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Formation of Identity through Acculturation: A Comparative Study of  
Smith's *White Teeth* and Adichie's *Americanah*

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By

Sanjeev Niraula

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Central Department of English**  
**Kirtipur, Kathmandu**

**Letter of Recommendation**

Sanjeev Niraula has completed his thesis "Formation of Identity through Acculturation: A Comparative Study of Smith's *White Teeth* and Adichie's *Americanah*" under my supervision. He carried out this research paper from December 2017 to July 2018. I hereby recommend this thesis be submitted for viva voce.

.....

Prof. Dr. Anirudra Thapa

Supervisor

Date: 2018-07- 11

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled “Formation of Identity through Acculturation: A Comparative Study of Smith’s *White Teeth* and Adichie’s *Americanah*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Sanjeev Niraula has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

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\_\_\_\_\_

Internal Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

External Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Head

\_\_\_\_\_

Central Department of English

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Abstract

This research work examines the relationships between acculturation and identity formation in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. The narrative unfolds the experience of first and second generation immigrants in new cultural locations of England and America. *White Teeth* narrates the story of Samad, an immigrant from Bangladesh who migrates to London and becomes an Englishman being influenced by British culture but ultimately turns to his own Islamic culture. Samad's son Magid born in England, follows British culture but the experience of discrimination makes him realize his 'otherness' in British society. *Americanah* projects the story of Ifemelu, a teenager from Nigeria who migrates to the United States to pursue her study. In her attempt to assimilate herself into American society, she begins following American culture and values. Later on, she returns to her own country Nigeria due to the experience of racism in America. Ifemelu's cousin Dike also undergoes the experience of racial discrimination in America. Due to the lack of connection to the cultural root, he lives an in-between life. To examine these issue of acculturation in the novels, the research work blends the concept of acculturation, acculturation strategies and acculturation stress as developed by John W. Berry, David L. Sam and others. Similarly, the concept of culture and identity is elaborated with reference to Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity. Likewise, Homi K. Bhabha's concept of mimicry is taken into consideration to examine the in-between state of the second generation immigrants in the novels.

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## **I: *White Teeth* and *Americanah* as Fictions on Intercultural Contact**

In the age of globalization, moving across national borders has become a common phenomenon. People born in one country, move to another whether by choice, necessity, or coercion. As people belonging to one culture come into contact with a new culture, their cultural identities come into question. In such cultural contact, the immigrants can either maintain their cultural identities or develop the contact and participation with other cultural groups. In most cases, the immigrants' experience is accompanied by acculturation. In its simplest sense, acculturation covers all the changes that arise following contact between individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds. The immigrants' experience of acculturation leaves them with what John W. Berry (2005) calls the alternatives of assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization (705).

In addition to acculturation, identity formation is also an important issue for immigrant people. In its simplest sense, identity is the product of a dynamic interplay between individual and context. The changes in ideals, values, and behaviors that occur during acculturation have clear implications for how immigrant people form, revise and maintain their identity (Seth J. Schwartz and et al). This dissertation focuses on the relationship between identity formation and the acculturation process in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013). It analyzes the first generation and second generation immigrants from both the novels as the two generations of immigrants represent two-fold aspects of the acculturation process. The first generation immigrants are the people born in one country but living in another country and the second generation immigrants are the children of first generation immigrants and they are born and brought up in different cultural locations. In the case of the former, integration is an important strategy of

acculturation but in the case of later due to the less strong connection with home country and culture and experience of discrimination in new cultural location, they share an in-between condition. In that sense, the acculturation process of the second generation necessarily does not follow the same pattern as that of the first generation. Samad in *White Teeth* and Ifemulu in *Americanah* are the representative of first generation and Millat in *White Teeth* and Dike in *Americanah* are the representative of second generation and their experience is analyzed to show the connection between identity formation and acculturation.

Set in multicultural London, Smith's *White Teeth*, deals with the stories of three families living in London: the family of Samad Iqbals, the family of Archibald Jones and the family of Chalfens. In the novel, the Bengali immigrant Samad and his son Millat belonging to Islamic culture come into a contact with British culture and society. Initially, Samad, the first generation of immigrant, has a strong desire to maintain his own cultural identity but in his interaction with the British culture, he assimilates into British culture. Samad lives in-between two cultures: Islamic culture and British culture; he is both a Bengali Muslim and an Englishman.

Millat, the second generation of immigrants, experiences acculturation differently in comparison to Samad. Millat, born and brought up in London, rejects his own cultural root and becomes absorbed into the British culture as evident in his language, appropriation of western clothing, love for popular culture. However, the experience of discrimination in British society makes him return to his own Islamic group as evident in his activity of joining an Islamic fundamentalist group, Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation (KEVIN), a militant anti-western organization claiming Quranic roots.

Adichie's *Americanah* is among the best-known contemporary work of African literature. *Americanah* narrates the story of Ifemelu, a modern young woman from Nigeria who lives in Nigeria until her late teens immigrates and afterwards moves to America hoping to complete her degrees and find an economically better life. Her life in America is not what she has expected. After experiencing depression in the initial stage, she adopts American culture dropping down her cultural identity. She becomes what the title of the novel suggests, 'Americanah'. However, later on, she maintains a balance between American culture and Nigerian culture. Dike, the cousin of Ifemelu and the representative of second generation of immigrant experiences discrimination like Millat in America and even attempts suicide after going through depression. It is after a trip to Nigeria with aunt Ifemelu, Dike develops a familiarity with Nigerian culture and it is also a return to his own root and culture.

*White Teeth* and *Americanah* have received many warm critical comments after the publication. The novels have been interpreted from multiple perspectives. Much of the critical reception of *White Teeth* has understandably attempted to position the novel within a postcolonial or multiethnic context. *White Teeth* has been interpreted as the novel dealing with the multicultural world. In a general sense, multiculturalism refers to presence of multiple cultures within a society. Simon Hattenstone describes *White Teeth* in *The Guardian* in December 11, 2000 as: "... a book about modern London, a city in which %40 of children are born to at least one black parent, a city in which the terms black and white becomes less and less relevant as we gradually meld into different shades of brown".

Sarah Nichols views *White Teeth* as the depiction of “exciting world of racial mixing and immigrant changing” (66). She examines the novel in the light of multiculturalism. In this regard she asserts:

Both sons (Magid and Millat) are drawn to movements of cultural purity. In the mixed-up world that Smith depicts, the diffusion of cultures draws the children toward simplified ideologies that they can embrace. Millat is a Bangladeshi boy, born and bred in London, who idolizes American gangsters. It's no wonder that the structure of rules and rituals that K.E.V.I.N. offers appear bewitchingly attractive. Likewise, Smith turns Magid, the son who has been educated in Bangladesh, into a defender of Western culture and of progress for progress' sake. Magid becomes a sort of public-relations frontman for the morally dubious genetic engineering work of scientist Marcus Chalfen. He is his brother's opposite, but they are both searching for a pure movement. (64)

Nichols talks about the cultural diffusion but fails to mention the causes behind Magid's love for English culture and Millat's in-between position. Why does Millat become a member of KEVIN? Is it just because it appears 'bewitchingly attractive' for the Bengladeshi boy who wants to be a gangster? In her review, Nichols fails to acknowledge the clash of eastern culture and western culture and its impact upon the characters and this missing thread is taken into consideration in this dissertation.

In her essay, “‘Happy Multicultural Land’? The Implications of an ‘excess of belonging’ in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*” (2005), Molly Thompson asserts that Smith challenges implications of multiculturalism's ties with the roots of heritage.

Thompson writes, “The notion of home as having a fixed and singular origin for

anyone in a multicultural world is...shown to be illusory” (133). According to Thompson, Smith challenges ideas of cultural heritage as being a necessary part of the identification process through which immigrants and their subsequent generations emerge. Rather, the characters of the novel identify their selves through a mingling of the past and present, a rootedness which clings to both personal histories and present circumstances. This dissertation agrees with Thompson’s idea of identity as the consciousness of both past and present but also moves away from this consideration suggesting that acculturation process is also central to identity formation.

Jonathan P.A. Sell takes the search for identity one step further in his essay “Chance and Gesture in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* and *The Autograph Man*: A Model for Multicultural Identity?” According to Sell, Smith presents an identity which is “produced for us socially, which never matches our own self-presentation. Thus, social relations are informed by a dynamic of chance and instability (27). Thompson views identity as the production of chance and instability in new multicultural world. Departing from Sell’s idea, this dissertation views identity as the production of a dynamic interplay between individual and context. Samad’s identity partly as a Muslim and partly as an Englishman, and Millat’s in-between identity is the product of their interaction in the multicultural London.

