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**ETHNIC IDENTITY AND FOOD CULTURE IN ASIAN AMERICAN FICTION**

**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

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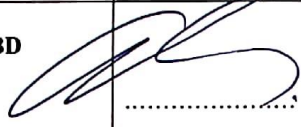
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SHKAR ABDALLA HAMEED TARAFINDAN HAZIRLANAN "ETHNIC IDENTITY AND FOOD CULTURE IN ASIAN AMERICAN FICTION" ADLI TEZ ÇALIŞMASI AŞAĞIDAKİ JÜRİ TARAFINDAN OY BİRLİĞİ / OY ÇOKLUĞU İLE VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALINDA YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ OLARAK KABUL EDİLMİŞTİR.

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## **THESIS STATEMENT**

The formation of a national idea against the background of cultural, racial, religious, and other disagreements with the local population is most of those authors' central thought. In addition, the use of various images, for example, food ones, is made with the purpose of displaying ethnic identity and is the technique that is typical for that era.

SHKAR ABDALLA HAMEED

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(M.A. Thesis)

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**ETHNIC IDENTITY AND FOOD CULTURE IN ASIAN AMERICAN FICTION**

**ABSTRACT**

The present paper is devoted to the investigation of problems pertaining to the development of the national and ethnic identity in first- and second-generation immigrants through the analysis of literary works by Asian American writers: John Okada, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Maxine Hong Kingston, Frank Chin, Amy Tan and Mei Ng. During migration and the course of adaptation to new cultural environments, individuals are exposed to significant stresses linked to cultural bereavement and loss of a sense of belonging, which one enjoyed living in the origin country. Assimilation can be especially challenged in case the host culture embeds substantially disparate values and norms. In this situation, the conflict between one's ethnicity and nationality may arise and consequently interfere with a person's functioning and well-being. In this research, the focus is made on the study of various cultural practices and their roles in immigrants' acculturation and identity development. Cultural practices connected to food preparation and consumption are chosen as the central point of analysis because of the multitude of meanings associated with food and its representation in literature. The semantic analysis framework is used as the major tool for the interpretation of primary sources as it allows finding links between signs (culinary practices), signified (ethnic identity), meanings (in-group membership, and so forth), and contexts (conflicts between majority and minority cultures). The main findings reveal that first- and second-generation immigrants face a different set of problems in immigration. Cultural practices play an essential role in their efforts to cope with acculturative stress and to develop sound self-identification, yet strict adherence to culturally defined activities and lifestyles, as well as their avoidance, may have negative implications for individuals' welfare.

**Key Words:** Ethnic identity, Asian American fiction, cultural practices, assimilation, "hybrid" identity, gender roles, stereotypes, food, traditions.

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**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**  
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**SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**

**ASYA AMERİKAN EDEBİYATINDA ETNİK KİMLİK VE YEMEK KÜLTÜRÜ**

**ÖZET**

Bu makale, birinci ve ikinci kuşak göçmenlerde ulusal ve etnik kimliğin gelişmesine ilişkin sorunların Asya kökenli Amerikalı yazarların edebi eserlerinin analizi yoluyla incelenmesine adanmıştır: John Okada, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Maxine Hong Kingston, Frank Chin, Amy tan ve MeiNg. Göç sırasında ve yeni kültürel ortamlara uyum sürecinde bireyler, kendi memleketlerinde yaşamaktan keyif aldığı o aidiyet duygusu kaybına ve kültür yoksunluğuna bağlı olarak ciddi streslere maruz kalmaktadır. Özellikle konakçı kültürün büyük ölçüde farklı değerler ve normlar içermesi durumunda asimilasyon ile mücadele içinde olunabilir. Bu durumda ise, kişinin etnik kökeniyle uyruğu arasındaki çatışma ortaya çıkabilir ve dolayısıyla bireyin işleyişini ve iyiliğini etkileyebilir. Bu araştırmada, çeşitli kültürel uygulamalar ve bu uygulamaların göçmen kültürü ve kimlik geliştirmesindeki rollerinin incelenmesine odaklanılmıştır. Yemekle ilişkili olarak anlamda çokluk ve edebiyattaki işleniş dolayısıyla, yemek hazırlama ve tüketme ile ilgili kültürel uygulamalar merkezi analiz noktası olarak ele alınmıştır. Anlamsal analiz çerçevesi, birincil kaynakların yorumlanmasında, göstergeler (mutfak uygulamaları), gösterilenler (etnik kimlik), anlamlar (grup içi üyelik vb.) ve bağlamlar (çoğunluk ile azınlık kültürleri arasında çatışmalar) arasındaki bağları bulmaya yardım ettiği için temel araç olarak yararlanılmıştır. Başlıca bulgular, birinci ve ikinci kuşak göçmenlerin, göç konusunda farklı sorunlarla karşı karşıya kaldıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Kültürel uygulamalar, kültürel stres ile başa çıkma ve sağlam bir öz-kimlik geliştirme çabalarında önemli bir rol oynar, ancak kültürel olarak tanımlanmış faaliyetlere ve yaşam tarzlarına sıkı sıkıya bağlı kalmanın yanı sıra kaçınmalarının da bireylerin refahı için olumsuz etkileri olabilir.

**AnahtarKelimeler:** Etnik kimlik, Asya Amerikan Edebiyatı, kültürel uygulamalar, asimilasyon, karma kimlik, cinsiyet rolleri, basmakalıplar, yemek, gelenekler.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ethnic identity can be expressed with a myriad of forms, activities, objects, and perceived abilities. Food and skills within a certain culture help in associating and defining that culture. However, there often exist unprecedented outcomes when observing other cultures that may be adverse. Discrimination and stereotyping by the majority culture may present itself through words, actions and even thoughts. The minority culture may try to integrate with the majority culture by imitating and learning its features. On the other hand, the immigrant culture may try to be adamant to such effects by having a strong association with itself or take advantage of the stereotyping. Nevertheless, it is a fact that cultural change is always imminent in the entry to a new country. How people associate with each other's diverse culture and integrate with society is of paramount importance to establishing harmony while maintaining the acknowledgment of different cultures.

The association of culture with unique features and attributes connected to a particular culture can aid in illuminating why there exists stereotyping and bias in a host country. These attributes that cultural possession ranges from food, clothing, skills, and other features. The implications of cultural stereotyping as well as discrimination can have varying effects on subsequent generations. In an interesting study by Kiang et al (2016: 1377), the authors found that model minority stereotyping was increasing and had positive outcomes on Asian American adolescents albeit in the event of discrimination, the outcomes were decreased. The stereotyping of Asian Americans include perceptions such as better skills in academic disciplines that enabled the students to improve their academic performance.

Moreover, the stereotypes may have aided the students to guard them against the effects of discrimination that reduced overtime. In as much as cultural stereotyping is not advocated for, the study depicted the essential importance of ethnic features that may work in favor of subsequent immigrant generations in both their academic performance and social interactions. Asian American people could use the perceived image depicted by the host culture to their advantage. By capitalizing on these stereotypes, Asian

American students may work harder in their studies and academic activities to become an essential member of the society.

Moving from skills to food, there is overt stereotype associated with authentic and ethnic meals. Given that the perception of skills may have positive outcomes on Asian American adolescents, the outcomes concerning ethnic food may be contrary. For instance, in a review of three texts on Asian food, August (2016: 193) asserted that the authors provided a new approach of viewing food to counter the stereotype associated with ethnic food. August acknowledge that food is “an analytic unit that can tell of social struggle, failure, and recalcitrance” (par. 1). Furthermore, August (202) posited that the texts suggested that marginalization of the Asian American voices can emerge due to the use of words and terms associated with ethnic food and ethnicity. Every culture has its own unique food, style of preparation, arrangement, and cultural significance. Thus, developing a bias towards other’s cultural food should be erased from people’s minds and consequently appreciate the diversity that exists in the universe.

Ethnic minorities in the United States continuously aim to sustain their political identity, rights, and privileges granted to them similarly to other American citizens. At the same time, immigrants and their descendants face many challenges pertaining to a search for the balance between a newly acquired political and an inherited ethnic identity. In this regard, the way one copes with the cultural and geographic dislocation, as well as the competition between the two identities, can often be observed in his or her attitudes to various ethnic customs, traditions, and practices. For some immigrants, they may become a mean for reinforcing their sense of belonging to the ethnic backgrounds, form a feeling of community and one’s identity. For others, these cultural practices may become a source of loathing and contempt. Considering these potential differences in perceptions, the present study will explore the process of identity formation in different generations of immigrants because their experiences of living in the United States can differ to a large extent. As part of the research, how they engage in cultural practices and the effects of the latter on their acculturation and self-identification outcomes will be examined.

The findings of the scholarly and theoretical literature review indicate that there are a few ways to deal with researching identity. Ordinarily, such viewpoints as race, financial class, sexual orientation, religion, and identity are taken into account. However, the most widely recognized method for the investigation of personality is through ethnicity (Kim, 2012: 139). The concept of ethnicity refers to conventions, traditions, and culture of in-group gatherings. Notably, food and eatery habits have always been symbolically important for diverse ethnic groups, and their role in developing individuals' identities cannot be underestimated. According to Stano (2016), in the social-cultural context, food is "a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior" (19). Stano notes that by analyzing food traditions as a system of signs, researchers may observe socio-cultural changes, reveal a balance between social roles, evaluate etiquette, and so forth (19). Therefore, along with immigration, food will be regarded as a pivotal construct of ethnic identity in this study that will aim to reveal both direct and indirect associations between these two variables.

Along with food-related cultural practices, the issues pertaining to gender identity will be explored as well. It is possible to say that this type of identity is very individual and is defined by one's personal relations and attitudes to this social-behavioral category. However, gender identity may be closely associated with ethnicity. It is argued that a child develops a psychological sense of being a male or a female and adopts gender-appropriate behaviors and views as a result of exposure to a certain rearing environment (Frable, 1997: 2). Additionally, Black (2014) states that "culture shapes the ideas of what behaviors are acceptable for men and women as well as what behaviors are appropriate between men and women" (5). Based on the abovementioned observations, it becomes clear that in essentially different cultures that embed disparate perspectives on femininity and masculinity, incorporate distinct political and religious elements, and endow individuals with a dissimilar degree of freedom to choose whether to follow various social and cultural prescriptions or not, persons' perceptions of gender may considerably vary. It is suggested in the present paper that cultural differences in perspectives on gender and male-female relationships can largely contribute to identity conflicts in Asian American immigrants because, being exposed to more conservative

values and social orders in their origin countries, they may become overwhelmed by freedoms linked to the construction of gender and sexual identity that the US culture affords.

The context of acculturation also plays a pivotal role in the understanding of Asian American immigrants' identity conflicts. According to Frable, scholars and theorists distinguish two major identity formation models: linear and two-dimensional (6). The former model, also known as the melting pot, implies that while immigrants commence strengthening their identity within the host society, they simultaneously weaken their ties with the origin culture (Frable, 1997: 6). At the same time, in the two-dimensional model, a person's relationships with the host and the origin environments are regarded as independent dimensions, whereas the best possible outcome of two-dimensional identity formation is the development of strong ties with both cultures (6). It is argued in the present research that significant differences in two dimensions of an immigrant's self-identification and the situations when one dimension outweighs the other for instance, through the denial of one's ethnic heritage or, on the contrary, the non-acceptance of new US lifestyles are the root cause of the identity conflict. In this way, a sound balance between Asian Americans' national and ethnic identities may be attributed to bicultural or multicultural competence that implies both good relations with own cultural and ethnic heritage and the possession of a significant degree of flexibility within the host environment.

It is valid to assert that immigrants' personal attitudes to and relationships with own ethnic and cultural heritage in the context of assimilation to a host environment can be well traced in literary pieces composed by Asian American writers for literature as such can be regarded as a powerful tool for sociological interpretation. Authors often document their actual life experiences, which inspire them and drive their psychological self-reflections, vastly influenced by the overall social, cultural, and political factors. For this reason, the works by Asian American authors are of particular interest in the present paper.

The problem of national and ethnic identity formation is one of the central ones in Asian American literature as authors frequently describe this process against the



background of cultural, racial, religious, and other disagreements with the representations of other ethnic groups in the society, as well as the overall dominant culture. While depicting how characters' identity is developing and how they are assimilating in the host environment, writers use eloquent imagery that is rich in distinct cultural meanings. For instance, they write about traditional celebrations, food preparation and consumption, and other customs, serving to reveal the ethnic and cultural heritage of their characters and also represent their relations with the society in general. In this way, through the analysis of certain Asian American literature works, it will be possible to elucidate common immigration and assimilation patterns typical of the era, to explore the complexity of a current and past situations pertaining to cultural diversity in the modern American Society, and to investigate the role of cultural practices, such as food preparation, in the formation of immigrants' identity.

The significance of the study is defined by the fact that in the context of competing national and ethnic identities immigrants' understanding of self can be complicated especially when the dominant culture in the host society is distant from the original one and promotes multiple ethnic and racial stereotypes. This situation may complicate interpersonal and social relationships and lead to the development of unsound self-conceptions in immigrants. Through the exploration of the representation of individual and ethnic identities in Asian American literature, it may be possible to identify both positive and negative perceptions of self and groups portrayed by the selected authors. In this way, it may also become possible to conceptualize methods that would allow minimizing tension existing between immigrants' ethnic culture and broad national culture and mitigating possible identity conflicts. Overall, this paper will contribute to ethnic identity research by offering some insights into the meaning of identity and its various constructs.

The paper aims to explore the whole spectrum of issues pertaining to ethnic identities of Asian American immigrants and their portrayal in modern literature. These research themes include immigration; development of multiple facets of personal identity, including ethnic, national, and gender identity; impacts on the host environment on immigrants' identity and relationships with others; and roles of various cultural

practices in individuals' lives. At the same time, special attention will be devoted to the investigation and analysis of culinary images in literature because of their polyvalent nature and high cultural significance.

The paper is focused on the works by such modern Asian American novelists and short story writers as John Okada, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Frank Chin, and Mei Ng. These authors are selected because they belong to the same historical era and their literary pieces are devoted to the problems that immigrants throughout the 20th and 21st centuries faced and continue to face. These authors bring up issues of social and legislative issues, ethnic character, experience, sustenance, culture, personality, history, migration, and others. Considering that a relatively large number of matters is discussed in their works, it will be possible to develop a comprehensive picture of identity conflicts and representations of immigrants' experiences. Moreover, since the literary pieces by the selected authors are written in the same genre, the opportunity to conduct consistent analysis and achieve reliable results increases.

The fact that primary sources are fictional is considered during research, and potential gaps between the extratextual world and ideas depicted in them are taken into account as the primary limitation of the present study. In order to reduce the gaps between the aesthetic world and actual situations pertaining to the ethnic identity of immigrants and establish more reliable links between them, evidence from a large pool of multidisciplinary, scholarly and theoretical sources is used. For example, the study substantially relies on the critical evaluation of primary sources conducted by Wenying Xu in *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature*. The work exhaustively discusses the significance of food in Asian cultures, its role in the formation of ethnic, racial, and gender identities. Some other important secondary sources include such articles as "Migration, Cultural Bereavement and Cultural Identity" by Dinesh Bhugra and Matthew Becker, "Cultural Dislocation and Ego Functions" by Karim G. Dajani, "Gender, Nationality, and Identity" by Karyn Stapelton and John Wilson, and some others. These scholarly sources are written by esteemed professionals in such disciplines as psychiatry, gender and social studies, and so forth.

Evidence retrieved from them is of great help during interpretation and helps increase the credibility of results.

The study employs the qualitative methodology which has a primary purpose of finding complex correlations among various variables. Qualitative research projects primarily seek to provide answers to such questions as "Why individuals have particular thoughts and emotions that may affect their behaviors and decisions?" Thus, compared to quantitative study designs that mainly investigate the "how" questions, this methodology has some advantages in terms of the discovery of dynamics interrelations between a great variety of factors present in the context of a problem and its outcomes.

However, due to the subjective nature of data investigated in qualitative studies, they are prone to bias. Since the given research project does not involve human subjects, the main threat to the credibility of findings is posed by researcher bias or, in other words, the risk of misinterpretation due to certain personal beliefs and predetermined views. To address this problem, the triangulation method for data validation is used. According to Carter et al.; "triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena" (p.545). Such type of triangulation as theoretical pluralism is used in this research. Overall, different theoretical perspectives are combined to explore identity issues in Asian American immigrants. They include Jean Phinney's theory of ethnic identity development, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural exchange, and the feminist theory. These theories have the points of convergence and divergence (Appendix B) and, therefore, they significantly enrich the comprehension of the topic.

The deductive approach to the investigation of links between distinct representations of Asian American immigrants' national identity and cultural identity is implemented. It starts with the hypothesis that the images of cultural practices allow tracking the process of immigrants' identity formation and assimilation within the dominant culture, and this assumption drives the interpretation of relevant passages from the primary sources. The hypothesis is formulated based on the findings of the literature review focused on the evaluation of over forty high-quality scholarly and theoretical sources on ethnic identity development.

In this paper, the analysis of symbols associated with Asian American cultural practices relies substantially on cultural semiotics. More specifically, the texts are analyzed within the semiotic analysis framework. Signs and relations are two crucial elements of semiotic analysis (Berger, 2017: 6). The meaning of a sign can be revealed only during its interpretation and, therefore, the primary purpose of the semiotic analysis is to reveal how and why a text is created. In this framework, every text is viewed as a system of signs, whereas its multiple meanings are derived from links among these signs and referents - things, objects, and phenomena that symbols and signs refer to. Moreover, the context in which the text is created plays a vital role during its interpretation as well because it suggests which emotions and ideas motivated a person who created a text. The illustration of the dynamic relationship between a sign, a signified, a context, and their meanings is provided in Appendix A.

As part of the analysis, the following questions are answered: What are the main culturally relevant signs in the authors' works? What ideological and sociological issues are related to them? What meanings do they convey within the selected theoretical framework? What oppositional relationships can be found within the sign system of the text?

The paper is divided into five major sections: introduction, literature review, review of primary sources, semantic analysis, and conclusion. The first chapter in the body of the paper provides a through an overview of study background and covers such topics as immigration, ethnic identity development, and cultural significance of traditional food practices. The second chapter introduces the selected authors and outlines their primary interests and motives in writing. Chapter Three summarizes the major findings from the analysis of primary sources supported by research evidence and theories on identity development and cultural dislocation. Main themes discussed in this section are ethnic and gender identity conflicts in immigrants, identity search and identity development through interpersonal communication and cultural practices. Lastly, conclusion recaps on the most significant observations and research results and suggests some theoretical and practical implications of study findings.

