



SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN IDENTITIES IN *GIRL ON THE VERGE* AND
SOMETHING IN BETWEEN



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อัตลักษณ์ชาวอเมริกันเชื้อสายเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ในนวนิยายเรื่อง *Girl on the Verge* และ
Something in Between



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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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BY
BUSSARAPORN MACHAROEN

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Identity development is essential in adolescence. In particular, young members of ethnic minority groups tend to be more confused about their identity because of the clash of cultural values and social norms. Diverse literature is a way to investigate identity development among ethnic minority adolescents. The aims of this study are to study the ethnic identity development of the two main characters in *Girl on the Verge* (2017) and *Something in Between* (2016), in order to compare the ethnic identity development of these characters. The two literary works were analyzed in the theoretical framework of Asian-American identity development of Jean Kim. The results revealed that Kan in *Girl on the Verge* and Jasmine in *Something in Between* developed their ethnic identities in line with the Asian American identity development of Kim. Kan establishes identity in *Girl on the Verge*. Her Thai-American identity is a fluctuation of two selves, which is fluid and unique. Kan denies being fixed on one particular side, but accepts both cultural selves to flow freely. In *Something in Between*, Jasmine refuses to choose one side and opts to define herself in a new way and creates a hybrid Filipino-American identity in 'the third space.' The analysis shows that these two characters shared some similarities. Kan and Jasmine developed an ethnic identity in a progressive manner. Both Kan and Jasmine's ethnic identities were a form of bicultural identity and their families played important roles in facilitating the achievement of their ethnic identities. However, there are some differences between these two characters. They have different ethnic awareness levels, with different identifications with the white majority. The style of their ethnic identities is also dissimilar. Kan has a fluid and flexible Thai-American identity, whereas Jasmine acquires a solid, hybrid Filipino-American identity. Lastly, the generalization of all Asian-Americans in a single group should be avoided, and that literature magically remains as a reflection of reality and the connection of human beings.

Keyword : Asian-American, Ethnic identity, Young adult novel, Diversity

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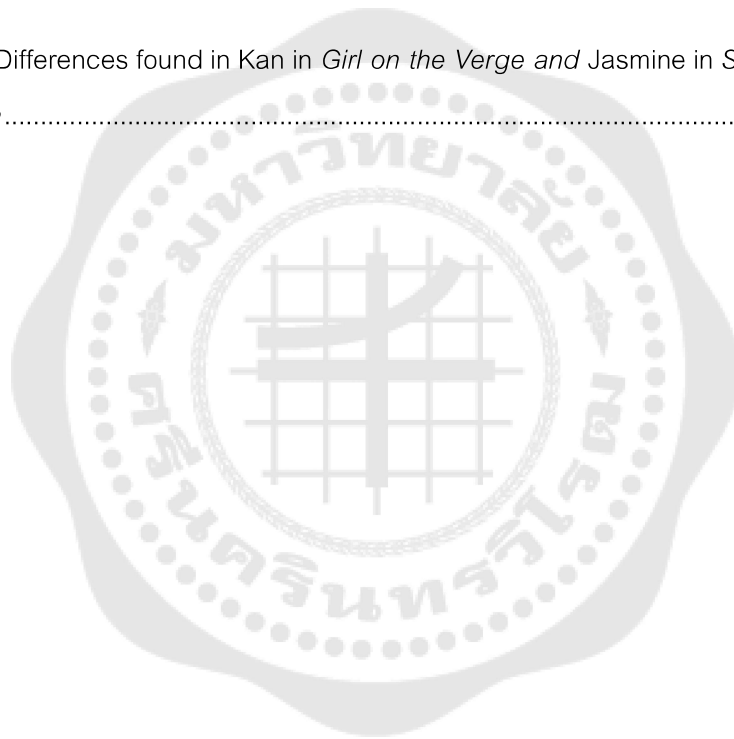
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Identity development is essential in all human lives, mainly because identity plays a vital role in directing how a life goes on (Grotevant, 1986). A fully developed identity helps promote a mature and positive worldview and reduces confusion and weakness in life for all individuals. Additionally, a firmly established identity is associated with enhancing adaptability to live among others peacefully. Unsuccessfully achieving identity, individuals are prone to live their lives aimlessly and suffer anxiety and depression. That is, identity impacts on several facets of living. Therefore, enabling individuals to develop identity is crucial. The developmental task is critical throughout the lifespan but significantly approached when adolescence begins (Arnett, 2014; Ferrer-Wreder & Kroger, 2019; Kroger, 2006).

Identity development in adolescence can be complex. First of all, youth confront rapid physical, emotional and psychological changes. These transformations lead adolescents to be confused about themselves, which is most likely regarding their roles as being themselves and members of their society (Erikson, 1968; Eveline & Ronald, 2012). Role confusion can create a great deal of turmoil among adolescents as they struggle to perceive and understand themselves. Furthermore, the inability to clear up the confusion may relate to problematic issues that are paramount to their identity development ("Young Emerging Adults Mental Health," 2017). More importantly, bemused amid social shifts and pressures, young individuals are at risk of heading to wrong directions to overcome "a war within themselves" to achieve a true identity (Erikson, 1968, p. 17). Identity development can present significant challenges to some adolescents; understanding how adolescents develop identity can inform measures to help these youngsters strive to adulthood successfully and safely (Tekeng, 2008).

Adolescents who are members of ethnic minority groups are seemingly more confused about their identity. This is because the set of two different values, the original and the mainstream, adds extra burden to the development of identity (Phinney, 1989).

Pate (2010) adds that teens with multiple cultural backgrounds find it more challenging to form their identity due to the colliding of their original culture and the dominant culture of the majority group. Furthermore, members of ethnic minority groups are viewed inferior and perceived as less privileged (Kim, 1981). This impression can also lead to identity conflict among young ethnic minorities; they can consistently struggle to identify who they truly are and which set of cultures they belong to. Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) underlines that ethnic identity, which is a sense of belonging in an ethnic group and the pride in being an ethnic minority, is pivotal in helping ethnic minority adolescents manage their overall positive identity and avoid identity conflict. Thus, facilitating ethnic identity among young ethnic minorities is requisite. A simple study of ethnic identity development in adolescence is to observe ethnic minority adolescents' lives directly. However, another form to study is investigating the stories of young ethnic minority characters and their ethnic identity development through the literary world.

In the literary world, books written for young people can foster understanding of adolescence by offering vivid portrayals of the young lives. Young adult (YA) literature is one of the most influential and valuable genres speaking for today's teens (Elmore, 2017). The plots and themes fictionally represented in YA literature reflect real-life issues that affect adolescents. Moreover, the characters, another valuable component of YA literature, commonly depict lives and circumstances that mirror those of real teenagers. For these reasons, the fictional characters and stories in YA literature, particularly in YA novels, can provide useful evidence to help explain adolescent lives.

The issues of concern to adolescents that YA novels address are generally current and ongoing (Simma, 2009). The theme that is trending in YA novels today is being different and struggling to fit in (Koss & Teale, 2009). As Bontempo (1995) writes "there are many young adult books...that deal with...young people sorting through and confronting the issue of being "different," of finding their place in sometimes confusing and diverse world" (p. 31), YA works reflect adolescents' characters who are confused because they feel different and alienated. These characters are generally ethnic minority adolescents in diverse cultural settings who must cope with the clash between their

native and dominant cultures. These characters demonstrate how the development of ethnic identity guides adolescents to live their lives harmoniously. Therefore, the ethnic identity development of young ethnic minority characters in YA novels can be examined to enhance the understanding of adolescent ethnic identity and its development.

Given that ethnic identity development is increasingly considered central to ethnic minority adolescents' healthy transition to adulthood (Williams, Chapman, Wong, & Turkheimer, 2012), research on ethnic identity development in ethnic minority adolescents has received attention in the past decades (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). For instance, a study by Sabien French examines the developmental process of ethnic identity among African American, Latino American, and European American adolescents. In addition, Aries and Moorehead (1989), the research on identity development among Black adolescents highlights the salience of ethnicity during the process of identity development among Black youth. Besides, Gautier studied how ethnic identity of Latino youth is formed. Asian Americans, as well as other ethnic groups, have also been center of attention over recent decades. Interestingly, as these examples illustrate, major efforts have been undertaken to study ethnic identity development among young members of ethnic groups.

In the field of ethnic identity development, the amount of research examining ethnic identity development among young Asian Americans, in particular, has been increasing significantly. Noticeably, most studies focus on Chinese and Japanese American youth; other Asian American groups remain unnoticed. This causes Southeast Asian Americans to be overlooked and unexplored to the extent that they continue to be recognized as "the others" or "forever foreigners" (Reyes, 2017). This is evidently shown in the area of young adult literature as most parts of Asian American YA novels regularly portray Chinese American and Japanese American characters, disregarding Asian American characters of Southeast Asian backgrounds. Although Southeast Asian American characters are outnumbered in the YA literature, a sufficient number exists to allow for an examination of the ethnic identity development. Thus, studying ethnic identity development of young Southeast Asian American characters in YA novels can

be another possibility to understand young Southeast Asian Americans and avoid pitfalls of generalization of all Asian American subgroups as one entity (Kobayashi, 1999; Tanujaya, 2019).

Some notable works highlight being young members of ethnic minority groups and growing up as Southeast Asian Americans. For example, Brian Ascalon Roley's critically acclaimed novel *American Son* (Roley, 2001) sheds light on ethnic identity by focusing on the ambivalence of two young Filipino Americans who confront common challenges of adolescence to finalize their self-assertion. Another one is Bich Minh Nguyen's *Stealing Buddha's Dinner* (B. M. Nguyen, 2007) that sets out on a journey of growing up as a Vietnamese girl in American society. These books prove to the readers that achieving ethnic identity can be struggling, but it must be pursued until it is achieved because it is necessary for living as an ethnic minority.

This research proposes to study ethnic identity development of young Southeast Asian American characters in two YA novels. Among YA novels with Southeast Asian American characters in the late 2010s, *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* are highly interesting. *Girl on the Verge*, written by Pintip Dunn, delivers the story of a Thai American teen whose name is Kanchana or Kan for short. The story follows the journey of Kan striving to fit in the White majority at school and struggling to comply with her Thai family and Thai traditions at home. In her quest to discover who she is, Kan has to find ways to fuse both cultures into her identity. Another book that highlights Southeast Asian Americans is *Something in Between*, written by Melissa de la Cruz (2016), about a young Filipino immigrant named Jasmine. As an immigrant, Jasmine encounters with the downsides of being an ethnic minority such as being viewed inferior and battling to gain U.S. citizenship. To deal with all the troubles, Jasmine has to navigate a new outlook to identify herself while being caught amid questions as to who she truly is and where she belongs.

The newly launched *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* can be good resources for studying ethnic identity development of Southeast Asian American characters because of various reasons. First of all, the main characters of *Girl on the*

Verge and *Something in Between* are Americans of Thai and Filipino ancestors respectively, which are the two subgroups of Asian American population that are likely to be assimilated into the mainstream American culture easily and lose their ethnic pride according to Bankston and Hidalgo (2006). Second, these two selected novels have received positive critical reviews from popular sources of reading and book recommendations such as *Goodreads*, *Kirkus* and *YA Books Central*. Third, the two selected books are written by Southeast Asian American writers who directly experience living as young minorities in the U.S. Lastly, both Dunn and de la Cruz are *New York Times* best-selling writers of YA fiction, and their novels are award-winning books. Dunn's novels, *Forget Tomorrow* and *Seize Today*, are the winners of RITA award (Romance Writers of American) for best first book and best young adult romance respectively. As for de la Cruz (2016), her several works are critically acclaimed books and award-winning YA novels, including *The Au Pairs*, *The Blue Bloods*, *The Ashleys*, *The Angels on Sunset Boulevard* and *Fresh off the Boat*. She also publishes short stories for renowned sources of reading for teens such as *Teen Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Allure*, and *Seventeen*. On the grounds of the writers' credibility and the popularity of their books, *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* are chosen in this study.

Today, living in multicultural world means dealing with an abounding mixture of cultures and values, which can confuse and complicate the approach to find true identity for youth. Ethnic identity, which can be as asset for young ethnic minorities, also represents a meaningful quality for all young individuals living among cultural and racial diversity. Given these points, this study aims to investigate and analyze ethnic identity development portrayed in *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* using Jean Kim's Asian American identity development framework. With all the attempts to uplift the importance of ethnic identity, this study contributes to shining a light on those who seek to avoid confusion in their social and cultural identity and adapt to living interculturally.

Purpose of the Study

For the overall aim of the study, the focus is on ethnic identity development of Southeast Asian American characters in two selected YA novels. The stages of ethnic identity development presented in the literature are examined as part of this research, which is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To study ethnic identity development of the main character in *Girl on the Verge*
2. To study ethnic identity development of the main character in *Something in Between*
3. To compare the ethnic identity development of the main character in *Girl on the Verge* and *Something In Between*.

Significance of the Study

This research can be a useful source of learning for individuals interested in diverse literature and ethnic identity development. The study can also enhance readers' awareness of ethnic identity development among young ethnic minorities. Moreover, the study can promote better understanding and appreciation of the value of literature through *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between*. Importantly, the study can be used as a guideline for more intensive studies on ethnic identity development among Southeast Asian American adolescents in the future.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the main adolescent characters in the two following novels: Kanchana in Pintip Dunn's *Girl on the Verge* and Jasmine in Melissa de la Cruz's *Something in Between*. Jean Kim's Asian American identity development theoretical framework is employed to analyze the main characters in each of these works.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the study.

“Ethnic identity” is the part of self-identity that acknowledges and internalizes a sense of belonging to an ethnic or particular group and accepting shared commitment of the countercultures and dominant cultures.

