

**CELAYA REYES' MEXICAN LEGACY AND
HER AMERICAN EXISTENCE :
THE PROCESS OF SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY
IN SANDRA CISNEROS' CAMELO**

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**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LETTERS
AIRLANGGA UNIVERSITY**

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UNIVERSITAS AIRLANGGA
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**CELAYA REYES' MEXICAN LEGACY AND
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THE PROCESS OF SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY
IN SANDRA CISNEROS' *CARAMELO***

**Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Sarjana Degree of English Department Faculty of Letters
Airlangga University Surabaya**

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ABSTRACT

As the closest southern neighbor, Mexico is one of the largest contributors of immigrants to the United States of America. Despite the new surroundings, the Mexican immigrants unavoidably continue to transmit their original culture to their children. However, their American-born children may or may not favor this cultural transmission. Some choose to be assimilated to the dominant culture or to stay as a separated ethnic group, while the others prefer the road of biculturalism.

The process that leads to the decisions above often starts during the years of adolescence that are highlighted with the search of identity. The search is signified with the urge to feel unique as well as to be accepted as individual and societal entity. A girl in her coming of age, Celaya is also one of the second generations of Mexican immigrant. As a consequent, there are several explorations that Celaya has to go through in her identity search. One is finding the meaning of ethnicity for herself. However, the exploration makes Celaya realize that there are two seemingly opposite sides in her. Her next effort involves finding an agreement between her Mexican legacy and her American future.

The focus of this analysis is aimed at the process of searching for identity in Celaya Reyes. The writer chooses to use personality theories in psychology to support the analysis of the intrinsic elements, specifically the main character.

Finally, the writer discovers that as a member of an ethnic group, Celaya must undergo a process called ethnic identity search. The process sometimes does lead to confusion. There seems to be a pressure to choose between the dominant culture and the heritage culture. But once this particular process is resolved, the

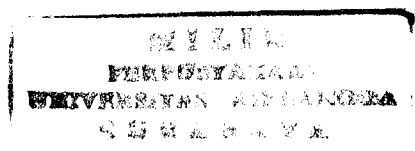
rest of Celaya's explorations become easier. Since self-concept is involved in the process, there is a great chance for Celaya's personality to develop.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

“Each and every person connected to me, and me connected to them like the strands of *rebozo*,” is Celaya “Lala” Reyes’ comment about herself –the narrator in *Caramelo* written by Sandra Cisneros. Celaya described herself in her own terms and metaphor about her new discovery of a life philosophy. The adolescent girl, Celaya, had grown wiser in facing the issue of her time. As it is commonly known, the biggest challenge of a girl in Celaya’s age is the identity crisis. What least known is the fact that adolescents are capable of constructing an existential status at some point during the crisis. According to Erik Erikson: “adolescents seek the meaning to their life as well as the meaning of life in general, much like an existential philosopher” (Santrock, 1997). Celaya had made it to that point, and the process on how she got there becomes interesting to analyze.

In *Caramelo*, Celaya Reyes appears as an appealing character and narrator. She presents a unique and original style of storytelling. The American-born Celaya Reyes became an American citizen by birth. But as she reached puberty, things started to change; Celaya could not simply be an American. The stability of her identity was shattered. Celaya stumbled upon the awkward moments of a teenager, moments in which the identity crisis was introduced. She was then opened to many possibilities of identity.



become so awful and proud. The famous *rebozo* mentioned in the first paragraph, acted as the passage to the past. *Rebozo* is a silk shawl traditionally made and worn by Mexican women. An unfinished shawl called *caramelo rebozo*, had been passed from one generation of Reyes to another. It was the story behind the unfinished shawl that brought Celaya further in the history of the Reyeses. Apparently, there is something influential about the *rebozo*, both lives of the Awful Grandmother and Celaya were completely changed after receiving the shawl. The writer believes that the *rebozo* stands as the spirit of Mexican culture; it is able to represent strong sense of family, pride, as well as one's devotion to one's mother and many other values that Mexican people share. The *rebozo* seemed to inspire both characters to do the "Mexican ways". For Awful Grandmother who was a true Mexican, the ways came naturally, but for Celaya, it was a trigger to a dilemma.

Living in two seemingly different worlds, Celaya felt the need to choose. She thought she could only be one, which was never the other. It was entirely up to Celaya to decide whether she wants to be an American or a Mexican, although she could never be free from the influence of the family and the demand of the society. In order for her not to be ostracized by her family and her peers, Celaya's actions must reflect the "quality" of a Reyes as well as a typical American teenager.

The Reyeses were known for their over generalizations on the Mexicans. They were trying to show that the Mexicans abide to certain morality, values, and tradition that they highly praised. The socio-historical background of the Mexican might explain why the Reyeses do what they do. Celaya keenly observed her

family and gathered as much as information she can get about family history. She later used the information as the pointer of her own naïve opinions on the Mexicans. The way the members of her family coped with problems and each other is a model input to the way she will identify herself. Meanwhile, in a wider social surrounding, Celaya was given a label as a low class minority living against poverty, discrimination and prejudice. And so, the more Celaya reflected upon herself, the more she realized the need to accept the both sides of her. The combined knowledge did not only allow Celaya to make the right decision but also to positively develop in personality.

The author of *Caramelo*, Sandra Cisneros is known for her quality novels and poems, many of them are nuanced of her cultural background as a Mexican American woman. She had received many awards including the Lannan Literary Award and the American Book Award and fellowship from the National Endowment for Arts and the MacArthur Foundation. Cisneros took nine years to finish this novel. She intended to write a short story, but as narrative ideas and details were added, the short story became a full novel. Fortunately, the novel extended not only in the number of page but also in quality. *Caramelo* is full of details and lists of food, of furniture, of *fotonovela* (illustrated Mexican novels) that Cisneros adds as cultural references to the novel. These interesting details gave colors to the heavy issues discussed in the novel. As an addition, the novel is presented in two languages; Cisneros employed English in most parts and Mexican Spanish here and there to enrich the cultural atmosphere of the novel.

The complexity of a girl in her coming of age and her search for identity is just one of the many subjects found in *Caramelo*. The role of women,

motherhood, family, one's love for the homeland, and many other weighty issues are presented to capture Mexican-American experience written all over the novel. The integration of these wide issues will lead the writer to a better comprehension of the topic. In the analysis, the readers will understand why the acceptance of the two sides of Celaya becomes a necessity in her personality development.

B. Statement of the Problems

Based on the expositions in the background of the study, the writer has found some appealing points in *Caramelo*. The writer tries to formulate these points into these statements:

1. How does the process of searching for identity affect Celaya's personality?
2. How does Celaya's acceptance of her Mexican legacy and her American existence come about?

