SECTION II
MEDIA, POWER, AND IDENTITY
This page intentionally left blank
CHAPTER 5

HYBRIDIZING NATIONAL IDENTITY: REFLECTIONS ON THE MEDIA CONSUMPTION OF MIDDLE-CLASS CATHOLIC WOMEN IN URBAN INDIA*

Marissa Joanna Doshi

ABSTRACT

This study reports on a four-month ethnographic project conducted among young Catholic women in Mumbai, India. Here, the author examines how the media consumption of participants is implicated in reconstituting Indian national identity. Because Hinduism is closely tied to conceptualizations of Indianness and because women continue to be marginalized in Indian society, Catholic women in India are viewed as second-class citizens or “not Indian enough” or “appropriately Indian” by virtue of their gender and religious affiliation. However, through media consumption that emphasizes hybridity, participants destabilize narrow definitions of Indian identity. Specifically, participants cultivate hybridity as central to an Indian identity that is viable in an increasingly global society. Within this formulation of hybridity, markers of their marginalization are reframed as markers of distinction. By centering hybridity in their media consumption, young, middle-class Catholic women (re)imagine their national identity in translocal cosmopolitan terms that subverts marginalization experienced by virtue of their religion and leverages privileges they enjoy by virtue of their middle-class status. Importantly, this version
of Indian identity remains elitist in that it remains inaccessible to poor women, including poor women of minority groups.

**Keywords:** Media consumption; hybridity; national identity; Catholic women; India; translocal cosmopolitanism

In India, a toxic configuration of national identity is on the rise. Specifically, this virulent version of national identity, which is espoused by right-wing groups emphasizes Hinduism and nativism as essential components of Indian national identity, and thus privileges a narrow, non-secular definition of Indianness (Demerath, 2004; Rao, 2018). For religious minorities, this discourse is of grave concern as it positions them as foreigners, citizenship notwithstanding. For women of minority communities, who already experience second-class citizenship by virtue of their gender (Sinha, 2004), such nativist discourses cement their status as cultural Others. With the goal of understanding how women from minority communities creatively negotiate these challenges to their national identity, this project analyzed the media consumption of young, middle-class Catholic women in urban India (Mumbai).

Media have often been examined to better understand how national identity is constituted since media, such as newspapers, books, and novels, facilitate the building of “imagined community” by communicating and cementing ideas about shared culture and values (Anderson, 1983). Practices such as media stereotyping and an absence of representation of minority groups in popular media (Greenberg, Mastro, & Brand, 2002; Ramasubramanian, 2005, 2011) show that media are actively involved in defining the limits of national identity. Still, popular media are also a space where discourses of belonging can be challenged and reimagined thorough interpretation and production (Hermes, 2005). Thus, media become an important resource for understanding who belongs and how one can belong to a national culture (Miller, 1998). For example, the media consumption of Punjabi youth in the United Kingdom is inflected with multiple allegiances, presenting a complicated version of British identity and diasporic Indian identity (Gillespie, 1995). Similarly, Durham (2010) demonstrated that young Indian-American women selectively use Indian and American media to connect with the Indian diaspora and American peers as a way of establishing multiple belongings. These studies show that in an age of global media flows, media act as a resource for imagining community in translocal terms (Appadurai, 1996). Here, I use translocal to refer to a type of transnationalism that seeks to maintain local connections even while being open to global circulations of media, finance, technology, and other forms of culture (Appadurai, 1996).

This project contributes to conversations about the role of media consumption in reimagining national identity for women of minority groups in India. In the context of postcolonial media studies, the experiences of Catholics in India remain rarely discussed. Although studies about media in postcolonial India abound, there is a tendency in the literature, particularly that originating
from within the Western academy, to homogenize Indian culture, without acknowledging that differences in class, gender, caste, and religion result in experiences that are qualitatively different. Some exceptions are Parameswaran’s (1997, 2001) work on the reading of romance novels, which focuses on the experiences of upper-class, young Hindu women and Mankekar’s (1999) media reception studies of middle-class Indians in Delhi. More recently, some attention has been paid to the marginalizing experiences of Muslims in India (Khan, 2009). However, in general, the mediated experiences of non-Hindu communities such as Catholics remain underexplored. This project contributes to this emerging conversation by examining media consumption in India at the intersections of gender, class, and religion. Specifically, by focusing on Catholic women, an under-discussed group in the studies of Indian culture and highlighting how these women creatively contest exclusionary discourses through their media consumption, this study engages Mohanty’s (1998) call to move away from presenting “Third-World” women as a homogenous, helpless group.

Studying how issues of marginalization rooted in religion and gender simultaneously inform media consumption aligns with adopting an intersectional perspective because intersectionality “is a knowledge project whose raison d’être lies in its attentiveness to power relations and social inequalities” (Collins, 2015, p. 1). Intersectional frameworks have been productive for uncovering how oppression rooted the categories of race, class, and gender operate simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1991), particularly in the United States. Recently, intersectional frameworks have been used to understand how oppression operates in the lives of marginalized women through additional identity categories such as citizenship (e.g., Christensen, 2009; Rottmann & Ferree, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2007) and caste (e.g., Brewer, Conrad, & King, 2002; Haq, 2013). In India, issues of religion and caste are typically more in focus. Therefore, this study aims to understand the lived experience of women belonging to a religious minority community. In this way, this study extends intersectional frameworks beyond the usual categories used in the Western academy.

Although this study examines how Catholics, who are a religious minority in India, can be excluded from claiming a national identity (in cultural terms), this argument does not apply to Western contexts or contexts where Christian denominations are typically the dominant cultural group. For Catholics in India, their colonial religious heritage profoundly shapes the quality of marginalization as well their response to this marginalization and thus studying their media consumption is an opportunity to expand our understanding of how national identity is experienced in a specific postcolonial context. Further, by focusing on middle-class, well-educated Catholic women, this article provides a glimpse into the role of media in constituting a postcolonial subjectivity that is marginalized along the axes of gender and religion but enjoys privileges along the axis of class. Thus, this study also cautions against an ahistorical deployment of intersectionality frameworks to study oppression.

In this chapter, I first present a snapshot of Catholics in India in order to provide readers with a sense of the type of alienation experienced by this cultural group. Next, I provide an overview of literature on cultural hybridity because it
acts as a sensitizing concept to explore the media consumption patterns among my participants. After introducing my research question, I discuss my research methods and findings. The article concludes by arguing that the media consumption of participants reflects the ambivalence they feel about their national identity. By centering hybridity in their media consumption, they (re)imagine national identity in translocal cosmopolitan terms that subverts marginalization experienced by virtue of their religion and leverages privileges they enjoy by virtue of their middle-class status. However, this version of Indian identity is remains elitist in that it remains inaccessible to poor women, including poor women of minority groups.

**CONTEXT**

Catholics account for approximately 1.6% of Mumbai’s population (Allen, 2009). Their religious identity is intimately bound up in India’s colonial history, since the majority of Catholics in Mumbai subscribe to the Latin rite and can trace their conversion to Portuguese colonization (Robinson, 2003).1 Their culture, thus, is inflected with Portuguese elements. In popular culture, these Catholics are typically framed as overly Western and marginally Indian. One participant, Cheryl, articulated this sense of being caught in the middle of two cultures as follows:

Cheryl: Our (Catholic) traditions are very similar. Dissimilar would be, like you know our religion is so westernized because they (non-Catholic Indians) identify us with you know English, not so much with Indians. So, we are always … somehow, I feel Catholics are always struggling to find their identity in India because we have still not established (what it is). People still don’t recognize us for anything. Even at work, sometimes I am totally lost. I mean I feel these people don’t understand me at all.

