**CULTURAL IDENTITY GAPS:**

**A Study of Zadie Smith's Novels *White Teeth (2001)* and**

***On Beauty (2006)***

Master's Thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

The present study investigates cultural identity gaps in two multicultural novels by Zadie Smith: *White Teeth* (2001) and *On Beauty* (2006). The concept of identity gaps is a way of explaining the interpenetration of four identity frames (personal, enacted, relational, and communal) in Communication Theory of Identity (CTI). These frames co-exist in all communication situations, and discrepancy between the frames is called an identity gap. This study concentrates on the cultural aspects of them.

The aim of this study is to investigate how different aspects of cultural identity are illustrated in the data, how the chosen identity gaps affect the characters' communication and relationships, and see if these novels could be used as teaching material in intercultural communication.

This qualitative study uses discourse analysis as its research method, and the data is deductively analyzed with the help of CTI.

This study investigates three different identity gaps from cultural point of view in the novels: personal–relational, personal–enacted, and relational–enacted. It was revealed that these cultural identity gaps affected in different ways the characters' relationships, communication, and how an identity gap functioned as either a positive or a negative identity source. As these novels illustrated some real-life (intercultural) phenomena quite well, they could serve as a useful material for, e.g., intercultural trainings or introductory courses in intercultural communication.

In addition, this study tests CTI in a new context, and it was noted that it does work also with fictive literature. This notion, and hence this study, adds its own contribution to the development of the theory into a more interdisciplinary tool for analysis, which CTI aims at to be.

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma käsittelee kulttuuri-identiteetin "rakoja" (eng. Identity gaps) kahdessa Zadie Smithin monikulttuurisessa romaanissa: Valkoiset hampaat (2001) ja Kauneudesta (2006). Identiteettirakojen (identity gaps) käsite on osa erästä viestinnän identiteettiteoriaa (Communication Theory of Identity eli CTI), jonka mukaan identiteetit koostuvat neljästä eri kehyksestä (eng. Identity frames): henkilökohtainen (personal), esitetty (enacted), henkilöidenvälinen (relational) ja yhteisöllinen (communal). Nämä kehykset ovat aina läsnä jokaisessa viestintätilanteessa. Jos tasojen välille syntyy ristiriita, on tuloksena ns. identiteettirako. Tämä tutkimus keskittyy näiden identiteettirakojen kulttuurisiin puoliin.

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on ottaa selvää, miten kulttuuri-identiteetin eri puolet tulevat ilmi aineistossa, miten tutkimuksen kohteeksi valitut identiteettiraot vaikuttavat henkilöhahmojen viestintään ja ihmissuhteisiin sekä pohtia mahdollisuutta hyödyntää näitä romaaneja opetusmateriaalina kulttuurienvälisessä viestinnässä.

Tämä kvalitatiivinen tutkimus hyödyntää tutkimusmetodinaan diskurssianalyysiä ja aineisto analysoidaan deduktiivisesti yllämainitun viestinnän identiteettiteorian avulla.

Tämä tutkimus käsittelee aineistosta kolmea eri identiteettirakoa kulttuurisesta näkökulmasta: henkilökohtainen–henkilöidenvälinen, henkilökohtainen–esitetty sekä henkilöidenvälinen–esitetty. Tutkimuksen tuloksista käy ilmi, että nämä kulttuuri-identiteetiraot vaikuttivat eri tavoin henkilöhahmojen ihmissuhteisiin, viestintään sekä siihen, miten identiteettirako saattoi toimia joko positiivisena tai negatiivisena identiteetin lähteenä. Aineistona olleet romaanit havainnollistivat hyvin elävän elämän (kulttuurienvälisiä) ilmiöitä, joten ne soveltuvat siltä osin kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän koulutukseen.

Lisäksi tämä tutkimus testaa CTI-teoriaa ensimmäisen kerran fiktiokirjallisuusaineistossa. Tuloksena voidaan todeta, että teoria toimii myös tämänlaisessa aineistossa, joten tämä tutkielma antaa oman panoksensa teorian kehittämisprosessiin sen tähdätessä eteenpäin oppiainerajojen ylittäväksi teoriaksi, mikä on CTI:n tavoitteena.

| Asiasanat – Keywords |
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*"[W]hat fiction can do that no other sort of expression does is evoke the emotion of felt experience and portray the values, pathos, grandeur, and spirituality of the human condition."*
*(Banks & Banks, 1998, p. 17)*


*" [R]eality comes to us in the shape of stories."*
*(Jameson, 1981, in Talbot, 1995, p. 5)*


*"[N]arration is the dominant mode of human communication: humans are storytellers who create and communicate stories that form understanding, guide collective reasoning, and shape behavior"*
*(Fisher, 1984, 1985, in Gring-Pemble, 2008)*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

When I was pondering a topic for my bachelor's thesis for English a few years ago, my supervisor pointed me towards Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* (2001) because I was determined to write the thesis about multiculturalism. He suggested that the novel might give me some kind of picture what multiculturalism in "real" life could be like. I found the novel very intriguing as it opened up a new world to me: the world of immigrants and other multicultural families in England. I truly had learned something new and was able to see things from different (cultural) points of view.

Zadie Smith has published four novels: *White Teeth* (2001), *The Autograph Man* (2002), *On Beauty* (2006), and *NW* (2012), and having read all of them, I have noted that multiculturalism and intercultural encounters are present in all of them in one form or another. This notion gave me an idea that perhaps these kinds of fictive stories could serve as material in teaching intercultural matters. Lewis and Jungman (1986) and Fox (2003) have suggested that fiction could be used as a part of intercultural training since reading about the intercultural phenomena might help understanding the various intercultural situations.

