



RESEARCH ARTICLE

TRANSMISSION OF IDEAS AND FEELINGS TO YOUNGER GENERATION: A STUDY OF  
ADOLESCENTS BELONGING TO MIRPURI COMMUNITY IN JAMMU

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ABSTRACT

The present research exercise was conducted to assess the perception of adolescent members of Mirpuri community about the impact of divide created by displacement from across the LOC in 1947 on their lives. It further aimed to investigate the effects of displacement at personal, familial and social levels from phenomenological perspective and documentation of the extent of transmission of ideas/ feelings related to displacement to younger members of the community. The information was collected through a questionnaire in view of adolescents' preoccupation and better expression of ideas through written medium. Purposive sampling was employed to choose the respondents depending on their availability and consent to participate in the study. The findings of the study indicated that the sample adolescents did not have detailed information regarding the history of Mirpur and the only partial information they had was provided by their grandparents and in some cases by their parents. Youngsters seemed to identify more with the cultural traits of the host Dogra community since they were born and brought up amongst majority of Dogra families. The dialect of Mirpuri language could not be mastered by them in the absence of appropriate role models speaking the language. Moreover, they had lesser interest in the religious aspects of their community and they preferred to practice the rituals for the social and personal value and to please the elder members of their families. They did not know much about variations in Mirpuri and Dogra culture. It was observed that Mirpuri adolescents tend to have a more globalised perspective on their identity as for most of them the nation and the state presumed more priority than their community.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a complex bio psychosocial phenomenon. All the inner-subjective changes in adolescents take place within the context of a specific social environment, which offers the necessary ideological setting that adolescents must confront in the course of their identity formation. Identity formation also called individuation is the development of the distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity. The process defines individuals to others and themselves (<http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/identity-formation>). Identity may include sense of personal continuity distinctness from others and sense of affiliation. Identity encompasses many different facets in one general term including gender, social, ethnic, cultural, religious and political aspects. Identity formation or answer to the question 'who am I?' is especially pertinent during adolescence (<http://www.actforyouth.net/>). Erikson acknowledged that identity issues could arise throughout the life course but saw this process of identity formation as the critical developmental task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Erikson described adolescent identity-

exploration as a crisis of identity versus identity diffusion when faced with situations having conflicting features. Research indicates four mechanisms to integrate one's ethnicity into their larger sense of self in multicultural context. These include assimilation, marginalization, separation and biculturalism (Phinney, 1990). The last one is typically an adaptive approach used by many young people whereby they adopt the traits from different cultural groups to integrate them in their personality. Forced migration creates conditions under which the adolescent ego may be traumatized more easily, resulting in the development of defensive mechanisms, which may interfere with the natural process of identity formation (<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11231-006-9019-1>). Displacement as a regular by-product of violent conflict puts individuals and families in a precarious situation. They lose their social network, physical assets and often family members (Sarvimaki, UusitaloandJantti, 2009; Fiala, 2009; Konylis, 2010; Bauer *et al.*, 2012). There is considerable evidence that forced migration, apart from more wide-reaching consequences has a severe psychological effect on the immigrant-refugee, as well as on his or her offspring (Fazel and Stein, 2002; Jaycox *et al.*, 2002; Mckelvy *et al.*, 2002). Children of immigrants navigate through multiple social and cultural worlds while forming their identities. They jugglebetween different norms, customs, languages and

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cultures, develop flexible identities into which they incorporate host and origin social structures in various ways (Zubidaet *al.*, 2013). Adolescents need to develop a socially-approved identity to ensure a healthy transition to adult life. This task is particularly challenging for immigrant youth growing into a social world where their home and host cultures differ considerably in terms of models of a healthy and acceptable identity. Adolescents need to acquire bicultural competence and flexibility as part of a secure and balanced identity and to function effectively in their multicultural world (Phinney *et al.*, 2002). Adolescents appeared to be reconstructing their grandparents' history, resurfacing their legacy, and in doing so realizing the strength and heroic battles their grandparents fought in order to get to the place they are today (Kahane-Nissenbaum, 2011).