The main theme Smith touches in her novel is ethnic diversity of post-colonial period. Experience of immigrants in Britain can be sum up in few words – disillusion, loss of their identity, disconnected links with their family back home, alienation and racism. Emrah Isik and Selen Tekalp in their essay, “Those In-Between: (I)Dentity Crisis in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*”, brings forth the issue of identity crisis of the characters in the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural British society. In tune with Laura Moss who states, “Smith has created characters of mixed races, mixed cultures and

mixed languages; in short, she has created a portrait of hybridity in a North London borough” (11), Isik and Tekalp also view this novel from the perspective of hybridity.

In this regard they assert:

Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* more effectually represents ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse characters adjusting, negotiating, and creating a sense of belonging in the city of London depicted by Bhabha in such a way: “It is the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diaspora come to change the history of the nation”. (342)

Isik’s and Tekalp’s focus is to explore the crisis of cultural identity of the characters caused by in-betweenness and hybridization. To explore it, their discussion is limited to the analysis of characteristics and psychological attitudes, ambivalence of Samad and his ill-tempered son Millat (344). Instead of limiting the study to only to hybrid identity, this dissertation analyses the formation of identity and impact of cultural encounters behind such formation.

Contrarily, *Americanah* has been interpreted from the perspective of race. Emily Raboteau in the Washington Post writes: “Race entraps, beguiles and bewilders (Ifemelu) because it’s an imaginary construct with actual consequences. [...] But beyond race, the book is about the immigrant’s quest: self-invention, which is the American subject”. In the light of race and racism, Chikaoha Agoha views *Americanah* as a narrative which seeks “to explore racism and its variegated manifestations” (8). For instance, the conversation on the unprofessionalism of braided hair which ensues between Ifemelu and Aunty Uju when Ifemelu recently moves to America is influenced heavily by “the subtle politics of race relations in contemporary America” (45). Aunty Uju, “who had spent many years scrapping vital parts of her being in order to fit into the expectations of a foreign land” (45), tells

Ifemelu: “I have told you what they told me. You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed” (142).

Expressing a view in line with literary commitment, Agoha suggests that “Adichie’s *Americanah* exposes institutionalized racism against Blacks in America and Europe, and this is evidently an indirect call on Africa to beware” (43). For him, “[i]n all of her works, Adichie battles one form of ill or another ... and we see nothing short of a real ‘fight’ in *Americanah* – where racism becomes the monster” (46). Agoha reads *Americanah* from a post-colonial literary perspective as a “narrative [which] is not only a struggle for cultural, economic, social and political freedom, but also an uncommon narrative about definitions [through which] Adichie subtly turns down the definitions of the West even as she makes strong political statements that mirror awkward expressions of political correctness” (43). A similar view in line with literary commitment is identified in Sarala Krishnamurthy where she points out that seen in the text is “its brutal honesty... vitriolic attack on Nigerian and incorruptible and unequivocal delineation of the Nigerian society as it exists today” (55).

For Agoha, as established, “the focal theme that reverberates through *Americanah* is racism” (44) and as such, his reading of the text presents the novel as one which “revitalises the world of racism, especially as it connects with Europe’s true relationship with the rest of Africa” (44). For him, the novel is one of such that provokes a revision of one’s understanding of racism in literature, especially in African literary criticism. This discourse of racism plays out in skin colour and hair among other things. Such characters like Dike, Ifemelu and Auntie Uju suffer the consequence of unfounded allegations as a result of the colour of their skin; they become victims of the colour of their skin. It is no surprise then that “[b]latant

deprivations and unfounded accusations, such as the ones Dike experiences in the text, eventually lead him [to] attempt suicide [out of depression]” (67).

In Claudio Braga and Glaucia R. Gonçalves’s reading, theirs based on diasporic theory, *Americanah* “[o]ffer[s] a fictional portrayal of a contemporary diaspora often made invisible by institutions, by the government, and by mainstream Americans, as it is persistently grouped with the African-American community, regardless of the specificities of each” (1). Their observation maintains that there is some sort of “fictional representation of Nigerian diaspora in the United States” (2). As such, the novel employs certain narrative strategies that foreground diasporic experiences.

In Soheila Arabian and Vida Rahiminezhad, the idea of *Americanah* as a study of Diasporas in general, still survives. They provide a reading of the text done “through the lens of diaspora in order to find how diasporic displacement affects the characters’ sense of belonging both toward homeland and host land . . . , bring[s] a sense of alienation for the immigrant characters and effect their decisions of return” (536). To this effect, they highlight two distinct categories of displacement in relation to the reasons why characters migrate in the text. For Aunty Uju, “though departure is not as the result of forceful facts such as war, famine or exile it cannot be categorized within the voluntary displacements [because] there is a kind of social pressure which forces her to move” (537). Ifemelu and Obinze’s displacements are not categorized as forceful. The only reason behind their movement is a kind of dissatisfaction which they wish to conquer through their prosperity in west; they have hunger for choice and certainty.

For Idowu- Faith, “*Americanah* is the melting pot where love and romance collide and comingle with hair politics and the shifting meanings of skin color” (1).

For her, *Americanah* unfolds along the paths of a new kind of migration story. She establishes that although many of the migratory experiences in the novel work within migration theory, Adichie transcends the typical borders of migration theories by introducing a new factor that influences migration, which is identified in the text as the “lethargy of choicelessness” (Adichie 317), and also projects a new perspective on return migration. We read:

Both Ifemelu and Obinze belong to the Nigerian (upper) middle class where the need to migrate is not induced by poverty but by the quest to experience choice and something new somewhere else. This battle against choicelessness is clearly projected to the reader through Obinze’s mind while attending a dinner in a friend’s house, during his short stay in Britain. When Alexa, one of the guests, commends Blunkett’s intention to make Britain continue to be a refuge to survivors of frightful wars, Obinze agrees with her, yet feels alienated because his own migration story is different from those common ones motivated by wars and woes (Idowu- Faith 3)

Likewise Both, Koskei Chepkorir and Orem Ochiel approach this novel through feminist lens and argue that Ifemelu redeems power through retaining political and economic independence. While the first critic uses Ogundipe’s feminist concept of “stiwanism” that “exhorts women to demolish myths and reconstruct new ideas” (63), the second places Adichie’s novel within the broad narrative of feminist desolation and struggle. Jessica Hidalgo explores the development of the protagonist’s identity by analyzing her relationships with her boyfriends, Obinze, Curt, and Blaine. Those relationships, according to Hidalgo, define the development of the protagonist’s personality through issues of race and gender that reflect the struggles of female

African immigrants in the United States. Instead of viewing race and gender as the factors behind the development of Ifemelu's personality, this dissertation closely examines the contact of Nigerian culture and American culture its impact upon the development of Ifemelu's personality.

Critics also argue that *Americanah* is a novel that follows the Afropolitan paradigm. Afropolitanism is a term first introduced by Achille Mbembe and Taiye Selasi. Mbembe and Selasi's neologism came to identify how Africans significantly can belong to two distinct worlds and cultures, become products of globalized and pluralistic sophistication, and acquire a mixed globalized perspective on ideas as well as identities. It is "to be of Africa and of other worlds at the same time" (Gikandi Introduction). Guarracino argues that *Americanah* depicts how African immigrants struggle between cultural displacement and plurilingualism while they try to understand their identities: "to be rooted both in Africa and elsewhere" (9). Katherine Hallemeier critiques and celebrates *Americanah* is an Afropolitan novel because it highlights "the Nigerian iteration of middle- class mobility" and "of cultural and historical hybridity" (234). She also argues that Adichie herself is an Afropolitan, a novelist, who like other Afropolitans (Cole, Selasi, and Soyinka), examines "the insistence on the centrality of global capitalism to African life" (234). Afropolitanism focuses on in-between state of Africans but the analysis of the character Ifemelu from *Americanah* on the ground of Afropolitanism would be limited as she is deeply rooted to Nigerian culture. She not only rejects American culture but also ultimately returns to America. Therefore moving away from the concept of Afropolitanism, this dissertation examines Ifemelu's interaction in American cultural context to analyze her identity.

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's ability to travel, unwillingness to assimilate, and inability to develop lasting relationships all help her create an idealized image of

Nigeria. She views the homeland rather than the hostland as the “land of opportunity.” In her introduction to a special issue of “Research in African Literatures: Africa and the Black Atlantic,” Yogita Goyal praises Adichie and *Americanah* for offering “a fresh conception of diaspora and the politics of comparison” (xi). Goyal writes that the novel’s familiarity to the American reader reverses “the heart of darkness narrative” in which the European looks at Africa as the exotic and instead the African sees America as the exotic. Ifemelu’s choice to leave America for Africa to seek better opportunity is as foreign to the Western reader as racism in America has been to Ifemelu. Where the European finds darkness in Africa, “an African character travels to the heart of the West, only to find darkness there” (Goyal xii). Adichie reverses the concept of darkness to America by at first placing the reader in America but then returning Ifemelu to Nigeria prior to her displacement.