According to Green et al. (2004b), "[t]ogether and separately, narratives and fiction have been underexplored by science, despite their prevalence in the lives of individuals and their importance for understanding domains…" (p. 162). This seems to be the case in the field of intercultural communication as there are only a few studies that have used fiction as data (Fox, 2003; Liu & Zhang, 2011, and Wierzbicka, 2010). As the data of this study consists of fictive literature, it means that I am stepping into an area that is not covered a lot in intercultural communication. Thus, I do not have too much literature to back me up. I see this to be a possibility rather than a problem: I will be adding something new to the field.

Even though fiction has not been used a great deal in the field of intercultural communication, in communication studies in general, there is a wider range of studies that

have used fiction as data. Fiction has been connected in motivating and supporting health behavior change in health communication (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007), how TV dramas impact on audience belief, willingness for organ donation, or support for controversial public policies (Appel, 2008; Morgan et al., 2009; Slater et al., 2006), scientists' contribution to film making (Kirby, 2003), how documentary vs. historical reenactment films differ in affection (LaMarre & Landreville, 2009), how narrative form can be used for affective news broadcasting (Knobloch et al., 2004), how "transportation into a narrative world" can result in connection with characters and thus self-transformations by the consumer (Green et al., 2004a, p. 311), and how fictional narratives can be a powerful tool in persuasion (Appel & Richter, 2007; Igartua, 2010).

Studying fiction in its various forms is thus important since they can be involved in people's lives in many ways. When considering in this study whether fictive literature could serve as teaching material, Mar and Oatley (2008) phrase their view of fictive literature as follows:

> Fiction literature…offer[s] models or simulations of the social world via abstraction, simplification, and compression. Narrative fiction also creates a deep and immersive simulative experience of social interactions for readers. This simulation facilitates the communication and understanding of social information and makes it more compelling, achieving a form of learning through experience. Engaging in the simulative experiences of fiction literature can facilitate the understanding of others who are different from ourselves and can augment our capacity for empathy and social inference. (p. 173).

Slater (1990) has also concluded: "…the impact of fiction messages about unfamiliar peoples on readers' beliefs may well be equal to or greater than that of nonfiction messages" (p. 327). In addition, Huczynski and Buchanan (2004) state that "…[f]ilm is a powerful tool for illustrating topics and concepts and for demonstrating the application of theory, providing a source of pedagogical material more stimulating and motivating than conventional methods"

(p. 708). If this applies to films, it might well apply also to fictive literature. Thus, learning what fiction can (and what it does) teach us is significant.

In this study, I will investigate one of the basic concepts of intercultural communication, cultural identity, by analyzing two of Zadie Smith's novels: *White Teeth* (2001) and *On Beauty* (2006). The latter is added to the data to get a broader understanding of the phenomenon. The background ponderings mentioned above are realized in the aim of this study: *to find out how cultural identities are represented in the data, and what we could learn from them*. The latter is important if these novels were to be considered as teaching material for, e.g., intercultural training.

This study will use Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) and the concept of identity gaps as its theoretical framework (Hecht, 1993; Hecht et al., 2005; Jung & Hecht, 2004, 2008). This theory was put forward by Hecht (1993), and later it has been elaborated by Jung and Hecht (2004). The central idea of CTI could be summed up as follows: "communication shapes identity while identity shapes communication" (Golden et al., 2002, p. 46). Thus, identities are communicative. They are also formed by four different, interpenetrated identity frames (or layers): personal, enacted, relational and communal frames. Discrepancy between two or more of these frames form an identity gap, or identity gaps, which can affect communication outcomes (Jung & Hecht, 2004), or even result in depression (Jung, 2013; Jung & Hecht, 2008).

Same way as in intercultural communication research also studies that use CTI as their theoretical framework tend not to use fiction as their data. I was able to find one by Hecht et al. (2002). In addition, there are no identity gap studies on fictional data. This thesis will try to fill that void, or at least will be a start of it.

The concept of identity gaps explains and illustrates the identity work that we all do, and how multilayered, dynamic and complex the identity processes are. I will apply this idea

to the cultural aspects of identities because of the centrality of multiculturalism in the chosen novels. As an intercultural communication major, I am interested in how contradictions in these cultural identity frames affect communication and social relationships. I have chosen to investigate three different identity gaps: personal–relational, personal–enacted, and relational–enacted.

This study is qualitative in nature and uses discourse analysis as its method. Even though the theoretical background of CTI is less used in studying fiction, discourse analysis, on the other hand, has been used more in literature studies. It will, therefore, complement the theory when analyzing the data.

## 1.1 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of the following five parts. In part Two (2), I will go through the theoretical framework by introducing the interpretive perspective to studying cultural identity and then, in more detail, the Communication Theory of Identity. In section Three (3), I will introduce the methodological framework that will be applied in this study. In part Four (4), I will analyze the data with the help of CTI and show how identity gaps are illustrated in the chosen novels. The section Five (5) consists of discussion of the results and how they fit to the CTI genre. Finally, in part Six (6), the conclusion, I will evaluate this study and give some implications for future research.

## 2 THEORIZING ABOUT CULTURAL IDENTITY

> *"Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationships, your complex involvements with others." (Weeks, 1990, in Song, 2003, p. 1)*

> *"[H]uman beings in all cultures desire both positive group-based and positive person-based identities in any type of communicative situation"* (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 217).

