



BIRACIAL IDENTITY IN *I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER* BY ERIKA L SANCHEZ

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ABSTRACT

This research explains the biracial identity experiences by individuals. By analyzing “I am not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter” by Erika L Sanchez novel, the study aims to explore the biracial identity issue and how to deal with it so that it can be related to the real-life issues related to racial identity. Furthermore, this study reveals how the response given by the main character to negotiate the identity. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method because it enables the writer to describe the result holistically. Moreover, the data were collected to analyze the study in detail within the novel’s narrative. After gathering the data, they were analyzed using Stella Ting-Toomey and Tenzin Dorjee identity theory to demonstrate that the novel’s narrative relates to biracial identity experiences. The results of the study show a connection between biracial identity experiences and the response of the main character. Moreover, the findings show that the biracial experiences and struggles of identity in this novel are explained as having the potential of affect individual process of negotiating identity, both personally and socially.

Keywords: *Biracial identity, identity, cultures, novel, literary work*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan pengalaman identitas birasial yang dialami individu. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, studi ini menganalisis novel “I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter” karya Erika L. Sánchez untuk mengeksplorasi isu identitas birasial dan respons karakter utama, Julia, dalam menghadapinya agar dapat mengkorelasi dengan isu social tentang identitas ras dalam kehidupan nyata. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari narasi novel dan dianalisis menggunakan teori identitas Stella Ting-Toomey dan Tenzin Dorjee (*Integrative Identity Negotiation Theory*). Teori ini menyediakan kerangka kerja untuk memahami bagaimana individu menegosiasikan identitas mereka dalam konteks multibudaya, khususnya melalui strategi seperti asimilasi, separasi, integrasi, dan marginalisasi (alienasi). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan antara pengalaman identitas birasial dengan respon karakter utama. Lebih lanjut, hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya potensi yang mempengaruhi proses individu dalam menegosiasi identitas, baik personal maupun sosial.

kata kunci: *Identitas birasia, identitas, budaya, novel, karya sastra*

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INTRODUCTION

Discussing the issue of biracial identity cannot be separated with racial issues as they are the part of the racism issue (Hapsari & Soelistyari, 2015). Arrasyid, et al (2022) stated that “Racism is a belief that one behavior person is determined by stable hereditary characteristics derived from distinct racial groups; each of these distinguishing characteristics is then analyzed with ideas and inferiority.” (Suryani & Saktiningrum, 2022) stated that the issue of racism has been very important in America from the slavery. era until today Furthermore, biracial identity is a complex and multifaceted experience, often characterized by a sense of belonging to two different racial groups while simultaneously feeling like an outsider in both. (Daniel, 2021) suggests that biracial individuals may navigate a range of emotions, including pride, confusion, and marginalization, as they construct their own unique identity. This process can be further influenced by societal perceptions and expectations, leading to pressures to identify with one race over another. Individuals who identify as biracial frequently navigate a complex landscape of belonging, acceptance, and self- perception, (Said, 2014) As society becomes increasingly diverse, understanding the intricacies of biracial identity is crucial for fostering inclusivity and promoting social justice. Ultimately, biracial identity is a personal journey shaped by individual experiences, cultural backgrounds, and social contexts. The experience of being biracial is a multifaceted and often challenging one, characterized by a unique intersection of cultural, social, and personal identities.

One of the core challenges faced by biracial individuals is the constant negotiation of their racial identity. (Bose et al., 1996) argues that racial categories are not fixed but are constantly being contested, redefined, and reinterpreted, therefore it has no guarantees in nature. Biracial individuals often experience pressure to choose one racial identity over the other, or to create a new hybrid identity. This process can be both liberating and confining, as it allows for self-determination while also potentially limiting one's sense of belonging within specific racial communities.

Moreover, biracial individuals may encounter stereotypes and prejudices based on both of their racial backgrounds. They can be perceived as "other" or "mixed" by members of both dominant and minority groups, leading to feelings of isolation and marginalization. As Nakamura (2022) suggests in her work on race and representation, the construction of racial difference is a central feature of contemporary culture. Biracial individuals often navigate this complex terrain by developing coping mechanisms and strategies for managing their racial identity. (Woolf, 2005.) suggests that it is important to recognize that the biracial experience is not monolithic. Factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, and geographic location can significantly influence how individuals navigate their identity. Additionally, the concept of "passing" as one race or the other is a complex issue with both positive and negative implications.