C. Objective of the Study

The statement of the problem allows the writer to reach several aims, they are:

1. To explain the effect(s) that the process of searching for identity has on Celaya's personality.
2. To find out the motivation or the inner drive behind Celaya's acceptance of her Mexican legacy and American existence.

D. Significance of the Study

The writer of the thesis expects that this analysis could be useful in understanding the psychological influence of multiculturalism in today's society, especially to the individual involved.

It is also hoped that the readers, especially to whom this study is purposed would gain some insight on how an individual corresponds with culture and society. Finally, the writer hopes that this study could help to accommodate further literary research, especially on the works of Sandra Cisneros as well as other Mexican American novelists.

E. Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on a psychological process, particularly, on Celaya Reyes' personality development, in which she has to settle her duality as a Mexican and an American.

It is necessary to pay attention on the intrinsic elements supporting the psychological process. Characterization helps in determining whether or not Celaya Reyes as the main character analyzed, progresses and particularly influences or being influenced by other characters. The plot helps to give a meeting point to past and present narration. The story that begins somewhere in the middle converge its beginning in the last few chapter where resolutions to many conflicts and mysteries are resolved. The setting, limited to the setting of time and place, gives a hint of the movement of the Reyes family between the borders of United States and Mexico, which help to signify their state of mind at the place and the time being.

The writer of the thesis carries this analysis out using the psychosocial theory and stages by Erik Erikson and Jean S. Phinney.

F. Theoretical Background

The intrinsic approach is useful in determining both effect and motivation behind Celaya's acceptance. This approach brings characterization, plot, and setting into function in the analysis. However, these intrinsic elements are not specifically discussed because they are inseparable with the development analyzed.

Since this study explains about a psychological process, it is only fair that the writer of the thesis also uses psychological approach. Theory of personality by Erik Erikson, a Neo-Freudian, is the basis of this study. Erikson introduced a concept of the Ego that was different to Freud's. In his "Theory of Psychosocial Development", Erikson emphasized the importance of family and culture surrounding to the development of personality, the latter being an area to which Freud gave almost no attention (Worthman 23). The study focuses on the fifth stage, which is adolescence stage from the Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development that Erikson proposed. In analyzing the motivation behind her acceptance, the writer of the thesis employs the three-stage model of identity formation by Jean S. Phinney. Jean Phinney adapted Marcia's status categories to describe what she called the stages of development of ethnic identity in minority adolescents (Krantz 526).

G. Method of the Study

The writer of the thesis finds the library research to be the most suitable method for this study. Data are collected from printed sources, like books of theory, articles, and journals. Internet sources containing the facts about Sandra Cisneros and *Caramelo* are also gathered as supporting information.

The application of descriptive analysis method becomes inevitable in the effort of figuring out the statement of the problem. The method helps the writer of the thesis to unravel the problems by obtaining representative samples from the occurring events, the dialogues and the actions of the characters.

H. Definition of Key Terms

Acceptance : the act of accepting something to be true, including the bond between two seemingly different sides.

Caramelo : the Spanish word for caramel or sweets made out of burnt sugar. It is also the representation of a color effect produced by the burnt sugar.

Ethnic Identity : an active process of decision making and self-evaluation by which people construct their ethnicity.

Ethnicity : the term used to refer to broad groupings of Americans on the basis of both race and culture origin.

Mexican Legacy: Mexican traditions and stories that are being passed on or left behind by the older generation to their predecessors.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The importance of theories and approaches in directing the analysis are obvious. Both theories and approaches provide a scientific base on the study, while leading the way where the study is carried.

In order to meet the objectives of the study, the writer uses both intrinsic and extrinsic approach to discover the effects that the process of searching for identity has on Celaya Reyes' personality and the motivation behind Celaya's acceptance of her Mexican legacy and her American existence.

The intrinsic approach presents a crucial starting point to the study. Before acknowledging the objects beyond a literary work, it is only natural to first recognize the elements within the work. The writer notices several important elements in the work; they are plot, setting, and character. However, the writer significantly analyzes the character, particularly, the main character of the work, without disregarding the other two elements. But in order to maintain the exact objectives of the study, neither of these elements is specifically discussed in the analysis.

Character in literature is an extended verbal representation of a human being –the inner self that determines thought, speech, and behavior (Roberts 64). With the resemblance to human being, how a character evolves in a literary work is most visible to see than the development of other intrinsic elements. Readers of fiction may at time-to-time find themselves comparing or reflecting the characters

in the story to real living persons. There is then a question that arise, how far can we treat the characters in fiction as a real living figure?

In *Writing Themes About Literature*, Edgar V. Roberts states that works that attempt to mirror life –realistic, naturalistic, or slice of life stories –set up the expectation that life is played out within the limits of everyday probability (69). Characters in literature would be true to life when they fit the usual or the normal behavior. However, the limit does not strictly draw a line over the uncommon conditions. Some probable trait can still be taken from those conditions. From these facts, it can be understood that there is a certain distinction between a real living figure and a fictional character. Fictional characters can only be ‘expected’ to come alive. Although the literary characters can never be essentially real, these characters can still be analyzed using existent approaches and theories.

Psychological Approach

The importance of psychological approach in literary study is based on the fact that both psychology and literature focus their object of study on human. In their book, *Theory of Literature*, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren state that when they are speaking about Psychology of Literature, they mean the psychology of the writer, as type and individual, or the study of the creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, or finally, the effects of literature upon its readers (audience psychology) (81). Emphasizing on the third point, the writer of the thesis uses two psychological theories, namely, Theory of Psychosocial Development by Erik Erikson and Stages of Ethnic Identity by Jean S. Phinney.

A. Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Much of the concern in Erikson's theory is on Ego. As a Neo-Freudian, Erikson accepts some of Freud's basic concepts while adding some of his own stress on the concept. Psychology of Ego derives from Freud's idea of a structural model of the mind. In the model, Freud proposed the existence of the id, the ego, and superego. For Freud, the ego is merely intermediary between the id and the superego. The ego never had a real 'control' until Heinz Hartman and other Freudian loyalists came up with a radical finding about the positive functions of the ego. Added with his own interest on the world of anthropology, Erikson became an Ego-Psychologist who strongly emphasized the importance of family and culture.

