

NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES: MUSLIM TEENAGERS IN THE NOVEL 'DOES MY HEAD LOOK BIG IN THIS?'

(*Toleransi Identiti: Remaja Muslim di Dalam Novel 'Does My Head Look Big in This?'*)

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ABSTRACT

This research is based on the novel, Does My Head Look Big in This? which is written by Randa Abdel-Fattah. The ultimate aim of this study is to show the multiple identities among the Muslim teenagers, namely Amal, Samantha, and Leila in a multicultural Australian society. The concept of hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha is chosen to foreground the analysis of this study. Several key concepts will be used in the analysis such as Assimilation, Ambivalent, and Mimicry. Amal shows the best example on how to mix with both the minority group and also the majority group. She embraces the positive side of assimilation which helps her to create a fluid identity in society. Her fluid identity makes her more receptive towards other cultures and religious beliefs. She also takes advantages of her bitter experiences as well as other people's experience in enriching her spirit so she can face the challenges as a hybrid in Australia. Samantha is the cousin of Amal, who faces identity confusion as she is raised up by Muslim parents who adopt the lifestyle of the White Australian. She basically enjoys her life just like any other White teenagers but when it comes to relationship, she is strictly prohibited to date any of the boys. It seems that her family has two different identities. Their outer personality is White but they are practically still Muslim Palestinian on the inside. Leila is a survivor of 'ideology clashes' between two generations. She faces a lot of cultural challenges especially when her mother wants her to quit school and get married. It clashes with her belief as a modern Muslim who was born and raised in Australia with a bright prospect as she is a brilliant student. As the conclusion, all these three Muslim teenage characters represent different type of identity as a hybrid in a multicultural society.

Keywords: Hybridity; assimilation; mimicry; ambivalent

ABSTRAK

Hasil kajian ini adalah berdasarkan novel, 'Does My Head Look Big in this?' yang ditulis oleh Randa Abdel-Fattah. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menunjukkan pelbagai sisi karektor remaja muslim iaitu Amal, Samantha dan Leila dalam lingkungan masyarakat Australia yang berbilang kaum. Teori Hibrid oleh Homi Bhabha akan digunakan sebagai asas dalam analisis kajian ini. Beberapa konsep turut digunakan dalam kajian ini seperti Asimilasi, Ambivalent dan Kemimikan. Amal menunjukkan contoh terbaik dalam pergaulan dengan golongan minoriti dan majoriti. Beliau menggunakan sisi positif dalam asimilasi untuk mewujudkan identiti yang fluid dalam masyarakat. Beliau juga turut menggunakan pengalaman buruk sendiri dan orang lain dalam memperkayakan jiwanya agar dapat menangani cabaran sebagai remaja hibrid di Australia. Samantha merupakan sepupu kepada Amal, yang mengalami kekeliruan identiti disebabkan beliau dibesarkan oleh ibubapa muslim yang mengamalkan gaya hidup golongan berkulit putih Australia. Beliau secara

amnya menikmati kehidupan sama seperti remaja berkulit putih Australia yang lain tetapi apabila berkaitan isu perhubungan, beliau dilarang keras untuk bertemu janji dengan mana-mana lelaki. Ianya menunjukkan keluarganya seperti mempunyai dua identiti yang berlainan. Secara luaran, mereka adalah berbangsa kulit putih tetapi dalaman ialah bangsa muslim Palestin. Leila pula merupakan seorang survivor dalam 'percanggahan ideologi' antara dua generasi. Beliau menghadapi cabaran budaya yang besar apabila ibunya menyuruhnya berhenti sekolah dan berkahwin. Ini bercanggahan dengan kepercayaannya sebagai remaja muslim moden yang lahir dan dibesarkan di Australia dengan prospek yang cerah sementelahan beliau merupakan pelajar yang pintar. Secara kesimpulannya, ketiga-tiga watak remaja muslim ini mencerminkan identiti yang berbeza sebagai hibrid dalam masyarakat berbilang kaum Australia.

