

The Cultural Differences And Identity In Chinese American Family In Everything I Never Told You By Celeste Ng

Ayunita Kurnia Ningsih 

Master of Arts Governance, Yogyakarta Art Institute of Indonesia, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received April 27, 2023

Revised May 01, 2023

Accepted May 02, 2023

Available online May 29, 2023

Keywords:

Multiculturalism, cultural study, cultural differences, identity crisis, biracial marriage.



This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.

ABSTRACT

This article aimed to study multiculturalism through the cultural differences and identity in Chinese American families portrayed by the characters in the novel *Everything I Never Told You*. This research was a cultural study research that used the qualitative method and library research method and the close reading and narrative description approach to understanding the cultural differences and identity in Chinese families following Stuart Hall's cultural studies theory. In conclusion, the identity crisis in people with different cultures and identities in a multicultural environment was due to various causes, such as minority racial discrimination, their difficult positioning within society, failed attempts to adapt to society, and the influence of their parent's worldview in bringing them up. Fulfilling others' dreams was not an easy job which may cause further damage in the process of identity-searching for people in the multicultural environment facing discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism is an ideology it applies to the diversity of tribes, races, religions, regions, languages, and gender groups that live side by side in peace and have equal positions. It can be found in countries or social lives and unites the diversity of cultural identities. In a complex world like ours, most countries today are culturally diverse because people come from many cultural differences. Dissenting questions and clashing issues happen in this diverse society and democracy, such as using languages, regional autonomies, political representations, immigration, and naturalization policies. Apart from this, as social being who lives side by side and needs one another, it is important to know about multiculturalism to help us respect differences and maintain peace. There are many different cultures that have become a part of life since it will represent people's identity as social beings.

There are many different cultures that have become a part of life since it will represent people's identity as social beings. As Philip Riley states in his research of *Language, Culture, and Identity an Ethno Linguistic Perspective* about life and culture, "it consists of the totality of social knowledge and is distributed differentially. To be learnt, culture has to be transmitted and any society that fails to pass on its knowledge to future generations fails to produce itself." (2007:40). As things go, it will draw more deeply in the most controversial issue which can be discussed in cultural life that identity is existing in different countries and cultural backgrounds by various knowledge.

The question of identity exists because it is increasingly fragmented and fractured and, "is formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways in which we are represented and addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (Hall, 1995:598). The issue of identity is not fixed concept. It is strongly debated in society and becomes a concern in multicultural understanding especially in multicultural communities.

The question of identity exists because it is increasingly fragmented and fractured and, "is formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways in which we are represented and addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (Hall, 1995: 598). The issue of identity is not a fixed concept. It is strongly debated in society and becomes a concern in multicultural understanding, especially in multicultural communities. Such as the nationality of people who were born in Indonesia to Chinese parents, the concept of gender equality in society, or how to be tolerant of people's differences. Those things are the beginning steps in a complex process of identity crisis which on people's perspectives as they change. Therefore,

speaking of identity crisis in a multicultural society is a part of today's society's problems. People demand the recognition of their identity and cultural differences of minority groups are at stake.

In Indonesia, Chinese Indonesian who were born in 1966 will not take pleasure in celebrating Chinese New Year and have very limited access to the display of Chinese characters in publicity because of the strongman Suharto's political leadership that constructed a policy of assimilation¹ from 1965-1998. Then again, it has been 33 years since Chinese Indonesian were banned from practicing their languages in schools and all of their rights also movements were controlled by the government. For this reason, future generations of Chinese Indonesians will provide a history to explore how Suharto with his supporters constructed the Chinese language and culture growing up.

Some efforts become historic not only to protect cultural minorities but also to regulate potential conflicts between majority and minority. One of them is bilateral regulation² to treat people in a few countries. In Suharto's era, the long-complicated relationship between Chinese Indonesians and *Pribumi* is also experienced in other countries because of multicultural diversity. In pre-industrial societies, the generations of Chinese in America also faced hard situations. Some immigrants in Chinatown became prisoners who also worked with a very low salary because of Anti-Chinese sentiment was rampant. In 1950, educated Chinese people succeed in fighting the stereotypic image of Chinese immigrants who were assimilated into American culture until then after they made a contribution to the economy of America.³ In the same century, the new generation of Chinese Americans got their freedom to live because who are more highly educated, more likely to be employed, and get a higher household income. Reflecting on the background above, it can be said that multicultural awareness is the foundation of relationships and it involves the ability of understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation of history, values, also experience of groups that apply to cultural studies that get its own interest in this global age⁴.

A debut novel by Celeste Ng gives understanding and curiosity to analyze more about what happened years ago concerning cultural differences. According to the outline of *Everything I Never Told You* (2014), the first of Ng's novels, the story is about some insidious nature-based race discrimination in America that concerns people of different cultures. She pictures how difficult it was for a Chinese and an American to fall in love in 1970 in Ohio just because of their different race. In addition, Ng wrote about cultural differences issues through the relationship of the couple, the communication of parents and their youngsters, and the affiliation between families dealing with a difficult society, especially for the Chinese. Celeste Ng is trying to portray the anti-Asian (Chinese-American racism) who have been denied equal rights, and subjected to verbal harassment, prejudice, and the act of discrimination for more than 200 years⁵.

Gene Luen Yang issued a work entitled *American Born Chinese* in 2006. As an Asian American cartoonist, he tells the story of a Chinese student in an American school trying to fit in through picture books. Yang tells the main character gets bullied by schoolmates because of his different race. *American Born Chinese* and *Everything I Never Told You* have similarities in bringing up the issues of identity. On the other hand, what makes the difference between *American Born Chinese* and *Everything I Never Told You* is Yang picturing that all Americans do discriminate. This will make the reader assume that all Americans are discriminated against non-Americans. On the other hand, the novel by Celeste Ng gives more insights into cultural identity. The act of discrimination is not only present from the Americans themselves, but also from the newcomers.

Everything I Never Told You contains a gripping page between cultures and rifts within a family, uncovering the ways in which mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, husbands and wives struggle, all their lives, to understand one another. Accordingly, the researcher is triggered to explore the issue of social well-being and the gap that Ng opens with sections set in the era of an interracial family in 1970s America. Moreover, the moment is when a previous crisis is also a propulsive mystery that constructs a mesmerizing narrative that shrinks enormous issues of race and identity into the miniaturist dynamics of a single family. This research is to analyse the issue of cultural identity and differences represented in *Everything I Never Told You* through the character and setting. It will explore the matter in question of social well-being in

¹Policy of assimilation is a policy which usually forced upon indigenous peoples to change their values and identity according to their live-in counterpart. <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/sa/SE00796> (Accessed on 2022, May 20th, at 07.31 AM)

²Bilateral regulation is a term of involving many different communities become together from agenda that supports one-sided action. (Accessed on 2022, May 20th, at 09.31 AM)

³<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states> (Accessed on 2022, July 28th, at 01.31 AM)

⁴“Global age” refers to a period of time when there is prevailing sense if the interconnectedness of all human beings of a common fate for the human species and of a threat to its life on this Earth. It has featured frequently in the titles of books, conferences, and lectures since the 1960s and has become popular as a framing device in political rhetoric since the 1990s. http://hoover.archives.gov/exhibits/China/Chinese_Americans/#1950-70 (Accessed on 2022, July 28th, at 01.31 AM)

⁵<http://www.Ngng.com/>. (Accessed on 2022, May 18th, at 1 PM)

Chinese-American families. The researcher reflects that the richness of cultural studies in the latter day creates a quite hard pedagogical and recognizes how to understand many different disciplines.