> *"Identity formation and management occurs in communication"* (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 115).

In their textbook, Martin and Nakayama (2010) list three different perspectives to studying identity in communication: the social science perspective, the interpretive perspective and the critical perspective.

*The social science perspective* relies on research in psychology. According to this perspective, identity is formed partly by the self and partly by group membership. The self is not only one identity: everyone possesses multiple identities.

*The interpretive perspective* stresses the importance of communication in identity formation: "identities are negotiated, co-created, reinforced, and challenged through communication with others" (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 166). Identities are manifested in core symbols (can also be called cultural values), labels and norms. Since communication plays such a big part in this perspective, it might be possible that others do not see one's identity as they see it themselves. Thus, identities can be ascribed (how others see a person and add attributes to him/her) or avowed (how a person sees him-/herself), which can result in identity conflicts.

The third perspective, *the critical perspective*, sees identity as a dynamic entity that is formed in specific contexts. There are reasons why some people identify with some groups but not others, which is why this perspective is interested in the societal structures and "institutions that constrain identities and are often the root of injustice and oppression" (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 167).

This thesis will concentrate further on the interpretive perspective because of its emphasis on communication as the developmental force in identity formation as well as in maintaining it. The theoretical framework of this study (i.e., Communication Theory of Identity) is defined as interpretive (Hecht, 1993; Hecht et al., 2005). In the following, I will introduce a few other identity theories from the interpretive perspective, and after them go through CTI in more detail. Other theories from the interpretive perspective help understanding the interpretive view(s) of identity. In addition, some of them have played a role also in the development process of CTI as it has borrowed some of its ideas from other identity theories, such as Social Identity Theory (SIT), or aims at being an interdisciplinary theory, such as Identity Negotiation Theory (Hecht et al., 2005). Therefore, it is suitable to go through also a few of them to be able to understand the foundations of CTI.

## 2.1 Theories of Cultural Identity from the Interpretive Perspective

In the following, I will briefly introduce a few identity theories in communication from the interpretive perspective that have either influenced or share some similarities with the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI). These theories have also been put forward before CTI, thus, introducing them first will show how the interpretive view of identity has evolved over time. Theories that will be covered next are Identity Negotiation Theory (INT), Social Identity Theory (SIT), and Cultural Identity Theory (CIT). Lastly, I will go through CTI more closely in its own section.

Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) was put forward by Stella Ting-Toomey in 1986 and later updated in 2005 (2005, 2009). This theory sees identity as "reflective self-images constructed, experienced, and communicated by the individuals within a culture and in a particular situation" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 217). According to INT, people in all cultures feel the need for identity respect and approval (Ting-Toomey, 2005, 2009; Toomey et al.,

2013). In addition, individuals possess multiple images of themselves, and these images are affected by cultural, social, and personal identity (Toomey et al., 2013). This theory stresses the importance of *mindful communication*, which means that while "the communicators attempt to evoke their own desired identities in the interaction, they also attempt to challenge or support the others' identities" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 217). Therefore, "[i]dentity or reflective self-conception is seen as the explanatory mechanism for the intercultural communication process" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 217). This theory is about intercultural communication competence and how we can reach it via mindful communication in an intercultural situation. INT places identity in the center of intercultural competence, which means that we first need to know who we are before we can understand who others are. When we know how we define ourselves and how culturally different others define themselves, it will result in more culturally sensitive communication. Thus, identity issues are important in intercultural communication, which is a notion that also backs up this thesis. INT is a theory that has been recognized also outside the field of communication, which is something where also CTI aims at (Hecht et al., 2005). In addition, social and personal identity aspects are also present in CTI as they represent two of the four identity frames that will be covered later.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) has played a part in the developing process of CTI, therefore, it is worthwhile to introduce it briefly (Hecht et al., 2005). From the SIT point of view, identities are developed through social categorization. These social categories can be, for example, ethnicity, gender and political affiliation. People belong to various social categories and form their identities based on their memberships to them. SIT emphasizes social aspects over individual ones. According to Suzuki (1998), "[c]entral to this approach is the idea that belonging to a group is largely psychological state, which is distinct from that of being a separate individual, that gives the person social identity" (p. 157). Group membership

is therefore important in this view of identity. This way of seeing identity has influenced CTI since it merges the social and individual aspects of identity.

Finally, there is Cultural Identity Theory (CIT) that originated in the 1980's and was introduced by Mary Jane Collier and Milt Thomas (Collier, 2005, 2009b). This theory proposes the following (Collier, 2005, 2009b):

1. Individuals possess multiple types of cultural identities in communication. These include, e.g., national, racial, ethnic, class identities.

2. These identities differ in salience and relative importance across situational contexts, time, and interactions.

3. Cultural identities become visible in particular forms with varying scope or prevalence.

4. In identity formation the processes of *avowal* (i.e., how an individual portrays her-/himself) and *ascription* (i.e., how others attribute identities to an individual) are involved.

5. Ascription and avowal of particular cultural identities vary in their intensity depending upon situation, context, topic, and relationship.

