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An Exploration of Identity and Hybridity in Postcolonial Fiction: A Textual Analysis of Reyna Grande's *The Distance between Us*

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Abstract

This qualitative research analyzes Reyna Grande's memoir *The Distance between Us* (2012) through the lens of postcolonial theory, using Stuart Hall's (1990) theoretical framework of cultural identity and hybridity. The study explores how Grande, a Mexican American writer, negotiates the conflict of split cultural identities and the ongoing process of identity formation while living in host land. Through theoretical framework of Stuart Hall (1990), the research reveals how the memoir reflects the fluid, fragmented, and evolving nature of identity shaped by cultural traditions, historical context, and societal expectations. However, the cultural identity findings underscore that identity is not a fixed essence but a continuous process of becoming, shaped by migration, memory, resistance, and adaptation in diasporic context and thus, it tends to shape into a new hybrid identity when characters navigate and interact with another culture. To conclude, hybrid identity challenges the traditional notion of identity by claiming that there is no such thing as superior or inferior culture as endorsed by colonial discourse and practices .

Keywords: postcolonial theory, cultural identity, hybrid identity, migration, identity formation

Introduction

Reyna Grande's book *The Distance Between Us* (2012) draws on her own experiences of transborder migration and covers issues such as cultural identity, displacement and the idea of belonging. The author uses the story of U.S.-Mexico migration to reveal the difficulties created by separating families, inequality and the daily struggle of belonging to two cultures .

This qualitative study explores the impact of hybridity, the mixing and mixing up of different cultures found in migrant lives. It demonstrates how leaving behind one's country can cause people to feel lost in their culture and feelings, as they have to adjust to different traditions in their new home. This means that this "mixing" of cultures is actually a long process of conflict, decisions and the creation of new identities.

This research adopts Stuart Hall's (1990) view that identity is not something that already exists, but a process of being and becoming. According to Hall, our identity develops due to representation, memories and differences and is made over time with the help of history, culture and social norms. Grande's sense of self in *The Distance Between Us* (2012) is formed by both her Mexican ancestry and what American society considers to be laws, progress and significance.

Through this analysis, the project will contribute to a deeper understanding of how literature rooted in migration serves as a powerful space for the articulation of cultural hybridity, resistance, and redefined belonging.

Post colonial literature

Postcolonial literature is defined as having been written by or pertaining to the formerly colonized nations and it focuses on the lasting influence of colonialism on the identity, culture and behavior of the colonized (Ashcroft et al.2002). It revolves around topics of hybridity, displacement, resistance and a quest for self-hood. Scholars such as Said, Bhabha and Spivak have developed major theories such as Orientalism (Said, 1978), Hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) and Subalternity (Spivak, 1988) which look at power relations made during colonialism between the colonizer and the colonized. These phenomena stemmed from trying to understand the legacies of colonialism and the cultural, political, and psychological scenarios that followed the end of colonial rule. Hybridity, identity, displacement, migration, resistance, cultural memory, and colonial oppression are some of the topics that these works strive to discuss. The phenomenon of post-coloniality is constantly being defined and redefined by different scholars yet another literary term which in some way or the other speaks about the history, culture and identity of post-colonial countries.

The Distance Between Us: a memoir (2012) by Reyna Grande is an addition to postcolonial literature as it explores the issues of cultural dislocation and the enduring impact of historical injustice over migration by demonstrating how colonial past transcends and shapes individual and communal identities in a globalized context.

Considering this, the present qualitative study seeks to explore the elements of identity and hybridity, in *The Distance Between Us* (2012) by Reyan Grande, as suggested by Stuart Hall in his book *Cultural identity and diaspora* (1990). It is conducted under the umbrella of postcolonial theory.

Statement of the Problem

In today's globalized world, migration from postcolonial countries is often driven by economic instability, poverty, and the search for better opportunities. This movement leads to cultural displacement, resulting in the complexities of identity formation of immigrants.

Given that, these issues have been highlighted by many writers dealing with contemporary diasporic literature. In this regard, Reyna Grande's *The Distance Between Us* (2012) attempts

to provides a personal narrative of migration, highlighting the struggles of immigrants as they navigate between two cultural identities. Thus, the current study attempts to explore how does the said writer deals with themes of identity and hybridity and reflects this global issue in her memoir .

Research Objectives

.1To examine the role of culture, history, and social conventions on the identity formation of characters in *The Distance Between Us*.

.2To analyze the intersection of two cultures in shaping the hybrid identities in the text.

Research Questions

.1What is the role of culture, history, and social conventions in shaping the identities of characters in the story?

.2How does the intersection of two cultures shape the hybrid identities of the characters in the text ?

Significance

Migration is a feature of contemporary worlds, and although it has become so defining, the postcolonial implications of migration and border experiences remain widely uncharted. It attempts to explore how hybridity and identity are constructed out of postcolonial fiction with a very important focus on migration and displacement. Of all the vast aspects of cultural negotiation, belonging, and self-identification, *The Distance Between Us* (2012) by Reyna Grande provides one of the most exciting narratives, and with this, it is an important text to think through postcolonial identity formation. This study, thus, will add to the growing discourse on border literature and is bound to yield useful insights for researchers in postcolonial theory, migration studies, and the formation of identity in transnational spaces.

Rationale of the study

The rationale of the study is to explore how does Reyna Grande negotiates with issues of hybridity and identity through diasporic writing in the light of post-colonial fiction .

Delimitation

The study is delimited to only one memoir ‘*The distance between us*’ (2012) by Reyna Grande. It has further been delimited to only one aspect i.e. identity and hybridity in the light of Stuart Hall’s theory of identity and hybridity.

Literature review

Hybridity

Hybridity in postcolonial studies commonly refers to the cultural, linguistic, and racial mixing that results from colonial encounters. Following Homi K. Bhabha’s research, hybridity’ was recognized by scholars as a domain for both decision-making and bending the rules. According to Bhabha (1994), the presence of hybridity suggests that colonial power generated many changes and created both fixed and shifting outcomes.

Loomba (2005) also argues, following Bhabha, that hybridity helps break the divisions between colonizers and the colonized; self and other; and civilized and primitive. It points out that cultures in postcolonial societies change over time and remain mixed, making it impossible to preserve their purity. So, the concept of hybridity rejects single definitions of identity and expands space for different representations.

Moreover, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007) refer to hybridity as “the process during colonization of forming new forms between diverse cultures”. They state that being hybrid leads to situations where a group is empowered or challenged, due to having to learn new ways, resist or reconfigure their identity.

