

Received: 19 May 2024, Accepted: 25 July 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9i2.68>

Exploring Identity and Alienation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*: A Psychoanalytic Perspective

¹Umama Mueed, ²Sana Malik

Abstract

This study reads Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah through the lens of a psychoanalytic theory to explore identity formation and alienation, in particular with reference to the protagonist, Ifemelu. The research further uses Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory to investigate Ifemelu's journey between Nigeria and the United States, explaining how she experiences a psychological conflict between Nigerian heritage and American social expectations. From her struggle to reconcile competing dual cultural identities, Erikson's theory helps to explain her personal growth within competing dual cultural identities. Concepts on the unconscious and repression from Freud help us to understand the psychological struggle Ifemelu must endure to understand and try to deal with racial discrimination and microaggressions. Her blog acts as a therapeutic safe space where she can repress what's bottled up and finds herself struggling with identity. Freud's theories discover the connection between her unconscious experience of the world and her outer experience, and in the process, they explain her resilience and her emotional catharsis. Thus Mr. Lacan's mirror stage theory is applied to analyze the alienation that characterizes Ifemelu, specifically, her disparately fragmented self-perception in a racially illiterate American society. Societal expectations about what she should be weigh down on her sense of self, an internal and external tension captured in this analysis. When examined from the lens of W.E.B. Du Bois's double consciousness, Ifemelu has struggled with the psychological strain of inhabiting conflicting identities—one of her unique, Nigerian, essential self and one that is determined in American culture. Essential also is the psychological effect of systemic racism on her sense of belonging. The study depicts Ifemelu's voyage as a mental odyssey of self-ownership, isolation as well as recovery. The return of her to Nigeria is a confrontation with traumas repressed and an integrating of the fragments of her identities. This study blends psychoanalytic theories with such applications to explore the psychological aspects

¹MPhil. Scholar (English Literature), The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, umamazai5@gmail.com

²MPhil. Scholar (English Literature), Visiting Lecturer, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Saanam.alik16@gmail.com

of migration, identity, and race in contemporary literature while strengthening broader cultural hybridity and the immigrant experience.

Keywords: *Americanah*, psychoanalysis, identity formation, alienation, unconscious, repression, double consciousness, Lacan, Erikson, Adichie.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Americanah* narrates such a complex narrative, taking social issues of identity crisis, exclusion, and the psychological transitional effect of immigration. Psychological issues are a complex yet integral part of human life (Javaid et al., 2024; Ramzan et al., 2023). They can range from mild stress and anxiety to more severe conditions like depression (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023), trauma, or personality disorders (Javaid et al., 2024; Ramzan et al., 2023). Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach that includes emotional, social (Al-Adwan et al., 2022), and environmental interventions (Akram et al., 2022; Javaid et al., 2023). Understanding the underlying factors and offering practical solutions can significantly enhance an individual's quality of life and overall well-being (Javaid et al., 2024; Ramzan et al., 2020; Sohail & Akram, 2025). Although exploring Ifemelu's psychological identity crisis, it is not hard to get to the conclusion that the novel is analyzed from the point of view of its protagonist, Ifemelu, who migrates between Nigeria and the United States. This research attempted to examine these experiences with the help of psychoanalytic theory with particular emphasis placed on the process of identity construction, unconscious processes, and effects of splitting and repression as observable in Ifemelu. Analyzing the narrative in light of psychoanalysis (Javaid et al., 2023), one can reveal the underlying layers of problematics to which Adichie's heroine is a witness, as well as begin to understand and investigate more closely the psychological issues that people in similar migratory situations experience.

The overarching theme of *Americanah* revolves around identity, especially concerning Ifemelu's change from Nigeria to America. And Erikson's theory of stages of psychosocial development helps in understanding Ifemelu's character. Erikson opined that identity is the process through which an individual has to accept the social status and society has to accept the individual as it is (Erikson, 1968). Through the condition of moving to America, Ifemelu struggles to re-identify on a different cultural map, a conflict between her embryonic Nigeria and enforced America. This aspect is illustrated in the aspects of her life where she battles horror between the expectations of society as well as individual identity (Adichie, 2013). Analyzing Ifemelu's identity through Erikson's theory Erikson allows for the understanding of the psychodynamic process in the conflict of multiple cultural affiliations.

It will be important to make a brief excursion into psychoanalysis in order to peddle onto Freudian psychoanalysis and how the unconscious influences Ifemelu's experiences and behaviors. Freud's concept of the unconscious shows a rationalization stating that human actions can be triggered by subconscious thoughts and feelings that cannot be easily explained. In the blog,

Ifemelu writes about life in America and race relations, especially touching on experiences that are considered taboo, which is the epitome of many of her friends. This act becomes cathartic because it offers an opportunity to vent her frustrations, which in turn gives her some degree of agency over the story (Adichie, 2013). If we analyze the blog her main character, Ifemelu, has been writing in, focusing on Freudian analysis, we can assess the intricate mental processes she goes through and how this reflects her psychological strength and personality.

