

Inter-group relationships of interdependence between the Adivasi people and the Jesuits in India: Emergence of a new identity

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring relationships between social groups from the perspective of the historical colonization. The general objective of the study has been to comprehend the nature of the relation between identities that have come in contact with each other with reference to differences in power. In this article, we seek to understand the nature of the encounter between the Jesuit identity and the Adivasi identity in two Jesuit provinces in India. A total of fifty-six interviews were conducted. Using grounded theory methodology, we have built a model of interdependence among the identities of these groups. The analysis reveals how the interaction centred in the self-respect facilitates the construction of inclusive identities. In this way, a potential model has been drawn into which the identity frontiers can blur to conform to the construction of more inclusive identities.

Keywords

Identity, inter-group relationships, indigenous peoples of India, tribal discrimination

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Introduction

Throughout the history of colonization, the advancement of the industrialized nations led to their exploration and control of developing countries. Initially, the main objective for the colonizing nations was to widen commercial networks with the economies of the unindustrialized countries. Hence, they established themselves in villages and cities of the recipient countries creating spaces of interaction and relationship among cultures belonging to both invading and recipient societies. Given their status as richer countries, they invested their resources in building relations of domination over the recipient communities, among others, indigenous peoples. However, besides economic and commercial relationships initiated by the colonial regimes, the missionaries initiated projects of cooperation guided by an evangelising interest and a welfare-based policy aiming at the development of the local communities (Amaladass, 1988; Menachery, 2003; Ramanathan, 2007; Suriá, 1993). Since Human Rights Universal Declaration in 1948, the initial models of cooperation identifying the development with the economic growth were introduced. In these projects, there was a strong impetus of cooperation with the receiving countries led by governments, religious orders and third sector organisations of the industrially advanced countries. These alliances generated new contexts of interaction which from the perspective of the group relationships create environments where the “foreign group” (outgroup) perceives itself and is perceived to have a higher status than the ‘native groups’ (ingroup), specifically the ‘indigenous groups’.

In view of the interaction between “cooperating groups” and “indigenous groups”, the arrival of the first groups with initiatives of help, conditioned the relations between both, originating an asymmetrical type of relationship in which it is assumed that the host group depends on the aid of the arrival group. This assumption requires an interpretation of a moral and economic superiority that defines the outgroup, deeply influencing the indigenous community’s self-perception as inferior. As a result of these encounters between communities, there emerges the following interdependence between social identities: the indigenous peoples would be subjected to a strong social pressure while the cooperating groups would feed the indigenous peoples’ submission as they need it for their own self-assertion.

In this manner, as proposed in the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), identity emerges and is reaffirmed in the interdependence with other identities. This takes place in the process of social interaction, which frequently implies an unequal relation. This inter-subjective and relational character of the identity implies that an individual’s self-perception is forged in relation with “the other”. In relation to identity, many questions with regard to how different identity attributes affect behaviour remain unaddressed in the social scientific literature.

This study attempts to find out, as a general objective, how the identities of groups have been expressed and adapted through multiple forms of expression whether social, religious, cultural, etc., seeking to generate knowledge about their relations and exchange between them. Our research design of the whole process, mostly based on the grounded theory method (Strauss & Corbin, 2008), is an important methodology of analysis for studying topics of this nature, social nature, as it helps us study the community behaviour in their own local contexts.

Ethnic identity

Racial and ethnic identities are defined as the significance of race and ethnicity to one's self-concept (Phinney, 1996; Sellers et al., 1998). Racial and ethnic minorities must contend with a legacy in which they were either segregated within or barred from other ethnic or religious groups as they were considered intellectually and morally inferior (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993; Wilson, 1978). Stemming from this history of cultural stereotyping and exclusion, minorities are particularly sensitive to indicators of respect and inclusion in mainstream cultural worldview (Bergsieker et al., 2010; Steele, 1997; Steele et al., 2002). Identity is "a person's sense of self" (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000, p. 715). It is the outcome of a developmental process whereby differentiation between self and others occurs. Identity can be individuated, open, reflexive, differentiated, more fragmented, mobile, precarious (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1996). More, according to Bauman (2013), identity can produce insecurity and anxiety among individuals leading them to adhere to new collective identities.

