

Asian Americans' Views of their Identities as Asians in *Eleanor & Park*: A Socio-Psychological Approach

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes how Asian American characters, Mindy Sheridan, Park Sheridan, and Josh Sheridan, in the novel *Eleanor & Park* view their identities as Asians. This research aims to understand how Asian American characters view their identities as Asians and what factors influence their views. The analysis of this research was conducted using the social psychology approach supported by Tajfel and Turner's (2004) social identity theory and Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's (1998) minority identity development model. This research shows that Asian American characters' views of their identity as Asian are influenced by the values believed by the dominant group in their social environment.

Keywords: Asian American, Asian, identity, view.

INTRODUCTION

The young adult novel *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell (2012) tells a love story of two young high school misfits, Eleanor Douglas and Park Sheridan, set in The Flats, a fictional place portraying an Omaha neighborhood. This novel has received several awards, such as the American Library Association's Michael L. Printz Award Honor book for excellence in young adult literature and Notable children's book of 2013 by The New York Times Book Review, due to the issues brought up, such as bullying, body image, domestic abuse, and racism.

Due to the portrayal of Asian American characters in the novel, such as Park Sheridan, Mindy Sheridan, and Josh Sheridan, this novel gained criticism from the Asian American community. It is interesting to examine the novel

and explore how Asian American characters are portrayed in the novel from the author's perspective.

Therefore, this paper attempts to investigate how Asian Americans are portrayed in the book as part of a racial minority group within a predominantly white neighborhood in the 1980s and how they view their identity as Asian. It focuses on the Asian American characters' views of their identity as Asians and the factors that influence their view.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As *Eleanor and Park* is enormously popular, numerous studies have examined the work. Several articles investigated racism in the novel. Sun (2016) points out racism in the novel's dialogue and the inaccurate depiction of Asian-Americans within the

book. Cheung (2018) also points out that the book “does more harm than good in terms of East Asian representation in popular media.” She finds a number of problems with Park’s portrayal and common East Asian stereotypes in the novel.

Other studies have investigated domestic violence and bullying in the novel. Savitri (2016) used a feminist approach to analyze the oppression experienced by Eleanor Douglas as a victim of domestic abuse and how she responded to it. The study finds that Eleanor’s reaction to domestic abuse is to run away from the abusive environment she was in. Another study by Utami (2017) focused on patriarchy in the novel, examining the domestic abuse experienced by Eleanor Douglas and her mother, Sabrina, and their struggle against domestic violence using a feminist criticism approach. Suciati and Thoyibi (2017) focused on bullying experienced by Eleanor Douglas using a sociological perspective. The study finds how, when, and where bullying happens, who’s the suspect and victim of the bullying, and how Rainbow Rowell builds the character Eleanor as an object of bullying.

The present research deals with how Asian American characters view their identity as Asians and what factors influenced their view. This study adopts a socio-psychological approach to analyze how Asian American characters interact with other characters of different races and their influence on the Asian American characters’ views of their identity as Asians.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The approach used in this paper is based on Hardjana’s (1981) psychological approach to literary work: “(...) psychological approach is one of the ways to understand characters and characterization, for example by examining the interaction between certain characters and their social environment. It could mean that there is relevancy between literary work and social psychology” (1997, p. 11). Allport (1985) defines social psychology as “the scientific study of how people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others” (p. 5).

Furthermore, this study also employs the social identity theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (2004). They argue that individuals are likely to have emotional and value significance to their social groups. External factors outside individuals play a significant role in shaping their perspective. Tajfel and Turner proposed three stages that create the in-group and out-group mentality. In the social categorization stage, individuals understand what categories they belong to. Next, in the social identification stage, individuals start to identify themselves as part of certain social groups, adopt the identity of the groups and act the way they perceive how the members of the groups act. In the last social comparison stage, individuals have categorized themselves as part of groups and identify themselves with those groups. They tend to compare their groups (in-group) to other groups (out-group) to maintain their self-esteem.

Another theory used in this study is the minority identity development model proposed by Atkinson, Morten and Sue (1998), which established five stages of minority identity development: conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspection, and synergetic articulation and awareness. This theory was adopted to help further comprehend Asian American characters’ perspectives on themselves and their surroundings. These stages assisted in classifying the attitudes and behaviors shown by Asian American characters in the book and how they see their identity as Asian.