One of the major themes in *Americanah* that could, therefore, be explained via Lacan's alienation. Lacan's 'mirror stage' theory posits that the formation of the self-results from the reaction of identification in response to the 'mirror' of other's gazes (Lacan, 1949). Ifemelu often feels out of place because she received the message that any representation of her as a member of the black Diaspora is an erroneous one – or a twisted one at the very least – in the eyes of a society that exclusively recognizes her in terms of race. This is further fueled by W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of the double consciousness: the mentation situation of the members of population that is in a culturally subjugated position which portrays the inner warfare going on in the soul of an oppressed people in their effort to oscillate between who they really are and who White America wants them to be (Du Bois, 1903). The office is a site of psychological tension resulting from the concept of double consciousness, which drives a wedge through the personality that shatters Ifemelu's relationship with Curt (Adichie, 2013). To understand the psychological effects of feeling alienated in America, these two concepts will help explain the effects on Ifemelu's sense of self.

In specific, trauma playing a central role in the novel is manifested in the repression of traumatic memories, specifically concerning race and racism in the United States, in Ifemelu. According to Freudian theory, there are feelings that an individual may not be able to express; with the result that such feelings, when repressed, become manifested as different ailments or disabilities, emotional feelings such as loneliness, for example, may be suppressed, and rather than having their negative feelings expressed in this way, such individuals develop psychosomatic ailments, further, depression (Freud, 1915). It is thus possible to consider Ifemelu's return to Nigeria as a quest to face and overcome these latent resentments. When she finally returns to her homeland, her physical movement shows the reader a psychological movement toward healing, self-acceptance, and self-forgiveness (Adichie, 2013). Reviewing the analysis of Ifemelu's experiences through the lens of repression, it is possible to recognize how the repression influences her psychological development and how an acknowledgment of the affected feelings can be therapeutic in nature.

B. Theoretical Framework

A psychoanalytic theoretical framework was utilized to examine the themes of identity, alienation, and repression found in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. The analysis is grounded in four key theoretical perspectives:

1) Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development.

Erikson's theory helps explain Ifemelu's identity formation in the stage of identity vs role confusion. At this stage, the integration of an individual personal identity with the expectations of

society takes place (Erikson, 1968). Migration from Nigeria to the US and back to Nigeria are crucial phases of identity exploration and consolidation Ifemelu explores. Between her Nigerian heritage and that of American society, she experienced the psychological tug of making a cohesive self-identity.

2) *The Unconscious and Repression according to Sigmund Freud.*

Freud's psychoanalytic theory also shows how behavior and identity are shaped by thoughts and repressed emotions that work outside of our conscious control (Freud, 1915). For dealing with racial discrimination and identity, Ifemelu's blog is basically a therapy session about which she needs to wheeze. This analysis shows how her unconscious mind affects her outward experience and the path to emotional resiliency.

3) *Jacques Lacan's Mirror Stage*

Lacan (1949), in his theory of the mirror stage, analyses Ifemelu's alienation and fragmented self-perception resulting from and propelled by racially oriented views of the society. This point of view shows how when contrasted with her conceptions of herself, society's racial stereotypes put her mentally under immense pressure.

4) *An Analysis of W.E.B. Du Bois's Double Consciousness*

Double consciousness, as per Du Bois, is how we walk about in the world while negotiating two identities. Rather, it implicates Ifemelu's anxiety between her true Nigerian identity and the stifling, racialized self that the American society has forced into its skin (Du Bois, 1903). In this duality, racism and cultural displacement are understood as the more general psychological implications of a legacy of systemic racism.

This study integrates the frameworks to provide a psychoanalytic analysis of Ifemelu's experiences, focusing on the psychological facets of migration, identity, and alienation.

C. Research Questions

This study aims to explore the psychological dimensions of identity and alienation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* using psychoanalytic theory. The research questions guiding this analysis are as follows:

1. How does Ifemelu's journey between Nigeria and the United States illustrate the psychoanalytic processes of identity formation and reformation, particularly through Erikson's stages of psychosocial development and Freud's concept of the unconscious?
2. In what ways do Lacanian theory and W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness explain the psychological impact of alienation and racial discrimination on Ifemelu's sense of self and identity in *Americanah*?

II. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research approach to enhance its understanding of the psychological aspects of identity, isolation, and the repression of psychological elements in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. To this end, the qualitative approach is most appropriate for use in this research in that it will afford one a rich understanding of the subject matter and the multifaceted experience of the protagonist Ifemelu through the lens of

psychoanalytic theory. Methodologically the strategy used will entail writing critically from a literature point of view with emphasis on critical reading and an endeavor to look inside Ifemelu's mind and soul.