Tajfel (1981) defines social identity as part of the self-concept that derives from an individual's knowledge of his/her identification and belonging of groups, along with emotional and evaluative aspects associated with that membership. An individual presents as many social identities as social groups with which he/she identifies. Ethnic identity refers to cultural traits in the face of ethnicity defined as psycho-sociological cultural identification (Barth, 1969). Ethnicity has always represented a major human identification substrate long before any national or social formation. Geertz (1963) studied how an ethnic group maintains its identity because of emotional attachment to the symbols of the group identity, and Barth, (1969) postulates how ethnicity is linked to political and economic factors. According to his classical thesis on the ethnic frontier, the groups maintain frontiers in spite of cultural changes, that is preserve their identity. When two or more identities interact, processes of influence occur between the individual, the group and the context, that is triadic interdependence (Moscovici, 1976), with the latent danger that one absorbs the other/s (acculturation) or that all get transformed as a result of their mutual interaction (Berry, 2002).

Objective of the study

The general objective of the study has been to comprehend the nature of the relation between identities that have come in contact with each other with reference to differences in power. In this article, we seek to understand the nature of the encounter between the Jesuit identity and the tribal people's identity in two Jesuit provinces in India: Gujarat Jesuit Province and Ranchi Jesuit Province.

The Adivasis are the original inhabitants of India, the so-called indigenous or natives. Their identity as tribal people has allowed them to survive for long periods of invasions and massacres, though the Adivasis have been invisible in the history of their own country. At this point, it can be said that Adivasis have been free people living in their natural habitat governed by their own self-government systems. However, they have been and are along with Dalits, the most exploited and marginalised groups of Indian society.

The Adivasis are not a homogeneous group, but quite the contrary; the Anthropological Survey of India mentions a diverse social group in ethnicity, culture and religion; that speaks around 100 different languages, which belong to the six language groups: Austro-Asiatic, Munda, Mon-Khmer, Tibeto-Burman, Dravidian, and Indo-Aryan (Devy, 2006; Singh, 1994; Tamminen, 2010). The Adivasis are an ethnic minority in India. Ethnic minorities are particularly sensitive to the “situational cues” that are relevant stereotypes. For instance, there are stereotypes about their intellectual inferiority.

The Company of Jesus or Society of Jesus is a religious order founded in Rome in 1540 by St. Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish religious leader, who was first a knight and became a hermit, priest and theologian. As a community of priests and brothers, Jesuits participate in a mission of spreading the Church throughout the world, and they also have a special relationship with the pope. To achieve their mission, they work with many people from all nations of the world. Some people say that the impacts and influences that the Adivasi population has received imply consequences not only from the point of view of a social change but also from the perception of their own identity (Dumont & Pocock, 1959; Robinson & Kujur, 2010). The question of identity in relation to the Adivasis has been dealt with considering their origin as a tribe. Authors such as Kujur (2012) claim that tribals are not “backward Hindus” but can be Hinduized, Christianized or Islamised. The Jesuits’ immersion into the Adivasi culture has activated a process of influence as explained in the influence of minorities of Moscovici (1976).

The individuals may experience changes in the saliency of their dominant or subordinate identities according to the context (Debebe & Reinert, 2014). One of the most important changes occurring due to the cross-identity interaction refers to the implication and support of the participants acting and thinking out of their group of reference (Crary, 2017). According to Pettigrew (1998) to ensure that a group encounter does not result in an increase of the social distance between the members, it is necessary that at least four conditions be met: common goals, group cooperation, institutional support, and social equality between groups. The lack of equality among groups could end with the lack of recognition of one of the groups in question. In the highly dependent encounters, such as the colonial relations type or unidirectional help type, the identity permeation usually occurs only in one of the participants. It is much more difficult to find examples in which, in spite of the initial intentions of unilateral dependence, whether real or apparent, the identity transformation has worked in both participants; the arrival of the Jesuits to the Adivasi lands has initially the specific characteristics of the unilateral influence of a “strong” identity over a “weak” one.

To summarise, the literature on the asymmetric identity encounters between the groups under study suggests that these result in the inclusion of one identity into the other (inculturation), or through identity conflicts. It is scarce the literature that reports a model of cultural encounters capable of explaining the sociocultural process able to transform the excluding relationship among identities into an inclusive one where both find their place without excluding each other, and besides, they produce enough resilience for the emergence of a new identity. This study aims at exploring the meeting and interactions of two groups in the geographical contexts of the Jesuit Province of Gujarat (Gujarat state) and the Jesuit Province of Ranchi (in Jharkhand state), Indian Republic, located in the

western and eastern parts of the Hindustani peninsula respectively. Generally speaking, both groups correspond to the members of the Society of Jesus and to the tribal population respectively, who live in different places in India. In this study, we have used grounded theory method (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) to build a model to explain the encounter between unequal identities (positive Jesuit identity/negative Adivasi identity), that we have called *Encounter between adivasis and jesuits: the emergence of a new identity*.