Going through the afore-mentioned literature reviews, it is evident that many social scientists and literary critics have studied the both novels from multiple perspectives. As discussed already, *White Teeth* has been interpreted as postcolonial novel and critics are concerned with the postcolonial issues such as multiculturalism, hybridity, identity-crisis, cultural displacement etc. On the other hand, critics are interested in the issue of race, gender and diaspora in *Americanah*. However, the studies on the both novels from the proposed perspectives are not evident though some of the studies have been carried out in individual novel with a particular perspective. The migration of the characters from one cultural location to another in both novels, in the case of *White Teeth* from Bangladesh to London and in the case of *Americanah* from Nigeria to America, the characters experience in new cultural locations, the common experience of racial discrimination experienced by immigrants in both the novels and the impact of cultural context upon the formation of their

identity demand an investigation into the novel from the perspective of acculturation and identity formation. Hence, this research attempts to study these two novels observing from the intersected perspective of acculturation and identity.

To analyze the issue of identity formation and acculturation, the dissertation borrows some of the key theoretical ideas from the theory of acculturation as developed by John W. Berry, Jean S. Phinney, David L. Sam and others. The four acculturation strategies of Berry- assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization- are used to analyze the identity formation of the immigrants from both the novels. In addition to this, the dissertation also incorporates Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity and Homi K Bhabha's concept of hybridity.

In the most general terms, acculturation can be defined as the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact. The classical definition of acculturation was presented by Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville Herskovits: "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in their original culture patterns of either or both groups" (149). Redfield *et al* define acculturation as the process of intercultural contact. Though acculturation affects the culture of both dominant and non-dominant groups, this dissertation considers the acculturation only in terms of its effect upon the culture of non-dominant groups.

Berry (2005) in his essay, "Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures", defines acculturation as a "dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (698). He also discusses the acculturation strategies as the variations that people adopt to engage in the process of acculturation. According to

him, the strategies consist of two components: attitudes (an individual's preference about how to acculturate), and behaviors (a person's actual activities) that are exhibited in day-to-day intercultural encounters (704). From the point of view of non-dominant groups, he outlines four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization:

When individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the assimilation strategy is defined. In contrast when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with other groups, then the separation alternative is defined. When there is an interest in both maintaining one's heritage culture while in daily interactions with other groups, integration is the option. Finally when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relation with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) then marginalization is defined. (705)

Sam in his essay, "Acculturation: conceptual background and core components", views acculturation in terms of three building blocks: contact, reciprocal influence and change. Regarding contact, he puts forth the condition of a "meeting between at least two cultural groups or individuals who come together in a 'continuous' and 'firsthand' manner" (14). Secondly, acculturation also has effect on the cultures of both dominant group and non-dominant groups. Finally, he states that "change involves both a process, that is dynamic, and an outcome" (16).

Like the term acculturation, identity is also a subject of much debate. This dissertation takes into consideration the concept of cultural identity as advocated by

Stuart Hall. Hall in his seminal essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, defines identity “as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process” (222). He examines two ways of thinking about cultural identity. Firstly, cultural identity is defined in terms of “one shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’ .... which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (223). The second definition of cultural identity emphasizes the similarities and the differences amongst an imagined cultural group who have similarities in their histories and ancestries but whose past as “a people” contains ruptures due to “the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (225).

To examine the connection between identity formation and acculturation, the characters’ interaction in the new cultural locations is used as the qualitative data for the analysis. The dissertation focuses on the experience of first generation and second generation of immigrants from the novels. The characters of Samad and Millat from *White Teeth* and Ifemulu and Dike from *Americanah* are examined in details. Though acculturation is an anthropological perspective concerned with the analysis of quantitative data, I will use it in the analysis of qualitative data in the literary texts. The incorporation of anthropological tool in literary analysis is likely to open up a new perspective in literary analysis. As much work has not been conducted in this area, I regard my work as an initiation in this area.

This research project is designed to be carried out in three chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the text and issue. This chapter explores into the text and its events that are significant from the thematic aspects. Along with the textual introduction, this chapter evaluates the notable critical reviews that the novels have received after their publication. This chapter also introduces the concept of acculturation and identity in brief.

The second chapter “Acculturation Process of First and Second Generation Immigrants” evaluates the connection between acculturation process and identity formation taking the experience of the characters into consideration. This chapter focuses on the issue of cultural identity of the first generation immigrants and the hybridity of the second generation immigrants.

Finally, the ultimate chapter “Formation of Identity through Acculturation” concludes and exposes how cultural identity of the immigrants is contested because of acculturation process and how the immigrants share the position of in-betweenness.

## II. The Acculturation Process of First and Second Generation Immigrants

### i. The First Generation Immigrants: Cultural Identity under Duress

Smith's *White Teeth* and Adichie's *Americanah* tackle the complexities of the lives of the immigrants in Britain and America respectively. Samad's journey from Bangladesh to Britain and Ifemelu's journey from Nigeria to America bring changes in their identities. Samad, the muslim becomes an Englishman being influenced by British culture and Ifemelu, a Nigerian turns out to an American under the influence of American culture. This chapter focuses on the identity formation of the first generation and second generation immigrants from both the novels. This chapter attempts to examine the relationship between identity formation and acculturation.

Samad in *White Teeth*, represents the first generation immigrants as he belongs to Bangladesh by his cultural root but is living in London. Samad with his wife Alsana arrives in London and starts working as a waiter at the restaurant owned by his distant cousin Ardashir Mukhul. The job from six in the evening until three in the morning, the frequent abuses from his coworkers, and the condescension from Ardashir make him fed up with the job. Samad finds it difficult to accept himself as the waiter. Dwelling in the past, he wants to shout out:

I AM NOT A WAITER. I HAVE BEEN A STUDENT, A  
SCIENTIST, A SOLDIER. MY WIFE IS CALLED ALSANA, WE  
LIVE IN EAST LONDON BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO MOVE  
NORTH. I AM A MUSLIM BUT ALLAH HAS FORSAKEN ME OR  
I HAVE FORSAKEN ALLAH. I'M NOT SURE. I HAVE A FRIEND  
– ARCHIE – AND OTHERS. (58)

Samad has come to London looking for a better future but ends up being a waiter. A Muslim of Bangladesh turns out to be a waiter in London. This monologue of Samad

presented in upper-cases in the novel, indicates his dissatisfaction with the new role that he has got in the new cultural location. He wants to live his life not as a waiter but with the identities that he had in the previous location, Bangladesh. According to Roy Baumeister (1986), identity is a “definition or an interpretation of the self” (13). Samad sees himself not as a waiter but as a student, a scientist, a soldier and as a Muslim. To define identity, Baumeister has considered two criteria. The first criterion is continuity as it refers to being a special case of unity across time, which entails being the same person. The second criterion is differentiation, which refers to being distinct from others. These two criteria are believed to guarantee the needed development of identity in response to life’s demands, but, at the same time, they protect it from drastic changes or alteration in the process. So Baumeister’s model defines identity as a fixed entity and also as being different from others. Samad views his identity as the same person even in the new land. He is not ready to accept his new role. His cultural identity, of being a Muslim, prevents a drastic change or modification in his identity in the acculturation process.

However, there are important links between cultural context and individual behavioral development. In response to the question what happens to individuals who have developed in one cultural context when they attempt to re-establish their lives in another one, John W. Berry in his article “Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures”, proposes the options of acculturation strategies of “assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization” (705). Regarding separation strategy, he states that “when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction, separation alternative is defined” (705). That means separation strategy is characterized by one’s love for original culture and

dislike for the culture of others. Samad's love for his Islamic culture and dislike for British culture can be interpreted as an expression of his separation strategy.

Samad as a Bangladeshi Muslim in London attempts to preserve his original culture in London by sidelining the British culture which is evident in his criticism of British culture. That means, he uses the separation strategy of acculturation. At the school meeting, he vehemently criticizes western education's system for privileging "activity of the body over the activity of the mind and soul" (127). He is against the idea of celebrating the Harvest Festival at school by his children as he finds it useless for Muslims to observe a Christian festival. Instead, he wishes the Islamic festival to be included in the school's calendar:

If we removed all the pagan festivals from the Christian calendar, there would be an average of twenty days freed up in which the children could celebrate Lailat-ul-Qadr in December, Eid-ul-Fitr in January and Eid-ul-Adha in April, for example. And the first festival that must go, in my opinion, is the Harvest Festival business. (129)

At this point, Samad reveals his separation strategy of acculturation in London. Because of his preference for his root culture, he looks more like a Muslim and less like an Englishman. Samad's cultural identity as a Muslim is predominant in the beginning of *White Teeth*. He frequently tells others: "I don't wish to be a modern man. I wish to live as I was always meant to. I wish to return to the East" (145). It means, he does not want to be modern, sacrificing his own culture. His desire to return to the East implies his preference for his root culture.