1). Data Collection

The primary data collected for this study is collected directly from the text of the novel *Americanah*. Hence, to practice close reading, Kaye chooses individual passages and chapters that relate to the subject of identity, alienation and repression. In this particular case, this textual analysis is to be centered around the account of such events and dialogues or even the narrative descriptions that are potentially informative of the protagonist's psychological status and change. Also, The blog entries that Chimamanda forwards in the novel are considered to analyze as they present the reader with an actual look into the subject's subconscious and unexpressed feelings.

2). Analytical Framework

Some elements of the structure of the analysis are as follows: In the development of the analysis, the following theoretical framework was used. Exploring Ifemelu's psychological experiences as a non-American in Ceba, each psychoanalytic theory: Erikson's stage of psychosocial development, Freud's unconscious and repression theory, Lacan's mirror stage, and Du Bois's double consciousness is applied to the pertinent sections of the book to analyse. This involves:

1) Eriksonian Analysis

Character analysis examining how Ifemelu reacts to her challenges of the endeavor of constructing a personal identity as well as the conflict of being a Nigerian in America. This entails analyzing her encounters with various cultural environment and also her process of identity transformation.

2) Freudian Analysis

Evaluating egotistical emotions and latent ideas in Ifemelu's blog entries and in her/Captain Echeremadu's narrative accounts. It also implies searching for the specific motifs or signs that can be interpreted as revealing.

3) Lacanian Analysis

Analysing the episodes of Ifemelu's racist othering and the construction of her fractured self as she observes herself from the American hegemonic vantage point. This pertains to friendships, and the social processes that shape her, as well as the reactions of others that shape her identity.

4) Du Boisian Analysis

With a focus on Ifemelu's character, exploring her double consciousness and how she resolves inner conflict and external pressures based on racialization. This pertains to showing her inner thoughts or scenes that depict her as both of these, especially a voluptuary.

3). Data Analysis

Categorizing the text means that the analysed material has to be analysed with regard to specific psychoanalytic notions systematically coded, with an intention to define regularities and

patterns. It is to understand that this codification process is cyclical and requires subsequent readings of the text to effectively codify as many textual segments as possible while accurately identifying the ones suitable for this investigation. After that, the themes are discussed in the context of the theoretical framework and further connections between Ifemelu's experience and the psychoanalytic theories are revealed.

A. Validity and Reliability

To observe the external validity and internal consistency of the analysis, the following measures are taken: Triangulation is the procedure of comparing the research results derived from different theoretical frameworks to substantiate the research conclusions that are comprehensive and reliable. Meanwhile, there is also the process of peer review and consultation with more experienced scholars in the fields of literary analysis and psychoanalytic theory to ascertain the credibility of the interpretation of the results and the conclusions drawn from the data obtained.

B. Ethical Considerations

It is also an independent study without any animals, human participants, or data with ethical implications. As this study involves a literary work that has been published, there are fewer ethical issues to consider. Nevertheless, one has to take certain precautions, bearing in mind both, the purpose of the writer and the cultural implication of the novel to other cultures. When the interpretations are offered, the socio cultural significance of the themes is given attention.

The study uses this research method to reflect a Psychoanalytic Analysis of the novel, *Americanah* that helps to clearly outline psychological process of identity constitution, migratory experiences, and personal strength, all while clarifying the theoretical contribution of psychoanalysis.

III. DISCUSSION

The psychoanalytic analysis of the *Americanah* is synthesized with the theoretical frameworks, and how they explain the protagonist Ifemelu's psychological experiences are discussed. The results of this analysis demonstrate a number of themes regarding the processes of identity formation, alienation, and repression, which more broadly illuminate the psychological implications of migration and racialization.

A. Identity Formation and Eriksonian Development

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* can only be understood via a critical framework based on Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. According to Erikson (1968), the defining stage of young adulthood is identity vs. role confusion, in which the person is looking to harmonize the internal image of self with the expectations of society from outside. But for Ifemelu, her emigration to the United States represents a transitional point in this developmental process, during which she attempts to understand new cultural norms and the construct of race, which she now, for the first time, understands to be a major component of her racial identity. The example given above, however, shows that Panjabi migrants experience this tension between two different cultural landscapes, epitomizing the complexity of identity formation that migrants have to endure.

According to Mezaache Asma (2020), displacement worsens this identity crisis, such that individuals must renegotiate a sense of where they belong.

It's become very upsetting for Ifemelu in the United States to realize that she's now portrayed as a racial identity by society. Reflecting on her experience, she states, "*I did not think of myself as Black, and I only became Black when I came to America*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 290). This shift shows that the racial classification of American society is an external imposition, as race comes to be the primary axis of classification. As articulated by Nawaz and Aziz (2024), such experiences underscore the psychological stand against the kinds of social frames that racialize individuals who migrate within a diasporic framework and strain to retain an authentic self-conception. Our thinking around Ifemelu's situation is similar to that of role confusion as understood by Erikson because Ifemelu's Nigerian identity is in conflict with the Nigerian role that she experiences from her American environment, causing her to be confused about who she is.