Method

This article is embedded in the research of group relations and therefore its aim is to study directly or indirectly some of the factors affecting individual or collective behaviour of individuals while they are part of a group.

In this study, we use a qualitative research methodology and ethnographic fieldwork that can generate and analyse data. This methodology is inductive because it uses and develops concepts based on data; it is holistic because both data and people are considered as a whole in its theoretical framework; and is phenomenological because studies behaviour of people as they live their world.

Using grounded theory method (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) the study aimed to understand the process of two identities mutually influenced within a tribal context. Grounded theory method is a systematic, inductive, iterative, and comparative method for analysing qualitative data with the aim of generating a theory that is “grounded” in data.

This research was approved by the University review board (IRB) and performed with approved protocol and informed consent process (2436). Confidentiality of personally-identifiable information has been maintained for privacy safeguards.

Participants

The field research has been carried out along several periods corresponding to the years 2013, 2014 and 2015, in which a total of fifty-six interviews were conducted within the two Jesuit provinces of Gujarat and Jharkhand. Around one hundred people had been previously contacted, out of which fifty-six participants were finally selected.

The different domains chosen where Jesuits and Adivasis live together help understand and explain the relationships between the aforementioned groups; they can generate knowledge and information applied to other situations, and can support the assumption that identities are multiple, rather than homogeneous, and are in constant motion, as they are not fixed (Thapar, 1966).

The interviewed participants were grouped into different categories outlined below in Table 1, establishing as a basic requirement that there had been real contact between major groups, that is Jesuits and Adivasis. The participants were Jesuits (tribal and non-tribal), women (tribal and non-tribal) and men (tribal and non-tribal and non-Jesuits), therefore a wide range of factors were taken into consideration in accordance with age, roles, economic status, background and formation, mainly. Concerning gender mainstreaming, it should be stressed that Jesuits have been a male group since their inception, which is an unchangeable fact.

Table 1. Participants.

Groups	Gender	Age	Work	Jesuit Province	Figures	Tribal/Non-tribal
Jesuits (Adivasis and Non-Adivasis)	Men	41 to 75	Social work	Gujarat state	15	2 Adivasis 12 Non-Adivasis
			Research Activism Education Pastoral work Projects coordination			
		54 to 90	Social work	Jharkhand state	23	17 Adivasis 6 Non-Adivasis
			Research Activism Education Pastoral work Projects coordination			
Non-Jesuits (Adivasis and Non-Adivasis)	Women	35 to 64	Nursing	Gujarat state	6	3 Adivasis 3 Non-Adivasis
			Farming Education Social work Research Education Social work			
		60 to 76	Research	Jharkhand state	7	5 Adivasis 2 Non-Adivasis
			Education Social work Research School administration			
	Men	55 35 to 54	Education	Gujarat state	1	1 Non-Adivasi 2 Adivasis
			Activism			

Occupation has been an aspect to insist upon, as it is relevant to know the different fields of work and tasks of the interviewees. Out of the total number of interviews conducted, 38 are Jesuits and 18 non-Jesuits (Table 1). In the latter group, 13 females and 5 men. The ages range from 35 to 90 and the fields of work and occupations are the following: social workers, researchers and teachers (in sociology, zoology, social work, development cooperation, mass media communication, law, history, human rights and activism, economics, theology, finances), pastoral work, school's administrators, school and college's principals, congregation members and superiors, lawyers, activists, economists, linguists, psychologists, engineers, nurses, theologians, NGOs founders and members; and farmers; all of different backgrounds. There is a wide range of professions in which Jesuits undertake their work as the means for the relation with the Adivasi people. The majority of the interviews have been conducted in the workplaces of the respondents.

Interview examples

Table 2 shows extracts from interviews conducted both in Gujarat and Jharkhand state.

Data collection

The different techniques applied in the fieldwork in the exploratory level were:

- (a) Self-reporting techniques such as in-depth semi-structured interviews that contributed to a better understanding of how the groups fit in the current situation of their environment; as we consider that interviews are themes, processes and experiences,
- (b) Observation techniques, such as participatory observation, immersion in the selected locations allowing us to see, hear, and begin to experience the reality that participants experience. This ethnographic data collection technique enables us to take account of everyday life, and
- (c) Documentary techniques, such as document review; noteworthy is a series of secondary type of information that can aid in the interpretation of qualitative data obtained to be susceptible of analysis, among which we mention roughly the literary production of the study groups as well as audio-visual material.

The language of communication has been mainly English except when the informants spoke only tribal languages, therefore the need of a translator was necessary. Furthermore, all the material retrieved in the data collection process provides us with relevant data.