Kata kunci: Hibrid; asimilasi; kemimikan; ambivalent

Introduction

There are many different definitions and characteristics to define the period of changes from childhood to adulthood. Various definitions of young adult are important as they set up a guide line to differentiate this group of people from childhood to adulthood. Lerner & Steinberg (2004) define adolescence as the transitional period between late childhood and the beginning of adulthood, and mark the beginning of the reproductive lifespan in humans. Adolescence involves sexual maturity in terms of hormones and physical development of the body, and is also characterized by an increase in the complexity of group interactions and thus social behaviour. A further definition of young adult is given by Coleman and Hendry (1990) as a period of development and consolidation of the social self, of one identity and understanding of the self in relation to the social world. Berzonsky and Adams (2003) stated that the psychosocial context of the adolescent is different from children and adults. In this period, there will be slight changes in terms of relationship between family, peers, and society as adolescents start to have a more autonomous control over their decisions, emotions, and actions.

According to Jenkins (1999: 135), Young adult literature or YAL is created especially for young adults, hoping to give them a better understanding of their identity as teenagers and also to bring forward the issues that happen in their lives. The stories usually focus on the experience of an individual, usually involving a teenage protagonist. It does not always provide the answers, but rather portrays a young person in search of them. YAL is also frequently described as coming-of-age fictions that tell of a young person's first experiences, be it love, death or adult choices and responsibilities. Aronson (2001:21) stated that classic coming-of-age stories capture "the innocent passion of adolescence, when children sense the layers of human existence, experience the desires, and work out the ideals that will add depth to their character and provide them with a road map on their journey".

In line with that, this paper seeks to find out about identity formation among the Muslim teenagers, Amal, Leila, and Samantha in a multicultural Australian society setting, which was based on the novel "*Does My Head Look Big in This?*"

Literature Review

I) Past Research on Homi Bhabha's Hybridity

A research entitled '*Exploring Hybridity in Fernando's Scorpion Orchid*' is done by Cheah Wei Lyn in 2006. In this study, the researcher uses Lloyd Fernando's novel, *Scorpion Orchid* as the main corpus of the research. The main aim of the study is to examine and analyse the thoughts, behavior and actions of the characters in Fernando's *Scorpion Orchid* using Homi Bhabha's concept of Hybridity- focusing on the 4 university students who represent the division in society determined by the colonizers.

Homi Bhabha's theory of Hybridity is used as the central theory to foreground the analysis of the novel. Bhabha's theory is chosen as it is relevant to the setting of the novel as the characters are from different cultural background such as Eurasian, Malay, Chinese, and Indian. One striking characteristic of Fernando's story is that, it is based on authentic historical situation like the infamous 13 May riot, which is the base for *Scorpion Orchid*. Through his works, Fernando explores the issue of identity searching in all the main racial groups after the British left Malaya.

The researcher has chosen three main concepts in Bhabha's Hybridity which are Mimicry, Unhomeliness, and Ambivalence. These concepts are used in order to analyse the situation and conflicts faced by the four characters. Besides that, it is important in this research to find out whether racial relation can affect the nation building of a country. The notion of 'In-Between' is also highlighted in this research and this is a concept where the researcher inserts Bhabha's Hybridity theory. The 'In-Between' can be seen as the link between two or more cultural identities. It is also the "connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white." (Bhabha, 1994: 4). However, there are insecurities in moving to the 'unknown' which is the 'In-Between' itself. It means that, one who lives in an 'In-Between' place is most likely to live in a hybrid environment.

There are gaps that can be explored further in the current research. The previous research focuses on the issues that arise from a multicultural society in pre-independence Malaya and Singapore. In this current study, the researcher uses a more contemporary setting as the corpus which is *Does My Head Look Big in This?* with modern multicultural Australia as the background. Even though the timeline for both novels are different, the issues of hybridity are still relevance as they are continuous even in current times. As long as there are people who live in a multicultural society, prejudice and dilemmas will always be the issues to ponder on.