In the conformity stage of development, minority individuals are distinguished by their clear preference for dominant cultural values over those of their own culture. Individuals’ views of self, fellow group members, and other minorities in general are clouded by their identification with the dominant culture (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998, p. 36). In this stage, individuals have the following attitudes: self-depreciating attitudes, group-depreciating attitudes, discriminatory attitudes, group-appreciating attitudes.

While in the conformity stage, the denial system is a major tool used by individuals, in the dissonance stage, this denial system has started to break down (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998, p. 37). In this stage, individuals have the following attitudes: conflict between self-depreciating and self-

appreciating attitudes, conflict between group-depreciating and group-appreciating attitudes, conflict between dominant-held views of minority hierarchy and feeling of shared experience, conflict between group-appreciating and group depreciating attitudes.

In the resistance and immersion stage, the minority individual completely endorses minority-held views and rejects the dominant society and culture. There is a desire to eliminate oppression from the dominant society and that becomes an important motivation for the minority individual's behavior (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998, p. 38). In the resistance and immersion stage, individuals have the following attitudes: self-appreciating attitudes, group-appreciating attitudes, conflict between feelings of empathy for other minorities' experiences and feelings of culturocentrism, group-depreciating attitudes.

In the introspection stage, the minority individuals experience feelings of discontent and discomfort with group views held in the resistance and immersion stage. The minority individuals then divert their attention to notions of greater individual autonomy. In this stage, minority individuals feel more comfortable with their sense of identity and that feeling too much negativity about the dominant group would only hinder their identity exploration. In this stage minority individuals start to understand that there are many positive and negative elements about each group (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998, pp. 38-39). In this stage, individuals have the following attitudes: concern with basis of self-depreciating attitudes, concern with basis of self-depreciating attitudes, concern with ethnocentrism basis for judging others, concern with the basis of group depreciation.

Minority individuals in the synergistic articulation and awareness stage experience a sense of self-fulfillment with regard to cultural identity. Conflicts and discomforts experienced in the introspection stage have been resolved, allowing individuals for more individuality and flexibility. Cultural values of other minority groups and the dominant group are objectively examined and accepted or rejected based on gained experience. There is a desire to eliminate all forms of oppression and it becomes an important motivation for the

individual's behavior (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998, p. 39). In this stage, individuals have the following attitudes: self-appreciating attitudes, group-appreciating attitudes, group-appreciating attitudes, attitudes of selective appreciation.

METHODS

The method used to collect the data is library research. To complement the study, some supporting sources from the internet were used. The sources were taken from books, journals, and also websites related to the research. The primary data of this research was the novel *Eleanor & Park* whereas the secondary data were taken from materials needed to support the work and the theoretical background of this research.

The method used to analyze the data is qualitative descriptive to get a conclusion based on the theory applied to this research. To analyze the data, thorough reading of the novel was done, focusing on the attitudes and behaviors of three Asian American characters in the novel, i.e., Mindy Sheridan, Park Sheridan, and Josh Sheridan in relation to their identity as Asian. The researcher examines the settings of the story, attitudes and behavior of other characters of a different race toward Asian American characters, and their interaction to see if there are factors that influence Asian American characters' view on their identity as Asian. The socio-psychological approach supported by social identity theory and minority identity development model is applied for this research to help meet the objective of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors that Influence Asian American Characters' View of their Identity as Asians

In order to comprehend Asian American characters' perceptions of their Asian identity in the novel, it is vital to understand the factors that shape their perceptions, including the story's settings, the perspective of other characters of different races,

their attitude, and behavior toward Asia and Asian American characters.

Settings of the Story

According to Abrams (1957), settings are the places where events happen. They include the time when the events happen and the social surroundings. In addition, Hudson (1963) mentioned that settings include the overall surroundings of the story, including mores, customs, or norms that are applicable and the characters' views regarding life. This study employs Pradopo's (1995) setting categories, including the places where events occur, social surroundings, living systems, tools/gadgets, and the time when events happen.

The story of *Eleanor & Park* took place in Omaha, Nebraska, between 1986 and 1987. The time setting is indicated by the release of *Watchmen*, a comic book that Park Sheridan and Eleanor Douglas read in the story. According to the U.S Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, the Asian population in Omaha, Nebraska, by 1990 is recorded at 3,442 from the overall population of 335,795, making up 1,01% of the population in Omaha, Nebraska. However, the white population has been recorded at 281,603 from the overall population of 335,795, making up 83,86% of the population in Omaha, Nebraska (p. 151). Since the data collection of this census is collected through the span of 10 years, from 1980 to 1990, it is fair to say that according to this fact, the majority of Omaha population at the time when the events in the story happen is white population, making them the dominant group in the society, while Asians can be regarded as part of the racial minority group.

The Flats, the neighborhood described in the book, where most of the events in the story took place, manage to capture this social environment from Eleanor Douglas' point of view.

“Eleanor couldn't figure out what an Asian person was doing in the Flats anyway. Everybody else here was seriously white. Like, white by choice” (Rowell, 2012, p. 40).

Eleanor Douglas thought on why a person of Asian descent lives in the Flats indicates that the neighborhood's population is homogeneous. The statement further emphasizes that the neighborhood

is predominantly white and implies that people of Asian descent living in the neighborhood are seen as foreigners.

In a passage, Park Sheridan's grandmother reiterates how dominant the white population was in the Flats when she talks about Eleanor Douglas's stepfather, Richie.

“He grew up in that little house, you know, until his parents moved someplace even more redneck than here” (p. 89)

Redneck, as pointed out by Park Sheridan's grandmother, is a derogatory term that refers exclusively to white Americans that is perceived to be crass and unsophisticated, closely associated with rural whites of the Southern United States (1975). Through the statement made by Park Sheridan's grandmother, it can be understood that the residents in the Flats are still mostly crass and unsophisticated, enabling the possibility of ignorant behavior.

“If you weren't born in the Flats (if your family didn't go back ten generations, if your parents didn't have the same great-great-grandparents), you were an outsider.” (p. 166).

This description of the neighborhood by the author tells that the society where the Asian characters live is closed-off. This social surrounding enables prejudice and discrimination toward people that the dominant group considers an outsider or different from the majority group living in the Flats.

“Eleanor had never even hear the n-word said out loud until she moved here, but the kids on her bus used it like it was the only way to indicate that somebody was black. Like there was no other word or phrase that would work.” (p. 40)

In this passage, Eleanor Douglas talks about how easy it is for kids her age that grow up in the Flats to utter the N-word. The black community indeed uses the N-word as a tool of camaraderie towards people within their racial in-group. However, the word becomes a derogatory term when people from other races say it. The word is often used as a power exercise against black people.

The explanation above indicates that most kids in the neighborhood had no problem abusing their power as the dominant racial group over other racial

groups considered a minority group. In that case, there is a possibility that they can also exercise their abuse of power as the dominant racial group towards Asians, whom they considered as a part of the minority group.

Attitudes and Behaviors of Other Characters of Different Races towards Asian Characters

After understanding the social environment of Asian American characters in the novel, it can be understood that their social environment enables the act of unfair treatment and/or stereotyping toward people of minority racial groups. According to Opatha (2017), the act of stereotyping is an attitude, and attitude shows how people think (cognitive aspect), feel (affective aspect), and tend to behave (behavioral aspect) toward a person or things. These aspects can be seen through actions, dialogue, and direct or indirect descriptions from the authors. Therefore, after thoroughly examining the novel, the researcher found three attitudes and behaviors by other characters of different races toward Asian American characters in the book that can be classified as an act of stereotyping.

Misidentification of East Asian Martial Arts and East Asian Cultures

This misidentification can be seen in how the characters, Steve, Mikey, and Eleanor, part of the dominant racial group, think that Kung fu, Taekwondo, and Karate are the same. In fact, those three are different kinds of martial arts. Kung fu is an umbrella term for Chinese martial arts as a whole, Karate is a martial art that developed mainly in Japan, and Taekwondo is a martial art developed in Korea by Korean martial artists during the 1940s and 1950s.

“‘Park,’ Steve said, ‘tell Mikey about drunken-monkey karate.’

‘I don’t know anything about it.’ Park shrugged.” (p. 6)

From the excerpt above, it can be concluded that Steve assumes Park Sheridan knows anything about Karate. He also assumes that a person of Asian descent must have known any kind of martial arts.

Steve’s friend, Mikey, asks what Park knows about Kung fu in the following dialogue.

“‘What the fuck does Sheridan knows about Kungfu?’ Mikey said.” (p. 6)

The behavior shown by Steve and Mikey can be classified as an act of stereotyping.

In another excerpt, it was also shown that Eleanor, a character of the dominant racial group, says that Park’s Taekwondo kick is a Karate move by referring it to a popular movie ‘Karate Kid’.

“‘Try what again? Your *Karate Kid* thing? I think that would be less fantastic. You’ve got to know when you walk away ...’” (p. 105)

What Eleanor says above indicates that her limited knowledge of martial art is informed through popular media. Therefore, it can be understood that the limited knowledge of East Asian culture is due to the limited exposure to the culture.

In Steve’s case, however, besides assuming that a person of Asian descent must have known anything about martial art, the attitude that he had shown toward Park Sheridan can be considered discrimination.

‘She’s not Chinese,’ Tina said. ‘She’s Korean.’

‘Who is?’ Steve asked.

‘Park’s mom.’

Park’s mom had been cutting Tina’s hair since grade school. They both had the exact same hairstyle, long spiral perms with tall, feathered bangs.

‘She’s fucking hot is what she is,’ Steve said, cracking himself up. ‘No offense, Park’ (p. 7)

Steve intentionally mistook Park Sheridan’s ethnic origin as Korean in the excerpt above by stating that he is of Chinese ancestry, ignoring Tina’s confirmation that Park Sheridan’s mother is Korean. Instead of apologizing, he made a joke about the appearance of Park Sheridan’s mother, which may be deemed sexualization.

In another passage, Steve also misidentifies East Asian culture by teasing Park’s Taekwondo uniform as Ninja-style.

While Steve attempted to be friendly toward Park Sheridan, his pattern of ignoring the diversity of East Asian cultural differences, specifically Japanese, Korean, and Chinese cultures, can be described as ignorant toward Park Sheridan’s

identity as a Korean, a distinct racial group within Asian as a major ethnic category.

According to this analysis, the characters of the dominant racial group's limited knowledge and exposure to East Asian culture resulted in their limited schema about Asian people or East Asian culture, which explains why they frequently misidentify the cultural differences within Asian American as a major ethnic group in the United States.

Asian People Come from the Jungle

Park Sheridan has a friend named Cal who likes to tease Park Sheridan in reference to his identity as a part of the Asian minority group. In a passage, Cal teases Park while saying the term 'jungle fever'.

"Now there's a girl who might want a piece of you,' Cal said. 'Looks like somebody's got a jungle fever.'" (p. 23)

The term that Cal uttered, 'jungle fever', is a slang word that refers to the attraction of a person of a different race from African descent towards people of African descent. It is, however, a derogatory term and an insult.

"No,' Park said quickly. 'She's on my bus. She's weird.'

'Jungle fever is a thing,' Cal said.

'For black people. If you like black people. And it's not a compliment, I don't think.'

'Your people come from the jungle,' Cal said, pointing at Park. '*Apocalypse Now*, anyone?'" (p. 24)

While Park Sheridan points out that Cal's remark is racially insensitive. Cal defended himself by stating that 'your people' refers to Park Sheridan, who is of Asian ancestry and from the forest. This categorization of people of Asian ancestry might be referred to as stereotyping.

According to this interpretation, the novel's characters' limited knowledge and exposure to individuals of Asian heritage resulted in their narrow schema regarding Asian people. This does not, however, excuse Cal's hostile attitude.

Making a direct judgment on a particular race based on limited knowledge about the race itself can be seen as ignorant, and even if said casually, it might

be interpreted as an act of racism, as Van Dijk (1993) stated in *Counseling American Minorities*.

"Racism also involves the everyday, mundane, negative opinions, attitude, and ideologies and the seemingly subtle acts and conditions of discrimination against minorities, namely, those social cognitions and social acts, processes, structures, or institutions that directly or indirectly contribute to the dominance of the white group and the subordinate position of minorities" (1997, p. 12).

Genderization of Asians as a Racial Group

After a thorough analysis, it has been found in the novel that the dominant racial group has the belief that Asian as a racial group is feminine and this understanding discriminate how Asian men and women are seen within the community.

The apparent disparity can be seen through the attitude and behavior of people from the dominant racial group toward Asian American characters in the novel.

There are three Asian American characters in the book, Park Sheridan, Josh Sheridan, and their mom, Mindy Sheridan. And it can be seen in the book that each character experiences a different kind of treatment due to their racial background.

Mindy Sheridan is a Korean woman who immigrated to the United States as a result of her marriage to Jamie Sheridan, an American soldier. After moving to America, she has two children with Jamie Sheridan: Park Sheridan and Josh Sheridan. Her character is defined in the novel as small, vulnerable, feminine, and family-oriented. She is a stay-at-home mother and wife passionate about beauty and make-up. She also works part-time as a beautician at her salon.

According to Sumi Cho and Susan Koshy, as quoted in Zheng (2016):

"The emergence of the Asian 'model minority' stereotype—according to which economic success of (some) Asian immigrant communities has been attributed to a strong work ethic and a culture of valuing education—has combined with prevailing sexual stereotypes to generate a representation of Asian women as the 'sexual

model minority': ideal in their union of sex appeal with family-centered values and a strong work ethic." (p. 405)

These descriptions about Mindy Sheridan emphasize that her character does fit the mold of how Asian women are perceived in the West.

While these stereotypes of Asian women can be seemingly deemed as positive stereotypes, the existence of positive stereotypes towards a specific group can be harmful to other groups. Moreover, stereotypes attached towards minority groups that live along with dominant racial groups can further other the minority group.

In an article, Andre Kung (2020) explained:

Unlike Asian American women, who have long been fetishized in the West, we (Asian men) have been desexualized ever since the first Chinese communities immigrated to the U.S. As a way of minimizing the threat posed by Chinese men -- who were often portrayed as stealing white American jobs and women -- Asians were characterized as passive, effeminate, and weak. (2020)

This can be seen in the experience of Park Sheridan, who has already experienced discrimination regarding his race since early in his childhood. This was implied during his phone call with Eleanor Douglas.

"Of course he knew. They'd all been telling him so his whole life. When Tina liked Park instead of Steve in grade school, Steve has said, 'I think she feels safe with you because you're like half girl.'"(p. 79)

This extract demonstrates that as a member of the dominant racial group, Steve believes the stereotype about Asian males being effeminate. His attitude toward Park Sheridan, in which he expresses that recognition, can be described as a form of stereotyping. The notion that Asian men are effeminate has damaged Park Sheridan's confidence to the point where he frequently compares himself to others, such as his brother, Josh Sheridan, who, despite being of Asian ancestry, resembles the majority racial group.

"All the women in his family were tiny, and all the men were huge. Only Park's DNA had

missed the memo. Maybe the Korean genes scrambled everything.

That didn't explain Josh's hugeness, though. Josh looked like the Korean genes had skipped him altogether. His eyes were brown and just barely almondy - almond-flavored. And his hair was dark, but not even close to black. Josh looked like a big German or Polish kid whose eyes kind of crinkled when he smiled." (p. 87-88)

The comparison of Josh Sheridan and Park Sheridan's appearances, which frequently stress which race is more dominant in their features despite being biracial, vividly implies the discrepancy between Asian and white people. This suggestion might also indicate that men of the white race are perceived as more manly in their social surroundings than men of Asian heritage.

Aside from comparing himself to his sibling and being perceived as effusive by his colleagues, Park Sheridan was also told by his father, Jamie Sheridan, that he needed to act or look more macho. For example, driving a car with a manual transmission or fighting. Park Sheridan defied his father's demands at one time by wearing eyeliner, which enraged his father. Jamie Sheridan requested that Park Sheridan remove his eyeliner, but Park Sheridan refused.

'Because I said so. Because you look like a girl.'
'So what else is new?' Park shoved his cereal bowl away.
'What did you say?'
'I said, what else is new? Isn't that what you think?' (p. 163)

The dialogue above indicates that Jamie Sheridan has thought that Park Sheridan is not masculine enough. It is also reflected in his action in which he demands Park Sheridan to act more masculine according to his standard. This attitude is proven to be related to the fact that Park Sheridan looks more Asian by the statement made by Grandpa Sheridan toward Jamie Sheridan when he asked Jamie Sheridan to be more tolerant regarding the eyeliner that Park Sheridan was wearing. "You should have seen what kids looked like while you were in Korea." (p. 181) The statement emphasizes that Jamie Sheridan's view on Park Sheridan is due to how Park Sheridan looks more Korean.

Through the explanation above, it can be concluded that Park Sheridan experienced unfair treatment due to his looks that do not resemble the dominant racial group. While Josh Sheridan, Park Sheridan's brother, a biracial child from Mindy Sheridan and Jamie Sheridan, does not experience the same thing as Park Sheridan does because he looks more like the dominant racial group.

Asian American Characters' View of Their Identities as Asians

Asian American characters' view of their identities as Asians can be seen through the way they internalize their experience of being Asian Americans in a predominantly white neighborhood and their perspective on their Korean roots and Asian culture.

Mindy Sheridan, née Park

It can be understood from the prior analysis that Mindy Sheridan fits the image of Asian women believed by the dominant racial group in her social environment.

In the novel, it was shown that one of her ways to preserve her Korean root is to stick with her accent while speaking English. However, from Park Sheridan's perspective, it was explained later that there is a probability that Mindy Sheridan kept her Korean accent while speaking English because of her husband, Jamie Sheridan.

"Sometimes Park thought she kept the accent on purpose because his dads liked it. But his mom tried so hard to fit in every other way ... if she could sound like she grew up right around the corner, she would."(p. 20)

As mentioned in the extract above, Mindy Sheridan tries to blend in a variety of ways, one of which is how she changed her Korean maiden name Min Dae to Mindy to make it sound more like a western name. Mindy Sheridan's Korean name, 'Min Dae,' was referenced only in the novel and appeared on her driver's license (p. 76).

Mindy Sheridan also rarely talks about her Korean roots, as mentioned by Park Sheridan in his conversation with Eleanor Douglas.

"... My mom's from Korea. She just doesn't talk about it very much." (p.79)

Mindy Sheridan also represses herself from talking about Korea. She only talks once about her life before she arrives in America in the book.

"I come from a big family,' his mom said. 'Three little sister. Three little brothers.' She held out her hands, as if she were patting six heads. She'd had a wine cooler with dinner, and you could tell. She almost never talked about Korea." (p. 141)

In the model proposed by Atkinson, Morten and Sue, appreciating the dominant group's culture can result in a depreciating attitude toward one's own culture. It can be seen in Mindy Sheridan's attitude. Even if she recognizes her identity as Asian, in order to fit in, she fills in the stereotype regarding Asian women, and it has been proven that Mindy Sheridan made an effort to repress her own roots. It indicates that her attitude towards herself and her own racial group has been self-deprecating. Therefore, in reference to Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's minority identity development, Mindy Sheridan is on the stage of conformity.

Josh Sheridan

Different from his brother, Park Sheridan, and his mother, Mindy Sheridan, it does not show in any passage in the book that Josh Sheridan experiences oppression from being of Asian descent. In fact, it shows that Josh Sheridan identifies more with his paternal side of the family, which is Irish.

In the earlier analysis regarding Mindy Sheridan, it can be understood that Mindy Sheridan repressed herself from talking about her Korean roots after she had arrived in America. Adding the fact that Josh Sheridan is known to identify more with his dad, Jamie Sheridan, it is natural that he identifies more with his paternal side of the family, which belongs to the racially dominant group.

In conclusion, because Josh Sheridan identifies more with his paternal side of the family, and it is known that his knowledge regarding his Asian ancestry, which comes from his maternal family, is limited, it can be said that he does not identify with his Asian identity.