METHODS

This research was a cultural study of the novel *Everything I Never Told You* by Celeste Ng. The research used the qualitative method and library research method to collect the data for analysis. The qualitative method is a research approach that aims to explore and understand the meanings and experiences of participants through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, and other qualitative data collection techniques. Qualitative research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied and is often used in social sciences, humanities, and education research. On the other hand, the library research method, also known as desk research, is a research approach that involves reviewing and analyzing existing literature, documents, and data to gain a better understanding of a particular topic or issue. This method involves searching and reviewing books, journal articles, reports, and other sources of information to gather relevant data. The mixed-method research approach combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single study. This approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of a particular topic or issue by using both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. In summary, using both qualitative and library research methods in a study can provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research problem being investigated. The researcher used the close reading and narrative description approach to understand the cultural differences and identity in Chinese families through the analysis of the characters and how its characterized and the setting described in the novel.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Research

The research used the cultural studies approach from Stuart Hall who was a pioneer in the field of cultural studies, an interdisciplinary approach to the role of social institutions in the shaping of culture and “the networks of meanings which individuals and groups use to make sense of and communicate with one another”⁶. In late modern times, the identities are therefore constituted within radical historicization and are constantly in the process of change and transformation, not only outside representation⁷. This is because time is constantly spinning and age is growing. Identities are constructed within, not outside, but through discourse. People have to understand the specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations⁸ and practices, by specific enunciatively. Moreover, the play of specific modalities of power thus is the product of making of difference and exclusion than the sign of identity in each person. Hall states that he does not try to inscribe itself in the overarching metanarrative⁹ of achieved knowledge, within the institutions¹⁰.

Nowadays, society has changed significantly through process modernization. These changes affected the societies that build up and develop their identities. Ironically, the stabilization of identities is questioned due to the new generation in the multicultural background that tends to make fragments of the individuals who behaved accordingly to rules and traditions. Therefore, individuals had very little choice about where they preferred to live. Identity is too complex and too little to be dealt with because “it is formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways in which we are represented and addressed in the cultural systems which surround us” (Hall, 1992:272). As a cultural critic, many processes of change have been discussed and Hall is classifying an identity as the definition and characteristics that change depending on the era which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, or representation.

There are two different ways of thinking about cultural identity from Hall, which is in the first definition is the term one, shared culture, a sort of collective or one true self, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and a shared culture that provide the society as “one people”. A conception of cultural identity played a critical role in today’s multicultural society which has so profoundly reshaped the world. Along with that, there is a history of cultural identity that has a part in the emerging social movements today, as simply as interaction in daily activities. Therefore, nowadays people should understand the differences around each

⁶<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Stuart-McPhail-Hall> (Accessed on 2022, May 20th, at 11.00 AM)

⁷https://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/arth200/identity_difference.html (Accessed on 2022, May 21st, at 10.30 AM)

⁸Representation of knowledge about different objects but have same meaning, heterogeneous, systematic, materially involved in the implementation of social life.

⁹Lyotard’s term which means a story or narrative that is presumed to have great generality and represents a final truth.

¹⁰http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/homi_k._bhabha_on_stuart_hall (Accessed on 2022, May 21st, at 2.00 PM)

other in public. Secondly, there are also critical points that constitute what people really are, since history has intervened about what society has become. It means the masses cannot assume by own perspective, with any exactness, about one experience-one identity without acknowledging others. For this reason, cultural identity in the second sense is a matter of becoming as well as of being which has points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but positioning and being positioned. (Hall, 1990:222-37).

Humans are much better at learning some new things from adaptation in search of a new life such as norms, rules, languages, and lifestyle. As a human being who has the plan to move to another culture, one should differentiate between different types of cross-culture. According to Dr. Young Yun Kim, a professor of Arts and Sciences, about identity adaptation, it is clear that a newcomer moving from one culture to another will affect the internal condition. It is a part of the process to fit in through adaptation like socialization, communication, sharing the cultural experience, and understanding the differences of other ethnic groups (Kim, 2006: 3, 283-300).

Intrinsic Elements of Literature

One of the intrinsic elements in literature work, especially in a novel is the character which connects with characterization. The character itself is anyone in a story that interacts with the different characters and how the character acts. Whereas, according to Literary Devices, characterization is the act of creating and describing a character in literature work¹¹. There are different types of characters distinguished by characterization approaches, such as the protagonist or a major leading character that revolves around the story. There is also an antagonist who represents the opposite of the protagonist.

The classification of characters is one of the factors that develop a story. It can often be described as a major character who is vital to the development and resolution of the conflict and a minor character who serves to help the plot move forward and complements the major character or even supports the protagonist. There is also a flat character who is the opposite of a round character or major character who encounters conflict. In addition, a dynamic one changes in some important ways, but a static character remains the same. Furthermore, every character usually works profoundly to get an in-depth idea of the personality of their respective character. As a result, no direct statements about nature's character are found, periodically¹².

Dr. Chris McCully, who lectures in creative writing and literature at the University of Essex, stated "setting is important whether you write in poetry or prose. The setting does not just concern nice descriptive passages about the house, woodlands, mountains, roads, and so on. The setting does not mean merely scenery"¹³. It means that the setting is also a master of the plot, a state of mind, and emotion in the story. Over and above, the setting influences the characters and what they do.

As one of the extremely important elements, the setting establishes the atmosphere in a specific scene. It also creates a creepy and nervous mood and pushes the reader to gain a sense which relates to the character within the story. There is a historical and geographical setting as the main components of the setting. The historical setting is how the arrangement of the story is based on when the real events. Meanwhile, the geographical setting is an aspect that correlates with when the events occur and where a character is socializing. The setting has a serious effect on what happens in the story. Just like what Mark O'Bannon says, "a part of the time of day or night can change the plot significantly, it can also be used to increase tension with the ticking clock method."¹⁴ For instance, place a bomb or some other kind of terrible event and let everyone know when it is going to go off. There is also a set of a social movements like the political and cultural conditions which will affect the readers. Most times, the environment plays a huge part in the setting of any story. For example, many romance stories take historical sites in certain time periods. In addition, a strong setting describes the story and pulls on the reader's senses.