II) Past Research on Australian Teenage Identities

A research entitled *From 'Looking for Alibrandi' to 'Does My Head Look Big in This?': The Role of Australian Teenage Novels in Reconceptualising Racialised- Gendered Identities* has been done by Lana Zannettino in 2007. Basically, this is a comparative research of three Australian young adult novels, Melina Marchetta's *Looking For Alibrandi* (1992), Randa Abdel-Fattah's *Does My Head Look Big in This* (2005), and Morris Gleitzman's *Girl Underground* (2004). Based on feminist post-structural and post-colonial theories, the researcher analyzed the text on how each author has constructed the racialized-gendered identities of their female protagonists. The researcher also included the struggles faced by the protagonists in fitting in with the dominant group and at the same time trying to develop their identities in their own minority group. Each novel has protagonist from different ethnic group and back ground that suggest the true meaning of being racialized in Australia rather than just the issues of 'belonging' and 'not belonging' in the dominant group.

Looking for Alibrandi is a story about a 17 years old girl, Josephine Alibrandi, who was born in Australia to an Italian parentage. Josephine was raised by her mother, Catherine Alibrandi, and grandmother, Nonna Katia without the presence of a father or male figure in her life. She faced conflicts with her family, especially her grandmother. The fact that her

relatives still have issues with Christina raising her child out of wedlock has not made Josephine's life any easier. In school, she has to deal with people who often taunt her for her Italian heritage. In *Does My Head Look Big in This*, Amal is a Muslim Australian from a Palestinian heritage. As a Muslim minority in a Christian White society, she experiences discrimination and racist remarks when she decides to stay true to her identity as a Muslim by putting on a hijab. Just like Josephine, she struggles with her diasporic identity in trying to fit in with her multicultural school surrounding. Bridget is the teenage protagonist in the third novel, *Girl Underground*, who is a pure White Australian girl. Despite being White, she always feels unaccepted and alienated in her own community as the result of belonging to a criminal family. Her friendship with child refugee, Jamal and Bibi is opposed her 'Whiteness'. The concept of hybridity through class and gender in this research is further explored with conflicts faced by the protagonists.

This past research is related to the current study as it focuses on Australian young adult novels. However, there are gaps in this past research that can be further explored in the current study. The current study will only focus on one novel, which is *Does My Head Look Big in This* by Randa Abdel Fattah. The current study will also use Homi Bhabha's Hybridity as the main theory in the analysis as opposed to the feminist post-structural and post colonial theories. The issues of identity formation as the effect of hybridity will be explored more in the current study and not on the issue of gender.

METHODOLOGY

There are several key concepts from Hybridity theory that will be used in the analysis of the novel. These key concepts are chosen because of their relevance to the analysis of the novel. The definitions of the key concepts are taken from several scholars including the theorist for Hybridity himself, Homi K. Bhabha. Various definitions of key concepts are important in providing different arguments regarding the concepts. It is also important to take other scholars' point of view in order to make the explanation more concrete and reliable. The key concepts are as follow:-

a) Mimicry

Assimilation between the Western culture and the colonized culture almost close the gap of binary opposition of Self and Other. This phenomenon creates ambivalence which is apparent in the strategy of mimicry. According to Homi Bhabha (1994: 122) in his article, *Of Mimicry and Man*, colonial mimicry is defined as; "*Colonial mimicry is the desire to be reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*" Homi Bhabha (1994: 129) highlights the conflicts that arise in mimicry in his article, *Of Mimicry and Man*, as;

"...raises the question of the authorization of colonial representations; a question of authority that goes beyond the subject's lack of priority (castration) to a historical crisis in the conceptuality of colonial man as an object of regulatory power, as the subject of racial, cultural, national representation."

The issue of "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 1994: 86), is also relevant here. As discussed in the said section, mimic men seem to possess all characteristics of the colonizers. However, upon a deeper analysis, they only possess a shell of an image and possess neither presence nor identity of the colonial power. Colonial power is deflected with the appearance of native men who display selected metonymy of the colonizer. These mimic men not only destroy the authority of the colonizers with repeated slippages but also undermine their authority by making them an object of regulatory power (Bhabha 1994: 90). The observer (colonial power) has become the observed (by natives). In the long term, this

addiction to colonial power could cause a counter appeal to the colonizers. It mimics the colonial authority so much that it destabilizes the power it mimics.