## CHAPTER I

### 1. Literature Review

The present chapter is devoted to the investigation of problem background through the review of secondary sources. It starts with an explanation of ethnicity concept, its major constructs, and the ways one's ethnic and cultural identity is formed. The second sub-section focuses on the issues pertaining to a failure to develop the ethnic identity and live in accordance to it, and the third sub-section investigates the importance of culinary practices in cultural reproduction and lives of diverse ethnic groups. Consequently, a brief history of immigration in the United States is provided as it helps to comprehend the context in which immigrants dwell. Considering that a significant portion of the present research is dedicated to the analysis of food-related cultural practices, the impacts of immigration on a culinary landscape in the country are discussed as well. Specific attention is given to the review of conservative views on immigration and cultural diversity in the country because they substantially define the relationships between majority and minority groups and influence the lifestyles and social functioning of people from distinct ethnic backgrounds. The chapter ends with an explanation of factors that foster better or worse communication among people of different ethnicities. In this regard, the contribution of ethnic food practices to the development of better multicultural understanding and communication is emphasized.

#### 1.1.Ethical Identity: What is it and how is It Formed?

“Ethnic” and “Ethnicity”, both terms are derived from the Greek word “Ethnos” which refers to a group of individuals of common descent (Schaefer, 2008: 456). In ethnic-based researches, the terms such as ethnic groups, ethnic community, communal group, minority and people are commonly utilized interchangeably (Schaefer, 2008: 456). There are two segments, which provide the grounds to recognize the ethnic groups; one is the accentuation of cultural traits and the actual understanding of those traits that separates the community from the other ethnicities who do not have common distinctive characteristics. The ethnic criteria identified by Anthony D. Smith offers the basis of communal identity (Guibernau, 2004: 126-127). The criteria include the memories,

historical experiences, common culture, and myths of common descent, ethnicity and interconnections with homeland or historic territory which the community may currently be inhabited (Guibernau, 2014: 126-127).

The building blocks of ethnicity are; 1) Identity and 2) Culture; through the construction of both building blocks, communities and ethnic groups tend to acknowledge the dynamics and problems of their ethnic boundaries and meaning. Ethnicity is hence continuously evolving entity that influences the individual's identity and the group organization as well. Both ethnic identity and culture, how they are formed, is due to the structure and agency. A dialectic conducted out by the ethnicity-based communities and the wider society. It is the product of the particular actions that are undertaken by the ethnic groups because it serves as the "identification" for the ethnic groups. The identification is served through the particular fulfillment of obligations, that include moral values, cultural values, traditional values and so on. This is how the "self- definition and "culture" is shaped; other than this, the external societal, political processes, economic perspectives and the other actors related to ethnicity by which it is actually constructed and other ethnic categories are also shaped with the definitions (Nagel, 1994: 154).

Culture, being a complex concept, comprises of numerous definitions, proposed by many scholars. Culture simple outlines the common experiences, moral and ethical values, and traditional beliefs, religious beliefs that are shared by a particular community and shapes the way, how humans understand their world and environment (Nagel, 1994: 162). It includes the communities, in which we are born; grow up, such as race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion or class. This also includes the communities that intentionally are joined by the individuals and become part of. For example, new culture is acquired by either changing the economic status, merging into a new region, or even by entering a new ethnic group. Culture spreads from one part of the region to another simply by communication and the interaction between different ethnicities. Through communication, culture is developed, shaped, transmitted and learned; communicational practices on the other hand, are also developed by culture and changed as well.

Culture that is portrayed by the ethnic communities is based on self-awareness and solidarity, which are commonly illustrated by the name of the community itself. When it comes to cultural practices, it is a critical aspect of ethnicity (Nagel, 1994: 162). Other than this, ethnicity means the perspectives, moral values, and distinctions that separate one community from another (Charmaraman & Grossman, 148). Hence, it is a shared cultural heritage (Nagel, 1994: 163). Commonly the characteristics counted for ethnicity are ancestry, religion, traditional food dishes, and forms of dress (163).

As Oyserman and Sakamoto (1997) comment, Asian American culture has a place with the most generally spoke to ones in the United States (435). In their endeavor to examine the exchange between Asian American ethnic character, introductions, and generalizations, specialists layout four constituents of such personality: the sentiment of linkage with one's family, the feeling of connection to customs and legacy, the possibility that one's close to home accomplishments will bring constructive results for their family and ethnic gathering, and the acknowledgment of prejudice and basic impediments (Oyserman and Sakamoto, 1997: 435). The initial two parts are firmly identified with the idea of food with the assistance of which individuals much of the time mirror their devotedness to customs and family. Whitt (2011) commented that food has turned into a famous picture in writing, which gives this idea capacity to speak to complex thoughts and convey various implications (2).

Ethnicity also elaborates other cultural factors such as regional culture, nationality, and so on. However, the importance of ethnicity and race towards the identity of the individual is known as centrality (Kim, 208). It represents the significance of the attributes to the individual's racial-ethnic background. On the other hand, the racial identity is much more associated to responses to prejudice and racism (Helms, 20), while ethnic identity provides the sense of connection with a group's heritage, traditions, and often local languages.

According to the "Primordia list approach", the first school of thought with respect to ethnicity, explains that there are fixed characteristics of people and ethnic groups (Brown, 2018: 68). According to this approach, it is embedded in biological and inherited attributes, where there is a prolonged history of practicing cultural

differentiation (Brown, 2018: 69). It is unique in durability and intensity and as an existential aspect; it outlines the communal distinctiveness and individual self-discrimination (69). Furthermore, the primordial argument state that fear and conflict is caused by the irreconcilable differences that exist due to cultural gaps (70).

## **1.2. Potential Consequences of the Non-Observance of Ethnic Identity**

Identities are developed due to the differences we have with other individuals with the objective of gaining the collective group solidarity and self-esteem. The social theorists Hogg, and Reid claim that identity is very important to everyone, as it allows to situate oneself and the other; it provides the sense to the existence; and to the order of the world. Identity and ethnicity recognition provides the opportunities to the individuals and communities and construct the society by how they give meaning, how they communicate, how they act, think, body language, work, socialize, judge, eat and relax (Hogg & Reid, 56).

Human beings are naturally and biologically complicated and have the urge to be differentiated on the basis of race and ethnicity to express their superiority and the distinction from other ethnicities. Humans are very much proud of their ethnicities and acknowledge them. Ethnic identities can be identified as the subset of the identity categories that develops eligibility for the membership. The membership is identified by the attributes that are linked with the descent. Ethnicity and individual identification is immensely important because if we deny out traditional roots, the defining characteristics are also negated. The characteristics are: a common history, a common territory, a common culture, a common mother tongue and so on. hence addressing ethnic identity not only identifies yourself, it outlines the characteristics of what is your cultural background, what are your traditional values, to what extent one is judgmental and so on. According to Max Weber

Ethnic groups are those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization or migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter



whether or not an objective blood relationship exist.(Hutchinson & Guibernau, 2004: 35)

Identity is generally interpreted as a self-definition, a 'story' that individuals let themselves know and others, as the appropriate response that they provide for the inquiry 'who am I?' All things are considered that it is a well-defined idea in the brain science writing which can be estimated utilizing overview inquiries of the sort 'To what degree do you feel? The writing recommends that personality is framed in youth and is probably going to be molded by different occasions in a man's life, thus evolves after some time. While it is a characteristically multidimensional idea, including desirable orientation and expert personalities, to give some examples, the emphasis here is on ethnic or national sentiments of having a place. Later well-known discussions propose that enthusiasm for whether national characters matter has developed for example; the 'relocation participation situations' looked by host nations.

Considering that through ethnicity an individual both consciously and unconsciously identifies him or herself with other people who share similar traditions, beliefs, and behaviors; makes sense of the surrounding world; and develops pride in own personality, its role in human life cannot be underestimated. Nevertheless, certain factors may inhibit the development of positive ethnic identification. One of them is the presence of negative public images of minority ethnic groups in the majority culture. According to Chávez and Guido-DiBrito (1999), in this situation, members of the minority group are likely “to feel shame or disconnection toward their own ethnic identity” (41). While it is observed that people who have a positive attitude towards own ethnicity and find pride in it usually tend to have better self-esteem and overall psycho-emotional status, those with unexplored ethnic identities and with negative perceptions of own ethnicities are prone to the emergence of various mental problems, including depression (Charmaraman & Grossman, 2010: 146). It is valid to note that when a person does not have access to resources and support needed to improve their perception of ethnicity, the mentioned psychological problems may affect their performance and functioning across the lifespan.

The main problem with negative ethnic images and stereotypes is that they are usually conveyed to individuals in the mainstream culture unintentionally, through education and other institutional practices. As Chávez and Guido-DiBrito (1999) note, individuals from a white or any other majority group derive their knowledge of ethnicities from own cultural heritage and, when they also lack experiences of interacting with other groups, it may be prejudiced (45). Conversely, the abundance of multicultural experiences and the elucidation of possible internal biases pertaining to race and ethnicity through self-reflection and loosening of fixed attitudes induce a more adequate view on diversity.

Another essential factor that may affect individuals' ethnic expressions and self-identification is the presence of open and severe ethnic discrimination and hostility in the society where they dwell. When a strict division between the majority and the minority groups is made in the overall community, one starts to divide people on "self" or "us" and "others." History provides multiple examples of institutionalized ethnic segregation and violence. For instance, when speaking of Asian immigrants in the United States, they faced severe prejudice throughout the 20th century at the institutional level through exclusionary migration policies, the cases of mob lynching, and legal discrimination through Alien Land Laws and other laws (Hilger, 2017: 9-10). It is clear that open hostility towards minority groups has considerable detrimental effects on lives of immigrants by instilling in them a feeling of insecurity, challenging their interactions with people from diverse backgrounds, and limiting their chances for self-realization within the society.

While different generations of immigrants can be exposed to the abovementioned problems, newly arrived immigrants also face some unique challenges to ethnic identity expression, and the primary one is cultural bereavement. It is defined as the loss of a habitual social structure and a consequent grief reaction (Bhugra & Becker, 2005: 18). According to Bhugra and Becker, migration is related to such stresses as "the loss of cultural norms, religious customs, and social support systems, adjustment to a new culture and changes in identity and concept of self (18). Cultural bereavement implies that a person becomes uprooted, and this state negatively impacts one's mental health

and may lead to a number of psychological and mood disorders, including depression and psychosis (Bhugra & Becker, 2005: 22). Overall, it means that people who migrate are at high risk of anxiety and distress due to exposure to cultural values and lifestyles that are disparate from those to which they are accustomed. In this regard, cultural assimilation is important, and the investigation and implementation of methods that help immigrants adapt to adverse consequences of cultural dislocation is pivotal.

It is worth noticing here that four basic stages of acculturation are identified in the literature. They include the honeymoon stage, the frustration stage, the adjustment stage, and the acceptance stage (“The 4 Stages of Culture Shock, 2001: 1-4). During the first phase, people traveling or migrating abroad usually become infatuated with a new culture and see everything positively. The second stage is associated with homesickness, communication problems, fatigue of misunderstandings, and other negative emotions. It is valid to note that when a person migrates to a culturally distant country and lacks contacts with the members of his or her own ethnic group, their frustration phase may last for a significant period. Additionally, the degree of one’s eagerness to learn and adapt to the host environment, as well as respect for local lifestyles and value systems, can largely define the success in the process of his or her adjustment (“The 4 Stages of Culture Shock,” para. 1-4). When immigrants remain flexible and find a way to cope with cultural bereavement in an effective way, they achieve the acceptance stage that is characterized by a greater opportunity to thrive and function well in the host country.

Character development and the ensuing impacts of personality on work advertise results. They build up a model of parental character interests in which if there is no income inconvenience from a minority personality then it is ideal for the parent if the tyke's character is equivalent to the parent's character, however guardians may 'confine' minority character ventures to the degree that there is some disservice. They recognize that their discoveries cannot be deciphered as causal, however contend that if monetarily fruitful people feel all the more firmly German then their gauge of personality is an upper bound and that if this impact is symmetric this is limited underneath by the coefficient on minority character.

The past researches to be somewhat rare and only traceable to American researchers working in the United States. This is because of the way that America has a long convention of migration, matched with since a long time ago named political and social issues of how to coordinate ethnic networks into standard society (Waters, 1990: 1). American governmental issues has in this manner truly swung to human science, and all the more as of late to human sciences, for learning on these issues (Waters 1). The attention on white ethnics is, on account of her exploration questions, a cognizant decision as per Waters. Her principle intrigue was what noteworthiness their ethnic inception bears or does not manage in her sources' lives and how they as needs be relate to their ethnic beginning as individuals in the "last phase of osmosis" (Waters, 1990: 12). To pick an ethnicity, instead of being credited one, is as indicated by Waters a matter of racial reasons. To meet non-white third era ethnics, at that point, is as indicated by her an altogether different ordeal and process for individuals in American culture and she along these lines considered it inefficient for her exploration (Waters, 12).

Waters closes from her discoveries that ethnic personality is something that does and does not make a difference to her witnesses (Waters, 1990: 147). An ethnic personality for white Americans does not force on decisions of whom you wed, where you choose to live, what work you will have, and above all, on the off chance that you will be exposed to separation (Waters 147). Be that as it may, ethnic markers convey hugeness in people groups' stories of their identity and where they originate from, or, in other words ages through the narrating to their kids (Waters 147). Waters focuses to two reasons in American culture why ethnic characters wait as a factor for personality development and safeguarding. She contends it is produced in a Catch 22 inside the American philosophy: the significance of a feeling of uniqueness on the one side, and feeling of network on alternate (Waters, 147).

As indicated by Waters at that point, a normal for American philosophy is the inclination of having a place with a more noteworthy network, yet without the accommodating and limiting parts that it involves, which request duty and bargains on the opportunity that accompanies singularity (Waters, 1990: 154). Second, she contends that ethnic choices are conceivable as a result of American race connection structures

(Waters 156). The plain idea of ethnic optionality is a benefit to white individuals as per Waters. Being a piece of the ruling race in America, her witnesses did not ponder much the reality how they could "slip all through their ethnic jobs" without confusion (Waters, 1990: 158). Waters battles that in the previously mentioned ways, representative ethnicity is not as noteworthy to white "European ethnics" as they are for individuals whose ethnicity and skin shading is not the authoritative white European (Waters, 154).

### **1.3. Ethnic Foods and Food Culture: How Ethnic Identity is influenced?**

Ethnic foods refer to the food items and dishes, which are unique and distinctive to a specific ethnic group, culture, race, nation, religion or heritage (Dwyer & Bermudez, 2018: 1). Other than the cultural values, the consumers of ethnic diets also constitute of distinctive religious, socioeconomic and regional characteristics. From the ethnicity formation standpoint, ethnic diet bridges the past and supports the entities that are accustomed to sustain the ethnic identity. Ethnic food offers the eaters to experience the culinary traditions and the opportunities to exploit new cultural value and new cuisines as well (Dwyer & Bermudez, 1). This also helps in designing the cultural relevant nutrition alterations to reach food that is nutritionally vulnerable and is difficult to be accessed by the people within the community. Other than developing familiarity, various ethnic foods also comprise of actual health importance that has elevated their respective appeal. Hence a platform is created where new foods, which are attractive and unique, are prepared that appeal to wider segments of the population (1).

In many ethnicities the food classifications can influence the national status as they can result in the exclusion of healthy food and diet and encourage the consumption of unhealthy food items (Dwyer and Bermudez, 2018: 2). Ethnic foods also create a false portrayal among the different ethnicities that their nutritional values are being fulfilled as the food is culturally important and comprise of value (Dwyer and Bermudez, para. 2). Various studies illustrate the evidence that food choices of individuals are basically associated with their ethnic identity and ethnicity. "Food thus entwines intimately with much that makes a culture unique, binding taste and satiety to group

loyalties. Eating habits both symbolize and mark the boundaries of cultures.” (Gabaccia, 2009: 9)

What separates ethnic identity from the racial identity is the primacy of the culture and culture is highly pivotal to the idea of ethnic identity. Ethnicity is referred as the integration of the geographical roots, cultural affinity, religious beliefs, a sense of substantial historical events, and sometimes the ascribed race is counted as well. With some degree of acculturation, in a particular culture, the ethnic foods and cuisines vary dramatically with the passage of time that relate with an ethnic group which is consuming them (Nagel, 1994: 161). Same is evident with the ethnic subgroups and races i.e. there are variations prevalent in the traditional foods. What happens is, traditional cuisines are passed down from one generation to another (Gardaphé & Xu, 2007: 5). In case of immigration ethnic foods and related cultures are diffused with other ethnicities. It also works as an “illustration of cultural identity” that identifies a particular ethnicity (Gradaphe & Xu, 2007: 161).

Immigrants have a long history of bringing their ethnic food dishes and cuisines in other foreign countries. They cook, and prepare these foods, as to preserve their own ethnic cultural values and tastes. According to Gardaphé and Xu, the formation of ethnic identity is influenced by experiences of "food productions and services, culinary creativities, appetites, desires, hunger, and even vomit" (5). Since the process of inculcating "ethnic inferiority" frequently affects digestive desires of ethnic people, culinary themes serve as vehicles for restoring ethnic pride and dignity (Gardaphé and Xu, 6). According to Khilnani (2015) the "notorious smell" of Indian curry is often employed as a trope diminishing immigrants in various styles of popular culture (77). Meanwhile, a large number of these immigrants open Indian grocery stores and restaurants, thus making food their means of earning money. Therefore, as Khilnani concludes, food does two things at the same time: it designates the Asian Americans as "the other" and entitles them with a "sense of selfhood" regarding financial security (77).

Understanding a culture through food is an interesting process because once a person starts asking these questions, such as how something is made, what ingredients are in it, or why it is called a certain way, the answers obtained go beyond culinary

learning. In these answers, food tells us something about a culture's approach to life. In the end, we can say that food functions symbolically, as a “communicative practice” by which we create, manage and share meanings with others. Understanding culture, habits, rituals and tradition can be explored through food and the way others perceive it.

The food diffusion has been evident largely due to immigrations where cultural diversity was at peak. Asian immigrants, since the 19th century has been bringing their influences upon American culture, yielding an altered, enriched and nuanced culinary landscape. According to the U.S Census Bureau, Asians or Asiatic people are defined as pan-ethnic groups that comprise of ancestral origins from Southeast Asia, South Asia, and East Asia. They have played an invaluable part in pioneering the food system of United States with their culinary traditions and ideologies. The varying cultures among the ethnic groups got much more diffused as diffusion refers to the movement of entities, perceptions, ideologies and values from one culture to another.

When diffusion of the cultures occurs, forms of the traits may lose its actual cultural meaning by transferring from one society to another. For example, When the American style McDonald's hamburger was introduced to Beijing and Moscow; they embraced it as luxurious foods that were only ordered on festive occasions. However, in America, they are a daily routine, food item. Even the similar content is discussed in the fictional literature authored by Asian American writers. For example, “The Making of Asian America” authored by Erika Lee elaborates the blend of different cultures (food traditions, moral values, communicational styles and so on), due to the Asian immigration. The author further explores the history of how Asians have remade themselves and attained new identities so that they get fit in America and some of them are under the influence of identity loss. Although the content is worth reading but it makes the reader sad and devastated about the problems faced by immigrants.

#### **1.4. Historical Context and Overview of Immigration and Emergence of Cultural Diversity in America**

The migration of the human civilization is about more than one million years old and continues to occur in the response of sophisticated human cultural and existence

conditions (Helms, 2007: 239). The term “migration” constitutes of two main parts; one is emigration and the second is immigration. The moving of people involves both social and spatial transformations (Helms239). In the modern times, revolutionary changes have continuously taking place, where such a high displacement of the people is occurring due to economic and political grounds. Almost today immigration has occurred in every part of the region. Migrated people up to 160 million are counted as a single country if they tend to create a “nation of immigrants” (Motomura, 2007: 9).

“The early 1960s world of Ozzie and Harriet, Leave It to Beaver, and American Bandstand prompted deep and unsettled questions about what it means to come to America, and what it means to say that America is a nation of immigrants (Motomura, 3)”

After the rapid industrialization in the late nineteenth century, the United States, witnessed the pouring of migrants from different countries in search of occupation-based opportunities. Prior to the Civil war, many of the migrants were from the Northern and Western Europe. However, in the early 1880’s, there was a whole new wave of migrants that started settling from Eastern and Southern Europe regions such as Greece, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), Poland, The Austro- Hungarian, Italy, and Russia. Almost 80 % of the immigrants, by 1907 were a part of Eastern and Southern Europe. The migrants that came United States, later on were either Roman Catholic or Jewish that had left their countries to get shelter and security from political and religious persecution.

At the turn of the twentieth century America was considered as the “melting pot” by the native-born Americans due to the merging of different people belonging from different ethnicities. As a result, there is a blend of different cultural values that come together by abandoning their native languages and customs. However, many of the immigrants define themselves as “hyphenated Americans” who have intermixed their ethnic values and traditions with the American ways of life. Most of larger ethnic groups tend to live altogether in the urban neighborhoods. The Polish, Greek, and Italian ethnic neighborhoods developed mostly in the areas located in the Industrial Midwest. These communities played potential role in enhancing the economy by forming social clubs, established orphanages, mutual aid societies, cemeteries and native-languages newspapers.



## **1.5. Influences of Immigration on the American Culinary Landscape**

Immigration has led to the diffusion of different cultures prevailing among ethnic communities. Hence the minimization of the distances between different regions of the globe has resulted in culinary globalization (Cheung and Tan, 2007: 2). Today there are countless variations in the food presented on a single table, among different ethnicities and under one roof. Familiar ingredients have blended with unfamiliar culinary arts that have added sophisticated and refined flavors to well-renowned taste (Cheung and Tan, 2007: 2). Asian food is derived from various different countries such as China, Afghanistan, and so on. They comprise of distinctive delicacies and the cooking styles are unique as well.

Many of the ethnic related culinary traditions have resulted and influenced by centuries that took place due to the immigrants and indigenous groups entering different parts of the world. For example, American food is simply considered as a “multiethnic blend” (Pilcher, 2012: 430). According to McLean, American culture and eatery habits are under continuous influence of foreigners, as, 20 percent of population have been accounted for non-natives during the year 2012. This continuous integration of people from different nationalities in the US is becoming a major reason of amalgamation of food, spices and cuisines from different cultures and ethnicities, which in return giving an Asian-American touch in the cuisines of America. Although, there are various cuisines that are purely American and portrays a long history of American tradition, however, the increasing diversity in food habits and cuisines is due to the influx of immigrants from different parts of the world, especially Asia, during twentieth century (McLean, 2015: 22).

There has never been a single eatery habit prevalent over the others and no ethnicity or a cultural community has emerged with nil alterations with the food trends (Pilcher, 2012: 430). Ethnicity and the related cultural heritage, both are presented by ethnic food preferences and choices (Waters18). However, every individual belonging from an ethnic group may have various ways of categorizing the foods, that are at a variance with the medical point of views, as source of multivitamins, and nutrients that are based on biochemical and physiological characteristics (Pilcher, 2012: 434). On the

other hand, the ethnic groups also vary in physical, social and food-ways context, where the food selection, preparation, serving and eating occurs (Waters, 20).

There are various literary studies on ethnicity and gender, which work with class, diaspora and sexuality and further expand the concepts upon the relationship between food, eating habits and subjectivity has been frequently articulated. Wenyong Xu (2008) provides irradiating pieces of knowledge pointing on how diaspora, class, gender can be affecting the Asian Americans individuality through food choices and tastes (22). The focal point of attention of eating identities is how the various societal categories alter the psychological dimensions of the individuality of the Asian American (Xu, 24).

Since the mid of the 19th century, American culture has been dramatically influenced by the Asian immigrants, that resulted in a varied, rich and nuanced culinary landscape. The Asian immigrants have played an invaluable part in pioneering the American food system and food traditions (Lowe, 1996: 19). They not only made the locals familiar with their culinary traditions but one of their monumental contributions is that they helped rice industries to be operational alongside Mexico so that California can be transferred into a global agricultural powerhouse. They have also fought resolutely for playing a foundational part with respect to labor rights and the treatment of the food workers (Lowe, 1996: 20).

From 1960 to 2013, the population of the Asian Americans grew from only one million to 19.4 million. In 2012, about three-quarters of them were foreign-born, that has ensured that the Asian food will enrich and invigorate the American food culture. Hence due to globalization, the East-West exchanges have led to the nurture of 2.6 million Asia Americans, belonging from mixed and diverse race heritage. These cosmopolitans are giving rise to transnational cross-pollination that alters the configuration of the culinary boundaries. The 20 million Asian American immigrants are widely categorized in six main groups that largely present their populations; that are, the immigrants of Indian, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Japanese and Vietnamese descent (Lowe, 1996: 18). According to the 2010 Census, the Thai American population is about less than a quarter million, despite the popularity and promotional campaigns conducted by the Thai government for making Thai restaurants more renowned and popular. By comparison,

every group among the Asian immigrants accounts for a population of about one million. Due to the cuisines prepared by Korean, Japanese, Filipino, and Vietnamese, they have set aside the South Asian American food culture (Lowe, 1996: 24).

Only 6000 Chinese restaurants were located in the 1960's in America; today there are more than 40 thousand restaurants with Japanese as well. Over 3 thousand of Vietnamese pho houses are located in the United States; while 600 Korean eating points are operational in Los Angeles; and the Philippines based chains of fast food like Jollibee, Max's and Goldilocks have been expanding successfully with over 60 branches (25). Whereas the influx of the Asian people that migrated to America have started to change the mainstream culinary landscape in astonishing ways. For example, the Asian immigrants residing in Hawaii have placed more profound influence and the local food patterns are transformed due to a hybrid of American, Asian and Hawaiian food cultures to yield many fusion dishes such as "Loco Moco", "Poke", and "Spam Musubi".

The various literature studies on migration of the different ethnicities emphasizes that immigrants present themselves as "human resources"; cultural diversity can be beneficial for economic and societal grounds. According to Bodvarsson and Van den Berg (2009: 245). Immigration is necessary for technological and innovation process. With the impact of the variation-based levels of heterogeneity in their composition and the levels of education, can improve the migrants as formation of human capital and favoring the implementation of new advancements. America, the state of immigrants is closer to the technological frontier. This implies that the economies struggling to develop themselves can exploit many opportunities through cultural diversity. The opportunities can be related to culture diffusion, highly skilled human capital, and integration of new ideas, solutions and innovation (Motomura, 2007: 3).

## **1.6. Conservative Viewpoints on Immigration and Cultural Diversity**

Immigration cannot be perceived as undermined American experiment, but it is a critical aspect of it. American is indeed a nation of immigrants. America has exploited many benefits due to the successive waves of immigrants that has sustained the country young in demographic, enriching the culture by diversity, added value to the productive

abilities as a diverse nation, which has enhanced the influence of United States all around the globe. Among the many economic advantages induced by immigration is the diversity among the population that is improved. Diversity, as it is claimed by many researchers, enriches the human capital, the technology, the knowledge and the environment in which people work and trade with each other; they contribute towards the greater creativity that lasts in the longer run.

Many important questions are discussed in the literary fictional work by the Asian American authors; such as what is diversity, to what extent it is beneficial and pose negative effects, do the existing immigration policies improve cultural diversity, to what extent, the society can gain through diversity and so on. The actual benefits and the gains from the immigration process are retrieved from the communications and interactions that individuals have within different ethnic groups. Though having interactions and positive conversations from one background or culture with people who belong from other can only provide the desired outcomes that are intended to gain from the immigration process.

Many of the studies have favored diversity in America by the 1990 Census. In the past, diversity was an important aspect of the U.S immigration policy however today the political conditions are not the same after the recent elections. There have been conservative critics that have negatively impacted on the immigration policies. The analysis suggests that the U.S immigration policy had been devised in the past due to the differences in the characteristics of the migrants. The distinctions reflect the influences placed on the selection criteria. Today, perhaps the solution resides in balanced immigration procedures that are adopted through the sale of immigration quotas and would certainly enrich the diversity of the American population as well.

Cultural diversity is the quality of diversification, where different people from different ethnicities, cultures and traditions peacefully live and work together is a society. The concept of cultural diversity opposes the homogenization of the cultures, and global monoculture as well. The term cultural diversity is also used to define the variety of human cultures and ethnicities in a particular geographic region or as a whole. However it is often said that, cultural diversity is negatively influenced by the process of

globalization (Hissom, 2016: 6-7). In the contemporary era, communication and interaction between different geographic regions, different states and different countries have become feasible and frequent. The immigration process has also resulted in more coming of the Asian Students to America for educational prospects that are actually experiencing the cultural diversity and living within different races and ethnicities.

The objective of the cultural diversity is to widen the horizons and develop the individuals to practice flexibility, tolerance and gaining new knowledge when it comes to sociology, psychology and anthropology. Cultural diversity is challenging to quantify but it is an appropriate indication for knowing the number of ethnic groups residing with each other and the number of languages being spoken within a diverse group. By doing so, we may gain a complete picture of where people stand as various ethnicities and nations. However the immigration policies of different countries can result in precipitous decline of cultural diversity due to the conservative parties and perceptions.

Many of the Americans use phrases as “white culture”, “American culture”, or “Western Culture for the people, groups and communities that comprise of homogenous cultures, and are large in size with common qualities and values. The people who are against the cultural diversity referred as “the conservatives” fail to acknowledge the existence of the cultural diversity. They dislike and neglect the notion of different people living together for common benefits within the American society. But the reality is this that many cultural groups are peacefully residing in the United States. Conservatives have greatest fears regarding immigration. They simply fear cultural diversity resulting from the immigration, as it will be deteriorating to the society. The argument brought by conservatives is that, the migrants will bring their own cultures and customs from other geographic regions that will damage the supposedly superior practices and customs and the results will damage the “our” long-held values, ethics, traditions and institutions that transform “our” society “great”.

Their concerns are of various natures; such as higher chances of violence erupting from the cultural differences, immigrants voting in such a way, or acting that is not conducive towards the conservatives that tend to acknowledge as “the fundamental principles of the republic”. However the American conservatives are restricting

immigration and revising the immigration policies, or at least enforcing the prospective immigrants to pass through the bureaucracy so that they can have the “conservative based trainings” on republican principles before becoming American citizens. Many studies view immigration, and cultural diversity as a mandatory drain over culture; it is perceived as a potential source of enhancing the culture through free exchange of ethnic identities and values. However in the market, the actors are permitted to perform any experiment with new solutions, ideas and with improved methods of manufacturing so that risk, innovation and thinking out of the box, can lead to the benchmark practices of various industries. Therefore, immigration, cultural diversity and diffusion of the ethnicities lead to the “discovery process”. This is how the immigrants with the locals discover newer, unique and much more efficient ways to improve economic and societal processes.

The conservative perceptions over immigration object cultural diversity to be causing negative side effects on their culture and society or either they claim that the majority based cultural views are neglected that are superior and have every right to be acknowledged. The idea of the conservatives that “our culture is superior” comprises of an epistemic problems; that is how the conservatives know that their culture is much better and respectable as compared to the other cultures adopted by various ethnicities. How do we know which culture is worthy of appreciation and adoption? Mostly the opinions are based upon micro-level perceptions on which the ethnic values and practices are substantial and individuals on the other hand, have every possible right to promote them in non-government ways and continue to reside their lives while implementing the cultural values. Many of the sociologists tend to embrace cultural relativism that evaluates a specific ethnicity or a culture on the basis of its own standards and values. Thus, sociologists emphasize that the noculture is good or bad. Cultures should be analyzed in accordance to their own standards and values.

Tolerance and flexibility towards diversity is the only gateway that allows the process of cultural discovery to be successfully completed at the first place. However, to assume that the sentiments towards ethnicity and cultural values constitute objective learning of the traditional practices on the macro-level is not relevant. On the contrary,

the key knowledge expressed by Hayek, is indeed a fatal conceit to assume such knowledge. In the paper namely, “Why I’m Not a Conservative” authored by Nobel laureate F. A. Hayek stated that: “One of the fundamental traits of the conservative attitude is a fear of change, a timid distrust of the new as such, while the liberal position is based on courage and confidence, on a preparedness to let change run its course even if we cannot predict where it will lead” (Hayek, 1992: 1, 2).

“There would not be much to object to if the conservatives merely disliked too rapid change in institutions and public policy; here the case for caution and slow process is indeed strong. But the conservatives are inclined to use the powers of government to prevent change or to limit its rate to whatever appeals to the more timid mind. In looking forward, they lack the faith in the spontaneous forces of adjustment which makes the liberal accept changes without apprehension, even though he does not know how the necessary adaptations will be brought about”(Hayek, 1/2)

It is evident from the work of Hayek that keeping away from the ideology of the conservatives, based upon “destroying the national culture”, the flexible mobility of the different ethnic groups through immigration allows the spontaneous order to operate in various ways that improve culture and provide opportunities. Immigrations, cultural diversity, flexibility and tolerance, all are considered pivotal for the free society as it makes possible to witness the discovery and revolution of the better cultural values and practices. Ethnic individual identity, freedom and communal values can only be enhanced through voluntary exchanges, unbiased attitudes and free mobility of the ethnic groups along with sharing of food from various cultures.

### **1.7. The possibility of Interaction of People from Different Cultural and Social Backgrounds**

According to Hurst (2003), the social interactions among individuals, is influenced by many factors; these factors include race, ethnicity, gender, and social class.

Generally, ethnicity plays a multidimensional role when it comes to the regulation of the environment perceived as a pioneer foundation for what is acceptable morally and what is unethical. In context to the social interactions, ethnicity becomes a “medium”. It becomes a passage way from which every life experience is measured and alters what impacts are placed on the identity of the individual. Many of the studies, question whether ethnicity of different individuals, such as students, elderly women, working men, would have any distinctions in their perceptions when it comes to the social interaction. The benefits and opportunities for encountering the people who belong from different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds many be related with the precise cognition and mechanisms related to feelings of joy, friendship, and even feelings of threat.

“Often, the expression of distinctive cultural interests by minority-group members is seen as risky — and invitation to be perceived through the lens of a stereotype,” write the study’s two authors, Gregory Walton, an assistant professor of psychology at Stanford, and PhD student Tiffany Brannon. “An important implication of the present research is that it highlights the benefits that can arise when minority-group members express and share positive aspects of their culture in mainstream settings” (Perry, 3).

Interaction and communication, that takes place across the differentiating cultures and within diverse ethnic communities with diverse individuals can be intellectual, educational yet also quite challenging, and there can be conflicts as well. Culture, language, work-perceptions, traditions, customs often also becomes a source of barriers that prevent individuals from developing the cross-cultural associations. Different ethnicities speak at different volumes; they may be less direct and more in expressing their emotions; they may be prone to more positive behavior, either negative or equally both; they may or may not have interest in engaging in small talks; they may exhibit more dissimilarities in communication; their body language may be flexible or either it may be ridged. When communicating with other people who belong from different ethnicities and race, the cultural differences can result in such encounters where friendship and long-term associations are expected or either conflict can rise.



## **1.8. Communication through Ethnic Food among Different Ethnicities**

Food culture and eatery habits have been the least discussed ideas when it comes to “ethnicity” and related terms. However, food plays an extensive critical role in defining a specific ethnicity. Ethnic foods are distinctive as they are associated with a particular race, nation, cultural group or heritage (Dwyer and Bermudez, 2018: 1). Throughout the Asian American Literature, there has been profound discussion over the interaction among different ethnic identities that have resulted through immigration one (Wang and Guo 2). Due to immigration, in numerous ways, ethnic identities and culture are developed and redeveloped in modern societies (Bodvarsson & Van den Berg, 2009: 220). As various cultures interact with each other, transformations take place initially, through how people communicate and what eatery habits are adopted by them (Husrt, 2003: 213).

Ethnic food, as a crucial entity in defining a specific ethnicity, represents different cultural norms, eatery habits, and offer different tastes (Dwyer and Bermudez, para 2). Many studies show that larger region of the U.S food market is overcrowded by Asian food markets which serves various ethnic foods such as Korean, Chinese, Pakistani, Indian, Thai, and Vietnamese (2). Many of the food dishes only comprise of a passing resemblance to the original cuisine from where they have been derived; for example, the staples and other foods are considered highly unique to their ethnicities, which are evident among the 300 different Native American groups residing. Similarly the Asian Americans of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino and Pakistani origins have different traditions and taste preferences when it comes to food (Pilcher, 2012: 435).

Mexican-American heritage with a Hispanic-Americans differentiate in their food preferences from Puerto Rican Americans; their eatery habits involve a blend of Taino Indian, African, Spanish, and continental American influences (435). Every specific ethnic group has its own national dish and a national beverage as well. However in the regions of European Union, the foods from South Asia, China, Japan, and Pakistan are considered as Asian food (436). “Food has great potential for helping us understand the processes of racial formation and transformation in America (Pilcher, 2012: 440)”

Food has always been considered to be a vital form of communication due to the non-verbal prospects and many meanings and concepts are shared by the collaboration of different foods, spices and ingredients. Scholars like Eivind Jacobsen, Roland Barthes and Claude Levi – Strauss have offered the knowledge that contributes to the theoretical techniques to analyse and understand how food becomes a medium of communication, how food is communicated and what we communicate about the food. Barthes utilizes the “semiotics” to define the function and role of the food. He argues that food functions as a sign that communicates any message in addition to it; perhaps some aspects are discussed other than itself. With food and food commodities, consumers just don’t are purchasing for fulfilling their nutritional needs but they are buying a whole system and chain of meanings.

Roland Barthes claims in “Toward a Psycho sociology of Contemporary Food Consumption” that food should never be seen as insignificant. He also further states that Psycho-sociology indirectly acknowledges eatery trends and pays more attention on how people consume food. Many literary studies establish that food, culture and communication, all are closely interconnected. Such as, In America, sugar has become an essential part of every food dish. Many American songs are also based on food items such as sugar.

As a commodity, food is concerned with nutritional value, consumption and food industry however as culture, food is considered to be a mode of communication that conveys the traditional values, and related to nostalgia, with the rhetorical repertoire of identity, uniqueness and aesthetics. There are countless incidents and vivid illustrations in the novels discussed where people and men share the family table, and share ideas, communicate and interact with each other. Sometimes the family dinner has turned into a battlefield; even some rules are imposed and so on.

Understanding “ethnicity” and “culture” through food is an astonishing and impressive process because as the individual decides to purchase a food commodity, before purchasing a food item, he inquires such as what are the ingredients, if it’s halal, why it is manufactured in a certain way, and so on; the answers that are obtained go beyond to the culinary knowledge. In these answers, every food expresses its meaning,

culture and an approach to life. It can be culminated that food functions symbolically and communicates with signs. As a communicative practice, the meanings are developed, managed and shared with others. Understanding habits, traditions, culture and ethnicities can be explored through food and eatery habits and how people perceive it.

### **1.9. Core of the Chapter**

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century the immigrants have been pouring into the American system for various reasons; main grounds for migrating are due to the aftermath of the civil war and job opportunities. From all around the globe immigrants have been settling down. The ethnic diversity, cultural and racial aspects have exposed the American people to new and unique ideologies and new ways to live life. Diversity has largely introduced new forms of food culture, traditional cuisines, religion, and language. Hence immigration has not helped the migrants to attain political and economic stability but also it helped many Americans to learn about different ethnicities, cultural diversity and about the ways how people tend to live their lives in different regions of the globe. Although the cultural diversity has not always been in a calm mode; conflicts may occur on continual basis, due to the conservative school of thoughts that are against of immigration.

Although benefits are exploited due to cultural diversity, but there are perceptions and strong ideologies of the conservatives that tends to resist the concept and consequences of the immigration process; they tend to perceive that their culture, values and moral code of conduct is highly superior as compared to other ethnicities and cultures. Hence there should be no diffusion in the actual local culture. They have issues due to their own interests and benefits. They fear the change will reduce their influence, power and authority over the common people. The cultural diversity where people will resist the system and will not go through the standardized procedure will create problems as they will not obey their commands.

When individuals tend to express tolerance and flexibility towards cultural diversity, there are various mediums through which the ethnicities and ethnic identity of other individual(s) is determined. This medium is “food” that is symbolically used to

communicate different ideas, meanings and perceptions among different ethnic groups. Hence food is highly significant in human's lives where traditional dishes and ethnic foods make one ethnicity distinctive and recognizable from the other ethnic community. Other than the food, being a medium, when different cultures and ethnicities start to diffuse with each other, communications, interactions, collaboration and conflicts will be inevitable.

The benefits and opportunities for encountering the people who belong from different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds may be related with the precise cognition and mechanisms related to feelings of joy, friendship, and even feelings of threat. Other than this, food also contributes to these relationships as strengthens. People have food together to enjoy each other's company; celebrating an event always welcomes craving for some sweet tooth. Occasionally the suppers and dinners have the usual meal course. Hence food have their different meanings and they portray different feelings as well. The cultural diversity isn't only evident due to immigration; it has also welcomed and embraced the ethnic food derived from different cultures. Every ethnicity has its own special dish and cuisines. Every festive occasion requires a different dish.

When communicating with other people who belong from different ethnicities and race, the cultural differences can result in such encounters where friendship and long-term associations are expected or either conflict can rise. All of the characteristics discussed briefly are evident when interactions occur within different ethnicities and different ethnic groups. Different ethnicities speak at different volumes; they may exhibit more dissimilarity in communication; their body language may be flexible or either it may be ridged. they may be less direct and more in expressing their emotions; they may be prone to more positive behavior, either negative or equally both; they may or may not have interest in engaging in small talks.

The other integral aspect of the study to be culminated is why ethnic identity and its acknowledgement are mandatory for every individual. Ethnicities and race define individuals for what they are and to what religious and traditional values they are committed to. The recognition is necessary in order to be distinguished from other ethnicities and cultures. It can be culminated that the main features and consequences of

the immigration process are based on the increased cultural diversity, sharing of food culture and critics faced by the conservative parties of the country.



## CHAPTER II

### Introduction to Asian American Authors

The present chapter aims to introduce the selected authors and their works. The novels and short stories that will be briefly reviewed here are *No-no Boy* by John Okada, “The Wife’s Story” and *The Middleman and Other Stories* by Bharati Mukherjee, *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston’s, *Donald Duk* by Frank Chin, *Eating Chinese Food Naked* by Mei Ng, and *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* by Amy Tan. The purpose of the chapter is to reveal the major topics discussed by the writers and explain the context in which their literary pieces were created, as well as experiences and ethnicity-related phenomena that inspired their creation. Within the scope of this research project, the issues of ethnic identity and cultural practices are given the greatest attention during the review. To back up the findings a brief summary of findings from the secondary literature on the depictions of immigration and ethnic practices in Asian American literature is given as well.

#### 2.1. Authors’ Opinions Regarding Immigrant System and Food Culture

In various literature reviews, America is truly declared as a “state of immigrants” (Motomura, 2007: 14). The American colonies were immigrants that flee from their homeland due to religious persecution. However, the later migrants built their own nations and cultural identity. These immigrants are considered as the country’s founding power, because they contributed as a labor force that made America an economic superpower and how the country’s economic conditions bloom during the industrialization period (Chan, 2014: 76). To this day, immigrants have done, immense part for this country and they have played a productive role in reforming America’s culture and building the ethnic communities. Almost the one-fifth population of America is based upon immigrants that are about 60 million people. Either they are immigrants or the children of immigrants. For the Asian American immigrants, the immigration policy is not considered as an abstract ideology but it conveys the concept of “family

reunification” and this affirms that they are a critical part of the “American Dream” (Chan, 2014: 80).

The fictional stories and novels authored by Asian American writers are mainly based on the themes of immigration, ethnic identity and food culture (Questia, 2018: 9). The authors discuss how the lives of many immigrants are a dialect between the memories of the home country they have left behind and the daily struggles of learning the how the new society, culture and moral values work. A new language, living conditions, working conditions, working with strangers, working with different ethnic individuals and coping with unfamiliar conditions and challenges are faced by the immigrants where they have to master the new ways of living (Chen, 2007: 115). There is no confusion over the nostalgia that comprises of deep control on the cultural pursuits of immigrants. However, if the immigrant groups find similarity among traditions, religious rituals of the host country, they cherish the comfort and enjoy it.

The authors have specifically discussed that the characters have contributed in many ways that are, in the realms of cultural, artistic, athletic and scientific endeavor. On the other hand, the heritage and beliefs introduced by the immigrants offer various creative benefits and opportunities to the minuscule fraction of the individual having astonishing talents. The benefits include: the motivation to succeed, resilience to reach a respectable position, openness to innovation, curiosity to uncover new aspects of the foreign ethnicities, and looking forward to the elevated risk pursuits, meaning that conventional jobs are less available to them.

The authors have firm believe over how immigration in the past from all around the world has changed America. It is immensely difficult to pinpoint and measure the ways how immigration has changed the country as it is notoriously difficult to measure the cultural changes. The themes of the novels are based on Asian American History, Ethnic Identity, Cultural Politics, Immigration, Food Identity, Ethnic Experience and Food Culture. The society is heterogeneous in nature, the immigrants have added diversity. The authors have conducted their efforts to explain and measure that how immigrants integrate into a society and how it doesn't remain static. The authors have documented numerous growths in religious diversity, ethnic reforms, and racial aspects.

This has led to heightened intergroup contacts and the transformation among the American institutions and communities.

It is not conceivable to comprehend a country without knowing its customs and the inclinations of its delegates. It is significantly harder to understand the idiosyncrasies of a foreigner minority since these individuals are unique in relation to the others as well as need to set up their entitlement to live as they wish in a place that isn't verifiably their home. A standout amongst the most significant issues that assistance delegates of outsider gatherings to set up their character is their food-ways. Regardless of whether individuals fit in with the utilization customs that relate to their local nation or choose to change their sustenance examples and absorb to the new settings, this decision dependably recommends much data about these worker gatherings. The paper has secured an assortment of subjects and issues identified with the idea of food as it is delineated in progress of Asian American essayists. In a portion of the books and short stories, food ways are the fundamental theme. In other artistic works, food fills in as just a single of the real issues enabling creators to break down settlers' methods for pleasing in the US and their ways to deal with safeguarding their personality while endeavoring to secure the components of another one.

There is an assortment of works by Asian American creators concentrated on sustenance topics, which makes it simple to recognize subthemes and follow similitudes and contrasts in methodologies. John Okada's *No-No Boy* and Frank Chin's *Donald Duk* focused on the subject of self-hatred and examine the trouble that heroes meet when attempting to acclimatize into the new condition. Another prevalent subject is the depiction of connections among guardians and youngsters. In *No-No Boy*, John Okada depicts the convoluted methods for conveying that exist between a mother and child. Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Mei Ng's *Eating Chinese Food Naked* uncover the connections between a mother and little girl. A few creators put accentuation on manliness and gentility as the parts of settlement and the variables having effect on character's personality. In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston gives careful consideration to feministic disclosures and deterrents met by Chinese ladies. In *Donald Duk*, Chin talks about manliness and declares that it has much impact on building



personality. The works by Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee depict the troubles of discovering one's ethnic personality and the likelihood of acquiring it with the assistance of following the conventional food designs. Aside from these topics, Asian American scholars likewise focus on the issues of sexuality, culture, and history.

In the above mentioned Asian American fictional based literature, the authors tend to explain and raise their concerns over history of immigrants, the difficulties faced by the immigrants, ethnic identity, food culture, identity crisis, and other themes are also a part of discussion. Due to the diverse nature of the themes elaborated in the fictional works, makes it evident to perform an in-depth analysis of the critical challenges.

## **2.2. Review of Primary Literature**

### **2.2.1 John Okada's *No-No Boy***

Among prominent minority discourses, a novel *No-No Boy* written by a Japanese American writer John Okada occupies a prominent place. *Okada's No-No Boy* is based upon fictional writing and was authored in 1957 however the novel, at that time had nil immediate effects. After the absence of any appreciation, he initiated working on his second novel that discussed the issues of the first Japanese generation that migrated to America. Overall the novel depicts how radicalized migration and adjustments have been taking place in the life of Ichiro, who is the main character of the story (Okada, 1976: 2). Amoko (2000) argues that the novel illustrates a negative model of minority identification (36). The incidents occur after the WW II, as Ichiro is trying hard to merge into the American society after spending four years in camp and prison (Okada 2). "I am not your son and I am not Japanese and I am not American" (Okada, 1976: Chapter 1, 16)

Okada has used the life experiences and journey of Ichiro to express his "American-ness", as an allegory for the Japanese American that has integrated into the American society. Ichiro had a continual struggle with the identity crisis, where he needed to achieve personal identity by accepting himself for being both Japanese and American. Ling notices that there is a substantial emergence of the critical questions

relating to the Asian American literary criticism, due to the changing perceptions of No-No Boy (31). Okada describes that there is an inner battle within the boy who negates to take the side of America at war. Thus, the novel denotes the *return of the prodigal*, who acknowledges his *mistake* and tries to, reaccepts *the promise of America Dream* (Ling, 1998: 32).

The most vivid illustrations in the John Okada's 1957 novel, No-No Boy, are when during the and after the WW II, there is a divide in the treatment of the Japanese. They simply have to endure life in internment, as Japanese American was witnessed as irreversibly foreign and antagonistic. This situation was evident due to the "Executive Order 9066". Under the order, two-thirds of the Japanese inhabitants were removed who were actual American citizens. The 110,000 Japanese American were moved in camps where they were monitored closely. That's why Ichiro felt bad about abandoning his ethnic heritage and culture. "The prison which he had carved out of his own stupidity granted no paroles or pardons. It was a prison of forever" (Okada, 1976: Chapter 2,40)

Being a protagonist and a narrator, sometimes, the main character of the novel walks through the small streets of Seattle with anxiety and understandable apprehension. Here the guilt is two-fold; firstly he refused to enlist him and declared sole allegiance to United States; and how Japan attacked Pearl Harbor with nuclear bombs. The latter did have substantial effects on Ichiro personally however in the entire narrative, he simple repents and have clashes with his ethnic identity. This is due to the perception of him as interchangeable with the attackers of the Pearl Harbor. The only significant portrayal of harmony and wholeness in the novel is the description of the last supper of one of the characters, Kenji, in his family circle (Xu, 2002: "Sticky Rice Balls" 58). Okada's novel No-No Boy depicts "identity-based conflict", where Ichiro was not able to understand and except his ethnical background just because of dual sides of race and ethnicity (Ling, 1998:34).

### **2.2.2. Bharati Mukherjee's Works**

Bharati Mukherjee was born in Calcutta, India, and moved to Canada first and then the United States in her early adulthood and began teaching literature there at the university level. Her work was heavily inspired by her own experiences of cultural dislocation and immigration as she primarily wrote compelling stories that illustrate the life journeys and experiences of the immigrants travelled from third world to United States.

One of the prominent themes of Mukherjee's works is that of food. In fact, the term "Middle Man" is used by the author as a metaphor to demonstrate the immigrant experiences, stating that such individuals are caught between two distinctive worlds with different cultural values and traditions. In her "The Wife's Story," Mukherjee describes the process of immigration to the United States in the following way: at first, a person does not "exist," then he or she is "invisible," later the immigrant becomes "funny," and, finally, "disgusting" (Khilnani, 2015: 27). Unlike other authors whose immigrant characters are represented as foreigners, Mukherjee portrays her characters as settlers rather than guests or sojourners. In her works, the writer reminds America of the American Dream and the promises it gives to people: the "equal opportunity for all" and the right to truth and democracy (Drake, 1999: 61).

The *Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) earned a National Book Critics Circle Award. Her accounts center around the settler encounter, yet she opposes endeavors to classify her as a hyphenated author whose interest is restricted to certain ethnic gatherings; rather, she portrays herself as an American essayist in a built-up American convention. She says in the introduction to *Darkness*: I see my "immigrant" story replicated in a dozen American cities, and instead of seeing my Indian-ness as a fragile identity to be preserved against obliteration (or worse, a "visible" disfigurement to be hidden), I see it now as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated. I see myself as an American writer in the tradition of other American writers whose parents and grandparents had passed through Ellis Island (*Darkness*, 3).

### **2.2.3. Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies***

Jhumpa Lahiri was born to the family of immigrants from Calcutta who settled in England and then moved to the United States. Being exposed to different cultures since early childhood, she dedicated her works to the portrayal of immigrants' lives. One of the most top-notch themes discussed by Lahiri has been the "search for identity." In most prodigally it is the search conducted by self, by others, by place and by situations. In the stories authored by Lahiri, every aspect that is included such as geography, homeland, gender, occupation, and participation within the ethnic community, can act in an acknowledging and determining the identity. The themes *Interpreter of Maladies* range from identity conflicts in the post-partition period, the ethnic differences, communicational gaps, food as a symbol of unity, ethnicity and family gatherings. The interlinked stories are evocative of the dispersion of Indians.

In the accumulation of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri utilizes food and feasting as a vehicle to show the crumbling of familial securities, network, and culture through the change from Indian to American lifestyles. This is most clear in the short stories "A Temporary Matter," "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," and "Mrs. Sen's." In *Mrs. Sen's*, feasts once more assume a focal job. Mrs. Sen always works away over suppers, a characteristic of her commitment to her family and the young man under her charge. The most fascinating aspect of Mrs. Sen, discovered by Elliot is: "He especially enjoyed watching Mrs. Sen as she chopped things, seated on newspapers on the living room floor. Facing the sharp edge of the blade without ever touching it, she took whole vegetables between her hands and hacked them apart: cauliflower, cabbage, and butternut squash. She split things in half, then quarters, speedily producing florets, cubes, slices, and shreds. She could peel a potato in seconds" (Lahiri, 1999: 114).

Lahiri additionally utilizes Mrs. Sen to demonstrate how critical food is to Indian culture, by the lengths to which Mrs. Sen will go to obtain it. All through the sum of *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri utilizes the sustenance traditions and feasting customs of her Indian-American characters to light up the significance of family and network. Ray cites Alice Waters, a culinary specialist and culinary in *The Migrant's Table*: "If you see the same ingredients every place you go you lose a sense of time and

place. Then nothing is special” (Ray, 2004: 132). He explains, “That is exactly why immigrants crave some of the distinctive products of their homeland, notwithstanding time or place” (Ray, 2004: 132).

Lahiri culminates that how the migrants’ assimilation into the rapid pace, and much time consuming can generally enforce the American society to develop a struggle to retain memories and perception of cultural and ethnic identity, that is strongly enforced by the traditional Indian foods and dining customs.

#### **2.2.4. Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts***

The author, Maxine Hong Kingston, was herself the daughter of Chinese immigrants and grew up in California. “The Woman Warrior” was her first book that depicted a vivid blend of fiction, myth, and memoirs in unique ways. For Kingston, the novel was a debut in 1976 that described the feminist rebellion with martial myth and fiction. Her experiences living, and growing up in America and family memoirs rooted with a Chinese heritage, led her cross various cultural and ethnic boundaries; this is all further elaborated through ethnic foods and many literary genres and themes in a startlingly ways. Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* is an attempt to resolve these claims on ethnic writers. As Wong remarks, Kingston depicts the struggle of the main character towards reaching a balance between self-realization and social accountability (Wong, "Necessity and Extravagance", 1993: 5). Wong concludes that even though the American society is becoming easier to understand, it does not mean that no misreading of ethnic literature will exist merely because writers perform good job "as artists" (Wong, "Necessity and Extravagance", 1993: 24). Thus, stereotyping is not always a bad thing. “On the fourth and fifth days, my eyesight sharp with hunger, I saw deer and used their trails when our ways coincided. Where deer nibbled, I gathered the fungus, the fungus of immortality (25).

Food simply fortifies us, without it we are powerless. Eating has dependably been an essential factor in families living in poor conditions. Frequently, the individuals who couldn't deliver more food are viewed as second-rate or dishonorable to eat. Maxine

Hong Kingston. *The Woman Warrior* is no exemption, because of the connection it makes among eating and the quality of individuals. This has appeared through the story of Fa-Mu-Lan, the tale of the eaters, and the references to the kindred relatives left in China. In the story of Fa-Mu-Lan, the storyteller is given a survival test, where she needs to survive a mountain trek without arrangements. Amid that trek, the storyteller ends up fatigued from appetite. Appetite draws out her creature senses since she needs to remain solid to live. The storyteller is compelled to scan for her food to eat. The hungrier she turns into, the wilder she is.

#### **2.2.5. Frank Chin's *Donald Duk***

One of the most respected and esteemed Asian American writers and critics, Frank Chin, was born in California in 1940. Chin describes himself as “the son of a Chinese immigrant father and fourth-generation Chinatown mother whose father worked in the steward service of the Southern Pacific Railroad” (Zia & Gall, 1995: 51). He derives inspiration from the rich history of his family, as well as other Asian Americans and Chinese culture in general, to portray characters and shape their experiences in his short stories, plays, essays, and novels. The topic of relationships between the majority and minority ethnic groups and cultures is one of the central in his works.

Most of the traditional Chinese American literature has labeled the Chinese as passive and timid, according to Chin’s view. The literature has specifically departed the true meaning from the Chinese philosophy and history. His content expresses the real Chinese culture and attempts to break the stereotypes made in the past. Chin's epic *Donald Duk* recounts a story about growing up of a Chinese American kid who experiences issues discovering his character. The book recommends an entertaining and certain portrayal of a few Chinese American guys whose sexual orientation advancement is nearly connected with Chinese cooking and writing and Hong Kong kung Fu motion pictures (Xu, 2002: "Manliness, Food, and Appetite" 38).

As the Chinese New Year approaches, a twelve-year-old Chinese American kid, Donald Duk, attempts to manage his emotions about his social legacy. Food is likewise a noteworthy piece of the New Year's festival. Families meet up to share extensive

dinners; the excess of food symbolizes the expectation that the coming year will yield thriving and satisfaction. Standard sustenance's likewise having an influence in the New Year's vacation.

“Ho see fot choy”, a traditional dish is cooked and prepared by Donald's father that is made from oysters, vegetable casserole and noodles; the dish is eaten on the New Year's eve, as it's sound is so much similar to “expression for typical holiday greeting, “happy new year,” in Chinese. In the same way, cabbage and lettuce are preferred in food because their sounds are similar to “riches” and “fortunes”. Hence Chin culminates his novel over how togetherness and abundance is cherished through preparing food and enjoying it on the New Year's Day.

#### **2.2.6. Mei Ng's Eating Chinese Food Naked**

Mei Ng was born in Queens, New York, in the family of Chinese immigrants. *Eating Chinese Food Naked* is her only novel up to date, but it provides a comprehensive overview of problems that homosexual individuals from the US ethnic minority population face. There are two noteworthy subjects portrayed in Mei Ng's *Eating Chinese Food Naked*: attractive quality and sustenance. In the novel, subjectivity that is caught up in ethnicity, sex, diaspora, space, and colonialist is plot by methods for food ways and sexual wants (Xu, 2002: 127). Ng's *Eating Chinese Food Naked* recounts an account of a contemporary character whose sexuality changes from hetero-to androgyny, a moving personality those investigations the unbending nature of the hetero/homo division. The epic advances amidst a blend made out of food, sex, and ethnicity in which the creator traces her hero's scan for sexual character (Xu, 2002: 127). The principle character's name is Ruby Lee, and she reluctantly comes back to her folks' home subsequent to moving on from a college. By methods for an assortment of tropes and symbolisms, Ng portrays the contention between the "ethnic, local" space and the "cosmopolitan" condition of lanes, bistros, and coffee shops (Xu, 2002: 127). The themes of food, sexuality, and ethnicity are entwined in these pressures among ethnic and cosmopolitan measurements. The dialect of sustenance, space, ethnicity, and

sexuality manufactures Ruby's change from a hetero who has an intuitive want for females to a bizarre awareness that overlooks every one of the tenets (Xu, 2002: 127).

While the simple title of the novel surmises the association among sustenance and sex, there is likewise one more meaning in it that includes uneasiness and defenselessness in honing ethnic food ways. The hero's voyage from Manhattan to Queens and back to Manhattan symbolizes the advancement of her sexual wants (Xu, 2002: 147-148). At first, the significant clash of the novel is by all accounts Ruby's vulnerability about her future. In any case, soon it winds up clear that it is her vulnerability about her attractive quality that annoys her greater part of all. Besides, this mess is irritated by the character's ethnic uneasiness. Both of the vulnerabilities are reflected by methods for sustenance references joined with spatial weight between the "secrecy" and "leniency" proposed by the two spots where the young lady lives (Xu, 2002: 148). Goals to these issues are dependent upon the spatial development and culinary suggestions. The household condition in *Eating Chinese Food Naked* spotlights an assortment of contentions: between the two worker life partners, between settler guardians and their little girl who was conceived in America, and the contention "inside the girl" among adoration and humiliation of her experience (Xu, 2002: 148). Ng every now and again utilizes food depictions to give a record of household space in Ruby's folks' home. At the point when Ruby returns home, she sees that her folks quit eating together: her mom "settled a plate for herself and went down to the storm cellar while her dad ate in the kitchen without anyone else's input" (Ng, 1998: 11).

This empowers the tone of the novel and readies to peruse for the family issues with which Ruby will bargain. Likewise, the example of sustenance utilizations is an allegory for Ruby's folks' connections since it remains for the life of partition that they have made due with themselves (Xu, 2002: 148). While guardians and their little girl don't tend to express their sentiments passionately, their affections are fundamentally reflected through sustenance. Most likely it was the absence of warmth between her folks that influenced Ruby to grow up being a man who is frightened of closeness despite the fact that she needs it. In any case, the family's appearance of warmth by



methods for sustenance never influences Ruby to waver about her folks' adoration to her (Xu, 2002: , 149).

Yanqiong (2017) considers *Eating Chinese Food Naked* as an impression of Chinese foreigners' organizing social character in the conditions of multiculturalism (354). Yanqiong contends that Ng's epic is a social enemy of portrayal of character because of a few reasons (356). The primary confirmation is that the occasions in the story occur in Chinatown that fills in as an "outskirts" to contradict social portrayal (Yanqiong, 2017: 356). The second reason is that the principle character chooses to remain in Chinatown for her mom despite the fact that she wouldn't like to live in her folks' home toward the start. The third clarification of Yanqiong's contention is that in the end Ruby leaves Chinatown, which exhibits her transparency and adaptability amid the development of social personality of Chinese migrants against the multi-social settings (356).

### **2.2.7. Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter***

Amy Tan is a second-generation immigrant, born to parents from China in the San Francisco Bay area. In her multiple short stories and novels, including *The Kitchen God's Wife*, *The Hundred Secret Senses*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, she often depicts Chinese traditions and the ways through which they are transmitted from one generation to another. In this regard, the matters of family relations and conflicts between parents and children take a central position in her works. Most of the time, Tan's readers explore her stories through the eyes and experiences of female protagonists and, in this way, the author touches upon the issues associated with gender and womanhood both directly and indirectly.

In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Amy Tan describes the story of three generations of women: the grandmother, Precious Auntie, the mother, Lu Ling, and the daughter, Ruth. The theme of mother-daughter relationships among these three women takes a central place in the literary work. It commences with the portrayal of Ruth's life in America and her complicated relations with Lu Ling, which started to be even more difficult due to the aggravating dementia of the latter. The misunderstanding between the

daughter and the mother is defined by the fact that they grew up in different environments. While Lu Ling was brought up in a conservative Chinese culture, Ruth enjoyed all the lifestyle freedom the American society has to offer since her very childhood. The conflict arises because Ruth does not understand the Chinese way of life and, thus, an ethnic component of her identity is initially undeveloped. However, she by engaging in the exploration of memoirs and stories that the character's mother and grandmother left to her, she commences developing her true identity.

The theme of the mother-daughter relationship is central in the novel. The main character passes through the process of identity development that starts with the reconciliation of past conflicts she had with her parent. Ruth eventually becomes aware of her inherent ties with mother and mother's pivotal role in her life: "And then I realized that the first word must have been: ma, the sound of a baby smacking its lips in search of her mother's breast. For a long time, that was the only word the baby needed. A mother is always the beginning" (Tan, 2001: 299).

However, the mother serves as a source and beginning not merely in the biological sense but in the cultural sense as well. It is her from whom Ruth learns about her ethnic heritage. Additionally, by becoming aware of LuLing's past experiences, Ruth begins to understand her views, attitudes, and behaviors that she was unable to comprehend before and that became the main reason for their ongoing conflicts. Along with accepting her mother as she is, she ultimately admits her Chinese background.

The *Bonesetter's Daughter* is also rich in descriptions of cultural practices and traditional Chinese foods. The latter is often used by Tan to emphasize ethnic distinctiveness of their characters: "More dishes arrived, each one stranger than the last, to judge by the expressions on the non-Chinese faces. Tofu with pickled greens. Sea cucumbers, Auntie Gal's favorite. And glutinous rice cakes. Ruth had thought the kids would like those. She had thought wrong" (Tan, 2001: 145).

It is clear from the presented excerpt that Chinese culinary practices are among the central elements of the characters' ethnic identity which distinguishes them from others and the dominant American culture. Additionally, the given passage from the novel demonstrates that food imagery is utilized by the author to indicate the generation

gap between family members of different ages: since Ruth's children are born in the United States and are the Americanized, third-generation immigrants, they are not interested in Chinese traditions and foods, which means their ties to the ethnic heritage are the weakest in the family. In this way, food-related cultural practices portrayed in the novel may be applied during the analysis of the significance of familial and ethnic roots in the process of identity development.

### **2.3. Understanding Food Culture through Asian American Literature**

Asian food culture tends to integrate and diversify the American food culture perpetually through different Asian American generations. In 2012, three-quarters of the Asian American population was completely foreign born (McLean 20). The American-born Asians offer a different perspective of cultural food mainly due to the influence of the country. A holistic relationship between Asian ethnic foods with the American tradition is created by Asian Americans through sharing and integration (McClellan 21). This association is expressed through food and grocery shopping bags that depict their sentiments and through various American cuisines that depict their history.

Victuals are essential in the organization and presentation of texts, for instance, food images, metaphors, and similitudes are filled in the tale of "Asian American History and Food," from which Ho makes reference to (Ho, "Consuming Asian American History" 29). In the novel, the dad of the main character has an eatery in Chinatown and he is portrayed as possessing epicurean skills while the kid often has illusory dreams with depictions of dinners. Utilizing food ideas not only acts as mixed components but they also enhance the characters to exchange messages relating to ethnic personalities and status quo (Ho, "Devouring Asian American History" 29). The use of food illustrations enables Chin to express the thoughts of the restoration of Chinese American culture and history (Ho, "Devouring Asian American History" 29). King, Donald's father, takes pride in his ethnicity as shown when he explains his arrangements of New Year meal by proclaiming that he will restore abandoned ways and recover the lost information (Chin, 63).

During the Gold Rush Era in America, the Chinese food dishes and cuisines mainly reached California where they demonstrated the pivotal role of immigration in bringing and transplanting the ethnic cuisines to the U.S (Chen, 2017:5). During this period, the Chinese food and dishes were parallel towards the Chinese communities where the Chinese Ethnic economy started to grow due to the food businesses mainly located in San Francisco, and Sacramento (Chen, 2017: 6). In 1856, the emerging Chinese settlement was based upon 33 grocery stores, five meat shops and five restaurants but later on, the Chinese also ended up opening their laundry businesses and started a chain in different parts of California (Para 6).

The examination of fictional works written by Asian American authors makes it conceivable to make the accompanying ends. Initially, food assumes an urgent job during the time spent framing and maintaining countries' social character. Also, regardless of whether migrants pursue their local food-ways or in the event that they want to change their food designs and absorb a few traditions supported in the nation to which they moved, it has much to say in regards to their level of ethnic personality, availability to change, or readiness to consolidate the two methodologies. Thirdly, food inclinations reflect significantly more than family connections or conventions. They can likewise uncover individuals' mentalities towards themselves as well as other people or show the otherworldly state of people.

It is therefore prudent to make the accompanying conclusions regarding the examination of fictional works written by Asian American authors. First, in the initial events, food assumes an urgent job during the time spent framing and maintaining countries' social character. Second, a lot can be said regarding the level of ethnic personality, availability to change, or readiness to consolidate two instances: whether migrants pursue their local food-ways or in the event that they want to change their food designs and absorb a few traditions supported in the nation to which they moved,

In sum, the use of sustenance examples may fill in as a reason for investigating an individual's sexual inclinations, their character, and social decisions. The research of literature made by Asian American authors provides knowledge into the various issues associated with the lives of migrants on a foreign country, their methods for pleasing,

and challenges they need to confront in attempting to build another life and make opportunities for themselves and their families.

#### **2.4. Samples from Works of Other Asian American Writers**

Other than the fictional works that have been studied in the present paper, there have been numerous Asian American notable authors that have wrote over the similar discussed themes such as immigration; ethnicity, identity and food based cultural diversity. Among the earliest books and fictional content published by the D. Lothrop Publishing Company, were authored by Asian American authors. “When I Was A Boy in China” was one of the first series authored by Lee Yan Phou in 1887 (Questia, 2018: 3). The story gives vivid illustrations of the boy who has memories of his past, including the early education attained in China and the Chinese traditions related to food, ceremonies, clothing, and games and so on. Another book, authored by New Il Han, “When I Was a Boy in Korea” published in 1928, depicts the customs of Korea for example housing, food and sports (Questia, 2018: 3). Both of these authors arrived America and portray their struggles and life experiences relating to immigration and integrating in new cultures through the main characters of the novels (Questia, p. 3). These struggles are discussed as they adapted to new American traditions.

“A Chinese Childhood” published in 1940 depicts the continual struggles and hardships faced to rectify the misconceptions of the Western people regarding the lives lived by the Chinese. There are other books as well that portray the journeys of the immigrants and the past memories about their homeland and families such as “A Thousand Springs” (1965) by Anna Channault, and “Our Family” (1939) by Adet and Anor Lin (Questia, 2018: 4). There are also many novels published that strive to illustrate the American culture from the eyes of the Asian migrants such as the “An Oriental View of American Civilization” (1934) by Park No-Yong and “Spectacles of an Oriental Diplomat” (1914) by Wu Tingfang. In books such as “My Country and My People” (1937) and “The Chinese Way of Life” (1959), the stories are based upon showing the Chinese cultures and traditions to the Americans (Questia, 2018: 4).

## **2.5. Core of the Chapter**

The literature establishes that food and eatery trends are significant and symbolically pivotal in developing individual's identities. "Immigration" and "food" being integral constructs of ethnic identity are directly and indirectly associated with each other. Ethnic food, as a crucial entity in defining a specific ethnicity, represents different cultural norms, eatery habits, and offer different tastes. Many studies show that larger region of the US food market is overcrowded by Asian food markets, which serves various ethnic foods such as Korean, Chinese, Pakistani, Indian, Thai, and Vietnamese. Immigration has led to the blend of different food concepts, spices and preparation methods. Many studies have explored the significance of food with respect to its cultural distinctiveness as opposed to their nutritional values and potential. In a portion of the books and short stories, food-ways are considered as the fundamental theme. In other artistic works, food fills in as just a single of the real issues enabling creators to break down settlers' methods for pleasing in the United States and their ways to deal with safeguarding their personality while endeavoring to secure the components of another one. Henceforth, the chapter have extensively identified 'food' and eatery habits as a source of distinction among various cultures.

## CHAPTER III

### Major Themes Identified Through Semantic Analysis

The third chapter is devoted to the explanation of findings obtained through the semantic analysis of the selected literary works. It is identified that major themes in the reviewed novels and short stories are ethnic and gender identity conflict and immigrants' search for identity. The section starts with the explanation of reasons for the emergence of identity conflict. Scholarly evidence on the problem of cultural dislocation and imbalance between ethnicity and nationality in multicultural countries is summarized to provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of this theme. Secondly, Asian American authors' presentation of gender identity issues is examined in relation to characters' ethnicities as well as cultural values and practices associated with them. It is observed that culinary practices have a direct link to gender roles and duties in many Asian cultures and traditions and, therefore, the analysis of feminine and masculine representations in some of the works is conducted by using food as the main semiotic sign. Lastly, the ways through which the immigrant characters develop their identities and cope with acculturation are analyzed. The main theoretical framework used to drive the analysis in the last part of the chapter is Jean Phinney's theory of ethnic identity development, as well as the concept of cultural dislocation. Afterwards, based on the analysis results, the conclusion regarding the main problems that different generations of immigrants in the United States face and methods that help them find the right balance between their national and ethnic identities is given. Asian American restaurants are essential instruments in the expression as well as the preservation of ethnic culture. These eateries create a theme of ethnic sensitivity in relation to food. The host culture may often want to satisfy their need for a food adventure. Also, people in these cultures may require to experience other cultures which consequently leads to the development of a need for uniqueness. Liu and Mattila (2015) noted that ethnic restaurants provided two menus depending on the culture of the customer. Mainstream American customers were served with modified ethnic dishes that were less spicy and sweeter. On the other hand, ethnic customers were provided with a menu listing authentic dishes. The implication of providing a separate menu and serving separate dishes was seen as

decreasing the customer experience as well as the need to belong. Therefore, the authors asserted that mainstream American customers may respond positively when provided with an authentic menu and also develop a sense of uniqueness and belonging when such customers are surrounded by Asian customers. The host culture may require to experience a new culture through food and the actual experience may be influenced by the type and number of surrounding cultures. Thus, mainstream Americans often need to obtain the exposure of Asian culture from ethnic restaurants in the United States and this exposure is improved if they are provided with the option to choose between modified Asian food and authentic food on the same menu. The influence of food and precisely authentic food is significantly high not only to ethnic people but also to mainstream culture.

However, the above restaurants appear to have been run by subsequent generations of Asian immigrants given the fact that they are able to acknowledge the needs of the host culture. Earlier immigrants or first-generation Asian immigrants may not be critical in addressing the requirements of the host culture. The relationship between these generations may be too strong to accommodate other cultures. For instance, Harris et al. (2015: 192) posit that ethnic restaurants play a pivotal role in cultural expression through ethnic meals, their preparations, how employees interact with each other and the involvement of family member in the day-to-day operations of a restaurant. Moreover, Harris et al. (2015: 192) add that ethnic cultures take pride in engaging in all customary activities such as religious ceremonies that involve the preparation of food despite other people's expectations who are not linked to the ethnic origin. The impact of such pride could be higher in first-generation immigrants in contrast to subsequent generations given the close association related to the origin country.

When addressing food regulations in American restaurants, Harris et al. (2015: 192) noted that many ethnic-run restaurants were operated with cultural motivations and commitment to adhere to the ethnic heritage which take precedence to food safety audits. The authors found that many such restaurants had both a higher number of food safety inspections and an increase in food safety violations. Notably, the main reason was



attributed to cultural influence on food preparation and certain tools specific to particular ethnic food preparation that may not ascribe to the food standards. The study shows strong implications of cultural practices, specifically those associated with food have on social interactions and adherence to the set regulations on a host country. To this effect, first-generation immigrants are highly associated with objects and activities that have major ethnic significance to their cultures. The influence of tight association with culture supersedes the requirement to consider the normal practices of a host country.

Therefore, restaurants are essential avenues through which bonding with different cultures as well as acknowledging cultural sensitivity are possible. Additionally, considerations need to be made to cater for all cultures regardless of the country. When addressing food and nutrition in adolescents, Larson et al. (2015: 46) asserted that nutritionist and food professionals should acknowledge the importance of cultural sensitivity when giving nutrition guidance.

### **3.1. Ethnic Identity Conflict**

Identity formation is frequently challenged in permanent immigrants because of the need to find a balance between the national and the ethnic identity. Both of them are crucial because individuals' ethnicity provides "a purpose in life and a strong link with ancestors and descendants," while the nationality "presumes a devotion to a country" and agreement with social and political practices adopted there (Constant and Zimmerman, 2013: 18). While in homogeneous countries, they are usually overlapped, in such multicultural states as the United States, it may be difficult to match the two.

According to Constant and Zimmerman (2015), one's perceptions and attitudes substantially determine the outcome in the immigrants' adaptation process (5). If they are open to the new culture and willing to embrace its multiple aspects, the integration becomes more feasible. In line with this statement, Pierre Bourdieu suggested that a person becomes attached to his or her origin state as a result of learning through social interactions and exposure to education (Farrell, 2010: 108). It is a result of social and cultural conditioning and, therefore can be regarded as a habit. Bourdieu's theoretical assumptions also indicate that a person can always adapt to new cultural and social environments. However, cultural assimilation and the preservation of the balance

between the national and the ethnic identity is “a two-way street” (Constant and Zimmerman, 2015: 5). The extent to which the citizens of the host country welcome newcomers and accept them can also play a vital role in reactions and experiences of immigrants, as well as their decisions to stay psychologically close or distant to the country of their origin.

Overall, immigration frequently induces the problem of cultural dislocation and leads to identity conflict, and this theme is the major one in the majority of the discussed literary works. According to Dajani (2018) cultural dislocation, which implies “the removal of a person from a location organized by a particular set of cultural practices and placing them in another location organized by a substantially different set of cultural practices,” results in cultural shock that, in its turn, may adversely impact individuals psychological state (16). This issue highlights the importance of ethnic identity and its vital role in human well-being.

It is also appropriate to mention here the observations made by Stanley and Derald Sue (1979) in their work called “Chinese-American Personality and Mental Health.” According to the authors, the identity of Asian Americans and Chinese Americans, in particular, is formed as a result of the interplay between traditional ethnic-cultural values, Western social influences, and ethnic and racial discrimination. The identity conflict arises because individuals become stuck between these forces and, depending on the prevalence of one of them in a person’s life, they become either a traditionalist, a marginal man, or an Asian American (Sue & Sue, 1971: 36-38). The first type of identity implies that one complies with parental and overall social expectations imposed on him or her by the origin culture. According to Sue and Sue, it is often characterized by the suppression of personal feelings and extremely aggressive reactions to ethnic prejudice and discrimination (39). The second category refers to a complete rejection of one’s ethnic heritage and all ties with it, preferring ethnicity-defined values to the Western lifestyles. The major problem with the marginal identity is that it increases the propensity to “racial self-hatred” (Sue and Sue, 1971: 40). Lastly, the Asian American identity forms when a person rebels against two conflicting cultures in order to find a new self. While Sue and Sue argue that this identity category is linked to

an “obsessive concern with racism” (43), it is still possible to say that it is the healthiest among all the three mentioned in their work. By exploring both host and origin cultures, immigrants may obtain a chance to balance the conflicting forces and acquire an individual conception of pride.

The described evidence reveals that identity conflict occurs due to various reasons, and each case is substantially determined by unique individuals’ experiences. Nevertheless, it is apparent that personal attitudes, as well as the views on ethnicity promoted by the mainstream culture, play a vital role in forming one’s ethnic self-identification. Some examples from the literature will be drawn in the following paragraphs to demonstrate that culture and ethnicity are among the central features in human nature.

### **3.2. Cultural Assimilation**

The main character in Mukherjee’s “The Wife’s Story,” Dimple, struggles during assimilation to the American culture after arriving there from Calcutta. The host culture suppresses her to the extent where she starts to lose her balance of mind and commences contemplating suicide. Not being able to cope with the new environment and regaining inner strength, she ultimately murders her husband due to excess acculturative distress. The semiotic sign of Dimple’s madness in Mukherjee’s story communicates an idea that culture is core to one’s mental stability. This message is in line with research evidence provided by Dajani(2018) who stated that culture coordinates social functions to a substantial degree and serves as “a necessary pre-condition for meeting the necessities and demands of existence” (19). Thus, after losing connections to her ethnic-cultural background and realizing own difference from everyone else in her American social circle, Dimple becomes entirely disoriented and unable to function in a healthy way.

Another story by Mukherjee, “The Middleman,” is entirely devoted to the problem of identity conflict. The very title of the story is used as a metaphor to describe the situation of cultural transition in which immigrants dwell, and which many of them cannot overcome. The protagonist, Alfred Judah, is originally from Bhagdad and currently lives in Queens. In the host environment, he is “an Arab to some, an Indian to others;” and nobody seems to accept him entirely (Mukherjee, *The Middleman and*

*Other Stories*, 6). At the same time, Alfred himself admits that “there are aspects of American life I came too late for and will never understand” (Mukherjee, *The Middleman and Other Stories*, 1998: 5). It is worth mentioning that in the story, the conflict between different cultures and ethnicities is brought up by Mukherjee to a higher social level as well. The character’s non-Americanness is what saves him from being killed by guerillas in an undefined country where the plot unfolds, while his white “gringo” employer is killed. In this way, the author demonstrates how ethnicity and race affect social interactions and an individual’s ability to survive in the host world.

The concept of otherness is also exhaustively explored by Kingston in *The Woman Warrior*. The author uses the word “ghosts” as a metaphor that describes the experience of a person living in a transition between the Chinese and the American culture, a person who is torn between two worlds. In addition, this metaphor is utilized to mark ethnic distinctions in the chapter where the narrator shares her experience of growing up in the United States. She saw “airplanes in the sky and ghosts everywhere,” and said that “America has been full of machines and ghosts – taxi ghosts, bus ghosts, police ghosts, fire ghosts, meter-reader ghosts, tree-trimming ghosts, fire and dime ghosts” (Kingston, 2010: 90). It is also noted in the novel that “the Japanese, though little, were not ghosts, the only foreigners considered not ghosts by the Chinese” (Kingston, 2010: 87). Thus, it is valid to presume that “ghost” in this passage means “a person of distinct, non-Chinese ethnicity” in the eyes of the members of the Chinese ethnic group. The cultural proximity between the Japanese and the Chinese and the similarity of their social and political experiences in the United States helped them relate to each other yet, by seeing others as ghosts, the characters and the narrator in *The Woman Warrior* isolated themselves from the culturally diverse society. In this interpretation, “ghost” implies a failure to become its integral part.

The problem of identity crisis is explicit in John Okada's *No-No Boy*. In the protagonist’s experience, the conflict arises due to incapability of his cultural and national identities because he was brought up to respect Japanese traditions and customs yet, during the Second World War, the overall American political and social context was hostile towards everything Japanese, and people belonging to this ethnic background

faced severe discrimination and oppression. It is useful to note that Japanese descendants were subject to hostility not merely from the members of the white, majority group, but also other minorities that were accustomed to racism and stereotyping for a long historical period. The episode when Ichiro passes by a group of African American males who commence mocking him by singing “Jap-boy, To-ki-yo; Jap-boy, To-ki-yo” demonstrates that the prejudice towards American Japanese was rather common in the United States (Okada, 1976: 5). In this situation, Ichiro becomes unable to choose between the two identities because he was born in the United States and was an American citizen and, at the same time, had his roots in the Japanese culture. The character’s inability to choose a side during the war and his consequent imprisonment can signify that, as a member of a discriminated ethnic minority group, he became unable to define his place and role in the society. Considering that culture is an essential prerequisite of individuals’ sense of belonging to their communities and the world in general (Dajani, 2018: 23), the described identity conflict led Ichiro to psychological alienation.

Ichiro’s mother represents another type of ethnic identity and related identity conflict. Based on the categorization provided by Sue and Sue, she can be regarded as a traditionalist. For her, the Emperor is superior to anyone in her family or the overall society, and she strives hard to impose the same loyalty on her son. The only way for her to cope with a hostile and discriminatory environment of the host country is through aggression and negative emotions: she was “only a rock of hate and fanatic stubbornness and was, therefore, neither woman nor mother” (Okada, 1976: 21). While Ichiro tries to reconcile the conflicting parts of his self-identity, though with significant difficulty and without substantial results, his mother is tightly closed to the American influences and, thus, has no chance for successful acculturation and becoming an integral part of the US society.

The identity conflict in immigrants may arise not merely due to the open political conflict between two nations but due to unequal power relations among different ethnic groups maintained within the dominant culture and inadequate representation of minorities in the United States. The experience of Donald Duk, a twelve-year-old

character from the family of Chinese immigrants, in Frank Chin's novel is related to this problem. The character develops a prejudice towards his cultural and ethnic heritage as a result of exposure to education and the overall social discourse that values everything American and depicts Chinese history and people in a stereotypical way. Influenced by the dominant culture, the boy hates everything Chinese at the beginning of the novel and is fascinated with everything American. For instance, he uses such an ambivalent word as "funny," which rather has a negative connotation within the novel's context, to describe Chinese customs and beliefs (Chin, 1991: 3). He also refers to other Chinese as "they" and psychologically isolates himself from the members of his ethnic community (Chin, 99). Donald's attitude makes him "a little white racist" in the eyes of his father as the boy regards Whites as superior to Chinese (Chin, 99). This situation perpetuates the identity conflict in ethnic minority individuals because, being born within a certain cultural community characterized by strong in-group ties, they cannot run away from their heritage and fully integrate into the Western culture. As a consequence, severe psycho-distress arises, and they commence directing their adverse emotions of anger and hatred towards themselves and their close ones.

Another perspective on identity conflict is given in Lahiri's "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" included in her collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*. The conflict may be traced in the relationships between the characters, Twinkle and Sanjeev, the second-generation immigrants who are married by arrangement in accordance with the Indian tradition. While Twinkle is dissolved into the dominant American culture and does not share a lot of Indian customs and values, Sanjeev, on the contrary, denies Western traditions and adheres to the Indian ones. For instance, Twinkle does not seem interested in cooking traditional cuisine like other women with the same ethnic background and decorates her house with Christian symbols. At the same time, Sanjeev strives to adhere to Indian culture in almost every sphere of life: religion, entertainment, marital relationships, and so forth. In spite of the fact that they have the same ethnic heritage, the differences in the characters' identities and lifestyles lead them to interpersonal conflicts and arguments. It is possible to say that Twinkle is presented as a positive example of identity that fully embraces multicultural features of the character

because, even though she is not interested in Indian culture, she does not express any contempt or shame towards her ethnicity. Conversely, Sanjeev's denial of the Western culture makes him inflexible and less connected to the broader American community. His perception of culture divides people on insiders (us) and outsiders (others). In this way, Twinkle becomes an outsider in his perspective, and her lifestyle choices alienate her from her ethnic community.

Based on the analysis findings, it is valid to assert that identity conflict in immigrants arises when they have limited to no opportunities to express themselves in accordance with their traditional, ethnic values like in the case of Ichiro from *No-No Boy*, when they are influenced by stereotypes diminishing the value of their culture like in the case of Donald Duk from the eponymous novel, or when they fail to connect to the new, dominant American culture like in the case of Dimple from "A Wife's Story." At the same time, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" demonstrates that although it is important for immigrants to develop a sense of belonging to their ethnic community, the denial of American values may create a split in one's identity and perception of other people, which may also complicate the interpersonal and social relationship.

Therefore, it seems that environmental conditions that would encourage multiculturalism at both individual and social levels are necessary for preventing and minimizing identity conflicts in immigrants. It is worth noticing that multiculturalism "does not prescribe homogenization and conformity directly nor does it encourage overtly different ethnic, religious, lingual or racial constituents of a particular society" (Dhivyapriya & Jagadeswari, 2011: 34). Thus, it is possible to conclude that in a truly multicultural society, there will be no inequality in the representation of different ethnic groups and no hostile attitudes towards ethnically distinctive lifestyles and features.

### **3.3. Gender Identity Conflict**

Along with describing cultural practices and values in relations to characters' ethnicities, many of the selected authors explored their connections to gender as well. By analyzing traditional practices and customs within the semantic analysis framework, it is possible to identify distinct attitudes to gender roles and gender relationships in different

cultures. The problem of gender identity is important in this research because it relates to the broader issue of ethnic identity conflict.

According to Stapleton and Wilson (2015), different nations and cultures are frequently described as feminine and masculine depending on whether manlike or womanlike qualities and values are embedded in their central ideologies (47). Overall, these values substantially impact the way men and women interact. For instance, in many cultures, females are viewed as “reproducers,” in both biological and symbolic meanings, and such a perspective on womanhood structures women’s rights and responsibilities within the society and significantly influences their subjective life experiences (47). When speaking of gender-associated rights and duties, it is important to mention that they are mainly manifested as “appropriate” and “inappropriate” masculine or feminine behaviors, looks, manners, social and professional activities, and so forth. In addition, from the perspective of the feminist theory, distribution of rights and duties among genders is associated with inequality (Agnew, 1996: 62). However, what is more important in this research is the extent to which women and men from distinct ethnic backgrounds accept such a predetermined, unequal distribution of rights and responsibilities. It is also important to understand how internalized conservative gender perceptions become influenced when a person from a country characterized by significant gender division is placed in a more liberal society, such as the American one.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that the United States is not characterized by any power imbalances between different demographic groups. Conversely, they are even more pronounced in the US society because its composition is highly diverse. The interconnectedness between the constructs of race or ethnicity, social class, and gender has been long-recognized by feminist theorists and, based on the feminist perspective, it is valid to assert that individuals’ genders are perceived by both self and others through the prism of ethnicity as well. As stated by Woo (2004), Asian Americans live in a unique matrix of domination defined by their representations in the US mainstream culture (woo, 2004:10). It is observed that “on the individual level, Asian men (as the oppressor) may choose to dominate those less powerful, such as the women and children in their lives” (10). At the same time, Asian American men themselves suffer from a



stereotypical exaggeration and wrong depiction of their feminine qualities in popular American culture (Woo, 10). Moreover, they may be oppressed by people of a higher social-economic class, be dependent on them financially and, as a result, feel ashamed and inferior. When speaking of Asian American women, they “must navigate between resisting racist ideologies facing their community,” strive to “prevent alienation from Asian men when battling male privilege,” and should “reject racialized gender ideologies that advance the sexist objectification of (Asian) women, the feminization of Asian men, and the advancement of white men as the most desirable partners” (Woo, 2004: 10). Overall, Woo’s observations make it clear that the experiences of Asian Americans in the United States are substantially determined by ethnicity, gender, and class.

Before plunging into the analysis of primary sources, it is also worth mentioning that similarly to other social and cultural constructs, individuals “learn” their genders through social interactions and educational practices (Skeggs, 2005: 21). The dominant culture in any country implicitly encourages one to adhere to prescribed gender roles and disapproves any attempts to change them. For example, men are frequently judged by their achievements and success in career and women - by the degree of their attractiveness and femininity. Notably, many Asian cultures are associated with conservative views on sexuality and gender-defined behavioral expectations and norms, whereas American culture offers citizens more freedom in this regard. Thus, some characters in the reviewed literary pieces, especially those who are represented as second-generation immigrants, openly question their masculine and feminine features, explore and contrast gender relationships within both their national and ethnic cultures, and evaluate their impacts on self.

### **3.4. Gender Relationships and Femininity**

The subjects of gender relationships and femininity are comprehensively discussed in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*. It is valid to say that the ancient legend of Fa-Mu-Lan that the author depicts in the chapter called “White Tigers” epitomizes the questioning of gender and its significance in the novel as a whole and sets the tone. Fa-Mu-Lan is “the girl who took her father’s place in battle” (Kingston, 2010:

20). She travels long distances and fearlessly fights the enemy along with other soldiers for years. At the end of her service, she ceremonially removes her armors and reveals her gender to her fellow warriors who were surprised at the fact that the brave soldier turned out to be a woman. The image of female warrior clashes with a common stereotypical view of femininity and provokes an idea that gender is merely a social construct while men and women are created by nature as equal.

At the same time, in her novel, Kingston frequently depicts Chinese culture as patriarchal, encouraging women to be submissive to males, and punishing any deviation from gender standards. For example, the chapter entitled “No Name Woman” tells a story of the female protagonist’s aunt who became pregnant without being married. The neighbors condemned her and threatened her family. Thus, in the morning after giving birth, she and her infant were found dead in a well. The protagonist also finds out that her father, the brother of the dead woman, “denies her” and prefers to pretend that she never existed (Kingston, 2010: 5). The conservative attitudes towards feminine roles in the Chinese culture are reflected as well in the views of another protagonist’s aunt, Moon Orchid, who believes that women must be quiet and timid, and should look modest and adhere to certain beauty standards. However, the main character manages to develop her gender identity and express her femininity in accordance with both American and Chinese standards, finding the right balance between the two. The exposure to distinct cultures and views throughout her life, as well as inspiration derived from the tale of Fa-Mu-Lan, helped her to overcome the common gender stereotypes that are present in the conservative Chinese culture.

The relationships of the protagonist’s parents in Mei Ng’s *Eating Chinese Food Naked* are consistent with Kingston’s perceptions of traditional Chinese views on gender described in Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*. Ruby’s parents have a loveless marriage where the wife plays a submissive role, and the husband frequently abuses her verbally and demands compliance. The disagreement of the protagonist with traditional gender perspectives and unhealthy family relations that they induce can be observed in her desire to save her mother from a strictly subordinated, patriarchal household by taking her on a trip to Florida. It is worth noticing that Ruby questions her gender identity and

sexuality in direct relation to her ethnicity. According to Schultermandl,(2009) Ng's choice of the mother's house as a location for identity formation has a symbolic meaning (109). In addition, "the mother-daughter relationship in Ng's novel foregrounds the tension between Ruby and the ethnic, gender, and sexual model of womanhood which her mother embodies" (109). Ruby's behavior in romantic and sexual relationships is a complete opposite to her mother's behaviors. The latter character has very certain and constrained marital relationships, while her daughter continually longs for sexual freedom and seeks meaningless encounters. Her homosexual inclinations also create a strong contrast against gender conservatism and can be regarded as a climax of ethnic and gender identity crises in the character.

The representation of female characters in Bharati Mukherjee's "The Wife's Story" requires mentioning in this section as well. Identity conflict that Dimple experiences after migrating to the United States is closely associated with her culturally-defined perspectives on womanhood and her feminine social roles. As stated by Krishnan, in Indian tradition, "marriages are *arranged* by parents, especially the father; the husband *assumes* authority over the wife; the wife is *expected* to subsume her individual and private identity into the (patriarchally) social and cultural" (1998: 7). Dimple complies with her patriarchally-defined role, yet it also seems that she is forced to behave as a good Indian wife. In the episode when she is offered a drink by Ina, an Americanized Indian woman, she is afraid that "If she took a drink she knew Amit [her husband] would write it to his mother and his mother would call the Dasguptas and accuse them of raising an immoral and drunken daughter. The Calcutta rumor mill operated as effectively from New York as it did from Park Street" (Mukherjee, "Wife, 1998: 78).

The exposure to more liberal American culture provoked fear of social exclusion from her origin environment and increased the character's inability to integrate. It created a division in Dimple's mind and ultimately led her to madness.

Specific attention in some of the reviewed literary pieces is also given to the distribution of chores among genders in different cultures. For example, one may find out from JhumpaLahiri's "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," that an Indian woman is

traditionally expected to perform the role of a nurturer and, unlike men, she usually engages in domestic work including food preparation. Notably, the main character in the story antagonizes this role because she often buys ready-made food and challenges the patriarchal values of her husband in many ways, including through her fashion choices. Additionally, in Lahiri's "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" and "Mrs. Sen," it is the mother and the wife who cooks and serves meals to others. The theme is particularly well-developed in the latter short story because Mrs. Sen spends a lot of time cooking away and coping with her cultural anxiety in this way. She finds pleasure in this activity as she accepts the traditionally feminine role of a nurturer. She likes to serve others and treat them with delicious meals. At the same time, the image of Mrs. Sen in the story is contrasted by the image of an American mother who mainly cares about herself:

"The first thing she did when they were back at the beach house was pour herself a glass of wine and eat bread and cheese, sometimes so much of it that she wasn't hungry for the pizza they normally ordered for dinner" (Lahiri 118).

In this way, Mrs. Sen's gender-associated beliefs and behaviors highlight her "otherness" and create barriers to her integration into the host society along with the general dissimilarities in culturally distinctive values and lifestyles.

Food preparation is one of the main signifiers in *Donald Duk*'s gender imagery as well. According to Xu, in the novel, "the kitchen becomes a site for the assertion of masculinity, with the language of cooking repeatedly evoking images of martial arts and war" ("Masculinity, Food, and Appetite in Frank Chin's 'Donald Duk,'" 79). For example, the protagonist's father, King Duk, is one of the esteemed cooks in Chinatown who runs a successful restaurant. He tells the boy a story of how he was trained to cook "in the kitchens of the most powerful men in the world" and how he "passed the war in the kitchens of presidents, prime ministers, premiers, lords, and generalissimos" (Chin, 9). In this way, unlike cooking traditions in the Indian culture described previously, food preparation in *Donald Duk* resembles a battle and performance. A cook is represented as a master of martial arts, and a prepared meal is equated to victory. The feminine, soft qualities are entirely eradicated from cultural food practices in the novel, while the

masculine ones are, on the contrary, exaggerated. The food imagery allows the author to create a heroic figure of the father, and this the symbolic significance of food as a semiotic sign is emphasized by the fact that King Duk plays a vital role in the development of Donald's masculine and ethnic identity. He taught him what it means to be both a man and a Chinese.

The findings of the analysis revealed that gender and ethnicity and nationality are at the intersection. The traditional Asian perspectives on femininity and masculinity often contrast with more broad-minded American views. For this reason, compliance with conventional gender roles may increase cultural estrangement in newly immigrated individuals like in the case of Mrs. Sen from Lahiri's short story. Additionally, identity conflict often arises in the second-generation immigrants because, at the earlier stages of life, they are both directly and indirectly exposed to more conservative values of their immigrant parents whose ties with their origin culture are stronger. Nevertheless, immigrant parents may serve as positive manhood and womanhood figures for their children as well as in the case of King Duk from Frank Chin's work. In either way, the examined literary pieces make it clear that parent-child interactions and exploration of own culture and heritage become a necessary part of gender identity formation in ethnic minority individuals.

### **3.5. Search for Identity**

Identity crisis is always associated with substantial psychological distress and can be regarded as a transitional stage in the formation of one's true identity. While many of the characters in the reviewed literary pieces are either ambivalent towards their ethnicity or have negative attitudes towards it initially, their quest for reconciliation with their ethnic and cultural backgrounds becomes a primary driving point in the stories' plots.

According to Jean Phinney's theory, ethnic identity development proceeds in three stages: unexamined identity, exploration of identity, and achieved identity (Jackson, 2006: 182). The first stage refers to a state in which a person is not aware of ethnic features and peculiarities, and shows no or little interest to them. Jackson (2006) states that people with unexamined ethnic identity tend to accept those views and ideas

pertaining to minority population groups that are promoted within the dominant culture (182). Conversely, the second stage, exploration, is associated with the development of an understanding of ethnicity problems and relationships between minority and majority groups. The main characteristic of identity exploration is an active engagement in various cultural practices and the strengthening of in-group ties (Jackson, 2006: 182). Finally, the third stage in the identity development process is the desired outcome of one's exploration. It is characterized by an acceptance of own ethnic peculiarities, a comprehension of heritage and meaning of the ethnic group membership, and a commitment to it (Jackson, 2006: 182). The main constructs of this model and particularly the second phase of identity development will be used as a theoretical framework in this part of the analysis.

In the context of cultural dislocation and disorientation, as well as active ethnicity exploration, immigrants and their children strive to find ways to reinforce their ethnic identity and integrate within the host culture. For this reason, the issue of search for identity is described in many of the selected authors' works, and cultural practices, such as production, preparation, and consumption of food, are often endowed by them with a power to promote the sense of belonging and, in this way, to foster a sounder perception of self. Research evidence indicates that, within the host society, various ethnic-cultural activities and values help to establish links among representatives of the same ethnic group who share a similar set of immigration-related dispositions. According to Dajani, (2018) this similarity of dispositions allows individuals to "interpret the world along the same code, making it possible for them to recognize each other's experience," and to develop stronger bonds with each other (17). In this way, distinct cultural practices that immigrants perform inside and outside their families assist them in forming new emotional and physical dimensions in which the traumas of displacement and symptoms of identity crises become less severe. At the same time, since the exploration of ethnic identity implies the immersion into in-group history and the development of meaningful ties, interpersonal relations with family or other cultural community members also serve as a mean towards the achievement of sound self-

identification. Thus, both social interactions and cultural practices will be used as essential culturally significant signs in the present section of the analysis.

### **3.6. Ethnic Identity Exploration through Personal Relationships**

Daughter-mother relationships play a crucial role in the protagonist's identity development in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. The daughter, Ruth, is initially in the conflict with her mother, LuLing. Ruth thinks that she criticizes her for being Americanized and not meeting her expectations. The situation is aggravated by the fact that Ruth does not speak Chinese well, and the mother cannot use English properly. As a result, the protagonist's ethnic identity remains unexplored, and she openly resists the Chinese culture at the beginning. However, by reading LuLing's memoirs and learning about her past life in China, as well as the reasons why she left her homeland; and through reconciliation with her mother, Ruth starts to develop meaningful links towards her ethnic-cultural heritage. Therefore, the mother serves as a transmitter of cultural knowledge to the daughter.

As it was already mentioned in the previous section, father of Donald Duk in Frank Chin's novel plays a crucial role in the formation of the boy's ethnic identity. In contrast to *The Bonesetter's Daughter* where mother-daughter conflict is core to Ruth's difficulty in coming to terms with her ethnicity, King Duk and Donald Duk have positive relationships regardless of the fact that the boy does not like to be associated with Chinese culture. However, the father purposefully engages in the intervention of the son's knowledge about his ethnic heritage. Notably, King Duk sees Donald's contempt towards everything Chinese as illness and even takes him to a traditional doctor yet, since the boy's symptoms are not physical but mental, the father commences the re-education. King Duk tells his son about multiple heroic deeds and contributions of his Chinese ancestors to the development of the American society and economy. In this way, he alleviates the negative impacts of American pop culture and general education curriculum that misrepresent Chinese people, diminish their significance in the American history, and marginalize them.

Nevertheless, interactions with other members of a certain ethnic group not always lead to favorable outcomes in the acculturation process. The experience of Dimple from Bharati Mukherjee's "The Wife's Story" is an illustration of this statement. After her arrival in the United States, the character socializes with Americanized immigrants who do not adhere to the traditional lifestyle. It is during the interaction with them when she realizes the strength of her attachment to Indian customs. For Dimple, the open-mindedness of the Americanized Indians is overwhelming and contradictory to her own worldview. Dimple feels pressure to "uphold Bengali womanhood, marriage, and male pride" yet she is also afraid that other liberated Indian women, who may be even "more American than Americans," would laugh at her because of her views (Mukherjee, "Wife," 68-78). It is clear that the character's inability to adapt to the new environment is defined by high behavioral expectations imposed on her by the origin culture, which she failed to abandon. Interactions with other Indians in the United States only increased Dimple's cultural divide and made her feel excluded from the ethnic group.

### **3.7. Assimilation and Psychological Coping through Cultural Practices**

Food imagery can be found in the majority of Jhumpa Lahiri's stories included in *Interpreter of Maladies*. However, it is valid to assert that food-related cultural practices as a mean for establishing a sense of communion are depicted best in "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine." In this short story, the family of the storyteller, a little girl named Lilia, and their guest, Mr. Pirzada, gather at the table every evening: "They ate pickled mangoes with their meals, ate rice every night for supper with their hands . . . chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, drank no alcohol, for dessert dipped austere biscuits into successive cups of tea" (Lahiri, 1998: 28).

However, the situation changes when India and Bangladesh became separate nations: Mr. Pirzada was originally from Dacca, and Lilia's parents were Indians. After Mr. Pirzada officially became a Bangladeshi, he no longer was welcomed at the house of Lilia's parents. Nevertheless, before that, meals served as a mean to soothe the characters' anxiety due to an ongoing conflict in their homeland. It was a method to unify the characters regardless of differences in their religions and political views for all



of them had the same eating habits and tastes, and this factor created a bond between them. In this way, the consequent exclusion of Mr. Pirzada from food consumption activities can be regarded as a sign of cultural and ethnic alienation.

In another Lahiri's short story, "Mrs. Sen," food practices help the character to cope with acculturative stress. The main character is an immigrant from Calcutta, and she struggles with assimilation to the American culture. Thus, food becomes for her a mean of reinforcing a sense of belonging. She becomes obsessed with fish, a typical Bengali food ingredient because it reminds her of home. Throughout the plot, she is preoccupied with finding fresh fish and cooking meals with it. Engagement in traditional food preparation makes her happy, and it seems that her overall survival in the host culture largely depends on whether she would be able to cook fish or not. Mrs. Sen's strong attachment to this food item is seen in the episode when, after the refusal of her husband to buy fish for her, she drives to the market to buy it herself even though she has no driving license.

The character tries to regain the sense of communion and belonging that she experienced while living in India by engaging in culinary practices. For example, Mrs. Sen tells Eliot, a boy after whom she looks after, that a blade which she uses to chop vegetables plays a significant social and symbolic role during the preparation to Indian weddings: "all the neighborhood women...bring blades just like this one, and then they sit in an enormous circle on the roof of our building, laughing and gossiping and slicing fifty kilos of vegetables through the night" (Lahiri, 1999: 115).

Considering that the character lost that sense of communion and belonging in the United States, she tries to recreate the same feeling by engaging in culinary practices. Nevertheless, she remains lonely and fails to integrate into the culture properly. Ng also endows food with a powerful symbolism in *Eating Chinese Food Naked*. She depicts it as the only mean to cope with displacement and a signifier of the distinction between the Chinese and the American culture. The first encounter of Ruby's mother, Bell, with the United States occurred through a meal served to her on a plane when a "yellow-haired stewardess passed around trays of cheese sandwiches, and for dessert, vanilla pudding" (Ng, 1998: 30). This food seemed strange and unusual to her,

and she asks her husband: “don't they have rice in this country?” (Ng, 30). Afterward, she gazed at the sky through the airplane window and “no matter how hard she looked, the fluffy mountains of rice in her mother's bowls were gone” (Ng, 30). It is possible to say that the phrase “the fluffy mountains of rice in her mother’s bowl” is nothing but a symbol of China, whereas Bell’s non-acceptance of American food highlights her estrangement from the host culture and her inability to adapt to it.

To handle the consequences of cultural bereavement better, Bell cooks traditional Chinese meals. Moreover, through food, she becomes able to express care and love to other members of her family, including her daughter and abusive husband. Bell “piled [Ruby’s bowl] high with all the good bits,” while in her own bowl there only was a “heap of bones” (Ng, 1998: 14). It means that the gathering of their family at the table help to foster communion in the family at least for a short period. At the same time, the fact that her parents started to eat separately, later on, signifies the alienation and the lack of bond between them.

It is important to note here Ruby’s relationships with Chinese cuisine as well. As the second-generation immigrant, she is Americanized and enjoys eating different kinds of food. However, it is possible to say Chinese food for her has a therapeutic effect as in the case of her mother. She cooks traditional meals while in college to cope with malignant feelings that she had because of “having left her mother behind” (Ng, 1998: 16). Since it was Bell who taught Ruby to cook, it also helps the latter character reinforce her ties with her family and her heritage.

A different perspective on the practice of traditional lifestyles and culinary practices is given in Okada’s *No-No Boy*. While having meals at home, Ichiro and his other relatives always use chopsticks and eat such ethnic foods as “eggs, fried with soy sauce. . .boiled cabbage, and tea and rice” (Okada,1976: 12). However, the main character does not perceive these foodways as something particularly enjoyable. The practice of the traditional Japanese lifestyle is primarily enforced by his parents and mother, in particular, who remains loyal to Japan throughout the course of the Second World War.

For Ichiro, who was born in the United States, American foods, such as fried bacon, are more attractive. It is clear from the episode with the last supper of Ichiro's friend, Kenji, that traditional American cuisine is presented by Okada as something more favorable compared to the Japanese cuisine. In this episode, Kenji's family eats a roasted chicken, a salad, and a pie for desert. They use forks during the dinner and, after, they watch a baseball game while drinking coffee with cookies, and ice cream. According to Xu, this dinner scene "presents a fine picture of successful assimilation by the 'patriotic' Japanese Americans" ("Enjoyment and Ethnic Identity in *No-No Boy* and *Obasan*,"2002:26). The contrast between the traditional ethnic foodways of the first-generation immigrants, such as Ichiro's parents, and the American food preferences of the second-generation immigrants indicate that the former find it more difficult to integrate into the host culture, especially considering widespread discriminatory sentiments during the war. At the same time, the preference of American foods by Kenji's family may also be regarded as a form of "social and cultural coercion" (Xu, "Enjoyment and Ethnic Identity in *No-No Boy* and *Obasan*,"26). By abandoning their original culinary practices, they could strive to detach themselves from their ethnic background and, in this way, become more acceptable and less ethnically distinctive in the eyes of other Americans.

Dissimilarities in food choices and practices between different generation immigrants are also observed in Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. When the family eats dinner together, Ruth's daughters say that they "stopped at Burger King in the Presidio and ate a bunch of fries" before coming home (Tan, 2001:111). Ruth's mother, the first-generation immigrant, condemned the choice of American fast food by her granddaughters and preferred such Chinese foods as jellyfish and glass noodles. The distance between the first- and the third-generation characters is also emphasized by the way the latter react to traditional Chinese foods. For instance, the following dialog occurred when Ruth placed strands of jellyfish on her mother's plate: "'Worms!' Dory teased. 'Try some.' 'Ewww! Take it away! Take it away' Boomer screamed" (Tan, 2001: 144).

While LuLing's granddaughters are not acceptant of ethnical foodways, LuLing herself is reluctant to eat and take anything American. It relates not merely to food but also such a culturally-defined practice as medicine. When Ruth found out that her mother has dementia and that she may need to undergo treatment for depression, she told the doctor: "you'll have to tell her the antidepressants are ginseng or po chai pills" (Tan, 2001: 110).

However, the ultimate sign of LuLing's non-acceptance of the American culture is her refusal to speak English. Even in the presence of other people who do not understand the Chinese language, she talks to her daughter in Mandarin. She also writes her memoirs in Chinese because "writing in Chinese characters is entirely different from writing English words. You think differently. You feel differently. ...Each character is a thought, a feeling, meanings, history, all mixed into one" (Tan, 39). It is worth noticing that language as such can be regarded as a cultural tool. According to Gelman and Roberts, it plays a crucial role in the transmission of cultural values and meanings associated with distinct practices (2017: 7900). Thus, while LuLing finds comfort in speaking and writing Chinese during her life in the United States as it helps her to cope with cultural displacement, when reading her mother's memoirs in Chinese, Ruth also becomes more familiarized with the Chinese culture in general. It helps Ruth to find a proper balance between the ethnic and national identity.

Traditional Chinese festivals such as the Full Moon Festival and the New Year celebrations are the main symbols of community and family reunification described by Asian American writers, including Amy Tan and Frank Chin. For instance, when reflecting upon the Full Moon Festival which Ruth hosted for the first time, she thought: "This particular gathering was not 'just a dinner'. It was their Chinese thanksgiving, the reunion. . .She had given much thought to setting it up, what it should mean, what family meant, not just blood relatives but also those who were united by the past and would remain together over the years, people she was grateful to have in her life" (Tan, 136).

