

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the research

Immigrants experience great challenges including alienation and confusion of their identity. The difficulties in adjusting themselves to the society and discrimination that the immigrants receive from society have resulted in alienation and have invited a conundrum about their identity (Moyano, M. 2019:2). Alienation is related to the feeling of being isolated, separated, and disconnected from the values, norms, and social relations of certain groups of people (Crossman, A. 2019). When a person experiences alienation, they feel powerless as they find the difficult to adjust and adapt to the new situation that they encounter in their life. As a socialist, Seeman, (1959) introduces the definition of social alienation. Seeman views that an individual who experiences alienation has the proclivity to feel powerless, meaningless, normlessness, isolated, culturally - estrangement, and self – estrangement (Seeman, 1959:40).

His statement illustrates the concepts of alienation that can be attested when someone undergoes the situation of having a lack of power, this means alienation makes people question themselves and their position in society because they do not feel powerful, being isolated, and separated when they interact with other people. Therefore, they find it intricate to blend with other people. A conundrum regarding their worth and value in their environment often makes them dubious about themselves, especially their identity. According to Jean, Kim. (1981), one of the stages of Japanese-American identity development is alienation. As they interact with their white peers, they start to feel different from other Japanese people. However, they also experience alienation because they look different from their other white

peers. As a result, their identity is confusing because they could not decide where they belong.

This illustrates how alienation is one of the things that becomes the arduous phase in the development of an identity. Identity is a complex concept that can be seen as a representation of an individual. It is not static but rather formed by the cultural condition and the society that surrounds an individual (Lamont, M. 2001). That means, an individual's identity is intricately related to their cultural and structural surroundings, that assist in shaping their experiences and interactions with the world around them. Godfrey, P.C (1998) states how identity is often associated with affection and emotion. Godfrey quotes the protestation of Dave Whetten in a talk at 1997 Academy Management meeting who proposed the analogy of identity with onion. Identity is parallel to an onion as it has a multi-layer. The layer discussed is linked with Godfrey's definition of identity as something that has been affected. Various things may influence identity, including the environment, social construction, and many more. It is attested, that the alienation dovetails with the issue of identity as reflected in the experience of the immigrants.

The immigrants often experience culture shock, adaptation, and confusion when they move to the host country. Host country means the country that becomes their destination to move. There are many reasons why immigrants decide to move to their host country. Many individuals are eager to invigorate their careers, altering their quality of life, and finding more comfortable ambiance in new places. Japanese immigrants, they leave Japan to become the labours in America to earn more money there. This phenomenon becomes proof of the increasing number of Japanese immigrants that has happened since 1885. However, the Japanese immigrant deliberately associates with the narrative "wormed their way into every farming industry." The media in America creates this narrative to depict the image of how the Japanese have a penchant for entering America's market (Ueda, 2020).

This could happen because the Japanese worker agrees with the low wages that would affect the American worker's conditions. Thus, the Japanese immigrants encountered animosity and aberration when they moved to America. The alienation and exploration of the identity of Japanese immigrants do not only occur when they move to America. But, it can also occur when they revert to where they come from. This phenomenon is also known as "reverse culture shock". It can happen when someone spends more time in their host country rather than their home country. Thus, the home country does not feel like it used to be. The home country becomes different from when it is left and different from what is expected.

The issue of alienation and identity also can be seen in the literary works. For example, the novel written by Elaine Castillo with the title, *America is Not the Heart* that is published in 2019, shares the story of Hero De Vera, a Filipino woman who migrated to California, America. Hero tries to get a better life in America as she escapes from her traumatic life in the Philippines and her communist rebellion. Her issue of identity occurs as she has mingled with the locals. She starts to question her background as a Filipino because she is influenced by her American life. In addition, Charles Yu (2020) writes a novel with the title, *Interior Chinatown*, explores the story of an Asian - American actor named Willis Wu. Willis always gets the role of a generic Asian man, like a "kung fu guy". He then sees his family who also has the same experience as him. His dad used to play the role as a kung fu master in a movie. His mom used to play a role as an Asian seductress in a movie. Willis wants his identity on the screen can be developed and go beyond the "Asian man" in the white community. Willis has the desire that he can let go of the stereotypical role of Asian man that he always gets offers.

Moreover, the experience of Japanese - American can also be seen in the literary works. To illustrate, Uchida (1970) in her novel, "Journey to Topaz: A Story of the Japanese-American Evacuation" shares the experience of the Japanese being taken in a concentration camp in Utah during World War II.

Uchida tells the story of a 11-year-old Yuki whose father is arrested by the FBI forces their family to be sent to the concentration camp. Yuki should adjust a new chapter in life with the shared bathrooms, shift - school, and mess hall. Uchida describes how miserable someone's life is in the concentration camp. In contrast, Yuki finds her life at best because she builds her friendship with a friend named Emiko. Then, Traci Chee (2020) writes *We are Not Free*, that follows the story of a group of Japanese - American, the second generation (nisei) encountering loathing, racism, and injustice because of the US mass arrests them at the concentration camp. The group of friends share their experience of being "not free" due to their life in the camp, however, they manage to build beautiful friendships as they feel connected and united as the second generation of Japanese - American people (nisei).

Similarly, the author selects the novel, *A Tale for the Time Being* also discusses the Japanese-American experience that regurgitates the alienation and identity of the Japanese immigrants. Published in 2013, *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki is a novel that explores Nao's life that is revealed through her diary. A fictional character named Ruth finds Nao's diary on a seashore in British Columbia. Ruth opens the diary and gets invested in Nao's story. The diary includes the story of how Nao feels alienated when she gets back to Japan. Nao finds it difficult to adjust to Japanese culture as she has spent more of her time in America. Nao wants to end her life as she receives mistreatment from her friends in school. She just wants to give up by seeing her surroundings who also seem helpless. It is the father who she finds lying about trying to get a job to provide for the family.

Nao realizes that her father is also as helpless as her. However, she finds her way back to enjoy life with gusto as she is inspired by her Buddhist great-grandmother. Jiko regurgitates many things about life to Nao. This includes how to be a good human, survive in life, and Japanese culture. Jiko assists Nao to have different perspectives about life and enrich her knowledge about Japanese culture.

Then, Nao finally finds her spark and passion in life. That nudges her to write a diary and contribute it to her great - grandmother, Jiko. On the other side, Ruth, the one who is fascinated to follow Nao's story from the diary that she found, is also assisted to get through her grief from her mother's death through Nao's story.

The novel has attracted people to read and review it. As an example, Downer (2013), an author and a journalist whose a passion for Japan, shares her thoughts on this novel. Downer views that the elements of Nao's story in this novel are mostly the most familiar images of Western Japan, such as unemployed suicidal "salarymen", school girl bullying, and kamikaze pilots, which become the amusing and painful parts portrayed in the novel. Then, this novel confides Nao's story through her diary written with purple ink and a red cover. She pours about her experiences, such as having a crummy time in school, being bullied by her classmates, moments with her lovable 104-year-old great-grandmother, her malaise about her father's job, and her plan to kill herself (Schwazarbaum, 2013). This novel is favoured by many people, attested from the nominations that this masterpiece has conquered, such as *Yasnaya Polyana Literary Award for Foreign Literature*, from *The Leo Tolstoy Museum and Estate*, *Dos Passos Prize*, *International IMPAC Dublin Award*, *Medici Book Club Prize*, and many more.

The author finds this novel intriguing since it talks about the struggle of immigrants when they move back to their home country. It is important to realize that the feeling of alienation also occurs when they revert to where they come from. The

issue of immigrants could lead to the discussion of culture and identity. The resistance that the immigrant has to do with the alteration of culture and identity exploration in their life is reflected in the novel. Thus, the author would like to analyse how the alienation and identity exploration occurred in Japanese – American’s experience by explaining the causes of alienation and how the characters overcome the issue of alienation and identity.

## 1.2 Identification of The Problem

*A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki is known for its exploration about the main character’s life story who experiences alienation in Japan. The author views that the issue of Japanese-Americans' oppression and identity confusion could also happen even if the immigrants revert to their home country, Japan.

The author applies the theory of hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha to explore the causes of alienation that occurred to the characters in the novel and invigorate the characters’ way to overcome their alienation and identity confusion by reconciling with their Japanese background. Moreover, the author uses the theory of alienation by Melvin Seeman, the author explores the issue of alienation that occurs in the main character in the novel.

To bolster the analysis of alienation, the author connects the discussion about identity because alienation occurs when a person feels like an “alien” as they try to adapt and mingle with the new environment. It is linked with identity as alienation could have an impact on the identity of a person. The author uses the theory of identity by Stuart Hall to explore the identity of the Japanese - American characters in the novel. Then, the problem that the author would like to identify is related to how the author of the novel represents the alienation and identity exploration in the Japanese-Americans experience in Japan.

### 1.3 Review of Related Literature

Several studies have been done to analyze the novel, *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki and the issue of alienation and identity. The first is a thesis by Chusna, A. N (2021) with the title “The Juvenile Delinquency in Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*”, states that this novel contains the issue of delinquency of children.

By applying the theory of juvenile delinquency by Kartono (2010), Turner and Helms (1987), and Rauf (2002), the author focuses on analyzing the various delinquency that is represented in the novel and reveals the factors of delinquency through the sociological perspective. The result shows that there are four types of delinquency that Nao has done, including skipping school, premarital sex, drinking alcohol, and committing violence. The author later adds the reasons why Nao committed to do the juvenile behavior. Six factors become the reasons why Nao does these obnoxious actions, such as Nao's family disharmony, lack of attention and affection, low socioeconomic status, bad peers, and an inadequate environment. Nao grows up in a family environment that is not harmonious that makes her neglected to the point she lacks of attention and affection. In addition, the school environment did not make Nao feel safe because of the bullying she experienced. In addition, the low socioeconomic level of Nao's family made Nao unable to get a proper education and live in a place surrounded by good neighbourhoods. Bearing all those hurdles, Nao tries to get away from the predicaments that she encounters by finding new activities to do. This study is beneficial for the author to give another perspective to analyze the novel.

The second is the thesis by Hilda, A. (2018) with the title “Identity Crisis and Its Formation to A Third Culture Kid As Depicted in Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*”, that analyzes the novel by focusing on the main character, Naoko Yasutani. The author analyses the reason Nao experiences identity crisis and identity formation.

The study shows that Nao who has lived in America becomes more “Americanized” as she moves to Japan. This situation causes her to be marginalized when she moves back to Japan. Nao’s inability to adapt well in Japan makes her friends bully her. The marginalization and the bullying that Nao receives, become the factors she experiences the identity crisis. Then, her moving back to her homeland Japan is the starting point of her imposition to adjust herself to the culture that affects her identity as the third culture kid. This study is useful to help the author improve the understanding of the issue in the novel.

The third is an article by Dimitrijovska-Jankulovska, Anita (2023) with the title “The Sense of Alienation In The New Land: A Pale View of The Hills”, analyses the issue of hybridity and otherness reflected in the main characters of the novel, *A Pale View of The Hills* by Kazuo Ishiguro. By employing the theory of hybridity and third space by Homi K. Bhabha, the author finds that Etsuko is struggling with her identity because of her hybrid condition. She is a Japanese woman who moved to London and resided there. She feels in between because she has the imposition to reconcile her Japanese background with her British identity. Etsuko has lived in Japan and London, and that becomes the reason why she experiences displacement and alienation to both cultures because she does not feel belongs to any culture. Moreover, Etsuko’s daughter, Niki is the reflection of the concept of “third space” by Homi K. Bhabha. She grew up in London, which made her become disconnected with her Japanese roots. The main characters in the novel experience the disconnection from their heritage and hurdles to discovering their sense of belonging because of the mixing cultures that they have been exposed to. The issue presented in this article is relevant to the theme of this thesis, it is to explore the case of alienation resulting from the hybrid condition.