Embedded in this quote is a sense of rootlessness – an experience that results from a feeling of incomplete belonging to a cultural group. Cheryl rejects the overly simplistic framing of Catholic culture as Western by pointing out that Catholic traditions are similar to Indian traditions in the first line of the quote. Therefore, she argues that she is a part of national culture. Yet, in the next sentence, she points out that because some aspects of Catholic culture, such as the use of English among young middle-class Catholics, are more commonly associated with the West than Indian culture, these Western elements complicate her sense of belonging to national culture. Her sense of incomplete belonging to national culture leads to her viewing her national identity as a site of ambivalence. Another participant, Florence, articulated a similar sense of incomplete belonging to national culture leads to her viewing her national identity as a site of ambivalence. Another participant, Florence, articulated a similar sense of incomplete belonging to national culture leads to her viewing her national identity as a site of ambivalence. Another participant, Florence, articulated a similar sense of incomplete belonging to national culture leads to her viewing her national identity as a site of ambivalence. Another participant, Florence, articulated a similar sense of incomplete belonging to national culture leads to her viewing her national identity as a site of ambivalence. Another participant, Florence, articulated a similar sense of incomplete belonging to national culture leads to her viewing her national identity as a site of ambivalence. Another participant, Florence, articulated a similar sense of incomplete belonging to national culture leads to her viewing her national identity as a site of ambivalence. Another participant, Florence, articulated a similar sense of incomplete belonging to national culture leads to her viewing her national identity as a site of ambivalence.

This brand of non-secular national identity has material impact on the Catholic community in Mumbai. Just before my fieldwork commenced, for example, a local Catholic organization called “Save our Land” was formed to protest
the use of Church-owned properties for road-widening projects by Mumbai's municipal corporation. The Catholic community continues to protest the demolition of crosses, which were established decades earlier and sometimes located in historically protected sites, for beautification or road-widening (Sinha, 2017). In addition, for the Catholic community, associations with Western culture have also proved to be particularly problematic in the context of Mumbai's political culture that is dominated by the Shiv Sena party, which often spouts an anti-foreign rhetoric that often leads to violence.

The Latin rite Catholic population in Mumbai claims belonging to the East-Indian, Goan, and Manglorean communities. Further, in India, Dalit Catholics comprise a significant portion of Catholics from both Latin and Syrian Christian rites. Within the India caste system, Dalits are considered “untouchables,” denied basic human rights, and treated as outcasts.

Poor Catholics experience varying degrees of systemic oppression. In Mumbai, for example, East-Indians have long advocated for recognition as “Christians of the soil” (Baptista, 1989) asserting their right to protection of their land and heritage and privileges such as “reservations” in educational institutions and government jobs afforded to other economically disadvantaged classes in post-Independence India. Many East-Indians continue to live in small ethnic enclaves called goathans or villages within the otherwise highly urban Mumbai. However, today, these goathans are under threat because of rapid urbanization. City planning ordinances are applied to these areas even though these villages were not planned around these ordinances. Development projects such as widening of roads have also led to encroachment of village land and the demolition of roadside crosses in these areas. Some of these goathans were also declared “slums” by the Mumbai government, much to the chagrin of the locals who see these villages as areas of cultural pride (Subramanian, 2013). There continue to be stark class and cultural differences within this community in Mumbai, which has caused some divisions when advocating for rights afforded to backward classes in India. Moreover, Dalit Catholics continue to face physical violence because of their religious commitments. They remain severely economically disadvantaged and although they are afforded “reservations” or quotas because of their caste status, on conversion to Catholicism they lose the right to access these reservations because the government does not recognize castes within the Christian community. They continue to be treated as outcasts by other Catholics and the Catholic Church as well (Mondal, 2015). This study is limited in that it does not explore these internal class and caste-based hierarchies within the Catholic community because participants were mainly middle-class (or lower middle-class) women who lived in highly urbanized Mumbai.

In mainstream Indian media, Catholic women are often depicted as hypersexual and the antithesis of Indian femininity (Kasbekar, 2001; Ram, 2002). Although the Catholic community itself might enact strict morality, perceptions of the women of this community as temptress and sexually available persist, particularly in Indian media. For example, Kasbekar (2001) points out the characterization of the Anglo-Indian movie star Helen in the 1960s “as the over-westernized femme fatale, the vamp provided the antithesis to the ideal [Indian]
woman’s embodiment of chastity, by her uncontrolled female lust and wantonness. With names like “Rosie” or “Mary,” she was parodied as either an Anglo-Indian (a racial outcaste) or a member of India’s Christian minority” (p. 298). A similar point is made by Ram (2002): “adulterous women or stock characters such as the “vamp” or the gangster’s “moll” are often given Western or Christian names (e.g., Mona, Dolly, and/or Lily) symbolically locating their impurity alongside the paradigmatic axis that includes Western culture, modernity, materialism, and so on” (p. 34). Even in contemporary Hindi cinema, Christian women are presented as cultural hybrids, embodying Western and Indian norms in ways that subtly yet persistently frame their Indianness as disruptive and inadequate (D’Souza, forthcoming). While the hybridity of Christian women is framed as disruptive in dominant media discourses, in contemporary Indian culture, hybridity is the norm rather than the exception.

MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND HYBRIDITY

In urban India, the mixing of international and local elements is obvious in spaces such as shopping districts, where flashy new malls share the street with hawkers who sell knock-offs of the items sold in the malls. Movie posters of Hollywood and Bollywood movies jostle for space among the various billboards crowding the skyline, and voices speaking in a mix of Hinglish cut through the smog. I present this short description as a way for introducing the idea that in postcolonial India, identities are shaped not only by colonial pasts but also by contemporary forces of globalization. The impact of these conditions on the lives of postcolonial subjects is usefully unpacked through the concept of hybridity, which articulates how identities are reworked and reimagined rather than subsumed in globalizing postcolonial societies.

Constituting hybrid identities is rarely a smooth or stable process. For example, Ishak (2011) showed that the Malaysian government uses adaptation and censorship to police hybridity in media, and thus power relations in this instance are re-inscribed. Consequently, critical hybridity theorists (e.g., Kaup, 2009; Kraidy, 2005; Papastergiadis, 2005) emphasize that when studying how hybrid identities emerge, researchers must study the unequal power relations within which they are forged. Kraidy (2005) suggests adopting a critical stance when analyzing hybridity of practices such as media consumption. In his study of media consumption of Maronite youth in Lebanon, for example, he demonstrates that responses to local and international programs play a crucial role in maintaining and producing hybrid identities that straddle Western and Arab worldviews (Kraidy, 1999). Thus, in this context, hybridity becomes a “heuristic device for analyzing complicated entanglement” (Ang, 2003, p. 150).

Postcolonial theorists remind us that when studying the multiple entanglements implicated in hybrid identities, it is important to closely analyze the allegiances being claimed via cultural mixing and interrogate why these allegiances are seen as viable, necessary, or revitalizing (Kumar & Parameswaran, 2018). One strand of such research has studied hybrid postcolonial subjectivities and showed
that in such cases, hybrid identities often function as routes to (re)claiming cultural power or subverting colonial ideas about purity. Hall (2003), for example, discussed creolization as a form of hybridity that counters colonial forces that seek to erase difference. In a similar vein, Bhabha (1994) used hybridity to explain how postcolonial identities are not wholly determined by history but continue to be reworked and reconfigured in the present. A second, connected strand of studies examines expressions of hybridity in the context of diasporic communities. These studies theorize hybridity as a process of negotiating a sense of belonging to multiple constituencies. Ang’s (2003) analysis of hybridity in Chinese diaspora suggests it might be a useful frame for living “together-in-difference” in a global society. Ang (2003) argues that the ambivalence central to hybrid identities acts as a type of resistance to the binaries of local and global, East and West.