“Asian American identity development (AAID)” is the developmental process that is Asian American individuals undergo step by step as they form their ethnic identity as an Asian American minority. AAID, proposed by Jean Kim, comprises five stages: ethnic awareness, White identification, awakening to social political consciousness, redirection and incorporation.



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to analyze ethnic identity development portrayed in minority adolescent characters in the two selected young adult novels, it is important to study the essence of identity in adolescence and ethnic identity development. The review of the study is drawn into three parts: identity, ethnic identity development, and related research on ethnic identity development.

1. Identity

1.1 Definition of Identity

In modern psychology, the topic of identity is broad and defined in a variety of dimension such as race, gender, and roles in life. Fundamentally, identity is derived from the Latin root *idem*, which means “the same.” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (Merriam-Webster, 2020) defines identity as the unique character or personality of an individual and describes identity as the same as individualization. Scholars have provided a variety of definitions that highlight multiple aspects. For example, Zanden and Pace (1994) define identity as “an individual’s sense of placement within the world—the meaning one attaches to oneself as reflected in the answers one provides to the questions ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Who am I to be?’” (p. 74). Abrams and Hogg (1990) state that identity is the concept of how one views oneself as a person and in relation to others and society. In social context, identity is the conscious sense of self that is developed through social interactions and experiences based on group membership (Tajfel, 1981) and the process by which individuals search for answers to questions regarding themselves (Ergün, 2020; Shell, Shears, & Millard, 2020).

1.2 Identity in Adolescence

The origin of the concept of identity in adolescence lies in Eric Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development. Erikson (1968), who is viewed as the pioneer of identity theory, proposes eight-stage psychological development. He points out that the search for identity occurs in adolescence, which is the fifth stage (identity vs. role

confusion). He believes that adolescents either discover their identity (identity resolution) or go through identity crisis (role confusion) before progressing to the latter stages (Erikson, 1968). Although Erikson's theory offers a valuable and useful framework, critics of Erikson's theory suggest that the theory is more practical for reviewing developmental histories of identity than analyzing modern identity developmental context. Furthermore, Erikson's theory is based on infants and pre-teens, and greater attention is paid to boys (Crammer, Flynn, & LaFave, 1997)

Based on Erik Erikson's theory on identity and psychosocial development, James Marcia extends Erikson's theory on identity and psychological development by proposing four identity statuses: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. Marcia agrees that Erikson's theory on psychosocial development in adolescence is extremely useful. However, he argues that identity occurs when an individual experiences exploration and commitment as these are the key factors to identity achievement, not role models to achieve identity as stated by Erikson (Somkid, 2018). Accordingly, Marcia (1980) elaborates Erikson's theory by purposing four identity statuses referring to the occurrence of exploration and commitment.

Rooted in Erikson's psychological stage of adolescence (identity vs. role confusion), Marcia's identity statuses give a clearer range of identity that is previously set in the earlier related works. Marcia's statuses provide a means for managing identity among adolescents. Each of his four conditions, which are not sequential, corresponds to the process of exploration and commitment. Exploration is the experience of decision-making on various alternatives in life, and commitment is the extent of how adolescents engage themselves into action in their lives. Marcia's identity statuses are classified as follows (Marcia, 1980).

1. Identity diffusion refers to individuals who neither have experience of exploring nor commitment to achieve an identity.

2. Identity foreclosure refers to individuals who commit to themselves but have no experience exploring their own way of life. The identity may derive from parental expectation rather than self-governing.

3. Identity moratorium refers to individuals who are in the process of experiencing and exploring crisis in life but have no commitment to develop identity.

4. Identity achievement refers to individuals who defuse crisis in life and commit to an identity.

There are both strengths and limitations in Marcia's identity statuses. Much of the psychological research on identity uses Marcia's identity statuses because they provide a wider range of styles in dealing with identity issues and exclusively concentrate on adolescents (Cote, 2009). Though influencing many studies, these identity statuses are criticized for the lack of underlying elements of identity development (Klimstra & van Doeselaar, 2017). Some critics also point to the statuses being highly westernized as a weakness. The statuses are uncompromising to the globalization, given that they exclude various social influences affecting the developmental process of identity (Cote, 2009).

Nevertheless, neither Erikson nor Marcia clearly relates their theories to sociological factors that influence the process of identity development in adolescence, such as ethnicity or multicultural facets. Accordingly, in connection with the modern psychology and cultural diversity, it is drawn into consideration not to neglect the adolescents who belong to multiple ethnic groups and obtain culturally diverse settings. To overcome this limitation, many scholars propose new concepts and models of ethnic identity development.

2. Ethnic Identity

2.1 Ethnic Identity Development

Ethnic identity is defined in a number of ways based on the key of self-identification. It is considered as: feelings of belonging and commitment, attitudes towards one's group, or the sense of shared values and attitudes (Phinney, 1990).

The population of people from ethnic minority groups surges in many large cities and countries throughout the world. This occurs apparently and especially in the United States, where “melting pot” becomes another national nickname (Phinney, 1992). In the communities where diversity is evident, the subject of ethnic identity development becomes prominent for both ethnic minority groups and the majority. Phinney claims that ethnic identity is ascertained to be “a general phenomenon that is relevant across groups” (Phinney, 1992, p. 157). She further states that it is common to desire a sense of belonging where two values collide. In addition, Lewin states that it is necessary for minority adolescents to feel the affirmation with their groups in order to develop a sense of well-being and to reduce confusion and self-hatred (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). Therefore, ethnic identity development is essential and particularly inevitable among ethnic minority adolescents.

Many models for ethnic identity development have been proposed. Most of these models share similarities with the previous works, not independent from Erikson’s theory on identity and Marcia’s identity statuses. Among these models, Phinney’s stages of ethnic identity development is the most broadly recognized in studies on ethnic identity development (Cote, 2009). Her model reveals comprehensive dimensions in a broader sense and emphasizes internalizing a sense of belonging and positive attitudes toward membership of ethnic minority groups, which is absent in other concepts of identity development. Moreover, it integrates sense of self-identification and sense of ethnicity in the process (Cote, 2009).

According to Phinney, ethnic identity development consists of three stages. The first stage is “unexamined ethnic identity.” In this initial stage, ethnic minority adolescents have no experience in exploring ethnicity. This stage can be recognized as identity diffusion and foreclosure in Marcia’s identity statuses when adolescents have no interest in their ethnicity or view their ethnicity from opinions of others (Phinney, 1990). The second stage is “ethnic identity search” or the period of exploration. Adolescents become interested in ethnicity and aware of consequences of being minorities, which is similar to the moratorium described by Marcia (1980). The final stage is “achieved

ethnic identity” or internalization. Ethnic minority adolescents develop a clear and confident sense of their own ethnicity. In this stage, they are comfortable with their major and minor groups, and they form positive and realistic views on their ethnic groups (Phinney, 1990).

Table 1 Phinney's stages of ethnic identity development

Stage	Characterization
1. Unexamined ethnic identity	Individuals lack experience in ethnicity.
2. Ethnic identity search	Individuals explore cultural diversity.
3. Achieved ethnic identity	Individuals develop a clear sense of ethnic identity.

Nonetheless, there is more subtle and discrete information in the subject of ethnic minority group. Each ethnic minority group is apparently different, and the process or formulation that is created for one particular ethnic group can be too general or unsuitable for other groups (Cheryan & Tsai, 2007). Factors and environments facilitating identity development of young minorities are various (Phinney, 1989). To illustrate, the approach that African American adolescents adapt to develop identity is likely to be dissimilar to those employed by Asian American adolescents. The differences in history, background, and family play important roles and make the process of development dynamic and resilient in all prospects. Thus, more theories on each particular minority groups are proffered. Hall (1972) proposes theory of racial identity development based on Black American adolescents solely, excluding the developmental theories of other ethnic minority groups. In relation to Asian American, Jean Kim (1981) postulates five stages of Asian American identity development (AAID), which are ethnic awareness, White identification, awakening to sociopolitical consciousness, redirection to Asian American consciousness, and incorporation. The explanation of AAID is provided in the following section.

2.2 Asian American Identity Development (AAID)

The similarity that all ethnic minority groups share is that they are deemed as color people and different. Asian Americans, not recognized differently to other ethnic minority groups, are viewed inferior and perceived as members of less-privileged society. This impression leads to identity conflict when adolescents are in the pursuit of their identity (Kim, 1981). Young members of ethnic minority groups deal with the difference of mainstream and traditional cultures and rely on self-reflection and self-evaluation to form identity (Kim, 1981). Alternatively stated, how they value themselves becomes as important as how they compare themselves as minorities to the majorities. Being the core contexts of ethnic identity, reflection and evaluation are the two aspects that Kim emphasizes on examining the process of Asian American identity development (AAID) (Kim, 1981).

In the context of Asian Americans, ethnic identity is not solely concerned with increasing one's awareness of the ethnic self. On the contrary, the point is to value certain aspects of oneself as a member of an ethnic minority group amidst the pervasive majority (Kim, 1981). Therefore, as Kim noted, self-validity and self-evaluation, together with ethnicity and race within self, are salient dimensions in every step of AAID (1981). Her dynamic and progressive five stages of AAID are ethnic awareness, White identification, awakening to social-political consciousness, redirection to an Asian American consciousness, and incorporation.

1. Ethnic awareness (EA) is the first stage and appears early on in life. Minorities begin this early stage around the age of three or four, and it lasts until they start school. They learn about their race and increase the awareness of culture and traditions through their family members and relatives. Each minority's exposure to experiences that promote ethnic pride vary depending on the availability of opportunities with which to access knowledge of their heritage. The shift to the next stage is when they are involved in school environments. The minorities become more complicated as they contact White society and, consequently, move on to the next stage, where they are greatly affected by the majority group (Kim, 1981).

2. White identification (WI) is the second stage that is the consequence of the significant contact with the majority, which is the White society. Minorities, primarily adolescents, enter this stage with a strong sense of being different as the differences between them and their peers are what stand out to them. They face the difficult time of handling the experiences of racism and prejudice, convincing them to blame themselves for being minorities. This sense of not belonging, of isolation, represents key components of Asian Americans' struggle with identity. To survive, the minorities choose to deny the acknowledgement of being different and, instead, accept values and standards of the dominant culture to become "one of them" in the predominant society. As a result, they are in the phase of "White identification," which is alienating from their original self and other ethnic minority fellows. This stage is critical as the results of alienation can cause negative attitudes and behaviors toward culture and traditions. Minority adolescents are led to believe that their group is subordinate and unacceptable. Kim further explains that the sense of being inferior is brought by a lack of political understanding (Kim, 1981). Therefore, the solution to leave this stage to the next one is to understand their social status.

3. Awakening to social political consciousness (ATSPC) is the stage that the minorities can develop new perspectives on who they are. By gaining knowledge about their heritage and community, young minorities build consciousness in order to better understand or change their self-perception from negative to positive. For instance, understanding history and political issues of their ethnic group helps them power through racism and assists them in coming to new realization of being minorities. Finally, they are connected to their inner selves. Their self-confidence and self-esteem are enhanced as well as the better feeling that they have about themselves (Kim, 1981).

4. Redirection to Asian American consciousness (RTAAC) is the fourth stage, which parallels the former stage in terms of the acceptance of ethnic values and the enhancing of self-esteem. The additional and critical step in this particular stage is "the immersion in Asian American experience" of the minorities (Kim, 1981, p. 147). To elaborate, the minorities in this stage focus on themselves as Asian Americans and

being members of an ethnic minority group more deeply and soundly. Their positive attitudes and pride of being who they are ethnically serve as the main indicators of this stage. The minorities praise their fruitful past as well as cultural and social history as a unique group (Kim, 1981).

5. Incorporation (I) is the final stage in the process of AAID. The focal points of this stage are divided into two aspects. First, having developed a clear sense of themselves from the previous stage, young minorities feel confident and strong in their Asian American identity, sufficiently to blend in the prevalent values and other groups without losing their identity as Asian Americans. Second and last, not only can minorities conclusively realize that their Asian American identity is a part of who they are and the lives they are living, they can also relate their Asian American identity in order to develop other significant identities. The latter point is the marker of identity achievement in AAID (Kim, 1981).

Table 2 Kim's Stages of Asian American Identity Development

Articles / Stages	Ethnic Awareness	White Identification	Awakening to Social Political Consciousness	Redirection to A.A. consciousness	Incorporation
Social environment	home, family	public arena, school systems, heightened heterosexual activity and interest	social political movements, campus politics	Asian American community	general
Critical factor	exposure and participation in ethnic activities	increased contact with White society, acceptance of White values and standards	gaining political consciousness on being minority	immersion in Asian American experience	firm Asian American identity, need to be whole

Table 2 (Continued)

Articles / Stages	Ethnic Awareness	White Identification	Awakening to Social Political Consciousness	Redirection to A.A. consciousness	Incorporation
Self-concept	<positive> neutral	negative self-image, particularly body image	positive as minority	positive as Asian American	positive as a person
Ego identity	<clear as person of ethnic heritage> less clear of meaning	being different, misfits, inferior, isolated, personally responsible	minority, oppressed, not inferior, not personally responsible	Asian American, sense of belonging, proud	whole person with Asian American as important but not the sole identity
Reference	family	White people society in general	individuals with similar social political philosophy	Asian Americans especially those at similar levels of identity development	people in general, may vary with role situation
Hallmark of the stage	discovery of ethnic awareness	realization of differentness, alienation from self and other Asian Americans and social alienation from Whites	gaining new political perspective, sociological imagination (change from personal to social perspective)	personal and cultural exploration, appreciation of Asian American experience	blending of Asian American identity with the rest of individuals' identities

Clearly, connections and similar features exist among these notions in the context of ethnic identity development theory. It can be concluded that Kim's stages are

conceptualized on the basis of Erikson's and Marcia's theory of identity with the additional facets of ethnicity and race (Kim, 1981). Kim considers identity conflict to be the key entrance to the process of Asian American identity development, which is related to Erikson's stage of identity role vs. confusion, Marcia's identity crisis and Phinney's stage of exploration. Ultimately, the meaningful contribution of AAID lies in the final stage, which shares the same result in Marcia's identity achievement and Phinney's achieved ethnic identity. In "Incorporation," the minorities not only internalize the uniqueness of their group, but they also interact with other manners of self-identity by staying true to who they are.