6. Cultural identities both remain over time and space, but also change significantly.

7. Cultural identities possess content and relational aspects.

These propositions – which form the core of the theory – are seen as the "early version" of CIT (Collier, 2009b, p. 260). It has later evolved to Cultural Identity Negotiation Theory (CINT) that combines critical and interpretive perspectives, and pays attention to contextual structures, ideologies, and status hierarchies as well as social equality and justice (Collier, 2009b). What CTI and CIT share in their identity views are the notions that identities are multiple and dynamic, the importance of communication, the process of ascription, and the

relational aspect of identities. The development work of these two theories took place roughly at the same time (1980's and early 1990's), CIT being earlier, which could explain some of the similarities of these theories. Not to mention that Collier was in fact involved with the study that influenced the development of the final form of CTI (Hecht et al., 1993). CTI seems to take things further in stressing the importance of communication in identity work, and it does not concentrate solely on cultural identity but is concerned about identity as a whole.

## 2.2 Communication Theory of Identity (CTI)

Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) was developed by Michael L. Hecht during the 1980's and early 1990's after several studies on African American and Mexican American ethnic cultures (Communication Theory of Identity; Hecht et al., 2005). The theory received its more or less final form in the beginning of the 1990's (Hecht, 1993). This "new direction for theoretical development" introduced a communicative approach to studying identity (Hecht, 1993, p. 78). CTI does not concentrate only on the individual and society, as sociological and psychological theories tend to do, but takes into consideration also performance and relationship (Hecht et al., 2005).

CTI presents 18 testable propositions, out of which ten are considered basic assumptions and the rest eight fall into the four different layers (or frames) of identity, which will be covered later (Hecht et al., 2005). The basic assumptions are:

1. Identities have individual, social, and communal properties.
2. Identities are both enduring and changing.
3. Identities are affective, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual.
4. Identities have both content and relationship levels of interpretation.
5. Identities involve both subjective and ascribed meaning.
6. Identities are codes that are expressed in conversations and define membership in communities.
7. Identities have semantic properties that are expressed in core symbols, meanings, and labels.

8. Identities prescribe modes of appropriate and effective communication.
9. Identities are a source of expectations and motivations.
10. Identities are emergent. (Hecht et al., 2005, pp. 263–264)

These basic propositions give an overview of how CTI sees identity. The rest of the propositions will be introduced in their respective frames of identity.

According to CTI, identities are formed, maintained and manifested in communication with others. Identities are seen as multiple, consisting of four frames (or layers): personal, enactment, relational and communal (Hecht, 1993, 2009; Hecht et al., 2005).

When identity is seen as a *personal frame*, it means that identity is a self-concept or self-image that is located "in" the individual (i.e., how the person sees him-/herself) (Hecht et al., 2005). This view is identical to how identity is seen in psychology. The proposition for the personal frame is:

11. Identities are hierarchically ordered meanings attributed to self as an object in a social situation (Hecht et al., 2005, p. 264).

The *enactment frame* implies that identities are acted out "in social interaction through communication and may be defined as those messages" (Hecht, 1993, p. 79). Communication is seen as the only way to perceive identities, though "[n]ot all messages are about identity, but identity is part of all messages" (Hecht, 1993, p. 79). The proposition for this frame goes:

12. Identities are enacted in social behavior and symbols (Hecht et al., 2005, p. 264).

The *relational frame* points out the fact that identities are constructed in relationship(s) with others through communication. There are three levels in this frame. First, people take into consideration who they are communicating with and then behave accordingly in the given social situation. As a result, the self is influenced by the other

interlocutor(s). Second, the sense of self is created in different relationships (e.g., friendships, marriage, occupations). Third, relationships themselves can be understood as identities. Hecht (1993) illustrates the last point with an example of a dating couple that "…establishes an identity as a couple which aligns it within the larger group" (p. 80). The propositions for the relational frame are:

13. Identities emerge in relationship to other people.
14. Identities are enacted in relationships.
15. Relationships develop identities as social entities.
16. Identities are meanings ascribed to the self by others in the social world.
17. Identities are hierarchically ordered social roles. (Hecht et al., 2005, p. 264).

The *communal frame* deals with the fact that also groups have identities that bind them together (Hecht et al., 2005). In this case, the identity is located in the group, not in the individual. A group of people base their group identity in common characteristics and history. The proposition for the communal frame is therefore:

18. Identities emerge out of groups and networks (Hecht et al., 2005, p. 264).

CTI seems quite holistic theory, but it does not aim at generalizations since it is more a micro-level theory. Thus it can be used in particular communicative circumstances. The frames give different points of view – and therefore a wide range of information – of the same situation. Hence, CTI is very useful when wanting to dive into the aspects of identity, how identity is communicated, and how it affects communication.

As already mentioned, there are three different approaches to studying identity in communication: the social science perspective, the interpretive perspective and the critical perspective (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Interestingly, all these perspectives can be found in CTI and its different frames of identity. Personal frame sees identity the same way as in psychology, as does the social science perspective. The interpretive perspective can be seen in the enactment layer of CTI: both stress the importance of communication in identity

formation, manifestation and maintaining. The relational and communal frames, on the other hand, reflect the idea of the critical perspective to studying identity: why do people identify with certain groups but not others? Therefore, not only is the theory taking into consideration that we possess multiple identities, the theory itself is also somewhat a hybrid of different theoretical approaches to cultural identity. Hecht (1993; Hecht et al., 1993) himself, though, sees CTI as an interpretive theory first and foremost.

The frames of identity should not be seen as separated entities since they all work together (i.e., they are *interpenetrated*) in any given situation. This means that these layers can be examined two or more at a time while bearing in mind that the layers could also be contradicting in some situations. For example, the personal frame (how a person sees him-/herself) might not be the same as the enacted frame (a person can act differently than how he/she actually feels). Even in these "conflicts" all the layers coexist. Nothing prevents studying the frames as single units but the most fruitful results can be obtained if this theory is used in this interpenetrated manner.