The most emblematic representation of the difficulty Ifemelu experiences in establishing her identity is when she has to mix in her non-African identity with a white American man, Curt. Though their relationship gives her comfort and security it also underlines her sense of alienation. Adichie (2013) says of Ifemelu, '*I began to feel suffocated by Curt's world, a world that I did not truly belong to*' (p. 352). This repeats Erikson's belief that an inability to reconcile different roles and expectations will result in a deep discord within the individual within (Erikson, 1968). Like Pourgharib, Asl, and Esmaili (2023), such experiences represent the overall psychological aspect of displacement as well as seeking self-definition in cultural hybridity.

Ifemelu's blog turns out to be a valuable tool for processing and articulating her struggles with identity. In one entry, she writes, "*Dear Non-American Black, if you make the decision to come to America, then you become Black. Stop arguing. You can stop telling me that I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't matter*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 220). By way of this frank expression of frustration, Ifemelu reveals the systemic ways in which racial categorization occurs in the US and shows how, through her blog, she developed the psychological resilience to be able to achieve civil disobedience. As Rasool (2021) points out, these platforms allow diasporic individuals to confront their experiences, but through these formations awareness of shared struggle within transnational communities is also formed.

Ifemelu goes back to Nigeria to reconcile all of these fragmented identities. "*I felt like I came back and it's right,*" she reflects. This demonstrated that being finally home, she attained identity coherence (Adichie, 2013, p. 478). According to Vachor and Tiliouine, these moments of return are often a symbolic return to not only the physical world of their culture but also bereft of competing psychological scars of diaspora. Using Erikson's theory, Ifemelu's journey represents the resolution of identity conflicts and the passage to a cohesive and self-consolidated identity. This nuanced exploration of the making of identity bears witness to the psychological resilience needed to bear cultural hybridity and takes it further to illustrate the broader psychological implications of migration and displacement.

B. The Unconscious and Freudian Analysis

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* is important to me because it allowed me to study Ifemelu's psychological experiences in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, more specifically the unconscious and repression. Freud (1915) proposed that the unconscious mind, the repository of repressed or unavailable to-consciousness thoughts, emotions, and memories, has a very large influence on behavior and identity. Systemic racism and microaggressions in the United States, mean that Ifemelu has to get used to accumulating repressed frustrations. Because the blog has become a place for her to express their hidden emotions and face and deal with her psychological problems. In diasporic literature, such narrative devices are presented by Pourgharib, Asl, and Esmaili (2023), who state that they are instruments that the characters use to deal with and unite the emotional impact of their forced exile. English literature is extremely important for expanding our knowledge of human experiences and world issues, including ecological concerns (Akram, 2020; Amjad et al., 2021; Ramzan et al., 2023), because of its rich history and diversified body of work (Li & Akram, 2023, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2023). Its universality enables it to cut across cultural divides, offering a forum for considering and addressing urgent environmental issues (Ahmad et al., 2022; Abdelrady & Akram, 2022; Ramzan et al., 2023).

No one can deny that the blog was important for Ifemelu's identity journey. In one entry, she writes, Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become Black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian because I'm not. She was told that "*America doesn't care*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 220). This statement is also evidence of her frustration at American racism in terms of racial essentialism. Freud's theory of repression explains how, as a result, Ifemelu's inability to confront the systemic nature of (daily) racism in her life directly, forces her to use her blog as her therapist. The struggle to find her identity and deal with the racial abuse she faces at the hands of African Americans has been repressed, as accentuated by her repressed feelings toward Donald Ayoola (Booker, 2005, p.4). However, Ifemelu redeems the horrors of racial experiences by coupling them to thoughts that articulate the experiences and fears she had been unable to explain.

Through her blog, Ifemelu also addresses the subtle forms of racism she encounters, which she refers to as "microaggressions." "*What got him to tell me I spoke good English?*" she says. "*We've all (people like us) been speaking English all our lives*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 295). These observations show that these frustrations unconsciously emerge in her writing from a more aware place of racial prejudice everywhere. According to Nawaz and Aziz (2024), such expressions can be understood as a way for diasporic subjects to get back control of their narrative or to negotiate the otherwise inescapable psychological dissonance of racial alienation.

Freud's theory of repression also help to explain the difficulties Ifemelu has with Curt. While Curt represents stability and affection, Ifemelu admits to feeling a sense of unease: "*Acting always, being in a role through which I wasn't myself*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 352). Freud's view on this is seen when repressed emotions and unresolved conflicts can show up as dissatisfaction in

individual associations (Freud, 1915). First, Ifemelu is unable to completely connect with Curt because of the racial and cultural discrepancies she subconsciously internalizes, which ultimately prevents her from taking ownership of the relationship because of its falsity.