For Samad, tradition, history, and culture are the factors contributing to his self. To Samad, tradition was culture, and culture led to roots. That did not mean he could live by them or grow in the manner they demanded, but roots were roots and roots were

good. Samad likes to be recognized with his identity of Bengali Muslim. He defines himself in terms of one shared culture or what Hall calls “a sort of collective ‘one true self’” (223). Hall in ‘Cultural identity and Diaspora’ conceptualizes two notions of cultural identity. Firstly, he defines it as the reflection of “common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as ‘one people’, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of references and meaning, beneath the shifting division and vicissitudes of our actual history.” (223). Samad defines himself in relation to his root of origin and therefore has a strong objection against his friend Mackintosh who addresses him as a sultan:

‘Sutlan . . . Sultan . . . ’Samad mused, ‘Do you know, I wouldn’t mind the epithet, Mr Mackintosh, if it were at least *accurate*. It’s not historically *accurate*, you know. It is not, even *geographically* speaking, accurate. I am sure I have explained to you that I am from *Bengal*. The word “Sultan” refers to certain men of the *Arab* lands—many hundreds of miles west of Bengal. To call me Sultan is about as accurate, in terms of the mileage, you understand, as if I referred to you as a Jerry-Hun fat bastard.’ (85-86)

As a Muslim, Samad follows Islamic culture even while living in London. He has a desire to go on haj his son and touch the black stone before he dies (152). The haj- Arabic for “pilgrimage”— is a five-day religious pilgrimage to Mecca and nearby holy sites in Saudi Arabia that all Muslims are expected to perform at least once in their lives. It is believed that a proper performance of the haj can absolve Muslim pilgrims of any previous sins. As a pure Muslim, Samad wants to touch the black stone Kaaba during the pilgrimage as a sign of his respect and continued devotion to Islamic religion.

Samad has respect for his religion and the religious text the Quran considering it a revelation of God. His cultural identity as a Muslim is also evident when he picks up the Quran during the time of emergency. During the period of terrible hurricane, he decides to leave his house along with his family members to take shelter at his friend Archie's house. His wife and the son pick up the essentials except the Quran over which Samad gets furious with them. He picks up the Quran considering it "key item in emergency situation: spiritual support" (222). As the follower of Allah, find the Quran as the revelation of God. So, no matter what the situation is, Samad neither forgets the Quran nor his religion.

Apart from religion, Samad views his ancestry as a defining element of his cultural roots. He always defines his self in relation to his great-grandfather Mangal Pande. The story of Mangal Pande introduced in the fifth chapter is handled in detail in the tenth chapter titled 'The Root Canals of Mangal Pande'. In the novel, this colonial history is often narrated by Samad bringing the bravery and contribution of his great-grandfather Mangal Pande. According to Samad, the bullets designed to be used in English guns by Indian soldiers were covered in a grease made from the fat of pigs, monstrous to Muslims, and the fat of cows, sacred to Hindus. As the English were intending to destroy the caste and the honor of the Indians, Samad claims, Mangal Panda took the step on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1857 to make a certain kind of history.

It is to be noted that there are two versions of the story of Mangal Pande in the novel. When Samad's version glorifies Pande, the English historian Fittchett's version criticizes Pande. According to Flittchett's writing, Pande was "half-drunk with bhang and wholly drunk with religious fanaticism" (254) when he shot the bullet. He "stood trial and was found guilty" (255). This accusation of Flittchett against Pande makes Samad very upset and furious. He tries to defend that "Mangal Pande sacrificed his

life in the name of justice for India, not because he was intoxicated or insane" (256). Samad is not ready to accept what Flittchett claims as he finds Flittchett's version distorting the reality of colonial history. He finds Flittchett's narration as the Western perspective to overshadow the contribution of Pande.

When Samad's cousin Rajnu discovers a book in Cambridge College in 1981 written by A. S. Misra who describes the story of Mangal Pande as a "history of bravery", Samad is so excited that he says: "A great day for our family, Rajnu, a great day for the truth" (257). Regarding the contribution of Pandey, Misra in the book writes:

Mangal Pande fired the first bullet of the 1857 movement. His self-sacrifice gave the siren to the nation to take up arms against an alien ruler, culminating in a mass-uprising with no parallel in world history. Though the effort failed in its immediate consequences, it succeeded in laying the foundations of the Independence to be won in 1947. For his patriotism he paid with his life. But until his last breath he refused to disclose the names of those who were preparing for, and instigating, the great uprising. (259)

The reading of the book packs up Samad with such emotion that he sits down on the bottom rung of the stepladder and weeps. He regards Pande as "the great hero of the Indian Mutiny" (87) and as "the founder of modern India, the big historical cheese" (226). Hall (1999) notices the influence of past upon the formation of identity.

Samad's declaration of his position in the present because of Pande's contribution, "he is why the way we are" (226) captures Hall's notion of identity. If identity is the way in which we position ourselves towards the narratives of past as advocated by

Hall, Samad clearly sees his past and history as a defining factor in his identity as well.

Samad initially rejects the idea of assimilation into British culture. Berry regards assimilation as one of the acculturation strategies and states: “When individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the assimilation strategy is used” (705). In this mode of acculturation, one adopts other’s culture sacrificing own culture. While talking about the children of Alsana’s sister, Samad is critical of them as he finds them forgetting their culture and following British culture completely. He is troubled because they do not go to mosque and do not pray. Moreover, they speak strangely and dress strangely. They do not have respect for tradition. He finds the children corrupted under the influence of British culture. For him, the act of following British culture is just corruption not the assimilation.

Samad’s preference of his Islamic culture to British culture reflects his desire of rejection of assimilation into British culture. As a Muslim, he wants to see Muslim children even living in London following the paths as shown by Islamic culture. The language, forms of dress, food preferences and sexuality are some of the elements of British culture that he attempts to avoid. At the same time, he is worried about the impact of such culture upon his children as he expresses his worries to Archie: “I tell you, I don’t know what is happening to our children in this county. Everywhere you look it is the same. Last week, Zinat’s son was found smoking marijuana” (190).

Samad is worried for his sons as he finds the children of immigrants blindly following the western culture. He thinks that such blind adherence to other’s culture makes one forget their own culture. He wants his children to grow up not in British culture but in the paths as shown by Islamic culture.

Samad's identity as a Bengali Muslim is contested when he experiences intercultural contact. Despite his attempt to avoid the interaction with the British culture, he cannot stop himself assimilating into British culture. The experience of acculturation process poses a threat to his cultural identity. John W. Berry in his essay "Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures" defines acculturation as the "dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members." In this light of definition, the cultural and psychological change in the case of Samad, is the product of his intercultural contact. Samad, the Bengali Muslim, happens to be the follower of "Western pragmatism" (134). As Samad lives in two cultures, he can't remain uninfluenced by the values of British culture. Despite his initial rejection of British culture, he happens to get assimilated into the British culture.

Smith begins the chapter entitled 'Samad' with the quotation of Norman Tebbit: "The Cricket Test- which sides do they cheer for? Are you still looking back to where you came from or where you are?" (123). This quotation sums up Samad's life in London; he is torn between Islamic values and British values. Samad's migration to England in 1973 along with his wife Alsana, seeking a new life brings his Islamic culture into a contact with British culture. David L. Sam in his essay 'Acculturation: conceptual background and core components' identifies three issues- contact, reciprocal influence and contact- as the building blocks of acculturation process (14). Regarding contact, Sam asserts:

A major prerequisite for acculturation is contact following a "meeting" between at least two cultural groups or individuals who come together in a "continuous" and "first hand" manner. While there may be different types of contacts in contemporary societies, the two

distinguishing features of acculturative contact are “continuous and firsthand.” (16)

Samad’s ‘continuous and firsthand’ contact with the British gives him a new identity, that is the identity of an Englishman. In this process of cultural contact, as Sam writes, Samad identity changes. According to Berry, “At the individual level, acculturation involves changes in a person’s behavioral repertoire”(699). Samad, who previously believed, “Every bit of my blood comes from Allah. Every bit will return to him” (89) becomes “a masturbator, a bad husband, an indifferent father with all the morals of an Anglican” (141). Samad does not care about his duties and responsibilities as a Muslim. He becomes someone who has the morals of an Englishman.

Despite the fact that Samad is a married man and the father of two children, he has an affair with his children’s music teacher, Poppy Burt-Jones. In the very first meeting, he feels that “he wanted her more than any woman he had met in past in ten years.” Her memory itself awakens his sexual desire to such extent that he is frequently engaged in masturbation repeating “To the pure, all things are pure” (139). He is aware of the fact that masturbation is strictly prohibited in Islam but masturbation is the only one way to get relief from the sexual desire aroused after meeting Poppy. So he tries to console himself that masturbation is not bad as such as he is himself pure. Wherever he is and whatever he is doing, he finds himself suddenly accosted by some kind of synesthetic fixation with the woman: hearing the colour of her hair in the mosque, smelling the touch of her hand on the tube, tasting her smile while innocently walking the streets on his way to work. The memory awakens his desire for sexuality which leads to him to masturbation. The use of auditory image ‘hearing’, olfactory image ‘smelling’ and the gustatory image ‘tasting’ reflects the intensity of sexual desire of Samad for Poppy.

Later on he gives up masturbation so that he might drink. He develops the habits of taking his last gulp looking up at the sky like a Christian. In his own evaluation of himself as an Englishman, Samad finds himself following the British culture: “I want another woman. I eat bacon. I regularly slap the salami. I drink Guinness. My best friend is a kaffir non-believer. I tell myself if I rub up and down without using hands it doesn’t count” (149). Samad becomes an Englishman because of the influence of British culture. He is engaged in all those things which are strictly prohibited in Islam.

In Islam, unlawful sexual relationship (*zina*) is haram and is a major sin. Islam specifies which foods are *halal*, “lawful” and which are *haram*, “unlawful”. In Islam, consumption of any intoxicants (*Khamr*) is forbidden. Similarly consumption of pork or pork-product is also prohibited in Islam. Likewise, masturbation is strictly prohibited in Islam. Samad as a Muslim knows what is *halal* and what is *haram* but despite knowing it, he is engaged in masturbation, consumption of liquor and pork and unlawful sexual relationship.

Samad’s linguistic assimilation is evident in his conversation with the music teacher Poppy. After spending many years in London, he has developed familiarity with English language but what is striking here is his claim of speaking the ‘Queen’s English’. He criticizes Poppy’s language: “What kind of phrase is this: “So what?” Is that English? That’s not English. Only the immigrants can speak the Queen’s English these days” (181). Samad has a clear understanding that only the Queen’s English is the standard form of English language. He is not in the favour of the innovative use of the phrase ‘so what’ and also criticizes Poppy for her language skill. It is because of his assimilation into British culture, he has a better understanding and knowledge of the British culture and language than the Britishers themselves. He seems less a

Muslim and more an Englishman. Samad's transfiguration is the product of what T. D. Graves (1967) calls psychological acculturation by which he refers to "changes in individual who is a participant in a culture contact situation, being influenced by the external culture" (338). In the contact situation of British and Islamic cultures, Samad can't avoid the influence of British culture upon himself. So he has a better understanding and knowledge of British culture though he is an outsider.

The acculturation process problematizes the cultural identity of Samad but living in between Islamic culture and British culture, he is well aware of his position as the "victim of Western corruption" (149). He is a Muslim in terms of his root but has become an Englishman in terms of acculturation process. He has the realization of his in-between position: "We are the split people. For myself, half of me wishes to sit quietly with my legs crossed, letting the things that are beyond my control wash over me. But the other wants to fight the holy war, Jihad!" (179). Samad's identity is torn between two cultures; he is both a Muslim and an Englishman. On the one hand, he wants to live the life of an Englishman and on the other hand, he can't forget his identity as a Muslim.

Though Samad adapts to British culture, soon he realizes the significance of his cultural heritage. It is because of his strong cultural identity, he is able to perceive the negative influences of British culture upon his cultural heritage:

I am fifty-seven. When you get to my age, you become... concerned about your faith. You don't want to leave the things too late. I have been corrupted by England. I see that now- my children, my wife, they too have been corrupted. I think I have made the wrong friends. Maybe I have been frivolous. Maybe I have thought intellect more important than faith. (144)

It is true that the acculturation process makes Samad an Englishman but acculturation turns out to be 'reactive' in his case. That means, he rejects the cultural influence of British society and once again returns to his own culture. Social Science Research Council (1954) defines acculturation not only as the cultural change but also as a 'reactive adaptation': "acculturation may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life" (974). The major event in the text reawakening Samad's cultural identity is the discovery of his extramarital affair by his children. As he is preparing to spend a night with Poppy in the garden, he is caught red-handed by his children: "Samad opened his eyes and saw quite clearly by the bandstand his two sons, their white teeth biting two waxy apples, waving, smiling" (182). This incident shatters Samad emotionally filling him with a realization that he can't teach his children the family culture as he himself has deviated from that. He does not want to see his children growing up as an Englishman but wishes them to follow the Islamic culture. But the paradox is how he can show them the right path when he himself has lost it. The incident has such an alarming effect upon Samad that he almost cries in front of his friend Archie expressing his concern for the sons:

'I looked at my boys Archie . . . I looked at my beautiful boys . . . and my heart cracked - no more than this- it shattered. It shattered into so many pieces stabbed me like a mortal wound. I kept thinking: how can I teach my boys anything, how can I show them the straight road when I have lost my own bearings?' (189)

Samad after the incident no longer looks like an Englishman. He does not want his children to grow up in London to be contaminated by the British culture: "What kind of world do I want my children to grow up in?" (189). Certainly he wants to see them growing under Islamic culture and that is not possible in London. He wants to send

them back to Bangladesh but he can't afford the cost of both due to his financial problem. Therefore, he finally decides to send Magid back to Bangladesh. Magid's concern for his sons reawakens his cultural identity.

As a Muslim, Samad is delighted for Magid as he states: "My son is for God, not men. He is not fearful of his duty. He is not fearful to be a real Bengali, a proper Muslim" (215). To Samad's disillusionment, Magid returns to London after eight years from Bangladesh as an ardent atheist and as a pure Englishman. Samad is so upset that he says "this is some clone, this is not an Iqbal" (424). Samad's attempt of Islamic upbringing for his son doesn't produce the desired result that he feels "The children have left us . . . they are strangers in strange lands" (425). He feels himself betrayed by his son Magid as he has become not a Muslim but a pure Englishman. He wants to see his son grow up in Islamic culture but that dream does not come true. So he finds his children strangers like the Britishers.

To sum up, Samad's cultural identity of a Bengali Muslim is contested after his migration to London where he experiences acculturation process. For some time being, he becomes an Englishman rejecting his cultural values and adapting the British one. However, it is because of his strong cultural identity, he once again returns to his own culture shedding the British culture.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* explores the immigrants' experience in the United States through the story of its protagonist Ifemelu who leaves Nigeria to study at Philadelphia. Like Samad's, her Nigerian identity is contested in American society and she becomes what the title of the novel reads out, "Americanah"- someone who follows American culture and thus has been Americanized. The term 'Americanah' in that sense refers to Ifemelu's transfiguration following her cultural encounter with the American society. However, she returns to

her Nigerian cultural identity and despite her name and fame in America, she finally returns home to Nigeria.

Ifemelu's migration to America gives her another picture of America which is different from what she has painted in her mind. She arrives in America in the summer that is sweltering with heat. Her idealized picture of 'overseas' America "as a cold place of wool coats and snow" (103) starts putrefying no sooner she lands at the airport. She finds it no longer "the landscape of her imagination" (104) which she has constructed after watching American movies. The sweltering heat, the urinating boy on the sidewalk, the cockroach in the kitchen of her aunt's apartment and the fact that she has to sleep on the floor indicate the crumbling down of her imagination of "glorious America" (106).

In America, Ifemelu is confused over many things- language, food, socialization process, relationship - to name few among many. She is confused in terms of language. She is unable to understand the difference between 'yoo-joo' and 'oo-joo' in the pronunciation of her aunt's name Uju. Equally confusing is her understanding of American category Hispanic (105). In Nigeria, 'boning' meant 'carrying face' but in America, it means 'to have sex' and 'half-caste' meant 'biracial' in Nigeria but it is regarded as 'a bad word' in America (123). She is forbidden to speak her native language Igbo with her cousin Dike by her aunt Uju with the logic, "two languages will confuse him" (109). Food is important for the immigrants as food functions as a medium for them to temporarily recreate culture in the new host society but in the case of Ifemelu, food looks confusing. For her both 'hot dog' and 'a sausage' are same. She has to depend upon her unfamiliar food the MacDonald's hamburger with the brief tart crunch of pickles, a new taste she likes one day and dislikes the next day.