Disucussion

The story is told from the third-person omniscient point of view which the narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of all of the characters. All of the characters in the novel are mentioned by names or pronouns. The author uses them, Lydia's sister, her, her father, etcetera, as the participants in the story. The story tells the events of a family who is discriminated against because of their mixed race. An unjust

¹¹<http://www.literarydevices.com/characterization/> (Accessed on 2022, May 27th, at 7.10 PM)

¹²<http://literarydevices.net/characterization/> (Accessed on 2022, May 27th, at 9.33 PM)

¹³<https://www.essex.ac.uk/outreach/documents/setting-literature-creative-writing.pdf> (Accessed on 2022, May 28th, at 5.10 PM)

¹⁴<http://www.betterstorytelling.net/thebasics/howsettingaffectsyourstory.html> (Accessed on 2022, Sept 09th, at 14.48 WIB)

treatment, a relationship between children and parents, and the unspoken tension of unfairness by society picture that identity issue is about acceptance and feeling of being included.

The Identity Conflict over Chinese Immigrants in America

Being Chinese in 1938 in America was an arduous life to live. As Chinese immigrants, they had come to a place and relocated from one to another in order to get a life of pleasure. At that time, political unrest and economic pressures had happened in America. It made so many Chinese immigrants take low-skilled jobs as laborers in mining, construction, agriculture, manufacturing, or service industries. The Chinese clustered together in order not to be found out and deported to Native County although historians said that some waves of Chinese immigrants returned to China. The story went from the time of Chester A. Arthur¹⁵ who approved the Chinese Exclusion Act¹⁶ which grew the Chinese sentiment and ethnic discrimination.

James Lee experienced as a radical victim of historical development by the American government of America which affects his identity, following the path according to time and condition. He had adjusted to being an alien under the law of the state. Even though he is a Chinese American, James Lee also got oft-unpleasant treatment because of his race. Being the second generation did not make him comfortable as an American because of the notion of assimilation. As a quiet person who never expressed his feeling of being discriminated against, James Lee did not have a sense of belonging as a citizen of America. The line "He had never felt he belonged here, even though he'd been born on American soil [...]" (p. 40) shows that America is a multicultural country, but the society gets complicated when they have to face the different people who migrate to their land. While this may be true, the second generation does not have it easy. It is often said that he experiences identity struggles because of the dual cultures.

America is a country with unlimited possibilities. Many people have been entering America from various countries with different languages and also cultures. Consequently, they develop a mixture of languages and cultures. On the other hand, all of the contingencies have their other things to be discussed. The line "America was a melting pot, but Congress terrified that the molten mixture was becoming a shade too yellow, had banned all immigrants from China. [...]" (p. 40), it can be said that people are unable to broaden his or her mind to exchange experiences of learning from people with other heritages; in this context is China. The classification existed and was deliberately set up in multicultural society so that some people view different qualities unfairly. Ironically, all immigrants had come to America using aliases or pretending to be the sons of neighbours who came there years earlier. The line in the novel describes this as "only the children of those already in States could enter. So, James's father had taken the name of his neighbour's son [...]" (p. 40). This was unfair federal law to shut out immigrants based on their nationality.

According to Byron Yee¹⁷ in the article *Chinese-American Descendants Uncover Forged Family Histories*¹⁸ by Hansi LoWang, "coming to America was a game. And the Chinese knew they were playing a game". Thus, basically, James Lee's father knew that he was playing the game to be accepted in America and to get a better life. There was Chinatown for Chinese immigrants clustered together, so they would not stand out and they also could find work through self-employment. Furthermore, it showed that the white people basically refused to work with the Chinese. That was the discrimination felt by immigrants in America although most Americans saw themselves as tolerant people toward minorities. Unfortunately, the Americans just did not realize that they were being insensitive to Chinese Americans by discriminating against them.

According to Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity theory, "The conceptualization of identity involves looking at classificatory systems which show how social relations are organized and divided. For example, into at least two opposing groups – 'us and them'" (Woodward, 1997:52). That was how America constructed for limitation statue in order to control the people coming and living in the country. The immigrants must show tolerance and adapt to the American way. In the case of Chinese Americans, James Lee was the son of his parents who immigrated to the United States. Sometimes he got unintended discrimination such as when his classmates ask where he came from, and just take on fewer friendly forms.

Although the country had the border act, many people from outside America still entered it illegally. The rules and regulations of America indirectly made a social stigma about otherness for those who were different. Accordingly, James Lee's parents' merging of their identity is related to occidental culture as well as James' name American that is integrated with Lee Chinese's name in order to be a part of the Americans

¹⁵Chester A. Arthur was the America's 21st President. <https://www.whiteshouse.gov/1600/presidents/chesterarthur> (Accessed on 2022, Feb 20th, at 01.16 AM).

¹⁶The Chinese Exclusion Act was the first significant law that restricted immigrants into United States, especially the coming of Chinese. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=47> (Accessed on 2022, Feb 20th, at 01.16 AM)

¹⁷Byron Yee is the second son of Bing Quail Yee. He is the son of a paper son. He is known as producer and actor.

¹⁸<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/12/17/251833652/chinese-american-descendants-uncover-forged-family-history> (Accessed on 2022, March 20th, at 01.16 AM)

and to adopt the American way. That is how identity as otherness happens that does not concern about the history and other people in a community. Not only getting the exclusion from the regulation of the country, but James Lee also got verbal abuse from schoolmates because of his physical differences. As a further matter, the researcher presumes that the identity conflict that exists among the second generation starts from the surroundings. Moreover, again, the researcher may say just like previously mentioned that the second generation has to face or struggle for their identity due to two dissimilar cultures each other. So here back to the case of James Lee the second-generation immigrant who experience a cultural conflict between his *parents* and that mainstream American society.

He began his study in America at Lloyd Academy. On the first day of school, his father gave him a deterrent to be the best person, representing the people from East Asia, "You're the first Oriental boy to attend Lloyd [...] "Set a good example." (p. 43). This gives a deep sense of having an essential identity of being Chinese. His father thought that there is one clear and authentic set of characteristics that all Chinese share. Besides that, the word "good" from the passage above implied that the Chinese had been perceived as a bad egg¹⁹ for America. As a result, he does not want his boy to become a stranger in his school. His classmate perceived him as a very odd person. It shows social relations between the next generation of Chinese and American constituting several cultures had been critical. Here, the parental figure supposed to be an educator and connect community members to introduce other cultures to open their relatives from the earlier time, so there is nobody will assume different people looks negatively. Thus, the new generation in America gets surprised in a way that is hard to understand when the other race is around. The view of the majority becomes fixated on experience-one identity without acknowledging others, as Hall put in his idea of essentialist identity concept.