Her return to Nigeria is also a moment of psychological reconciliation along with blog and relationships. In the words of Vachor and Tiliouine (2022): the diasporic's return home is an encounter with previously repressed feelings and an arrangement of inner conflicts. For Ifemelu, returning to America is a physical return and an emotional and psychological catharsis. 'I came back and it felt right,' she reflects. It was true — I was finally home (Adichie, 2013, p. 478). This is consistent with Freud's (1915) position that to overcome psychological healing and self-coherency, the repressed emotions must be recognized and treated.

Freud provides us with aspects of the unconscious and repression, which elaborate on Ifemelu's psychological journey in *Americanah*. Her blog, repressed emotions, and conflicts on her relationship and overall life as a Black African woman in America are addressed through her life, relationships, and, ultimately, return to Nigeria. The struggles Ifemelu articulates and reconciles her identities enable her to attain resilience and emotional self-acceptance. According to Pourgharib, Asl, and Esmaili (2023) and Nawaz and Aziz (2024), these processes, highlighting the ability of self-expression and confront to reduce the psychological effects of migration and displacement, provide evidence of development in those processes.

C. Alienation and Lacanian Theory

In the mirror stage theory Jacques Lacan offers a useful theory on understanding Ifemelu's alienation and fragmentation of identity in Ifemelu's *Americanah*. Lacan posits that the formation of identity is profoundly shaped by an individual's perception of themselves as reflected in the "mirror" of others' views (Lacan, 1949). The distorted lens through which Ifemelu's identity is constantly mediated in the US, however, is always racial stereotypes and prejudices, which create a tension between the way Ifemelu sees herself and the way she is narrated. That this dissonance is an almost perfect illustration of Lacan's point that identity is never fixed, and is always a fluid, fragmented thing, being influenced by social interaction and external validation, is more than obvious. Asl Pourgharib and Esmaili (2023) claim that this fragmentation recurs in postcolonial and diasporic narratives in which characters tend to negotiate alienation as a consequence of being othered in society.

In reflecting on race in America we have one of the most poignant illustrations of Ifemelu's alienation. "*The only reason you are saying race was not an issue is because, for one, you don't want to face up to your own complicity, and for another, you also don't want to be tried and convicted yourself by the media or the public for this complicity, but most importantly, you don't want to face the consequences of acting in an institution that is racist toward nonwhite members of this society,*" she says. We all wish it was not. However, this is a lie (Adiche, 2013, p. 327). By offering the observation that racial dynamics always pervade her awareness of self, she shows that she is aware of the way that race plays such a pervasive role in her thinking of self. In Lacanian terms, this extra sort of perception is a mutilated reflection to record an identification that Ifemelu

would not have seen as her very own identification: it is an otherness that she feels. Nawaz and Aziz (2024) highlight how such experiences of racialization in diasporic contexts contribute to a Lacanian "lack," where individuals struggle to reconcile their authentic selves with the fragmented identities imposed by hegemonic structures.

Her romantic relationships serve to illustrate her alienation. And in her relationship with Curt, a white American man, she notes, "*I was happy, but I was also pretending.*" "*But I wanted him to be happy with Who he believed I was Why?*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 301). We can see this mirror stage from Lacan as Curt's perception of Ifemelu completely reflects an idealized version of her but she couldn't ever be her. What complicates the fragmentation of self here is that as a racialized subject, Ifemelu is compelled to walk through life seeing herself sometimes as herself, sometimes as Black. Asma Mezaache (2020) suggests that relationships in literary works of the diaspora are customarily small worlds of personal identity crisis that the characters have to live with between a need to conform to the cultural demands and the necessity to be true to themselves.

Ifemelu's alienation deepens in (social) interactions in America, too. She tells me of times when people are surprised she speaks fluent English or make assumptions about what they think it means to be African. There is evidence in one instance, she said, where she explains: "*Why do they think all of Africa is one giant country?*" I also want to know why they have such a poor opinion of it anyway.' (Adichie, 2013, p. 217). These microaggressions reflect the distorted "mirror" through which American society views her, reinforcing Lacan's notion that identity is shaped by external perceptions that are often reductive and alienating. However, for Vachor and Tiliouine (2022), these interactions also showcase the psychological effect of being racialized and othered, creating a fractured self-perception that makes understanding one's identity problematic.

The final coming home of Ifemelu to Nigeria represents a moving point towards resolution with these phases of fragmentation. As she reflects, "*I returned home, and it felt like I could finally exhale*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 475). This is the act of returning, the act of rejecting the distorted refracted identity of the American societal mirror to return to her, return to her authentic self. Rasool (2021) suggests that, as in diasporic literature, the characters returning home signify an act of healing; an encounter with their fragmented identities. As Ifemelu returns through Lacan's lens she rectifies her alienation and propounds her sense of self away from the distorted refraction of exterior perceptions.