After CTI was developed, there were a number of studies that concentrated around the separate identity frames (they either chose certain frames and studied them or investigated all four of them), but they seemed to neglect the interpenetration, the view that is particular to CTI (see, for example, Hecht & Faulkner, 2000; Hecht et al., 2002; Orbe, 2004, and Witteborn, 2004). Jung and Hecht (2004) realized this and pointed out

> CTI is particularly concerned with … interpenetration or juxtaposition of identities (e.g., how the frames relate to each other). Unfortunately, this part of the theory is not well articulated or understood. Most previous research has focused on individual frames, neglecting how the frames act jointly. (p. 267)

The reason for this was probably that there was a lack of a tool that could help to study the interpenetration. Thus, CTI was elaborated by Jung and Hecht (2004), and the concept of *identity gap* was introduced. Jung and Hecht (2004) define identity gaps as "discrepancies

between or among the four frames of identity" (p. 268). Identity gaps are more or less omnipresent in human communication since communication does not take place in a vacuum and it is seldom transparent. Therefore, the point of research is not to prove that identity gaps exist but "[t]he issue is the degree and type of gap, as well as the implications of these gaps for social relations" (Jung & Hecht, 2004, p. 268). For example, an identity gap emerges if one's personal identity does not match the ascribed relational identity (i.e., others do not see you as you see yourself).

The "original" version of CTI has been used to study, for example, self labels (Martin et al., 1996), identity management (Henson & Olson, 2010), identity negotiation (Faulkner & Hecht, 2011; Orbe, 2004), identity search and enactment (Maeda & Hecht, 2012; Witteborn, 2004), information seeking on the Internet and web self-efficacy (Warren et al., 2010), medical interview in an intercultural context (Scholl et al., 2011), Jewish American identity (Hecht & Faulkner, 2000; Hecht et al., 2002), and even urban space (Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998).

After 2004, studies on identity gaps have been very popular in various contexts ranging from intercultural issues, such as acculturation and immigration, to intraracial communication and linguistics (see, e.g., Drummond & Orbe, 2009; Heinz, 2001; Jung & Hecht, 2004, 2008; Kam & Hecht, 2009; Urban & Orbe, 2010; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Identity gaps have been shown to influence for example communication outcomes, which are communication satisfaction, feeling understood and conversational appropriateness and effectiveness (Jung & Hecht, 2004), as well as the level of depression: the greater the identity gap between certain identity frames, the more depressed a person feels (Jung, 2013; Jung & Hecht, 2008). It has also been shown that existing identity gaps can have positive results too: they increased positive personal growth and change with always-single Japanese women (Maeda & Hecht, 2012).

There is very little, if any, CTI research on fiction. Hecht et al. (2002) studied Jewish American identity on a television show *Northern Exposure* and how a group of Jewish Americans perceived the series, but otherwise fiction does not seem to interest CTI researchers. So far, I have not come across any other CTI studies about fictive literature or other forms of fiction. Thus, this thesis will apply the theory in a new context. In a way, CTI and fiction are "a match made in heaven" because in fictive literature we are able to get "inside" a character's head and thus gain a wide range of information about his/her identity.

With the help of CTI and the concept of identity gaps, this qualitative study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. How are different aspects of cultural identity represented in the data?

2. How are the chosen identity gaps illustrated in the data?

3. How do the chosen identity gaps affect the characters' communication and social relations?

## 2.3 Introduction of Data and Data Collection

This study uses pre-existing data, which means that no data collection procedures, such as interviews or questionnaires, have been carried out. The data consists of two novels, *White Teeth* (2001) and *On Beauty* (2006), by Zadie Smith. In the following, I will introduce the novels briefly.

### 2.3.1 *White Teeth* (2001)

*White Teeth* is Zadie Smith's first published novel. The first edition of it was published in 2000. This thesis uses the first international edition of 2001. The storyline centers around three different families – the Iqbals, the Joneses, and the Chalfens – in London, England.

The Iqbals are a Muslim immigrant family from Bengal (i.e., Bangladesh). Father, Samad, first immigrated to England in the 1940's, then went back to Bengal, and then, as a middle-aged man, re-immigrated in 1973 with his 20-year-old wife, Alsana, to seek a new life. A couple of years later their twin sons, Magid and Millat, are born. As they grow up, they cause a few gray hairs to their parents.

The Jones family is close to the Iqbals because the father of the Jones family, Archie, is Samad's best friend. The two families also live in the same street. Archie, a middle-aged white English man, ends up marrying a whole lot younger woman, 19-year-old Clara, who has Jamaican heritage. Their daughter, Irie, is born the same year as the Iqbal twins, and she often is involved with their shenanigans.

The Chalfen family is introduced half way through the novel, and they represent the white English middle class. The parents, Joyce and Marcus, are well educated and earn a nice living, as opposed to the other two families in the novel. They have four sons: Joshua, Benjamin, Jack, and Oscar. Joshua is the eldest and the same age as Irie and the Iqbal twins. He admires Millat and Irie from afar but keeps it to himself.

These three families' stories get intertwined along the plotline in various ways and seed the ground for different kinds of confrontations where questions of identity, culture, and heritage are present.