In summary, this study of Southeast Asian American characters in young adult novels is designed to analyze a Thai American character in Pintip Dunn's *Girl on the Verge* and a Filipino American character in Melissa de La Cruz's *Something in Between* by utilizing Asian American identity development (AAID). This is because Kim's AAID provides clear understanding of being Asian American in the U.S. and focuses on the experience of being members of an ethnic minority group, which are proper and relatable to study the main characters in the two selected young adult novels.

3. Related research on ethnic identity in literature

Ethnic and racial identity is studied widely in the field of literature. Many writers portray young ethnic minority characters in their fictional works to express their interests in racial and cultural diversity in today's life. For this reason, there are various studies related to issues on ethnic identity among ethnic minority adolescents of different races. One instance of research on ethnic identity in young adult literature is Padilla Perez and Carol Isabel's "Navigating Borders: Identity Formation and Latina Representation in Young Adult Literature." The study is conducted to explore cultural identity, gender, sexual identity, and social identity in fourteen young adult books. All these three aspects of the main characters in the texts are analyzed utilizing Gloria Anzaldúa's theoretical framework "Borderlands/La Frontera," which is based on the idea of one existing in both the culture of origin and the dominant culture. The results reveal that young adult Latinas

are aware of their two different cultural values being integral parts of becoming who they are, and neither of the cultures can be abandoned.

In Jing-Mei Woo's "Hybrid Identity in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* Novel" (Tan, 1989), Novitasar, Sunggingwati, and Lubis (2018) focus on hybrid identity of the main character in the outstanding novel *Joy Luck Club*. Hybridity theory by Peter Barry is employed to analyze hybridity portrayed within Jing-Mei Woo's identity and the development process of Jing-Mei Woo's hybrid identity. The results show that Jing-Mei Woo as the main character not only accepts her origin as a Chinese but also integrates herself into the standard American culture, which creates her hybrid identity as a Chinese American.

Another study is Rasha El Gohary's "Identity and Post-Colonial Discourse: Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*" (Gohary, 2017). The issue of the impact of racism and stereotyping on identity development among American adolescents of Asian descent is the focal point of the study. Three different characters in the critically acclaimed graphic novel *American Born Chinese* are analyzed using the ethnic identity development models of Frantz Fanon, Jean Phinney, Jean Kim and Sue and Sue interchangeably. The analysis indicates that the main characters in *American Born Chinese* blends Chinese traditions and American popular culture, which advocates the concept of ethnic identity that young Asian Americans can be Americans in Asian ways or vice versa.

In addition, Somchai Watcharapunyawong, "The Development of Racial Identity in Sin Sin Far's Two Short Stories: *Pat and Pan* and *Its Wavering Image*," uses William Cross' racial identity development to analyze the protagonists in *Pat and Pan* and *Its Wavering Image* (Watcharapunyawong, 2007). The findings of the research show that Pat in *Pat and Pan* developed his American identity and denied his Chinese identity. Pan in *Its Wavering Image*, on the other hand, develops her Chinese identity and rejects her American identity. In the comparison, three factors are indicated to be the causes of the difference between the two protagonists: age, race, and environment.

The previous works have studied the ethnic identity development of various young fictional characters from different races and ethnicities; most characters show their development through steps to establish their sense of ethnic identity. However, studies on ethnic identity development of Southeast Asian American characters are still limited. Therefore, this study aims to examine ethnic identity development of the Southeast Asian American main characters in Pintip Dunn's *Girl on the Verge* and Melissa de la Cruz's *Something in Between*.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides information related to the methodology of the study. It is divided into three sections: the selection of young adult novels, procedures of the study, and content analysis.

The Selection of young adult novels

The two selected young adult novels in this study are *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between*. The selection is based on three principles: the year of publication, the main characters, and the writers. First, both *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* are written in late 2010s (2016 and 2017), which are corresponded to the contemporary settings and issues of ethnic minority adolescents in modern world. Second, the main characters in *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* are ethnic minority adolescents: Thai American and Filipino American, respectively. These chosen minority characters are portrayed by the writers from the same ethnicities, which is an essential point as authors' own voices can increase the authenticity of the stories and reduce the misinterpretation of ethnic minorities (Bold, 2019). Last, both Pintip Dunn (*Girl on the Verge*) and Melissa de la Cruz (*Something in Between*), are successful young adult novel authors and experienced in delivering materials of ethnic minority adolescents, having published critically acclaimed and award-winning young adult novels such as *The Darkest Lie* (Dunn, 2016a), *Forget Tomorrow* (Dunn, 2016b), *The Queen's Assassin* (de la Cruz, 2021) and *Blue Bloods* (de la Cruz, 2006).

Procedures of the Study

The procedures include the following steps:

1. Related literature in the following topics was studied:
 - 1.1 Identity in adolescence
 - 1.2 Ethnic identity development

1.3 Related research on ethnic identity development in young adult literature

2. The ethnic identity development of the main characters in *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* was analyzed by using Jean Kim's Asian American Identity Development (AAID) as a framework.

3. Comparison of ethnic identity development of the two main characters in the selected were illustrated.

4. Discussion and conclusion of the findings were drawn.

5. Suggestion for further studies were proposed.

Analysis

Ethnic identity development in *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* was analyzed by using Jean Kim's Asian American identity development (AAID) as a framework. The availability of certain articles influencing each stage in the development was also explored to reveal Southeast Asian American identities in the discussion.

CHAPTER 4

THE ANALYSIS OF GIRL ON THE VERGE AND SOMETHING IN BETWEEN

This chapter presents the analysis of ethnic identity development of the main characters in *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between*. Kan's ethnic identity in Pintip Dunn's *Girl on the Verge* is analyzed by Jean Kim's Asian American identity development. Significant events in Kan's life that affect her ethnic identity development are depicted. The idea of posttraumatic growth is used to explain Kan's ethnic identity. Kim's Asian American identity development is also adopted to analyze the development of Jasmine de Santos' ethnic identity in Melissa de la Cruz's *Something in Between*. The concept of Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity and Edward Said's Otherness are also interchangeably employed to investigate Jasmine's journey to develop her Filipino American identity.

Girl on the Verge

Pintip Dunn's *Girl on the Verge* is a story about a Thai American young girl named Kanchana or Kan for short. The novel follows the story of Kan who learns to form her unique ethnic identity. Kan was born in Thailand but moved to the U.S. with her Thai parents and grandmother when she was four years old. She grows up as the only Asian girl in a small town in Kansas City, Missouri. Being in between two different cultures, Kan bestrides the two clashing worlds. At the beginning of the story, she is unable to blend in neither worlds. In other words, Kan is toiling to belong in the White community and struggling to fit in the ethnic world. Her friends and family issues also add up multiple traumatizing difficulties and dangers in her frustration as a young minority. Regardless of the struggles, Kan finally learns and forms a unique identity.

The first stage of Kim's Asian American identity development (AAID), ethnic awareness, is described as the phase where ethnic minorities are aware of their ethnic origin. In the beginning, Kan develops an awareness of her ethnicity or Thai origin through her *Khun Yai* or grandmother in Thai. Kan's grandmother is deemed to be the only source of learning Thai culture and traditions for Kan. *Khun Yai* provides knowledge

of Thai culture and traditions for Kan. To broaden her granddaughter's knowledge in Thai heritage, *Khun Yai* speaks Thai to Kan in all possible occasions. She often calls Kan *luk lak*, which means the endearment in Thai. In return, Kan always calls her *Khun Yai*, which is the grandmother in Thai. *Khun Yai* also cooks authentic Thai food such as *Nam Phrik Kapi* and *Pad Thai* for the family. In her grandmother's attempts, Kan understands Thai language and customs. Kan is seen singing in Thai at her *Khun Yai*'s 75th birthday party in Thailand in front of her Thai cousins. Her Thai pronunciation is surprisingly correct and impressive to all the cousins at the party. This implies that her Thai speaking ability is inherent. Kan also occasionally prays to *Phra Buddha Chao* or Buddha in English. She insists that she is not religious, but constantly prays for *Khun Yai*'s full recovery after a surgery later in the story: "I pray to Buddha. I'm not religious, not really, but prayer has been instilled in me from the time I was child" (Dunn, 2017, p. 167). These events show that Kan is taught well in her heritage and language of origin.

Although Kan acknowledges her ethnicity in the wake of the unswerving bond with her grandmother and seems to follow some Thai traditions, she feels neutral about being an ethnic minority. Her sense of pride in being a minority is not great. Kan cannot find a meaning of being an ethnic minority. She is unsure of her ethnic identity. Kan, in a sense, feels dislocated and confused. The frustration presumably springs from living in an intergenerational family or a skipped generation household, which is being under the care of grandparents. In this living arrangement, the generation gap and differences in cultural views somewhat cause contradictory ideas in cultural beliefs between Kan and her grandmother. As *Khun Yai* lives her entire life in Thailand, her upbringing is rooted in Thai values and beliefs whereas Kan believes otherwise. Pummanee, Tedla, and Riesch (2018) reveals that most Thai adolescents are expected to be submissive and over-controlled in contrast to regular American adolescents. From this point of view, *Khun Yai*'s parenting practices are against Kan's aspiration for American freedom of choice and independence in her life. The dispute between *Khun Yai* and Kan over Kan's future career often arises. As *Khun Yai* decides on the list of medical schools for Kan to consider, Kan claims, "You can get a bachelor's degree in fashion design here [The

U.S.]. And I ... never wanted to be a doctor, anyway" (Dunn, 2017, p. 16). Another disagreement is on the matter of education. *Khun Yai* prefers Kan to be a college professor, which is considered to be "the second most revered profession in the Thai culture" in *Khun Yai*'s view (Dunn, 2017, p. 16). However, Kan protests, "You become a professor because you want to spend the rest of your life studying a subject you love. Not because a PhD makes you look good to your neighbors!" (Dunn, 2017, p. 16). These disagreements clearly raise the incompatibility between Kan and her grandmother.

Khun Yai adopts a fashion of Thai parenting practices, which is aiming at the traditional expectations of obedient and compliant behaviors. According to Miller, Hess, Bybee, and Goodkind (2018), customs and traditions are essential factors of Thai family life. Therefore, *Khun Yai* expects Kan to conform to Thai traditional values. In other words, Kan is expected to obey and respect traditional Thai values. This is evident as *Khun Yai* expects Kan to conduct herself as a stereotypical Thai girl: "not a girl who wears tight jeans and low-cut blouses. Not someone who runs around gossiping about boys instead of doing her homework" (Dunn, 2017, p. 17). Another instance is that Kan is discouraged to cross her knees because this act, according to *Khun Yai*, is considered inappropriate and not ladylike in Thai social norms. Moreover, *Khun Yai* is conventional about inheritance. She will only leave Kan a family heirloom—a unique precious necklace—on the condition that Kan will not marry a *farang*, which means Caucasian or white people in Thai. *Khun Yai* is also constantly adamant that Kan consorts with *farangs*. Blending in with the White is unacceptable for *Khun Yai*. This practice implies that *Khun Yai* entirely adopts traditional Thai family system as a single approach to bring up her granddaughter. As a result, Kan is trained to be obedient and modest as expected in Thai cultural expectations of a woman. All the rules and expectations applied by *Khun Yai* are forms of family pressure controlling Kan's attitude toward herself. Kan, exposed and influenced by the White majority, senses the imbalance between her self-perception and her family's anticipation in the matter of traditional norms and modern values. *Khun Yai*'s particular emphasis on the original

culture causes Kan's indifference and detachment toward her ethnic self. Consequently, Kan appears to be confused and discards her ethnicity.

In terms of building ethnic awareness, Kan develops a neutral sense of being an ethnic minority. That is, she acknowledges her Thai origin, but she is not committed to it. Kim notes that the impact of being different and raised in traditional Asian values among the western philosophy can affect the development of positive feeling towards selves and ethnicity (Kim, 1981). This is vivid in Kan's case. Being forced to be traditional against her choice to be modern results in self-conflict. This is stated as the significant point to transfer from the first stage to the second stage in Kim's Asian American identity development (AAID) (Kim, 1981).

Following the clash of cultural beliefs at home, the increase contact with the White majority at school is another critical factor alleviating Kan's sense of ethnic awareness. This is because Kan is the only Asian girl at school and surrounded by the White. For this reason, Kan is seen enduring internal conflict and identifying herself with the White, which are two significant progressive phases in the second stage "white identification" in Kim's AAID (Kim, 1981). At school, Kan experiences unpleasant encounters with her school friends' continual abusive appearance and racial banters. Her name, *Kanchana* or *Kan*, can always capture the school cafeteria diners' attention in her elementary school years. Her schoolmate ridicules and laughs at her name, "Hey, Kan, did you use the *can* today? I drank a whole chocolate milk at lunch, Boy, do I need to use the *can*" (Dunn, 2017, p. 15). Though the name reminds her of her late father because he named it, Kan detests explaining why her first name is long and different and what it particularly means. She thereafter prefers to rely on her full name to avoid the possible confrontations that seem to deteriorate her confidence. Moreover, Kan is unhappy with her appearance because it looks different as she recalls, "like the time the school photographer yelled 'open your eyes!' when they were already open" (Dunn, 2017, p. 6). Clearly, having different appearance becomes Kan's vital issue.

