmony and blendedness between ethnic Ladakhi and Western cultural streams compared to the Muslim students. This difference might suggest the significance of religion for cultural affiliation and, furthermore, might reflect social power asymmetry and historically conflictual positions between Muslim and Western cultural elements. Ali, Dolma, Sanah, and Fatima reported abiding religious customs of daily prayers. However, only Ali and Dolma reported distress in regard to the irreconcilability of normative religious and explorative Western positions. Ali reported strongly adhering to the Islamic religion endorsed by his parents. As a Shia Muslim from the somewhat marginalized district of Kargil, he endorsed the modern Islamic reflections of Ayatollah Khamenei, which influenced many youth from Kargil district through digital media and the Internet (Gupta, 2014). His religious position regulated him while he lived as a student in the cosmopolitan city of Delhi, placing him at the intersection of two dissimilar cultures.

I am also a Muslim, I have been influenced by Islam. So Islam doesn't permit me to get engaged in the – you know – parties, like in parties we dance with girls – you know – in Islam, you are not permitted to touch a – you know – girl.

This “I as Muslim” position was opposed by his self-perception of him being a liberal person. The position of “I as liberal” was related to his culturally mixed clothing and to participation in other cultural traditions. However, the Muslim and liberal positions were in conflict regarding adhering to the tenets of Islam regarding not socializing with women. His liberal position was strengthened by the acculturation experience of relocating and the liberal context of reception in

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Delhi opposing his previous stay in Srinagar, the largest city in the Muslim Kashmir valley.

Nevertheless, he categorized Westerners and Western culture to be “more than liberal”.

when I was in Jammu and Kashmir [Srinagar], I was among the whole Muslims.

Everyone was Muslim, nowhere Hindu, nowhere Christian – I was a bit – I, – say

you know – we may call it a bit narrow minded or you know not liberal. It should

be Islamic and Islamic, no it should be Islamic. But after coming here, I – you

know – I became a bit liberal. I accepted all the things which are good, which are

worth to be appreciated.

The dialogue between his liberal and religious positions could clash with the religious position dominating and silencing the liberal voice even though the liberal position was gaining strength through the perceived liberal community in Delhi.

whenever we offer Salat, Namaz³, at that time I always - whenever these girlfriend thoughts came, whenever they come, I usually I say “no it shouldn't be, I don't like these girls, I love Allah, I love Allah – you know – I love Allah, I love Allah” and this turns away the thoughts.

Voices of the increased connectivity involving preaching from Iran and with Western liberal lifestyles were meeting and conflicting within Ali. A strong power asymmetry marked the dominance of the normative religious position, in coalition with religious inner-other positions, in limiting and sometimes silencing emerging desires and liberal aspirations. Ali reported the balancing of influences from inner-others, as influences from friends who were dating could create a desire, and his parental or religious guidance would steer his life path. The religious I-position, largely shaped by collective voices from Ali's childhood, his stay in Srinagar, and

³ Salat and Namaz are the Arabic and Persian words for Islamic worship or prayer.

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remote influences from Iran, served to counter and offset his interest in the casual social contact with females that was prevalent among students in Delhi. The conflict and uncertainty caused by disagreement between these positions is thus resolved by not recognizing the perspective of the liberal I-position and reducing the dialogue to monological processes.

Through dialogue within the self, the Ladakhi youth in our sample are negotiating their self-identification with an increasing complexity of positions. These positions were experienced as largely reconcilable by most participants but irreconcilable because of incompatibilities between traditional-religious and Western positions. This process of attempting to reconcile contradictions appeared to be challenging, sometimes causing conflict when the positions were too far apart – such as when traditional religious principles framed Western positions as immoral. Other intercultural processes could provide opportunities for exploration of new cultural streams and ways of doing things, learning global knowledge and technology, and open-minded innovation.

Discussion

Examining the phenomenology of globalization-based acculturation and negotiation of cultural identity among Ladakhi youth reflects a number of diverse processes with meaning-making I-positions associated with location, culture, religion, age, family, and gender. Young people are likely to undergo contextually-embedded acculturation experiences through which “modernity” and “tradition” are negotiated through local, national, and global cultural interaction.