The custom of celebrating also has a significant meaning in "Donald Duk" because during the Chinese New Year, Donald's father gifts large bags with rice to

many of the families living in Chinatown and cooks different kinds of fancy foods that all members of his family enjoy the night before the New Year. In this way, the performance of cultural practices becomes a positive mean of cultural reproduction that allows strengthening in-group ties and contributes to the welfare of the overall community rather than just helping one forget about the problems of cultural displacement.

Based on the analysis findings, it is valid to conclude that experiences of identity process in first-generation and second-generation immigrants differ in multiple aspects. For the former, it is often harder to assimilate into the host culture because their ties with the origin culture are still strong. They may come to the United States searching for a better life, but they may struggle to understand the American lifestyle and values fully. Thus, new immigrants may feel homesick, melancholic, and even depressed because cultural and geographic dislocation is associated with the loss of such valuable intangible things as the feeling of communion with others that they enjoyed in their homeland. For this reason, the first-generation immigrants frequently engage in the performance of cultural practices because it evokes good memories and helps to regain a sense of purpose. The example of Mrs. Sen from Lahiri's short story illustrates this assumption best. Nevertheless, the experiences of characters in the reviewed literary pieces, including Ichiro's parents from Okada's *No-No Boy*, Dimple from Mukherjee's "The Wife's Story," and LuLing from Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, demonstrate that strict adherence to traditional lifestyles and worldviews often creates barriers to better cultural assimilation and may be linked to closed-mindedness, as well as reluctance and inability to accept American culture.

It is worth noticing here that in accordance with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural exchange, national identity (self-identification with the origin state) is not something given by nature but learned. Farrell (2010) states that when a person changes their environment, they may "alter their way of being, seeing, acting and thinking" (109). However, Bourdieu emphasized that change in one's national identity is possible only through immersion, active participation, and learning (Farrell, 2010: 110). This does not diminish the importance and value of ethnically defined practices. After all, ethnicity

and nationality are two different phenomena. Nevertheless, Bourdieu's assumptions suggest that an active involvement in the host culture can help an immigrant psychologically detach him or herself from the origin nation. Purposeful engagement in practices of the host country is core to the development of more cross-national and cross-ethnic identity, and non-acceptance of American culture by some of the mentioned characters is counterproductive to this process.

The second- and third-generation immigrants are more open to the American culture because they are born in the United States and usually understand the local life much better than their parents. However, in their case, the identity problem arises because they lack the understanding of and ties with their ethnic heritage and inadequate perceptions of it. It may happen due to the exposure to ethnic stereotypes present in the dominant culture, due to conflicts with in-group members or disagreement with common views and norms accepted in the origin culture. In either way, various cultural practices, such as food preparation and consumption, help them to increase familiarity with own ethnic background. Additionally, improvement of family relationships and active exploration of family history allows them to develop a healthier perception of ethnicity as well.

### **3.8. Core of the Chapter**

Semantic analysis is a useful tool of literary criticism because it allows researchers to identify both textual and extratextual signs, and elucidate the links between word content and contexts in which texts are created. The familiarity with the authors' personal experiences and biographical facts largely contribute to the comprehension of their works' meanings. At the same time, the evaluation of multidisciplinary secondary literature focused on the problem of immigration, ethnic identity, and their impacts on individuals' lives assists in the exploration of the fictional characters' subjective experiences, motivations, and behaviors.

It was revealed that identity conflict is the primary theme in the selected works. It arises in immigrants due to cultural dislocation – removal of a person from the environment characterized by a set of familiar cultural practices and feature and their

placement in the environment where substantially different cultural practices are performed and valued. Regardless of the motivations that make immigrants move to the United States, many of them find it hard to cope with acculturation-associated distress. In some cases, strict preference of traditional ethnic lifestyles becomes a barrier to one's integration into the American culture. As the analyzed examples from the primary sources reveal, it mainly happens in first-generation immigrants who were brought up in conservative cultural contexts. However, second-generation immigrants are more flexible in this regard and, on the contrary, their identity conflict is frequently linked to the lack of understanding of their ethnic background. In addition, they frequently find themselves struggling during the exploration of gender identity because, since childhood, they may be exposed to conflicting views on femininity and masculinity adopted in the host and original cultures.

The findings of the semantic analysis also make it clear that various cultural practices play a significant role in the lives of both generations of immigrants. The Asian American writers endow food imagery with powerful meanings and often depict traditional food-related activities as a mean to promote a sense of belonging to a certain ethnic group. In the experiences of the first-generation characters, cultural practices are also used as a method for combating homesickness, which in the second-generation characters they are utilized to gain greater awareness of own cultural heritage during the exploration of ethnic identity.

## CONCLUSION

The study makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature on Asian American literature, immigration, and ethnic identity by drawing distinction between the problems faced by first- and second-generation immigrants in the United States and describing a vital role of cultural practices in self-identification and individual well-being. While the latter topic is widely explored by other researchers, the findings on categories of differences and similarities among immigrants are rather scarce. To get an insight into the distinctions between different generations of Asian American immigrants, it is appropriate to sum up the research results acquired from the review of secondary sources on the mechanisms of identity development and cultural influences on personality.

Cultural traditions of a certain ethnic group are learned by individuals since early childhood. As such, culture is defined by Dajani (2018) as “collective propositions inculcated (internalized) through normal developmental channels to become dispositions that determine perception, organize thinking and shape behavior” (18). It means that being exposed to particular cultural influences, a person learns to be an integral part of the collective and function harmoniously within it by adhering to accepted behavioral norms and participating in widespread practices. Naturally, an individual becomes attached to their culture as it shapes the very structure of their psyche and becomes an intrinsic part of their mind. In ideal homogeneous countries where nationality, ethnicity, and relevant cultural activities are merged and constitute an organic whole, a person who is raised there usually feels psychologically secure and integrated into society. However, in a context of immigration and multiculturalism, the situation is different because of strong cultural contrasts that individuals face. When the host and the origin countries (or the majority and the minority groups) are culturally distant, an ethnically distinct person can struggle to find a balance between different values, customs, and views to which they are exposed.

When speaking of a subtle distinction in the experiences of first- and second-generation immigrants in the United States, it is defined by the way in which they are exposed to the host and origin environment. The newcomers undergo both cultural and



geographic displacement, while their children early become exposed to a multitude of diverse traditions and stereotypes as the citizens of the multicultural state. Overall, the main problem for first-generation immigrants is cultural bereavement or, in other words, the loss of familiar social and cultural structures, support networks, and language. A typical reaction to such a situation is grief, psychological distress, and anxiety.

On the other hand, the main problem for second-generation immigrants is that they may be prone to internalize the beliefs and stereotypes about their ethnicities that are most widely available in the dominant American culture. As the plethora of examples and evidence pieces from both primary and secondary sources demonstrated, ethnic minorities were frequently discriminated and marginalized during the history of the United States. As a consequence, immigrants, especially those who were born and raised in the host country, could struggle with self-identification because the conflict between ethnicity and nationality was severe in this case. However, even though open discrimination against minorities may be relatively rare nowadays, different ethnicities are often misrepresented in the mainstream culture. Their inadequate image is formed and transmitted to all members of society through education, mass media, and so forth. Thus, in the worst scenario, immigrants' children can develop contempt for their ethnic background and, in a slightly more favorable scenario, their ethnic identity remains unexplored.

The performance of traditional cultural practices of the origin country and the establishment of meaningful links with other members of the ethnic group become tremendously important for immigrants of different ages as they strive to assimilate into the new world and find a balance between one's nationality and ethnic identity. It was revealed in the present research that such mundane cultural practices as food preparation and consumption have incomparable emotional significance to humans because, through them, individuals express their ethnic traditions and identities on a day to day basis. People tend to develop a strong attachment to the foodways of their origin countries as they usually evoke pleasant memories and even help one comprehend his or her place in society and purpose in life. For example, in many Asian cultures women cook and serve food for others and, through a diligent performance of these chores, they care for their

in-group members and fulfill the conventional feminine role of a nurturer. Thus, various ingredients, dishes, and culinary practices serve as cultural and ethnic markers, and different generations of immigrants demonstrate and develop connections to their ethnic background through them.

Culinary practices take a special place in the lives of first-generation immigrants as they allow soothing cultural anxieties, handle fears and other adverse emotions that arise due to exposure to otherness. In many primary sources, including *No-No Boy*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, "Mrs. Sen," and others, the preference of traditional foods by newly arrived and older immigrants was emphasized. However, it was also observed that while culinary practices and adherence to other customs helped fulfill the characters' need for comfort, they also signified immigrants' inadaptability and marked them as outsiders. Overall, it is worth noting that dietary choices rely heavily on individual preferences and may not necessarily depend on cultural upbringing. A person may like traditional foods merely because of their taste. Still, it is also valid to assert that a person's attitudes and ability to remain open to new cultural influences, views, and common activities largely contribute to positive outcomes in the acculturation process. According to Bhugra and Becker (2005) cognitively and psychologically flexible migrants are more likely to develop a sense of belonging in their host state (21). They observe that "the majority culture may seem less threatening and more inviting as the individual becomes more linguistically and socially fluent in this new culture" (Bhugra & Becker, 2005: 21). Therefore, strict preference of their ethnic traditions and languages by first-generation characters in the analyzed literary pieces may have negative connotations as well: it can be regarded as an ultimate symbol of their perpetual alienation and inability to find their place in the host environment.

It is possible to say that in the experiences of the second-generation immigrant characters, engagement in traditional cultural practices has only positive connotations. Contrary to their parents and grandparents, as well as other in-group members, they often preferred American foods and lifestyles. In the best scenarios, they remained open to different multicultural and ethnic influences like Ruby in Ng's *Eating Chinese Food Naked* who enjoyed eating burgers, croissants, and many other Western dishes along

with the traditional Chinese ones. However, when the second-generation immigrants' Americanization was linked with contempt for everything ethnically defined, like in the case of the main character in Frank Chin's *Donald Duk*, engagement in cultural practices, as well as active investigation of the family's past and ethnic history, allowed them establishing lost or unexplored connections with their cultural heritage, develop a sounder self-identification, and alleviate the symptoms of identity conflict.

Based on the abovementioned observations, it is valid to conclude that healthy identity in immigrants' forms as a result of finding the right balance between nationality and ethnicity, minority and majority culture. It does not mean that one should force him or herself to like certain traditions and customs, but it implies that he or she should keep the mind flexible and open to foreign things. This ability is of great importance in the multicultural societies, such as the American one, because misunderstanding of other ethnicities and cultures may interfere with social and interpersonal communication and can have harmful effects on community cohesion. In a multicultural nation, individuals can still live exclusively in accordance with traditional lifestyles because the society does not impose any specific behavioral standards and norms on them. However, their cultural and ethnic distinctiveness should not interfere with their social functioning and isolate them from others both physically and ideologically.

In regard to the final conclusion about the importance of personal flexibility in immigrants, it is also important to note that in order to facilitate their acculturation and social integration, favorable social factors must be present in the host state. As it was mentioned before, hostile sentiments towards ethnic minorities prevent them from establishing meaningful social contacts and friendships and limit their opportunities for receiving high-quality public services and employment. The interaction between majority and minority cultures is always a reciprocal process. By creating a supportive environment for immigrants' assimilation, sound self-identification, and well-being, the host country can produce mutual benefits. For instance, it may foster multiple changes in its cultural and social composition that may substantially contribute to the development of unique national features and advantages. At the same time, immigrants may also gain multiple individual benefits: they will be able to fulfill their expectations of a better life

and become productive and loyal members of the society. In this way, the recognition of vital social and psychological needs of those who migrated to the United States or other countries, as well as their families, is an issue of individual, social, and national significance.



## **Recommendation**

The assessment of texts as sign systems within the semiotic analysis framework undertaken in the present research project may be regarded as successful because it helped to answer the formulated questions and develop a comprehensive picture of the investigated problem. The findings may also be considered credible enough because the triangulation method for their validation was implemented. Nevertheless, the fictional nature of the selected primary sources can be viewed as the main limitation of this study. Even though the attempt to fill the gap between the real-world situation and its representation in literature pieces was made through critical evaluation of different types of research data, it is hard to estimate the extent to which the obtained evidence about ethnic identity development in fictitious characters can be generalized to real people. Based on this, it can be recommended to investigate the same set of immigration-related problems by using biographical data or information collected through personal interviews. In this way, it will be possible to establish more credible links between the studied phenomena and the extratextual world.

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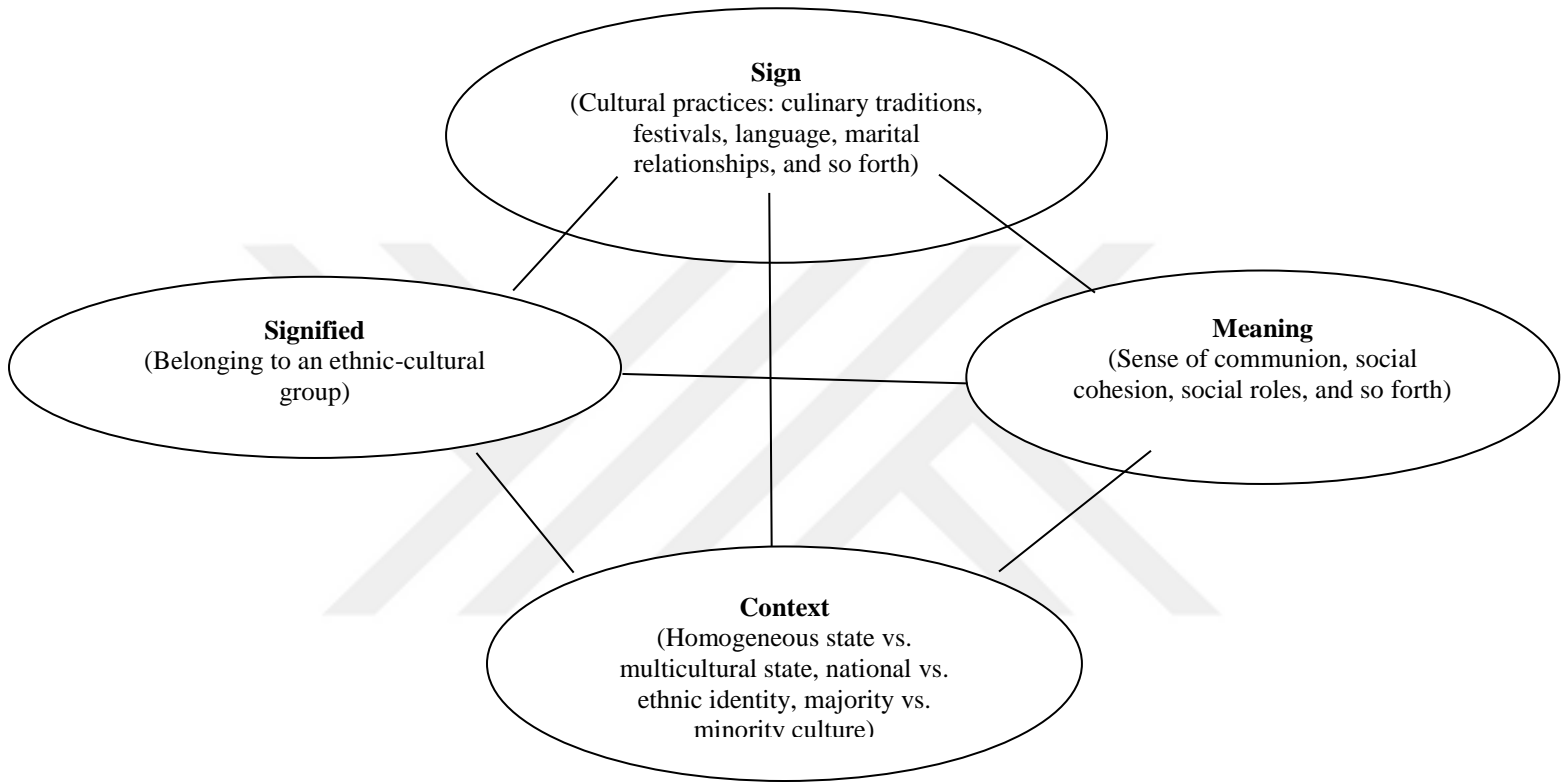
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**APPENDIX (A): RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SIGN, SIGNIFIED, MEANING,  
AND CONTEXT**





**APPENDIX (B): SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THEORIES APPLIED**

**AS PART OF THEORETICAL TRIANGULATION METHOD**

	<b>Ethnic Identity</b>	<b>Gender Identity</b>	<b>Identity Search</b>
<b>Jean Phinney's Ethnic Identity Theory</b>	Identity can be either unexamined or achieved. The first phase is characterized by little or no understanding of ethnicity. The last phase is characterized by full understanding, acceptance, and internalization.	–	Active examination of ethnic identity, cultural practices, and history leads from unexamined identity to achieved identity (Jackson, 182)
<b>Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Exchange</b>	A person's attachment to their nation (origin state) is learned and habituated. National identity is a product of social conditioning and can be restructured.	Gender is a cultural construct. Gender identity is closely associated with social identity whereas family is just a social artifact. Example: gender-defined division of labor (Skeggs, 25).	Identity can be reshaped if a person is "open to modification and is engaged in "reconstruction through reflexive agency and educational practices" (Farrell, 108).
<b>Feminist Theory</b>	Ethnicity and race are social constructs. Similarly to gender, ethnicity defines a person's position in the society. Minority groups usually enjoy less rights and opportunities than majority populations (Agnew, 62).	Gender is a social construct. Women and men are socially unequal and one of the primary reasons for that is that females are traditionally expected to perform such unpaid duties as childcare and family care. Women of different races/ethnicities may have different social status (Agnew, 62).	–



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LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZ ORIJİNALLIK RAPORU

TezBaşlığı / Konusu:

28 /05 /2019

**Ethnic identity and food culture in Asian American fiction**


Yukarıda başlığı/konusu belirlenen tez çalışmamın Kapaksay fası, Giriş, Ana bölümler ve Sonuç bölümlerinden oluşantoplamlam 105 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 28/05/2019 tarihinde şahsım / tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtreleme uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 6 (yüzde altı) dur.

**Uygulanan Filtreler Aşağıda Verilmiştir:**

Kabul ve onay sayfası hariç,  
Teşekkür hariç,  
İçindekiler hariç,  
Simge ve kısaltmalar hariç,  
Gereç ve yöntemler hariç,  
Kaynakça hariç,  
Alıntılar hariç,  
Tezden çıkan yayınlar hariç,  
7 kelimedenden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç (Limit match size to 7 words)

Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Tez Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılmasına İlişkin Yönergeyi İnceledim ve bu yönergede belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın her hangi bir intihal içemediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu Kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim

Gereğini bilgilerinize arz ederim.

  
29 /05 /2019  
SHKAR ABDALLAH HAMEED  
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