The aforementioned potential of hybridity as resistance notwithstanding, when postcolonial subjects invoke connections to the culture of their former colonizers because these colonial elements are perceived as sophisticated, it might also signal a desire for access to still powerful colonial hierarchies via the contemporary discourse of globalization. In this context, it might be productive to focus “on the ways in which vestigial structures of colonialism (language, educational institutions, cultural practices) create the conditions of possibility for cultural globalization today” (Kumar & Parameswaran, 2018, p. 350). Parameswaran’s (1999) study of the pleasures and fulfillment upper-caste, young Hindu women derive from reading English romance novels is one such example of how English, rendered familiar via India’s colonial history, operates as a form of social capital in a postcolonial context. Interrogating who benefits from imposing, claiming, and/or celebrating a particular formulation of postcolonial subjectivity is important if we are to articulate the power relations operating within and through contemporary postcolonial conditions. For example, hybridity is implicated in media representations of the middle-class female identity in India wherein Indian women are portrayed as having an (un)easy relationship between tradition and modernity (Parameswaran, 2005; Steeves, 2008). However, achieving this brand of Indian femininity often requires access to global capital (Munshi, 2004; Parameswaran, 2005). Thus, in these instances, hybridity is a gendered experience (Darling-Wolf, 2008; Guzmán & Valdivia, 2004) and operates as an elitist discourse (Pieterse, 2001).

Given the widespread availability of local and international media in Mumbai, I expected the media consumption of young, middle-class Catholic women to include engagement with a wide variety of media. Therefore, this study examined how the media consumption of these women reflected their specific gender, class, and religious identity concerns, particularly in terms of imagining their national identity. The possible gendered and classed dimensions of the postcolonial subjectivity constituted via their media consumption are also examined.

**METHOD**

The fieldwork for this project was carried out over a period of four months (mid-May–mid-August 2013 and mid-December–mid-January 2014). The participants
in this study were 30 young, Catholic women living in Mumbai, India, aged between 18 and 25 years. Most lived with their parents and siblings and were either students or just entering the workforce. Some participants lived in a gao than and a surrounding urbanized area, while others lived in apartment buildings. My participants came from middle-class or lower middle-class families. As is common among middle-class families in India, participants stayed with their parents even if they were working and did not engage in part-time work if they were students. In terms of religious practice, they occupied a broad spectrum of religiosity, ranging from deeply committed to their faith to non-practicing Catholics (see Appendix 1). Participants were educated in convent schools run by Catholic nuns. These schools offer affordable education, with English as the language of instruction, and enroll students of all religions. However, there are government-approved quotas reserved for Catholics in these schools since the government recognizes Christianity as a minority religion. Participants had attended or were attending government colleges, which also provide affordable education. There are government incentives available for education of women, such as fee waivers, and as a result, all my participants could access high-quality education at affordable prices.

During fieldwork, I wanted to explore how my participants’ media consumption is implicated in accessing/embodying/subverting their gender, religious, and class identities. Further, I wanted to explore how media consumption occurs in different contexts. Therefore, observation occurred in multiple sites. This was important because in urban India, interactions with media occur often beyond the boundaries of home. For youth, in particular, who often spend their days with friends outside the home, media interactions occur in movie theatres, clubs, or while simply “hanging out” in coffee shops and malls (Ito et al., 2009). To understand the everyday lives of participants, I conducted participant observation at the local church compound, local coffee shops, and a popular mall. I often took notes at various other points as well – while traveling with my participants, in social gatherings, etc. My main method of gaining access to participants was through my social network, and other participants were recruited subsequently through snowball sampling. This approach of using acquaintances to facilitate access is advocated by Lofland and Lofland (1995). Key informants not only pointed me toward popular hangouts but also were also willing to “vouch” for me, an important step in gaining trust among participants, particularly in the local church, where I was quickly identified as an outsider given the tightly knit community that already existed in that space.

Participant observations were supplemented by in-depth interviews to explore media interactions in other contexts and understand the significance of these practices. Details about where each interview was conducted are provided in Appendix 1 at the end of this article along with other demographic information for each participant. Supplementing observation data with interview data allowed me to gain additional insights into how my participants defined their identities in terms of culture, nation, religion, and gender. The interviews, were part of a larger project that explored the role of media and technology in the lives of my
participants. Thus, these in-depth interviews helped unpack thought processes underlying media consumption and technology use. The results presented in this article focused on responses to the following parts of the interview guide: (1) Part 2: Sections A, C, and D, which focused on demographics, religion in daily life, and cultural identity. (2) Part 3 Section A, which focused on media consumption. The complete interview guide is provided in Appendix 2.

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed along with field notes. Analysis followed the constant comparison method (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). First, the transcripts and notes were read multiple times. Next, line-by-line coding was completed. Codes that were related were grouped to create conceptual categories. This process involved iterative analysis, wherein concepts emerging from the data were compared to concepts in the literature and vice versa. During this step, if needed, codes were rewritten or refined. Next, related conceptual categories were grouped (Tracy, 2013).

ANALYSIS: CONSTITUTING HYBRIDITY

Analysis revealed that participants were voracious consumers of both local and international programming. However, overwhelmingly, they preferred Western, English media. Although local, Hindi programming was consumed, they demonstrated discretionary appreciation of Hindi media as compared with English media. I categorized their consumption of English media along two subthemes: (1) connection and (2) self-improvement. Their consumption of Hindi media was categorized as follows: (1) distancing, (2) trivialization, and (3) relationship building. These media consumption patterns and practices of young, middle-class, Catholic women are significantly shaped by content and context. Hybridity is seen not only in terms of consumption of various types of media (local and international) but also in the sense making and reasons provided for consuming such a wide range of media. That is, hybrid media consumption plays a role in constituting the hybrid postcolonial identities of participants.

Consumption of English Media

Western media, and more specifically American media, dominate English programming in India. Many American TV shows were extremely popular among the young women interviewed for this study: Dexter, One Tree Hill, MasterChef, CSI, Big Bang Theory, and Castle to name a few. Thus, the popularity of American programming transcended genre. It is also significant that when asked to name TV shows they watched, most participants listed American TV shows rather than local TV shows. In fact, most participants spoke disparagingly about local TV programs, characterizing them as overly dramatic and traditional. When asked why they preferred international, English-language TV shows, two reasons dominated their answers: participants preferred these because they connected with their language and content and they watched these media to learn Western skills and styles as an endeavor in self-improvement.
Connection
Among the young women I interviewed, English dominated their everyday life. Thus, it was no surprise that many preferred international programming in English.

Anjali: Indian people also do understand English, and I like watching shows in English … something that is easier for me. Although I have been watching Hindi since I was small but since I speak in English and since I am always around people talking in English, I like English.

Natasha: My dad has always been watching Star Movies, or HBO, or whatever. So even Star World. So, when we were growing up we have always been watching English channels.

Because Anjali and Natasha had grown up in households where English dominated, they preferred English media. Anjali and Natasha were not alone in this regard. Another participant’s responses revealed that English proficiency is carefully cultivated among young Catholics by parents such that it becomes their primary language. In the excerpt below, Cheryl revealed that her father played an important role in shaping her preference for English media.

Cheryl: Oh gosh, we used to watch Hindi because I think we had DD and Metro whatever as kids. When cable became the thing is my dad was always abroad and he did not like us speaking in Hindi. He was very strict about it. So, when he came down from the (United) States. He was in the States for quite some time, and he was in the American phase, so he didn’t let us, he cut us from all our Hindi serials. I remember we used to watch this serial “Banegi Apni Baat” as kids.

Interviewer: Yeah?
Cheryl: So, he cut that out from us. So then we had to watch English serials, and he was very strict about it.

Interviewer: Why?
Cheryl: Because he felt that we don’t know English. I mean if we speak Hindi our English is going to get really bad and it is going to ruin our tongue. So he was very insistent on English and he read a lot of books to my mother and my dad forced us to read a lot of books as kids.

Cheryl’s father did not merely encourage her to watch English media, but “he was very strict about it” because Hindi would “ruin” her tongue. In this way, by privileging English over Hindi, her father reproduced language hierarchies that he internalized during his stay in the United States. His actions are thus an example of how “through all the hierarchies and classifications inscribed in objects (especially cultural products), in institutions (e.g., the educational system) or simply in language, and through all the judgments, verdicts, gradings, and warnings imposed by the institutions specially designed for this purpose, such as the family or the educational system, or constantly arising from the meetings and interactions of everyday life, the social order is progressively inscribed in people’s minds” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 471). It is in her family that Cheryl learned that English proficiency is a mark of distinction and thus the family is one site where the dominance of English was normalized.

Fluency in English played a role in enjoyment of English media as well. Janet, for example, emphasized that when engaging with Hindi media, she needed to focus on comprehension because she was not fluent in the language.
Consequently, rather than enjoying the media, her focus was on comprehension. This was not the case with English media, which she understood easily.

Janet: I just stick to the English. Firstly, because I have a difficulty in understanding Hindi movies.

Interviewer: The language or?

Janet: No, I can understand it, but it is then really like you have to like pay attention to it. You know it is not something like English. Like English you just watch it and you understand it. It is easy like. I don’t really like, I know like little Hindi and all and Marathi and all, I really can’t understand them.

The links between understanding content and issues of immersion and enjoyment were further clarified by Katy.

Katy: When it comes to English music because I am so fluent with the language I really appreciate the lyrics more than the actual music because I think when you connect to the song it feels more awesome and you tend to sing it and all that. But I can’t do that with Hindi. I just have to listen to it. I can’t sing it along. I can’t relate to it. So it is quite pointless for me.

Katy’s linking of understanding with engagement reflects contemporary research on cultural proximity, which points out that engagement is a multifaceted concept and for audiences to connect with media, media should reflect cultural elements from the audience member’s culture (Adriaens & Biltereyst, 2012; Piñón & Rojas, 2011). In the case of young Indian-Catholics, English language is the cultural element that allows for deeper engagement with otherwise-foreign texts.

In addition to language, similarities with other cultural elements such as dress, music, humor, story-pacing, and religion have also been found to contribute to cultural proximity (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005). Amelia explained that she preferred watching Dancing with the Stars rather than Jhalak Dikhla Jaa, India’s version of the American dance show because she did not connect with references to Indian dance forms. Instead, she preferred the American version that incorporated some Latin dance elements that are particularly popular among Catholics of Portuguese descent.

Amelia: As a Catholic, I would relate more to you know salsa or a jive rather than Bharatnatyam or Kathak (Indian dance forms) where I would not probably understand the terms. So that is the reason I would prefer it.

Responses such as Amelia’s indicate that if audiences’ lives are not reflected in local media, they may reject local media and prefer international, English language media, particularly if these media incorporate cultural elements that are missing in local media. This result corresponds with La Pastina’s (2004) findings regarding the popularity of Mexican telenovelas among rural audiences in Brazil, who did not identify with the modernization narrative in local Brazilian telenovelas and thus preferred Mexican telenovelas.

Self-improvement: Learning to be Global

Although English language and some cultural markers rendered Western media culturally proximate to young Catholic audiences in Mumbai, a number of
cultural elements were foreign to participants. For example, some found American accents hard to understand and therefore used subtitles when viewing TV programs on computers. Although American legal and crime dramas were popular, participants had little knowledge about legal and criminal systems in the United States. Many enjoyed watching international, English-language culinary shows but lamented their lack of access to culinary ingredients used in shows. One reason why these shows are popular among these young women despite the presence of numerous foreign cultural elements is because these shows acted as resources, allowing young Catholics to learn about global lifestyles and aesthetics.

Iwabuchi (2002) suggests that cases of engagement with Western media should be thought of as desired proximity to modernity rather than true cultural proximity. The use of American TV to learn about modernity has been documented previously by Featherstone (1990), although he also argues against equating globalization with Americanization. Instead, he suggests that the West should be thought of as a point of reference against which non-Western cultures define their difference. One interesting example of how American TV and movies are used to learn about modernity is provided by Chriselle, a young college student and aspiring singer. Chriselle began watching American TV shows to improve her English. Improving English in this context meant not only expanding her vocabulary but also polishing her accent so that it lacked Indian inflections.

Although participants claimed English as their primary language, they still found it difficult to comprehend Western accents in their favorite TV shows. Part of this confusion is ameliorated in India by subtitles that are provided for all international, English programming. Still, rather than rejecting Western TV shows that required “extra” attention in terms of simultaneously focusing on content and subtitles, participants still reported being ardent fans of TV shows. Rather than interfering with engagement, subtitles were useful because they helped participants note the pronunciation of English words. Part of the reason why participants found American accents and vocabulary difficult to comprehend was that in India, British English remains the norm. While Hinglish is liberally used in urban areas such as Mumbai, participants noted that such English was not “correct.” Among Catholics also, there is particular brand of English used wherein some phrases and syntax are direct translations of Marathi or Konkani. Although this might be the brand of English used in informal settings, participants are taught in convent schools and by parents that such English lacks prestige and is a marker of low class. Those with access to high-quality education, such as that provided in convent schools, are expected to know and use the “Queens’s English” rather than any variations thereof. This emphasis on using media to improve language skills corresponded with the use of dictionary apps by some participants (Nina) to expand their vocabulary.

Chriselle: When I was small I used to watch only Hindi movies because I used not to understand the English movies. I was too small to catch up with their pace because their accent is different and they are quite fast when they talk. So I used to watch more of Hindi but then all of a sudden. I don’t know when this transition took place but I started liking more of English movies and I realized that watching them it helped me you know increase my vocabulary. Even reading books, I know even reading
Chriselle defined English proficiency narrowly. It was not enough to know English; it also involved speaking fluently (no “fumbling”), with confidence, having a large vocabulary, and using English that was devoid of any colloquialisms. Chriselle’s quote illustrates that although young Catholic women prefer international, English TV shows because they understand English better than Hindi, they still believe their English is not “good enough” and requires further work. The accents, vocabulary, and inflections in international, English-language media are constructed as the gold standard. Viewing these media is an investment in their efforts to become global, and in this instance, global is equated with Western. The work that is put into disciplining accents and vocabulary to conform to Western standards positions them as the petit bourgeoisie of global culture, struggling to conform to the culture of the Western bourgeoisie (Bourdieu, 1986).

The efforts to erase any local markers in their speech also suggests an internalization of inferiority regarding local Indian culture, which Fanon (1967) points out is an enduring psychological effect in colonial subjects. Bhabha (1985) terms the efforts of colonial subjects to imitate (but always fall short of perfectly replicating) colonial culture as colonial mimicry – “the identification with, and performance of, colonial superiority by the subordinated…” in which “colonial subjects set out to become as much like their masters as possible, both in order to reap the rewards that this imitation will garner but, as well, because they have come to believe in their own inferiority” (Rajiva & D’Sylva, 2014).

In addition to learning “global English,” young Catholic women also saw English TV shows as “resources for experiments with self-making” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 3). In today’s age of globalization, Appadurai points out that media and migration drive the imagination of modern citizens; that is, they urge citizens to visualize and aspire to new ways of existing in our increasingly interconnected world. Sabrina and Chriselle’s explanations that international, English-language media allow them to learn about global culture become salient in this context.

Sabrina: I would choose MasterChef Australia I guess mainly because a lot of the cuisine that they show is cuisine that – I mean, I’ve just watched one program of MasterChef India but it was something that we always do. You know palak paneer is made at my place also – the only thing is there’s the novelty issue when you watch things like MasterChef Australia because I had never known how to make pasta. We always bought it from the store, so it was nice to see that. How we put it through the grinder or maybe make – doesn’t normally do that which I don’t think is like that much in MasterChef India.