Another unfavorable and sensitive incident is that Kan is viewed and called *exotic* by her friends frequently. Collins Dictionary defines *exotic* as *unusual and*

interesting because it comes from a distant country ("Collins COBUILD Essential English Dictionary," 1992). The term causes offense to Kan as illustrated in the story when she is referred as exotic, "God, I hate that word. Exotic means different. Unfamiliar. Originating from a distant and foreign land. And I'm none of those things" (Dunn, 2017, p. 7). Kan believes, "*Exotic*, however, is a step up from ugly. And if I've graduated to that, I suppose I should take it" (Dunn, 2017, p. 8). According to Azhar, Alvarez, Farina, and Klumpner (2021), *exotic* also refers to a common stereotypical image of Asian and Pacific Islander American women (API). In the U.S., API women are perpetually depicted to be "exotic and overtly sexualized" (Azhar et al., 2021, p. 1). The case of Kan being called *exotic* validates Yamamoto's idea that being called *exotic* means being *othered*. According to Yamamoto (2000), the othering of the majority's view on API women permeates and reinforces the experience of racial abuse on a daily basis in the lives of API women. To the White society, as clearly seen in Kan's incident, Thai women are among API women being the subject of racial verbal abuse by being called *exotic* to describe their beauty and appearances.

Kan is subjected to verbal racial abuse on being *different* and *Asian* at school. The boys at Kan's school sexually teases Kan about her physical characteristics after studying a magazine with "scantily clad models with long hair and slanted eyes pose provocatively" (Dunn, 2017, p. 31). The Asian edition magazine fulfills the boys with the images of sexual exoticism in Asian women. One of the boys, Walt, walks straight to Kan and seeks for his entertainment, "I never thought of you as sexy. But I've changed my mind; I think I like *exotic* women. How about Friday night? In Stevie's basement? There's an old couch there that would suit someone like you" (Dunn, 2017, p. 31). Walt continues his verbal bullying at the lockers, "You're a *spicy* one, aren't you, Kan? No wonder Brad prefers you to your plastic friend, Ash. I'd do you too" (Dunn, 2017, p. 59). The insulting words provoke Kan's feeling of humiliation and shatter her confidence in her physical appearance. The banters are feasibly caused by mainstream magazines that continue and increase the stereotypical sexualized images of Asian women in the U.S. *Exotic* can also infer a single idealized standard of beauty, which is exclusively

white in American society (Kuo, 2016). Yamamoto (2000) states that using words to objectify API women is a harmful fashion of othering Asian women in the context of sexualization. In other words, exotification can be recognized as forms of othering. This othering concept is consistent with Edward Said's concept of the Other. In Kan's situation, she is perceived to be a *different* and *exotic* woman being compared to the majority's beauty standards. This is lucid that Kan, in a way, is identified as the Other, who pertains to a different and wild beauty.

Struggling with western beauty standards is a significant challenge for API women for generations. Eurocentric features are yet emphasized, and the non-White bodies are still under scrutiny. Birla (2018) states that the feeling of being unable to achieve beauty standards can cause low self-esteem and poor sense of ethnic awareness. Being called *exotic* and being *strange*, Kan grows body dissatisfaction and anxiety issues concerning beauty. She believes that she cannot meet the required standards of beauty in neither places. In The U.S., Kan is recognized as *exotic* and different to the mainstream American beauty ideals. On the contrary, in Thailand, Kan's body is considered large and robust—the opposite of the conventionally revered bodies of Thai women. Clearly, these beauty standards play havoc with Kan's self-perception. As a consequence, Kan becomes conditioned to believe that she belongs in neither Asian nor Western beauty standards. This perception leads Kan to feel socially unaccepted and *othered*. According to Kim (1981), the sense of disconnection with the mainstream and original culture is a prevalent issue among young minorities that occurs prior to their self-reevaluation and ethnic identity development.

Being othered and referred as exotic impacts on Kan's attitude toward her appearance. Kan starts to resent her body as being called *squinty* and *exotic* repeatedly and depreciates being different. She compares herself to the White majority and creates a negative self-image for herself: "nobody thinks I'm pretty, except maybe Ash. But she's my best friend. She has to think that" (Dunn, 2017, p. 23). The statement indicates that Kan is living in the world where western beauty standard rules. In Kan's point of view, being different is still unacceptable in spite of all the attempts of the media

to promote equality. Additionally, the doubt in herself is raised in association with her romantic relationship with Ethan. She ponders to herself: "I should've known there was no way I had a shot with blond, blue-eyed Ethan, not when he has a plethora of other girls from which to choose. Girls who aren't the only Asian student at school. Girls who don't have squinty eyes and puffy hair. Girls who look like everybody else" (Dunn, 2017, pp. 43-44). Kan's self-perception is powerfully influenced by the beauty standards based on the White majority, which is that desirable women are European-like, fair skin, typically with blond hair, long legs, and round eyes. This perspective is considered to be a source of stress hampering the ability to obtain positive self-image (Kim, 1981). Kim (1981) asserts that self-rejection and self-hatred can contribute to a negative self-perception and low self-esteem. In Kan's issue, her negative outlook on being different leads her to believe that she is a misfit. She rejects her ethnic self and loses a sense of ethnic identity.

Provided that Kan lives in the society where being different is criticized, she lacks confidence in being an ethnic minority. This leads Kan to face confusion as "a girl straddling two worlds and fitting into neither" (Dunn, 2017, p. 15). Reconnection to her ethnic self appears to be the solution to frame her ethnic identity. In fact, the opportunity to understand being an ethnic minority and being different can enable Kan to end her cultural and identity conflict. This is stated in Kim's AAID as an acquirement to exit the total state of social-separation and self-isolation (1981).

To achieve an ethnic identity, the major factor is gaining political perspective to develop positive self-concept as a minority as stated in Kim's AAID (1981). However, in Kan's case, there is no occurrence of social and political activity to be an opportunity to deeply understand the meaning of being an ethnic minority and move out of the stage of "White identification." Nonetheless, Kan's ability to gain consciousness on being an ethnic minority is not impeded. Kan gains new perspectives on herself as an ethnic minority through two different contexts. First, she learns from her romantic relationship with Ethan. Another occasion providing Kan's consciousness on her ethnic identity occurs in the light of posttraumatic growth. Kan learns and gains new perspectives on

herself through adverse experiences. In other words, posttraumatic growth helps shape Kan's ethnic identity. Berman, Montgomery, and Ratner (2020) suggest that an individual's perception and interpretation of significant events can affect identity development in a favorable and transformative way. This unfamiliar reciprocal relationship between trauma and positive development is depicted in Kan's ethnic identity achievement.

The awakening of Kan's ethnic identity begins with Kan's date, Ethan. He encourages Kan to be herself and respects her family and traditional culture. In essence, he assures Kan that she is beloved despite her different appearance and origin. Visiting Kan's family, Ethan impresses Kan with his attempt to learn about her background and heritage. Example of Ethan's effort to cherish Kan's original culture is his enjoyment in a traditional Thai appetizer, *miang kum*. Despite its strong smell, the dish of a plump green chapel leaf with sauce administers Ethan to show his joy in Thai food, which is opposed to most of Kan's friends' expressions. More importantly, Ethan accepts Kan for who she is, "But I never thought you looked different. I thought you looked like you. And I like that. More people should look like you" (Dunn, 2017, p. 74). Unlike other school friends, Ethan shows his appreciation on Kan's name: "Like I said. Beautiful. Interesting. Unique. Just like you" (Dunn, 2017, p. 69). This encourages Kan to revise herself and rebuilds her confidence in being different, hence being an ethnic minority. Kan feels that "being with Ethan is showing that difference is not necessarily a bad thing" (Dunn, 2017, p. 97). Ethan's appreciation of her uniqueness leads Kan to reiterate and believe in herself. That is, she begins to restore her confidence in being different through her significant other. Ethan's acceptance raises Kan's awareness of being difference. The pride in ethnic group membership appears to be built.

However, Kan's consciousness on being an ethnic minority is ultimately gained after critical and traumatic events that become life-defining moment. In the story, Kan is seen mourning the loss of her friend and surviving a violent abduction. Shelly, the orphaned girl whom Kan's mother agrees to provide a home for, is responsible for these horrific incidents. After Shelly enters her family, Kan begins to grow a considerable

discomfort. At first, Shelly shows her respect and acceptance in Thai traditions. However, Shelly's disconcerting friendship and suspenseful characters lead Kan to conduct an investigation to uncover Shelly's disturbing past. Following Kan's discovery, Shelly murders Ashley, Kan's best friend, and kidnaps Kan and Ethan. They are held in captivity and tortured for several days before they manage to escape. In the aftermath of the exposure to life-threatening events, Kan retraces the adverse experiences and revisits her perspectives on herself, her family, and her ethnicity. The traumatized experiences, in a manner, support reframing self-concept and integrating a sense of self (Marin & Shkreli, 2019) .

After overcoming adversity, generally, a mental health condition or posttraumatic stress disorder tends to arise. In some cases, notwithstanding, trauma can be an impetus for positive changes and power. Research reveals that trauma could potentially cause positive psychological changes (Wu et al., 2019). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) call the positive changes in the wake of encountering traumatic events as *posttraumatic growth* (PTG). Areas of posttraumatic growth can be various, including personal strength, appreciation for life, new possibilities in life, spiritual change and relationships with others (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Noticeably in Kan's case, her openness to the upside of the adversity allows space for the reassessment of self and belief. Kan's personality also plays a vital role enabling her to positively integrate the dramatic experiences into her life.

In Kan's case, the involvement in trauma ignites her self-reconsideration. Kan and *Khun Yai* reunite and accept each other. *Khun Yai* becomes a significant family reinforcement for Kan and helps remind Kan that the adverse experiences can bring about positive changes. Otherwise stated, the negative experiences produce a desirable outcome and changes, resulting in Kan's mindfulness and gratitude for her family. Kan finally treasures her family support and appears to have a greater appreciation of life in all directions.

Stokes (2021) notes that a strong support system, particularly a network of supportive family and friends, plays a key role in generating posttraumatic growth. In

final scenes, Kan's grandmother shows her support by accepting Kan's choice on her belief system. *Khun Yai's* encouragement and respect for Kan's decision is shown as she gives Kan the precious necklace without hesitation. Prior to the traumatic incidents with Shelly, *Khun Yai* promises to give Kan the family heirloom in the condition that Kan is willing to obey her decision for Kan's future life. After powering through the hardship with Kan, she converts her words and strengthens Kan's confidence:

"It took me eighty years to learn this. I now know a person's culture doesnot reside in her outer trappings. It's in the heart. And in your heart, luk luk, you are as Thai and as good as I would ever want you to be. [...] You are beautiful. Never doubt that. You may not look like or feel like other people, but that's what makes you so special, through and through. On the inside out" (Dunn, 2017, pp. 229-230).

In her trauma exposure, Kan discovers meaning in her personal traumatic experiences to promote her ethnic identity through family support. The adverse event in turn becomes Kan's resilient outcome. Experiences in traumatic events encourages her self-reconnection and self-questioning and becomes a dramatic change in her perspective on what kind of person she desires to be. As reflected in Kan, the aftermath of adversity sparks positive changes in Kan's attitude towards herself. Kan uncovers her passion and talent and raises her confidence to face challenges.

Posttraumatic growth in Kan's case is a kind of social awakening for Kan's ethnic identity development. Muldoon, Taylor, and Norma (2016) assert that the posttraumatic growth established through the lens of traumatic experiences can help shape self-perception in a positive way. As portrayed in Kan's story, she regains her consciousness on being different through uncommon and different life experiences. Kan positively views herself from this point forward as a survivor and decides to follow positive pathways. Besides, she alters the disaster into a benefit to learn about the merits of her native values and present moment. This is shown after the adversity when Kan is sufficiently confident to finally ignore beauty standards of the White: "Instead of ducking my head, however, I hold it high. With my recent decisions, it's more clear than ever I'm not the Thai girl she was. And yet, I'm not purely American, either" (Dunn, 2017, p. 229). That is to say, she sees 'being different' as a part of her and ignores beauty

standards that once impede the ability to see her intrinsic beauty. She also stops resenting the characteristics of a proper Thai girl because she knows that those characteristics are parts of herself.

As a consequence of experiencing adversities, Kan acknowledges that she possesses 'two selves'—Thai self and American self. She learns that these two essential components play a vital role in growing her strength for survival. As shown later in the novel, at first, Kan describes herself as *the girl in between*: "I used to feel that because I was in between worlds, that I was part of neither" (Dunn, 2017, p. 237). This perspective conveys that, prior to the traumatic experiences, Kan shuttles between two worlds and belongs to neither world in her belief. Kan views herself as a 'neither/nor' person. This piece also indicates that Kan is not connected to either Thai or American part; she is dislocated. She overlooks the importance in her 'selves.' However, on grounds of family's acceptance and posttraumatic growth, Kan can identify with both Thai and American parts. She accepts living in two cultural worlds and understands the natural outcome of the state of her in-betweenness. She appreciates and registers her membership in both Thai and American group. In this sense, Kan's self-concept changes from negative to positive—from not belonging to belonging in two worlds. She does not uphold the majority norms anymore because she knows those values cannot entirely define herself. Finally, Kan accepts and feels connected to her Thai origin as well as her American side. This, as stated in the third stage of Kim's AAID, is a sign and a doorway to leave identity conflict to enter the stage of redirection to being an ethnic identity in Kim's AAID (1981).

In the light of posttraumatic growth, Kan reaches the phase that her positive self-acceptance and confidence are the grounds for her Thai American identity. This can be linked to Kim's stage of redirection to Asian American consciousness, which is the acceptance and the confidence in being an ethnic minority (Kim, 1981). Learning to accept her two different cultural elements, Kan reassures herself, "And even less desire to hide who I am" (Dunn, 2017, p. 228). Now that the pride of being different is established, Kan clearly sees and understands that her two different compositions—

being Thai as well as being American—are equally essential. As stated in Kim's AAID, the goal of ethnic identity is to be able to determine the ethnic part and the American part (Kim, 1981). Kan, accepting and embracing her two different cultures, successfully establishes her Thai American identity.

Kan's Thai American identity serves as Kan's new belief system. That is, Kan chooses to express her Thai American identity in a unique way. She locates herself in her own position and defines her 'Thai American identity' in her own context. Kan describes herself as *the girl on the verge*, which is announcing that she stands on the borders of two different sides. In other words, her Thai American identity embodies the interchangeability of her two selves in two different cultures. Ravichandran and Deivasigamani (2013) suggest that "individuals exist not as a unified persons but as many, bound by no borders with infinite possibilities of inventing identities" (p. 560). The new definition of herself signifies that she breaks through the in-betweenness and ready to rise as a new person as she proclaims,

"Now I know the truth. Different worlds aren't mutually exclusive, and you don't have to pick one world over another. I can choose to belong to both—or neither. Or make my own world altogether. I'm not a girl in between. I'm a girl on the verge" (Dunn, 2017, p. 237).

By stating that she can choose to fit in both or neither at her discretion, Kan allows her Thai American identity to migrate from one place to another. Her Thai American identity is in the fashion of fluid identity. The flowing between two things can help individuals in mixed societies develop survival skills and avoid being emotionally disintegrated in life (Onmus, 2012). The key ideas of fluidity are the unsettlement and the impermanence in one place (Davenport, 2020). This explains Kan's Thai American identity. It is a mutual exchange between Kan's Thai self and American self that can occur depending on circumstances and opportunities in her life. Kan refuses to be fixed or categorized into a certain group and allows her Thai American identity to flow and shift freely. In consequence of her new belief system, Kan is thereafter positive of her Thai American identity and becomes an autonomous young adult who is unwavering to face her own issues and pursue her success in fashion design.

By virtue of the achievement of her unique Thai American identity, Kan is at the final stage of Thai American identity development. In Kim's AAID, this is the stage where an ethnic identity is firmly established and able to be blended with the other identities of oneself (Kim, 1981). In the final developmental phase, Kan's Thai American identity functions as a life director leading to the other identities and life aspects. Kim asserts that the possessing a fully developed ethnic identity provides inner strength and confidence to overcome the urge to identify with or against the prevailing values (1981). This reflects in Kan's fearlessness of pursuing her American dream and transcending cultural limitation. She reveals her passion to her family, "No more sewing machines and dressmaker's dummy shoved into the closets. Instead, all of my equipment is displayed out in the open, the way it should be" (Dunn, 2017, p. 227). Kan's revelation shows that her Thai American identity grows stronger and installs her confidence in moving forward with her life. Kan proclaims, "Of new adventures, of new possibilities. I can be whoever I want to be. And now, I know I'm not alone. And maybe, just maybe, I never was" (Dunn, 2017, p. 237).

Kan's unique and fluid Thai American identity development reflects real life cases. The author of *Girl on the Verge*, Pintip Dunn, bases Kan's sense of not belonging on her experiences of marginalization. As highlighted by Dunn (2017), Kan's journey to find her unique ethnic identity is portrayed in the light to present "an accurate representation in stories can go a long way toward combating this feeling of erasure" (Nucum, 2017). The discernible fluidity in ethnic identity is also found in Tiger Wood's distinct self-definition. Wood, a former professional golfer, is indeed "a rich mix of racial and ethnic heritage" (Younge, 2010). His father is of African American, Chinese and Native American descent, and his mother is of Thai, Chinese and Dutch descent. Wood reveals that "Cablinasian" is his own unique self-identification, disapproving being called Asian American or African American. The term "Cablinasian" is coined by Wood to show his rejection to be put in a certain group. Another representative example of unique ethnic identity is Rachel Dolezal, the former leader of The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Though Dolezal was born to White

parents, she is influenced to identify herself as an African American owing to growing up with four African American siblings (McGreal, 2015). From these cases, ethnic identity is likely crafting one's own identity. A unique and fluid ethnic identity appears to be a tool to ease self-conflict and develop the ability to live in intercultural and globalizing world. Ultimately, the act of not categorizing people by their social or cultural groups help demote the power of hatred and othering.

Something in Between

Melissa de la Cruz's *Something in Between* depicts the story of Jasmine de Santos' as progresses to frame her self-concept as a Filipino American. The novel follows Jasmine's major life events that influence her ethnic identity development or Filipino American identity at last. Jasmine, a model American girl, looks forward to a promising and vibrant future ahead of her until she discovers that her family is undocumented in the U.S. This complex immigration issue causes changes in Jasmine's viewpoint on herself to find out what and where she belongs. Jasmine is confused and unsure about her direction. Thus, making sense of herself and her reality is Jasmine's sole solution.

From the start, Jasmine acknowledges her ethnicity and Filipino culture. Her awareness of being an ethnic minority is related to the positive self-concept and is an early critical stage in Kim's Asian American identity development. While perceiving herself as an independent American girl with American dreams, Jasmine understands that she is Filipino and different. Jasmine's awareness is primarily raised by her family members and relatives. The first significant source of Jasmine's ethnic awareness is her parents. They call her *neneng*, which means baby girl in Tagalog (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 22). Her mother's friend also calls her *maliit na ina*, which means little mother in Tagalog because Jasmine is protective of her little brothers (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 34). According to (Bialystok, 2005), raising children to be bilingual helps their children connect to their family origins and remain close to their heritage. Therefore, hearing Tagalog, even occasionally, offers Jasmine cultural benefits regarding how she views and relates herself to her Filipino culture. Moreover, her family regularly manages

to cook Filipino food and gather Filipino relatives and friends for Filipino festive holidays. In this way, Jasmine and her brothers learn more about Filipino culture. In this manner, Jasmine feels the sense of being Filipino through her parents, who are the most essential reference to foster Jasmine's ethnic awareness (Kim, 1981). Along with her parents, *Lola Cherry*, or grandma Cherry, is the person who appears to be an important influence on Jasmine's life. *Lola Cherry*, living adjacent to Jasmine's family, is Jasmine's mother's aunt and the only Filipino reference outside her family. Jasmine respects *Lola Cherry* and idolizes her as a Filipino American role model. *Lola Cherry*'s adventurous experience as a pioneer immigrant in the U.S. motivates Jasmine to treasure her parents' contribution to the U.S. and stand for herself as an ethnic minority. In this regard, Jasmine understands her cultural background and accepts values of her origin. This is seen when she reminds Royce of what she always practices, "I'm always trying to please my parents. It's a Filipino thing" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 221). In similar manner, Jasmine realizes that taking care of her parents is a Filipino act and that she is expected to comply because "old people in Philippines never go to a home" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 235).

However, Jasmine primarily considers herself as an American because she grows up in California and vaguely recalls her toddler years in the Philippines. As a result, Jasmine's viewpoint on Filipinos is not only advocated by her family as above-mentioned, but also influenced by the representations of Filipinos in the U.S., which is generally displayed in American popular culture encompassing her childhood and early youth. The common stereotypes of Filipinos are maids and housewives in films, television, and literature (Regullano, 2014). Thus, Jasmine's perception of Filipinos is that Filipinos and their beliefs are primitive and outmoded based on the images of stereotypical Filipinos on American pop culture. For this reason, she understands her Filipino culture and the nature of the Filipinos, but she settles on modern American culture or the U.S., which is the only place that she calls home (de la Cruz, 2016).

Though perceiving herself as an American, Jasmine is confident and comfortable in being an ethnic minority in the U.S. and aware of her Filipino origin, as

she assures herself: "Winning at the meritocracy is my American dream. A successful career and a handsome husband. A family. I'm old-fashioned that way, maybe because I'm Filipino" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 15). Jasmine feels moderately positive and proud of her Filipino origin and the Philippines. She can see the beautiful side of her native country as she lingers on the Philippines, "I try to remind myself to not to be so negative about my native country. Despite the poverty and the government corruption, the Philippines is a place of such natural beauty" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 348).

However, Jasmine's confidence in being an ethnic minority is shaken when she has contact with white people. According to Kim (1981), direct effects in association with the White majority is the second stage in Asian American identity development, which leads to inner battles or identity crisis. This idea is shown in the case of Jasmine going through two distinct phases in contact with the White. At first, Jasmine's sense of being different among her White peers is positive. This positive sense is gained through her cheerleading squad as the group with whom Jasmine interacts the most. Jasmine is aware that she is physically different from the White majority, but she never suffers from troubles caused by her appearance. She neither sees the difference as a problem nor feels inferior for being physically different. This can be because Jasmine is a respectful and proud captain of the school's cheer squad. The squad fills Jasmine with admiration as they tease Jasmine, "You're so perfect, Jasmine. You do everything right. You were junior class president. Cheer captain. Honor roll. Volunteering. Don't you ever get tired?" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 10). Jasmine masters her flawless leadership skills with confidence and gains respect from both the squad and the schoolfellows. Therefore, Jasmine feels confident and positive about herself among her team squad. She believes that she completely belongs to the team and the White society. Another source of Jasmine's positive view of herself is her boyfriend, Royce. He encourages Jasmine to be proud of who she is for the entire time that they are together. This can be seen as he texts Jasmine on her deportation hearing at the court, "Don't worry. America was made for and by people like you. I love you" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 293). Royce's message could be seen as an act of accepting Jasmine for who she is. Thus, Jasmine's perspective on

herself as an ethnic minority is certain and positive because she is accepted and supported by her White peers.

Nevertheless, Jasmine's attitude toward herself changes after she learns that her family is 'undocumented.' Jasmine finds out that all the family members are not permanent residents nor American citizenship holders. Unprepared and confused by the truth, Jasmine suffers from her inner conflicts; she becomes unconfident about who she truly is and where she belongs. Her self-perception begins to shake. She thereafter reveals the truth about her family's immigrant status to her peers, "I'm not an American. I'm not here legally" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 177). The revelation leads to Jasmine's greater exposure to prejudices, which causes changes in her worldview.

The first encounter that weakens Jasmine's confidence is the incident at the immigration court. Jasmine is disrespectfully treated by Judge Reynolds. After Mr. Alvarado, Jasmine's family's lawyer, reports to the court about Jasmine's excellent academic performance and her leadership capability as a cheerleading captain, Judge Reynolds replies, "Yes, yes. You're right. Our country is in dire need of more cheerleaders" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 298). The Judge's satire and devaluation on cheerleaders send a negative message to Jasmine who tries to defeat the constant negative stereotypes of cheerleaders and regards cheerleaders as athletes. Jasmine describes her feeling as "ashamed" and "belittled" for being disparaged as a cheerleader after the hearing at the immigration court. Moreover, Royce's brother, Mason, insults Jasmine and her family with demeaning labels such as boat people, forever outsider, and unwelcome strangers. With this regard, Jasmine perceives herself as *the other* as in Edward Said's idea that White people have negative images on Asian people (as cited in Mohrem, 2020). This is evidently seen at the party as Isko, Jasmine's brother, are called "FOB" or "fresh off the boat" and told to go back to "the stupid island" with Jasmine (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 263). According to Goleman (2006), the phrase "fresh off the boat" is a derogatory term describing immigrants who are unable to assimilate into the customs, the language, or culture of the host country. The term is considered politically incorrect and offensive in the U.S. (Sturgeon, 2005). Moreover,

Jasmine's peers also insist that Jasmine leave the country as she is illegal and not American. Jasmine never experiences all these name callings or being labeled for being different prior to disclosing her family immigration status. The reactions brought by her peers add to Jasmine's confusion and sense of being different. As noted by Gonzales (2011), many undocumented youth are unfairly treated and negatively discriminated against by their White peers on the grounds of their cultural background and incapability to obtain citizenship. Unfavorable reception from the majority proves to be barriers for the youth to locate themselves in the society. Schwartz, Zamboanga, and Jarvis (2007) additionally state that immigration, by its nature, can exert strong influences on ethnic identity among young foreign-born ethnic minorities. Accordingly, illegal immigration can inarguably cause further complication to develop ethnic identity. For this reason, Jasmine is greatly affected by illegal immigration. She begins to question herself as who she is in her own eyes and through the eyes of the White majority, which inevitably drives Jasmine to frame her view on people and culture in binary oppositions.

The above-mentioned painful encounters between Jasmine and White people provoke her sense of framing her world in terms of duality. In other words, Jasmine reflects her world in the mode of binarism, which sees the binary opposition in the case of Jasmine. Jasmine's views are shaped in a combination of binary opposites. The most obvious binary opposition is White/Non-White or Filipino/American as she is a Filipino-born American straddling on two values. Additionally, Jasmines finds the opposition of upper class/lower class, powerful/powerless, and dominant/dominated in contact with the White majority. These binaries become clearer to Jasmine when she meets high-ranking Congressman Blakely, her boyfriend's father, for the immigration support. Jasmine describes the Blakely's world as the opposite of hers. While Congressman Blakely is likely to have political power to overturn the immigration Judge's decision, Jasmine and her family are powerless to persuade the immigration Judge to listen to them in the court. At the court, as the Judge points out how pointless Jasmine and her family's hard-working is, "You should know that simply working in American doesn't give anyone the right to stay in American, no matter how excellent reports are" (de la Cruz,

2016, p. 218), Jasmine even feels more humiliated, powerless, and useless. All these events, meeting Congressman Blakely and the incident at the court, simply reflect the binary structure of domination, which is one counting on the other one intricately (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013). Undoubtedly, Jasmine is situated in the “less” or “inferior” position, hence “lower” and “powerless.” As Jasmine soliloquizes, “his dad is a congressman who thinks all documented immigrants should be deported” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 6). In addition, the conversation she has with Royce before the final deportation hearing confirms her binary view as she says, “I feel like I’ll be less of a person if I move back to the Philippines” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 342). In essence, the binary opposition in the eyes of Jasmine is that one term of the opposition transcends the other one (American over Filipino or White over Asian).