The implications of "passing" as one race or the other for biracial individuals are complex and multifaceted (Aisyah, 2020). On the one hand, passing can allow individuals to avoid racial

discrimination and prejudice, enabling them to access opportunities and resources that might otherwise be denied to them. For example, a biracial individual who passes as white might have a better chance of securing employment or housing in a predominantly white community. However, passing can also lead to feelings of inauthenticity and alienation, as individuals may have to hide a significant part of their identity, passing can reinforce harmful stereotypes and perpetuate the notion of a racial hierarchy, as it suggests that one race is more desirable or advantageous than another. For instance, a biracial individual who passes as white might inadvertently contribute to the erasure of the experiences and contributions of people of color

A biracial Chinese-American, has openly discussed the challenges of navigating dual cultural identities. She has described feeling like an outsider in both Asian and American communities, facing stereotypes, and enduring pressure to choose one identity over the other. However, she also emphasizes the positive aspects, including a unique perspective, a strong sense of self, and the ability to connect with diverse people. Her experiences highlight the complexities of biracial identity.

The writer chooses this novel because the novel has crucial issues to analyze and all of that is poured into a thesis entitled *Biracial Identity in I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sánchez. As societies become more diverse, understanding biracial experiences is essential for fostering inclusivity and promoting social justice. This study discusses how biracial identity is depicted in this novel and how the character response. In this study the writer focuses on the analysis using Stella Ting Toomey and Tenzin Dorjee's identity theory because the theory offers a structured, evidence-based for dissecting the complex interplay between culture, identity, and communication. The analysis focuses on the main character, because she is the center of the issue, (Abrams, 1999), and it is the person to whom the author trusts to employ the plot (Booth, 1983.) In conclusion, the biracial experience is a complex and multifaceted one, shaped by societal expectations, cultural pressures, and personal identity. The pressure that may come from historical background where the White supremacy controls over other races, especially the Black (Cross, 2020). Therefore, the phenomenon is closely related to a resistance, (Scott, 1989.) Meanwhile, biracial individuals may face unique challenges, they also have the potential to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society. By embracing their diverse heritage and challenging societal norms, biracial individuals can help to create a world where everyone feels valued and respected, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Furthermore, analyzing biracial identity issue can lead to achieve racial sympathy as stated by (Syafik et al., 2023) that racial sympathy entails acknowledging and understanding the difficulties and hardships faced by marginalized racial or ethnic communities and demonstrating empathy toward their experiences. He also explains that racial sympathy is able to inspire a motivation to take action, advocate for change, or support initiatives that strive for equality and justice for all individuals, irrespective of their race or ethnicity. In line with this statement, (Engbreetsen & Liinason, 2023) point out that this concept enabled us to exceed national boundaries and gave us a possibility to discuss the systemic dynamics involved without missing

the points that make our cases historically (p. 169). (Phinney, 1996) also stated that in achieving better understanding of the implications of ethnic group membership, it is necessary to unpack the packaged variable of ethnicity (p. 918). Based on the identified problem, this study focuses on examining how biracial identities are experienced by the characters in *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* (2017) and how these characters respond to the complexities of their biracial identity throughout the narrative.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Biracial Identity

According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) the experience of being biracial, or having parents from two different racial or ethnic backgrounds, is a unique and multifaceted one. It involves grappling with societal expectations, cultural pressures, and personal identity. Biracial individuals often find themselves navigating a complex landscape, where they are expected to fit into predetermined racial categories while simultaneously yearning for a sense of belonging that transcends these boundaries.

One of the primary challenges faced by biracial individuals is the pressure to choose a single racial identity. Society often demands that people identify with one race or another, leaving biracial individuals feeling as though they must sacrifice a part of themselves. This can lead to feelings of alienation and a sense of not belonging to either racial group. Furthermore, biracial individuals may encounter discrimination and prejudice from both sides of their racial heritage. They may be seen as "passing" for white or "not black enough," leading to feelings of exclusion and marginalization. This experience can be particularly challenging for those who identify strongly with both of their racial backgrounds. As anthropologist Nakamura (2002) notes, Biracial individuals may face the challenge of being seen as 'other' by both racial groups, leading to a sense of being in-between or outsider. Biracial individuals often experience a sense of belonging to neither racial group fully. They may be perceived as not being "authentic" enough for either race, feeling excluded or marginalized from both communities. This can lead to a feeling of being "in-between" or "outsider," as they don't quite fit into either racial category. In essence, biracial individuals may face unique challenges related to identity and belonging due to their mixed heritage.