As per published evidence, Mirpur, the commercial and hub centre of J&K state, now a part of POK fell to the hands of Pakistani raiders on 25<sup>th</sup> Nov, 1947 (Gupta, 2011). People were forced to leave their homes after the tribal raids. According to rough estimates, there were twelve hundred thousand wounded persons of POK who were subjected to killings by tribes (from Pakistan). Thousands of innocent people were mercilessly and brutally slaughtered, property worth millions of rupees was looted or destroyed, women of all ages were kidnapped, abducted and ravished ([http://www.ipcs.org/print\\_article-details.php?recNo=2197](http://www.ipcs.org/print_article-details.php?recNo=2197)). Researchers have found that the holocaust has had a psychological, social and cultural effect on first and second generation survivors. Despite the significant amount of research that has been done on holocaust survivors and their off springs, little has been investigated about when, why and how surviving generations begin to move past pathological symptoms.

Despite the fact that a large number of people were impacted by the division of the state in 1947, there have not been many systematic studies which have documented the impact that the displacement had on these people and the transmission of these effects to the younger generation. In the light of the very important research gap, this study of the Mirpuri community was undertaken.

### Objectives

The main objective of the study was to assess the perception of adolescent members of Mirpuri community about the impact of divide created by displacement from across the LOC on their lives. Mirpuri community in this study consists of community of persons who migrated from Mirpur town during 1947.

### The specific objectives include the following:

1. Analysis of perception of adolescent members of Mirpuri community about the Mirpur incident.
2. Documentation of the extent of transmission of ideas/feelings related to displacement to younger members of the community.
3. Perception about the problems faced by members of Mirpur community in their adjustment.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study is confined to one community, that of Mirpuris – the people who were earlier residing in Mirpur and nearby areas and came to settle in Jammu after their displacement in 1947. The idea underlying this study is to evolve an understanding of the relevant issues and build awareness regarding those. The locale for the present research study was Jammu district in the state of J&K in India. It focused on Mirpuri families who had faced the trauma of displacement. The areas from where the sample was drawn included Bakshinagar, Sarwal colony and Janipur. These are the urban areas in the heart of Jammu city under the Jammu West Assembly Constituency.

The sample comprised of adolescents and young adults in the ages of 12-30 years who had no direct experience of the Mirpur tragedy and had only learnt about it from their elders and through sources such as media. Purposive sampling was employed to choose the sample adolescents depending on their availability and consent to participate in the study. Since the Mirpur community is very closely knit, it was very easy to get the reference of other Mirpuris in the locality who were approached for their consent. A directory containing names of members of Mirpuri community also came in handy since many adolescents were identified through that directory and the sample was selected for the study. A detailed questionnaire was used to elicit information from youngsters in view of their preoccupation and better expression of ideas through written medium. The major areas covered in the questionnaire were related to transmission of history and ideas, role of present generation in preserving culture, participation in religious activities, knowledge of Mirpuri language, knowledge of Mirpuri culture, and aspects on which Mirpuri culture differs from prevalent Dogra culture and identity as a community member.

Data collection: Two sources of data were used for the study. The primary source included young Mirpuri adolescents while secondary sources included the print material available as published research studies, books and articles on the web. At the time of data collection, extra efforts were made to encourage the participants to fill out the questionnaire completely. Clarifications were sought for certain questions, wherever the need was felt. It was seen that interview was not a very convenient method of getting information from adolescents owing to their unavailability due to studies. For them, questionnaire method was used in which they were given a structured questionnaire personally which was collected at a later date as per the convenience.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Details about the respondents are presented in Figure 1, 2 & 3.