D. Double Consciousness and Psychological Tension

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's, *Americanah* provides a valuable framework for understanding the double consciousness psychological tension in Ifemelu as she travels through the dual of her identity based on W. E. B. Du Bois's terms. Du Bois (1903) calls the confusion felt by the marginalized a double consciousness resulting from perceiving themselves through their own self-perception and a society's prejudiced view. In this duality, this is a constant struggle that Ifemelu has to experience the difference between her authentic Nigerian identity and the American racialized identity implication. Vachor and Tiliouine (2022) note that this psychical tension is

evident in diasporic characters, who are faced with socially enforced expectations, and at the same time, they have to act against their own culturally defined authenticity.

Ifemelu poignantly articulates this tension when she reflects, *“I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as Black and I only became Black when I came to America”* (Adichie, 2013, p. 290). This captures her notion of being racialized as a person in the US, having her self-understanding hijacked by the structural reality of the US. According to Nawaz and Aziz (2024), this racial categorization is an integral aspect of double consciousness – in which diasporic people have to negotiate the gap between their internal sense of self and external projections of them. In the case of Ifemelu, though, this forced racial identification leads to deep alienation, as she is constantly challenged with assumptions on the part of her society, which quite often is the direct negation of her personal experiences and convictions.

In Ifemelu’s romantic life, all of which is marked by this duality, she carries on relationships with Blaine, an African American professor, and with an American white man, Curt. Her connection to a shared experience of racialized identity through her association with Blaine highlights not only the cultural differences between African Americans and Africans, but that while their relationship occurs in a historical moment of discourse on blackness, blackness can never quite be the same thing. E.g. *“Blaine’s world was a world where protests and poetry readings, where outrage over things that didn’t outrage me in the same way — that was his world”* (Adichie, 2013, p. 310). It speaks to the very nuanced distinctions within the Black experience in America, and to the complexity of Ifemelu’s dual consciousness. Mezaache Asma (2020) argues that the same is the case, and these moments testify to how diasporic individuals are often trapped in liminal spaces between shared racial experiences and their own cultural identities.

The External pressures of double consciousness shown in Ifemelu’s relationship with Curt reveal the exact difference. Although Curt provides her with emotional support, Ifemelu acknowledges the racial and cultural divide that underpins their relationship: *“With Curt, I felt safe. However, I also felt invisible, or like ‘part of his life but not completely seen’”* (Adichie: 2013, 328). This sense of invisibility mirrors Du Bois’s description of the “veil,” a metaphor for the inability of marginalized individuals to be fully seen or understood within a prejudiced society (Du Bois, 1903). Asl and Pourgharib Asl et al. (2023), therefore, argue that such relationships highlight the psychological hardship that double consciousness bears on characters, such as Ifemelu, as they negotiate the anticipated and implicit expectations from intimate partners and wider social structures.

The frustrations and the psychological strain that double consciousness puts Ifemelu under can be dealt with on her blog. *“I actually want to give you permission to believe me or want to believe me because I really want us to move forward,”* she writes in one entry, *“Dear American Non-Black if an American Black person is telling you about an experience, don’t explain it, don’t rationalize it — hear me and listen.” “He listened”* (Adichie, 2013, p. 221). On her blog, Ifemelu critiques society’s expectations of her to conform to a racialized identity but at the same time provides her own narrative. The blog serves not just as a space for Ifemelu to process her dual

consciousness, but as a tool to reclaim her voice, as Rasool (2021) observes, as both a space for her to speak without the silencing that occurs in a society dominated by voices of the oppressor.

E. Repression and Healing

Repression and resolution of repression constitute a dominant theme in Ifemelu's psychological journey in *Americanah* through repression. According to Sigmund Freud's theory of repression, traumatic experiences are forgotten in the unconscious but usually manifested as emotional or physical signals (Freud, 1915). While Ifemelu's experience with racial discrimination in the U.S. is rarely called for in direct confrontations but in internalized form, the burden psychically brought out is exceptionally effective. According to Pourgharib, Asl, and Esmaili (2023) in diasporic narratives, characters fight with the pressure of systemic racism and cultural displacement, a recurring motif in repression. The return to Nigeria that Ifemelu's character eventually returns to signifies a cathartic grappling with these refugees of lost time within their own spiritual selves.

Repressed frustrations of Ifemelu's are largely from her experience of racialization in America; her identity is always discussed by the color of her skin and not as an individual. She reflects, "*I became Black in America, a new identity forced on me by the weight of racial stereotypes*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 290). And, I often times have to wrestle with feelings of anger and alienation when she's forced to navigate a predominantly white society while being made to live in an imposed identity. According to Freud's theory (1915), such suppression has its own psychological consequences; unacknowledged emotions return in other forms, for instance, one feels alien or uncomfortable. Nawaz and Aziz (2004) note as similarly how characters such as Ifemelu internalize societal expectations and thereby manage to produce psychological tension that demands eventual resolution.

Ifemelu's repressing of her emotions is mostly seen in her romantic relations, where there is a racial and cultural experience of dissonance. In her relationship with Curt, Ifemelu acknowledges the unspoken but ever-present divide: "*He loved me, but he could not understand the weight of race that I carried*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 352). Curt's inability to articulate her frustrations stems from his repression of her real feelings that he doesn't seem interested in completely accepting the whole of her. Ashma (2020) states that typically such relationships are a representation of the greater psychological battle that faces diasporic people in reconciling the versions of themselves that they would like to be with the reality of societal and interpersonal demands.