Types of Hybridity

Postcolonial theorists have pinpointed different forms of hybridity presented in fictional works. Blending indigenous with colonial languages is a form called linguistic hybridity, and it is found in some texts. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) combines English, Hindi and Urdu to describe how Indians are influenced by many cultures. In Young’s (1995) view, “language is the place we can observe the clashes between different types of power and cultures”.

This form includes the mixing of customs, ways of life and traditional values from colonizers and those who were colonized. In Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) we see how Igbo traditions collide with British colonialism. As described by Nayar (2008), living between two worlds occurs for those who experience colonialism.

Many postcolonial books explore racial hybridity when dealing with social differences and how these are rooted in the past colonial era. Hybridity, according to Gilroy (1993) in *The Black Atlantic*, resulted from the movement of Africans and the mixing of diasporic communities in the Atlantic world.

Postcolonial Identity

After experiencing colonial rule, people and communities go through processes to build a new sense of themselves. The experience of colonialism, leaving their homeland and mixing with various cultures can break up a person’s identity. Fanon, F. (1952) argued in his work *Black Skin, White Masks – Peau noire, masques blancs* that under colonial rule, people from these societies come to adopt their colonizers’ opinions about them which causes them to feel isolated and uncertain about their identities. Fanon, F. (1961) stated in *The Wretched of the Earth – Les damnés de la terre*, “The more the colonized takes on the traditions of the mother country, the more he is regarded as above his former jungle status.”

The experience of duality and separation helps explain identity in postcolonial fiction. Moore-Gilbert (1997) argues that postcolonial identity is where new and old alliances are put together. Fictional characters are often torn between their old cultural heritage and the new ambitions of the postcolonial era.

Furthermore, in postcolonial literature, individual identity is influenced by the system of social hierarchies, gender divisions, religion and where someone comes from. According to McLeod (2000), “people develop postcolonial identities by dealing with different, sometimes conflicting ideas such as colonialism and colonial past, indigenous customs and the impact of

global culture.” As a result, identity is a process that varies over time and with people’s social connections.

Hybridity and Identity in Latin American Narratives

Latin American literature after colonialism focuses a lot on hybridity and identity, thanks to its experience of twinning various races and continual resistance. Many authors such as Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende, write about communities that developed under Spanish rule, African slavery and indigenous traditions. In these stories, hybridity shows up as a way of life and a method for getting by in challenging times.

In the 1987 publication of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa shares, “I am a border woman.” I was raised in an environment that combined two cultures. Flutie has been living between the Mexican border and others in the region all her life. Gloria’s writing clearly highlights the mental and cultural mix felt by people living between various cultures and countries.

Similarly, Alvarez, J. (1991) explores identity in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* by portraying how it arises through interaction at the levels of language, community and family. Dalleo and Machado Sáez (2007) suggest that Caribbean and Latin American literature actively resists the idea of one set identity by highlighting multiple, mixed identities through fiction.

African and Caribbean Perspectives on Hybridity

Much of African postcolonial fiction investigates the concept of hybridity as connected to neocolonialism, diaspora, as well as the process of reclaiming culture. Writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, (1986) critique linguistic hybridity as a form of continued domination, advocating instead for writing in indigenous languages. In contrast, authors like Adichie, C. N. (2013) embrace hybridity as a tool for storytelling. Adichie’s *Americanah* (2013) explores how Nigerian immigrants navigate racialized identities in the U.S., illustrating the intersection of hybridity with transnational identity.

Authors such as Derek Walcott and Jean Rhys (2005) focus on the history of creolization focuses on how African, European and indigenous ways were blended together. Brathwaite (1984) calls the Caribbean identity “shattered and unclear,” despite being unified. because of common events in the past. Their scattered identity links them to each other. The main challenge of living in a hybrid society is being both separated and related at the same time.

Hybridity and Diasporic Identity

Diasporic literature provides a deep understanding of the development of hybridity and identity in migratory contexts. Many migrants and their lineage end up living in the margins of society relating to conditions in the native country and those in the new country. Hallward (2001) states that “diasporic identities are formed by the conflict between memories, dreams and a sense of loss, this fiction shows a blend of different traditions and cultures. .

The protagonist in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* (2003) seeks guidance for his identity from others. The social aspects of Bengali and American cultures. This memoir gives a clear picture of what Mishra (1996) terms the “diasporic imaginary,” wherein characters construct hybrid selves through adaptation and selective remembrance. In the same way, people

remember only a few things about it. Authors from the Caribbean-American community such as Edwidge Danticat look into themes related to leaving home cultural identity and gaining membership in a country. Hybridity in diasporic fiction typically reflects the conflict found between conforming to a new identity and clinging to the old one.

Bhatia and Ram (2009) suggest that “diasporic hybridity can be empowering when it enables agency, but it can also be a source of psychological distress when belonging is contested”. In these narratives, people’s sense of who they are is personal and involves political issues.

Gendered Dimensions of Hybridity and Identity

In postcolonial feminism, theorists have highlighted the role that gender plays in shaping identities. For women, their lives in colonial societies, when migrating or adapting to new cultures are likely to be unique from men’s experiences. In Mohanty’s view (1988), “third world women are not a homogenous group but are marked by intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender”. Consequently, their personal identities are blended through men-dominated and colonial societies.

In text like Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (1988), the female characters find it difficult to assert independence in both colonial and century-old patriarchy. Here, being in between two cultures is not seen as a good thing, as women are pulled in several opposing directions. Elleke Boehmer (2005) mentions that “female characters in postcolonial fiction often experience hybridity as a disjunctive force that fragments their identity and belonging.”

Likewise, in Reyna Grande’s novels, the combination of these factors helps describe how female characters see themselves. They question traditional views about men in postcolonial countries and widen the focus of identity politics.

Nowadays, both hybridity and identity are critical issues explored in postcolonial literature that describes what it means to move from one culture to another. Experts in various branches of research have reported how people from former colonies may face crises related to their identity and wellbeing.

In studying *Seasons of Flight*, Adhikary (2023) points out that accepting Western customs clashes with keeping native ways. In his view, the lead character is affected by his culture, creating a kind of hybrid character that joins “mixing modern ideas with memories of the past”. ideas. This struggle makes the protagonist uncertain about his or her identity, as moving to a different country is difficult .

Brah and Coombes (2000) say that the idea of hybridity is often praised too much, and they warn us that “hybridity acts like a term for culture alone, omitting any mention of political and social structures. They believe that failing to examine hybridity over time can be a problem that helps hide the inequality between nations on a global scale. They expand the scope of the idea of hybridity and include cultural aesthetics in a discussion of race, class and colonial roots.