### Background information of the respondents:

Analysis based on responses obtained from Mirpuri adolescents has been presented based on the theme selected for analysis which is as follows:

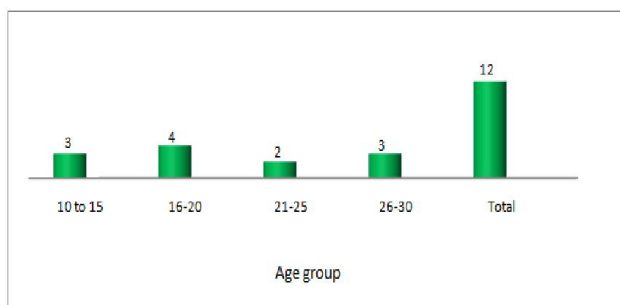


Fig. 1. Age group of sample adolescents

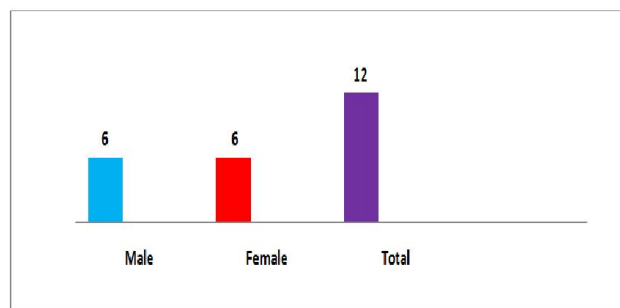


Fig. 2. Sex of sample adolescents

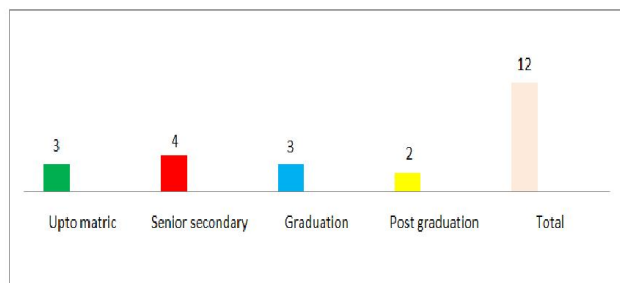


Fig. 3. Educational status of sample adolescents

### Transmission of History/Ideas

There were bitter memories related to the Mirpur riots in the mind of youngsters. They had listened to a lot of stories from their grandparents on this tragic fall of Mirpur and how they had to flee from their motherland. The present generation of Mirpur community had partial rather than detailed information regarding the history of Mirpur. They were told about the history of old Mirpur by their grandparents and in some cases, their parents and how they used to live back then (before partition). One of the respondents said, 'It is estimated that violence in Mirpur took place on 26<sup>th</sup> of November, 1947. Many innocent people lost their lives. Many people were separated from their loved ones. My grandmother along with her maternal family members ran from the place and kept on moving for several days by foot, without food and other necessities'. There were other respondents who didn't know much about the Mirpur history and could not provide details.

### Maintaining cultural traditions

It was discussed under various heads which are as follows:

### Role of sample adolescents in preserving culture

The young generation believed that with the help of education, they could preserve their Mirpuri culture and were eager to know more from their grandparents. Many of them wanted to spread awareness about their culture to their peers belonging to Dogra community. For instance, one respondent reported: 'Being an adolescent, I can spread awareness regarding belief and traditions that I know and convey same to the people of my age group that can help in the conservation of the culture'. A kind of more practical and scientific response was given by other youngster: 'Belief and culture of any community cannot be preserved if they are not changed along with advancement. I don't want to accept everything without logics so I only follow what is right and not follow what I don't think is right'. While most wanted to preserve Mirpuri culture, a few of them were not at all interested in culture preservation and the reason behind this was they didn't know much about their cultural patterns because their parents never discussed the history of Mirpur in their families. 'I don't know anything about Mirpur and what happened in Mirpur. Our parents never talked about Mirpur and history' was the response given by an adolescent when asked whether she would like to play her role in preserving Mirpuri culture. Yet another viewpoint of a respondent suggested that the nation is much more important than one's culture and one must be loyal to one's nation. According to him, 'The most important thing is that we belong to this nation which provides us shelter. So, I am loyal to her and I don't think community wise. We are all human and everyone has to live with brotherhood'. It was seen that Mirpuri adolescents tend to have a more globalized perspective (macro level) on their identity as for most of them, the nation and the state assumed more priority than their community. However, this didn't mean that the micro level context was not considered important. Basically, it appeared to be the smaller one (Mirpuri identity) merging into the larger identity.