Cultural Integration through Harmony and Conflict

For the young Ladakhis in our study, multicultural integration included endorsing Ladakhi cultural conservation through global cultural awareness and amalgamation, and simultaneously

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strengthening and mixing this local self-conception with Indian and Western cultures. Many students experienced great empowerment integrating selected cultural elements and did not describe societal restrains as a limitation. However, several cultural elements relating to normative religion and gender roles such as female clothing, contact between genders, risqué entertainment, and use of social media were experienced by some participants as conflictual. These elements suggest the presence of some cultural incompatibilities that may preclude harmonious integration – leading to some degree of distress and confusion. These distressful experiences were presented as situationally conditioned by the participants except one, who framed the distress as pervading her everyday life and psychological well-being. Experiences of cultural conflict were reported by two Ladakhi students (Dolma and Ali) who had spent the most time away from the Ladakh region. Unlike the other participants from Leh, Dolma resided in a small rural village far from Leh. Likewise, Ali had been greatly influenced by his prolonged stay in the religious community of Srinagar. Experiences of cultural conflict may therefore be contextually guided, at least to some extent.

Harmonious cultural integration was exemplified within domains of knowledge such as education, language, open-minded mentality and intercultural learning. They were influenced by local cultural environments with the greatest psychological distance to the global cultural stream (Hermans, 2015). The experiences of conflict and harmony between various cultural elements accentuate the importance of inner-other voices in the negotiation of cultural affiliation, framing this experience as a collective process. In general, Indian society is known for interdependence, close family relationships, and prescribed roles related to gender and family (Rao et al., 2013). In appreciating the challenges involved in integrating multiple cultural streams, the students in our

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sample identified positive and negative elements within each of the various interacting cultural streams.

Stability in Times of Increasing Heterogeneity

The process of globalization-based acculturation appears to create multiple dialogical positions within the selves of young Ladakhis. Dialogical self theory has been proposed as applicable to the Indian context because it ensures sufficient flexibility to capture a contingent and changing self, a non-uniform orientation toward collectivism and interdependence, and the encompassment of collectivistic identities (Chaudhary, 2012). Through participation in various cultural contexts, Ladakhi students experience an acculturation process with multiple cultural and religious voices. In turn, these voices lead young Ladakhis to expand their position repertoire and to create experiences of greater complexity and heterogeneity. These experiences can complicate intergenerational relations, where the older generation is likely to be more traditional and less open to Western influence. This cultural multivoicedness requires larger mental jumps between contradictory I-positions.

Exposure to globalization experienced while sojourning outside the Ladakhi region appeared to lead to somewhat incompatible cultural positions and intermittent conflicts. Ali had been strongly influenced by not only his family within Ladakh, but successively by the religious community in Srinagar and then the liberal city of Delhi, creating multiple heterogeneous cultural positions. Dolma had just returned from seven years in a boarding school outside of Ladakh and was now living with her parents and grandparents in a small rural Ladakhi village. Both were struggling with negotiations between and among heterogeneous cultural voices.

Young people are especially concerned with identity-related information and are thus adapting to the increased complexity of multicultural influences during their identity

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development through identity exploration – which is likely to include a wide variety of cultural voices (Jensen, 2003). Such proliferation of cultural voices, and larger perceived distances between traditional and global cultural streams, can create feelings of uncertainty and instability – as well as the perception that one’s traditional culture is endangered (Hermans, 2015). Indeed, such perceptions underlie much of the anti-globalization discourse in Ladakh. Religious orthodoxy, with a strong hierarchical organization of positions, can serve as a strategy to reduce heightened level of uncertainty experienced as a response to cultural complexity and incompatibilities (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). However, the religious positions of young Ladakhi Buddhists in Delhi have been found to be in flux, contraindicating a monological dominance in their negotiation of traditional religion and secular modernity (Williams-Oerberg, 2014). This inner dialogue provides opportunities for flexibility, innovation, and reorganization within the self. Another way of constraining the proliferation of identity positions is through existing identity narratives (Bell & Das, 2011). The story of the unique and pure Ladakhi cultural identity that demands preservation can help to maintain stability when one is exposed to globalization-based acculturation. Low bicultural identity integration may lead to attempts to preserve one’s cultural heritage in the face of globalization, suggesting that the perception of conflict and incompatibility between ethnic and Western cultural identities can result in a defensive reaction and resistance to new cultural interactions (Chen et al, 2015).