Phoenix and Owen (2000) bring attention to interactions between people and the role of society. The talks and discussions that help form mixed-race identities. It is explained that young people growing up in Singapore form hybrid identities as a consequence negotiating human relationships affected by people’s understanding of race in society.” Identity is something that is made up by society and is something people perform.

Cohen and Fischer (2019) argue that diasporic identity is mostly generated at the local level. The state is being increasingly molded by what people and groups do each day and in official settings. Cultural membership is more important to their lives than the major national ideologies put forth. Their emphasis on memory, mobility, and political positioning underscores hybridity as an ongoing, dynamic process.

According to Bhandari (2022), while Bhabha's theory of the third space offers psychological freedom by “destabilizing binary oppositions,” it often fails to address the persistent material inequalities in postcolonial contexts. He asserts that hybridity, in this sense, risks becoming a symbolic solution, offering no tangible resistance to global systems of domination.

In their study of *Exit West* and *Americanah*, Dizayi and Tahir (2023) examine how characters navigate between cultural belonging and assimilation. They write, Since the culture is borrowed and rejected in their identities, the characters feel like they belong as well as do not belong to the culture at the same time. It reveals the main point behind the concept of hybrid identity in these writings.

Zohdi (2018) claims in *Season of Migration to the North* that feelings of division and self-doubt can be dangerous if the person lacks a strong sense of who they are. He acknowledges that, “Because Mustafa Saeed lived between two worlds, he eventually went into a mental collapse.” Zohdi believes that hybridity can be both productive and unsettling when it has not been worked out.

According to Castells (2010), identity gives meaning to our lives as individuals, since it helps people link with the wider society. He highlights the emergence of resistance identities that are “constructed by those who are in positions devalued or stigmatized by the logic of domination”, emphasizing identity as a tool for social transformation.

From a pedagogical lens, Duresa (2024) examines cultural hybridity in multilingual classrooms, asserting that “teachers and learners engage in identity negotiations daily, mirroring societal power dynamics and linguistic hierarchies”. This context reflects the broader challenges of identity reconstruction in transnational educational spaces.

Easthope (1998) provides a cautious take on hybridity, warning that “if everything is hybrid, then the concept becomes meaningless”. Yet, he concedes that the interstitial space remains vital for resisting fixed notions of culture and identity, allowing for ambiguity and agency.

Kasih and Strid (2020) apply postcolonial theory to Reyna Grande’s *The Distance Between Us*, interpreting the U.S.-Mexico border as a “symbolic site of transformation where cultural identities are remade, resisted, and rearticulated”. They view Grande’s memoir as an articulation of hybrid Chicana identity that blends resistance with adaptation.

According to Yazdiha (2010), hybridity opposes rigid separations based on race, nationality and culture by viewing identity as flexible and open to coordination. By making this point, Bhabha suggests that embracing hybridity allows marginalized communities to thrive and resist oppression.

According to Kipng’etich (2024), empirical research reveals that today’s migration helps people form different identities. He states that living in a hybrid world means that people are constantly affected by historical, economic and media influences. It has been found that being

open to hybridity encourages conversations between cultures, but people should be careful not to appropriate culture.

The author of Albay (2023) explains that Salman Rushdie's *Shame*: The power and burden of hybridity, explores how identities are broken by the challenges of translation and political expulsion, highlighting how hybridity works on both a negative and positive level. Albay argues that in postcolonial literature, hybrid identities help new subjectivities come into being.

They bring attention to South Asian diaspora, observing that migrants end up in a situation where their desire for home comes into conflict with the sense of foreignness they feel in the culture they moved to. For them, hybridity is constant negotiation between cultures which often brings about identity issues and splits the mind.

Suraju (n.d.) explores hybridity in the work of Azouz Begag, showing how "racial and linguistic hybridity frame the identity struggles of Maghrebi immigrants," particularly in their oscillation between Arab and French cultures. He draws on Ashcroft et al.'s (1998) framework to categorize hybridity into dynamic forms that reflect societal pressure and personal agency.

Finally, Baig et al. (2024) examine *Americanah* through the lens of Bhabha and Erikson, concluding that "Ifemelu's return to Nigeria marks a reclamation of self after a long negotiation with cultural mimicry, rejection, and hybrid identity" (p. 50). Their analysis shows hybridity as a painful but necessary route to self-awareness and reintegration.

Kasih et al. (2019) describe border as a "symbolic and transformative zone" where "identities are redefined through trauma, adaptation, and negotiation". The border, in this sense, becomes a hybrid space where cultural affiliations collide, and identity is both fractured and forged. They further argue that even the home becomes a "colonial space," reinforcing "hegemonic values" and internalized marginalization.

This ambivalence is echoed in Baba-Arbi's (2022) exploration of *Things Fall Apart*, where the incursion of Western religion and language results in "fractured identities and cultural dissonance". Although characters attempt resistance, the narrative suggests that "cultural coherence becomes nearly impossible in the face of imposed hybridity", underscoring the psychological toll of colonial intrusion.

Expanding the discussion to national identity and pedagogy, Azada-Palacios (2022) contends that postcolonial hybridity challenges rigid nation-building frameworks. Drawing on Bhabha, she reimagines the classroom as a "liminal site where identity is not fixed but constantly renegotiated". She writes, "The postcolonial classroom becomes a space where students navigate hybrid cultural affiliations that defy hegemonic nationalistic ideals". This approach is especially potent for diasporic subjects whose identities are informed by both the homeland and the host country.

In the context of Algerian literature, Ghenim (2020) focuses on narratives set during the Great War, showing how colonial and native identities co-exist in "a liminal existence, marked by longing for belonging and entrapment in dual loyalties". She emphasizes that "war and travel create the ideal conditions for hybrid identity formation", suggesting that hybridity often emerges not just culturally, but existentially.

Badjak et al. (2022) analyze Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* through Bhabha's framework, highlighting how identity emerges in a "third space" where characters "oscillate between Indian and American cultural spheres". They note that "hybridity leads to empowerment" but also "identity fragmentation as a side effect of cultural ambivalence", illustrating the dual nature of hybrid subjectivity.

Darraj (n.d.) contributes to this discourse by examining Arab and South Asian migrant identities. She argues that "migrant identity is inherently hybrid, shaped by both the homeland's memory and the demands of the host society". Her comparative analysis shows that displacement creates a "site of both tension and potential", where the past and present continuously shape identity.

In his influential book *Colonial Desire*, Young (1995) explores hybridity's subversive potential. He writes, "Hybridity destabilizes fixed cultural identities and colonial hierarchies", revealing how it simultaneously threatens and exposes the contradictions within imperial ideologies. He further observes that "Victorian anxieties about miscegenation were paradoxically accompanied by a latent desire for the Other", emphasizing hybridity's disruptive force.