These interviews recordings and their corresponding transcriptions, together with the field notes are to generate several codes and categories. The analysis of the contents has considered the attitudes, value system and ethos of the interviewees. All the statements uttered by the participants create the need of exploring them further until we can develop a conceptual analysis of all the data already codified.

Table 2. Interview examples.

(Adivasi-Jesuit from the Vasava tribe). 11 Oct 2014

I Feel there is meaning in tribal religion. Earlier I had the idea when talking of religion that trees, thunderstorm, and stone had life in them; now I have removed that, there is no life in trees, storms and stones. I Go beyond nature. For many tribals religion comes from whatever is beyond their capacity, even they worship a tiger, because he is powerful, it is beyond their control, it is the god tiger. In the mass I try to inculturate, so people feel “this is ours”, not a religion coming from abroad

(Adivasi woman from the dungri garasia tribe). 4 Aug 2015

What happens is that to adivasis they say [the non-adivasis]: “You people are like this”; they do not consider us according to their status, to us, to adivasis. Ok, poverty is in all the district, but maybe we are more poor than them, but we have lands, our own animals, but when we are in need of some money, that it is not there, so in that way adivasis are not much educated; they work in somebody’s field, or you go and do any other work like. Then, adivasi girls...., you can play with them, abuse them, many girls are misused, many of the girls

(Non-adivasi jesuit from Belgium). 16 Aug 2015

I Came in 1967, I was the last one, the last of 529 belgians who have come; during more or less a period of 100 years, almost 5 at an average every year, young people, which is tremendous The community is important for the adivasis; communitarian, the community is first, the community has to survive, not the individual; so the individual growth, the individual asserting oneself, the individual coming forward, that mostly is not appreciated

Their silence means many years of suffering: To your husband when you get beaten, to your neighbour, not to tell your neighbour that your husband is beating you, to your children, not to tell your children that... this miscommunications, this misunderstanding, a lot of fear, this witchcraft...

The church here has done tremendous work; father lievens, you know that. He said “I will give you freedom”, freedom from outside by giving back their lands, freedom from inside by taking away your fear, fear of the evil spirits. He said “I will give you the spirit in whom you can trust”, freedom from without and freedom from within, and that has gone a lot deep already, and in that way I think the adivasis here have grown more than the adivasis in Gujarat

(Hindu woman from India). 17 Aug 2015

India has a tribal population. I Think they are very important people, the tribals, and I’ll give an example: If we are talking of conserving the biodiversity because that is the biodiversity in humanity, so if the tribal will not be there, diversity will not be there, many of the cultures and the indigenous knowledge will vanish so it is a very important part in our system

Source: Authors’ elaboration.

Analysis

Using grounded theory method, the interviews have been analysed at two main levels; the textual level including *unit’s segmentation* (the most significant units were identified); *open coding* (emerging concepts and ideas have been coded); and *memoing writing* (memos were written along the whole process, both at the textual and conceptual level). The code classification has been done following [Saldaña \(2009\)](#) and his coding classification in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*.

As per the conceptual level, we have proceeded from the *axial coding* (codes being linked inductively and deductively, so to allow a consequent grouping); through *selective coding* (identifying central codes), to the *elaboration of semantic networks* and the *preliminary elaboration of the emergent theory*. Table 3 summarizes the process of analysis for the qualitative research based on grounded theory.

Through the arising of the main six categories, such as Adivasi identity, Jesuit identity, Hindu pressure, Adivasi dignity, Adivasi stigmatization, and Adivasi-Jesuit identity, there has been the development of the emergent and final theory (Figures 1–4).

Results

A key finding in this study is the emergence of a new identity that arises as a result of the interaction and the immersion of the Jesuits among the Adivasi population; a new identity Adivasi-Jesuit. The analysis reveals that in the encounter between Adivasis and Jesuits, there has emerged a new inclusive identity. This scenario would be the consequence of a “relation of dialogical learning” where the egalitarian dialogue guided by intentions of practicality and not imposition, prevailed. Moreover, although the previous Adivasi negative experience with other groups (British, Hindus, etc.) could have predisposed them to receive the Jesuits with suspicion and rejection, both groups knew how to activate permeable identity components that created the necessary atmosphere of trust in order to turn the encounter into a space for transforming the relationship.

Table 3. Process of analysis based on the grounded theory methodology.

Phases of Grounded Theory	Levels of the process	Process
Research design	Exploratory	Formulating the research problem
Data collection		Sample design Interviews to the experts and observations
Data analysis	Textual level	Units segmentation Open coding Memoing writing
	Conceptual level	Axial coding Selective coding Revision Elaboration of semantic networks Preliminary construction of the theory
Confrontation of the literary review and the emergent theory	End of the analytical phase	Emergent theory revision Conclusion and discussion

Source: Authors' elaboration.