Adjusting to the conditions and situations is not easy. However, it is a way to make other people become positioned and positioned within a multicultural neighborhood. Because an adjustment is formed by the identity perceived by society, it is always in process, constituted within, and, or representation, as Hall put it in his concept. Seemingly, James Lee had gone through to pass the hard days of being Chinese American who got discriminated against by his schoolmates. He still tried to make a sense of comfort although it seems to be problematic for him too. As described by Kim, "Cross-cultural adaptation is conceived as a process of dynamic unfolding of the natural human tendency to struggle for an internal equilibrium in the face of often adversarial environmental conditions." (2006: 3, 283-300). It explains that the dynamic of the adaptation process is naturally felt by newcomers; to share the cultural experience and understand the differences of other ethnic groups. People living in an ever-changing social sphere that demands adjustments to human identity and actions become an examination of contemporary life.

As said by Hall that the conception of cultural identity played a critical role in the multicultural condition which has so profoundly reshaped the world. For that reason, all of the struggles, such as James Lee's way of adapting, always to be in process of transformation of his identity in order to position himself as a unity in the majority and get an equal position. Accordingly, the author of *Everything I Never Told You* stated that someone's identity is represented by how she or he looks. It naturally makes a significant difference for other people. Therefore, to look just like the others, James Lee tried to change his habit in order to be the same and to blend. A person's identity is constantly demanded to become socially acceptable to people around him. Public perspectives also shape and distinguish people's identities from the way people dress and speak. Thus, identity is about someone being placed.

Lloyd Academy accompanied James Lee to become a professor at Middlewood College for American History, specifically for the Cowboys subject. One unsurprising day, an office receptionist at university where James Lee teaches made an assumption that he was a visitor who came from Japan to visit the college. It shows that there are many people who make assumptions on what they saw from the physical appearance. Like what Hall said, identity is constructed within the self and discourse, not outside. Interestingly, James Lee accustomed himself to accept or tolerate of those treatments from the people around who always judged a book by its cover. Taking the essence of Hall's ideas about an identity issue that essentialist conception of identity "has been taken to define the essence of people being, it is very core and hence ground the existence as human subjects." (1996:597).

His students treated him unfairly and they underestimated him. He realized and acted like it did not matter although he attempted to cover his inferiority and said, "Boys will be boys" (p. 34). Combined with one of Hall concepts, James Lee was positioned as the enlightenment subject which became the center of attention because of his physical differences. His students just saw him as "consisted as an inner core which

¹⁹Bad egg is an old-fashioned for bad person <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/bad+egg> (Accessed on 2022, Jan 20th, at 05.16 AM).

first emerged when the subject was born, unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same---continuous or identical with itself---throughout the individual's existence." (1996:597).

America is described as a multicultural country. There are various citizens and cultures within the multicultural society. To some extent, any society can be defined as a multicultural place when it is constructed by two or more different cultures, languages, and religions. However, the people in America are not able to consider the different races, ethnicities, and otherness of its citizens essential to its existence but rather stand in the cultural melting pot²⁰. Imperceptibly, the melting pot masks the fact that being whites has its privileges²¹. This only makes the racial discrimination, and it still exists because history calls it so.

Presumably, assimilation among father and mother's James Lee as the first generation of immigrants had affected the second generation. It does not mean that they left their roots because leaving the roots is not an easy thing, but it rather requires a long process. Nevertheless, the first generation of immigrant's dubious past makes things problematic not only for the second generation, but also to the third generation. This novel brings to light that experience of first to second generation would implicate to the next generations. It is not only the complexity of identity that occurs in it, but also the conflict between generations.

Ethnic and National Identity among Second Generations

Being racist is much easier than being tolerant, either consciously or unconsciously, for those people who perceive others who are different. Moreover, it can turn into discrimination that affects the victims emotionally such as that experienced by James Lee and his family. The condition at that time did not support James Lee to get married to Marilyn because, "it was 1958; in Virginia, in half the country, their wedding would break the law [...]" (p. 51). The law forbids interracial marriage. In addition, in 1958, Gallup poll as American research-based revealed that only 4% of American adults support interracial couples to get married, while 94% opposed to the idea.²²

Marilyn's mother was like other people who supported the anti-miscegenation laws.²³ According to the line "You're sure," she said, "that he doesn't just want a green card?" (p. 53), one can assume that Chinese was still considered exceptional, although the Chinese Exclusion Act had passed since the last 66 years from James Lee's life. In such modern societies which tend to unify the minority to be the same as them, Marilyn's mother was afraid if James Lee wanted to get authorization to live and work in United States on a permanent basis by marrying a white American citizen. She was afraid that Marilyn was being used by person who as historically never wanted in the country.

Americans had regulations that prohibited people from different races to live together, "[...] the law reminding them that Almighty God had never intended whites, black, yellow, and red to mix, that there should be no mongrel citizens, no obliteration of racial pride. [...]" (p. 51). As one of matter of the fact that society deal with bias and discrimination in life, even love have bounds in this regard. Therefore, when two people who are in interracial relationship then dealing with reality and it is that others may harbor negativity about their relationship. Moreover, she thought about Marilyn's children who would not be able to assimilate into society. "Think about your children," she said. "Where will you live? You won't fit in anywhere. You'll be sorry for the rest of your life." (p. 54). This is universally doubted of those in interracial marriages. Many people have made the assumption that biracial children must inevitably have psychological problems which will make them difficult to blend in the society. Other than that, the children who were born from mixed families often experience unique types of discrimination, one assumption of being mixed race is mistaken identity. Having dynamic condition and situation, people's identities are always contextual. Identity can also come from as otherness, as mentioned by Hall, "but, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation" (Woodward, 1997:52).

At that time, in the situation of anti-Chinese sentiment, critical and historical interventions changed the society. It means that the people could not have their rights to live freely and choose with whom they wanted to live by. This is what it meant that America is a country inhabited by various people but it does not care about the diversity of life. It is because point of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture. Identity is not an essence, but the series of positioning and being positioned. Discrimination not only felt by the Chinese as immigrants at the time, but it was also for the citizens of America itself, especially women.

²⁰Melting pot as adopted in the United States, tells immigrants that no matter who they have been in the past, upon landing on American shores, they are American and are expected to adopt and follow the American way. http://www.darrenduncan.net/archived_web_work/voices/voices_v1_n4/mosaic.html (Accessed on 2022, Jan 07th, at 5.16 PM)

²¹<http://www.ethicsdaily.com/the-problem-with-the-melting-pot-cms-13647> (Accessed on 2022, Jan 07th, at 5.17 PM)

²²<http://www.gallup.com/poll/117328/marriage.aspx> (Accessed on 2022, Jan 05th, at 05.16 WIB).

²³The regulations which prohibiting cross-racial marriage.