The historical context of the novel runs through the 1970's until the end of 1990's, but there are some "historical flashbacks", for example, to the Second World War and the earthquake in Jamaica in the beginning of 1900's. These flashbacks underline the fact that we cannot escape who we are even after generations.

### 2.3.2 *On Beauty* (2006)

*On Beauty* was first published in 2005, but this study got a hold of an edition from 2006. This novel also carries cultural issues in it, but they differ from those in *White Teeth*. In this novel, the questions of education, class, and status are more salient than issues of religion and ethnicity like in *White Teeth*.

The story centers around two families, the Belseys and the Kippses. They both represent highly educated middle class: the Belseys in the USA, the Kippses in England. The fathers of these two families are rivals in the academia: they both are Art History Professors with extremely differing views.

The Belsey family lives in a university town of Wellington in New England, USA. The father, Howard, is an Art History Professor at the prestigious Wellington College. He is a white man, originally from England, and his work has brought him to the USA. His black wife, Kiki, is from the southern part of the United States. She has climbed the class ladder from working class to middle class, and has administrative duties at the local hospital. Their children – Jerome, Zora, and Levi – are all smart in their own ways, but being mixed race causes identity issues of their own.

The Kippses all have roots in the Caribbean. As mentioned, the father, Monty, is Howard's rival in their academic field. His wife Carlene is less passionate about her husband's work and comes across a motherly figure. They have two children Michael and Victoria, out of whom Victoria is more present in the novel.

An important character from outside of these two families is Carl Thomas who is a young black man from the rough neighborhood of Roxbury in Boston. He adds a contrast to the middle-class life represented by the Belseys and the Kippses.

# 3 METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

This thesis takes a qualitative approach to its data. A very simplistic way of describing the difference between quantitative and qualitative research approaches is an analogy by Cecil Helman: two children are watching leaves falling from trees in autumn, the other one is counting them and calculating when the trees might become bare, while the other one is wondering why only some trees lose their leaves and why the leaves come in different sizes, shapes, and colors (Barbour, 2008). The first is interested in quantity, the latter in quality.

Thus, qualitative research aims at studying their research subjects as holistic understanding manner as possible (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 1997). In addition, qualitative studies want to find and reveal new facts rather than concentrate on proving existing claims about what is true (Hirsjärvi et al., 1997). Qualitative approach is also an eclectic approach: it has been influenced by many schools of thought, such as hermeneutics, phenomenology and analytic philosophy of language (Barbour, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Eskola & Suoranta, 2008; Flick, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state: "[q]ualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible…[t]hey [the practices] turn the world into a series of representations" (p. 3). The aim of these practices is not only create representations of the world, but also "to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 4; see also Flick, 2007).

Eskola and Suoranta (2008) list some distinctive features for qualitative research. First, the data is often in text form (e.g., journals), or it has been made into a text form (e.g., transcriptions of interviews) (see also, Flick, 2007). Researcher can use existing texts or ask to create new ones (e.g., when research subjects are asked to keep a journal that is later used as data). Interpreting the texts begins from early on in the research process and the first

interpretation may not be the final one. Therefore, in qualitative studies, the research plans are prone to changing during the research process. As Barbour (2008) puts it: "flexibility is the hallmark of qualitative research" (p. 30).

Second, in qualitative research, the researcher aims at describing and interpreting the phenomena objectively, though perfect objectivity is impossible to reach. A researcher can try not to bring their beliefs or attitudes into the study, but this is not an easy task to accomplish, as they are also part of the world that they study and are influenced by it. This is a fact that needs to be recognized by the researcher and made known to the public.

Third, qualitative studies use selective sampling. The point is to concentrate on a small sample and analyze it as in-depth as possible. Thus, the scientific criteria are not based on quantity, but the *quality* of the data. The aim of selective sampling is to build strong theoretical foundation by the researcher. This foundation also guides the data gathering process.

Fourth, qualitative studies lean towards using inductive analyses. This means that theories are built from the empiric data. Fifth, qualitative studies tend not to use hypotheses because the researcher should go through the data without presuppositions. This way the researcher is able to find new angles and not merely concentrate on proving a hypothesis.

Sixth, in qualitative approach, the researcher's position is central in a slightly different way than in quantitative studies. The qualitative researcher has more freedom in research planning and implementing, but he/she also has to make creative decisions concerning, for example, methodology and the written style of the report. Lastly, Eskola and Suoranta (2008) see narrativity as a general characteristic of qualitative research since storytelling and listening to stories are the foundation of the human world.

Despite the general inductive manner of analysis in qualitative research, theory can work in two ways in qualitative research approach: it can either be the target of or the tool for

the study (Eskola & Suoranta, 2008). When theory is used as a tool, it means that the theoretical background helps in making interpretations from the data, and that with the help of theory a researcher can present those interpretations in a scientific form. When the aim is to come up with a new theory, then one needs to go through the data and see which themes rise up from it. This study uses theory as a tool since the data will be analyzed with the help of Communication Theory of Identity (CTI).

Qualitative research approach seems appropriate for intercultural communication. Alasuutari (2011) states that there is one important similarity between qualitative research and cultural studies: they both explain phenomena by trying to *understand* them. They do not aim at universal explanations but concentrate more on studying the phenomena locally. For example, communication styles can vary from culture to culture but there is no one single way humans communicate.

I chose qualitative approach for this study, first, because of the amount and quality of my data (fictive novels). Since pre-existing data is substantially used in qualitative studies (Barbour, 2008), it seems an appropriate approach. Analyzing this kind of data can transcend "the original intent of the materials", and provide "an alternative frame of reference, highlighting the complex functions and significance of texts as these are produced and consumed" (Barbour, 2008, p. 16).