Chriselle: Because I probably would get to learn something. I would know how to bake or cook and I would like the stuff they make compared to the Indian show that has probably something very traditional, like maybe Gujarati food or any other.
MasterChef America and later MasterChef Australia were popular among almost all participants. At the time, MasterChef India was also being aired. MasterChef India involved participants from India and included culinary challenges involving recipes that are common in Indian kitchens. For Sabrina, the inclusion of familiar cultural elements was what made the show boring. Rather, she enjoyed the “novelty” of the international versions of MasterChef. Although I did not have the opportunity to watch MasterChef Australia with Sabrina, I watched the show multiple times with Tania. Tania would periodically exclaim that she wished she could taste the dishes prepared by the contestants and would often ask me if I had tasted the dishes mentioned in the show or if I knew how to make them. In order to learn more about the techniques and recipes she saw on the show, Tania also bought a copy of the magazine Good Housekeeping, which sells at a rather high price. On learning that I could make a New York cheesecake, Tania excitedly arranged for a trip to one of the elite grocery stores in the area so that we could purchase international ingredients (ultimately, we settled for using Indian brand ingredients because the non-local ingredients were too expensive). We then prepared the cheesecake together and even afterwards, Tania continued to ask me if I knew any other non-local recipes.

I include this incident as an example of “the work of the imagination” in modern India. International shows such as MasterChef informed Tania about global cuisine and framed these dishes as special (unlike the dishes on MasterChef India which were mundane for most participants). Further, Tania and others noted the emphasis on culinary techniques in the international MasterChef and pointed out that this suggested a level of expertise involved in executing these dishes that seemed to be absent when preparing local dishes. Thus, local cuisine was positioned as unsophisticated, while global cuisine was considered sophisticated. Acquiring the skills to prepare sophisticated cuisine could mean another step closer to toward a global lifestyle and thus Tania jumped at opportunities to expand her culinary skills. As this incident demonstrates, international media provide scripts for becoming modern and participants not only learn these scripts but also attempt to execute these scripts.

Global fashion was another script that participants described learning from American TV shows such as Gossip Girl and One Tree Hill. The use of international media to learn about cosmopolitan lifestyles and aesthetics has been documented previously. Lin & Tong (2008) point out that female Chinese viewers of Korean soaps appreciated cultural products. Further, they point out that these viewing practices created aspirations to engage with these cultural products, thus promoting a consumerist lifestyle. In Tania’s case, we see a similar connection between viewing of American reality TV shows and her consumption practices. In Tania’s example, we see how the viewing practices of participants promotes a “mediated globalized consumer lifestyle” (Lin & Tong, 2008, p. 101). Although the voracious consumption of international, English media might suggest a rejection of local media, as the next section demonstrates, this was not the case. Instead, participants express a complicated relationship with local, Hindi media.

Consumption of Hindi Media

Overall, Hindi media consumption among participants was steeped in ambivalence. There was no wholesale rejection of these media and unlike, English
media, participants expressed specific preferences regarding the Hindi media they appreciated.

**Distancing**

Many participants commented that they disliked Hindi soap operas. In Indian programming, particularly Hindi TV programs, Hindu culture is usually celebrated. In contrast, minority religious cultures are rarely portrayed or if they are portrayed, they draw on negative stereotypes. Such cultural dominance is particularly obvious in Hindi TV soaps that are immensely popular with mainstream Indian audiences. This emphasis on Hindu culture in local programming was also noted by participants.

Tania: Very strong like Hinduism is like a very big thing in Indian media. They always have to start off with a temple or some girl always crying in front of God and they are running away and getting married away in a temple. So it is like it is very centered around other religions.

Nina: TV shows, yeah, they have a lot of *pujas* (Hindu ritual of worship) and all I guess, so it does play a big role.

The dominance of Hindu cultural motifs in local Hindi programming might be one reason why young Catholics distance themselves from these shows. Although women play central roles in Hindi soap operas, the women are Hindu, usually living in the joint family system, and have problems that are associated with living in such a system. For most young Catholic women, this situation lacked resonance with their lived experience, because most were part of nuclear families and they perceived their lives as being very different from that of Hindu women.

Reema pointed out the emphasis of Hindu religious practices in Indian TV soaps and saw the portrayal of women as conservative and home-bound in these soaps as an extension of Hindu culture.

Reema: Everything is about religion over there (in Indian soaps). They are always praying at the temples and mandir and stuff like that. It is not, it is like how the mentality over here is it is mostly with the programs.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Reema: Like over here the girl is supposed to be in the house cooking, not going out. That is how the people over here have the views like that. They are always wearing saris. No open clothes and stuff like that. The girls don’t work. They are always in the house working for the mother-in-law and stuff like that.

Reema’s reading of these soaps corresponds with Chakrabarti’s (2014) analysis wherein he points out that Hindi soap operas are complicit in narrowing the definition of Indianess to upper-caste Hindu culture. This is achieved by developing a definition of Indianess that relies on “the overtly Hindu upper-caste, urban joint family which was perpetually engaged in performative displays of an efflorescent Hinduness, whose milieu was saturated with religious symbolism, whose discourse was borrowed from the discourses of Hindutva,⁹ and in which the women were almost always safely ensconced in the private sphere of the home” (p. 487). By distancing themselves from the upper-caste Hindu women portrayed in the soaps, participants were also rejecting these portrayals as epitomizing Indian womanhood.
Distancing was also enacted through evaluation and comparison. Specifically, participants compared international and local versions of a TV show and commented on the ways in which local programs fell short of expectations. Thus, Hindi media were heavily scrutinized and subjected to careful evaluation, unlike English media.

Jasmine: Honestly, I see more *Dancing with the Stars* if I had to watch, I can see more technique, I can see more form, I can see something new happening, I can see judges qualified at some point to make a daring decision. Obviously, *Jhalak* is a rip off *Dancing with the Stars* I would rather watch the original. While for *Jhalak*, judges are not qualified. You will have your whoever. There is no form. Even the simplest thing like when you dip and come back on top. Just because they are probably a singer or a whatever, like Shaan, who is not a dancer, when actually if you are a dancer, then that is horrible. You can’t do that. So, it is all false opinion there. So I would rather watch “Dancing with the Stars.”

Lisa: Because I find that reality shows in India are very fake, very preplanned and all that but still I watch it. Yeah, like the contestants are again fake, and the way they cook. India is more about Indian dishes only. I mean though they cook something else, and I think it is slightly little fake. I don’t like watching *MasterChef India*.

Jasmine and Lisa perceived local Indian versions of shows as “rip-offs.” The inclusion of local elements into global media – glocalization of media content – is supposed to make local versions of shows more appealing and engaging to audiences (Rao, 2010). However, although these Indianized reality shows might be popular among mainstream audiences, young Catholic women cast them as “fake.” By labeling these Indian versions as inauthentic, participants took on a more evaluative role, claiming knowledge about what the programs should be. For example, Jasmine explained that Shaan, a well-known Indian singer, was not qualified to judge a dance competition and then went on to critique his dancing style. In doing so, Jasmine shifted from her position as learner when watching *Dancing with the Stars* to expert when watching *Jhalak Dikhla Jaa*. Her use of vocabulary typically used by dancers such as “form” and “dip” further solidified her position as expert. In this case, to evaluate Shaan, Jasmine drew on knowledge gained from watching *Dancing with the Stars* and applied it to the Indian context. That is, she used international standards to evaluate local media content. By coding the skills of participants’ the American *MasterChef* as authentic, but the skills of local participants’ as “fake,” Lisa also questioned the ability of traditional Indian participants to have modern skills. Thus, through their dismissal of Indian versions, participants claimed their position as cosmopolitan consumers with expert knowledge of global culture, thanks to their viewing of international media.