Jasmine sees the distinction between two groups of individuals, two classes of society, and two values to hold onto. This becomes clear when Jasmine meets Royce’s friends and family. She feels inferior and *othered*. Everything surrounding Royce is beyond her reach and seems to be “the other world” to her (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 34), such as his family’s mansion in Bel-Air and his car Range Rover. These exorbitant products lead Jasmine to feel inferior and excluded as she lives in a rental property, and her family car is an old pick-up truck. Another important aspect in Jasmine’s binary view is that Jasmine polarizes people in her life in two groups. She frequently mentions “like mine,” “like ours,” and “like yours” when referring to the White and the Rich against herself, as she whispers to Royce, “my parents aren’t like yours” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 205). Meeting Royce’s family leads Jasmine to believe that she is inferior and viewed as the Other who is not a part of their American society. This is lucid when Jasmine talks to Keyla about Royce, “His family hates families like mine. I can’t be with someone like that (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 182).” Additionally, her sense of inferiority is clearer being rejected to stay in the U.S., “People like me pour out of it, spilling back over borders because of the way we are all criminalized. We feel like outsiders in our own community, in our own house” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 315). This ‘I/You’ binary perspective permeates Jasmine’s mind and consequently renders the binary concept of Self/Other.

The perception of Self and Other is essential in defining oneself and locating one's place in the society (Udah, 2019). The case of Jasmine and the White majority revolves around the concept of "Self/Other"—"Self" as the White majority and "Other" as Jasmine who is the minority—that posits the former as superior and privileged and locates the latter in the inferior and strange position (Said, 1978). That is, based on Loomba's interpretation, Jasmine can be defined as "the Other," and the White majority is the "Self" (Loomba, 2007). With the preexisting notion of immigrants as the invading and unwanted Others (Sorvo, 2015), a clear prejudiced image of Jasmine as *the Other* is created. Once Jasmine is labeled as not American among her White American fellows, she feels *othered*. In this reason, an imaginary borderline between "us" and "them" to divide people in two groups in Jasmine's reflection is drawn.

Likewise, Jasmine's binary perspective places herself into another representation of the binary opposition. The Self and the Other within Jasmine's inner struggle to solve her ethnic identity conflict can be translated to the Self as the American part and the Other as the Filipino part. In Jasmine's case, she otherizes the Filipino part, considering the part as something that she knows but is never a part of herself. As Jasmine proclaims,

"I don't want to go to the Philippines to live. There's nothing there for me. My life is here. [...] I've been here most of my life. I can barely remember the Philippines. I used to think I belonged equally to both cultures, but I'm not really Filipino, and now I'm not quite American either"
(de la Cruz, 2016, p. 223).

This binary logic of Self/Other causes the overlapping of being Filipino and being American, leaving Jasmine in an obligation to pick a side. For Jasmine, the fact that she is illegal and not American is a "torture" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 300). Jasmine sees being American as being herself and considers being Filipino as the other part that is not herself. After the court rules that the de los Santos family are aliens and rules in favor of deportation, Jasmine laments, "I know I belong here [America], but the government doesn't think I do. I may look like I belong in the Philippines, but they'll know I'm a fraud too. I can't even speak Tagalog or Ilocano. Neither country will want me" (de

la Cruz, 2016, p. 301). The frustration shows that Jasmine is caught in a dilemma. She is unable to classify where she belongs and which value she adheres. Her belief is fluctuated and divided into two different parts.

The official decision of the court ruling for her family's deportation brings a negative perspective on Jasmine's ethnic part and causes a sense of humiliation on her ethnicity. Jasmine blames her origin and her family for leaving her in traumatic confusion, "That's where you are wrong. You've never known who I really am. And whose fault is that?" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 184). Jasmine's prevailing ethnic pride is wavered, and she is subject to abandon allegiance to her ethnicity seeing that it gives her a strong feeling of disappointment. As an ethnic minority and illegal immigrant, Jasmine feels uncertain about her place in society, which results in a lack of purpose and direction in life and social isolation (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). This, then, leads her to have a negative self-perception and feel socially alienated from her family and the White majority, which is the entrance to the latter phase in Kim's second stage of Asian American identity development.

Jasmine develops a negative evaluation of herself and alienates herself from her White peers because she feels the sense of *not* belonging. She mirrors herself negatively, "Ha! You thought you were so smart. and now look at you. You suck. You're no one. You're nobody. You're dirt. You're not from here! Go home! Go back to Asia or wherever you're from" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 273). She does not only look at herself negatively, but she also believes her White friends and boyfriend thinks of her and her family unfavorably as "a bunch of amusing ethnic people" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 280). Afterwards, she becomes estranged from family, friends, and Royce. Consequently, Jasmine avoids contact with her friends, boyfriend, and family and directs her energy and time on cheer practicing and responsibilities within the school. She admits her own "insecurity about her background" as she confesses to Royce, "I was the one who was embarrassed to be who I was embarrassed about where I come from" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 289). Moreover, on Acceptance Day, she depreciates her self-worth as she ponders, "I'm starting to feel like I'm not the real Jasmine de los Santos. I'm her doppelgänger.

The one who isn't American" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 364). At this point, Jasmine's positive perspective toward her Filipino part is shifted. Her sense of ethnic identity is shaken, which is the result of the increase significant contact with the White society (Kim, 1981). In order to establish ethnic identity, Jasmine develops new attitudes on herself and her cultural views by eliminating the binary perspective and the vacillation in her ethnic identity.

New positive perspectives on being an ethnic minority are essential to enable Jasmine to tackle her ethnic identity crisis and remove binary views in order to progress to the next stage of Asian American identity development to form her ethnic identity (Kim, 1981, p. 138). Kim (1981) states that political understanding and participation in political activity can be important factors facilitating changes in self-concept as being a minority. According to Kim (1981), there is no one prescribed way to learn from political involvement. Being a part of a political action and hearing stories of social-political affairs can be tools to gain political understanding of being an ethnic minority. The idea can be seen in Jasmine's attitudes. Initially, Jasmine's attitude change is made from understanding being an undocumented ethnic minority through Mrs. Garcia's, the school's collage counselor. She helps Jasmine see a clearer picture of being undocumented in the U.S., as she says, "There are lots of kids who go to this school—and thousands of kids in LA alone—who are undocumented. The sheer number makes it impossible for ICE to deport everyone. You're a good kid. They're not going to bother you" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 246). Mrs. Garcia's words spur Jasmine's realization on being an immigrant. She opts for positivity and expresses her optimism about her situation after talking Mrs. Garcia: "And talking to Mrs. Garcia is the first time that I really understand there are a lot of people out there facing what I'm going through. I'm not the only one. Or the first, And definitely not the last" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 246). Enlightened on being an immigrant, Jasmine additionally notes to herself at the cheerleader national championship competition: "It feels like my old confidence is finally returning. I can get through anything with a little persistence and a lot of love from family and friends" (de la

Cruz, 2016, p. 256). Clearly, for Jasmine, her understanding political circumstances can help make changes in attitude toward herself.

However, major changes in Jasmine's attitude toward being a minority occurs because of two political involvements, which impact her on acquiring political consciousness on being an ethnic minority. First, Jasmine learns to form her new personal social and political views through Royce's father, who is a Congressman. Although Congressman Blakely rules in the government's campaign on the immigration bill, which is the policy to slow down the number of immigrants and illegal workers in the U.S. However, he speaks to the Judge for Jasmine and her family's extended stay in the U.S. In Mr. Blakely's kind act, Jasmine learns that she should not be ashamed of being a minority, and her worth is appreciated. She knows that she receives help because the land that is "partly found on immigrants like the U.S." need people like her and her family to move the country forward (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 12). This shows that Jasmine believes that she is valuable and beneficial to the country.

The other reference in Jasmine's consciousness on being an ethnic minority is Millie, a prestigious Stanford University alumnus and a patient at the hospital where Jasmine works part-time. Millie, who involves in helping Jasmine and her family win the deportation case at the end, enlightens Jasmine on being different through her storytelling as a member of a privileged society. Millie motivates Jasmine to strive for what she searches for through her story as a participant in political movements in her days. The story of Millie's engagement in political activities in her juvenile is Jasmine's opportunity to feel relevant and connected to herself in the lens of the other person's experiences. As storytelling enables listeners to understand the core of perplex concepts and ideas (Suzuki, Feliú-Mójer, Hasson, Yehuda, & Zarate, 2018), hearing those political acts alerts Jasmine to be positive on herself. She understands that her race is unchangeable, and racism only exists if she allows. She begins to comprehend the circumstances of being an immigrant and an ethnic minority: "it's not our fault that we [Jasmine and her brothers] love American, that we want to stay in the only country that we know" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 325).

On the grounds of Mrs. Garcia's counselling and Millie's storytelling of her political actions, Jasmine gains new perspectives on herself as an ethnic minority. Jasmine's self-concept on being an ethnic minority changes from negative to positive, which leads her to defuse her ethnic identity crisis. That is, Jasmine stops resenting herself as an ethnic minority and appears to be proud in herself for being an ethnic minority as well as an immigrant. Her acceptance and new attitudes are shown as she confesses her inner struggle to Royce,

"I work so hard to hold my head up, to be proud of my culture, my background, my history. I would never change my skin color, the shape of my eyes, or the color of my hair, but inside, I was worse than anyone out there who calls me a chink, or a FOB. But I don't want to be that person anymore. I want to be open and generous" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 290).

At this stage, like Kim's idea, she cherishes the value of being Filipino as well as being American and wants to fit into both parts. Her logic vision on being an ethnic minority finally changes from personal to social perspective. Ultimately, Jasmine is aware that she is an ethnic minority with a mix of Filipino and American essence. She clearly understands and willingly accepts her ethnicity as well as being American to be who she truly is.

Jasmine finally enters Filipino American consciousness and identifies herself as a Filipino American. She feels positive and confident that being Filipino is as good as being American, which is a "fertile ground" for Kim's Asian American identity development (Kim, 1981, p. 145). In this stage, Jasmine is immersed in both Filipino and American parts. After refocusing on her minority experiences, Jasmine neither leans towards Filipino part nor American part. On the contrary, Jasmine decides to associate herself with both Filipino and American parts. She realizes that being Filipino is as essential as being American. Jasmine understands the coexistence of both Filipino and American parts and eventually develops Filipino American identity.

In the story, the crucial point fostering Jasmine's persistence to be firm on both Filipino and American parts is Royce's marriage proposal. At the first glance, Jasmine is positive about the plan to elope with Royce as it is bound to serve as a solution for her to

be an eligible legal American. She believes that eloping with Royce can extend her stay in the U.S. and end her frustration, “Soon enough I’ll be an American citizen. Just like that, I’ll *belong*. I won’t be stuck between two countries and cultures anymore. I don’t know anything else except for America. Just this country. Just me being me.” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 384). However, shortly before walking down the aisle, Jasmine overruled her decision, “This isn’t brave. This isn’t part of what I have to go through. This is a quick fix. A band-aid” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 386). She turns to face the reality and agrees on being deported with her family as she bears in mind: “The De Los Santos family will always stick together” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 404). Jasmine finally admits that marrying Royce in order to be eligible for a green card is a poor decision to ease the situation and unable to override the fact that she is a non-White and Asian in the U.S. Jasmine’s ultimate judgement proves that she has no preference on her race and value. She neither places her standpoint on American side nor Filipino side. Jasmine, on the other hand, is filled with both American and Filipino elements. She not only strives towards being American, but also accepts her origin to identify herself as a Filipino as well as an American. Finally, Jasmine learns that she belongs to both cultures and consequently develops a new way of defining herself, which is finding a way out of the tension between having to single out one way or another. Jasmine embodies a mix of Filipino and American attributes. Having multicultural upbringing and undergoing changes following intercultural contacts, Jasmine realizes that creating her own bicultural identity can be a means to find escape from uncertainty. She can balance and blend two cultures to make her own place or space. According to Bhabha (1994), living in between two cultures can be referred to hybridity, which is the in-between stage where minorities and immigrants are indeed.

Bhabha’s concept of cultural hybridity can be accounted for Kim’s idea of immersion in two significant cultures, which is the state where Jasmine discovers her Filipino American identity. This is shown in her speech on the graduation day in which Jasmine addresses, “No one—not the law, not a college admission officer, not your friends, not your teachers or parents or any other people, can define who you are. The

only person who can do that is you” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 409). From this perspective, Jasmine allows one space in between her two cultures to create her own place. She clearly develops a full sense of her ethnic identity and represents herself as a Filipino American—the hybrid—who is inseparately positioned between American and Filipino standpoint. Hybridity, at this point, provides Jasmine a way out of her binarism and allows space to structure her Filipino American identity. Jasmine becomes a young confident Filipino American immigrant, who is proud of her rich ethnic history and her uniqueness. She incessantly pursues her American dream and keeps her Filipino tradition. As the title of the story *Something in between*, Jasmine finds herself embraced with both Filipino and American identities and firmly places her belief between two values with confidence and certainty. This reflects in a line from her speech at the graduation as she says, “we’re all unique creatures” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 408).

As Jasmine develops a clear sense of her Filipino American identity, she is confident to motivate other people through her story. Jasmine’s ethnic identity is harmonious, and she can relate herself to all areas in her life without losing sight of her Filipino American identity. This is the final success of Kim’s developing Asian American identity development. In this stage, Jasmine is determined to inspire others through her experiences and evolve as a grown woman with certain and positive attitude toward being Filipino American. Jasmine is also seen to be comfortable among the majority. She not only treats experiences as valuable lessons, but also attempts to pass on her inspiration found upon minority and immigrant experiences to others. The indication of Jasmine being able to relate herself to different groups of ethnic minorities is shown after she receives Congressman Blakely’s political support:

“My mind turned back to the millions of illegal immigrants in this country, waiting and hiding. Trying to stay in American is a game of cat and mouse, a life of working under the table, for less than minimum wage, with no way to report workplace abuses and transgressions. What happens when they get sick? What happened if they’re hurt? The sacrifice they are making is enormous. My story is one of many. I feel connected to everyone who has ever tried to move to the United States in search of a better life” (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 314).

