

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Self-identity is a deeply personal and complicated concept that involves the understanding and perception of oneself. It includes recognizing one's unique qualities, beliefs, values, and experiences that shape who they are. Developing a strong sense of self-identity is crucial because it forms the foundation for how individuals interact with the world and navigate through life. This journey is often filled with emotions, both challenging and uplifting, making it a profoundly human experience.

One of the primary reasons self-identity is important is that it provides a sense of direction and purpose. When people understand who they are and what they value, they can set meaningful goals and make decisions that align with their true selves. This alignment leads to greater satisfaction and fulfillment, as individuals are more likely to engage in activities and pursue paths that resonate with their core beliefs and desires. This sense of purpose ignites a passionate drive, filling life with a sense of excitement and anticipation.

Moreover, self-identity plays a critical role in mental health and emotional well-being. A strong sense of self can act as a buffer against external pressures and societal expectations, reducing the likelihood of experiencing anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. When individuals have a clear understanding of themselves, they are better equipped to cope with challenges and setbacks, maintaining resilience and a positive outlook on life. This inner clarity brings a sense of peace and stability, fostering emotional security and self-love.

In social contexts, self-identity influences the way individuals relate to others. People with a well-defined sense of self are more likely to form authentic and meaningful relationships. They are able to express themselves genuinely, communicate their needs and boundaries, and connect with others on a deeper level. This authenticity fosters trust and mutual respect, which are e

essential components of healthy and lasting relationships. Sharing one's true self with others can be both exhilarating and comforting, creating a profound sense of connection and belonging.

Self-identity also impacts personal growth and development. As individuals explore and understand their identities, they become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. This awareness allows them to leverage their strengths and work on areas that need improvement. Personal growth is a continuous process, and having a strong self-identity provides a stable foundation from which to evolve and adapt over time. This journey of self-discovery is often filled with moments of triumph and self-realization, as well as moments of vulnerability and self-reflection.

In the context of career and professional life, self-identity is equally important. Knowing one's strengths, values, and passions can guide career choices and professional development. Individuals who have a clear sense of their professional identity are more likely to pursue careers that align with their interests and values, leading to greater job satisfaction and success. Additionally, a strong professional identity can enhance confidence and assertiveness in the workplace, contributing to career advancement. The pursuit of a career that aligns with one's identity can bring a profound sense of accomplishment and purpose.

Cultural and societal factors also influence self-identity. Understanding one's cultural heritage and how it shapes personal values and beliefs can provide a deeper sense of belonging and pride. It allows individuals to appreciate the diversity of their own identity and the identities of others, fostering inclusivity and empathy. Navigating the intersection of personal and cultural identities can be challenging, but it is an essential aspect of developing a comprehensive self-identity. Embracing one's cultural roots can evoke a sense of pride and connection to a larger community.

During adolescence, the quest for self-identity becomes particularly important and highlighted. This developmental stage is characterized by exploration and experimentation as young people seek to define themselves. Encouraging adolescents to explore different aspects of their identities, such as interests, values, and social roles, is vital for their overall development. Support from family, peers, and mentors can

significantly impact the formation of a healthy self-identity during this critical period. The emotional intensity of adolescence can make the journey of self-discovery both exciting and tedious.

Additionally, searching for self-identity during the teen years is crucial because it builds the base for future mental well-being and stability. Teens who figure out who they are, tend to have higher self-esteem and make better decisions. Knowing oneself also helps them deal with challenges more effectively. A strong self-identity can improve social relationships since people who understand themselves communicate more genuinely and form deeper connections. Thus, this time of self-exploration is key for finding purpose and direction in life.

In the literary world, there are multiple novels and other works regarding identity or finding self-identity. After long consideration, the present writer will be using a memoir from Nicole Chung. The memoir is titled "All You Can Ever Know"; this memoir tells the story of Nicole Chung's life. Nicole is a Korean adoptee, adopted by Caucasian parents. Growing up, Nicole never really felt accepted in her neighborhood. Even during school, she would receive mockery and slurs just because she looked different. When her peers would throw mockery and slurs at her, no one would stand up for her. Other kids that Nicole thought of as friends pretended like they did not know her. At first, Nicole did not really mind it, but inside she always wondered why people did that because she did not feel different from them.

As time went on, Nicole felt the ups and downs of accepting her identity. Though in denial at first, at some point, she finally accepted the fact that she did look different from anyone in her family and her neighborhood. She even stated that she would not find anyone with a tiny bit of Korean or Asian features in her neighborhood, therefore she often felt left out. Even though Nicole had accepted her appearance as different from everybody she knew, it seemed as though slowly Nicole was losing herself as each day went by.

Despite her feeling like she might lose her identity at the moment, things did not stay in the same unchanging state for Nicole. One day she found a role model to look up to. It shocked and amazed her that someone who looked like her could be

admired by many people. Having a role model that looked like her helped Nicole a lot, including in finally starting and wanting to reshape her identity and reclaim her Korean heritage. With Nicole finally being at peace with who she is, she grew curious about her biological family.

Overall, the memoir delves into themes of identity, belonging, family, and the intricate layers of adoption. It also sheds light on the impact of transracial adoption on one's sense of cultural identity and the journey towards self-discovery. Chung's story is touching and reflective, providing readers with a deep understanding of the complexities of adoption, race, and the longing to reconcile one's identity with their past.

Nicole Chung's journey from denying her identity as a Korean to finally accepting and embracing her Korean heritage is fascinating. This transformation captures the present writer's interest, encouraging a deeper exploration of her memoir. Chung's story is a powerful example of how a person can grow and change over time, coming to terms with her true self and cultural background.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

1. What does the memoir say about Nicole's family background?
2. How is the main character's journey in search of identity?
3. How does Nicole change after her identity journey?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

1. To know Nicole's family background
2. To explain the main characters' process of searching for their identity using Erikson's theory of psychosocial development stages.
3. To find the difference in Nicole's personality before and after her identity journey.

#### **1.4 Significance of Study**

The present writer conducted the study to gain more understanding of the human psychosocial identity concept and their adaptability to new environments. The present writer wishes that this research paper could help readers who are interested in the same field understand more about the usage of Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development stages in fictional characters or in daily life.

#### **1.5 Methodology of the Study**

The methodology of this skripsi is the qualitative method. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the "human" side of an issue, that is, the often-contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals (Mack et al., 2005). The present writer will be using the *All You Can Ever Know* memoir as the main data and from literature works and studies regarding the identity crisis theme.

In collecting the data needed for this skripsi, the present writer will be doing the following steps. First, the present writer will be reading the *All You Can Ever Know* memoir, character & characterization, and Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory. Then, analyzing Nicole Chung's search for identity journey using Erikson's psychosocial development theory. Lastly, the present writer will try to point out the difference in Nicole Chung's personality before and after her identity journey.

#### **1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

For this study, the present writer decided to use *All You Can Ever Know* memoir by Nicole Chung. In the memoir there are two main characters with similar yet different experiences, but the present writer will only be analyzing Nicole's journey in finding her identity. Though there are many books and definitions regarding identity, the present writer will be using Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development stages from Erikson's own book, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* that was first published in

1968. Therefore, this study focuses on looking deeper into Nicole Chung's journey to find and be at peace with her identity.

### **1.7 Status of the Study**

The present writer has come across various research papers that uses Erikson's psychosocial development theory to analyze characters, yet there is a limited number specifically diving deeper into Nicole Chung's *All You Can Ever Know*. Among the identified papers, one noteworthy contribution is from Rizqia Nur Maziya titled *The Portrayal of a Korean Adoptee's Experience in Nicole Chung's All You Can Ever Know: A Memoir of Adoption* (2021). Maziya adopts a transnationalism perspective and transnational immigration theory to highlight Korean adoptee charts in America. Additionally, Phinnes' ethnic identity development theory is employed to analyze Chung's unique experience as a Korean adoptee living in America.

According to Maziya, this exploration aligns with Phinnes' theory of ethnic identity development, with Chung's narrative tracing back to her adolescent years. Growing up as a Korean adoptee in a predominantly white environment from infancy, Chung grapples with challenges related to understanding the circumstances of her adoption and connecting with her Korean heritage.

Nicole Chung's journey was made clear through the theory of Phinnes' four stages of ethnic identity development: diffused, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved. This concept allows for a nuanced examination of Chung's evolving understanding of herself, her adoption, and her cultural identity. As she progresses through these stages, Chung navigates the complexities of her identity, gradually gaining a deeper understanding and, ultimately, accepting her unique cultural and personal heritage.

It is important to understand that, despite sharing a common theme, the present writer will not be applying the same theoretical concept as the previously mentioned paper. Instead, the analysis will focus on the main character of the memoir using Erik Erikson's psychosocial development stages theory.

Considering the limited existing research on this memoir, the present writer's analysis using Erikson's psychosocial development stages theory adds a bit more

understanding of Chung's experiences. This new study the present writer will be doing aims to contribute fresh insights and perspectives to the exploration of identity development among Korean adoptees, enriching the discourse on the diverse paths individuals take in coming to terms with their identities within the context of adoption and cultural heritage.

However, even though existing research regarding this memoir is limited, the present writer did find similar analysis done on different novels; *Psychosocial Development of Anna Fitzgerald in My Sister's Keeper Novel by Jodi Picoult* (Meriska, et al., 2019) and *Psychosocial Development of The Main Character in Iwan Setyawan's 9 Summers 10 Autumns* (Purwaningsih, 2020).

The research papers done by Meriska et al. (2019) and Purwaningsih (2020) used the same theory but performed on different novels. Therefore, the present writer will combine the over-view of both of the research papers. The research paper done by Meriska et al. (2019) and Purwaningsih (2020) used the qualitative method. Purwaningsih's research titled *Psychosocial Development of The Main Character in Iwan Setyawan's 9 Summers 10 Autumns*, resulted in Iwan Setyawan did experience six of the eight stages of Erikson's theory and proved Setyawan's character was nicely developed because of the good environment (Purwaningsih, 2020).

Meriska et al. 's research not only uses Erikson's theory but also Bowlby's attachment theory to analyze Anna's relationship with her caregiver. The analysis resulted in Anna psychosocially experienced role confusion, because she failed to figure out her place and her identity in the family. This phenomenon affected Anna's relationship with her mother since Anna did not get the ideal and comforting mother-daughter relationship.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

### **1. Chapter I - Introduction**

This chapter provides background of the study, problem formulation, research objectives, research significance, research methodology, scope and limitations, status of the study, and research organization.

### **2. Chapter II - Review of Related Literature**

This chapter consists of the present writer's findings regarding the paper's theme. This provides the reader theories and a research paper with the same theme to see the implication of the archetype theory.

### **3. Chapter III - Research Methodology**

This chapter explains what kind of methodology the present writer used to analyze the main data of the research paper.

### **4. Chapter IV - Findings and Discussion**

The research findings are presented in this chapter. The problem formulation of the research paper is answered in this chapter.

### **5. Chapter V - Conclusion and Suggestions**

In this chapter, the present writer presents a conclusion and suggestion after doing the research regarding the chosen novel. This chapter explains the conclusion from what was discussed and some suggestions regarding the research theme.