Mishra (2024), through an analysis of Salman Rushdie's later works, argues that his characters embody "multifaceted, hybrid identities formed through migration, political upheaval, and cultural fusion". He explains that novels like *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* use magical realism and nonlinear narrative to "depict identity as a fragmented, ever-evolving construct."

Bagchi (1996) provides a foundational analysis of hybridity in Indian fiction, asserting that "sites of hybridity are often contested spaces where colonial discourse is both resisted and re-inscribed". She critiques the post-independence Indian elite for "reproducing colonial hierarchies", revealing how hybridity can also signal internal conflict.

Dizayi (2015) delves into the psychological effects of hybridity, particularly through the lens of mimicry and dislocation. He asserts that "postcolonial subjects often suffer from psychological alienation as they attempt to reconcile indigenous values with Western norms". Diasporic movements further complicate this, as "new hybrid identities are shaped by otherness and unhomeliness", a condition that often leads to identity crisis.

Karkaba (2010) places hybridity within a globalized, postmodern framework, arguing that identity is "a fluid, evolving construct forged in relation to the Other". In his analysis of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, he highlights how the protagonist Karim Amir "inhabits a 'third space' marked by ambivalence and constant negotiation", exemplifying hybridity's ongoing influence on self-perception.

Amurao (2015) applies a transnational lens to identity formation in Filipino migrant families. She observes that children of 1.5-generation migrants "construct hybrid identities that diverge significantly from their parents', influenced by localized cultural and social environments". The study shows how global labor and familial displacement complicate the diasporic subject's sense of belonging.

Nayana and Manjula (2022) explore Amitav Ghosh's novels to illustrate how "transnational movements and colonial legacies generate hybrid spaces". They argue that Ghosh's

characters reflect “cultural integration and disruption,” with identity shaped by “memory, migration, and multiculturalism”. For example, in *The Glass Palace*, hybridity is shown as a response to displacement and historical trauma.

Collectively, these studies affirm hybridity as a critical lens through which postcolonial identity is understood not as fixed or essentialist, but as “a shifting performance shaped by history, language, and space” (Nayana & Manjula, 2022). Whether through literature, pedagogy, or migration, hybridity emerges as a complex condition of modern postcolonial life.

Research Gap

Considering the above discussion, it has been observed that hybridity and identity suggested by Stuart Hall from this lens (fluidity) has not been explored in a memoir. Most existing studies on hybridity and identity focus on postcolonial fiction, where characters are analyzed within constructed narratives. However, memoir as a genre offers real-life experiences of cultural negotiation and identity formation, making it a rich yet underexplored site for applying Hall’s concept of fluid and evolving identities. Memoirs present personal accounts of migration, displacement, and cultural conflict, all of which are central to the understanding of hybrid identity. Despite this, there is a lack of scholarly work that applies Hall’s theoretical framework to autobiographical writing. Thus, this study aims to fill that gap by examining how hybridity and identity are represented and shaped in *The Distance Between Us: A Memoir* by Reyna Grande through the lens of Stuart Hall’s theory.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research employs qualitative methods to analyze how identity and hybridity are explained in Reyna Grande’s memoir. This approach aligns with the nature of the research questions, which seek to understand the subjective experiences and cultural negotiations of postcolonial subjects. Creswell and Biggam (2020) claim that the main purpose of qualitative research is to focus on the processes and meanings of a phenomenon that is not measurable or quantifiable. It encourages understanding certain feelings from a personal perspective, without broad terminology or descriptions .

It is within the framework of interpretivism which values the significance of both subjectivity and intersubjectivity, that the study is developed. Through interpretivism, the researcher gains insights into the way individuals create meaning in their lives. Scotland and Collins (2020) state that “individuals’ views on reality can differ from one another”. From this viewpoint, this research investigates how Reyna Grande depicts and interprets the social lives of postcolonial individuals in her autobiography.

Research model

The research model adopted in this work is textual analysis devised by McKee. According to him, textual analysis refers to a method of analyzing a text and a data gathering technique which attempts to see how people in different cultures and subcultures make sense of the world around them .

Theoretical Framework

Post colonial theory provides the foundation of theoretical framework which is presented by Stuart Hall in his work cultural identity and diaspora (1990). The main objective of this theoretical framework is to explore identity and hybridity employed by Reyna Grande in post-colonial fiction in the light of Stuart Hall's theory on hybridity .

Stuart Hall defines hybridity as the dynamic and changing nature of cultural identity, shaped by history, power, migration, and cultural mixing. He rejects the idea of a pure or original identity, and says identity is always being reformed, repositioned, and negotiated especially in postcolonial contexts. Also, he said that "Cultural identity... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past".

Analysis

Cultural, historical and social influences on identity formation

Cultural Influences

Hall's theory claims that identity keeps developing because culture, experience and history continually affect it. Reyna's dilemma includes religious practices, family roles and tales such as La Llorona mark her journey toward figuring out her identity. Hall emphasizes that we position ourselves with respect to the different cultural stories found in society. She is unsure how much of her Mexican traditions to keep and how much of American culture to pick up. Seeing how she mocks religious ceremonies and does not connect with her cultural rituals proves her cultural independence. Therefore, Hall's (1990) theory demonstrates that Reyna manages her cultural background by consistently finding a place in it, instead of either rejecting or fully accepting everything it stands for.

"She'd had a job at a tortilla mill and one time her hand had gotten caught in the grinder...", together with "I looked at the hand she had around me and saw the silvery scars...", (Grande, 2012, p.78) shows how, in working-class Mexican communities, it is valued when women endure hardship due to their hard work. These scars are not only physical but symbolic of generational endurance and the invisibility of women's labor. They prove how women in traditional roles are required to tolerate hardship, although their efforts often go unseen and unrewarded.

Also, by saying "We thanked her for letting us stay at her home and for taking care of us" (Grande, 2012, p.78) the Writer reveals the common habit of respecting and being thankful to authorities and elders, even if the situation is tense. The idea is found in culture; questioning the actions of elders is often seen as rude. Never meeting a child's emotional needs makes them feel obligated to obey and say thank you and this keeps them from confronting issues in the family.

Popular stories and legends influence the way children experience life. By telling them stories about La Llorona, Abuela Evila controlled her nieces and nephews through fear. Meanwhile, my other grandmother advised us that La Llorona wasn't that scary and that we should pray if we ever saw her as a way to protect ourselves. It demonstrates that parents share both fiction and religious beliefs to teach their children in many generations, let fear shape their minds and grow faith at the same time .