Participants also negatively evaluated Hindi TV as overly dramatic and emotional. In contrast, international, English-language programs were seen as rational and professional. By associating and rejecting emotion and drama with local programming, participants demonstrated their preference for modern aesthetics wherein rationality and realism are privileged over over-the-top depictions.

Tania: Yes, I don’t watch any Hindi TV shows.
Interviewer: Why?
Tania: Because they are too dramatic. They are very dramatic and very unrealistic all the time and the same shit happens all the time.
Interviewer: So which ones are you specifically referring to?

Tania: “Saas-Bahu” sagas. There is nothing else. Remaining things now on Indian television is only dance and I am not particularly fond of watching choreographed dance.

Sonia: The Indian soaps all run on how do I ruin this person’s life, it has to have a villain. Wherein the English programs don’t have really a villain in it, it just has normal people in their lives and the issues in the normal life that they face. There’s not about, there’s no one here to ruin somebody else’s life. Its more normal, it’s very human, you can relate to it. You can imagine living that life, you can’t imagine living a Hindi soap life where you have an enemy throughout your entire life who’s willing to kill you or just plotting to kill you every single day of your life.

The persistent association of English media with realism, complexity, and authenticity and the rejection of Hindi TV because of its excessive drama elements, fakeness, and frivolity show that what is at stake in these discussions is an assertion of taste (Bourdieu, 1986). In the quotes above, Catholic women aligned English media with superior taste and Hindi media with inferior taste and thus through these evaluations asserted their competence as cosmopolitans capable of discerning the codes of global culture.

**Discretionary Appreciation**

Participants appreciated Hindi movies much more than Hindi TV programs. One reason for this difference in evaluation might be that participants saw the two media as very different.

Amanda: Yeah, I love Bollywood. I love watching Hindi films. I don’t know I find it is different from regular Hindi TV. I think currently what is going on in TV is homely problems and how they solve it, how one person in the family is totally amazing like the bahu (daughter-in-law). She is totally amazing and she can fix everybody’s problems. It is too black and white. You are a bad person. It is not like that in real life. You know it is okay, some people have their bad sides at different times.

Amanda appreciated the complexity in Bollywood movies that she found lacking in Hindi TV. Further, participants such as Reema also saw Bollywood as more progressive in comparison to Hindi TV soaps.

Reema: Yeah, movies are little different. Movies are much different than the programs.

Interviewer: What are the differences that you see in the movies?

Reema: Indian movies are like the girl is a little open. She can do what she wants. But in the program she is all caught up in the little place in the house serving her husband and stuff like that.

In contemporary Bollywood movies, female characters are portrayed with more complexity. Today, female protagonists transcend the vamp/virgin dichotomy that was popular in older Hindi movies (Govindan & Dutta, 2008). However, these newer movies still emphasize traditions, family values, love, and patriotism even while acknowledging how globalization has reconfigured these aspects of Indian culture (Punathambekar, 2005). In addition, in contemporary Bollywood, the Hindi used is typically less formal than that used in Hindi TV soaps. Further, Hinglish is often used, which might aid with understanding for participants who were not very fluent in Hindi. Thus, by embedding local realities
in global contexts, Bollywood epitomizes and celebrates the cultural hybridity of contemporary India. Further evidence of such hybridity was found by Schaefer and Karan (2010) in their content analysis that compared 61 Bollywood movies released between 1947 and 2007. They found that in movies released after liberalization, there was a significant increase in the “levels of Western (86–92%) and modern (83–89%) content (e.g., Western-style attire, holidays and sports; contemporary technology, weaponry, motorized transportation, and the like) and a significant decrease in Eastern/Indian (91–85%) and traditional (43–29%) content (e.g., Indian attire, religious practices and holidays; rural lifestyles; and non-motorized transport)” (p. 313). For the most part, participants responded to this formulation of hybridity favorably by pointing out that Bollywood offered “the full entertainment package.”

Katy: Bollywood is I feel pure entertainment. It is unrealistic no doubt, but if you go to see for entertainment level where you are actually stressed out in life and you want something to laugh about you have to watch a Bollywood movie because there is dance, there is drama, there is caring people, and there is tenderness. All happy endings and you know something like that.

Katy’s quote points out that elements associated with Indian tradition such as valuing relationships, dance, and drama are incorporated into Bollywood, while other participants pointed out that Bollywood had complex, progressive characters and narratives. Thus, participants seemed to appreciate Bollywood because it expanded what counted as “Indian.” Importantly, Bollywood movies that copied Hollywood movies were evaluated poorly, emphasizing the salience of Bollywood’s hybrid nature for Catholic women.

Casting Bollywood as “entertainment” was advantageous for Catholic women for two reasons: (1) it allowed them to trivialize the representations of the Catholic community in these movies because the movies were seen as purely fictional; and (2) once the representations of the Catholic community in these movies were dismissed, it opened up the opportunity to enjoy these media texts, which was important for these women, given the paucity of Indian media texts that acknowledged or celebrated hybridity.

**Relationship-Building**

Although young Catholic women preferred English media programs, they consumed Hindi media in specific contexts. For example, Hindi media were considered suitable for viewing with parents because they were perceived as having less sexually explicit content than English media.

Reema: Like with family, if there is a bad word, they will all look at you like you did something wrong. And the sex scenes and stuff it is just bad, it is so awkward.

Interviewer: Really? Can you tell me an instance?

Reema: I was watching a movie there was this girl, the girl was on TV and they didn’t blur it out. I think it was Sony Pix or something. Mom was sitting there and she looked at me. She asked me, “What are you watching? Please change the channel.” I didn’t know. I said, “I want to watch it.” The movie was pretty interesting and there was just that one part and she was asking me to change and I didn’t like it. My brother keeps closing his eyes.
Such monitoring of participants’ TV viewing was not uncommon. Nina discussed this aspect of parental monitoring of media content by explaining that her mother would periodically check on her to make sure she was not seeing anything “wrong” even when she was watching TV alone in the living room. Not all participants reported such extreme surveillance of their TV viewing, but when TV was being watched in the presence of other family members, parental surveillance was common.

In general, TV viewing was a family activity rather than an activity engaged with friends. Some participants reported watching Hindi soaps with parents, particularly their mothers and older relatives.

Zara: My favorite TV show is *Friends*. I don’t watch that much of TV anymore but when I used to it used to be Star World and it used to be most of the sitcoms.

Interviewer: So do you watch anything else?

Zara: *Pavitra Rishta* from Zee. Yeah, I used to watch that.

Interviewer: You used to watch it?

Zara: Yeah, on and off, but not regularly. I watch it generally because my grandma used to watch it, and I developed a liking for it from watching it. Not very regularly.

Interviewer: So you watch both Hindi and English (TV)?

Reema: Only English. Hindi only some. All those “saas bahu” programs are too weird. My mom watches it, and I watch it with her, and I laugh because they are damn funny.

Jasmine: I like *Madhubala*. That is again because I have seen these nuts watching. I see like my family watching and talk about the story and I am like, “Okay, it is interesting.” The interesting story has gone for 4 episodes. Now I am going back to English TV. That is what usually happens.

When the viewing of Hindi TV shows is juxtaposed with their otherwise poor opinion of these Hindi programs, it becomes clear that the reason for watching these media was to maintain family relationships. Although participants found the content of the soaps irrelevant, watching soaps provided opportunities to interact with family members. International, English-language programs that participants enjoyed did not offer these opportunities.

This example of TV viewing in family contexts underlines a point that participants repeatedly made when distinguishing themselves from Western youth: that Indian youth are invested in family ties. Such investment in family time was seen as essential and framed as a mark of Indian culture.