Despite these challenges, biracial individuals can also experience unique advantages and opportunities. Their exposure to multiple cultures and perspectives can foster a sense of empathy, tolerance, and cultural understanding. Additionally, their experiences can challenge societal notions of race and identity, leading to a more inclusive and equitable society. According to Oluo (2018), Biracial people are often forced to confront the complexities of race and identity in a way that monoracial people may never have to. This can lead to a deeper understanding of racial dynamics and a greater commitment to social justice. biracial individuals often have a unique perspective on race and identity. Because their experience of being part of multiple racial groups, they are more likely to be aware of the nuances and complexities of racial dynamics. This heightened awareness can lead to a deeper understanding of racial issues and a stronger

commitment to social justice. Ultimately, biracial individuals may have a more nuanced understanding of race and identity due to their lived experiences, which can motivate them to advocate for racial equality.

Identity Negotiation

Identity negotiation, as conceptualized by Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018), is a dynamic process through which individuals construct, maintain, and modify their self-concept within the multifaceted tapestry of intercultural interactions. It posits that identity is not a fixed entity but a fluid construct, intricately woven from cultural, social, and personal threads. Individuals navigate a complex interplay of these threads, strategically selecting and presenting aspects of their identity in various contexts. This negotiation is significantly influenced by power dynamics, cultural values, and communication styles. Individuals strive to balance a sense of belonging with personal autonomy, often engaging in strategic self-presentation to manage perceptions and navigate social expectations. For biracial individuals, this process is particularly intricate, as they often juggle multiple cultural affiliations, leading to heightened awareness of identity's performative nature and challenges of reconciling often conflicting expectations.

Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) theory of identity negotiation provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex experiences of biracial individuals. By examining how they navigate the interplay of different cultural identities, we can gain insights into the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to maintain a sense of self. Biracial individuals often experience a unique tension between belonging to multiple cultural groups and the desire to assert their individuality. They may face the challenge of being seen as "other" by both racial groups, leading to a sense of being "in-between" or "outsider." Furthermore, biracial individuals may be forced to confront the complexities of race and identity in a way that monoracial people may never have to (Bhabha, 1994). This can lead to a deeper understanding of racial dynamics and a greater commitment to social justice. However, it can also be a source of significant stress and anxiety. Biracial individuals may struggle to reconcile their different cultural identities and may experience feelings of exclusion or marginalization.

In conclusion, identity negotiation is a complex and dynamic process, particularly for biracial individuals. By understanding the factors that influence identity negotiation and the challenges faced by biracial individuals, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of identity and the importance of intercultural understanding.

Cultural Expectation

Cultural expectations are fundamental to understanding how individuals interact within their societies, influencing communication styles, behaviors, and identity negotiations. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018), elaborates on the importance of cultural expectations as implicit and explicit standards that guide behavior in various cultural contexts. These expectations are deeply rooted in the values, beliefs, and practices of a culture, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and others. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) asserts that cultural norms provide the framework for

evaluating and enacting identity-related practices, which are crucial in intercultural interactions. For instance, she distinguishes between "tight" cultures, where adherence to social norms is strictly enforced, and "loose" cultures, which allow for greater individual expression. This distinction highlights the need for cultural sensitivity when engaging with individuals from different backgrounds.

Moreover, Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) emphasizes that cultural membership significantly influences how people construct their identities and interact with others. Through the process of enculturation, individuals internalize the values and norms of their cultural group, which affects their communication patterns when interacting with culturally dissimilar others. This internalization can lead to misunderstandings if individuals rely on their own cultural frameworks to interpret the behaviors of others. Therefore, advocates for mindful identity negotiation a strategy that encourages individuals to be aware of their biases while actively seeking to understand the perspectives of others. By adopting this approach, communicators can navigate the complexities of cultural expectations more effectively.