Second, I want to concentrate deeply on what the data will reveal to me. Instead of an inductive approach, which is more typical for qualitative studies, this study will analyze the data deductively. This is because of the solid theoretical base (CTI) that will guide me through the analysis.

Hirsjärvi et al. (1997) say that qualitative research uses qualitative research methods in order to analyze the data. Qualitative research is also multi-method in nature, and "[n]o specific method or practice can be privileged over another" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Some

favored methods include semiotics, narrative, content, discourse, archival, and phonemic analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Next, I will introduce one of those methods, the one that will be applied in this thesis: discourse analysis.

## 3.2 Discourse Analysis (DA)

Discourse analysis (henceforth DA) is a qualitative research method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Hirsjärvi et al., 1997). It has its origins in the field of linguistics where it was developed to study how language works in reality (Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Gee, 2010; Rapley, 2007). Later, the method has spread to other fields, such as social studies, communication and education. As the method has moved to other disciplines, it has taken new forms. DA is a fluid method of analysis since the researcher can "decide" what discourse means for him/her. Therefore, discourse does not necessarily have to deal with language since it can also deal with, e.g., social structures. This is the beauty and the challenge of the method. DA can also be combined with other methods, such as narrative, rhetoric or ethnographic analyses.

According to Gee (2010), DA is always an interpretation. Thus, there are no single truths since different researchers can find different truths from the same data. Interpretive approach is also recognized in intercultural communication. Scholars Collier and Thomas (1988) state about the nature of interpretive research that

> …interpretive inquiry is often most concerned with describing and explaining phenomena rather than explaining 'causal' relationships and predicting behavior, and we believe that cultural identity is important in describing and explaining intercultural communication (p. 106).

This statement gives a good support for this thesis since the aim of this study is to describe and explain identity gaps that deal with cultural identity by using interpretive approaches, i.e., DA and CTI.

DA can be done in two ways: there is descriptive DA and critical DA (Gee, 2010). Descriptive approach to DA aims at describing "…how language works in order to understand it" and gaining "…deep explanations of how language or the world works and why they work that way" (Gee, 2010, p. 9). Critical approach, on the other hand, not only describes how language works but also takes a stand on social and political issues and brings up questions of power (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Gee, 2010). As mentioned above, this thesis will be descriptive and leave the critical part aside. The study at hand is not interested in power relations and how the use of language will affect them but more interested in *how* cultural identity is enacted in communication.

DA and CTI are both interpretive, and they both aim at describing and explaining phenomena, which should make them a good match when it comes to combining the research method and the theoretical framework. In addition, as Collier and Thomas (1988) pointed out, cultural identity is important in describing and explaining intercultural communication, therefore, it seems that DA is an appropriate choice as a research method for this study. In the following, the concept of discourse and how discursive approach has been used to study identity will be introduced.

**3.3 The Concept of Discourse and Discursive Approach to Identity**

As mentioned earlier, the researcher defines what discourse means for him or her. Therefore, there is no straightforward and general description or definition to what a discourse is. This thesis will follow Fairclough's (2003) line of thinking, which sees discourses as

> …ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world. … Different discourses are different perspectives on the world… they [discourses] may complement one another, compete with one another, one can dominate others, and so forth. (p. 124)

As discourses represent different aspects of the world, so do our multilayered identities represent different aspects of ourselves. Just as discourses can contradict or add to each other, so do the frames of identity identified by Hecht (1993). All this is enacted in communication and the way we use language (Hecht, 1993; Gee, 2010).

Fairclough (1992, 2003) defines three ways discourses are present in our social practices: *genres*, *discourses*, and *styles*. *Genres* are different ways of (inter)acting, for example, interviewing someone or writing an opinion editorial for a newspaper. *Discourses*, as we already went through, refer to the different representations of the world. *Styles* refer to the "…particular ways of being, particular social or personal identities" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26). For example, we can use a certain kind of language to enact our personal identity (see also Gee, 2010, and the seven building tasks of language). Important for this study are the notions of discourse and styles. Cultural identity could be seen as a style and its different representations as discourses.

Identity has been of interest for discourse analysts in the past few decades (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; de Fina et al., 2006). Next, I will go through how identity has been treated in discourse studies.

Discursive approach to identity sees identity in two ways: identity either is a product or a performance that occurs in interaction, or it is a "historical set of structures" that has "regulatory power upon identity" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 29). Here we can see echoes from the theoretical perspectives to studying identity in communication mentioned earlier (Martin & Nakayama, 2010): interpretive perspective stresses the importance of communication (interaction), and the critical perspective stresses the importance of societal structures (such as power relations) and context (such as history). Furthermore, as in the identity theories introduced before, in discursive approach too, identity is seen as a dynamic, fluid and changing process (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006).

When identity is seen as constructed in discourse rather than just performed in discourse, the perspective to identity is *social constructionist* (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). According to social constructionism, "who we are to each other… is accomplished, disputed, ascribed, resisted, managed and negotiated in discourse." (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 4). Collier & Thomas (1988) follow the same line of thinking when they state that "…identity is experienced (i.e., occurs in discourse) at a variety of levels across situations" and that "cultural identity is a fluid process residing in discourse rather than a discrete dependent or independent variable" (p. 106, 116).