What follows is a list of the six categories of knowledge already mentioned along with a description and explanation of each one. They have emerged from the data analysis.

Adivasi identity

The results show that the Adivasis keep a vision of the world with elements of indigenous worldview and animism. Tribal ethos and identity are closely related to land and forests. The most valuable features of the Adivasi world are a communal sense, group solidarity and a philosophy based on equality. It could be said that they are “Lax peoples”, that is, to have a contemplative connection with time/space, keeping a relaxed daily activity. In comparison with the rest of Indian women of non-tribal origin, the Adivasi female enjoys freedom, as well as the possibility to choose partner and get divorce; having decision making capacity in the household and resource management. In the identity interaction, the Adivasis are subject to a strong social pressure from groups with competing interests. That is why the social comparison results in an Adivasi negative social identity, in which they are perceived by the outgroup as inferiors and incapables. The Adivasis self-perceive as oppressed, exploited, isolated, and casteless.

Jesuit identity

Power is a central characteristic of this identity, as well as the permeability of its limits. The Jesuit missionaries arrive in tribal lands following their mission statement of empowering the people living as oppressed and in need of protection. Jesuits relate to the Adivasi people activating the prototype characteristics of the service-oriented Jesuit identity. In the encounter between the weak and negative Adivasi identity and the strong and positive Jesuit identity, which seeks to empower the Adivasis; the relation, far from being of superiority, is oriented by humility, understanding, and compassion toward this tribal people with such “negative identity”.

The idea of “we want to make you better” clashes initially with the suspicion of a threatened people who aspire to be recognized as they are. This threat dissipates when verifying that Jesuits do not harass them in such a way that the Adivasis are to renounce to their identity. On the contrary, the blurred limits of Jesuit identity in India are made clear by the adaptability as *Jesuits modus operandi* (inculturation). Thus, the Jesuits learn the tribal languages, respect the tribal spirituality, and make their identity visible when they refer to them as “Adivasis” instead of tribals.

Hindu pressure and pressure of other identities

The meanings emerging out of the descriptions of the Adivasis’ daily existence indicate that they are individually, institutionally, and culturally stigmatised. The results show that the Adivasi identity is under pressure and threatened by other identities. Due to its relevance when considering the Adivasi feelings nowadays, we highlight the relationship with the British colonisers. This oppressive relation reflected in a story of economic and labour exploitation, where the Adivasis were considered incapable of managing

effectively their own resources, became internalised by the Adivasis themselves. The atmosphere imposed by the colonisation has been replaced nowadays by the Hindu pressure, the mainstream identity group in India that dominates the Adivasi people from their social and political power, making use of their authority and dominance, exerting control over their lives and making their culture invisible; that is, denying the Adivasi identity.

Adivasi dignity

The interdependence mentioned above involves the encounter between the Jesuit identity and the Adivasi identity. The Adivasi negative identity associated with the economic and identity pressure due to the encounter with the British and Hindu identity, has given way to a collective state of defensive identities. However, the Jesuits' inculturation introduces respect in the Adivasi's own identity (given value for an equal relationship) that takes them to defend their essence. The emergence of the self-respect gives the dignity back to the Adivasi people, now capable of setting social mobility strategies in which they do not lose their identity traits. To do this, the Jesuits' expert power is channelled in favour of the dignification of the Adivasis; and through their formation in communication skills, leadership and knowledge of legal matters, build the capacity of the Adivasi people to lead a proactive process of dignification (social competition strategy). The new categories, from which the Adivasis compare, imply an idea of self-recognition and acceptance of what they are, and can be framed in a context of self-respect (social creativity strategy). The results reflect how the desire to highlight the proudness of being Adivasi and the empowerment supported by the Jesuits take both identities to be attuned.

Adivasi stigmatization

The discrediting and denying reaction to the existence of the Adivasi identity exerted by the Hindus is manifested in their disapproval of the Adivasi institutions and culture as real and expressive categories of their identity existence. In order to foster the legitimacy of such denial, the actions and cultural product of the Adivasi peoples are devaluated and discredited, pressing on the Adivasi identity so they separate from this identity, perceiving it as negative and weak. Human trafficking, especially of women, demographic issues and displacement from their lands favouring economic interests, alien to the Adivasi culture and welfare, foster the idea that as a culture they are invisible and worthless.

Mutual symbiosis

Focusing on the Jesuit/Adivasi identity dyad, the Jesuits facilitate the formation of the Adivasi community, fostering the individual talent, offering legal, economic and financial support so they can be proficient. Ultimately, empowering them so they can be the protagonists in the building of a socially proactive dynamics in the Adivasi community. Data indicate that between both identities there emerged a relation of complementarity, that is to say, the encounter between them is characterised for discovering synergies that

favour the cooperation. This cooperation does not hide that power, the capacity to foster and sustain the identity dignity, is in the hands of the Jesuit leadership, which offers the Adivasis the possibility to improve the living conditions as well as make visible their culture and identity. For their part, the Adivasis offer the Jesuits the possibility of expanding the Jesuitical doctrine, increasing their institutional and evangelising power. However, this process has gone beyond the outgroup/ingroup cooperation, producing an identity fusion which has given rise to the emergence of a new identity Adivasi-Jesuit.

New identity: Adivasi-Jesuits

This category emerges with firmness. All participants have been asked about the relationship between Adivasis and Jesuits. From the interviews and the coding emerges the category Adivasi-Jesuits identity. The results show that the adaptability of the Jesuit inculturation was able to bridge distances between both identities –identity symmetry-merging in a new one: Adivasi-Jesuit identity. The results indicate absence of inner conflict in the internalisation of this new identity, organising as a young and positive Adivasi-Jesuit identity with the following characteristics:

- They keep their tribalness, orienting their strength to work for their people and not for their own benefit
- A bigger commitment towards the Adivasi peoples, whether Christian or non-Christian
- Intrinsic motivation to empower the Adivasis and the Adivasi church (positive discrimination)
- Progressive identity Adivasi-Jesuits: institutionalists, social workers and activists
- Evolutionary leap in the tribal spirituality, that now goes beyond nature

Figure 1 shows the emergent theory starting with the coding from bottom to top to see how the core categories have been shown and related among each other to allow the emergence of the theory explained.

Discussion

The main objective of this thesis is to comprehend the nature of the relationship among asymmetric identities of Adivasis and Jesuits during their interaction. More precisely, we have explored the encounter between two identities, analysing the relationship between the Jesuit identity and the tribal people's identity in Gujarat Jesuit Province and Ranchi Jesuit Province (both in India). We have followed grounded theory methodology to achieve this objective, which has led us to the emergent theory.

Through the paradigm of grounded theory, we intend to explain the process of the encounter and transformation of two identities that are culturally speaking distant and alien to each other, subject to the influence of the social pressure exerted by a third identity. The narrations of the participants reveal the psychological challenges faced by the members of both groups. A dialectical process of building a new inclusive identity has

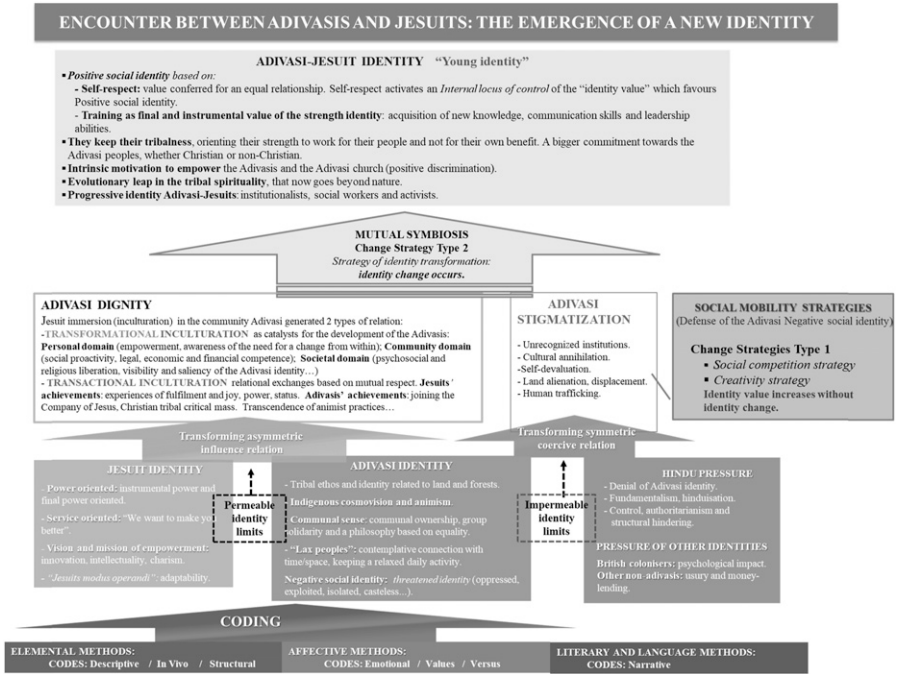


Figure 1. The emergent theory.

been observed, resulting in an encounter in which the feedback given by the members of each group indicates how they perceive each other, generating new meanings on their own identities or verifying them. However, unlike the constructionist paradigm (Kim et al., 2010), the shared construction of identities has been salient. Similarly, we observe how the desire to understand and meet mutually has allowed the redefinition of the identity meanings generating a symbiotic point of encounter and affinity.