Le Réceptacle's blog becomes a place where Ifemelu can address her repressed emotions, though. She starts to express through candid commentary on race and identity the experiences that have made way for the emotions she's been so good at stuffing down. She writes in one entry, "*The only way to feel really safe in America is to politely pretend race doesn't exist, but it doesn't stop it from existing*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 245). This speaks to her developing consciousness of the psychological effects of the racialized society she lives in and how to reckon with this. Rasool (2021) contends that Ifemelu's blog presented both a ritual of personal catharsis and the act of

collective advocacy in which she emerges out of her closet of self to attend to prevalent systemic issues affecting others like her.

Ifemelu's return to Nigeria is the end of the road for her healing. She reconnects with her roots, disgusted with the feelings and the identities that she has repressed through her sojourn in the United States. She reflects, "*I returned to Nigeria with a new awareness of myself and a readiness to embrace my identity*" (Adichie, 2013, p. 468). As Vachor and Tiliouine (2022) note, this moment settles the fragmented identities of her diasporic experience while resolving the psychological tensions of that diasporic process. Having returned home and having returned, Ifemelu is able to integrate herself as a Nigerian with what she learned in America and arrive at a sense of psychological well-being and self-acceptance.

In conclusion, the psychoanalytic analysis of *Americanah* provides a comprehensive understanding of Ifemelu's psychological experiences. By applying Erikson's, Freud's, Lacan's, and Du Bois's theories, we gain deeper insights into the complexities of identity formation, the impact of alienation, and the processes of repression and healing. This analysis not only enhances our understanding of Ifemelu's character but also sheds light on the broader psychological challenges faced by individuals navigating multiple cultural identities in a migratory context.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie paints a brilliant picture of the intimate travails of the psychological implication of identity, alienation, and self-reconnection in her protagonist, Ifemelu. The novel does a fine job of showing the difficulties associated with racial displacement, and systemic racial biases. The experience of Ifemelu from the predominant struggle of her realization of double consciousness, repression, and fragmentation of identity is very profound and is an experience for the migrant. Her return to Nigeria is a big part of that resolution, a sign of healing after accepting yourself and incorporating yourself into the culture. The novel emphasizes the likeliness of human nature to overcome and come to terms with challenges of complex personal and indeed societal undertakings through reflections, relationships, and experiences by the protagonist. Ultimately, Ifemelu's story is a testimony to what self-awareness can eventually do and the importance of accepting who you really are in the midst of an 'ambiance' or pressure from the outside.

Several recommendations for further research and practical application are presented from these insights. Other dimensions, including gender, socioeconomic class, and intergenerational conflict, could also be explored in further contexts of identity formation in global diasporic contexts. Such an approach would better reveal the way in which individuals understand multiple layering of identity in a networked world. From a practical standpoint, in working with migrants, educators, counselors, and policymakers should be encouraged to develop environments in which cultural diversity is treated as a norm and recognized and respected. Addressing the psychological challenges of migration and the process of racialization not only helps people feel a sense of belonging but aids with wellbeing. Furthermore, Ifemelu's narrative moves the reader and scholars

to contemplate the universal themes of identity, belonging, and self-discovery while years later providing readers with a deeper appreciation for the complexities of the migrant experience.

REFERENCES

- Abdelrady, A. H., & Akram, H. (2022). An empirical study of ClassPoint tool application in enhancing EFL students' online learning satisfaction. *Systems, 10*(5), 154.
- Adichie, C. N. (2013). *Americanah*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Ahmad, N., Akram, H., & Ranra, B. (2022). In quest of Language and National Identity: A Case of Urdu language in Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Management Sciences, 3*(2), 48-66.
- Aissaoui, S., & Amina, B. (2023). Postcolonial diasporic reflection of Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* and Adichie's *Americanah*: A comparative study (Doctoral dissertation, Kasdi Merbah Ouargla University).
- Akinbo, A. B. (2020). Afropolitanism and its diasporic subjectivities in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (Master's thesis, Western Illinois University).
- Akram, H., & Abdelrady, A. H. (2023). Application of ClassPoint tool in reducing EFL learners' test anxiety: an empirical evidence from Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Computers in Education, 1*-19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40692-023-00265-z>
- Akram, H., (2020). Education Governance in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis of Challenges. *Journal of Social Sciences Advancement, 1*(1), 38-41. <http://dx.doi.org/10.52223/JSSA20-010105-05>
- Akram, H., Bhutto, M. H., & Chughtai, M. S. (2022). An analysis of business students' stressors and their coping strategies in the post-pandemic era. *Decision, 49*(2), 239-252.
- Al-Adwan, A. S., Nofal, M., Akram, H., Albelbisi, N. A., & Al-Okaily, M. (2022). Towards a sustainable adoption of e-learning systems: The role of self-directed learning. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Re-search, 21*, 245-267.
- Amjad, M., Hussain, R., & Akram, H. (2021). Structural and functional taxonomies of lexical bundles: an overview. *Harf-o-Sukhan, 5*(4), 358-367.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. A. C. McClurg & Co.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- EZEMA, N. (2021). Globalisation and the formation of liminal characters in the African novel (Doctoral dissertation).
- Freud, S. (1915). The unconscious. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 14, pp. 159-204). Hogarth Press.