The concept of mimicry can be seen as the negative side of assimilation. Thus, the researcher will utilize this concept to analyse Samantha, as she seems to adopt the Westerner's culture in her life as with her parents. Excepts will be taken from the novel to show the parts where Samantha mimics the Westerners in terms or lifestyle, worldview, and so on.

b) Ambivalence

In Bhabha's essay "Signs Taken for Wonder" (Bhabha 1994: 102), he writes the ambivalence of colonial power. In this interesting essay, he brings to light the different opinions and reaction to colonial power. He draws most attention to the Bible also known as the Great English Book. This book is the insignia of colonial authority and order. It can be said that most laws that the English practice are indeed from this book. It becomes a signifier of colonial desire and discipline.

Colonial power then seems to have a split between appearance of the original that is authoritative and the mimic double which is repetitive with little clue of real understanding. Therefore, there are two sides of colonial power. The first side is the colonial scene which is the invention of history, mastery, and mimesis. The other is a displaced scene that is achieved through repetition, mimicry, and fantasy. Bhabha reveals that this display of difference "produces a mode of authority that is agonistic (rather than antagonistic)" (Bhabha 1994: 104). They each contend for dominance instead of fight against each other. The end results are an arrangement of position and knowledge in relation to each other and not to the sense of order as followed by the colonizers. In a way, the resulting power is a hybrid that is created for the present. It is an "effect of finalization, relative to an objective" Foucault (1994: 109).

In these two later reproductions of the original colonial power, there is a double force that disturbs the visibility of colonial presence. For the colonizers to have authority, rules of authority must be reflected in consensual opinion; to be powerful, the rules must be reached. There must be unitary reference to race, nation, and culture to preserve colonial authority. In situation of mimicry and hybrid, the margins of these essential rules and unitary references are blurred. This would make recognizing colonial authority difficult. Therefore, this would unsettle the demand that figures at the centre of colonial power.

The term 'Ambivalence' will be used in the analysis of the research with the focus on Leila's character. She is the one with 'identity uncertainties'. She is neither 'this' nor 'that'. These uncertainties are connected to ambivalence as one does not possess a solid stand on identity as this situation may due to cultural differences between the mainstream group and the minority group, exposure on education and many more.

c) Assimilation

Assimilation is also another aspect of multicultural society. It can be viewed as negative or positive. It is considered as positive assimilation when the outsiders try to blend in with the dominant group so that they can live or work in harmony without compromising their sense of identity and culture. However, assimilation does have its negative side when the outsiders totally immerse into the dominant group and trying to adapt, adept and adopt to the foreign culture which can lead to mimicry. The risk of losing one's cultural identity is very high in the attempt to blend in with the dominant group. Harles (1997: 711) includes a Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism on assimilation as; "*Assimilation implies total absorption into another linguistic and cultural group. An assimilated individual gives up his cultural identity, and may even go so far as to change his name.*" This description clearly shows the negative effects of assimilation as some people tend to 'reinvent' any aspect of their cultural background just to be accepted by the mainstream

society. Wallendorf & Reilly (1983: 293) stated that; “*Full assimilation is said to have occurred when the impact of the norms associated with the culture of origin becomes very small...*” Thus clearly, the idea suggests that people who have reached the full assimilation adopt the mainstream culture to become their own.

This concept is further explained by Barry (1979, in Dealwis and David, 2009) as he defines assimilation to include the complete disappearance of the group’s identity. Cultural assimilation happens when people from a minority group accept the norms, values and patterns of behaviour (culture) of a majority group (Hj. Mohd Jalil et al., 2003, in Dealwis and David, 2009). The generally held belief is that minority groups tend to adopt the dominant groups’ cultures. However, although it is possible that the minority group would want to adopt certain cultural traits, this does not mean that they want completely to integrate with the dominant group.