Park Sheridan

Park Sheridan has experienced some discrimination due to Asian stereotypes believed in the West. The stereotype that influences Park Sheridan's character development the most is the stereotype that Asians, as a racialized group, are feminine.

Park Sheridan recognizes that he is a part of the Asian minority group, and he is conscious of his racial identity. His consciousness about his racial identity can be taken as a source of his insecurity, and the insecurity about his racial identity can be seen in several passages. The first indication of Park Sheridan's insecurity is that he constantly compares himself with his brother, Josh Sheridan.

"All the women in his family were tiny, and all the men were huge. Only Park's DNA had missed the memo. Maybe the Korean genes scrambled everything.

That didn't explain Josh's hugeness, though. Josh looked like the Korean genes had skipped him altogether. His eyes were brown and just barely almondy - almond-flavored. And his hair was dark, but not even close to black. Josh looked like a big German or Polish kid whose eyes kind of crinkled when he smiled." (p. 87-88)

Emphasizing the statement 'Maybe the Korean genes scrambled everything', there is an indication that Park Sheridan had already internalized the dominant-held belief that as a race, Asians are feminine. Therefore, Park Sheridan recognizes himself as an Asian and sees it as a defect, implying that Park Sheridan sees his Korean ancestry negatively.

"'Nobody thinks Asian guys are hot,' Park said finally. He had to look away from her when he said it -- way away, he turned his head completely. 'Not here, anyway. I assume Asian guys do all right in Asia.'

'That's not true,' Eleanor argued. 'Look at your mom and dad ...'

'Asian girls are different. White guys think they're exotic.'

'But ...'

'Are you trying to come up with a super-hot Asian guy, so you can prove me wrong? Because

there aren't any. I've had my whole life to think about this.'" (p. 202)

The excerpt above shows that Park Sheridan has already internalized the dominant-held belief that men of Asian descent are seen as less attractive. He recognizes that Asians are seen as others when he states, 'Nobody thinks Asian guys are hot, not here, anyway. I assume Asian guys do all right in Asia, meaning that people like him are not accepted in 'Here', which refers to the United States of America. This passage also shows that Park Sheridan had gone through a process in which he finally concludes that, 'Nobody thinks Asian guys are hot,' which can be seen as his effort to understand his Asian identity. Park Sheridan also came to a conclusion that "Everything that makes Asian girls seem exotic makes Asian guys seem like girls" (p. 202), conforming to the dominant-held belief.

As can be seen from the analysis of Mindy Sheridan, Mindy Sheridan did not share much about her life before she came to America with her children, which is essential for culture transfer. In that case, it can be understood that both Park Sheridan and Josh Sheridan are culturally disadvantaged because they have little to no understanding of their Korean roots. This limited understanding of their Korean ancestry due to the lack of transfer culture by Mindy Sheridan has led both Josh Sheridan and Park Sheridan to identify more with their Irish ancestry from his paternal side of the family.

In that case, it can be concluded that Park Sheridan is conscious of his identity as an Asian and has deeply internalized the dominant-held belief, which shaped his depreciating attitude toward himself and his racial group. In reference to Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's (1998) minority identity development model, Park Sheridan switched from the introspection stage to the conformity stage.

CONCLUSION

Several concluding statements are made from this research. First, Asian American characters in the novel conform to the dominant group in their social environment. Therefore, they see their Asian identity the way the dominant racial group in their

social environment see Asian. Their view of their identity as Asians is influenced by the values believed by the dominant group in their social environment.

Second, the social environment around Asian American characters plays a significant role in shaping their view regarding their identity as Asians. It can be seen in the way the characters of the dominant racial group often emphasize Asian American characters' Asianness by showing their partial understanding of Asian and Asian culture, further othering Asian American characters. Josh Sheridan, however, is different from Mindy Sheridan and Park Sheridan, perceived more as a part of the racially dominant group and identified himself as such due to physical looks that look a lot more like people of the dominant racial group. In that case, he did not experience the same repression Mindy Sheridan and Park Sheridan felt like a part of the Asian minority group.

Finally, Asian American characters in the novel internalize the dominant group's belief of Asian people, and Asian American characters see their identity as Asians as a source of insecurity. However, in Josh Sheridan's case, he did not recognize his Asian identity.

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