Another highlight of Erikson's theory is the developmental framework that he presents. Erikson believes that humans will continue to develop throughout their lifetime. Moreover, when Erikson speaks about 'development', he does not mean a homogenous process that keeps repeating itself over and over again. As a psychodynamic theorist, Erikson, like Freud, sees human development as a set of confrontations the individual must cope with (Worthman 23). Erikson sums up all of the set of confrontations into the Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development. Each of the stages functions through what Erikson calls as the epigenetic principle. In his essay on *Personality Theories*, George C. Boree (online) gives a wonderful illustration on this epigenetic principle. Boree pictures the epigenetic principle on human development as similar to the unfolding of rose petals; each petal opens up at a certain time, in a certain order, which nature, through its genetics, has determined. However, what is more important is that each of the

stages is presented with different challenges. If a challenge is resolved favorably, positive personality traits emerge, which in turn make it easier to cope with later challenges. Unfavorable resolution of a challenge, in contrast, leaves a person troubled and possibly in need of psychotherapy (Worthman 23). However, every new stage gives an opportunity to resolve the previous challenges.

The stages in Psychosocial Development are referred by the different challenges or the life crises that each of the stages faces. The first stage, trust vs. mistrust; the second stage, autonomy vs. shame and doubt; the third is initiative vs. guilt; the fourth, industry vs. inferiority; the fifth is identity vs. role confusion; the sixth, intimacy vs. isolation; seventh is generativity vs. stagnation; finally the eighth is integrity vs. despair. Of all the stages mentioned, Erikson is most involved with the fifth stage of the development, identity vs. role confusion, which occurs during adolescence years.

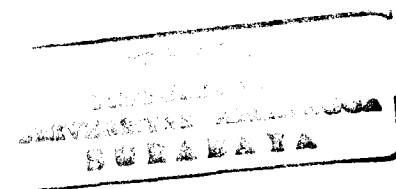
By far the most comprehensive and provocative theory of identity development has been told by Erik Erikson (Santrock 321). The concept of ego needs to be reinstated in the subject. For one reason, Erikson refers his subject as Ego-Identity. Consequently, Erikson makes a clear distinction between self-identity and ego-identity. In his book, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, Erikson explains that “self-identity emerges from experiences in which temporarily confused selves are successfully integrated in an ensemble of roles, which also secure social recognition.” (211). Self-identity can be called Ego-Identity only after it succeeds in displaying an existential quality, particularly with an individual style. Ego-Identity involves not only realizing one’s existence but also realizing the consistency and continuity that the ego maintains by solving the

conflicts that arouse from within or in the midst of its social environment. Identity, in this connection, has a claim to recognition as the adolescent ego's most important accomplishment in that it help simultaneously in the containing of the post pubertal id and in the balancing of the then newly invoked superego as well as appeasing of the often rather lofty ego ideal –all in the light of a foreseeable future structured by an ideological world image (Erikson 211).

The process of identity formation starts after a child sees his mother for the first time, in which both of them make contact and admit each other's existence. But identity formation reaches its definite form during the stage of identity crisis in adolescence. The identity crisis presents adolescents with an opportunity to integrate their childhood experiences with the rapid physical, social-emotional, and cognitive changes in adolescence to prepare for the challenges of adulthood (Krantz 522). Two core ingredients in Erikson's theory of identity development are personality and role experimentation (Santrock 323). Erikson and Waterman state that successful exploration prepares adolescents for commitment, the process of dedicating themselves to goals, roles, values, and beliefs that provide meaning and direction to their lives (Krantz 524)

B. Jean S. Phinney's Stages of Ethnic Identity

For individuals who belong in category of minority group living in predominantly white culture, the issue of finding identity requires another search. Spencer & Markstrom-Adam mention that although the search for identity is a formidable developmental task for virtually every adolescent, the task is considerably more difficult for members of minority groups (Krantz 526). These



minority adolescents is burdened with the task of developing an 'ethnic identity'. While the term identity is used broadly to refer an individual's integrated sense of self, ethnic identity refers more specifically to the degree to which in individual identifies with a particular culture and its tradition (Krantz 526).

In her article, *Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adult: Review of Research*, Jean Phinney realizes that ethnicity is becoming increasingly important topic in psychology. For one reason, she is aware of the changing demographic in the United States and other Western countries. The population of minority group grows significantly over decades. However, the emphasis is not so much placed on the relationship between the majority group members and the minority group members like the way it has been. According to Weinreich, attitudes toward one's ethnicity are central to the psychological functioning of those who live in societies where their group and its culture are at best poorly represented (politically, economically, and in the media) and are at worst discriminated against or even attacked verbally and physically; the concept of ethnic identity provides a way of understanding the need to assert oneself in the face of threats to one identity (Phinney 499).

Phinney believes that there are numbers of stages involved in the development of an ethnic identity. In a recent article examined commonalities across various models and proposed a three-stage progression from an unexamined ethnic identity through a period of exploration to an achieved or committed ethnic identity (Phinney 502). In the earliest stage or the stage of 'unexamined ethnic identity', the minorities may never been exposed to the issue of ethnic identity. Out of not knowing, they would sometimes prefer to be in the

dominant group instead of in their own ethnic group. However, such preference is not a necessary characteristic of this stage (Phinney 502). The key is that of the young person's ethnic self is not arrived at independently but comes from outside sources, much as conventional moral judgments are based on outside authority (Bee 285). Alternatively, they may have absorbed positive ethnic attitudes from parents or other adults and therefore may not show a preference for the majority group, although they have not thought through the issues for themselves –that is, are foreclosed (Phinney 502).

The second stage or the exploration stage involves an actual search for ethnic identity. This search is typically triggered by some experience that makes ethnicity salient –perhaps an example of blatant prejudice or merely the widening experience of high school (Bee 285). It involves an often intense process of immersion in one's own culture through activities such as reading, talking to people, going to ethnic museums, and participating actively in cultural events (Phinney 503).

The result of the exploration is then called ethnic identity achievement. In this last stage, people come to a greater understanding of their ethnicity. Eventually, as the value and importance of having a strong identity become clear, the individual establishes a more coherent sense of personal identity that includes this ethnic identity, and, with growing confidence, he or she attempts to help others deal with their own struggles with ethnic identity (Steinberg 280). However, the meaning of ethnic identity achievement is undoubtedly different for different individuals and groups because of their different historical and personal experiences (Phinney 503).

In her review, Phinney also adds some components that are involved in ethnic identity. These components become the measure of ethnic identity, that is, the components function as the comparative value of one stage and other elevated stage. In studies of the *state* of ethnic identity or a person's identification at a given time, the components most widely studied were self-identification as a group member, a sense of belonging to the group, attitudes about one's group membership, and ethnic involvement (social participation, cultural practices and attitudes) (Phinney 503). Self-identification (also called self-definition or self-labeling) refers to the ethnic label one give to oneself (Phinney 503). The concern in this area is choosing a label for oneself. One may label oneself according to parents' ethnic identification but distinct features of race and culture can also be the determinant of self-identification. Self-identification becomes problematic when it comes to deciding which label to use. In an example given by Buriel, people whose parents or grandparents came from Mexico can call themselves Mexican American, Hispanic, Latino, or Chicano (among others), each of which has a different connotation (Phinney 504).