The first categories arising out of the coding process draw us closer to the identity of Adivasis and Jesuits. The results of the research show the reality of the Adivasi people in a context where their identity traits have left them in a disadvantaged position with regard to the interaction with other identities, and as a consequence they self-perceive and are perceived as a negative social identity, following Tajfel's social identity theory (1981). For their part, the Jesuits act as catalysts for development of an Adivasi identity towards being more positive.

Evidence has been found about the process of influence pertaining to the triadic interdependence among identities (Moscovici, 1976). On the one hand, the strong Hindu pressure has turned the Adivasis into a stigmatized group, and consequently, a threatened identity. Our finding shows the image of a people who by realizing the threat to their identity, try to find the way to "rescue" it (Spears, 2001); and in order to achieve it, as the *Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE)* proposes, do it in a motivated and

conscious way, through the strategic dimension of their identity (*ibid.*). On the other hand, as a consequence of the Jesuits influence, we have seen how the Adivasis activated mainly two strategies of mobility in order to transform the negative social identity into a more positive one. In this sense, we have found that the strategies of social competence and social creativity proposed by [Tajfel \(1981\)](#) in his theory are applicable to the Adivasis' response to their situation. Thus, we can see that the SIDE model would explain the motivation for the change, and the social mobility strategies of the social identity theory (TIS) would explain the actions taken for the change towards a more positive identity.

The results suggest that in the Jesuit inculturation there would be a relation based in the respect to the Adivasi identity (Adivasi dignity). This scenario would diminish the feeling of being threatened and the response of over identification inherent to the threatened identities. In this way, the degree of permeability of the identity limits would increase, activating the capacity of absorbing from the context the necessary elements for the change to operate. In this way, the Jesuit power in interactive combination ([Moreland et al., 1996](#)) with the Adivasi dignity would have generated the climate of change that the formation of a new identity needed. In such a way, the Adivasi communal sense, the culture of equality, the group solidarity and the "Jesuitical strength" have integrated creating a new identity. This new identity is qualitatively different to the other two, situating the Dignity-Force in the centre of the identity being, needed in the service of the commitment to empower the Adivasi peoples.

Likewise, significant differences have been found regarding the presence of the young identity Adivasi-Jesuit in the two provinces under study. These differences can be explained from the minority influence of [Moscovici \(1976\)](#), associated with the minorities social influence that accounts for how a new idea, a different way of thinking and acting work their way slowly through the consciousness of the majority of the individuals. Thus, at the beginning of the encounter the Jesuit minority was less influential being perceived as strange, rare and unreliable on the part of Adivasi majority. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the interaction moved forward and the Jesuits kept consistent in their behavioural style (Jesuit inculturation), within time, they would have provoked that the majority of the Adivasi population activate the validation of the Jesuitical message, being easily influenced.

The result of the influence of this minority requires a consistency in their style of conduct throughout the time. The Adivasi-Jesuit presence in Gujarat is scarce, and this research shows that the origin of this scarcity may be due to the lack of conditions needed for the influence of the Jesuit minority to operate. The presence of the new identity is bigger in Jharkhand than in Gujarat. In this sense, the most recent presence in time would not have allowed to consolidate the influence of the Jesuits over the Adivasis. In spite of the differences between both provinces, the results seem to indicate that the tribal community will continue its empowering, but from now on they will be guided by the young Adivasi-Jesuit identity, who is taken over becoming the moving force for the Adivasi people to take command of their own destiny.

It should also be noticed that notions of identity among the scholars, a theme that is often debated nowadays, people do not have one but multiple identities ([Gottschalk, 2000](#)). Considering the social-constructivist approach to identity, it is considered that the

members of a collectivity are not defined by an essential and core feature (Rehman, 2007). If we consider that the self has social statuses attached to identities, the selves take on different identities. To Stets and Burke (2003), identity is not a set, concrete entity, on the contrary, it is very flexible and it can change according to the environment, context, and expectations from the counterpart, whether it may be the society, a group, or other identities just like itself.