In the process of adapting American ways of life, Ifemelu undergoes what Berry (2006) calls ‘acculturative stress’. According to Berry, “acculturative stress is a reaction by people in response to life events that are rooted in intercultural contact.” (43). When people belonging to one cultural background come into a contact with different culture, they provide responses in the process of adjusting to new culture. In this regard, Berry and colleagues (1987) state:

The concept of acculturative stress refers to one kind of stress, that in which the stressors are identified as having their source in the process of acculturation; in addition, there is often a particular set of stress behaviors which occur during acculturation, such as lowered mental health status (specifically confusion, anxiety, depression), feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level, and identity confusion. (492)

Ifemelu’s confusion in that sense can be likened with acculturative stress. Apart from language and food, she is equally confused about the socialization process and relationship in new cultural location. In Nigeria, party meant ‘gathering and dancing’ but she is baffled by America’s meaning "to party was to stand round and drink" (129). In America she does not know when to laugh, what to laugh about. Coming from the cultural heritage which focused on the value of family, Ifemelu finds her aunt Uju a complete stranger. Uju is completely changed that Ifemelu concludes America has subdued her.

What does acculturative stress entail? It entails negative affectivity (Beiser, Johnson, & Turner, 1993; Berry, 2006; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Specifically, it involves bad moods and anxiety, due to uncertainty about how one should lead their daily lives in the new society. It also involves heightened levels of

depression. Ifemelu's anxiety is the product of unemployment and financial insecurity. She applies for all the jobs such as waitress, hostess, bartender, cashier and waits for the job offer that never comes, and for this she blames herself. It has to be that she is not doing something right and yet she does not know what it might be. In the beginning of her life in America, Ifemelu is hopeful that she would get the job but as time passes, her hope fades away as she does not get a job offer.

Despite her several attempts to get a job, Ifemelu becomes a failure. She even reads the books on interviews tips and follows the tips during interviews and she also works on her accent but she does not get the job. The anxiety caused by her economic crisis leads her to such depression that she accepts the 'help to relax' job of a tennis coach understanding the implication of sexuality behind the offer.

In her adjustment into the American society, she sleeps with the coach for one-hundred-dollar note! This experience is so embarrassing for her that she begins to experience self-hatred:

Back in her apartment, she washed her hands with water so hot that it scalded her fingers, and a small soft welt flowered on her thumb. She took off all her clothes and squashed them into a rumped ball that she threw at a corner, staring at for a while. She would never again wear those clothes, never even touch them. She sat on naked on her bed and looked at her life, in this tiny room with the mouldy carpet, the hundred-dollar bill on the table, her body rising with loathing. (154)

This embarrassing experience causes depression in Ifemelu that even her friend notices in her appearance and remarks "I think you are suffering from depression" (157). She wakes up each morning sad and frightened. She is "swallowed, lost in a viscous haze, shrouded in a soup of nothingness" (156). She cares about nothing. She

finds everywhere “an utter hopelessness”. She does not see any point in living but has no energy to think concretely of how she can kill herself. The state of depression makes her forget to eat food. She longer goes to class and her days are stilled by silence and snow (156). Acculturative stress causes ifemelu’s loneliness due to the relative lack of social networks and support systems.

Ifemelu deals with the acculturative stress along with her adaptation in American society. She finally gets a job as a babysitter of the two children of Kimberly, a rich white woman. She is hungry to understand everything about America. She starts supporting a team at the Super Bowl. She understands the meaning of Twinkie and luckouts. She orders a “muffin” without thinking that it is a cake. She begins learning American norms, values and culture.

To understand America better, she reads American books, novels, histories and biographies and as she reads, “America’s mythologies began to take on meaning, America’s tribalisms – race, ideology, and region – became clear. And she was consoled by her new knowledge” (136). Ifemelu who previously was uncertain over the use of the term ‘excited’ as she found it being overused in America, herself starts using the word. Although she is still Nigerian, American words begin to fall out of her mouth.

Language is one of the major factors indicating Ifemelu’s assimilation process. Khaled Hossaina in his article “And the Mountains Echoed”, elaborates the concept of language and states that it is the “key into the front door of culture” (4). When Ifemelu first registers for classes, a white girl named Cristiana Tomas sitting at the registration table talks to her very slowly which makes Ifemelu think that Christina has a speech defect until Ifemelu realizes that it is because of her own foreign accent: Cristiana doesn’t think she knows English. Ifemelu “shrinks” in this moment of shame

and condescension, and after that she starts practicing an American accent. She is successful in doing so after careful watching of friends and newscasters, the blurring of the *t*, the creamy roll of the *r*, the sentence starting with “So”, and the sliding response of “Oh really”. She practices the accent with consciousness. So in her case, it is an act of will. It is with the effort of the twisting of lip and the curling of tongue, she is able to speak in American accent.

Apart from language, hair also reflects Ifemelu’s attempt to follow American culture. It is after having been rejected several times with her braided hair in the interviews, one of her friends suggests Ifemelu to lose the braids and straighten her hair. In America, black hair in its natural form is disliked and racialized. The racialization of black hair has its origin in the times of slavery during which the slaves with the ‘nappy’ and ‘bad hair’ were deemed to work on the fields, whereas those with a softer hair texture, seemingly closer to the ‘white ideal of beauty’, were privileged and worked as house slaves, attained access to education and health care (Byrd and Tharps 18). Considering straight hair as ‘new adventure’, Ifemelu applies creamy relaxer on her hair and is delighted when the hairdresser remarks: “Look how pretty it is. Wow, girl, you’ve got the white-girl swing!” (203). Ifemelu’s image as an Americanah is evident in her reply to her boyfriend Curt who wants her to continue with her natural hair:

My full and cool hair would work if I were interviewing to be a backup singer in a jazz, but I need to look professional, and professional means straight is best but if it’s going to be curly then it has to be the white kind of curly, loose curls or, at worst, spiral curls but never kinky. (204)

It is true that Ifemelu has to struggle with her identity in America and she first deals with this by following American culture- taking on an American accent and straightening her hair- seemingly giving in to a new identity as American. But the assimilation process is problematized by her experience of racism in America. In this regard she says: “I came from a country where race was not an issue. I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America” (290). She begins to understand what being black means in America: her blackness is not biological, but rather a socially constructed aspect that taints her identity with ugliness, exoticism, and difference.

Ifemelu also comes to realize that dominant white American society categorizes all blacks as one group based solely on phenotypical likeness. The experience of racism turns Ifemelu to blog-writing called *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black* in which she scrutinizes the issues of race. This turning to blog also symbolizes her turning away from American culture. In her blogs, Ifemelu appears not as an American but as a Non-American Black. In one of the blog entitled “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America You are Black, Baby”, she writes: “Dear Non-American Black, when you make up the come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I’m Jamaican or I’m Ghanain. America doesn’t care. So what if you weren’t black in your country? You’re in America now” (220). As an African, Ifemelu has never thought of herself as a black. In *The Negro and Psychopathology*, Frantz Fanon explains this issue in the following way:

The Negro lives in Africa, subjectively, intellectually . . . conducts himself like a white man. But he is a Negro. That he will learn once he goes to Europe; he hears Negroes mentioned he will recognize that the

word includes himself as well . . . As long as he remains among his own people, the little black fellows, he [is] very nearly the course as the little white. But if he goes to Europe, he will have to reappraise his lot. (465)

Ifemelu regards race as one of the kinds of American tribalism. She finds America still enjoying the marvelous rhyme: “if you’re white, you’re all right; if you’re brown, stick around; if you’re black, get back!” (184). In the ladder of racial hierarchy in America, she finds white always on top, specifically White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) and American Black always on the bottom and what is in the middle depends on time and space. In her blogs, Ifemelu often writes on the issue of race in America. She considers race not as biology but as sociology. She thinks that race is not genotype but it is phenotype.

Adichie’s perspective on racism connects with Ian F. Haney Lopez who believes that race is “a social meaning [that] connects our faces to our souls. Race is neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the macro effects of daily decisions” (466). In American society, black women are supposed to be “STRONG” and “SCARY” and black men to be “hyper-mellow”. Similarly, blacks are supposed to be offended by “racist slur”. Blacks near the crime spot are always suspected as criminals and the whole black community is accused when a crime is committed by a black individual.

The experience of racism in America turns Ifemelu towards her Nigerian cultural identity. After developing mastery over English accent, she finally decides to drop it. In her phone call with a telemarketer, she is complimented “Wow. Cool. You sound totally American” (175) and in response she thanks him for the compliment.

Suddenly she feels shame as American accent can't be an accomplishment. It is after hanging up the call, she feels the stain of a burgeoning shame spreading all over her, for thanking him as she was delighted for his words "You sound American". She questions herself how the American accent becomes an accomplishment.

Ifemelu first adopts a fake American accent, but soon she realizes that this process would lead to eroding her African identity, so she decides to drop her fake American accent and retain her West African English. She not only resolves to stop faking the American accent but also decides to stick to her braided hair. In fact, she uses the strategy of separation of acculturation in the later part of her life in America. Berry defines separation strategy as a situation "when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others" (705). Ifemelu's preference of West African English to American accent implies her preference to her original culture. It is because of the love for own culture, she prefers braided hair to straight hair.