Sense of belonging is a different thing, it concerns not only on the name or label to have but it appreciates the attachment that one has with a certain ethnic group. Meanwhile, the attitude toward one's ethnic group comprises of two different sides, the positive and the negative attitudes. According to Phinney, the term 'acceptance' is frequently used for positive attitudes, while the negative attitudes include dissatisfaction, displeasure and discontentment with one's ethnicity. The negative could also be shown in the way one tries to hide and conceal their background. Finally, the ethnic involvement sees how the members

of an ethnic group participate in social and cultural scope. The indicators of ethnic involvement that are most commonly assessed are language, friendship, social organizations, religion, cultural traditions, and politics (Phinney 505).

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

Celaya Reyes' experience as an American represents the experiences of many other children who were born in that country with different ethnic backgrounds. The fact shows that the Reyes family originally came from Mexico. The immigration flow drove some of the family members to the United States. These members are indeed faced by a challenge to assimilate into the new culture. Although the force to assimilate is very strong, the immigrant members manage to keep their Mexican identity intact, which could be seen in the language that they speak, the food that they eat, and many other old traditions that they still practice. It seems that the migration could not completely destroy their primary background because they could still feel the strong bond to their homeland. The American-born Celaya searches for the same attachment to a homeland, but she just could not decide where she belongs

Celaya is raised within a family that has a strong Mexican background. However, she is also exposed to many social forces that ensure her enculturation as an American. Being assimilated for Celaya means a completely different thing from what the first generation of immigrants experienced. Faced with the dual reality, Celaya seeks for clarity of who she really is.

Here, Celaya identity search becomes a solution to the dilemma as well as a reassurance of Celaya's position in the future. For Celaya, she needs to bring together her Mexican legacy that has run in the family with her ongoing American future. Celaya's condition resembles a double-sided coin being tested to stand on

its ridged edge. Celaya faces two possibilities; first, the coin may fall flat on one side or the other, or second, the coin may be able to stand and balance both of its sides.

However, the writer of the thesis does not only focus on the process of identity search, which leads to Celaya's acceptance of her dual identity. The writer of the thesis also puts light on the effects that the process of searching for identity has on Celaya's personality and on how she copes with changes and different situations, in which she keeps on progressing. Therefore, before going into Celaya's acceptance of her identity the writer of the thesis would like to center first on the pre-conditions, which consist of Celaya's American existence and Celaya's Mexican legacy. In the novel, these two sides of Celaya are not always written in consequential order; they come interchangeably preceding Celaya's acceptance. Finally, what occurs during her acceptance comes as a contrasting result of the two previous conditions.

A. Celaya's Pre-conditions

1. Celaya's American Existence

The opportunity for Celaya to have an American future is widely opened by the fact that she was born and raised there. Despite the Mexican 'materials' she has in her, Celaya is undeniably 'made in the USA'. Celaya could never really say that she is an American, but the truth shows that the United States of America has become a part of her as it has become the only place that she calls 'home'. However, the future she will have in America is not only determined by

these facts, but it is verified by the attitude, the behavior, and the ideal perception that she obtains from living in the land of the free.

One's real nature is often revealed after one is away from one's place of origin. This statement is true for Celaya; her American nature is discovered after little Celaya left the US for Mexico to visit her grandparents' home. The description of daily life in Mexico that Celaya gave is the first evidence of how her nature comes to surface. Her description went over little details of language, sound, smell, and taste of Mexico, which accentuated the cultural differences. Mexican life is very distinctive and uncommon compared to what Celaya has in the USA.

Another evidence of how Celaya's nature comes about is seen in the way she behaved in her grandparents' home. Awful Grandmother, who is a true Mexican, saw Celaya and her brothers as children who lack discipline and manner. Compared to their Mexican-born cousin, Antonieta Araceli, Celaya and her brothers are more aggressive, curious and fearless. One of their intolerable manners is when Celaya and her brothers secretly broke into a strictly forbidden area, their grandparents' room. They were more than willing to accept this risky 'mission' because they were so drawn by their curiosity.

The two previous paragraphs are able to show how a dominant culture has subconsciously entered a child's mind. Furthermore, significant reactions come forward after another culture steps in and 'interrupts' with the stability that has already been set by the first culture. When Celaya pointed out the details of Mexican life, she did it in a manner that the reader can sense and correspond with her thought of how "uncommon" the Mexican customs are, this shows just how

attached Celaya has been to American customs. It is all about showing the contrast between the two cultures.

Meanwhile, the 'mission' that Celaya and her brothers took also follows the same pattern. On one hand, Antonieta Araceli appears as a perfect grandchild who never shows any dislikes and objections toward Awful Grandmother's rule. Celaya, on the other hand, would always question everything that her grandmother said. "I ask and ask, but the Grandmother won't answer (46)." Actually, it is quite natural for children to want to know a lot, especially in their learning age. In the US, children are encouraged to always ask for explanations. In a way, curiosity becomes a sign that a child is thinking critically. Mexican children are probably as curious as Celaya, but their actions are bound by their parents' rule. Meanwhile, the children in American families are never placed in a subordinate position from their parents; each of them has a rather equal position. Therefore, whenever Celaya and her brothers are positioned in a submissive level, they would immediately react to the injustice because they are aware of their actual position. So the sneak visit to Awful Grandmother's room is considered as compensation for the inequality and at the same time, a release for their anxious curiosity.

However, the displayed actions above are considered as an impulsive move of a child. The actions may seem 'superficial' because sometimes children do not necessarily understand the concept behind the things that they do. Children are drawn to follow the things that they see and experience every day. But once they reach adolescence, they grow from being a naïve 'copycat' to an advanced 'imitator'. Piaget says that they are now able to analyze situations logically in

terms of cause and effect and to entertain hypothetical situations and use symbols, such as in metaphors, imaginatively (Gentry 11). The understanding of consequences of every action elicits their ability to reason.

So, as Celaya comes out of her childhood, she continues to be Americanized. But she has to deal with all sorts of changes that adolescents experience. While some things become less significant, the others become increasingly important for Celaya. The general aspects of adolescent social development are just some of the important things that come in contact with her Americanization.

—But Maaa! Everybody in eighth grade wears a bra except me, some since the fourth grade even. And I start high school this fall. It's disgusting!

—Forget it! I'm not wasting good money on something you don't even need! And quit your moping. You're not changing my mind!
(258)

In the dialogue, we came across Celaya's forceful wish for a pair of bra. She wants the bra not because she needs it, but because 'everybody' wears it. The writer found the word 'everybody' intriguing because clearly, it has such strong impact on Celaya. This highlighted word has proven its worthiness to be one of the social development aspects that the writer is about to discuss.

Like any other adolescents, Celaya develops the need to establish an independent identity apart from her parents. The new sense of independency causes her to slightly turn away from her parents in search of other source of

information, which she found in 'everybody'. As an institution outside the family, the word 'everybody' should then be simplified under the term 'peer'.

Information is not the only thing that Celaya gets from socializing with her peers; an amount of pressure is also created to then slowly take control over the choices that she makes. Peer pressure benefits from Celaya's fear of being ridiculed and ostracized. It pulls Celaya to always keep up and be up to date with whatever goes on in 'the world of youth'. Therefore, her request for a pair of bra is merely an effort to conform to peer pressure in order to avoid undesirable outcomes.

Some time after, the argument between Celaya and Zoila moves to tampon use. Zoila feels that tampons are not suitable for single or unmarried girls, while Celaya, using the same old 'everybody wears them' reason, thinks that tampons are far more comfortable than the thick '*tamales*' Zoila suggests for her. It is interesting that Celaya used the word '*tamales*' in reference to sanitary pads. *Tamale* is a Mexican food wrapped in leaves and sealed on each end, which makes it looked like a pad. While tampons are modern and popular among the young American women, sanitary pads are as conventional as Mexican tradition. There is then an impression that Celaya is leaving her Mexican tradition in exchange for a new American life. Here, it becomes clear that Celaya is taking her direction to an American future mainly because of the influence of her peers.

The construction of Celaya's vision of the future begins when Celaya met Viva Ozuna, who eventually becomes her best friend. Celaya's first impression of Viva is that she is bold and she knows her way around, while Celaya is an innocent girl who does not seem to have any clue. However, it is this fact that

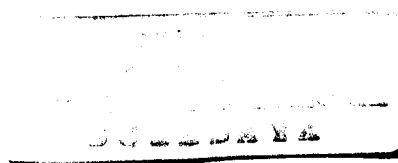
enables them to fill each other's gaps. Being friends with Viva gives the impression that Celaya is trying not to be left out among her peers. Moreover, the bond between them is easily built because they share the same economic and ethnic background. Viva who always knows exactly what she wants stimulates Celaya to start thinking about the things that she wants to do, especially for the future. What Viva does in the construction of Celaya's future is giving some kind of foundation to it. Viva became the first person to point out Celaya's talents; she was the one who leads Celaya's melancholy quality to a 'prospective' future. On one side, a positive energy is created because afterward, Celaya then realized that she has a future to pursue. But on the other hand, Celaya created a future vision that does not completely reflect her own thoughts and desire.

Nevertheless, Celaya improves her future vision on her own with the support of powerful media that become the next aspect that we discuss. The media helps Celaya discover some new ideals that she consults with her father, Innocencio.

—It's just that I want to be on my own someday.

—But that's not for girls like you. Good girls don't leave their father's house until they marry, and not before. Why would you ever want to live by yourself? Or is it ... you want to do something that you can't do here?

—I just thought maybe I would want to try stuff. Like teach people how to read, or to rescue animal, or study Egyptian history at a university. I don't know. Just stuff like ... like you see people doing in the movies. I want a life like ...



—Girls who are not Mexican?

—Like other human beings. It's that I'd like to try to live on my own someday. (259)

Without doubt, the media has a great interference here. Celaya easily connects to what is seen in movies because it is visually and audibly attractive. It is widely known that the media including music, movies and television feed their audiences with both positive and negative images that are taken to the most extreme measure. Unfortunately, these images are just enough to shape the viewers' ideals.

A small friction occurred between Celaya and Innocencio because they do not share the same perception on women's role. Innocencio places the matter in cultural context where it goes back to the choice of being Mexican or American. He does not seem to understand that Celaya endures a different process from what he went through. He still goes by the traditional patriarchy belief that agrees to the idea that women are only destined to marry and to have children. Celaya on the other hand, has shifted from the traditional belief. The media, in particular, has taught Celaya to live by modern standard. She has inevitably become the product of American society where she is encouraged to follow a set of beliefs. She is not the same Mexican that Innocencio expects her to be.

The interference of social development aspects that the writer mentioned above shows just how susceptible Celaya is to dominant influences. There is no doubt that the aspects mentioned are very influential to adolescents. But Celaya has shown that she does not have a firm basic ground to stand on in the first place.

2. Celaya and her Mexican Legacy

There is an opinion that a child's mind is like a sponge that absorbs things easily. So, it is not surprising that children imitate what they see. Children are able to assimilate through what they see, hear, and feel. The children could take in the examples that are given by their parents, they could follow anything out of habit, or they could just follow the things that they consider new and exciting. Ever since Celaya was a little girl, she had been exposed to the thick Mexican culture in her family. Whether she wants it or not, pieces of Mexican culture will continue to reside in her. Later on, in her process of growing, Celaya's perceptions of love for her opposite sex, for her family, and for her 'homeland' seems to follow what had been set by the elders.

The elders in the Reyes family have particular way of preserving their old tradition. In hope for younger generation's appreciation, they continue to practice the tradition through actions, and most notably, through stories. The Mexican style that they carry is written all over the stories that they share. Their stories vary from true-life experiences to beautiful lies and folklore. Regardless of the accuracy, the stories can prevent the old tradition from being loss. Thus, through family, Mexican culture is nurtured.

One of the first things that Celaya 'absorbs' from her family is the pride that they take as Mexicans. In addition, they have the tendency to boast and brag about their own good deeds. For one reason, they inherit this habit from their ancestor that came originally from Seville, Spain. Seville has always been famous for their boisterous and sociable people (online). Unfortunately, the loud and proud Spanish blood that runs through the Reyeses' veins affects their opinion

toward other Mexicans, particularly the Indians. The Reyeses believe that they are superior to the Indians. As Spanish descendants, they feel like they have entitled the right to feel superior over Spain's victory in conquering Mexico.

Moreover, the history of the family shows that their members had participated in few war battles. So, it is perfectly natural that these members feel proud of their contribution and that they expect to get some respect that they deserve. Although the residual effect reveals that these members always want more than what they receive. The stories of the Reyes' supremacy shape the children to believe that they belong to the sovereigns just as their elders.