We have discovered that data are consistent with these two identities as totally consolidated; as well as relevant information provided in the literature review, all in contrast with the emergence of a young identity, the Adivasi-Jesuit identity. In this sense, if one compares this new identity formation with the multiple identities perspectives, there is a different factor in the new identity that was found, as it functions as a unique identity.

The grounded theory constructivist model emphasises the exploration of complex relations and multiple realities (Creswell, 2007), in order to analyse the process of triadic interdependence which is displayed in an encounter between identities as we have seen in this work. The development of this encounter, in spite of its constructionist dynamics, does not seem to be incompatible with the perspective of the theory of identity of Tajfel (1981). The analysis of the evolution of the identities can contribute to a dynamic comprehension of the emergence of an inclusive identity, a process not so much explored in the literature. An important future line of investigation would be to explore the dynamics of construction of new identities through the identity mobility in interaction. Let us now consider a few lines written by Díaz Gárriz (2006) about the missionary effort that is worthy of being taken into consideration, “Foreign Mission has become a local church with its own clergy, their own culture, their own vitality” (p 225). He clearly narrates the why and how of the Spanish Jesuit presence in India in the state of Gujarat, and sees the imminent demise of the presence of foreign Jesuits in India in the next ten or twenty years. The Society is becoming local in India. Precisely in Jharkhand, this local population is of the Adivasi origin while in Gujarat the number of Adivasi Jesuits is likely to improve. The interaction has provided the local Church with a tribal critical mass with a double identity capable of working in many fields, but above all to be the voice and representation of the Society and the Adivasis in India.

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To answer the research question that has guided this study, there is no doubt that the encounter between the Jesuits and the tribal culture has created a new community, the Adivasi-Jesuit community, and what is more, the Church of Jharkhand or better said the Tribal Church of Jharkhand, Jharkhandies being mainly tribals in their homeland. However, the Adivasi-Jesuit presence in Gujarat is scarce, yet the hinduisation process continues with the strength provided by the defence of Hindu values by the non-tribal population. Therefore, this investigation shows that the Adivasi people will continue their empowerment guided by the double identity which is taking over to move forward in a

more complex identity crystallization that allows them to be the driving force of their own destiny.

Although the cultural differences between Jesuits and Adivasis could have taken them to either rejection or imposition on one identity above the other, this work shows how the interaction centred in the self-respect facilitate the construction of inclusive identities. In this way, a potential model has been drawn into which the identity frontiers can blur to conform to the construction of more inclusive identities.

Conclusions

Our finding shows the image of a people who realizing the threat to their identity, try to find the way to “rescue” it (Spears, 2001); and in order to achieve it as it proposes the Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE), do it in a motivated and conscious way, through the strategic dimension of their identity (Peris & Agut, 2007).

Similarly, we understand that after the “revival of the Adivasi dignity”, there would be the over identification with the ingroup, as Schmitt and Branscombe report (cited in Smith et al., 2010), as a response to reduce the negative effects of the stigma, allowing them to establish symmetrical relations with the Jesuits (Symbiotic Relationship).

It should also be noted that the Jesuits pay important attention to the fact that the Adivasis are conscious of the correlation between their negative identity and the plundering of their resources for subsistence. In this way, by making the negative social identity salient, it then becomes more motivationally attractive, and through the transactional/transformational relationship, (Bass, 1985, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1990, 1994), the Jesuits have been empowering them in the different spheres of human development so they may be perceived by the rest of the Indian identities as a more positive identity.

That is to say, in the encounter between the Jesuit and Adivasi identities, a “Transformational Asymmetry” occurs, which through the inculturation process (Jesuit *modus operandi*), manifests in two dimensions: on the one hand, there are “Transactional Inculturation” processes in which both relate symmetrically obtaining mutual benefits; and on the other hand “Transformational Inculturation” processes in which the Jesuitical strength play a catalytic role in the emergence of the Adivasi-Jesuit identity.

Methodological strengths and limitations

One of the main strengths of the grounded theory is the inductive approach that allows the participation of multiple voices, several experiences, and the active implication of participants and researchers, whether in their provision of information or in the process of verifying this information (Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004). The main limitation is the difficulty in generalising the results. Besides, concerning this study, another limitation is the limited number of women as well as non-Jesuit indigenous peoples, which can restrict the sample diversity. Qualitative methodology does not require a representative sample based in number and characteristics. Nevertheless, the special care taken to reflect the cultural diversity of the participants in the identitarian encounter with the sample presented, has

been a strength. The results presented here are well saturated with data in terms of deepness, detail, and convergence in the comprehension of the quotation. While it is true that the limitation in understanding tribal languages has urged us to work with a sample of interviewees who are able to speak the English language and are highly educated.

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