Marilyn got discrimination in the form of gender bias when she became one of the physics students at Radcliffe in 1955. The line "Everything, she soon realized, started with *better*: "Better let me pour that acid for you." "Better stand back---this will make a pop." (p. 26) is the way the writer show that America is a sexist society. Most positions of power are held by men and it does not apply to women. Then, Marilyn's silence is one act of resistance that leads to be understood which women could not even own her property. The sexism against women above is still a major problem and also an outer surface of discrimination which common in America. This happens due to many factors and lack of understanding. A person's identity is not something fixed. This means one will always find new things to learn.

Marilyn was doubted by her male friends just because she was a woman and it was impossible for her to be a chemist. Appropriately, Marilyn showed her open mindedness of the sickening treatment as a form of adaptation process to understand a culture. It is the same as what Professor Kim said in his theory of adaptation and transformation that, "in some cases, adaptive successes may be almost entirely due to the openness, strength, and positivity of the stranger's personality, which enable the stranger to overcome even the most severely unreceptive host environment." (2006: 3, 283-300). In the name of gender equality, Marilyn proved herself and her male school mate that women also capable and could be equal to men. She did not want to be shackled in sexist environment around her and she refused their help. Besides, she did not want to be the victim of the prevailing role of women as an inferior object. Marilyn was an ambitious person. She was a brave woman who rejected the notion at that time that the majority of women were required to be submissive and backward.

American women were generally regarded as being wives and mothers as the most significant professions.²⁴ As a result, Marilyn's mother thought that identity is stable and will not change. She just wanted her daughter to be a home maker. "[...] Home economics was required for every sophomore girl" (p. 243). For Marilyn, it really bothered her and for that reason she insisted to achieve her dream to become a doctor wearing a white doctor's coat, laying a cool hand against a feverish forehead, and touching a stethoscope to a patient's chest. Yet in the end, before it happened, she met a man and got married. Hall stated that "some differences are marked, but in process some differences may be obscured; for example, the assertion of national identity may omit class and gender differences" (Woodward, 1997:12). It means that society is a key concept to provide the framework within the construction of identity and to the role of history.

The cultural identity and differences brought up in this novel not only tell how the Chinese are being positioned and has their own positioning, but also how Americans are represented and representing themselves. Furthermore, the researcher proclaims that culture as a capacious abstract which connects to society. In addition, multiculturalism concept becomes an overriding pathway to apply in social life. Multiculturalism is a democratic culture in which to convince all social-cultural groups to be realized, represented, and can coexist. Multiculturalism focuses on understanding and awareness that individuals and social groups exist in mutual tolerance despite different ideologies or interests. However, the understanding itself is a form of adaptation and assimilation which society should view as parts of process.

Their marriage was illegal, hasty, and its rudimentary preparation. The bride's dress was not whites, but cream. It was too plain, so it did not look like a wedding dress. They did not take their ceremonial marriage in church and without any roses but daisies, which are not wedding flowers. None of these differences were deal breakers as they fell deeper and deeper in love. From here, the researcher sees that James Lee and Marilyn constructed their identity by the concept of otherness. They shared the differences in marriage and believed that everyone had differences from others. Moreover, that was one of many problematic evidences for their next generation. Their shared different identities would make things difficult for their children. Their choices were created out of people's perspective on them. Their life after that day was not as simple their ceremonial marriage. After the event, James Lee had to be accustomed by the question about his interracial marriage, just like an academic staff did, "Your wife's---not Chinese?" (p.10), and the other people seemed to tense up once they saw his family photo on his office desk.

Although interracial marriage has been happening since the colonial times, but the question above shows that it is taboo and posing barriers to mixed-race couples in America. Moreover, that is one of matter of consequence for James Lee and family's life; upon how he lived his life with Marilyn and their children, how he and his family viewed themselves and each other, and how his family communicated within and to the society. Nonetheless, their ineffective communication became deadly interracial family drama. James Lee was able to socialize with a stranger who also Chinese like himself, in a place where his identity could hardly be accepted. It just made the researcher took the idea of the fact existence that James Lee taught about race custom is an essential one. He liked Louisa because of their same characteristics as Chinese Americans.

²⁴<http://www.wic.org/misc/history.htm> (Accessed on 2022, Jan 05th, at 3.16 PM).

In America, skin color can be seen as identification. Yellow is a representation for Asian and James Lee's family are Asian. They have no yellow skin, except James Lee' in Ohio. Although that place was a part of multicultural country, but it was dominated by White people. Again, an interracial marriage history of James Lee and Marilyn made them overthink and doubts to blend in. It was 1977 and the members in small town of Ohio could not accept that cultural differences. As a result, Lee and Marilyn decided not to socialize around the neighborhood. They were hesitant to be around. The historical law made them aware of interracial couples who were perceived less than couples with the same race. Thus, they recoiled themselves within society and projected their hopes or fears to their children so that the next generation would be socially compatible.

The Third Generation in Identity Conflict and Public Space

Ohio is the next place where the adaptation process and struggle to fit in for James Lee and his family. The people were xenophobic²⁵ after years of laws led the wave of Chinese immigrants. There, they became the victims of racism, especially to their children Nathan and Lydia. It similar with James Lee had felt when he was being a stranger throughout his life. Just like James Lee's childhood, Nathan and Lydia also felt the discrimination from the community. People questioned them of what happened to his or her eyes, about their culture, and etcetera. One day, James Lee go to swim in a public swimming pool with Nathan and Lydia. He asked Nathan to go in and play. He thought that Nathan had to learn how to make friends. Nathan intended to join the group in the pool, but something went unexpectedly. He got bullied because he was Chinese. James Lee had always been plagued with issues of assimilation and identity. He worried that the same issues would also happen to his children, and that thing just happened. Sadly, James Lee could not able to protect his children who were being bullied because of his race and ethnicity. The only thing that he could do was hiding what he felt, wanted to tell their children that he understood.

Nathan had a dialogical process that would modify his identity. This process happened unconsciously when the subject was around the society like he enjoyed himself in the pool and tried to blend in with the society. At that moment, the stability of the identity of Nathan became fragmented into multiple identities that might not contradict his experience which called unresolved identities. In this case, Nathan ran into the notion of sociological subject from Hall concept that he would transform his identity in the cultural worlds.

Not only Nathan who got the unjust treatment, but also did Lydia. She was a second child of James Lee. She was born with her mother's blue eyes and honey-blond hair, but sadly it did not make her easy to be accepted in society. Lydia's physical differences became important for Marilyn and James Lee. It shows that one of their children had genetic traits to be a citizen in the whites' community, she would be easy to be fit in, and she would be free from discrimination. The differences of Lydia's physical appearance are the opposite of Nathan's. Nathan's appearance was just like his father's, a Chinese. James Lee and Marilyn assumed that Nathan's appearances would make him difficult to blend in various social activities, for example talking to each other and doing enjoyable things. In this case, essentialism for James Lee and Marilyn was set since human was born, then favoritism goes to Lydia. Unconsciously, their essentialist perspective shaped the practice of discrimination and racism towards Nathan and Lydia. This is one of the few situations where it really pays to be dishonest.