The second lesson that Celaya receives is on how Mexicans love. Mexican love has always been identified as a deep and passionate like the way it is seen in the *telenovela* (Mexican soap opera). Zoila makes this point clear as she described Aunt Licha's love to Uncle Fat-Face. "Mexicans women are just like Mexican songs, *locas* for love (11)." Aunt Licha represents many other Mexican women who love their husbands like crazy. She would rather kill herself than to bear any of her husband's affairs. This 'suicidal' love story seems normal among the Mexicans.

Celaya's Little Grandfather also made a contribution to the lesson. The tale of twin volcanoes, Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl is one of the few stories that he shared with Celaya. The Mexican version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* perfectly ends with tragedy. Little Grandfather did not explain much about the story, except that it illustrates the way Mexicans reveal their love.

The lesson then continues with the introduction of *fotonovela* (illustrated novel) and *telenovela* (Mexican soap opera) that come almost inseparable with the

people. Both are similar in subjects but different in medium; one serves traditional reading pleasure through words and figures, the other, through audio-visual illustrations. A study by Mayer (2003) showed that all Mexican American young people saw *telenovela* consumption as an important part of their heritage and as a way to travel to Mexico without leaving home. For these young people, *telenovela* has become a means to perceive life in Mexico. Thus, the modeled themes in the Latin-American soap opera, including the love theme, are then admitted as values that the Mexicans share.

Interestingly following is the lesson on telling a 'good' lie. The topic was well presented by Little Grandfather who took the lesson into practice right away. He permits lying to almost anyone, especially to the other members of family to avoid conflict and trouble, which he justifies under the term 'healthy lie'. Submission to healthy lie is a part of Little Grandfather's wisdom on how to survive in life. As a shared wisdom, healthy lie has the ability to stay and grow in the Reyes family. The practice of this lie even advances in the hands of Little Grandfather's successors. His first son, Innocencio, used this lie in favorable situations that allow him to benefit from the lie.

The lessons continue even as Celaya grows older. The way to reach adolescence brings her to larger issues that require her full understanding. For starter, Innocencio directs her to the issue of *familism*. Ramirez and Arce proposed that *familism* contains four key components: (1) demographic familism; (2) structural familism; (3) normative families; (4) behavioral familism (Baca Zinn 389). Innocencio emphasizes *familism* on the third point, which taps the value that Mexican-origin people place on family unity and solidarity. Like

everything else that he believes, Innocencio pushes Celaya to appreciate Mexican familial concept that places *la familia* above everything in life. Celaya's growing analytical skill allows her to slowly 'digest' this heavy message. But then she gets overwhelmed with the idea of devoting her life to her crowded family. Yet, she understands the risk of debating *familism* issue with her father whom she is very close to. The position of *la familia* had somehow been defined, and there is nothing that Celaya could do but to learn to accept this 'horrible' fact.

The identity crisis during adolescence presents Celaya with an opportunity to integrate her childhood experiences with the changes that she must undergo as an adolescent. In other words, the chance to apply the lessons that she previously received is finally given. However, the writer of the thesis sees three turning points that push Celaya closer to her cultural heritage. First, Celaya noticed the enormous contrast between her and the *güeros* (the whites). She has always been familiar with the generalizations over the non-Hispanic whites that the family made. But after she became a housekeeper assistant in a school church, she notices that the differences between her 'people' and the whites are becoming more and more obvious. The dissimilarities do exist, even in the smallest area, like in the way of performing household chores.

“But I don't know how to set a table for *güeros*. I don't know how to iron *güero* boxer shorts. My father and brothers wear briefs. I don't know how to cook *güero* food, or how to work in a kitchen where you put everything away the second after you use it.” (322)

The second turning point is when Celaya became close to Viva. As previously known, Viva is a strong and influential character. Like Celaya, Viva came from

Mexican-origin family, and yet she is perfectly comfortable with her ethnicity. Although Celaya visited Mexico more often than Viva, Celaya has so much to learn from Viva, especially about being at ease with her *latina* identity. At last, the third point is how Celaya sees herself as a subject to discrimination and prejudice.

“The two guys in suits say we’ve stolen something. I mean, how do you like that? ‘Cause we’re teenagers, ‘cause we’re brown, ‘cause we’re not rich enough, right? Pisses me off.”

(338)

Celaya forms this unfair judgment on herself and Viva after the security guards in a department store took them in for reasons that were unclear at the moment. Celaya was being precautious to situation that could bring people to act indifferently toward her Mexican identity. The negative assumption that Celaya made is her understanding of acceptance level in the prejudice American society. A perceived discrimination may be the fuel that triggers the search for greater affinity to a heritage culture among the later generation (Padilla and Perez 48)

Thus, the three turning points turn Celaya to become more optimistic in applying the lessons of Mexican culture. The first application starts as soon as she was transferred from a Catholic school to a public school. It is in the new school that Celaya asserts her identity as a Mexican for the very first time. As an introduction, Celaya confidently mentions the long line of blue blood and ‘royalty’ in her family. She unconsciously continues boasting about the tradition, which is probably not the best way to start in a new environment. As might expected, her schoolmates respond coldly to her newfound pride. However, the

worse response comes from schoolmates who are Hispanic¹. Looking through their last names (Cantú, Estrada, Pacheco, Treviño, Ochoa, Falcón, and Carvajal), these schoolmates are really not far different from Celaya. These Hispanic girls feel that by announcing the ‘royalty’ of her family, Celaya conceitedly carries herself like she is far superior to other Hispanics in school. Consequently, they quickly turn into foes that generously shower Celaya with ‘special’ treats. Every single day, they tease and call Celaya by degrading and disturbing names that are quite annoying.

In accordance to her physical growth, Celaya goes through a special phase where the interest to opposite sex also grows increasingly. Her mind would always wonder every time she stares at the old 1965 Mexican calendar with a picture of a *charro* (horseman) carrying his true love. Her desire to fall romantically in love seems unbearable at the moment. However, this is the perfect momentum for another application, that is, of Mexican love. Celaya does not go very far in searching for the object of her voluptuous affection. Her choice falls to Ernie Calderón, the friend of her brothers. For Celaya, Ernie is the *charro* and the Prince Popo who come to rescue her from all cruelty in the world. But again, Celaya made a mistake by taking this love application too far. She literary gives herself only to comply with the stories and examples that are given by the elders. Yet, the biggest mistake that Celaya made is when she decides to elope with Ernie to Mexico City. It does not take very long for them to be engaged in sexual intercourse for they are finally alone. Celaya hopes that the intercourse

¹ The category ‘Hispanic’ was created by federal statisticians to provide data on people of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, and other Hispanic origin in the United States (Baca Zinn 391).

could help to 'seal the deal' and that Ernie has no other choice but to marry her and finally their parents have no other choice but to agree.

The two different incidents above display the lack of understanding that Celaya actually has on family tradition, that is, the Mexican culture. Stories are the only thing that she got and she was never given complete information about the real application if the situations ever come to her. Furthermore, Celaya still shows her 'weak' personality. The feeble trait is caused by the lack of support that the family gave to Celaya. As the youngest and the only girl in the family, Celaya would always be teased and if not, outcast by her brothers. Ideally, Celaya should be given guidance by positive role models, especially of the same sex figures. Unfortunately, this is what the Reyes women seem to lack. As a mother, Zoila never really takes the time to care about Celaya's complains, instead, she criticized every single thing that Celaya does. The only grown woman figure that can sympathetically relate to Celaya is Auntie Light-Skin. But unfortunately, Auntie Light-Skin cannot be the best role model for Celaya because Auntie Light-Skin has a 'promiscuous' issue of her own to settle, especially on her scandalous relationship with men. Moreover, at the moment, the family had to experience an economical setback that causes Innocencio to slightly forget about his daughter. Innocencio failed to recognize the changes in his own daughter because he was too busy fixing the financial condition. The two incidents become Celaya's independent struggle for acceptance.

Consequently, Celaya has to be responsible for the actions that she took. In school, she has to deal with verbal and physical assaults that her Hispanic 'friends' throw at her. She also has to admit that her elopement to Mexico has

brought a disgrace to the family honor. Worse of all, her relationship with Ernie just ends foolishly. Surely, her heart is broken, but the pain that Celaya endures is redeemed with a great understanding about life. The sadness that Celaya feels is turning into something rather positive although it does not necessarily mean that she instantly recovers from fallback. The grief that she suffered leads her into a healing process that gives her the time to think everything over and to be prevented from doing something negative and unplanned. In the little time she was given, Celaya also pondered upon faith and humanity. Celaya finally realizes that she is a part of humanity and like everybody else she is controlled by the greater power of faith. The way she relates and sympathizes to other people signifies her growth to a better, non-egoistic, mature self.

B. Celaya's Acceptance of Her Mexican Legacy and Her American Existence

In order to come to a full acceptance, Celaya must first come face to face with the spirit of Awful Grandmother who lingers on earth to settle her unfinished business. With experiences that she gained, Celaya can begin to enter the area of acceptance. But the meeting with Awful Grandmother will give Celaya the insights on her family's complexity and on how the complexity affects her behavior. The meeting directs Celaya to a personal understanding of the elders' actions, which at times are projected by Celaya.

In some parts of her narration, Celaya loves to leave her story hanging and to leave the reader asking questions. But as the narration reaches closer to an end, the 'mysteries' are answered one by one. The biggest mystery is probably the

cause of grandmother's awfulness. Once this big piece of jigsaw puzzle is solved, the other pieces just seem to fill in the little blank space left in puzzle.

Right before Celaya confronts Awful Grandmother, Celaya found out about the other daughter Innocencio had out of wedlock from Zoila. Celaya found out that her half sister is the dark-skinned servant girl in Mexico, Candelaria. The reveal of mysterious Candelaria is an opening to her meeting with the spirit of Awful Grandmother. In a hospital room where Innocencio lays sick and unconscious, the spirit of Awful Grandmother's uncovers all of the family secrets to Celaya.

The reunion with Awful Grandmother is an awakening moment for Celaya. Celaya comes to an understanding that there is always a reason behind every action. Awful Grandmother had endured so much sadness and pain in the past that she has every reason to be awful and obnoxious. Celaya cannot help to contemplate the same thought on her father's plentiful affection and protection for her. She knows that Innocencio only compensates everything that he could not give to his first daughter.

Subsequently, Celaya is also struck with the reality of her physical resemblance to Awful Grandmother, the one person that she despises. Both Celaya and Awful Grandmother are then caught in an argument about who has more right over Innocencio, although it only elucidates the other semblance between them, that is, their obsessive love for Innocencio. The argument is finally resolved with an agreement that Celaya could win Innocencio, if she agrees to tell Awful Grandmother's story to the world, especially to those who were hurt by Awful Grandmother while she was living. Celaya unwillingly

grants her grandmother's wish so that her spirit could peacefully crossover to the other side.

As previously known, Celaya has worked herself up through the Mexican tradition as she continues to be Americanized, which is actually the essential element of Celaya's acceptance. Her acceptance does not start until she figures out the function of the traditions that were given to her. But she has indeed made it through that far. She gets to a point of understanding the traditions and cultural heritage that were given to her are made for a purpose. The understanding then leads to a greater appreciation for the elders, especially for not-so-innocent Innocencio.

Say what they say, no matter what my father's life, he's lived it as best as he could, has labored honorably. Okay, maybe he made some mistakes. Maybe he told a few healthy lies during his day. So? Here we are, aren't we? Here we are. (429)

Here, Celaya formed an understanding for her father's actions. She could also accept her father's concealment of his dark past, which she recognizes as a quality of a dignified Mexican. The new state of acceptance helps to make Celaya feel comfortable in her own family, in her own mixed culture, and in the whole reality that surrounds her. It is with this kind of comfort that Celaya could begin to contribute to the family without forcing her idealistic views.

And I don't know how it is with anyone else, but for me these things, that song, that time, that place, are all bound together in a country I am homesick for, that doesn't exist anymore. That never

existed. A country I invented. Like all emigrants caught between here and there. (433)

Moreover, Celaya comes to see that her presence in the United States becomes undeniable as she finds out that she no longer belongs in Mexico. Celaya's effort in reinventing the past has led her to an understanding that she is not the same Mexican as her father or her grandmother. Knowing her place in her Mexican family has helped Celaya to see her present existence in America, that while carrying the Mexican legacy on her back, Celaya must look ahead and carry on with her American life. Therefore, acceptance means that Celaya truly accepts the fact that she is bonded to her Mexican legacy, as well as to her American existence.

Finally, through the acceptance, Celaya begins to reach clarity of some roles in life. Although there is still a long way to go, at least Celaya has survived one phase of identity crisis.

C. Motivation Behind Celaya's Acceptance of Her American Existence and Her Mexican Legacy

There is one motivation that brought Celaya to accept the two sides of her being. The motivation is acquired through Celaya's psychological process and the social conditions that surround her. The reason within Celaya, which is her need for an ethnic identity under changing social circumstances, is the focus of the discussion.

1. Celaya's Need for An Ethnic Identity

The author of *Caramelo* used storytelling method to explore the history of the Reyes family, which is a helpful method to observe the development of Celaya Reyes. Generated mainly through Celaya's viewpoint, the narrative enables the writer of the thesis to see as Celaya evolves from being a naïve little girl to a more experienced adolescent. Classical issue of adolescence is the desire to forge a new identity apart from childhood life. Erikson speculated two fundamental aspects of identity: a *personal* aspect that involves making commitments to ideas, beliefs, and philosophical position on politic, religion, and lifestyle; and a *social* aspect concerned with relating with others (Krantz 522). While the personal aspect works on her roles exploration, Celaya involves herself in the social aspect that places her in a category of ethnic minority individuals. As a nonwhite minority teenager, she has an additional task of developing an ethnic identity.

Ethnic identity is meaningful only in situations in which two or more ethnic groups are in contact over a period of time (Phinney 501). It is in the formation of ethnic identity that determines the two sides that she needs to accept. Celaya has to undergo two different stages out of the three stages proposed in the identity formation before she can finally discover the two sides of her being.

Initially, Celaya has to go through the first phase of ethnic identity formation where her identification of ethnicity is in its earliest stage. Here, Celaya based her view of ethnicity on others' perceptions, mostly from authoritative figures like parents and the other older members of the family. Celaya acquires the knowledge of Mexican culture through the complex conducts, such as the traditional roles that the family applies to simplest concepts of what is

served on the family's dinner table. Through culture, the older members define almost every stance of life for their children. In this foreclosure stage, Celaya does not have that much option but to go along with what has been set. Moreover, as an individual, she has never been afflicted with the issue. Since her physical features do not exactly imply an ethnicity, people never specifically identify Celaya as a Mexican.

There are several components that describe the state of Celaya's being in this first stage, which would continue to develop until Celaya reaches the final stage. One of the first components is the language use of the Reyes family. Celaya is used to having her parents switch their language use from English to Spanish, or the other way around. Although seems very simple, the concept is salient in the formation of ethnic identity. In fact, language is the most widely used element among the Hispanics (Phinney 505). The use of Spanish in the house allows Celaya to be accustomed and to then be able to communicate using the language with older relatives, including her grandparents. In a study on the role of grandparents in the socialization of Mexican-American children Schmidt and Padilla (1983) found that both grandmothers and grandfathers were involved in the socialization of grandchildren (Padilla 31). The interaction with her grandparents enriches Celaya's knowledge of Mexican dishes, Mexican heroes, Mexican songs and folktales.

Another component is the family visit to Mexico. Every summer, all three Reyes brothers (Innocencio, Fat-Face, Baby) bring their family along to Mexico City to visit their parents. On a case-by-case basis, the frequent visits to Mexico give Celaya the real taste of Mexico, which stays forever in her memory. Celaya

gains the basic insights on how Mexican people live and interact with each other. Moreover, the visits help to arouse some interest in learning more about Mexico.

The next component is the area of residence. The family lives in a poor Mexican barrio, in which the members form a habitual living among other Mexicans. Many Mexicans live a distinctive life from their Anglo fellows. So it is not surprising to find that these Mexicans being connected to unconstructive words like minority and inferiority. The unjust bias could push the Mexicans closer or farther away from their own ethnicity. In Celaya's case, the bias boosts more of her sense of belonging and positive attitude toward her own ethnicity. Although this means that there is a significant change in Celaya's self-identification, still the label she gives to herself is most likely imposed than synthesized. Therefore, it is the time for Celaya to move up to the second phase of the formation where she must find the meaning of ethnicity by and for herself. Since this exploratory stage is very personal, the results go deep within the individual.

The component involved in this second stage is friendship. Celaya hooks up with a friend of the same ethnical background. The relationship with an in-group friend lets Celaya experience the personal struggle to be a Mexican living in United States. Celaya and her friend are connected through poverty and prejudice. Phinney, Lochner & Murphy mention that the two fundamental problems for ethnic minorities are (a) cultural differences between their own group and the dominant group and (b) the lower or disparaged status of their group in society (Phinney 503). This second stage is where Celaya explores her whereabouts as a Mexican. Included in this stage are the two previously

mentioned applications of Mexican tradition. Celaya starts by calling herself “a Mexican from front to back”, and then she begins to act like any other Mexicans (based on what she knew and learned). But the ethnic distinction does not erase the two problems stated earlier. At the end of the exploration, two sides are clearly formed and from here on after, Celaya’s acceptance must begin to be created in order to prevent the occurrence of other problems. Of all the stages, the second stage is the rockiest stage. There are several fallbacks that Celaya has to endure during this ethnic exploration.

Finally, Celaya elevates to the third and final stage of ethnic identity formation, the achieved ethnic identity stage. For Celaya, the last stage raises a new meaning to the term Mexican-American. That deep down inside, Celaya is a Mexican although her Mexican identity could only suffice in America. Here, Celaya begins to have a clear and confident sense of her own ethnicity. By the end of the book, Celaya cannot call herself a Mexican without mentioning her whole family. Not only could she admit the reality of her family, she even submits herself to her family’s oldest tradition, the healthy lie, a something that she could not do at the beginning.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The United States of America has for so long been the destiny of many immigrants from all over the world. It is a known fact that the greater the population, the more the chance for problems to arise. If complication still exists in a homogenous population, imagine how the trouble manifolds in a variety-populated country. At individual level, the problems inevitably become multidimensional. For the immigrants and their generations, the problems are enhanced with special features of culture.

The second-generation immigrant, Celaya Reyes, strives to find herself through her overcrowded family. She struggles to discover her place in the family and in the society. She does everything that she could possibly think of, just to feel that she belongs somewhere. But everywhere that she goes, she is always in between position.

Celaya's core problem is recognized as identity crisis that happens mostly during the adolescence years. But as mentioned before, the challenge also lays in the added context, which is culture. Celaya's basic initial need is to be accepted in her 'very Mexican' family. However, the world that she occupies has more than one side to manage. Consequently, she has to deal with American society, American peers and most certainly American socialization.

The process of searching for "who she is" and "where she belongs" guides Celaya to find for an agreement between her Mexican legacy and her American existence. Interestingly, the process does not happen in an instant. One of the

efforts that Celaya makes to get there is to reinvent the past. It is during the reinvention that Celaya frequently falls into confusion that leads her to make a mistake after another.

However, it is through the fallbacks that she significantly resolves her dilemmatic position and gradually improves her sense of self. The exploration also leads to a commitment, where Celaya knows enough not to repeat the mistakes that she made and to also know where she best belongs. At the end, Celaya realizes that she does not have to choose between being a Mexican or an American. Her dual-self must only be accepted as a reality. What is more important is how she places herself in between the two sides.

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