### Participation in religious activities

The adolescents visited the temples of their respective deities to worship them as they had a trust that their deities could save them. The adolescents took part in religious activities of the community with joy and fervour. Those who were not so religious took such activities like going to congregation (the place where family deity was situated) as a family picnic. There were different deities for different clans; these were Rabneshwar in Rajouri, Mata Data ji in Bishnah, Kanachak, Arnia, Bantalab and Baba Talak (ChiddikaMela) in Akhnoor to name a few. Adolescents loved to visit their local deities (Kuldevi/Kuldevta) as according to them it was a source of assembly of the community people. In the exact words of one respondent: 'It brings the feeling of togetherness and love and source of exchanging views to bring about changes in the society'. On asking about the significance of going to such religious gatherings, someone expressed: 'In my opinion, the significance of attending such gatherings is to know more about your culture. Moreover, these gatherings ensure the unity amongst the community and conserve the culture also'. The respondents of this study revealed that they had lesser interest in the religious aspects of their community but preferred to

practice the rituals for its social and personal value and to please the elder members of their families.

### Knowledge of Mirpuri/Potwari language

Any language will be affected by being pulled out of its context. The Mirpur community is no exception. It has a rich oral tradition, which has been passed down from generation to generation and is used in many famous couplets (poetry). Originally, Mirpuri/Potwari was a rich dialect spoken by Mirpur community but as a result of displacement, it got mixed with words of languages spoken by the host community. Language is an important medium for communication and transmission of culture. The adolescents reported that elder members of Mirpuri community were striving hard to preserve their linguistic affinity but not being able to transmit it to their generation. On being asked about their knowledge of Mirpuri/Potwari language, most of the youngsters replied that they could only understand the language but couldn't speak the same as remarked by the respondent: 'I understand Mirpuri but do not speak the language. We speak only Hindi even at home. Nobody at home insists upon speaking Mirpuri language'. Meanwhile, about 50% of sample adolescents didn't show their interest in learning the language. This response reveals that the younger generation perceived the utility of language as an important variable affecting their choice of learning and speaking a particular form of speech. In addition, the dialect could not be mastered by them in the absence of appropriate role models speaking the language. Some of them did not like being identified as a community member by using a peculiar dialect.

### Knowledge of Mirpuri culture

Upon asking about their rituals followed by their community members on various occasions (birth, death, marriage and other life processes), majority of the youngsters didn't have detailed information. For instance, one replied: 'I don't know that much about my cultural heritage. I think some rituals might be followed among Mirpuri community'. While many of the respondents didn't know about their cultural heritage, yet one respondent described how the ladies of the community used to dress up 'Ladies were wrapped in their traditional dress like in Muslims. Our rituals are similar to Islam, i.e. language, food specifics e.g. wazwan'. Youngsters seemed to identify more with the cultural traits of the host community since they were born and brought up amongst majority of Dogra families. During the process of their growing up, they had imbibed the rituals and practices of the host community, both consciously and unconsciously. 'I can't really differentiate between Dogra and Mirpuri people and their culture and traditions. In my opinion, these days, Mirpuri and Dogra community are somewhat following similar culture as being citizens of the J&K state' was the typical response of a Mirpuri adolescent.