Based on the description above, assimilation can be described as a process for ‘appropriating’ oneself to a mainstream community and it can be seen as a strategy to blend with the mainstream community. Just like in any other situation resulted from hybridity, assimilation has its own pros and cons. Bhaba focuses more on the negative side of multiculturalism which resulted in mimicry as discussed earlier. However, the researcher intends to focus on both the positive and negative side of hybridity, thus using the concept of assimilation in the analysis. This concept will also be applied on Amal, the main protagonist as she seems to have the most ‘balanced’ characterization among the three main characters. An analysis will be carried out in order to find out to what extent Amal assimilates herself with the mainstream community and at the same time, maintaining her relationship with people from her own ethnic group and other minority races.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

a) Analysis 1: Amal

Representation of Identity – Assimilation

“I have a sleepover at my house on Saturday night with Eileen and Simone. Leila’s here too; she’s not allowed to sleep over but my mom managed to convince her mom to at least let her stay for dinner. Yasmeen has some family thing going on so she can’t make it and is fuming big time. We’re in my bedroom pigging out on pizza. Luckily, criss- crossing my two sets of friends has never proven to be a disaster since everybody gets along.” (pg 149)

The situation above refers to Amal and her multicultural friends’ usual sleepover. Eileen is her Japanese Australian friend at her prep school, McCleans. Simone is another friend at school who is a white Australian. Both Eileen and Simone are really good friends of Amal and they hang out not only in school but also outside of school. Leila is also one of Amal’s best friends and she is from a similar cultural and religion background as Amal.

Having two different sets of friends proves that Amal has a fluid identity so that she can easily mix with other friends who are not from the same ethnical and religious background as can be seen from this phrase; “*Luckily, criss- crossing my two sets of friends has never proven to be a disaster since everybody gets along.*” It is interesting to notice that two different group of teenagers; from the majority group, for example Simone, can get along very well with teenagers from the minority group such as Amal, Leila, and Eileen.

The questions of religion and cultural differences are not the issues when the majority and the minority group have the willingness to mix and understand each other as can be seen from Amal’s friendship with her close friends. In Amal’s case, she is the second generation immigrant who is also born and raised in Australia. She is more likely to adapt and assimilated easily with the surrounding in Australia as she has no memories or experience in her ‘homeland’, Palestine.

Amal's friendship with Eileen and Simone outside the private domain might raise eyebrows from some people. However, within the private space, which is Amal's house, these teenagers can get along very well and they do not let racial differences deter their relationship. Eileen and Simone can get along with Leila as much as they can get along with Amal. In this situation, they are just like any other teenagers who discuss about boy talk and other common teenage interests.

Clearly, Amal embraces the positive assimilation as a result of her hybrid identity. She has a fluid identity as she can get along with people outside of her ethnic group. It is a much needed form of negotiation in order to get along with people in a multicultural landscape such as Australia.

"After two hard days at school we go to a peace vigil on the weekend. My parents, Uncle Joe's family, Yasmeen and her family, Simone, Eileen and Josh. We stand there in the crowd, holding candles, hanging on to one another, singing prayers and John Lennon songs, swaying together in a gentle evening breeze that smells of birthday-cake candles and tragedy and agonizing incomprehension. It's the first time we don't question one another. The first time we don't all stop and think about our labels and rationalize our participation. Nobody speaks about identity or religion or politics or ideology. We just sway and grieve with the crowd....." (pg 252)

The situation refers to the post Bali bombing tragedy where people gathered together to pay respect to the victims of the event. The excerpt above shows another example on how the minority and majority can be together in a public space without any issues on race or religion. This is the time where people from various background can be united as the bombing is considered cruel regardless the motive behind it.