The fourth is the article by Hussein, A.K. et al (2021) with the title “Alienation in Harry Potter”, explore the issue of alienation in Harry Potter by J. K Rowling. The



authors find the theme of alienation in this novel is concerning. The authors use the postcolonial study to reveal the alienation presented in Harry Potter. Postcolonialism often discusses the issue of alienation, marginalization, racism, and discrimination towards the minority that the authors believe is the issue that confided in the novel. The authors employ the theory of alienation by Seeman (1959) to analyze the representations of alienation that can be seen in Harry, the Muggles, and Dobby. The result shows that Harry is alienated because he has no parents. He then gets bullied by Dudley and receives different treatment from Dudley's family.

Then, the alienation also exists in the muggles. The alienated muggles come from the people who have no blood relation with the wizards. The superior group in Harry Potter is the wizards. They believe to be at the top of the hierarchy with their extraordinary superpower. As a result, the muggles are alienated by the wizards, because the wizards despise them for having no power, ability, or talent. Lastly, the authors find Dobby as the alienated character because Dobby technically is a servant or a slave. The slavery presented in the novel shows the element of racism. Dobby's clothes are a sign of slavery. Dobby is often treated as the other and neglected by many characters. The condition of Dobby who has no control of his power contributes to his alienation. The theory that is used by the authors is relevant to this thesis. Therefore, this study is useful to enhance the author's understanding of connecting the theory of alienation with the issue represented in the novel.

The fifth is an article by Guermit Djihat et al (2023) with the title "The Examination of Stuart Hall's Postcolonial Perspective on Displacement and Identity Discontinuity in Fadia Faqir's *The Cry of the Dove* (2007)", investigates the identity development when someone experiences displacement that can be seen in *The Cry of the Dove* by Fadia Faqir.

The authors use Hall's concept of identity that can be found in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (1990). The result shows that Salma, the character of the novel who is an immigrant from Hima, Saudi Arabia decides to reside in England. Hall's concept of identity delves into the connection between displacement and discontinuity to the new place, the authors believe Salma experiences the displacement and discontinuity to her identity that shape her new identity. Salma's geographical displacement occurred when she moved from her home country to England. That makes her experience cultural and psychological displacement as well.

She needs to adjust herself, so she decides to change her name to Sally and alter her personality as an English woman. Salma's displacement contributes to her confusion to her sense of belonging. The authors apply Hall's concept of identity formation to depict Salma's identity formation. Salma's "being" is her identity as an Arabic woman. Through her transformation, she is influenced by the Western values that she receives when she is in England. Then, it alters her identity as an English woman. The study shows there are several influences on Salma's identity, including her cultural background, her present condition of living in England, and her new identity as an English woman. This study is useful to invigorate the author's understanding to employ Hall's concept to analyze the issue of identity in the novel.

The other researchers employ various theories and approaches to analyse the novel. However, the author would like to focus more on exploring alienation and identity in Japanese - American's experience, by discussing the cause of alienation, the representation of alienation and identity exploration, and the ways the characters overcome the alienation and identity confusion that can be seen in Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*.

#### 1.4. Research Questions

The questions for this research will consist of:

1. How does the author present the alienation and identity exploration from the Japanese - American's experience in the novel?
2. How does the character overcome the alienation and identity exploration as Japanese – American in the novel?

#### 1.5 Scope of The Research

This research focuses on delving into the characters' experience, Nao and Ruth, encountering alienation in their home country that nudges them to question their identity. This research contains a discussion about the representation of Japanese-Americans through Nao and Ruth's experiences who fight for alienation and identity exploration. In addition, the author also examines the way the characters overcome the alienation and the issue of identity that is reflected in the novel.

#### 1.6 Objective of The Research

The research is done to reveal the issue regarding alienation and identity exploration in the Japanese-American side. It is common to find the case of the immigrant who experiences alienation in their host country. However, it is intriguing to discuss how alienation could also occur for immigrants when they revert to their home country. In addition, the author would like to highlight the way the characters overcome the alienation and identity confusion that they experience. By using the novel by Ruth Ozeki with the title *A Tale for the Time Being*, this research has the purpose to give insight of the Japanese - American' experience of encountering alienation and identity exploration in their home country, Japan.