### Aspects on which Mirpuri culture differs from prevalent Dogra culture

Almost half of respondents knew about cultural variations from Dogras while an equal proportion of them didn't know anything about their culture. Only few of youngsters knew

details about how their customs and traditions were different from the ones that Dogras had. It was observed, on a whole, that Mirpuris had different rituals from Dogras such as they didn't keep fast like 'karvachauth' (a fast kept by married women for the sake of long lives of their husbands). The respondents who knew about their Mirpuri culture were not able to differentiate much between Dogra and Mirpuri culture. A youngster responded: "I can't really differentiate between Mirpuri and Dogra culture so it's hard for me to point out the Mirpuri traditions that differ from Dogra culture in any aspect'. Also, according to a respondent, unlike Dogras, they didn't discriminate on the basis of gender. Dogras were regarded as 'conservative' by yet another respondent. Adolescents stood against the 'purdah system' prevalent in Dogras and said, 'In Mirpur, daughters-in-law didn't take out 'Ghunghat' (veil) but Dogras did'.

### Identity as a community member

Mixed responses were given by the adolescents on their identity as members of Mirpuri community. A total of five respondents described their community as having positive traits e.g. one of the respondents was quoted as saying: 'The people of Mirpur community are soft spoken, good hearted and helpful and easily mix with people from other cultural groups'. In a similar manner, in the words of another respondent: 'Mirpuri people are kind hearted, good mannered, well educated, having good moral values'. The younger generation viewed the people of their community as simple and humble who are inclined towards their cultural values. It can be interpreted as being ethnocentric in a way 'Now days, everyone is fond of one's own culture. Although, we got the money and high status, we remain humble, polite and have patience'. In general, youngsters reported that Mirpuri people were well educated and disciplined, as reported by one respondent: "I've found that Mirpuri people are peace loving and are very affectionate with others. They like to help others unlike people of different communities. They believe in brotherhood and also in conserving their culture". However, almost half of the respondents had negative perception regarding members of their (Mirpur) community i.e. some of the youngsters believed Mirpuri people to be 'argumentative' and 'stubborn' who try to dominate Dogras. Despite knowing the history of Mirpur, many of the respondents hadn't told their friends that they belonged to Mirpur community or history associated with it. In the words of a teenager: 'My friends only know that I am Mirpuri and nothing more than that'. Likewise, one of the adolescents wasn't proud to be a Mirpuri and she believed that if she would tell her friends that she was a Mirpuri, they would bully her. Instead, she was very comfortable to be called as a local Dogra girl. In spite of these responses from adolescents, 7 of them were proud to belong to Mirpur community as one youngster said, 'Yes, I am proud, it is because the community to which I belong have struggled earlier and have ensured that the community will prosper'.

### Conclusion

In human beings, unlike animals and birds, migration does not merely imply physical movement of people. The moving people also carry with them a socio-cultural baggage

containing their identity, values, beliefs, food habits, language apart from their customs and traditions (Jayaram, 2004). The imagination, ideals and energies of youth are vital for continuing development of societies in which they live. All cultures recognize adolescence as a highly significant period in which young people learn future roles and incorporate the values and norms of their societies. Among the adolescents under investigation, language was found to be a major casualty in the process of acculturation since Mirpuri language was being spoken in its pure form only by the elders while the youngsters favoured mixing of Dogri and Punjabi words or preferred pure Hindi for routine communication. The younger generation was much more assimilated in terms of language and their habits and customs as it was born and grew up in Jammu, its existence is much less schizophrenic than its older counterpart, which constantly evokes the old Mirpur and its culture while living in Jammu. The youngsters on a whole didn't like the idea of being called as a Mirpuri as they believed in the feeling of nationalism and loved to be called as Indians first and Mirpuris later. Similar findings were revealed in a study carried out on Mirpur culture pointing out that most of the younger people had started calling themselves Jammuwalas and some even Dogras (Puri, 2012). Religious rituals appeared to be strong mechanisms since members continued to follow these for the blessings of the supernatural forces while adolescents seemed to see them as moments of recreation and relaxation in addition to social get together. The adolescents belonging to Mirpuri community appeared to be distant from the historical narratives yet it seemed, these oral accounts in the form of stories, from one generation to the next, had formed permanent part of the cultural heritage of the group. These filtered stories, it was found, continued to affect the Mirpuri adolescents and communicated feelings, thoughts and patterns of behaviour to them.

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