It can be seen from the excerpt that Amal and her family, her cousin and her family, Yasmeen, Josh, Eileen and Simone are united as one as they pray for the victims of the Bali bombings regardless of their religion and culture. The part; *"It's the first time we don't question one another. The first time we don't all stop and think about our labels and rationalize our participation. Nobody speaks about identity or religion or politics or ideology. We just sway and grieve with the crowd....."* shows that what matter the most is that all of them are against cruelty and terrorism and it is interesting that unity can sometimes be achieved in difficult times and the tragedy just proves it. This is also the time when humanity is more important than any other issues such as identity, religion, or political ideology. The characters' express their grieve and sadness toward the suffering of the Bali bombing victims

The way Amal, her family and friends united together at a rough time is also a form of assimilation. People from different cultural background will not be able to unite together without mutual understanding and acceptance. Amal can easily integrate her family and her white friends as she shares the same understanding and sense of acceptance with her close friends even though they do not come from the same background.

b) **Analysis 2: Samantha**

Representation of Identity – Mimicry

"Uncle Joe and Aunt Mandy crack me up. Big- time. Uncle Joe is the complete opposite of my mother. He was born Ismail and my aunt Mandy was born Aysha. I'm still trying to figure out where Joe and Mandy came from.

They're not into Islam or Arabic culture like we are. They're more into changing their names, bleaching their hair, and acting like they were born on Mars and not in Jerusalem. They're always freaking out about us being "fanatics". For example, in Ramadan, we're "crazy" to fast. When it's prayer time, they ask us why we bother. When we buy halal food, we're "too extreme". (pg 100)

The quotation above refers to Samatha's family who is also Amal's cousin. Uncle Joe's real name is actually Ismail and his wife, Mandy's real name is Aisha. He is the brother of Amal's

mother and these two families are very close to each other. Amal thought that it is funny when his family seems to change any trace of Arab-ness in their lifestyle and even name.

Uncle Joe and his family are totally different from Amal's family even though they are related by blood. This is because Uncle Joe believes that in order to be accepted by the white Australians, they have to blend with the majority. Thus, Uncle Joe has a western name for himself, wife, and the children. The phrase; *"They're not into Islam or Arabic culture like we are. They're more into changing their names, bleaching their hair, and acting like they were born on Mars and not in Jerusalem."* depicts that they are more eager to change their ethnic identity to what they think as the more accepted identity, or more specifically, a western identity. The need to assimilate is very evident in their family.

Uncle Joe and his family is a good example of 'mimic man' as they try so hard to mimic the lifestyle of a white Australian. While adaptation to one's culture is part of how the minority can assimilate with the majority, Uncle Joe takes it to another level. He seems to suppress his Palestinian identity and adopt the western identity with a big hope of being accepted by the majority white group. His action of criticizing Amal's family for fasting, praying and even buying halal food is related to his own 'fear' or obsession to everything western.

Generally, Uncle Joe has adopted the western culture and also the way of thinking. Based on the postcolonial concept, Uncle Joe can be depicted as the product of colonialism. However, in order to suit with the background of this novel, Uncle Joe's way of mimicking the lifestyle of the western people can be seen as merely a survival to blend in with the majority group.

c) Analysis 3: Leila

Representation of Identity – Ambivalent

"How long did it take you to feel, you know, confident?"

"Sometimes, I still get nervous; depends where I am. But I'm used to it now. The hijab's part of me. Hey, got to go! Mom's calling me. She's having a tantrum because I can't be bothered to watch her cook tonight. See ya!" (pg 49)

"And my brother, Hakan? He gets to do whatever he likes. He's changed his name to Sam and I'm the one with cultural denial!" (pg 262)

In the first excerpt, it shows how Leila embraces her faith as a Muslim and she wears the hijab as the sign of her faith. Among Amal, Yasmeen, and Leila, Leila is the first one who wears the hijab followed by Amal. Yasmeen, on the other hand, is not wearing it. Leila's comment that; *"The hijab's part of me."* is contradicted by *"I still get nervous; depends where I am."* It creates an ambivalent identity for Leila. Her ambivalence is not with regards being a Muslim or wearing the hijab but rather in the way she is treated by mainstream/ non-Muslim public. It is true that she is confident with herself and her hijab but she still feels a little bit vulnerable in a public space just like Amal. This is because, wearing the hijab will instantly put the wearer as the 'others' instead of belonging to the majority group.