Empathy also plays a crucial role in understanding cultural expectations. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) argues that developing empathy allows individuals to appreciate the emotional experiences of others within their cultural contexts. This emotional intelligence facilitates deeper connections and promotes an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued. Furthermore, flexibility in adapting one's communication strategies is vital for effective intercultural interactions. Individuals must be willing to modify their behaviors based on situational norms and cues from their conversational partners. This adaptability not only enhances communication effectiveness but also demonstrates respect for the other culture's values and practices. Indeed, it is believed that the process of crossing cultures challenges the very basis of who we are as cultural beings. It offers opportunities for new learning and growth, (Kim, 2012)

In conclusion, cultural expectations provide valuable insights into the dynamics of intercultural communication. By understanding how cultural norms shape behavior and identity negotiation processes, individuals can navigate cross-cultural interactions more effectively. The concepts of mindful identity negotiation, empathy, and flexibility are essential tools for fostering respectful communication across diverse cultural landscapes. As our world becomes increasingly interconnected, cultivating these competencies will be crucial for promoting mutual respect and understanding among people from different backgrounds.

Cultural Boundaries

The complexities of intercultural communication, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities that arise when individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact. The concept of boundary-crossing, which refers to the process of navigating the cultural differences that can hinder effective communication. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) emphasizes that cultural boundaries are not static but fluid, influenced by various factors such as individual identities, relational dynamics, and contextual factors. Successful intercultural communication requires individuals to be mindful of these boundaries and to develop strategies for bridging them. Ting-

Toomey and Dorjee (2018) argues that individuals' identities are shaped by their cultural affiliations and that these identities play a crucial role in intercultural interactions. When individuals from different cultures encounter each other, they must negotiate their identities and find ways to reconcile their cultural differences. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) suggests that by being mindful of their own cultural biases and assumptions, individuals can become more aware of the potential for misunderstandings and can develop strategies for overcoming them. In essence, mindfulness of one's cultural biases is a crucial step toward effective intercultural communication, as it enables individuals to bridge cultural gaps and foster understanding.

In conclusion, the dynamic nature of cultural boundaries and the importance of navigating them effectively. By understanding the interplay of individual identities, relational dynamics, and contextual factors, individuals can develop strategies for bridging cultural gaps and fostering understanding. Mindfulness of one's own cultural biases is essential in this process, as it allows for the recognition of potential misunderstandings and the development of strategies to overcome them. Successful intercultural communication requires a nuanced appreciation of cultural differences and a commitment to building bridges rather than erecting barriers.

Alienation

The experience of biracial individuals often involves a complex navigation of identity, shaped by both personal self-perception and societal pressures. Biracial people are often confronted with the challenge of reconciling multiple racial and cultural identities, which can result in feelings of alienation. According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) explore the intricate processes of identity formation and communication within intercultural contexts. Their insights into the negotiation of cultural identities, the role of social categorization, and the dynamics of intercultural communication offer a useful lens through which we can understand the alienation often felt by biracial individuals. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) argue that identity is not an inherent, fixed trait but is shaped through continuous communication within various cultural contexts. For biracial individuals, this dynamic of identity construction can be fraught with challenges, as they may feel compelled to navigate and sometimes "choose" between the racial categories they belong to. This constant negotiation of identity, influenced by societal norms and expectations, often leads to feelings of alienation. The cultural context in which an individual lives shapes how their identity is communicated and perceived. In societies where racial categories are rigidly defined, biracial individuals may feel pressured to align with one side of their heritage, thus suppressing or ignoring the other.

A major contributor to the alienation of biracial individuals is the lack of authentic representation in the media. According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018), the media plays a critical role in shaping public perceptions of culture and identity. The underrepresentation or misrepresentation of biracial individuals in mainstream media reinforces stereotypes and perpetuates the marginalization of their experiences. In many instances, biracial characters are either completely absent from popular media or are portrayed as ambiguous, with their racial

identity downplayed or stereotyped. Biracial individuals may struggle to find role models who reflect the complexity of their experiences, leading to a sense of invisibility and isolation.

The alienation of biracial identity, as explored through the lens of Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018), highlights the need for a more inclusive and flexible approach to racial and cultural identity. By recognizing the fluid and multifaceted nature of identity, societies can create more inclusive spaces where biracial individuals are empowered to express and embrace the full range of their heritage. This requires challenging societal assumptions that demand racial purity or cultural homogeneity, and instead embracing the diversity that comes with multiple identities. Moreover, as scholars such as Poston (1990) argued, biracial identity is not merely about reconciling two distinct racial categories; it is about finding new ways to integrate and express one's diverse cultural experiences. For biracial individuals, this process can be difficult, but it is also an opportunity for greater self-empowerment and agency.