Her thought reflects that she has compassion and develops a sense of connectedness with others. In addition, Jasmine's strength and confidence in her Filipino American identity is ensured to be rewarding to others as mentioned by Millie who is responsible for Jasmine being awarded a patron grant at Stanford University: "I wanted them to choose an incoming female student who would use her education to give back to the world. The grant committee chose you. You earned it all on your own" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 396). In Millie's faith, Jasmine is a matured young woman who is comfortable in all identity areas by account of a strong sense of her Filipino American identity.

Another compelling evidence is at the end of the story that Jasmine, as a valedictorian of the graduation class, urges her classmates to find their passion and support their nation, "We need to figure out how to help others too. We have to ask ourselves: what can we do to better ourselves and our country? what can we do to be remembered? who do we want to be?" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 409). Benefitting from the disfranchised deportations, Jasmine passes on her own profit as a motivation to her schoolfellows to pursue their path of life for personal success and for prime purpose like the U.S.,

"I urge you to find your passion. Follow the light of true knowledge. Find what inspires you. Find what makes you passionate, what help you recognize the sense of justice already burning within your heart. Give voice to the voiceless, help to the helpless, be a haven for those who have no recourse, no resources. Keep fighting—for your own sakes, and for the future of our country. Thank you" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 410).

As the applause is echoing in her ears, a thought crosses her mind: "It's not just about one undocumented immigrant, but for everyone with a dream and a will to succeed. I love my country, and I won't stop until I count myself among its citizen" (de la Cruz, 2016, p. 410).

To conclude, Jasmine is influenced by a combination of both Filipino and American cultures. She has Filipino cultural elements, which are valuing commitment on family and holding onto Filipino customs as being polite and respectful. She also has American cultural elements, that is, being independent and expressive. As a result,

Jasmine resolves her ethnic identity conflict by developing her Filipino American identity. As seen on the outset, Jasmine is aware of her origin. She acknowledges her Filipino values. However, despite her intuitive ethnic awareness, association with the White is likely to distort Jasmine's ethnic pride. Jasmine's confusion over her ethnic identity reigns when she faces the fact that she is an alien in the U.S. all along. Battling against her inner conflict and deportation, Jasmine gains political understanding and adopts positive attitude toward being an ethnic minority. As a result, she embraces in hybridity and creates her own space or third space by grafting on her two cultures. Jasmine, balancing on her two customs, arrives at her Filipino American identity. Her ethnic identity is finally strong and not threatened by the mainstream values. Lastly, Jasmine realizes that being Filipino American is an important part of herself as a person and that her Filipino American identity is the connector of herself and the rest of her identities.

Comparison

From the analysis of the two main characters in *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between*, it is found that these two young adult characters share some similarities and differences. The first similarity is the progressive development of ethnic identity. Although Kan and Jasmine are of different Asian American subgroups, they develop their ethnic identities in five sequential stages with each stage building upon the former as stated in Kim's Asian American identity development. Kan and Jasmine move beyond doubts in their ethnic attributes to resolve their ethnic identity conflicts in predominantly White societies by redirecting to their ethnic consciousness. This leads them to create positive ethnic identities, which are Thai American identity and Filipino American identity in Kan and Jasmine's cases respectively. Eventually, Kan and Jasmine develop the ability to integrate their ethnic identities with other social identities, which marks the finality of Kim's Asian American identity development.

One noteworthy similar finding is the major factor contributing to ethnic identity development. It was found that family is an important factor in ethnic identity development for adolescents. According to Bronfenbrenner, family and peers are among

several essential factors in fostering individuals' ethnic identity development (Bronfenbrenner, n.p., as cited in Eng & Tram, 2021). In addition, as discussed by Kiang and Fuligni (2010), the development of ethnic identity is enhanced by social relationships and interactions in which family plays a pivotal role. The lack of family support can lead to self and social isolation, low self-appreciation and inner conflict (Hafen & Laursen, 2009). Clearly, a strong connection between family relationship and the development of ethnic identity appears to be unexceptional. Kan and Jasmine are from Asian-based families who emphasizes collectivism and interdependence. This means that both Kan and Jasmine have strong family ties. In *Girl on the verge*, Kan, notwithstanding the dispute over Thai traditional values, reconciles with her mother and grandmother. She learns, in the aftermath of traumatic events, that she is the product of her family, and her family acceptance encourages her to see her ethnic self clearer. In *Something in Between*, Jasmine realizes that being a Filipino immigrant in the U.S. is equal to other people because of her family and peers. Therefore, Kan and Jasmine's ethnic identity developments are shaped by their family support more evidently than any other factors.

Additionally, the emergence of bicultural identity is another similar aspect. Kan and Jasmine develop their ethnic identities by accepting both the mainstream and original cultures. They internalize their two cultural orientations and form their ethnic identities regarding the combination of the original and mainstream cultures. Noticeably, parts of the novels' titles are a flash of revelation. The terms "on the verge" and "in between" signify the state of belonging to more than one culture. In *Girl on the verge*, Kan creates Thai American identity. She realizes that neither cultures are dispensable and recognizes the quality of having a dual culture. Kan's Thai American identity can be considered as a compromise where two cultures are "homes" of the identity (as cited in Schumann, 2011). In *Something in Between*, Jasmine creates a third space for her ethnic identity. This space is the combination of both Filipino and American identities, a breaking and merging of two parts like the idea of Robert Young (as cited in Sandset, 2011). In this sense, Jasmine represents herself as a Filipino American

Another similarity found in this study is the connection between the main characters and the authors. Kan and Jasmine are inspired and portrayed by the authors' own life experiences. Despite the differences in personality and situation to the characters, Pintip Dunn (*Girl on the Verge*) and Melissa de la Cruz (*Something in Between*) are influenced to present these two fictional characters in their ethnic minority experiences. The authors feature their characters amid battles over their self-acceptance. In *Girl on the Verge*, Pintip Dunn depicts Kan as a Thai American teen who suffers the feelings of otherness and loneliness, which reflect her real-life struggles. Dunn highlights the issues of being a misfit and not belonging while straddling two worlds in her novel. The difficulties that Kan encounters are the problematic topics that Dunn also experiences personally (Nucum, 2017). Similarly in *Something in Between*, Melissa de la Cruz portrays Jasmine as an illegal immigrant, which mirrors her personal life closely (Gandhi, 2017). De la Cruz (2016) integrates Filipino cultural aspects and the immigration experience into her novel, reaching out to the audience to pass on the story of an undocumented life (Mason, 2016).

Although the two YA novels are similar in various aspects, there are some differences. In the first stage of Kim's Asian American identity, the strength of Kan and Jasmine's ethnic awareness is different. Kan and Jasmine identify with their ethnicities differently. In *Girl on the Verge*, Kan's ethnic awareness is neutral and wavering. She views herself as a misfit of both the White majority and the ethnic society internally and externally. Thus, she feels excluded and rejected by both cultures, which causes her to be unassertive in her ethnicity. On the contrary, in *Something in Between*, Jasmine's awareness of being an ethnic minority is strong and positive. She learns Tagalog and practices Filipino cultural activities through her family members and relatives. Therefore, Jasmine has a great pride and knowledge of her Filipino culture and traditions.

Furthermore, the extent of identifying with the White majority is dissimilar. According to Kim (1981), white identification is the second stage of Asian American identity and categorized as either passive or active identification. Kan identifies with the majority passively, but Jasmine is found to actively identify with the majority. That is, Kan

neither perceives herself as an American nor Thai girl because she believes that she belongs nowhere. On the other hand, Jasmine considers herself as an American girl and assimilates into the American world. However, she is proud of her ethnicity as the positive ethnic awareness helps lessen the severity of identification (Kim, 1981). Hence, these two characters have the different experiences of White identification.

Regarding the awakening of their ethnic consciousness, Kan and Jasmine implement different strategies to acquire their new perspectives on being ethnic minorities. The involvement in political movements or activities is seen to be the significant factor in perspective changes according to Kim (1981). This political factor only contributes to Jasmine's perspective changes because Kan gains her new perspectives on being different through the rise of posttraumatic growth. Kan's positive change grows as a result of being taken hostage, which acts as an impulse for her posttraumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The outcome of the struggle with her major life disruption causes the positive changes in her attitude toward being an ethnic minority. Contrarily, Jasmine learns to raise her consciousness on being an ethnic minority by encompassing herself with influential people in political realm. She receives a lot of supports from highly respected people experiencing in political acts. They help her reappraise the worth of her ethnicity through their political action and storytelling. Thus, her new awareness as an ethnic minority is built upon the understanding of her status as an undocumented minority. Clearly, Jasmine and Kan develop their new ethnic consciousness from different means.

Another difference found in Kan and Jasmine is the style of their ethnic identities. Truly, they figure out that parts of themselves comprise ethnic selves and American selves. In *Girl on the Verge*, Kan produces her ethnic identity in a unique way. Although Kan's Thai American identity is the mixture of her two cultural elements much like Jasmine's Filipino American identity, Kan's Thai American identity is neither rigidly put in an exact position nor remained in one bounded location, which is similar to the idea of Castanheira, Green, Dixon, and Yeagerb (2007). Kan perceives her Thai American identity to be fluid, which represents the two 'selves' that are adaptive,

contextual and unique (Moore & Barker, 2012). In this way, Kan's Thai American identity can be referred to an alternating identity, in which she allows herself to move and fluctuate her Thai and American selves contextually. Jasmine, in contrast, becomes a hybrid. She creates the third space to posit her Filipino American identity. She chooses to settle in a new location where her Filipino and American selves are pieced together. This means that her Filipino American "floats in between" (Schumann, 2011). On this account, Jasmine's Filipino American identity can be viewed as a solid hybrid identity because she builds a certain place or space for her new entity; her Filipino American identity is in a fixed space.

The similarities and differences between two ethnic minority characters are shown in the Table 3 and 4.

Table 3 Similarities found in in Kan in *Girl on the Verge* and Jasmine in *Something in Between*

Similarities	Kan (<i>Girl on the Verge</i>)	Jasmine (<i>Something in Between</i>)
The development	Progressive	Progressive
Ethnic identity shapers	Family	Family and friends
Bicultural identity	Thai American identity	Filipino American identity
The authors' experiences	Misfit experience	Immigrant experience

Table 4 Differences found in Kan in *Girl on the Verge* and Jasmine in *Something in Between*

Differences	Kan (<i>Girl on the Verge</i>)	Jasmine (<i>Something in Between</i>)
Ethnic awareness	Neutral	Positive
White identification	Passive identification	Active identification
Awakening to ethnic identity consciousness	Posttraumatic growth	Political involvement
The style of ethnic identity	Fluid Thai American identity	Hybrid Filipino American identity



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study is conducted to study ethnic identity development of two Southeast Asian American characters in the two selected young adult novels: Melissa de la Cruz's *Something in Between* and Pintip Dunn's *Girl on the Verge*. Theoretical Framework of Jean Kim's Asian American identity development is used to analyze the main characters in the two selected works. This study also compares and contrasts the ethnic identity developments portrayed in the two characters. In this chapter, the conclusion and discussion are presented to describe the findings and explore the results of the two characters' ethnic identity development. Suggestions for further studies are also provided at the end of this chapter.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the two main characters in *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* develop their ethnic identities in line with Jean Kim's Asian American identity development. In *Girl on the Verge*, Kan creates Thai American identity, leading to fluid and unique selves. In *Something in Between*, Jasmine establishes Filipino American identity, emerging as a hybrid. In both cases, the acceptance in their different cultures lead to the development of their positive ethnic identities, in which family serves as a major support system.

In Pintip Dunn's *Girl on the Verge*, Kan forms fluid Thai American identity, following Kim's Asian American identity development. That is, Kan invents "two alternating selves" to represent herself. In the beginning, Kan acknowledges her Thai values. Kan's grandmother or *Khun Yai* in Thai helps foster knowledge in Thai traditions and beliefs. However, Kan is uncertain about the meaning of being an ethnic minority. She appears to acknowledge Thai traditions and values, but she has difficulties fitting into Thai world. This is due to *Khun Yai's* high expectations on Kan to behave herself as a proper Thai teenager, which is against her will. Therefore, Kan feels frustrated and forsakes her ethnicity. She feels neutral toward her Thai culture and begins to lose pride

in her ethnicity. Similar to Kim's idea, Kan's confusion with abandonment in her ethnicity lead to self-conflict, which is the ground of the second stage in Kim's Asian American identity development.

Kan's self-conflict is derived from the lack of positive ethnic awareness and the direct contact with the White majority. Kan's sense of ethnic awareness is shaken because of associating with her White peers at school. Kan's schoolfellows use the language to mock about her Thai name and Asian-like appearance such as having squinty eyes and being *exotic*. Being different and stereotyped, Kan compares herself to the idealized standards of the White female beauty, and this causes her to have negative self-perception. She disrelishes her appearance and deprecates the values of being an ethnic minority. As a result, Kan feels excluded and loses sense of her ethnic identity.

According to Kim (1981), political involvements are important in terms of changing self-concept and gaining new perspectives to form an ethnic identity. However, Kan's sense of ethnic identity is awakened by the romantic relationship and traumatic life events, which lead her to value being an ethnic minority. Ethan, Kan's boyfriend, helps Kan reevaluate herself by showing his acceptance and respect to her Thai family and culture. Nevertheless, the major change in Kan's attitude toward her ethnicity occurs because of the harrowing life incidents. Having trauma, Kan seeks for family support, which is a key factor in positive changes in being an ethnic minority. Positive changes occurred in the aftermath of traumatic incidents can be linked to the concept of posttraumatic growth, which simply signifies that the darkness can lead to the new light. This chance allows Kan to rethink about the value of being an ethnic minority and the equality of White and Thai cultures.

As the confidence and the acceptance in being an ethnic minority are gained, Kan has positive attitude toward being an ethnic minority. Kan redirects to her ethnic consciousness and builds a new belief system. That is, Kan rewrites the definition of being an ethnic minority and establishes her Thai American identity in a unique way. Her Thai American identity is in a form of fluid identity, allowing Kan to be unfixed in a

specific group and enabling her Thai American identity to flow flexibly. She develops the power to portray herself as both Thai and American identities at her desire and no longer views herself as a misfit. Kan entirely becomes an independent and autonomous individual.

Similarly, in Melissa de la Cruz's *Something in Between*, Jasmine's ethnic identity development is consistent with Kim's Asian American identity development. Jasmine establishes her ethnic identity as Filipino American identity—hybrid identity. At first, Jasmine is well aware of being an ethnic minority. She values her Filipino culture and traditions. Her parents and her Filipino community and environment play vital roles fostering Jasmine's positive ethnic awareness. Therefore, Jasmine is proud in her ethnicity because she acknowledges and cherishes her Filipino traditions and values.

However, Jasmine's attitude toward being an ethnic minority changes after significant contact with the White majority. People who find out that she is illegally living in the U.S. treat her without respect by calling her "boat people," "forever outsider" and "unwelcome stranger." The action of the White majority affects her ethnic pride and changes her self-perception. She starts to view herself and her ethnicity differently and rather adversely. Consequently, Jasmine's viewpoints on people and cultures around her are shaped in a myriad of binary oppositions. Jasmine figures her world in various two major groups: White/Non-White, Filipino/American, upper class/lower class, powerless/powerful, and dominate/dominated. Her belief system is divided into Self and Other. As a result, she feels inferior and *othered*, which corresponds to Edward Said's concept of Otherness.

The binarism also impacts on Jasmine's self-perception. Jasmine struggles with the clash of Self (American) and Other (Filipino) in her ethnic identity development. She *others* her Filipino part and considers American part to be superior, which leaves Jasmine in dilemma. She is unable to identify herself with both sides. As a consequence, Jasmine develops a sense of *not* belonging and forms a negative judgment against herself. Her perspectives on her ethnicity and being an ethnic minority

change from positive to negative, which is clearly the result of contact with the White majority.

In order to escape from the uncertainty in her self-perception, Jasmine gains new perspectives on being an ethnic minority through a variety of political involvements. The association with people involving in political movements enhance Jasmine's understanding on being an ethnic minority. These people help Jasmine see a clearer picture of her circumstances as an ethnic minority. Their supports help Jasmine realize that she is an asset to the U.S. and as important as other Americans. Hearing the stories about political participation also provides new perspectives on being an ethnic minority for Jasmine. She finally arrives at the conclusion that being an ethnic minority or an immigrant is an intrinsic part of who she is. To this end, Jasmine realizes that she is indeed the output of a mixture of two different elements and embraces both parts.

At this point, Jasmine creates a "third space" or hybridity for her ethnic identity like Homi Bhabha's idea, Filipino American identity, which is the combination of Filipino and American dimensions. Jasmine establishes this new way to define herself by accepting two different cultural values. In this stage, as Kim's idea, Jasmine is proud of her rich Filipino heritage and immersed in ethnic minority experiences.

Jasmine's strong sense of Filipino American identity urges her to pass her experiences and knowledge to others. She tells her immigration story and experiences on the graduation day in order to inspire people. Her aspiration shows that she emerges as a new entity who is fully prepared for other promising opportunities ahead of her life. Her ability to move on as a confident and unwavering Filipino American is in accordance with the ultimate hallmark of Kim's Asian American identity development.

Discussion

This study reveals that Kan in *Girl on the Verge* and Jasmine in *Something in Between* are in line with Jean Kim's Asian American identity development. Although Kim created this pattern by studying the ethnic identity developmental path of Japanese Americans, this pattern can be adopted by those from the other Asian American subgroup, like Southeast Asian American characters in this study. The pattern of

Southeast Asian American identity developments found in this study is similar to the pattern of Asian American identity development proposed by Kim. That is, Southeast Asian American identities of Kan and Jasmine are progressively and sequentially established in the same fashion to Japanese Americans women's ethnic identity development studied by Kim. Kan and Jasmine build their ethnic identities upon their life experiences. Facing difficulty situations and being supported by their families, Kan and Jasmine finally learn to accept their different cultural values and develop their ethnic identities.

From the cases of Kan and Jasmine in this study, it can be concluded that learning from life experiences is a crucial factor fostering the developments of Southeast Asian American identities. Life experiences help individuals create new self-perspectives and become more integrative (Merriam & Clark, 2006). In the novels, Kan and Jasmine experience significant life events or major life crises, influencing the two characters to overcome their identity conflicts and develop their Southeast Asian American identities. As a trauma survivor, Kan in *Girl on the Verge* shows an increased appreciation for life in the aftermath of a violent abduction. This is referred as posttraumatic growth, which serves as the stimulus for Kan's fluid Thai American identity. Similarly, in *Something in Between*, the disorienting immigrant experiences become valuable leading Jasmine to fully understand being an ethnic minority and develop her hybrid Filipino American identity. Therefore, life experiences play a vital role in developing Southeast Asian American identities.

Family, as the most important supporting system according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979), provides new perspectives on being ethnic minorities for Southeast Asian American adolescents like Kan and Jasmine. Xiong, Eliason, Detzner, and Cleveland (2005) concurs that family is an important factor for Southeast Asian American adolescents to adjust and adapt in living in the U.S. In the novels, Kan and Jasmine's characters can be described as family-oriented regardless of being Americanized to some degree. This is because Southeast Asian American youth are largely raised on the belief that obedience, family orientation, and family commitment

are common qualities to follow. Within this context, the parent-child relationship among Southeast Asian Americans is eminent and strong. As shown in this study, Kan's *Khun Yai* (grandmother in Thai) and Jasmine's close neighbor and cousin *Lola Cherry* (grandmother Cherry in Tagalog) are the facilitators enriching the understanding of being different and causing changes in self-perceptions for both Kan and Jasmine. Therefore, family support is clearly the key factor for young Southeast Asian Americans to develop their sense of ethnic identity.

This study also suggests that Southeast Asian American identities can result in different forms. Although Southeast Asian American identities found in this study are the combination of two selves, Southeast Asian self and American self, they are not entirely identical. In *Girl on the Verge*, Kan develops a fluid Thai American identity in a unique way, which brings about a sense of inhabiting both Thai and American worlds. Her Thai American identity is fluid and unsettled in a specific position. This is similar to Pran's identity in *The Impressionist* by Hari Kunzru (2002). According to the illustration of hybridity concept in Anna Bysiecka's study, "No One Today Is Purely One Thing: Hybrid Identities in Postcolonial Fiction," Pran is an example of an individual who "moves places and adjusts to the changing circumstances" (Bysiecka, 2008, p. 14). Bysiecka concludes that Pran creates a fluid cultural self as he fluctuates between different identities easily and crosses cultural borders limitless. In other word, Pran's identity is "not fixed" (Bysiecka, 2008, p. 14).

On the contrary, in *Something in Between*, Jasmine develops hybrid identity—Filipino American identity. Her Filipino American identity is the blending of two cultures, which is located in the "third space" or the space of hybridity. In Jasmine's case, hybridity offers the chance to liberate themselves from one fixed category (Sorvo, 2015). Jasmine embraces the in-betweenness and creates a third space for her in-between self, which is like Nina, an Indian immigrant in Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant*. In "From Tradition to Modernity: Nina's Quest for Hybrid Identity in Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant*," Salami and Pirayesh explores hybrid identity by concentrating on Nina's immigration to Canada (2019). Like Jasmine, Nina experiences the in-betweenness and posits herself

in the third space to create hybrid identity. She occupies two cultural selves and develops double visions (Salami & Pirayesh, 2019). This study is also similar to Selime Onmus' work "Hybrid identities in *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi and *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri." Onmus (2012) studies two hybrid characters of two different Indian immigrant generations in the U.S. and finds that both hybrid characters deny the traditional way of settling on one particular side and create their own third space to express themselves.

In one sense, the discovery of fluid identity and hybrid identity can lead to both benefits and drawbacks for individuals. Certainly, these forms of bicultural identity can reduce the tension and confusion of being ethnic minorities and bring about extraordinary well-beings in all areas of life (Bankston III & Zhou, 1997; Berry et al., 2006). In "No One Today Is Purely One Thing: Hybrid Identities in Postcolonial Fiction," Bysiecka (2008) studies the case of Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. The study shows that being hybrid gives Nazneen the power to change and remake herself to become independent and autonomous. However, dealing with two different cultures can burden the individuals and lead to anxiety, social detachment, and identity confusion (A.-M. D. Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Like Pran in *The Impressionist*, despite his hybrid and fluid identity all at once, he is rather perplexed about himself at times.

The findings of this study are similar to other studies. The idea of 'Otherness' is found in the analysis of the two characters. In *Girl on the Verge*, Kan experiences being othered by the predominantly White. Kan, taunted about being different at school, views herself as "the Other" who does not belong anywhere, which causes her to negatively frame her self-concept. The concept of Othering is also depicted in Jasmine's ethnic identity development in *Something in Between*. In contact with the White majority, Jasmine feels excluded from her White peers and perceives herself as "the Other" as in Edward Said's idea. For Jasmine, being othered changes her attitude toward herself as an ethnic minority from positive to negative and leads her to alienate herself from friends and family. This "me vs them" way of thinking is similar to Matava Vichiensing's study "The Othering in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*." Vichiensing (2017) investigates the

concept of othering depicted in human clones being identified as “the Other” by normal human-beings. She finds that othering leads to negative consequences and violates the value of lives.

The study shows that White beauty standards affect ethnic minority people's attitudes. In *Girl on the Verge*, White beauty standards impact on Kan's attitude toward her self-concept. She despises being different and the value of being an ethnic minority, which leads her to lose sense of ethnic identity. It is also found in Sriwulandari's study “Pauline's Acceptance to White Beauty Standard and Its Impact on Her Self- esteem in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*” that the acceptance of white beauty standards results in negative self-concept and distorted ways of thinking, which leads to having low self-esteem (2017). In “Regimentation or Hybridity? : Western Beauty Practices by Black Women in Adichie's *Americanah*,” Yerima explores the hazardous Western beauty practices of female Nigerian characters in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2017). The study reveals that the celebrated Caucasian beauty affects the characters' identity formation and continues to determine self-perception for immigrants from Africa.

The ethnic identity development of Kan and Jasmine in Pintip Dunn's *Girl on the Verge* and Melissa de la Cruz's *Something in Between* can be useful in multiple ways. First, in this growing multicultural world, studying young individuals of ethnic minority groups can be a key to learning and understanding individuals across different groups. Literary works on ethnic minorities embody the experiences of struggling with being inferior, powerless and forgotten, which can potentially help prepare readers to become well-informed citizens (Mitchell, 2018). By studying Kan and Jasmine's ethnic identity development, readers also have opportunities to promote their knowledge in the field of ethnic studies as well as respect among ethnic groups.

In addition, Kan and Jasmine can be examples of young individuals whose ethnic identities serve as a reaction toward the increasingly globalized world and a strategy to cope with their diverse cultural perspectives (Yazdiha, 2010). Grounded in Kan's Thai American identity and Jasmine's Filipino American identity, growing up with a double culture appears to offer an innate knowledge that there are alternative ways to

see and think in the mist of diversity. This idea can be adoptive to all living in-between worlds and pursuing answers of 'who are we?'

Incorporating *Girl on the Verge* and *Something in Between* into classrooms can raise readers' awareness about critical issues arising during adolescence. These two YA works can be useful materials to teach about the complexity of ethnic identity development and the problems of being different and displaced since YA literature is sometimes referred to problem novels (Lamb, 2008). As YA literature is more attractive to read and easier to understand, students can be encouraged to become lifelong readers. Moreover, readers or students will be able to develop their connection skills after reading these two books. They will be motivated to reflect their issues on the relevant characters, to find their own cultural views, to be challenged with similar conflicts or ideas, and to become more open-minded by recognizing the differences among people of all backgrounds.

In conclusion, this study looks closely at the portrayals of two teen characters from seemingly forgotten ethnic groups in *Girl on the verge* and *Something in Between*. The characters' ethnic identities prove that ethnic identity development is a psychological and social path that is finalized by "a state of a cultural synthesis" (Schumann, 2011, p. 18). In terms of the plots and themes, these two novels render the issues of ethnic identity and the difficulty of dealing with the cultural frustration. Although both Kan and Jasmine are Southeast Asian Americans, their ethnic identities are not entirely the same. This suggests that ethnic minorities, even among the same ethnic groups, can produce different outcomes of their ethnic identities. In this sense, stereotyping and generalization should not be made to judge ethnic minorities because each individual is simply different. Like Kan and Jasmine, all individuals are naturally empowered to have the agency to explore and create their own belief system (Superle, 2010). It is hoped that this study might encourage readers to understand differences as "literature is indeed powerful" (Alsup, 2013).

Suggestions for Further Studies

Ethnic identity development is psychologically and culturally crucial to young people with diverse backgrounds. There are various interesting ideas for future research. Further studies should examine the results of using YA literature with characters of diverse cultural backgrounds in classrooms to cultivate students' awareness of diversity. The focus on other ethnic groups from other nations would be another interest topic to explore in the field of ethnic identity development and hybridity. Another promising area to study could be the effects of social media on ethnic identity development among minority adolescents. Finally, the further research on YA literature in the style of psychological analysis should be conducted.



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