Vanessa: To me Indianness means all about being in a family. It is about being together. It teaches you to be with your parents, your friends, to keep things like not to just break apart. Like when you have something it is for keeps that is what being an Indian means to me.

The emphasis on maintaining family ties revealed another facet of how participants defined Indianness – valuing relationships. While Hindi TV soaps helped strengthen family ties, watching movies in theatres helped strengthen ties with Catholic and non-Catholic friends.

Amelia: Do you prefer Hindi movies to English movies even now?

Interviewee: No, it is not. See, it is like basically what happens is your friends’ circle. Initially, my friends’ circle back in college was, even when I was studying my MBA was more of non-Catholics. So they tend to watch more of Hindi movies.

Interviewer: Okay…

Amelia: So I used to watch a lot of Hindi movies, but I used to balance it by watching English serials.
In this study, hybridity is seen not only in terms of consumption of various types of media (local and international) by young Catholic women but also in the sense making and reasons they provide for consuming such a wide range of media. The media consumption of participants highlights their ambivalence at being erased from some types of local media as well as their need to connect with Western culture because they find it better reflects some aspects of their upbringing. Importantly, these desires for multiple belongings are not seen as contradictory or antithetical to being Indian. Instead, they fault Hindi media for reinforcing a narrow version of Indianness and emphasize its inadequacies by taking on the role of evaluators. By embracing Bollywood, these women further emphasize their preference for media that acknowledge complexity and celebrate hybridity. Their responses to international, English media demonstrate their desire for connecting with Western culture, but importantly, they see this desire as central to contemporary Indian identity.

In Sabrina’s quote, she designates English proficiency as “globally appealing” speech and points out that such competency is expected of Indians now that India is “moving toward globalization.” Further, she explains that her English proficiency means that those who speak it as second-language cannot “compete,” clearly indicating that it functions as a form of capital, affording opportunities that might not be available to others. Thus, for Mumbai’s Catholics, English language fluency solidifies their position as cosmopolitan Indians. Consuming English media, then, cannot be understood as a simple desire for Westernization. Rather, it should be read as a commitment to cultivating a cosmopolitan Indian identity that is adept at engaging with foreign elements.

Further, these women also consume media to reaffirm their commitment to characteristics they deem as core to Indian identity – valuing relationships. Specifically, this aspect is highlighted through their consumption of Hindi media that is valued by friends and family rather than themselves. Thus, while dominant discourses emphasize Hindu religion as central to identity, these women opt for secular characteristics – valuing relationships – as central to their formulation of Indian identity.

Gendered hybridity is constituted in their simultaneous rejection of Hindi TV that affirms conservative, Hindu womanhood as ideal and embracing of international shows that help them cultivate feminized skills of cooking and dressing fashionably. While dominant discourses emphasize the hypersexuality of Catholic women, discussions of sexuality are noticeably muted in their own media consumption. They subtly acknowledge their openness to freer sexual mores by pointing out their enjoyment of English media but also affirm their commitment
to conforming to traditional expectations of sexuality by avoiding these media when viewing occurs in the presence of family members.

This study shows that young, middle-class, Catholic women develop a hybrid postcolonial identity by selectively engaging with international and local elements from their media environment and that they use it to find their place in the national imaginary. In other words, this particular iteration of hybridity, which emphasizes selective connections with international and local media, promotes translocal cosmopolitanism and destabilizes nativist definitions of national identity. This postcolonial Indian identity allows for participants to find connections with a version of Indian identity that emphasizes “global” dimensions of Indianess through campaigns such as “Indian at heart, global in spirit” (seen all over Mumbai’s international airport). This recent campaign was preceded by media in post-liberalization India that similarly privilege the desire to live global lifestyles while still embracing Indian traditions. Hindi movies cultivate this type of translocal cosmopolitanism by celebrating the figure of the non-resident Indian (Punathambekar, 2005). Similarly, post-liberalization media discourses celebrate Indian beauty queens as cultural ambassadors who embody an Indian femininity that is upwardly mobile and able to engage with and circulate through global capital (Munshi, 2004; Parameswaran, 2005). Although these slogans and media representations contradict lived realities, which are rife with non-secular nativism, they provide middle-class Catholic women with an accessible formulation of Indian identity.

One of the limitations of this study is that because participants were mainly middle-class and well-educated, their cultivation of hybridity as translocal cosmopolitanism cannot be generalized to all Catholic women in India. Further, this translocal cosmopolitan identity is powered by participants’ English fluency resulting from class and education privileges, and therefore, is accessible only to an elite section of the Indian population. Thus, this study shows how postcolonial identities that are constituted in response to globalization can, at times, maintain local hierarchies. Participants’ formulation of translocal cosmopolitanism reinscribes colonial hierarchies by framing literacy of Western culture and English language fluency as essential for sophistication and distinction. Further, their media consumption privileges a neoliberal Indian femininity that is characterized by its ability to engage with global capital while simultaneously maintaining sexual restraint and centering family ties. Thus, the translocal cosmopolitan identity privileged by my participants through their media consumption helps them navigate the marginalization they experience by virtue of their religion but is complicit in cultivating an elitist Indian identity that erases poor women and maintains caste and class-based hierarchies.

NOTES

* This study discusses research conducted as part of my dissertation.
1. Not to be confused with South India’s Syrian Christians, who have a conversion history different from those of Portuguese Catholics (Robinson, 2003).
2. Palshikar (2004) traces the evolution of the Shiv Sena from a political party that advocated for workers’ right to its current avatar of a political party that encourages nativist politics.

3. Ghosh (2012) has reported on the Shiv Sena’s attacks on couples celebrating Valentine’s Day and harassment of women attending pubs.

4. After Bombay came under British rule, the local inhabitants of Bombay who were Portuguese Catholics were given the name “East Indians” to reflect their status as the first Indian-Catholic subjects of the British crown under the British East India Trading Company and to distinguish them from the Portuguese Catholic migrants from Goa and Mangalore who continued to be Portuguese subjects (D’Souza, 1989).

5. A mixture of Hindi and English that is widely used in urban India and the Indian diaspora (Kothari & Snell, 2011).

6. The many rural communicates that have been displaced as a result of modernizing initiatives such as dam-building projects (Nilsen, 2010; Walker, 2008) or the exploitation of local knowledge by global intellectual property laws (Shiva, 1997, 2001) are evidence that the mixing of the global and local does not create stable or safe spaces for many.

7. Iwabuchi (2000) also points out that American media are no longer viewed as the only classrooms for learning modernity in East Asian countries because countries such as Japan now provide media that provide a more familiar form of modernity that is filtered through local cultural values.

8. North Indian dish made of spinach and cottage cheese.

9. In its contemporary usage, it is a discourse associated with Hindu fundamentalism that links Indianess to Hindu religion.