Mutual Processes of Localization and Globalization

The Ladakhi cultural stream encourages cultural preservation and reconstruction through intercultural exposure. Ladakhi cultural identity has recently been strengthened by foreigners traveling to the region. With strong expectations of and interest in what Ladakhi culture is and should be, these foreigners often help to position, mediate, and support the local culture and

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Ladakhi identity as traditional and indigenous. Support for traditional Ladakhi culture may result from its similarity to Tibetan Buddhist culture, which has been endangered for many years (Gillespie, 2006). Unlike other indigenous groups who have become urban minorities, marginalized, and alienated from their ethnic culture (van Meijl, 2006), Ladakhi youth in Delhi conserve their ethnic culture by forging diasporic ties with other Ladakhi students cultivating idealized visions of their home region. These ties help them to maintain their Ladakhi identity while embracing the cosmopolitan environment of Delhi (Smith & Gergan, 2015). Similar to other indigenous populations experiencing a renaissance in ethnic culture, Ladakhi youth are influenced by the ways in which their identities are approved by dominant societal discourses around the importance of preserving traditional ethnic identity (van Meil, 2006). Many of these students not only wished to preserve Ladakhi culture, but they also sought to inform others about it. The Ladakhi Buddhist student organization in Delhi, Flowering Dharma, flourished through Facebook and grew to a sizable international presence (Williams-Oerberg, 2014), and within the anti-globalization literature, Ladakhi society has popularly been presented as a sustainable alternative to what is described as Western monoculture and consumerism (Norberg-Hodge, 1991). The propagation of Ladakhi culture accentuates the multidirectionality of globalization-based acculturation.

The negotiation of cultural identity reflects the perception and importance of a “distinct Ladakhi identity”. However, examining this identity reveals an irreducible character including considerable diversity of religious and tribal culture as well as ambiguity of local fluid practices of identification (van Beek, 2003). Still, the embracing of Ladakhi identity has been fueled by local politics, experience of national marginalization, and greater interconnectivity with the Indian nation-state and foreign tourists. Relying on a platform of indigenous and ethnic identity

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marked by minority status within India, Ladakhi youth may explore and adopt cultural elements that are perceived as positive, forming a broader, dynamic, and more flexible notion of cultural identity as “summing across” self-identifications at various levels (e.g. tribal, village, regional, national, global), in various contexts (e.g. Leh and Kargil), and within various domains (e.g. public, family, peers). As Ladakhi cultural identity is not delineated in detail or in stable and homogeneous ways (van Beek, 2003), it is possible for one to identify as Ladakhi and with other cultural streams, while also forming a coherent and inclusive local and global cultural identity.

Indeed, Ladakhi is the primary cultural identification among the Ladakhi students in our study, and this appears to be part of the process of globalization-based acculturation. Specifically, globalization-based acculturation is agentic, and it has been found adaptive for the local identity to remain prominent over global or other distal identities – especially because parents and other older adults are likely to be primarily traditional (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012).

Further, it has been argued that, during acculturation, cultural aspects that have previously been taken for granted are transformed into cultural identities in response to the dynamics of identity threat and maintenance (Schwartz, Vignoles, Brown, & Zagefka, 2014). Therefore, cultural identity formation is influenced by the degree to which individuals exposed to globalization-based acculturation experience their culture as being threatened by the presence of other cultural groupings. Such threat often results in a strengthening of one’s ethnic cultural orientation. Additionally, this identity formation process is influenced by the historical relations between the various groups involved (Schwartz et al., 2014) and the social power differences between the cultural positions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Ladakhis appear to be responding to what is perceived as an identity threat by strongly endorsing Ladakhi culture. Those participants who had been away from Ladakh appeared to be more involved in the

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discussions concerning the influence of globalization. Because Ladakhi identity is multifaceted, it can be endorsed along with a strong Indian national identity and openness to new cultural identities. This complex process of cultural identity development occurs through dialogue between various I-positions and inner-other positions within the self, reflecting both agency and contextual influences.

Approaching the Accelerating Complexity of Globalization

In complex cultural settings such as Ladakh – settings that include several interacting cultural streams and an acculturation process initiated by globalization – qualitative approaches to studying acculturation can provide an important complement and adjunct to quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach scrutinizes the meaning-making process that extends the quantitative approach by moving from an interpersonal focus to an intrapersonal one. Thus, the qualitative approach captures more of the actual content, the contextual situatedness, and the fluidity and ambiguity involved in negotiating among multiple cultural streams. Although the BIIS-2R provides an important advancement for furthering the understanding of biculturalism within acculturation psychology, the scale does not capture such details as ambiguous processes of negotiation, domain-specificity, and situatedness. Indeed, these constructs might best be understood using a qualitative approach. In the Ladakhi context, the BIIS-2R appears to primarily tap into discourses concerning the preservation of cultural distinctiveness and cultural compartmentalization. The qualitative data indicate that the picture is far more intricate and complex – the motivations underlying comfort versus discomfort in balancing cultural streams can involve religion, traditions, and intergenerational relationships.

Consistent with the theory of polyculturalism (Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015), Ladakhis maintain continuous partial and fluid engagement with various cultural streams through a

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complex set of interactions, leading to further cultural interaction and change. Dialogical self theory provides a useful framework through which to analyze in detail the local response to globalization, capturing not only the continuous negotiation between cultural positions but also various societal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal positions.

Conclusions and Limitations

Investigating a multifaceted and culturally complex acculturation process, including extending broad quantitative measurements with a detailed qualitative analysis including dialogical sensitivity, has advanced our understanding of the continuous dynamics of globalization-based acculturation in Ladakh. Ladakhi youth negotiate their cultural identities in relation to the various interacting cultural streams, selectively integrating what they view as positive aspects of their heritage culture with aspects of other cultural streams while simultaneously seeking to share their Himalayan culture with others. This negotiation entails dialogue between contradicting positions within the individual – where this dialogue can cause confusion and distress in some cases. However, most Ladakhis find their ethnic cultural stream compatible with many new cultural elements such as modern education, Internet use, and Western entertainment, empowering them to conserve their culture while participating and learning in cross-cultural interaction through globalization. Thus, Ladakhi youths' negotiation of multicultural affiliations appears to be an agentic process in many cases.

The present results should be considered in light of at least four important limitations. One such limitation is that all participants were college students. We did not sample youth who were not in college. Such youth might have less access to resources, and may therefore be more likely to be conflicted by globalization-based acculturation. A second limitation involves the cross-sectional design that we used, which does not permit examination of dynamic changes in cultural

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identity over time. It is important to extend the present results using longitudinal designs with both college-attending and non-college individuals. A third limitation relates to our reliance on reports, but not direct observations, of cultural behavior. Experimental and observational designs could be used to substantiate individuals' reports about their behavior. A fourth limitation is the influence of the Danish interviewer representing the Western cultural stream and the possible social power differences between Ladakhi and Western European cultural contexts. Our results should be considered in light of possible influences that could activate a Ladakhi anti-globalization discourse and/or favor Western I-positions. However, with this said, it should be noted that any specific interview or interactive situation could potentially activate specific I-positions.

In sum, despite these and other limitations, the present results shed important light on the process of globalization-based acculturation among indigenous individuals. The case of Ladakh, a region distinct from much of the surrounding area and where there is an active movement to preserve the local cultural stream, can be instructive regarding the challenges of negotiating cultural identity during the reciprocal processes of localization and globalization. We hope that the present study will inspire more work in this direction, both in Ladakh and elsewhere.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the subsample of eight interviewees

Participant	Gender	Age	Religion	Studying in	Years outside Ladakh	BIIS	Ethnic culture	Indian culture	Western culture	Psychological well-being
Tashi	M	24	Buddhist	Leh	3	71	43	34	34	84
Padma	F	20	Buddhist	Delhi	4	61	37	29	34	70
Dolma	F	18	Buddhist	Leh	7	61	34	38	38	76
Tsering	M	24	Buddhist	Delhi	6	60	42	28	29	86
Nasir	M	20	Muslim	Delhi	4	40	38	30	27	71
Sanah	F	20	Muslim	Leh	-	38	38	41	33	75
Ali	M	20	Muslim	Delhi	11	33	40	32	22	76
Fatima	F	21	Muslim	Leh	-	32	36	36	23	75
Total sample mean (<i>SD</i>)	66.6 % female	20.69 (2.20)	72.9 % Buddhist	73.7 % Leh	4.32 (4.47)	48.81 (5.82)	48.81 (5.68)	33.63 (5.11)	30.05 (5.58)	68.38 (8.77)

Note. Cultural orientation was measured through Ladakh Acculturation Scale – Tridimensional (LAS-T; Ozer & Schwartz, under review), Bicultural identity integration was measured through a modified version of Bicultural identity Integration Scale (BIIS-2R; Benet-Marínez & Haritatos, 2005), and psychological well-being was measured through the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The mean was calculated from a survey including 395 Ladakhi college students. All names are pseudonyms.