“Women would sit their homes on wicker chairs, embroidering cloth napkins or reading a magazine while listening to boleros on the radio. In clusters or alone, men return home from work” (Grande, 2012, p.98). Expectations in society are shown by the fact that men work outside while women care for things at home. Such roles are typical in our lives and help define for Reyna and others what men and women should do in society.

“Don’t talk like that. Your abuela is doing your father and me a favor... Listen to her...” (Grande, 2012, p.16) Sometimes, the adult Korean world gave more weight to respect for elders than to the child’s personal feelings. Being obedient is something youngsters are taught is good, even if it requires them to ignore how they feel or allow people to mistreat them. It reveals how sometimes, culture facilitates silence, making children feel they have to choose respect over telling adults what they think, shaping them into people easy to control .

In the end, the conversation between Reyna and her mother becomes very difficult, as she asks her “Why can’t I go with you? I promise I’ll do well...” (Grande, 2012, p.16) reveals that migration, poverty and parents not being around are accepted by the community as the way things are. The mother is acting this way because she believes having things for her child is more important than being physically with them. As a result of this view, children often link loving their family with giving up and being distant from them, making their sense of family bonds more difficult to grasp.

Historical Influences

Stuart Hall’s ideas point out that people’s sense of identity comes from their history and memories. Reyna’s life is told amidst the challenges of Mexican migration, inequality of wealth and a severe U.S. system for immigration. According to Hall, cultural identity is shaped by both the past and the way individuals remember and understand it. Having wanted her father to protect her, being afraid of la Migra and dreaming about life in America were shaped by important historical events for Reyna. Her father’s attempt to get legal residency and her knowledge of how difficult migrating could be illustrating that identity is closely tied to the past. Reyna’s personal identity grows out of both what happened in her family in the past and what was happening in society at the time.

“Why do we need to carry our own water from the well? Why can’t we use what’s in the water tank?” (Grande, 2012, p.16) points to the tough lifestyle in rural Mexico, where everything was harder due to lacking infrastructure. This quote shows that postcolonial Mexican villages were without many modern conveniences which led families to have to rely on work by hand, underscoring why they would move away.

The book begins with the line, “Where’s Papi? Is he back, too?” (Grande, 2012, p.78), this repeated question by the children testifies to the tough effects of migration on families commonly caused by economic differences between U.S. and Mexico. Between the 1980s and 1990s, a number of Mexican men traveled to America in search of more job opportunities, leaving their families at home behind. This quote shows the lack of certainty, hopes and longings felt by children brought up in families from various countries.

When he said, “Well, at least there’ll be three fewer mouths to feed...” (Grande, 2012, p.78) he revealed how hard it was on families with foreign parents and the resentment they experienced. It points out that the money sent from the United States by immigrants was not always spent as planned. While the parents work very hard and sacrifice much for their

children, the grandmother's resentment shows the stresses that can affect families due to migration.

"School had ended... and the movie was Tía Emperatriz's present to us...", (Grande, 2012, p.77) I remember being happy, because the school year was over and Tía Emperatriz got us the film as a gift, showing how even then, achievement in school meant a lot to us. In addition, the theme captures how rural communities began to encourage children to study hard, influenced by news of successful people from the U.S.

"I prayed that he would cross the border safely...", (Grande, 2012, p.245) it highlights how unsafe and unlawful it was for migrants to enter the country without proper documents at the time. Certainly, the fear of the immigration officers, along with fears about being injured or killed, demonstrates how much risk migrants had to face for the opportunity to improve their lives. With her prayer, the child shows how she was too young to understand the real dangers, but still felt the stress back then faced by migrants seeking refuge. The child's prayer reveals how even young minds internalized geopolitical threats that shaped their family's fate, reflecting the broader struggle of undocumented migrants in the late 20th century.

"He realized that dollars weren't as easy to make as the stories people told..." (Grande, 2012, p.14) One of the main ideas this memoir shows is that tales about how easy and wealthy life abroad would be, pushed migrants across the world, only to suffer from exploitation and low-wage work. Choosing to bring the mother instead of returning alone revealed that survival in the new country required more than one action and was linked to the need for work. When Abuela Evila said "American dollars go a long way here," (Grande, 2012, p.18) she explained how little Mexican salaries earned compared to U.S. wages and how this imbalance often caused Mexicans to come to the U.S. In rural Mexico, the American dollar was worth a lot, so it was worthwhile for your family to have even the lowest wage that they could earn in America. Because money was emphasized by family members, I now understand how money influenced everything I did and how our family functioned.

"Papi said we'd broken the law... but I didn't understand much about laws," (Grande, 2012, p.171) It points out that the laws fail to prioritize the true situations of those involved in undocumented immigration. Children were taken to another country by their parents, not fully knowing the situation was illegal, causing them to constantly struggle with their roots and the law.

Afterwards, she "I understood so clearly now why Papi said there were so many people who would die to have the opportunities we had," (Grande, 2012, p.288) Over the years, many migrants took great risks to come to the United States and the quote recognizes that the promise of learning and a good life made it all worthwhile. Such awareness is in keeping with the huge number of individuals who risk everything for a brighter future.

Moreover, "If there is a Hell, we're already living in it..." (Grande, 2012, p.268) reveals the emotional and psychological suffering caused by being displaced. Things were not peaceful for parents and their children from the beginning; they continued to feel isolated, afraid and insecure. This quote captures the disillusionment many migrants faced the "broken beauty" of America, where hope and suffering coexisted, shaped by historical exclusion and hardship.

Social Influences

Stuart Hall's theory explores the way in which social structures and ideologies are connected to the way identity is formed. In *The Distance Between Us*, everything from family rules to what people expect from girls and girls' education recommends how Reyna feels about herself. Hall says that identity develops from the ways in which people engage with the language and authority available to them. Reyna has to think about wearing shoes that were sent by her family, responding negatively to the discrimination by her grandmother and worries about passing her classes, which are a few of her social-norm sensitive issues. As a result of these tensions, she adopts an identity influenced by both traditional values and her desire to be more independent. This theory explains that Reyna makes decisions about her own identity, depending on the social environment she lives in.

"Don't just stand there," Abuela Evila said. "Go get your things ready," (Grande, 2012, p.77). Traditionally in Mexico, telling children to get their things ready demonstrated how parents did not allow their kids to question their instructions. As a result, showing respect to older family members and accepting the proper place in the family's hierarchy became more important than caring for and talking openly to those individuals.

It is clear from, "Abuela Evila lavishes treats and special privileges on Érida..." that partiality in families is a common social rule, motivated by a range of reasons. Because of this bias, Reyna feels left out and worthless, as she struggles to win the affection of her parents, which is typical in both patriarchal and matriarchal families.

The line states that "At school the kids struggle to learn English...and try to get good grades to please their father," who wants excellent achievements. Many immigrants have made sure their children stand out, as they are often expected to make up for what the parents left behind by being successful.

Breaking with social expectations, Reyna's introduction to Chicano authors, as noted in, "She is introduced by this professor to Chicano authors and she is not alone anymore," It represents a moment when literature breaks from tradition, giving Reyna a chance to see her identity in books. At this point, these women go from being isolated to working together, from being silent to finding their voices, challenging the quiet their immigrant status usually brings.

The quote "They had been sent to us by our parents...But...they didn't even know what size shoe I wore," (Grande, 2012, p.64) boldly tells us about the custom to respect people who never gave us love. In the book, the proud gift she receives from her parents clashes with her inner feelings of rejection, as custom requires children to always respect their parents.

It is clear from Reyna's words that "I had to keep on believing my parents left me because they loved me too much..." (Grande, 2012, p.30), society leads children to think that parents may have abandoned them for their own sakes. The reason is that Asian parents are often viewed as giving up everything for their children and questioning them is considered disrespectful. Nonetheless, Reyna emphasizes her martyrdom as a parent rather than telling her real feelings.

The author mentions "When my father beat me...I held on to the vision of the future he had given me" (Grande, 2012, p.256). Many immigrant families focus so much on improving

their lives that abuse, including emotional and physical, is overlooked. The children are often expected to remain silent and just accept it, rather than react.

In the end, the line “I brought you to America so that you can get education and exploit the opportunities...”, demonstrates the immigrant belief that sacrificing is worthwhile for finding success. The saying reveals that in society, people think the way to make parents’ suffering worthwhile is through education. It simplifies a child’s role by expecting them to accomplish, succeed and ensure it’s all worth the pain they endure.

Impact of culture, history, and social conventions in shaping the identity of characters

Reyna

In *The Distance Between Us*, Reyna Grande's hybrid identity is forged in the shifting space between Mexican tradition and American modernity. Her emotional and cultural split begins with physical separation from her parents and later deepens as she attempts to navigate both cultures. From the moment she arrives in the United States, she is marked by a profound cultural dislocation: “I had already lost my mother by coming to this country. It wasn’t easy having to also erase her from my name. Who am I now, then?” (Grande, 2012, p.171). This moment suggests that the self is lost through the suppression involved with seeking such help. Reyna is no longer able to enjoy motherhood. Having a surname in school showed the pressure for Asian youth to blend in with a system that supports the father’s lineage names and habits of Americans .

The first step in her hybrid identity is losing her original culture. Transformation. Because people speak different languages, their cultures can become divided, and their differences are highlighted. As a student in school, she finds herself being compared to other students. “Looked just like me” but spoke fluent English: “I wished I weren’t being taught something kids learn in kindergarten. I hated being older than everyone. I hated that I didn’t know how to speak the language.” (Grande, 2012, p.177)

Her sense of shame and isolation in the classroom resembles what Bhabha (describes as “liminal,” which means being “in-between.” Nevertheless, education enables Reyna to build a bridge connecting the two cultures. “Those books gave me a glimpse into a world I wished to belong to. That world was the perfect place I had imagined the U.S. to be.” (Grande, 2012, p.248)

When she read Chicana literature, she understood that she was now free to speak about her own life. I could be proud of who I am. “The words of Chicano writers gave me the permission I needed to tell my own story. I didn’t have to be ashamed ”.

By connecting two cultures, the emerging writer discovers a new literary and intellectual self that is formed from the foundation of Mexican memory and the experiences of living in the USA.

Mago

The main traits that define Mago are endurance, strong emotions and resistance. At first, she behaves as Reyna’s surrogate mother according to Mexican customs, but she later begins to shift her role due to exposure to American influences.

Once in America, she starts to resist her Mexican heritage. Even though Iguala was where I grew up, “Just because I used to live here, it doesn’t mean I still need to be friends with these people... Let them dare call me a little orphan now.” (Grande, 2012, p.311 (

Defensive distancing by the Prime Minister suggests she is trying to impress people by claiming superiority over her difficult and poor background. Mago is pleased with her achievement in English and being able to adapt in LA. Reyna reflects: “Even in her speech, she was trying to erase Mexico completely.” (Grande, 2012, p.288) Her linguistic transformation becomes a marker of her shifting cultural identity language is no longer a mother tongue but a tool of integration, dominance, and denial.

Her hybrid identity is more conflicted than Reyna’s. While Reyna seeks to connect both sides, Mago often denies her roots to assert her Americanness. In this way, her hybrid identity is shaped through repression and confrontation, rather than reconciliation.

Papi

Papi, Reyna’s father, exemplifies the struggle of traditional masculine identity in a new world that does not uphold old values. In Mexico, Papi’s dreams of landownership and fatherly authority define him. However, the move to the U.S. turns him into a dependent, unstable figure .

“Once I’m a legal resident, and I speak better English, things are going to change.” (Grande, 2012, p.243(

This line reflects false hope Papi believes that language and legal status will restore the authority he held in Mexico. Yet, despite living in the U.S., he continues to use a fake Social Security card and depends on Mila to navigate American systems.

His masculinity erodes further when Mila leaves him, leaving him broken and isolated: “He would stay in his room and wouldn’t come out, except to go to work or to the liquor store.” (Grande, 2012, p.244(

Here, the hybrid space becomes tragic. “He cannot embody either role the strong Mexican patriarch or the successful American provider. His failure to reconcile these cultural expectations traps him into a liminal identity marked by alcohol, anger, and isolation.”

Mami

Mami’s hybrid identity is forged through economic struggle, personal abandonment, and emotional transformation. In her early migration, she follows Papi’s dreams, saying: “Your father says a man must have his own house, his own land to pass down to his children.” (Grande, 2012, p.19 (

However, upon returning, she becomes emotionally unavailable to her children. Reyna observes: “She had hardly said a word to us. She sat on the couch, unmoving, her belly swollen. We kept waiting for her to say she had missed us.” (Grande, 2012, p.79) Mami adapts to the American way of life as a working-class woman. She collects cans, prioritizes money over feelings, and forces her children into menial labor. When Reyna protests: “She told me I had to learn the value of a dollar, that this was the real world, and that I better get used to it.” (Grande, 2012, p.59(

Her hybrid identity is one of emotional numbing and survival, formed by the tension between Mexican maternal expectations and American economic demands. She no longer offers warmth; she offers endurance.

Her ideas about culture have also changed. When her daughter becomes ill, Mami contrasts American fragility with Mexican toughness: “She’s an American, that’s why she’s so fragile. We have thick Mexican blood.” (Grande, 2012, p.87) By saying this, the writer shows that she values how tough and resilient Mexican people are, even she wants her children to be American.

It is difficult to integrate Mexican and American cultures. Consequently, it introduces difficulty, a sense of separation, adjustment and change to who individuals become. McKee’s explanatory criteria suggest that these personal examples also demonstrate important parts of postcolonial culture .

Intersection of cultures and hybrid identities

In Stuart Hall’s “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” hybridity through positioning refers to the idea that cultural identity is not a singular or fixed essence, but rather a fluid and ongoing process shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts. Hall describes identity as “a positioning,” emphasizing that individuals are constantly negotiating who they are, depending on how they relate to and are shaped by past and present narratives (Hall, 1990).(

As a result, diasporic identity is developed through the mixing of multiple influences from backgrounds such as African, European and American in the case of the Caribbean. In other words, diaspora presence draws attention to the fact that diasporic people construct their own identity through their experiences of living in other places.

In the memoir, the characters reveal how their identities are influenced by both Mexican and American cultures. The way they identify themselves is influenced by language, their role in the family, cultural traditions and the things they have experienced. The following analysis will explore the way in which Reyna, Mago, Papi and Mami build their hybrid identities by experiencing life in two cultures

Reyna Grande

Her identity is influenced by the ongoing blend of her Mexican heritage and her American existence. She explicitly states, “I was no longer Mexican enough for the Mexicans and not American enough for the Americans,” The line indicates that she feels trapped between two worlds and does not completely belong to either. This is referred to as hybridity, where an individual's identity is shaped by existing between two cultures, frequently accompanied by confusion and difficulty .

Her background with language demonstrates this clearly. When she says, “When I spoke Spanish, I felt like my old self. But in English, I was someone else, someone who belonged,” It illustrates how language alters her perception of her identity. Alternating between Spanish and English illustrates her navigation through two cultures. She is also mocked for the way she speaks and her clothing choices, “My classmates made fun of my accent, my clothes, and the food I brought from home,” which leaves her feeling excluded in American society .

Even so, she makes an effort to keep both sides of her life alive. “I wanted to Be American like the other kids, but I didn’t want to lose being Mexican.” This demonstrates her problem: she yearns for acceptance in America but also wishes to keep her Mexican heritage. Knowing that I had to abandon my heritage to fit into the culture here made it very difficult for me to combine the two sides “leave my culture behind to succeed in this one.”

Her sense of family is clear in her statement, “I called him Papi, but he didn’t act like the fathers I saw on TV,” demonstrating how she is affected by both Mexican and American traditions. According to her, “I translated for my parents because they couldn’t speak English, but I barely understood them anymore”,

At the end of the story, she feels as trapped as ever, even with her immigrant status confirmed. “Even when I got my green card, I didn’t feel like I belonged here or there.” As a result, her identity consists of culture as well as feelings of belonging and a sense of where she belongs which are always changing.

Mago

Mago shows the difficulty of navigating two cultures by attempting to preserve Mexican customs while residing in America. She states, “We had to forget who we were to become who Papi wanted us to be,” This indicates that they were required to relinquish aspects of their culture to adapt to American life, illustrating how migration changes identity. When she shouts, “I’m your sister, not your mother!” in English, although they typically converse in Spanish at home, it demonstrates how she employs language to emphasize her perspective and express her independence .

Mago’s mixed identity is clear when she “wore makeup like the American girls, but still made tamales every Sunday,” demonstrating how she integrates aspects of both American and Mexican lifestyles. She dislikes it when her father instructs them to speak only in English, “She hated it when Papi told us to speak only English at home,” showing her desire to preserve her Mexican heritage .

Simultaneously, she recognizes that adjusting is essential, “Mago would say, ‘We have to survive here. That means change,’” This implies she realizes that changing certain aspects assists them in adapting to life in America. She faces challenges with being “the Mexican daughter he wants and the American girl I’m becoming,” which reveals her conflicting emotions regarding her expected identity

Nonetheless, Mago clings to her origins, “She never stopped speaking Spanish to us,” and “held on to our mother’s sayings, even when she was quoting Shakespeare in class,” indicating that she embodies both cultures simultaneously. In fact, “Sometimes I think Mago was more American than the Americans, and more Mexican than Mexicans,” which shows she completely integrates both cultures into her identity .

Papi

Papi’s identity involves balancing being American with his Mexican heritage. He says, “You’re in America now. Speak English!” which shows he wants his family to become more American to succeed. He notices the difference between cultures when he says, “Back in Mexico, children respected their elders. Here, they talk back,” which shows how moving to America changes family relationships. He also believes, “We came here to have a better life.

That means acting like Americans,” which means he thinks acting American is necessary for success. But he also shows discomfort with too much American influence, “Why are you dressed like a gringa?” which means he wants to keep Mexican culture. He also shows some tough feelings about Mexican women, “I didn’t work this hard so you could end up like a Mexican woman with no education,” which shows how hard work and education become important American values mixed with old ideas. Even though he became a citizen, “When I became a citizen, I cried. I never thought I’d stop being a Mexican,” shows he feels sad about leaving his old identity behind. His English name at work, “At work, they called me ‘Joe’ because they couldn’t say ‘Natalio,’” shows how his identity changed to fit in. Papi also adopts American work values, “In America, time is money. No time for sitting around talking,” which is different from Mexican ways of life. But he also feels left out, “Even in America, I couldn’t escape being the poor Mexican,” which shows that no matter how much he tries, some parts of his identity are shaped by society’s views.

Mami

Mami relates herself to Mexico and the way she wishes to achieve success in the United States. She hopes to share her culture with her kids by cooking for them, but she also hopes her children achieve great things in America. In an interview, she shared that going to college was never something they thought about when they were young. I hope this can happen for you because migration brought new possibilities. The quote clearly reveals how difficult it is for her to speak Spanish sometimes when she wishes it could be easier to speak English instead.

Similarly, Mami turns on Mexican novellas at night and listens to English music in the day, showing that she mixes both cultures. She has mixed feelings: “I am both a strong woman and a caring mother.” She sometimes has trouble getting the same products at the market, as they don’t sell what she wants here. She has a mix of spirituality, explaining that she prays in Spanish, but dreams in English.