REFERENCES


# APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Interview and Location</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age (Years)</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Relationship status</th>
<th>Living Arrangements</th>
<th>Language Proficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 25 Home</td>
<td>Katy</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents and sibling</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20 Home</td>
<td>Tania</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and sibling</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 28 Friend’s home</td>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and siblings</td>
<td>English, Konkani, Hindi, Marathi (limited)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31 Coffee shop in mall</td>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Office manager</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents and siblings</td>
<td>English, Hindi (limited), Marathi (limited)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31 Coffee shop in mall</td>
<td>Reema</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and siblings</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1 Coffee shop in mall</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Student, part-time jobs</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents and siblings</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 6 Coffee shop in mall</td>
<td>Rachita</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Public relations</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and siblings</td>
<td>English and Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 6 Coffee shop in mall</td>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and siblings</td>
<td>English, Hindi (limited), Marathi (limited)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8 Coffee shop</td>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Marketing executive</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and sibling</td>
<td>Hindi and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 15 Coffee shop in mall</td>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Film-maker</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents and siblings</td>
<td>English, Konkani (grandparents), Hindi, Marathi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 15 Restaurant</td>
<td>Chriselle</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents</td>
<td>English, Konkani (limited)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 7 Home</td>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and sibling</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 7 Coffee Shop</td>
<td>Sonia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Call center employee</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with mother</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 16 Coffee Shop in mall</td>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with mother and sibling</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Occupation/Role</td>
<td>Relationship Status</td>
<td>Living Arrangements</td>
<td>Language(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Advertising professional Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with father</td>
<td>English and Hindi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents,</td>
<td>Grandparent, Aunt, and Siblings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents and Sibling</td>
<td>English, Konkani (grandparents), Hindi, Marathi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and Sibling</td>
<td>English and Hindi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>News correspondent at NGO</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with mother and Sibling</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Malayalam, and Marathi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Programs executive</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with mother</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Marathi (limited), Konkani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>College lecturer</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents and Grandparent</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priyanka</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents and Siblings</td>
<td>English and Hindi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents</td>
<td>English, Hindi (limited) and Marathi (limited)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents</td>
<td>English, Hindi (limited) and Marathi (limited)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blossom</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents and Extended Family</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Call center employee</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Marathi (with grandparents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Entrepreneur (designer)</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and Sibling</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reshma</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Lives with parents and Extended Family</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Marathi (limited)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reshma</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and Sibling</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Konkani (limited)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>Model and actress</td>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>Lives with parents and Sibling</td>
<td>English, Hindi, Marathi, Konkani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

PART 1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for speaking with me.

During this interview, you will be asked about questions related to your media exposure and interactions and technology use. The first part deals with general questions about yourself, with a focus on your daily activities, culture, and religious practices. The next part focuses on media that you engage with and perceptions of popular media. The final part focuses on your use of new media and communication technologies such as mobile phones and social media. All information you provide will be kept confidential. You have the option of refusing to answer any question and ending the interview at any time.

In order to maintain your confidentiality, a pseudonym will be used to refer to you in any research report that draws on this interview. What pseudonym would you like me to use?

PART 2. BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

A. Demographic and General Questions

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you and/or your family lived in Mumbai? Where did you live before?
4. Do you work and/or study?
5. Which languages do you speak in addition to English? In the home?
6. How would you describe yourself?
7. What does your typical day look like?

B. Privacy and Freedom

1. What do you understand by the term privacy?
   a. Is privacy important to you?
   b. How do you maintain your privacy?
2. Are there any restrictions on where you can go or what you can do?
   a. Who places these restrictions?
   b. Do you comply with these restrictions? Why or why not?
   c. When do you comply with these restrictions?

C. Religion in Daily Life

1. How important is religion to you?
   a. In your personal life?
   b. In your social life?
   c. Are you a part of any Catholic/parish organizations?
   d. Do participate in religious events held in your community?
2. How would you characterize your relationship with religion?
3. What is your religious/spiritual philosophy?
   a. Are there any church teachings that you disagree with? Why?
   b. Are there any church teachings that you agree with? Why?
   c. How do you feel about the Church’s stance toward the role of women?
   d. How do you feel about the Church’s stance regarding issues related to sexuality?
   e. Do you participate in the rituals or practices of other religions?

D. Religion in Daily Life

1. If you had to provide me with a definition about what it means to be Indian, what would that be?
   a. Do you think others would have similar definitions? How would they differ? In what ways would they be similar?
   b. What do you consider are positive aspects of Indian culture?
   c. What do you consider are negative aspects of Indian culture?
2. If you had to provide me with a definition about Western culture, what would that be?
3. How would you define “global culture?”
4. Do you feel you are part of a global culture?
5. How would you describe your culture?
6. How similar/dissimilar is your culture to Indian culture? (attitudes toward family, religion, sexuality, money, education, autonomy)
7. How similar/dissimilar is your culture to Western culture? (attitudes toward family, religion, sexuality, money, education, autonomy)
8. What do you think are some of the challenges of being a young woman in India?
9. What does it mean to be a modern Indian woman?
10. Do you think being a young Catholic woman influences your life? How?
11. Can you narrate an instance where you felt you had to downplay or emphasize your Catholic identity?

PART 3. MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND PERCEPTIONS

A. Participants as Audience

1. Which is your favorite TV show? Why?
   a. What kind of TV shows do you not like?
   b. With whom do you view TV? (friends, family, alone)
   c. Is there any TV show that you are not permitted to watch?
2. Do you watch movies?
   a. Where? With whom?
   b. What kind of movies do you prefer?
   c. What kind of movies do you not like?
3. Do you have any language preferences in terms of TV shows, movies, and music?
4. Do you have any preferences in terms of local versus foreign programs?
5. How would you describe Bollywood?
6. How would you describe Hollywood?
7. Are there differences in viewing TV/movies with family and friends? Who controls the remote?
8. Can you describe a conversation you had with a friend regarding a TV show or movie you watched?
9. Do you think religion is an important part of Indian shows/movies/music?
   a. How are Catholics portrayed in Indian media? How are Catholic women portrayed in Indian media?
   b. How are other religions portrayed in Indian media?
10. Can you relate to (or identify with) these portrayals? Do you think other young Catholic women can relate to these portrayals?
11. Can you think of an experience in your life where people thought of you or other Catholic women in this way (like the portrayals)?
12. What would be an ideal portrayal of young Catholic women?

B. Participants as Users

i. Mobile phones
   1. Do you own a mobile phone?
   2. What kind of phone is it?
   3. Why did you choose to buy this phone?
   4. Who pays the mobile phone bills? What is the monthly bill?
   5. Which mobile phone apps do you use the most?
   6. In your opinion, what are some of the most popular apps today?
   7. Does your phone have a passcode? Have you shared this passcode with anyone?
   8. On a typical day, could you tell me how you use your phone? (from the time you wake up until you get to bed)
   9. Can you describe an instance where you intentionally refrained from using your phone?
   10. What would your reaction be if you lost your phone? If someone went through your phone? Why?

ii. Computers
   1. Do you or your family own a desktop computer or laptop?
   2. Are there any rules regarding computer use in your family? What are they? Do you follow them?
   3. Can you tell me about what you did the last couple of times you used the computer? Are these activities typical?
   4. Do you use a computer anywhere other than your home?
   5. How would not having a computer affect your life?
   6. Do you or your family own an iPad or tablet? (if participants say they use other forms of communication technology, questions similar to those asked about computers will be explored)
Social media (Facebook and Twitter)
1. Do you have an active Facebook account?
2. How would you describe your Facebook posts? What were your last five posts?
3. How did you choose to personalize your profile? (profile picture, cover photo, “about” section)
4. Are you concerned with issues of privacy? How do you manage these issues?
5. How often do you access Facebook in a day?
6. Which Facebook groups do you belong to? Why?
7. Can you narrate an incident where Facebook exchange came up in an offline conversation?
8. Have you ever gotten into a Facebook argument? Can you describe the exchange?
9. Do you ever post about or comment on others’ posts about religious, gender, national issues?
10. Have you ever deactivated your Facebook account? Why?
11. Do you use any other forms of social media? Which ones? (if participants say they use other forms of social media, questions similar to those asked about Facebook will be explored)

C. Participants as Producers
1. Are you involved in producing media? (plays, choirs, bands, movies, blogs, YouTube videos, etc.)
2. Describe the kind of media you produce?
3. Why did you start producing media?
4. Why do you continue to produce media?
5. Are there any challenges associated with media production?
6. Does your gender, culture, religion, and age influence the media you produce?

PART 3. CLOSING QUESTIONS
1. Are there any questions I should have asked?
2. Is there anything you would like to add?
3. Do you know of anyone else who would be interested in participating?