On the contrary, American multicultural society did not take the blue eyes and blond hair of Lydia as her similarities among the whites. Lydia's epicanthic folded eyes characterized her of oriental appearance which made her still positioned as a poor Chinese immigrant. Chinese people in Ohio were not readily accepted. It also implied that Chinese people, in certain parts of America, still experienced racial discrimination although in 1970, history of United States and the People of China relations were reconsidering to have official diplomatic relations.²⁶ This is connected to Stuart Hall's concept that a person's identity is influenced by whom, where, and whenever certain individual gets along. However, there is one essence in the self of individual that will always be modified when one interacts in some social groups. This interaction is said as process of adaptation to find something new. Each individual of every race, tribe, ethnicity, or descendant will find the process of adapting as above while interacting with the society. This is regardless of where people come from. It experienced by James Lee and family when they were in the social group and being Chinese was positioned as a group who did not belong in America. Then, their favorite kid is Lydia become the saddest victim of identity issue who later became disoriented of her own identity. Apart from that, there were roles of her parents who put her in too much pressure in shaping her identity.

²⁵Xenophobia is typically used to denote a phobic attitude towards foreigners or strangers, or even the unknown. Racism in general is described as a form of xenophobia. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Xenophobia> (Accessed on 2022, Jan 05th, at 06.16 AM).

²⁶<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/rapprochement-china> (Accessed on 2022, Jan 05th, at 01.16 WIB).

James Lee and Marilyn had participated in the formation of Lydia's identity and they had different views about how-to live-in society. James Lee who had a bad childhood experience put expectations on Lydia to be socially compatible in Ohio's society. He was concerned on her behavior. "You should smile more---everyone likes a girl who smiles." (p. 227). The excerpt says that smile is generally regarded to be one easily decoded facial expression. It conveys pleasure, kindness, and friendliness. However, the image of the "smiling female" has many different meanings to people, and it existed since the 1970s". Vinh and Professor Southworth also explained that charming female is portrayed as smiling. Often, when the female is not smiling so that she will be criticized and questioned sharply by others, else she also seen severe or unapproachable. Building upon James Lee's instigation to Lydia and a study from Vinh together with Professor Southworth, the researcher finds that James Lee tries to teach his daughter to adapt in Ohio with an eye to be accepted.

On the other hand, Marilyn wished Lydia to be an outstanding person, to study harder for a better future to be doctor as she aspired at. This creates an even bigger gap for Lydia go to public school, adopt general culture of the country from her peers, friends, and feel isolated with her neighbors whoever else has been living in area. Lydia's identity had developed and it had been constructed over time. Lydia tried to fulfil what her parents wanted. She could see herself doing her parents' desire and left the job she really wanted as a chef. On the other hand, Lydia could not realize what her parents asked for. She lacked self-confidence and she had a poor social skill. Her lack of social skills made her adaptation process exhausting. The reason why she was awkward in society was because her mother would not let her hang around with friends to study hard and "[...] that she could not go out on the weekends until she'd done all homework" (p. 227). Lydia did not have freedom to socialize with the people in Ohio, and it would affect the developing process of her to be known and accepted by society.

On the contrary, her father wanted Lydia to be loved, have many friends, and look like everyone, "I'm so glad you're going to dance, honey---everyone goes to dance. Your hair looks so pretty that way, Lyddie--everyone has long hair these days, right? [...]" (p. 227). James Lee wanted things for Lydia that he once did not have in his childhood which made him difficult to mingle and to be around people. His experiences of being a victim of bullying made him introvert. Those different frames of reference just made much pressure on Lydia. Lydia realized that it was hard to achieve her parents' unfulfilled goals as her own, "[...] she had already begun to feel it: how hard it would be to inherit their parents' dreams? How suffocating to be loved. (p. 273). She tried to hide the burden of her parents' hopes which made her feel depressed and affected her identity in social life. Lydia did not know how to interact and start the conversation with the people. Her awkwardness was the result of Marilyn's pressure. She preferred that her daughter to study hard than to socialize with people.

Lydia's process of adaptation cannot face the challenges of new culture which always transformed with the times. She tends to feel anxiety and distressing issue later on in life. Along this process that parents should eventually come to an understanding and support no matter what the decisions from her or his children, no matter upbringing they are brought out. Professor Kim said "[...] very little adaptive change may take place in strangers whose ethnic community offers an almost complete insulation from having to face the host cultural challenge. (Kim, 2006: 3, 283-300). Those things also had effects to Lydia who could not fit easily in the society although she looked like the Americans. Nevertheless, she was secluded and never tried to make a conversation with others. It made people around her think that she was socially inept. Lydia refused every invitation from her friend because Marilyn banned her to be involved. For that reason, her friends perceived her differently. Therefore, she lacked self-confidence.

Lydia does not make any interactions with society and, as a result, she was portrayed as an isolated person with inconspicuous culture, outwardly quiet, and submissive. She always said no to birthday parties, to playing roller skating, to swimming at the rec center, to everything only for rushing home early, desperate to see her mother and hence the society perceived her as an exceptional Chinese like any others. All of Lydia's reasons were actually not her own, but her mother's. The mind-set influenced Lydia unconsciously and separated her away from humanity in social circumstances. Moreover, she studied in a school which the students were mostly western. Her lack of confidence in introducing herself in front of her friends made her schoolmates question her being Chinese. "Do Chinese people celebrate Thanksgiving? And: "Do Chinese people have belly buttons?" [...]" (p. 165). The statement shows that stereotypes between race and typical outlook have been stuck in the minds of multicultural generations according to rules and traditions. In fact, process of development may affect the development of generation too, not always based on the inherited by the ancestors. This happened because of the absence of communication, interaction, and adaptation to know each other.

In order to try to fit in, Lydia made many attempts to adapt with her school mates by practicing their different demeanor, "[...] Lydia would watch Stacey Sherwin---her golden hair braided, then ironed flat, then feathered---waving to her friends, pulling them towards her, the way a rhinestone caught and held the light."

(p. 166). After she learned about her friend, she felt that their differences make her hesitant to be in society and uncomfortable of her physical differences. Quoted from *The Crisis of Identity in a Multicultural Society* by Shahyan Rizgar, identity crisis of biracial children is caused by two problematic dimensions; cultural history and personal history which is reflected by first generation, in this case is Lydia's parents, and second generation who is Lydia herself. It pictured the way of history viewed Chinese immigrants as exceptional, therefore Lydia's friends identified her from how the past event representing her race. Moreover, Lydia positioned as the descendant of biologically inferior race, as Chinese people were positioned before. It made Lydia feel uncomfortable when she is in the neighborhood and she found it difficult to socialize. She begun to feel identity crisis and had no idea about her own identity, like question everything about who she really is. She is incapable to communicate how it feels when people look her as differential, just like James Lee who felt the similar childhood experience.

What happened to Lydia was because of her parents' and society's expectations. Thus, it was hard for her to align her individual desires into her social and cultural worlds. Contrary from her parents, Lydia questioned who she was and where she came from. In essence, identity crisis happens because of globalization and migration. Migration impacts the identity crisis when someone has two identities, whether his or her origin and the identity of the new place. Therefore, his or her identity is being contested, as Woodward stated (1997:16). Thus, the existence of Lydia's identity is in between, as a Chinese and American. Lydia just could not express her true self because there was a gap of different sociological perspectives from James Lee and Marilyn that did not support Lydia to reach what she wanted. She was just totally obedient to her parents, and she realized the consequence, but she could never tell them. Therefore, she pursued what she wanted to do without her parents' consent.

Lydia shaped her identity into the system which established by the people around her. Her urge was to keep the family intact, but actually she was absorbed by her parents' dreams. Without realizing it, the dreams of James Lee and Marilyn were slowly killing her daughter with impossibly high expectations. As a result, contradiction happened inside Lydia influencing her behavior towards her society. This is called dialogical process which is a part of sociological concept by Hall and in the later time will be continuously offered as unresolved identities. Consequently, Lydia felt a period of intense exploration of different roles and aspects of herself. However, she tried to manage the deal in different situations with her emphatic race which marked by changing her attitude and character towards adaptive compliance. Unhappily, it just made her feel complicated. Lydia's desire only made her difficult to find her true self. She must lie to herself and parents only to be seen as a sociable daughter.

Historical framework mattered in American people's heads. Jack explained how the Ohioans saw other people on their differences. Jack's curiosity was similar to Stacey Sherwin's and her gang (Lydia's schoolmates) who also questioned Lydia's identity which mentioned by researcher above. This thing happened because Lydia never tried to socialize and introduce her race. Therefore, connected to Hall's theory that, "since history has intervened and what we have become. It means that people cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about one experience-one identity without acknowledging others." (1990:222-37). In addition, people can say something on the assumption because there are things represented continuously and do not change easily, and it imprints on historical memory. Woodward said in the book that the essential history just makes some claims that are considered unchangeable. Identity of a person or an ethnic becomes symbol of differences. When one joins a new group or society, the process of acceptance will not be always smooth. Being in this condition, one—who is a part of the minority—must try to blend into the society. Sometimes, there are many reasons which make people cannot involved themselves into community easily. It can be their attitude, character, social class, physical appearance and etcetera. Another important thing is how they face the differences in the new places. That is what James Lee's family felt since their first meeting with the American in Ohio.

On the same context, Lydia and James Lee had the same experiences that, according to Hall, are called enlightenment. Lydia could feel what her father felt to fit in his own roots. One of the reasons why this happened is immigration impacts. Someone's identity is being contested when she or he has multiple identities. As a minority around America society, Lydia also had to deal with the treatment related to discrimination. This fact influenced Lydia's perspective to the Whites people. She tended to be confused of people who assumed like they knew everything about other people. One can reasonably assume that Lydia had punctuated on the negative views. She mentioned it because people treated others by their differences. Injustice treatment just made her skeptical on people. It just because of people she encounters in her everyday life. She had witnessed injustice manners from several ethnic groups in a society. Yet the most influential aspects of her perspective came from the society exposure and her parents' special treatments over the other children.

Not only questioning the identity of Lydia as Chinese American, Jack showed his contempt by speaking some tactful things for Lydia. Apparently, identity is produced and goes under influence of place, time,

history, and culture. Furthermore, people judge another not only by the cover but also apart of someone's behavior. Later, when Lydia looked back to everything and considered about what Jack said, she felt the way everything had gone so wrong, but she was also never sure. The researcher proclaims that these things are the challenges that James Lee faces as the second generation who does not have clear culture or identity. Researcher thinks that everyone needs to know where he or she belongs, or with whom he or she can identify himself or herself. Thus, Lydia tried to see her personal history as a part of her identification. Lydia had been contemplating and realizing that her efforts to assimilate into the society were because of the burdens of her parents, and she had no success doing. She had faced the problems of complex identity. For her, it had not been easy as a biracial child of Chinese and American parents who had different worldviews in multicultural America. It had not been easy to become the favorite of her parents, and it had not been easy to act as if everything was her want.

Charles Correa on the same journal by Shahyan Rizgar argues that, "identity is a process and it is not a found object. This process can be produced through history and a period of time. We can find our identity by understanding ourselves (who we are) and our environment" (p. 9). It means that people cannot possess the identity and it continues through the past history. Lydia was living as a third generation from past history of her Chinese granny and grandpa as the first-generation immigrants, and her mixed-race parents as second generations. The mix generation made complexity in her life as biracial child. It gives the idea of complexity in cultural identity. It shows that familial background has a role in developing children identity. Ng pictures that Lydia got pressure to persuade into doing something which was not her desire, but under her parents' different rules. In addition, she lived in a region that Chinese immigrants once refused to enter. The history claimed that it was because Chinese were the third-largest foreign-born group in the U.S after Mexicans and Indians²⁷. Practically, American was bearing that Chinese were opponents in economics matter just like the researcher explained before, until the Chinese sentiment, ethnic discrimination contributed to the complexity of identity for Lydia.

Typically, with cultural groups or immigrants who have left their homelands will probably bring their customs to the new country. Although Lydia was acting as third generation who was half American and half Chinese, often people acknowledged the other part of her as completely insignificant to them. The effects of this discrimination prompted her to withdraw herself socially; she got mentally anxious, losing confidence, and getting negative experiences. Moreover, because she was still teenager, it was important to acknowledge what kind of adult she would be later on after getting this kind of discrimination.

Shahyan Rizgar talking about identity crisis, and taking notes from Erik. H. Erikson, "The period of adolescence has critical stage for an individual's identity development. He asserts that identity crises occur in one's developmental period" (p. 12). It was experienced by Lydia when she was being dishonor of behavior of blatant prejudice by Jack. It can be analyzed that the period she felt uncertain of her identity due to people failing to accept her. Since Lydia realized that everything had gone askew, by her silence she decided to go her own way. She chose to go to the lake which a short distance away from her house. She could not believe that anything was impossible. Lydia was stressed out and encountered by a surge of anxiety which eventually made her feel cramped. She then committed suicide. This creates a conflict because she was unsure of who she was. She felt alienated, angry, and she always questioned things. As things went worse, discrimination made Lydia suffer because of her being different could not be tolerated by society.

Through the act of surviving her life until death, Lydia's family was finally able to learn the way to raise children without any favoritism, to be assertive, and not to put pressure on them. The researcher agrees with Hall who claimed that identity is too complex and too little to be dealt with since it is always in process which represented and addressed in cultural system. The cultural system has always been connected to history which plays a critical role in social movements. Therefore, people cannot speak for very long in assumption of differences without acknowledging others.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes that multiculturalism is the main cause for the characters' identity conflict. At the same time the ambiguity of roots and history can be another cause in constructing identity as well because some of characters' pasts are unclear and complicated. Ng's novel shows the difficulty of denoting to ancestors from different ethnic backgrounds and history for the characters' present-day situations. In *Everything I Never Told You* some of characters try to expose their desires to other people by favoritism. It is unconsciously affected by a person's identity which becomes the identity crisis. People tend to be friend those with similar ethnic groups and they also have differences with others connected to dominant culture

²⁷<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states> (Accessed on 2022, Feb 05th, at 3.16 PM).

in the society. In recent years, people coming from the second generation of Chinese immigrants seem to be more different than others. They wish to go back to their ethnic group with similar culture and society.

The characters in *Everything I Never Told You* to have their own identities within particular backgrounds. The researcher inquired to profess that there are some issues that give the capacity to have an effect on the characters. James Lee's identity as the second generation of Chinese immigrants is constructed based on his interest. It is a part of his way to fit into the multicultural society. On the other hand, Nathan and Lydia as the third generation of Chinese Americans are more complicated. Their identity is constructed based on the rules of parents who have different perspectives. The result is that Nathan and Lydia have not chosen what they are interested in and they have been through with their parent's expectations. Somehow, they got intolerable pressure from society. It makes the researcher believe that different perspective is a part of identity also cultural differences in each race.

Nathan can also be counted as one of the conflicted characters as he identifies himself as a sporty boy, but physically he does not look like one. On the same level, Lydia as a sister of Nathan looks half Chinese and American with slanted blue eyes, and blond hair, but people still question her identity. That is to say, identities cannot always be determined by people's looks. Neither person's physical appearance determines their identification. In addition, gender role in identity issues is a challenge for a multicultural society. Women's position has not always been ideal and most often women are the first victims of the conflict between indigenous nations and political states. However, they can stand up and protect their rights by getting an education. They can teach their children to get an education abroad. Through education, women have some world views and extensive knowledge about their people's resources. Just like Marilyn, she works hard for her daughter to have high equal education, even though expectations are not always in the same as the dream.

Identity is constructed but cannot be planned by the ambition of achieving something because it is an unspecified thing which changeable based on place and time. James Lee and Marilyn want to build a better future for Lydia. That action constructs her identity. They think that the differences in Lydia may actualize their unsuccessful dreams. Eventually, these things do not work because roots and history are continuous concerns in human life. As difficult as it is, people may change their identity. Yet, their roots somehow cannot be denied. Moreover, for immigrants, it is important to prepare themselves for being questioned due to the dominant culture which will become a big influence in a multicultural society.

Identity develops with one cannot find the stages of life. One is able to renew and affect one's identity with new interests and relationships. It is obvious in Ng's *Everything I Never Told You* that the characters try to change another person's identity in accordance with their own desires and different worldviews. Somehow, James Lee has changed parts of his habits of speaking Mandarin to English with his parents in daily life to shade the accent and complete himself in society, once he is perceived as the other. This shows the flexibility of identity for the second generation of immigrants. They are forced to practice and have the root customs of their parents which they cannot accept and attempt to escape. Yet, it becomes the opposite for the third generation of mixed-race parents.

STATEMENTS OF COMPETING INTEREST

Herewith the author declare that this article is totally free from any conflict of interest regarding the data collection, analysis, and the editorial process, and the publication process in general.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, C. Jeffrey., and Steven Seidman. (1990). *"Culture and Society"*. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, New York. United States. Retrieved on 2022, July 25th at 12.46 PM.
- Biography. (2014-2016) in <http://www.Ngng.com/>. Retrieved on 2022, May 18th at 1.00 PM.
- Chee, Alexander. (2014, August 31st). *"The Leftovers, Everything I Never Told You by Ng Ng"*. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/17/books/review/everything-i-never-told-you-by-Ng-ng.html?_r=1. The New York Times Company. Retrieved on 2022, May 19th at 7.40 PM.
- During, Simon. (1990). *"Culture and Society, Contemporary Debates"*. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, New York. United States. Retrieved on 2022, July 25th at 12.46 PM.
- Fallon, Claire. (2014, June 24th) *"The Book We're Talking About: 'Everything I Never Told You' by Ng Ng"*. Huffington Post http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/24/everything-i-never-told-you-Ng-ng_n_5523516.html?. The Huffington Post. Retrieved on 2016, May 18th at 5.00 PM.
- Healey, F. Joseph. (1993). *"The Cultural Studies Reader, Second Edition"*. Pine Forge Press, A Sage Publications Company, America. United States. Retrieved on 2022, Aug 01st at 7.12 PM.
- Journals, Chicago. (2016) *"The Beginnings of Their Own Enunciations: Stuart Hall and the Work of Culture"*. <http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/homi.k.bhabha.on.stuart.hall>. Retrieved on 2022, May 21st at 2.00 PM.

- Kymlicka, Will. (1995). *"Multicultural Citizenship"*. Oxford University Press Inc, New York. United States. Retrieved on 2022, July 25th at 10.46 AM.
- Le, C. N. (2016) *"Anti-Asian Racism & Violence: The Landscape of Asian America"*. <http://www.asian-nation.org/racism.shtml>. Retrieved on 2022, May 29th at 11.58 PM.
- Literary, Devices. *"Characterization: Definition of Characterization"*. <http://www.literarydevices.com/characterization/>. Retrieved on 2022, May 27th at 7.10 PM.
- McCully, Dr Chris. *"Setting in Literature and Creative Writing: A Resource for Teaching A-level English"*. <https://www.essex.ac.uk/outreach/documents/setting-literature-creative-writing.pdf>. Retrieved on 2022, May 28th at 5.10 PM.
- Ng, Celeste. (2014). *"Everything I Never Told You"*. Penguin Press.
- Oneonta. *"Identity and Differences: Critical Statements"*. [https://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/arth200/identity difference.html](https://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/arth200/identity%20difference.html). Retrieved on 2022, May 21st at 10.30 AM.
- Riley, Philip. (2007). *"Language, Culture, and Identity"*. Atheneum Press Ltd., Gateshead, Tyne & Wear. Retrieved on 2016, March 13th at 11.52 AM.
- Vinh, Kim., and Professor Franklin Southworth. (2000). *"Male-Female Communication, East-West, Final Paper: A Study on Smiling"*. Retrieved on 2022, May 25th at 12.46 PM.
- Woodward, Kathryn. 1997. *Identity and Difference*. United Kingdom: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Zajda, Joseph. (2009). *"Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Education"*. Springer Science. Retrieved on 2022, Oct 16th at 5.52 PM