While Mami encourages her children to speak English, she also explains that they shouldn’t ever forget their own traditions. She notices the growth and changes in her kids. “When I watch you walk to school in your jeans and t-shirt, I see both my daughter and a girl from another world,” which shows how they are growing up different from her but still connected. Finally, “I cry sometimes for the life I left behind, but I smile for the life we’re building here,” shows how she feels both sadness and hope in her hybrid identity .

Findings and Conclusion

Findings

This study focuses on how *The Distance Between Us* (2012) by Reyna Grande explores the process of forming hybrid identities due to the influence of culture, history and traditional values. The analysis applying Stuart Hall’s approach revealed that identity in both postcolonial and migratory contexts changes over time, influenced by people’s interaction, memories and the balance of power.

In analysis, it is evident that culture has a major influence on characters by including typical beliefs, religious activities and the roles of men and women in their daily lives. Because of her grandmother, Reyna grew up surrounded by Mexican customs at home, folklore stories

and the faith of Catholicism. Yet, when people come to the United States, their traditional cultural values are challenged. Reyna struggles with picking between the requirements of her culture and her true feelings. Just as Hall describes, identity is reflected here as a process of continually becoming and being, as Reyna keeps adjusting to cultural shifts.

This study also reveals that historical context also plays an integral role in shaping a person's identity. Struggles caused by migration demonstrate the country's larger problems with unfair treatment and relations between the U.S. and Mexico. The author demonstrates that migration involves leaving one place and adapting to another over many years of hardship, being kept out and finding ways to survive. By remembering her lost parents, thinking about the American Dream and experiencing the pain of moving across borders, Reyna's identity is formed through memories of past injustices. This demonstrates that Hall's theory of identity includes both what happened in the past and what is still happening to a community in diaspora today .

How a person is expected to behave in society's eyes and in circles such as family both influence the identity of the person. It uncovers how being part of a traditional Mexican family reduces children's chances of expressing their true feelings. Much like American children whose parents immigrated, Reyna has to juggle respect for their father and mother with the pain of his absence, neglect or abuse. According to Hall, identity emerges as people interact with power and decide whether to follow or resist the rules in society .

Intersection of cultures and hybrid identities

Language, education, and literature help Reyna feel stronger after feeling lonely. When she starts reading Chicano literature, she connects her Mexican roots with her life in the U.S., which helps her understand herself better. Mago, on the other hand, tries to forget her Mexican background and fully adopt American ways. She stops speaking Spanish and hides her feelings, showing that being caught between two cultures can lead to confusion and self-denial. Papi struggles to keep his traditional male role, but because of changing laws, poverty, and a weak family structure, he loses his sense of identity. Mami's identity is shaped by many things. Even though she becomes emotionally distant, she learns how to care for her children. As a result of colonialism and migration, people can form mixed identities by absorbing new influences, meeting difficulties and constantly searching for ways to self-identify. These writings also agree with Hall by revealing that identity is shaped by external factors.

It becomes clear that people in colonial and migrant societies develop hybrid identities, not only by blending customs, but also by dealing with different problems and searching for ways to define themselves. According to the texts, Hall is right that the formation of identity is due outside influences, not just someone's fixed trait. For this reason, a mixed cultural background causes someone to keep changing and responding to new situations, unlike someone who only has traits from two cultures. In Hall's view, identity is developed over time and is not something fixed since it evolves with life experiences. The memoir demonstrates how Reyna, Mago, Papi and Mami are treated in their cultures, during specific periods and by people with power all shape this process. Each person's identity is formed by their reactions to things like moving to another country, separation from family, traditional gender roles and other struggles all happening together within the context of cultural and historical issues. The memoir highlights how citizens displaced by history and the unbalanced system are influenced in forming a hybrid identity. The history between the two cultures,

challenges caused by poverty and politics at the border result in situations that urge the protagonists to quickly decide whether to accept the change or resist it. Hall suggests that people shape their identity by differentiating themselves and by dealing with those in power. Being aware of social injustice, she uses books to find and use her voice. It shows that identity can empower someone and is not limited to loss. Moreover, the customs found in families further impact people by making them keep feelings to themselves and follow strict rules. Reyna faced the lack of her parents, took on various roles and hid the feeling of hurt as a daughter. Hall believes that an individual's sense of identity comes from negotiating with important social, historical and cultural systems and not just from family background.

Conclusion

Overall, *The Distance Between Us* (2012) explores how individuals' identity shifts and transforms in moving from their homeland to another place. In the light of theoretical framework suggested by Stuart Hall, it is revealed that hybridity is experienced in everyday life, and it often leads to an extra ordinary struggle due to their background, culture clashes and society's rules. (Hall, 1990). Based on the evidence, culture, history and social conventions play a significant role in shaping the identity of characters, however cultural identity is not a singular or fixed essence, but rather a fluid and ongoing process which tends to shape into a new hybrid identity when characters navigate and interact with another culture. This means that a hybrid identity is formed by individuals themselves, through fighting, resisting, adapting, and remembering their pasts (Hall, 1990). So, Reyna Grande's memoir *The Distance Between Us* (2012) stands for many immigrants who divide their lives between two cultures, constantly redefining themselves based on their experiences from all stages in life. Through her narrative, we see that characters are not only influenced by their move from one home to another, but also by the daily struggles with emotions, society and culture. Despite the difficulties stemming from differences in language, memory, family history and social expectations, the memoir shows how the author deals with these challenges successfully. Reyna's journey and the experiences of people in her life all represent what it means to be an immigrant, since identity shifts as people move between homes and new lands.

The Distance Between Us (2012) presents a powerful story of the author's life and also demonstrates the postcolonial dilemmas faced by people with multiple backgrounds. Stuart Hall's theory is applied on the memoir to show how migrancy can split a person's own identity but, in turn, also help to build and redefine it. Her memoir demonstrates that having a mix of different cultures is powerful and common in our global society .

According to Young (1995) "hybridity destabilizes fixed cultural identities and colonial hierarchies...simultaneously threaten and exposes the contradictions within imperial ideologies". Considering this, it is evident that hybrid identity challenges the traditional notion of identity by claiming that there is no such thing as superior or inferior culture as endorsed by colonial discourse and practices. Alongside resistance, it also represents the struggles of people in-between different cultures and borders and thus plays a pivotal role in understanding the lives of immigrants in modern world .

Recommendations

This study can be applied to postcolonial feminist literature to study cultural assimilation and hybridity with regards to gender power dynamics in diasporic context.

It can also be employed to draw comparison between texts written by male and female writers to determine their treatment of identity and hybridity in immigrant literature.

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