The alienation of biracial individuals is a complex issue that arises from the tension between their multiple racial and cultural identities and the rigid, often exclusionary, societal structures that seek to categorize individuals into fixed racial boxes. Communication plays a central role in the construction and negotiation of identity, and that intercultural communication dynamics contribute to the alienation of biracial individuals. Through an understanding of identity fluidity, social categorization, and the role of cultural context in shaping self-perception, we can better appreciate the challenges faced by biracial individuals and work toward creating more inclusive and empathetic social environments.

RESEARCH METHOD

To delve deeper into the complexities of biracial identity as presented in "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter", the writer employs a descriptive qualitative research approach. This methodology, grounded in the work of Bogdan and Taylor (1975), prioritizes understanding the world from the subjective perspectives of individuals rather than imposing predetermined categories or treatments. By adopting this approach, the writer can gain valuable insights into the lived experiences of biracial individuals, capturing the nuances and complexities of their identities. The qualitative technique allows for a more in-depth exploration of the social phenomena at hand. By observing and analyzing the novel's portrayal of biracial identity, the writer can uncover the underlying themes, emotions, and challenges faced by the protagonist. This approach enables a rich and multifaceted understanding of the topic, going beyond surface-level observations and delving into the deeper meanings and interpretations that emerge from the text.

The researcher has selected the novel "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter" by Erika L. Sánchez as the primary source for this study. Published in 2017, this novel provides a rich exploration of themes related to biracial identity, family dynamics, and cultural expectations. By analyzing the text, the writer aims to gain insights into the experiences and challenges faced by individuals navigating multiple cultural identities. In alignment with the definition provided by Bogdan and Taylor (1975), the novel serves as a valuable data source. The text offers a wealth of information that can be used to address research questions related to biracial identity, cultural

assimilation, and the complexities of belonging to multiple groups. The novel's narrative provides a unique perspective on these issues, allowing the researcher to delve deeper into the complexities of identity formation and the challenges individuals may encounter in their quest for belonging.

Method of data analysis is step for compiling and explaining the data that has been collected. This step involves several steps such as organizing data, reading and understanding the data as a whole, dividing the data by breaking it down into an explanation that can answer the research questions we are studying. The qualitative approach method will be utilized in this study to collect data from Erika Sanchez's novel, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, which must be relevant to the subject. To describe Reyes family multiracial identity and how they overcame the challenge, the writer will use facts from the novel's core narrative and dialogue. Throughout the analysis, the writer will use excerpts from Stella Ting Toomey and Tenzin Dorjee identity (2018) to clarify and support the multiracial identity research in the selected narrative and interaction. Furthermore, to strengthen the analysis, the writer will provide explanation for narrative and dialogue element.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Biracial Identity Experiences portrayed in I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter (2017)

In the 21st century, the United States has become increasingly diverse, with a growing population of biracial and multiracial individuals. This demographic shift has brought about a greater awareness of the complexities of biracial identity and the challenges faced by those who navigate multiple cultural and racial backgrounds. Sánchez's novel reflects these contemporary trends by portraying Julia experiences in a society that is increasingly diverse yet still grappling with issues of cultural boundaries and cultural expectation. Julia journey highlights the ongoing tension between the desire to belong to both her Mexican and American cultures and the challenges of being perceived as "other" or "in-between."

Biracial identity in the 21st century, highlighting the complexities and challenges faced by individuals who straddle multiple cultural and racial backgrounds. Through the lens of Julia, the protagonist, the novel delves into the intricate process of self-discovery and negotiation as she grapples with the expectations of her Mexican heritage and the pressures of American society. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) theory of identity negotiation provides a valuable framework for understanding Julia's experiences. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) posits that individuals face biracial identity issues through cultural expectations and cultural boundaries. Meanwhile, they may deal with the issue through identity negotiation and alienation. Julia's successful moments in the novel would involve her finding ways to assert her full, multifaceted identity in a way that is understood, respected, and supported by others. She might achieve this through effective communication, building relationships that validate her experience, and developing high self-awareness and empathy in her interactions. When negotiation efforts fail, or the cultural environment is too rigid, alienation can occur.

Moreover, the novel explores the experiences of biracial identity. Julia experiences with community and family provide a glimpse into the struggles that can both connect and isolate individuals. The ability to connect with others who share similar experiences can be empowering, but it can also reinforce feelings of otherness and exclusion. Sánchez's *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* offers a timely and relevant exploration of biracial identity in the 21st century. By highlighting the complexities and challenges faced by individuals who navigate multiple cultural and racial backgrounds, the novel contributes to a growing body of literature that seeks to understand and address the experiences of diverse populations.

Cultural Expectation

Cultural expectations are formed through socialization and are reinforced by cultural institutions such as family, school, religion, and the media. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) describe cultural expectations as the implicit or explicit norms, beliefs, and behaviours that people of a culture expect from one another in order to sustain social peace and group cohesion. These expectations influence how individuals are regarded and interact in a cultural environment. Biracial people have distinct obstacles when navigating the sometimes-opposing norms and values of several ethnic groups. This duality can cause conflict when multiracial people are required to adhere to the cultural norms of one ethnicity while potentially disregarding or being ostracized from the other.

The first quotation explains when Julia comments her sister, Olga, choice to dress in a way that deviates from mainstream beauty standards could be seen as a form of resistance against societal pressures to conform. She is the perfect Mexican daughter in their family, her older sister never rarely opposed their mother opinion of wanting to preserve their Mexican culture. My poor older sister had a special talent for making herself less attractive. She was skinny and had an okay body, but she always managed to make it look like a sack of potatoes. Her face was pale and plain, never a single drop of makeup.” (Sánchez, 2017, p.1)

According to the previous quotation, Julia's remarks regarding her sister's appearance highlight the widespread impact of cultural norms and stereotypes in determining how people view and assess other people. Julia's remark that her sister's attractiveness is "a waste" subtly expresses an internalized notion that success, personal fulfillment, or social approval depend on conforming to particular beauty standards. This criticism highlights the difficulties people encounter in negotiating such expectations in addition to reflecting the prevalence of societal discourses that place a premium on physical appearance as a gauge of value or attractiveness. This viewpoint specifically draws attention to the junction of cultural and personal identity, where standards of beauty are frequently influenced by more general society ideals such as class, color, and ethnicity. These beauty standards can be doubly challenging for people who are juggling numerous cultural identities, as is often the case in biracial or multicultural environments. They might feel pressured to fit in with conflicting beauty standards, which could minimize or even contradict elements of their ancestry. According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) provides an insightful theoretical framework for analyzing this dynamic. In multicultural settings, their theory highlights the need

for people to negotiate identification, cultural value dimensions, and face-saving tactics. The internalized cultural ideals imposed by dominant beauty standards, as well as the conflict between preserving and fighting these values, could be reflected in the narrator's criticism of her sister's appearance in this instance.

Cultural Boundaries

Crossing cultural boundaries may involve encountering a new culture, which may result in cultural misunderstandings or the mingling of cultural aspects (known as cultural diffusion). Cultural boundaries are the limits or divisions that separate distinct cultural groups or traditions. These limits are frequently established by elements such as ethnicity, language, religion, location, or social conventions, and they define the uniqueness of one culture in respect to another. Cultural boundaries can also refer to how certain activities or beliefs are labeled as "inside" or "outside" a specific culture. According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018), multiracial persons can integrate their dual heritages by managing cultural borders with mindfulness and intercultural competence, generating a sense of belonging and acceptance in both cultural contexts. These borders may not always be physical, but they help define what is "normal" or "acceptable" within a specific community, as opposed to what is "foreign" or "different."

Towards the quotation, it explains the situation when Julia mother's want to make birthday party for Julia, but the mother's desire to throw a party, even in the face of the individual's grief. The mother's actions may be driven by a desire to uphold the family's reputation or to project an image of resilience.

"Wait, what?"

"A party. Don't you want a nice party?"

"My sister just died and you want to throw me a party? I'm already fifteen!" I must be dreaming.

"I never got to give Olga a quinceañera. It's something I'll always regret."