- Javaid Z.K., Akram, D., Fatima, S. M., Ahmad, J., & Hafeez, H. (2024). Investigating Emotional Experiences of Music Listener: Impact on Psychological Well-being. *Harf-O-Sukhan*, 8(2), 494-501.
- Javaid, Z. K., & Mahmood, K. (2023). Efficacy of Expressive Writing Therapy in Reducing Embitterment among University Students. *Pakistan Journal of Law, Analysis and Wisdom*, 2(02), 136-145.
- Javaid, Z. K., Andleeb, N., & Rana, S. (2023). Psychological Perspective on Advanced Learners' Foreign Language-related Emotions across the Four Skills. *Voyage Journal of Educational Studies*, 3 (2), 191-207.
- Javaid, Z. K., Ijaz, S., Latif, E., & Azam, S. (2024). A Qualitative Study on Student-Teacher Interaction: Student Engagement and Teacher Feedback. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences*, 3(2), 1670–1683. Retrieved from
- Javaid, Z. K., Khan, K., Kamran, M., & Aslam, S. (2024). Influence of Mindfulness on Environmental Satisfaction among Young Adults: Mediating Role of Environmental Identity. *Environment and Social Psychology*, 9(9), 2937.
- Lacan, J. (1949). The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience. In *Écrits: A Selection* (pp. 1-7). Norton.
- Li, S., & Akram, H. (2023). Do emotional regulation behaviors matter in EFL teachers' professional development?: A process model approach. *Porta Linguarum: revista internacional de didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras*, (9), 273-291.
- Li, S., & Akram, H. (2024). Navigating Pronoun-Antecedent Challenges: A Study of ESL Academic Writing Errors. *SAGE Open*, 14(4), 21582440241296607.
- Maritim, E. C. (2020). Focalization schemas, transnational formations, and social remittance in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch).
- Mezaache Asma, S. L. (2020). Displacement and identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*.
- Nawaz, M. Z., & Aziz, A. (2024). Black diasporic subjectivity and Lacanian lack of home: A reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. *African Studies*, 1–16.
- Odubajo, A. (2023). An evaluation of shifting gender constructions in selected works of Achebe, Adichie, and Emecheta (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University, South Africa).
- Pourgharib, B., Asl, M. P., & Esmaili, S. (2023). Decolonized trauma: Narrative, memory, and identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. *Arcadia*, 58(1), 16–34.
- Ramzan, M., Azmat, Z., Khan, M. A., & un Nisa, Z. (2023, June). Subject-Verb Agreement Errors in ESL Students' Academic Writing: A Surface Taxonomy Approach. In *Linguistic Forum- A Journal of Linguistics* (Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 16-21).

- Ramzan, M., Bibi, R., & Khunsa, N. (2023). Unraveling the Link between Social Media Usage and Academic Achievement among ESL Learners: A Quantitative Analysis. *Global. Educational Studies Review, VIII*, 407-421.
- Ramzan, M., Javaid, Z. K., & Ali, A. A. (2023). Perception of Students about Collaborative Strategies Employed by Teachers for Enhancing English Vocabulary and Learning Motivation. *Pakistan Journal of Law, Analysis and Wisdom, 2(02)*, 146-158.
- Ramzan, M., Javaid, Z. K., & Ali, A. A. (2023). Perception of Students about Collaborative Strategies Employed by Teachers for Enhancing English Vocabulary and Learning Motivation. *Pakistan Journal of Law, Analysis and Wisdom, 2(02)*, 146-158.
- Ramzan, M., Khan, M. A., & Sarwar, M. (2023). Style Shift: A Comparative Cultural Analysis of Pride and Prejudice and Unmarriageable. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature, 7(II)*, 22-29.
- Rasool, S. H. (2021). Exploring diasporic identity in Adichie's *Americanah*. *The Dialogue, 16(4)*, 22–34.
- Soltani, H. (2023). Gender differences and liberation of female subjects discourse: The case study of *Americanah*. *Cadernos de Educação Tecnologia e Sociedade, 16(3)*, 706–717.
- Sohail, A., & Akram, H. (2025). The role of self-awareness and reflection in academic achievement: A psychological and Bayesian analysis. *Pedagogical Research, 10(1)*.
- Vachor, R., & Tiliouine, N. (2022). Racism and identity in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) (Doctoral dissertation, Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou).