

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

1.1 Background of Study

The process of identity formation in adolescents is an important part of a person's life. Moreover, identity will continue to develop and change while facing new conditions, situations and challenges. This means identity is a concept that encompasses how a person identifies themselves, and how they are perceived by others. (Meeus, W, 2010)

According to Stella Ting Toomey (2015), an intercultural communication expert, identity is how individuals reflect or mirror themselves, which originates from various aspects of life such as family, gender, culture ethnicity, and socialization processes. This identity affects social interactions and inter-individual communication. Understanding identity, both of oneself and others, is key to building healthy, inclusive, and mutually understanding relationships in an increasingly diverse society. Identity is something unique to each individual and can evolve over time. It helps a person understand who they are, what they value, and how they interact with the world around them.

We retain control over how we define ourselves and which aspects of our identities we choose to highlight over others. This concept is known as individual or personal identity. Personal identity is the distinctive manner in which you define yourself. For instance, an individual may prioritize aspects like family, religion, and hobbies when discussing their identity, while another person may focus on elements such as race, community, and occupation as significant parts of their self-concept.

Your personal identity encompasses all the factors that you perceive as contributing to your individuality. For example, Personal branding involves the impression you create of yourself and the professional value you bring currently and in the future. It represents your self-image, which can be conveyed through various means, with social media being just one example. Nevertheless, personal branding can be deliberately cultivated, allowing you to shape how others perceive you. For the writer, personal branding is the writer ability to

dance. From dance, the writer can reach many people to use the idea to make some moves on dance in traditional even in modern dances.

In its brief definition, From Erikson's (1963) perspective, identity refers to a sense of who one is as a person and as a contributor to society (Hoare, 2002). It is personal coherence or self-sameness through evolving time, social change, and altered role requirements. Identity serves several functions for us as humans, contributing to our well-being in various ways. One of these functions is fostering a sense of belonging. When we have a clear understanding of our self-definition, it becomes simpler to identify communities and environments where we feel a sense of belonging. We are inherently affiliated with social groups from birth, and as we mature, these affiliations can remain constant or evolve. Our membership in these groups contributes significance to our lives. At times, we have the freedom to choose which social groups we align with, while in other instances, we may be categorized into groups that do not reflect our true identity.

According to Erikson, an identity crisis is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself. Erikson noted that developing a sense of identity is important during the teenage years, though the formation and growth of identity is not confined to adolescence. Instead, identity shifts and changes throughout life as people confront new challenges and tackle different experiences. Thus, an identity crisis can occur at any age. Experiencing an identity crisis is a common reaction in such situations, leading to inner conflict and turmoil. However, it can also mark the beginning of a transformative and positive phase in life. There is an identity crisis refers to a phase of doubt or disorientation in an individual's life, occurring when their self-perception becomes uncertain and shaky.

Individuals have the capacity to renegotiate and alter their meanings. For instance, they may question the conventional male/female gender dichotomy or challenge societal expectations regarding gender roles in work or parenting. One's personal and social identities play a role in shaping their perception and interaction with the world, impacting the opportunities and obstacles they encounter, their perspectives on and treatment of others, as well as how they are treated by others. According to Tajfel, 1981; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, &

Wetherell, 1987) they have also identified social identity as a powerful ingredient in the development of in group bias and intergroup conflict.

People tend to experience an identity crisis at various points in life, particularly at points of great change, including: beginning a new relationship, ending a marriage or partnership, experiencing a traumatic event, having a child, learning about a health condition, losing a loved one, losing or starting a job, moving to a new place. Moreover, it does not only happen in reality but also literary works (Hall, 1990, p.713).

One of the works that shows identity crisis because of her mixed-race is *Swing Time*. *Swing Time* is a novel by Zadie Smith that explores two childhood friends, the unnamed narrator, and Tracey, both of whom share a love for dance. As they grow up in a London housing estate, their lives take different paths. While the narrator becomes the personal assistant to a famous pop star, Tracey pursues a career in dance. As they enter puberty, the narrator who remains unnamed seems to drift along, never really content or at one with herself. The narrator's namelessness symbolizes her erasure. Her voice is muted by dominant narratives—whether her mother's politics, Aimee's philanthropy, or Tracey's performative Blackness—leaving her perpetually questioning, “What was I doing here?”

The novel weaves back and forth in time, exploring the narrator's reflections on her childhood, her complex relationship with Tracey, her experiences working for the global pop icon, and her influences from family and her own lack of personal understanding explain her inability to adopt a tolerant and reasonable attitude with a multicultural society. The narrative also delves into the complexities of race, class, and the challenges of navigating the contemporary world.

Narrator's own lack of personal understanding is due to the narrator's mother being a feminist activist without a degree to be a member of the British government and she is a black woman experiencing the diaspora and her father British and white, she became a mixed-race child. This is a broader term that encompasses individuals who have ancestry from two or more races called mixed-race. It includes biracial individuals but also extends to those who may identify with multiple racial heritages, such as someone with black, white, and

Asian ancestry. Mixed-race can also refer to a more inclusive identity that recognizes the complexities of racial backgrounds.

Children in multiracial families often develop distinct racial identities. For example, one sibling may identify as black, while another sees themselves as white. These identities are influenced by physical characteristics, family ties, parental support, and experiences with different racial groups. Research also suggests that multiracial children tend to be happier than their 'single race' counterparts (Fields, 2010). Multiracial families play a crucial role in early childhood development, shaping notions of race and culture. The effect of multiracial or mixed-race is hybrid identity and identity crisis. Homi K. Bhabha is a leading postcolonial theorist who has written extensively on the themes of identity, culture and representation. One of his most significant contributions to this field is the concept of "hybridity", which he defines as mixing elements of different cultures to produce something new and different.

According to Bhabha, hybridity is a way of understanding the complete and often contradictory nature of identity in a globalized world. He argues that individuals and communities are constantly negotiating their identities, using different cultural, linguistic and historical traditions to create something unique and dynamic. In its brief definition, hybrid identity is where two or more aspects of a person's identity are combined, producing a unique one (Crawford, 2014). Forms of identity. In other words, they live in the middle of two cultures, which leads to ambivalent identities. The past culture shadows their path because it has developed since they were born when they have to accept the new culture as their attempt to adapt to their new environment. That is the reason why immigrants are considered to live in two worlds. This cultural problem creates a negotiation between the old and new cultures. Migrants who fail in adapting to their new land to maintain their past culture find themselves as a new identity.

Furthermore, this study looked into mixed-race effect on the identity crisis of the main character as shown in the novel *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith. Also the mixed-race main character's experience of hybridity in her social attitude analysed with hybridity theory from Homi K. Bhabha. This study differs from the previously researches regarding the similar topic or issues by the main focus of this study. This study analyzed how the mixed-race and hybridity influenced the narrator and caused her identity crisis throughout the

novel by the depiction of characters dialogues and narratives—showcasing the analysis with the use of identity crisis theory, giving them the perspective how these character is underwent identity crisis and choose their own path despite the culture they're being introduced and raised by. The study is being conducted by Eric Erikson's theories about identity, theory on mixed-race.

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the background, this paper intends to elaborate the following questions:

1. How does the main character undergo the identity crisis?
2. How is being mixed-race affect the identity crisis of the main character?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

According to the research problem above, the purpose of this study wants to implement the following statement:

1. This study aims to explore the symptoms identity crisis of the main character.
2. This study aims to analyse relationship between her mixed-race experiences to her identity crisis.

1.4 Scope of Study

The scope of this research is the analysis of the main character, the unnamed narrator of *Swing Time* novel by Zadie Smith which refers to process of identity crisis that caused by mixed-race and hybridity experienced from the Jamaican mother and the white British father. The novel's story revolves around two childhood friends, the unnamed narrator, and Tracey, both of whom share a love for dance. As they grow up in a London housing estate, their lives take different paths. While the narrator becomes the personal assistant to a famous pop star, Tracey pursues a career in dance. When the narrator becomes, the personal assistant to West Africa, she compared her London State to West Africa and she feel doesn't belong to each other place she run it. This idea aligns

with Erik Erikson theory. According to Erikson (1963), an identity crisis is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself. Erikson noted that developing a sense of identity is important during the teenage years, though the formation and growth of identity is not confined to adolescence. Recognition of mixed race would be fair, because if racially “pure” people are entitled to distinct racial identities, then so are racially mixed people. Also, the false belief in biological races logically entails a belief in mixed biological races. But, of course, in true biological taxonomic terms, if pure races do not exist, then neither do mixed races (Zack 1997, 183–84; 2002, chap. 7)

1.5 Significance of Study

The outcomes of this study are expected to be beneficial in several aspects as follows:

1. To give the readers a reference who are interested in studying identity crisis, especially in literary works.
2. To add the analysis about mixed-race can affect the identity crisis.
3. To add an Erikson’s theory of identity crisis that caused by mixed-race experiences.

1.6 Previous Study

When writing this thesis, the writer has discovered 5 article that used *Swing Time* novel and cultural identity as the object of study. The first in ‘Unveiling Multiracial Family Parenting Practices in Early Childhood Education within the Indonesian Context: A Case Study’ by Aghnaita and Wahyuni Murniati, published on 2023. The presence of multiracial families in society has given rise to various questions regarding early childhood care practices. It is essential for children to develop a strong sense of identity, considering their diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. This research aims to investigate the parenting practices within multiracial families during early childhood.

Banaz Wirya Ali's article (2023) discusses the psychological of social identity. This research analyzes the main character growth throughout *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith. This study also investigates the challenges faced by people of color in the entertainment industry, among critics, and in the pursuit of social and economic mobility. A strong sense of community is difficult for immigrant groups to establish. The difficulties that immigrant communities in contemporary Britain face in assimilating to mainstream culture are depicted in nuanced detail in Zadie Smith's *Swing Time*. The researcher concludes that the main character's influences from family and her own lack of personal understanding explain her inability to adopt a tolerant and reasonable attitude with a multicultural society.

Necati Erkilinc (2021) discussed the issues sense of belonging about the main character, postcolonial, and intersectionalism. This study analysed in its own resolution, specifies in a crystal clear the reasons of the decisions that the characters made in the novel along with concentrating on where exactly these decisions have led them and whether these journeys that they take have truly led them to a place where they belong. And the author aimed to offer this study with the intention of disclosing all mentioned aspects of the characters in the novel.

The fifth article by Ngutswen Ray Ahoame (2020) discussed the issue of hybridity and identity crisis in *Diana Evans' 26a and Sade Adeniran's Imagine This* deal with the aforementioned migrant problems, as they problematise the struggles of the major characters to carve out their own identities as hybrids in their migratory journeys between Nigeria and Britain. This study explores the issue of hybridity and identity crisis in *Diana Evans' 26a and Sade Adeniran's Imagine This* with a focus on how the major characters construct their own identities and how they undergo identity crisis as hybrids in multicultural spaces. The study adopts qualitative method of descriptive textual analysis and applies Homi Bhabha's Hybridity model of Postcolonial theory which account for creation of multiple identities and ambivalence, and Erik Erikson's theory of identity crisis to explain the clash of self.

This study analyzed identity crisis found in the novel *Swing Time* by Zadie Smith, limited with the previous related study that has similar topic to this study. Another limitation of the study is the lack of variety from similar topic in

the book where it analysed in this study, the identity crisis caused by mixed race and their hybridity. This study added analysis related to the identity crisis caused by mixed race and hybridity that does not yet exist in related theories or related journals. Therefore, there's a need for further studies and research regarding the topic to add into the variety where it be future references.



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