Despite her economic, social, and emotional successes, Ifemelu feels that she is unfortunately unrooted in America. After thirteen years, she finally graduates, obtains a green card, writes a financially well paid and profitable blog about race, holds a high-status Princeton fellowship, buys a stylish condo, befriends many academic and artistic associates, and dates a handsome Yale professor. And yet she feels a heavy burden "cement" in her soul. She experiences fatigue, a bleakness, and borderlessness. She is frequently hunted by piercing homesickness. She discovers that she is unhappy in America as America is never a root or a home. Because of her dissatisfaction in and alienation from a country that debases and violates African soul and identity, she decides to return to her country. Living in America as a foreigner, she is longing for home and her culture.

Ifemelu's return to Africa symbolizes her return to Nigerian identity and highlights the significance of reclaiming African heritage and consciousness. To Ifemelu, "Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil" (6). In contrast to restlessness that she felt in America, Ifemelu feels peace in her reunion with her root and country. Finally, after arriving in Nigeria, she states that "she was at peace: to be, home, to be writing her blog, to have discovered Lagos again. She had, finally, spun herself fully into being" (475). It is after reaching Nigeria, Ifemelu experiences happiness and peace. A return to original culture makes her aware of her existence and being.

To sum up, Ifemelu the Nigerian youth, initially becomes an Americanah in America following the American culture. The experience of racism in America makes her turn to her own culture. As she is strongly connected to her own Nigerian culture, she takes a decision to return to her country despite her name and fame in America. Her return to Africa implies her return to her root culture.

## **ii. The Second Generation Immigrants: Living in In-Betweenness**

The second generation immigrants refer to the children of the first generation immigrants. They are the people born in the country where their parents had migrated. In *White Teeth*, Millat born and brought up in England, is the son of Samad and in *Americanah*, Dike brought up in America in America, is the son of Uju. While the first generation immigrants have strong bondage with their home country and culture, the second generation immigrants lack it as they are born and brought up in different cultural locations. While they first generation immigrants frequently return to their cultural identity, the second immigrant generations in the lack of connection with cultural root, they share the state of in-betweenness.

Millat the son of Samad and Alsana in *White Teeth*, is born and brought up in London and is highly influenced by British culture. His identity as an Englishman is evident in terms of his love for popular culture. When the music teacher Poppy Burt-Jones asks him about his favorite music expecting to hear ethnic songs or singers from the east, Millat replies Bruce Springsteen and Michael Jackson as his favorite singers. The teacher expects to listen some cultural music but he is so influenced by popular culture that he can't think beyond the songs of Michael Jackson and Bruce Springsteen.

Millat does not wish to maintain his cultural identity and seek daily interaction with British culture. In this process of assimilation, he has completely forgotten his original culture. The influence of British culture is also evident in his manner of clothing. He chooses his own dress and makes his mother to buy "red stripe Nike, Osh-Kosh Begosh and strange jumpers that had patterns on the inside and the out" (134). Millat's preference for multinational corporation's clothing popular among the British youth reflects what Berry (2005) calls 'assimilation acculturation strategy' (705). In this mode of acculturation strategy, people disregard their culture and follow the culture of others. Millat rejects his heritage culture and becomes absorbed into the dominant society.

Millat's is highly influenced by Hollywood gangster movies that construct his identity as a 'tough guy'. He is a big fan of gangster movies and likes to re-enact them in his own life. He likes to be called "the BIGGEST and BADDEST, the DON, the BUSINESS, the DOG'S GENITALIA, a street boy, a leader of tribes" (218). He is the shining light and the role model of the teenage community. He smokes and drinks in Hollywood movies style. Like in gangster movies, he loves trouble.

Although Millat is born in Muslim family, he doesn't follow Islamic culture because of the influence of British culture. He farts in mosque, chases blondes and smells of tobacco (218). Islam prohibits sex before marriage but he gets the first experience of sex at the age of thirteen: "he even lost it – IT ! – aged thirteen and a half. OK, so he didn't FEEL much or TOUCH much, it was MOIST and CONFUSING, he lost IT without even knowing where IT went, but he lost it" (218). There are two types of sins in Islamic laws: forgivable known as *Sagheer* and unforgivable known as *Kabeer* and the sex before marriage comes under the category of *Kabeer* and it's *haram*. Millat does what Quran has prohibited.

Millat's identity as an Englishman due to his assimilation into British culture is problematized along with the experience of racial discrimination. He has a realization that he is always 'a Paki' in the eyes of British society no matter what he does. He is always an outsider and has no identity and future in England. His bitter experience of discrimination in England is captured by the following extract:

He, Millat, was a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelt of curry; had no sexual identity; took other's people's jobs; or had no job and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his relatives; that he could be a dentist or a shop-owner or a curry-shifter, but not a footballer or a film-maker, that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep; that he worshipped elephants and wore turbans; that on one who looked like Millat, or spoke like Millat, or felt like Millat, was ever on the news unless they had recently been murdered. In short, he knew he had no face in this country, no voice in the country. (234)

The experience of discrimination makes Millat join the group Raggastani, a culturally diverse group consisting mainly of non-British youngster. It celebrates cultural diversity and wants it to be acknowledged in the British society. Millat becomes a leader of the Raggastani. Raggastanis speak a strange mix of Jamaican patois, Bengali, Gujarati and English. They had faith on Allah as well on Kung Fu and Bruce Lee. Its mission is to celebrate the cultural diversity as it wants to “put the Invincible back in Indian, the Bad-aaaass back in Bengali, the P-Funk back in Pakistani (232). Millat and his company look like trouble. The group consists of the Indian, Bengali and Pakistani youths who have experienced their marginalized position in English society.

In the process of acculturation, Millat chooses the option of separation acculturation strategy. Berry (1997) defines it as “When there is little possibility of interest in heritage cultural maintenance and little interest in having relation with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) then marginalization is defined” (705). Millat’s reluctance to pursue assimilation has a direct link with the discrimination he experiences in British society. Those whose physical features set them apart from the society of settlement may experience prejudices and discrimination, and thus be reluctant to pursue assimilation (Berry et al. 1989). Millat is a Paki in the eyes of British society no matter what he does. He finds himself being considered as an outsider by the British society. Therefore, he is no longer interested to pursue assimilation.

Millat finally joins an Islamic fundamentalist group, Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation (KEVIN). KEVIN is a militant anti-western organization claiming Quranic roots. Samad has a strong objection against Millat’s involvement in KEVIN. He wants him to be a Muslim but he turns out to be a

fundamentalist. KEVIN demands a rejection of western culture and maintenance of life according to the teachings of Quran. There are four main criteria set by KEVIN:

1. To be ascetic in one's habits (cut down on the booze, the spliff, the women).
2. To remember always the glory of Muhammad (peace be upon Him!) and the might of the creator.
3. To grasp as full intellectual understanding of KEVIN and the Quran.
4. To purge oneself of the taint of the West. (444)

In the first three areas, Millat does well but he has problem fulfilling the number four, purging oneself of the West. He can't get rid of the western values as evident in his love for gangster movies. He is ready to give up smoke and woman but can't give up his love for gangster movies. It is his most shameful secret that whenever he opens a door – a car door, a car boot, the door of KEVIN's meeting hall or the door of his own house – the opening of GoodFellas runs through his head and he finds himself repeating the sentence “**As far as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster**” (446). That means the gangster movies have become an inseparable aspect of his life. It is to get rid of the British culture, he joins KEVIN but he finds himself being preoccupied with British culture.

Despite joining KEVIN, Millat is still under the influence of Western culture no matter how hard he tries. He still smokes cannabis, and still dates white women. He tries to subdue his love for western entertainment but unable to do so. After joining KEVIN, he makes a parody of his earlier aim: “**As far as I can remember, I always wanted to be a Muslim**” (446). Who is Millat then? An Englishman? A Muslim? Or none of them?

In fact, Millat has become a hybrid man. He is neither an Englishman nor a Muslim. In hybridity, the old identity does not disappear easily although the new cultural identity strongly influences it. Homi K. Bhabha, a prominent critic on hybridity, views hybridity as a type of a “Third Space” in his book *The Location of culture* (1994). According to Bhabha (1994), hybridity concept occurs as the ambiguity of identity that brings a person in a position of ‘in-between’. When Bhabha gives his broader definition on hybridity, he refers to the in-between stage where immigrants are. This in-between stage, in its most basic sense, is what is meant by the term liminality – immigrants live in between two cultures, and their identities are in the middle of a forming process. In Bhabha’s words:

The stairwell as a liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (5)

Millat at KEVIN lives in two cultures simultaneously: “he stood schizophrenic, one foot in Bengal and one in Willesden” (219). Millat hybridity is best reflected when Smith remarks: “Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali; he lived for the in between, he lived up to his middle name, Zulfikar, the clashing of two swords” (351). In this stage of liminality, he still smokes, drinks, dates white women, admires gangster movies on the one hand

and follows Islamic duty, prays five times a day without fail on the other hand. He has become a hybrid man.