"So you're going to use me to make yourself feel better?" (Sánchez, 2017, p.11)

The quotation above, explains that the concept of cultural boundaries as the individual navigates between two cultural identities. The quinceañera (celebrating 15 birthday) tradition, while significant in Hispanic culture, may feel foreign or inappropriate to the individual, who is also grappling with the recent loss of a sibling. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) Boundary-crossing refers to the process of navigating between multiple cultural identities or contexts. In this case, the individual is situated between their Hispanic cultural heritage, represented by the quinquenary (celebrating 15 birthday) tradition, and their personal experiences, including the recent loss of a sibling. The quinceañera (celebrating 15 birthday), while a significant rite of passage in Hispanic culture, may feel incongruous or even distressing for the individual given their personal circumstances. The loss of a sibling can create a sense of grief and mourning that may conflict with the celebratory nature of the quinceañera (celebrating 15 birthday).

2. The main character Responses of biracial identity portrayed in I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter (2017)

The 21st century has seen a rise in awareness of multiracial identity due to globalization and greater cultural interconnectedness. The social forces that uphold cultural barriers have not been removed, nevertheless. The difficulties faced by biracial people today, who are often asked about their "authenticity" or made to feel as though they must choose between two cultural identities, are reflected in Julia's experience. In a society where cultural stereotypes are still prevalent and identity construction is made more difficult by the intersections of gender, race, and class, this pressure is especially great. The main character, Julia Reyes's reactions of alienation and identity negotiation serve as a prime example of the difficulties associated with multiracial identification. Julia struggles to fulfill her family's traditional expectations while seeking her individuality in a more progressive world illustrate the emotional toll of juggling her Mexican ethnicity with her American cultural background. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) state that when people feel excluded from completely belonging to either cultural group or suffer cultural dissonance, alienation frequently results. This is exemplified by Julia, who feels alienated in largely white American settings and is criticized for defying her parents' cultural expectations.

Identity Negotiation

Biracial identity through the lens of societal expectations and self-perception. While there's no explicit mention of biracial identity in the text, the appearance can be interpreted as reflecting broader cultural norms and stereotypes that often pressure individuals to conform to certain beauty standards. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) work on intercultural communication might provide valuable insights into the relationship between identity, appearance, and societal expectations. The research often explores how cultural factors influence communication styles, self-perception, and interpersonal interactions

The next quotation, which describe when Julia reaches the bottom, she kicks the sand out of irritation, and a gust of wind blows some of it right into her eyes. She is furious at Lorena and has had enough of Juanga.

"I've always loved the feeling of sand against my skin. We rarely went to the lake when I was a kid, even though it was close. They were some of the only times I've ever seen Apá happy. He built sand castles with us, and swam and swam until it got dark. He said it reminded him of swimming in Los Ojos when he was young." (Sánchez, 2017, p.94)

The quotation above explains that Julia's affection for the sand and the memories associated with the lake highlight the importance of shared experiences in building interpersonal relationships. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) emphasizes that shared cultural practices can enhance relational bonds and create a sense of belonging. In this case, the lake serves as a significant site for family connection, where Apá (father) joy while building sandcastles and swimming reinforces the emotional ties between family members. Such experiences not only strengthen relationships but also create lasting memories that shape individual identities.

Moreover, the act of reminiscing about Los Ojos reflects a transference of cultural values and memories from one generation to another. Apá (father) memories serve as a bridge that connects Julia to her cultural heritage, enriching her understanding of her family's past. This intergenerational sharing of experiences creates a tapestry of identity that informs how Julia perceives herself and her place within her family and broader cultural context.

The other quotation tells Julia feels so far away from the life she wants the things she yearns for feel impossible to reach. Dr. Cooke asks Julia to tell her about the things she wants. She says she feels suffocated by her parents, by Chicago, and by her family's desire for her to be more like more perfect.

"I want to move away, go to college. I don't want to live in Chicago. I don't feel like I can grow here. My parents want me to be a person I don't want to be. I love my mom, but she drives me crazy. I understand that she's upset about my sister we all are but I feel so suffocated. I'm nothing like Olga, and I never will be. There's nothing I can do to change that." I stare at the ceiling, wondering what life will be like when I go back home." (Sánchez, 2017, p.155)

In this quotation, Julia reflection on her desire to move away from Chicago and her strained relationship with her mother reveals a tension in generational identity negotiation, particularly within a biracial context. Julia feels suffocated by her mother's expectations, which may be shaped by traditional Mexican values and a desire for her to conform to a certain role in the family, a role that contrasts with her aspirations and identity. This internal conflict is a manifestation of what Stella Ting-Toomey and Tenzin Dorjee (2018) describe as identity negotiation, where younger generations often seek to assert their own identity and independence, while older generations shaped by different cultural norms attempt to preserve values and expectations that may seem constraining. Julia's statement that she is "nothing like Olga" suggests a struggle between her own sense of self and the familial or cultural expectations to embody a specific role (in this case, the idealized role of her sister, Olga). The desire to escape and create a new identity outside of the family's influence reflects the challenge biracial individuals often face in reconciling multiple cultural expectations especially when one culture may be more rigid and traditional in its expectations, while the other (her American upbringing) allows for greater individuality and independence. Identity negotiation underscores how generational differences can intensify the sense of alienation and confusion for individuals who are trying to balance dual or conflicting cultural expectations, particularly when one generation is more invested in upholding traditional cultural norms. It can be seen that Sánchez challenges simplistic narratives about immigrant families. She exposes the "emotional and intellectual stresses within political identities and systemic realities," showing the hidden complexities and generational trauma that are rarely acknowledged publicly.

Alienation

Alienation occurs when people struggle to reconcile differences in cultural values, communication styles, or customs, resulting in feelings of loneliness, dissatisfaction, and a weakened sense of belonging. Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) define alienation as an emotional condition caused by cultural discord or exclusion, which can occur in a variety of intercultural interactions. This phenomenon is especially important in the context of multiracial identity, as people frequently navigate the challenging terrain of belonging to various cultural heritages. Biracial people may encounter particular obstacles, such as being viewed as outsiders by both cultural groups or failing to match each group's specific standards. This dualism can result in identity uncertainty, exacerbating feelings of alienation and emotional turmoil. To address these problems, Ting-Toomey and Dorjee underline the significance of developing mindfulness and intercultural competency. These techniques allow people to empathize with cultural differences, build a better sense of belonging, and enjoy the diversity of their identities, ultimately changing alienation into a chance for growth and self-understanding.

When Julia and her parents went to her cousin house, Victor's seventh birthday party, her family gave her compliments but she knew they weren't compliments. This explains in the following quotation

"Normally, I wouldn't be offended by a comment like this Mexicans are always saying that about kids. It's meant as a compliment. "Good eaters" are people who'll eat anything put in front of them with no complaints; they eat with enthusiasm. It means they aren't picky or entitled brats. But this time, I know it isn't meant as praise because tía Milagros is always talking shit." (Sánchez, 2017, p.56)

The quotation acceptance of the phrase "good eaters" as a compliment illustrates the high-context nature of Mexican culture, where meaning is derived from shared cultural understandings. However, the character's awareness of Tía Milagros's tendency to "talk shit" shifts the interpretation of the comment from praise to criticism, emphasizing how relational history can influence communication dynamics. Ting-Toomey (2018) emphasizes that in high-context cultures, much is left unsaid, relying on the listener's familiarity with cultural nuances. The comment showcases their understanding of this cultural backdrop, but the subsequent realization of its negative intent highlights how context can shift meaning based on relationships. Additionally, the evolution of the speaker's perception underscores the importance of relational context in shaping meaning, resonating with symbolic interactionism, which posits that individuals create meaning through social interactions. Overall, the text encapsulates the intricate interplay of cultural context, interpersonal relationships, and identity in shaping communication, illustrating how these factors can complicate understanding in intercultural exchanges.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis examines how Erika L. Sanchez's book's which is entitled "I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter" deals with the idea of multiracial identity. Being a member of two distinct racial groups while feeling alienated from both is a common characteristic of biracial identity, which is a complicated and multidimensional experience. People who are biracial may experience feelings like pride, perplexity, and exclusion while they create their own identity. This process can also be influenced by societal expectations and views, which can result in pressure to identify with a certain race over another. Fostering inclusivity and advancing social justice require an understanding of the complexities of multiracial identity. The findings show what experienced by Julia as the main character of the story proves that individual experiences, cultural origins, and societal situations all influence the development of biracial identity. Being biracial involves a special fusion of social, cultural, and individual identities. People who are biracial must constantly negotiate their racial identity, which may be both freeing and limiting. They frequently experience prejudice and stereotyping because of their racial backgrounds, which makes them feel alienated. Numerous factors, including geographic location, gender, and socioeconomic class, have a big impact on how people manage their identities.

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