Leila's identity is also ambivalent regarding her relationship with her mother. Leila is the smartest among the three Muslim girls and her ambition is to be a good lawyer when she finishes her study. Unfortunately, her mother, Gulchin has a total opposite mindset compared to her daughter. Gulchin has never been to school as her family is so poor thus she cannot read and write. She had been married of at the tender age of sixteen just like any typical obedient Turkish girl. All her life, she has been taught that it is the girl's job to clean the house and take care of the family. Being too educated is a disgrace as no man will be interested to take them as wives as they are afraid that an educated wife might go against them and hurt their ego. Gulchin believes that what Islam says about women as they were the practices of her own mother and the generations before her. In reality, those are not the

teachings of Islam. Those are just the cultures invented by people in her community based on what they think as 'right'.

Despite her confidence and a brilliant brain, Leila still follows her mother's instruction to clean up the whole house. It shows that she has both the identities of a confident modern girl but at the same time she is also a 'well guarded' Muslim girl in a patriarchal Muslim family. She mentions it clearly that she is living in 'in-between' as seen from this statement; "*He's changed his name to Sam and I'm the one with cultural denial!*" Her brother, Hakan, has assimilated with the mainstream Australian as he changed his name to Sam just like Uncle Joe's family. He even has a white girlfriend, socializes, drinks, doing drugs, and yet his parents say nothing about it for he is a male. Leila on the other hand, is stuck between religion and culture as she is not completely free because of the orthodox way of her family. She knows that she can be successful in life she definitely knows what she wants. In other words, she is the product of both the culture and religion. Truth to be told, being a good Muslim girl is not the same as keeping the house clean all the times. Religion cannot be mistaken as culture and vice versa. Gulchin might not see the difference between religion and culture thus; it creates conflict as Leila's dream shatters at her mother's version of Islam which is untrue and oppressive.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that Amal shows the best example on how to mix with both the minority group and also the majority group. She embraces the positive side of assimilation which helps her to create a fluid identity in society. Her fluid identity makes her more receptive towards other cultures and religious beliefs. She also takes advantages of her bitter experiences as well as other people's experience in enriching her spirit so she can face the challenges as a hybrid in Australia. Amal's decision of wearing the hijab is not a wrong decision at all. It gives her the chance of creating an ambivalent identity which she learns to appreciate later on.

In the character of Samantha, although she is the Muslim Palestinian teenager who is born and raised in a liberal Muslim family, she is the opposite of Amal. She pretty much adopts the lifestyle of the white Australians as it is the practice of her parents, Joe and Mandy. Her father thinks that in order to avoid being an outcast, they have to be 'one' with the majority which basically they have to mimic the lifestyles of the majority group. Samantha does not have the problems in living like a white except she hates it when her father tries so hard to impress his white friends. Her embarrassment creates an ambivalent side of her as she has the 'love hate' feeling towards her family's way of assimilation. They practically parroted what the white community say and do. However, they could never be and never will be one of the pure white Australians.

As in Leila's character, she is an ambivalent character as she embraces her old tradition as much as she wants to be free from it. There is no clear indication that Leila faces some conflicts with the majority group. Her struggles are more obvious within her own ethnic group, or more specifically, her own family. The interesting part is that, Leila shows the most radical resentment and resistance towards the mental torture by her mother. She is a brave girl at heart who is also strong willed and she knows herself better than her own parents. At the end, she manages to come in good terms with her mother as she negotiates with her daughter's opinion and desires to be a successful lawyer rather than a house wife.

There are few limitations in this study as the researcher only used one main corpus, which is the novel, *Does My Head Look Big in This?* as the main corpus of the study. It is also not sufficient to make a general assumption on the Muslim minority in Australia which may be different in a real life. Besides that, the researcher only used one approach in order to analyse the novel, which is the notion of hybridity by Homi Bhabha. As the result, the analysis considered certain aspects which are related to the key theory. The research only focused on the Muslim teenage characters but not the non-Muslim characters or the adults.

Thus, the analysis is limited to the lives of the three characters who are Amal, Samantha, and Leila. Information on the other characters might be more beneficial and balance.

Future researcher might also want to analyse the novel using another approach other than hybridity. An analysis based on Islamic Feminism is also a good alternative to look at the struggles of the Muslim women between their inner circle and also the mainstream society.

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