On the contrary, in the novel *Americanah*, Dike, the cousin of Ifemelu and the son of Uju, is brought up in America. As a second generation migrant, he considers his mother's home as his home country. His adaptation of American culture since his childhood makes him an American as he grows up, he experiences racial discrimination in America and realizes his 'otherness' in American society. He even attempts suicide being unable to cope up with the acculturation stress. Finally, a connection to Nigerian culture brings him solace.

Dike's adaptation of American culture is evident in terms of his language as he grows up with "seamless American accent" (105). His ability to distinguish between 'a hot dog' and 'sausage' and the knowledge to prepare the hot dog in water shows his understanding of American culture. He grows up listening to the American accent. Even his mother Uju talks to him in American accent as suggested by her command in nasal sliding accent "Dike, put it back" (*pooh-reet-back*) at the grocery store. She prevents the use of Igbo language in communication with Dike considering "two languages will confuse him" (109). She wants him to grow up not like a Nigerian but like an American. Therefore, she tries her best to avoid speaking her native language Igbo with Dike as it might hinder his growth as an American.

Though his mother is from Nigeria, Dike has no access to Nigerian culture as evident in his ignorance of Igbo language and dislike for Nigerian food. Eating banana with peanuts is a popular food item in Nigeria and when he is offered the same food item by Ifemely, he strongly denies it stating "I don't think I like Nigeria, Coz" (113). Dike's identity as an American is captured in the way he talks to his friends: "With them, Dike changed; he took on a swagger in his voice and in his gait, his

shoulders squared, as though in a high gear performance, and sprinkled his speech with “ain’t” and “y’all” (332). Since he has grown up listening to American accent, he has developed a mastery over it and speaks like an American in front of his American friends.

Despite his attempt of assimilation into American culture, Dike becomes a failure. The lack of ethnic community and the experience of racial discrimination are the major causes behind his unsuccessful acculturation in America. Dike’s mother Uju has no time to look after the son due the work-pressure to sustain in America and she leaves Dike under the care of a Hispanic babysitter. She can’t provide him an ethnic community with role models to teach him about his cultural heritage. She tries her best to make him grow not as a Nigerian but as an American, talking to him in American accent, preventing the use of Igbo and placing her son in the school where he is the only black child in the class. The lack of ethnic community is also evident in the residence of Uju in Massachusetts. The place is intentionally chosen by Uju as it separates them not only from black people but also from the people with the same ethnic background.

The major reason behind unsuccessful acculturation of Dike is the experience of racial discrimination in America. At school, Dike is regarded as aggressive only because he looks different because of his dark-skin. His mother is furious over it and expresses her complain to the principal, “Look at him, just because he looks different, when he does what other little boys do, it becomes aggression” (172). The reply of the principal, “Dike is just like one of us, we don’t see him different as different at all” (172) implies her racial tone towards Dick.

According to Janet T. Awokoyo (2012), in the life of second generations immigrants, next to the family, peers and the school play paramount role in the

identity construction process and the well-being of the child and the teenager. Dike is not African American but at school he is reduced to the holistic ideas of blackness because of his skin color. At summer camp of school, Dike is not given the sunscreen by the group leader on the logic that he does not need it. (183). When all the others are given the sunscreen, he is not only because he is dark. Dick sees his skin separating him from others and it is the beginning of understanding his 'otherness' in American society.

Another particular example of racial discrimination that shapes Dike's identity is the principal's accusation of hacking of computer network against Dick. In reality, Dike is not good at computer and he was with his mother all day on Saturday. Dike is blamed for doing so only because "you have to blame the black kid first" (349). The micro-aggression from the peers also makes Dike realize his otherness. His friends always have an inquiry for him, "Hey, Dick, got some weed?" (349). Dike's frustration is reflected in the given extract:

Later he told her how his friends would say, "Hey, Dike, got some weed?" and how funny it was. He told her about the pastor at church, a white woman, who had said hello to all the other kids but when she came to him, she said, "What's up, bro?" "I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears, like large broccoli sticking out of my head" he said laughing. "So of course it had to be me that hacked into the school network." (349)

Here, Dike is confronted with racial discrimination which assumes criminality perceptions regarding the blacks. In the course of time, he realizes his identity as a black in America. His perception of himself as a black is evident in the text that he sends to Ifemelu after the victory of Barack Obama: "*I can't believe it. My president*

*is black like me*” (360). The lack of ethnic community, the experience of racial discrimination at school and the micro-aggressions from the peers make him realize his blackness in the United States.

Eventually unable to cope up with the experience of racial discrimination, Dike undergoes depression and attempts suicide at the age of fifteen. He takes an overdose of pills and also anti-nausea so that the medicine would stay in his stomach (365-366). Fortunately, he does not succeed. In the understanding of Ifemelu, “His depression is because of his experience” (380). After his suicidal attempt and rescue, Ifemelu invites Dike to come to Nigeria to stay with her for a while.

Dike’s visit to Nigeria provides him an opportunity to understand his cultural heritage and identity. While driving in the street of Nigeria, Dike comes into a contact with his ethnic community for the first time in his life: “Oh my God, Coz, I’ve never seen so many black people in the same place” (420). This cry of happiness gives voice to his relief and fascination of finding a home ultimately, something he has been missing when he was growing in America. In Nigeria, he is surrounded by people who share his skin-colour and speak native language. He also visits his father’s old house. All these experiences help Dike to understand where he comes from and who he is.

Despite his familiarity with Nigerian culture, Dike shares what Bhabha calls the space of liminality- an in-between state. He is living between American culture and Nigerian culture. Living in Nigeria among his own people, he eats both ‘hamburger’, the typical American food and ‘jollof rice and fried plantain’, the typical African dish. His hybridity is reflected in his ability to speak Nigerian language, Igbo. “I wish I spoke Igbo” (424) wishes Dike in English.

### III. Formation of Identity through Acculturation

To come to the conclusion, Smith's *White Teeth* and Adichie's *Americanah* tackle the complexities of the lives of the immigrants in Britain and America respectively. Samad's journey from Bangladesh to Britain and Ifemelu's journey from Nigeria to America bring changes in their identities. As an immigrant person is exposed to receiving culture ideals and interacts with the new social environment, his or her identity is likely to change. In this intercultural contact or acculturation process, immigrants form, revise and maintain their identity. In the case of the first generation immigrants, the cultural identity is contested and in the case of the second generation immigrants, in-betweenness and hybridity is a common experience.

*White Teeth* traces the life of Samad and his son Magid in London. Interacting in the British society, Samad is engaged in both cultural maintenance and contact and participation. On the one hand, he considers his cultural identity to be very important and so he is strived for its maintenance but on the other hand, he is also involved in the contact and participation in other cultural groups. His identity as a Bengali Muslim is contested when he experiences intercultural contact. Despite his attempt to avoid the interaction with the British culture, he cannot stop himself assimilating into British culture. The experience of acculturation process poses a threat to his cultural identity.

Magid undergoes the experience of in-betweenness in London. Born and brought up in London, he views himself not as a Muslim but as an Englishman. The experience of racial discrimination makes him realize his position as an 'other' in London which changes his perception of British culture. Shedding British culture, he wishes to return to the Islamic culture but in the lack of connection with the cultural root, he becomes neither an Englishman nor a Muslim.

*Americanah* explores the immigrants' experience in the United States through the story of its protagonist Ifemelu who leaves Nigeria to study at Philadelphia. Her Nigerian identity is contested in American society and she becomes what the title of the novel reads out, "Americanah"- someone who follows American culture and thus has been Americanized. It is after the experience of racism in America, she returns to her Nigerian cultural identity and finally after thirteen years in America, she returns to her own homeland Nigeria. Ifemelu's return to Africa symbolizes her return to Nigerian identity and highlights the significance of reclaiming African heritage and consciousness.

Dike, brought up in America, becomes a failure in his attempt of assimilation into American culture. The lack of ethnic community and the experience of racial discrimination are the major causes behind his unsuccessful acculturation in America. In the lack of a connection with cultural root, he suffers from depression. Dike's visit to Nigeria provides him an opportunity to understand his cultural heritage and identity.

To sum up, while the first generation immigrants have strong bondage with their home country and culture, the second generation immigrants lack it as they are born and brought up in different cultural locations. While they first generation immigrants frequently return to their cultural identity, the second immigrant generations in the lack of connection with cultural root, they share the state of in-betweenness.

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