Similarities in the discursive approach and interpretive theoretical approach to identity seem evident. These approaches back up each other, which make them useful for this study. Finally, I will go through the relationship between DA and intercultural communication.

## 3.4 Discourse Analysis and Intercultural Communication

There has been an attempt to combine culture and discourse analysis in the field of intercultural communication. Carbaugh (2007) has put forward a type of discourse analysis that he calls cultural discourse analysis (CuDA). CuDA is a tool with which to do ethnographic communication studies. Cultural discourse is defined as "…a historically transmitted expressive system of communication practices, of acts, events, and styles, which are composed of specific symbols, symbolic forms, norms, and their meanings" (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 169). CuDA's basic idea is that as we communicate with each other, we are saying things literally about a specific topic but at the same time we say things culturally. These cultural things are such that people from the same culture understand them but an outsider may not. In other words, there are hidden meanings in the communication and it is those hidden cultural meanings that CuDA is interested in.

Since this method is clearly ethnographic and suits better for "natural" data, I decided not to use it. Using descriptive DA is more useful for my purposes. I am not interested in hidden meanings but how communication and cultural identities shape each other.

All in all, recent DA studies are overwhelmingly inductive (see, e.g., Avila-Saavedra, 2011; Burgess & Ivanic, 2010; Clary-Lemon, 2010; Handsfield & Crumpler, 2013; Knight et al., 2012; McVittie et al., 2011; Sapountzis et al., 2013; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2009; and Wickens, 2011) and less deductive (see, e.g., Schieble, 2012). This could be expected because, as a method, DA is qualitative and qualitative research is prone to be inductive. However, in intercultural communication the ratio between recent inductive vs. deductive DA studies is vice versa: there are more deductive discourse analyses (see, e.g., Collier, 2009a; Lacy, 2010; Ladegaard, 2007, 2012a; and Strunck & Lassen, 2011) than inductive ones (see, e.g., Askehave & Holmgreen, 2011; Demont-Heinrich, 2008; Ladegaard, 2012b) to be found in the field of intercultural communication. There is also one study that has combined both approaches (Hammack, 2010). This study will follow the ICC trend of using deductive approach because of the solid theory that will guide the analysis of the data.

## 4 IDENTITY GAPS IN *WHITE TEETH* (2001) AND *ON BEAUTY* (2006)

As was covered earlier, identity gaps are "discrepancies between or among the four frames of identity" (Jung & Hecht, 2004, p. 268). In addition, research on identity gaps is not supposed to merely point out the gaps since they always exist in communication, the point is to reveal the type and the degree of the gaps, and how they affect social relations (Jung & Hecht, 2004). In the following, I will go through selected identity gaps with examples that can be found in the data, and how they might affect the social relations in their contexts.

The identity gaps that were selected for this analysis are *personal–relational*, *personal–enacted*, and *relational–enacted identity gaps*. These identity gaps were chosen

because personal–relational and personal–enacted identity gaps have been studied the most, as they were the first identity gaps to be introduced by Jung and Hecht (2004). Thus, there is more literature to be found of these identity gaps and hence more studies to refer to. Relational–enacted identity gap was chosen because it, on the other hand, has been studied relatively little. Therefore, this study can add its contribution to the theory by expanding the coverage to also relational–enacted identity gap. This gap was studied first by Kam and Hecht (2009). The latest trends in identity gap research are demonstrated in the chart below (Figure 1).
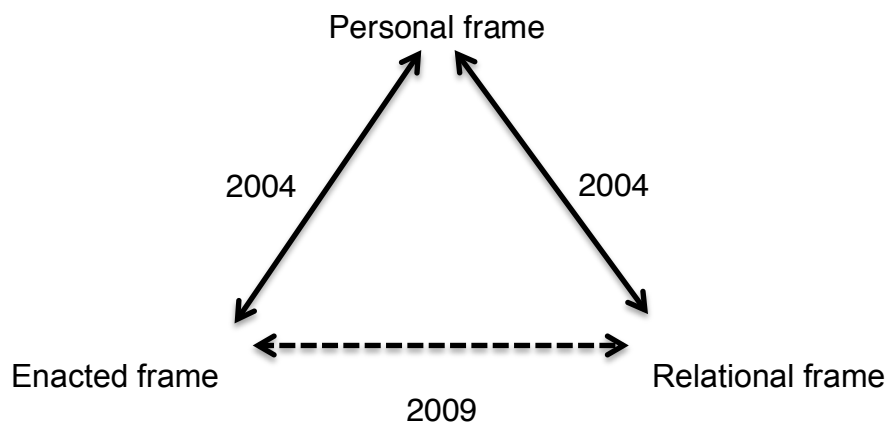


Figure 1. Trends in identity gap research

Studying the personal identity frame as a part of the identity gap will be of interest as the data will allow me to get "inside" the characters' thoughts and hence reveal his/her "real" self. Enacted frame is important to investigate since it deals with communication, and according to CTI communication is central in identity formation, maintaining, and manifestation. Relational frame, on the other hand, will reveal the nature of the characters' various relationships. In addition, personal–relational and personal–enacted identity gaps reveal different kinds of information as the first one "seems to occur relatively instantaneously from communication", and the latter is "a delayed result of communication" (Jung & Hecht, 2008). Lastly, relational–enacted identity gaps will reveal inconsistencies

with others' expectations. Therefore, quite holistic understanding of how cultural identities are represented in the data could be found.

Early on in the research process, the interpenetration of identity frames was discovered. This was revealed once it became clear that same situations could serve as examples for more than one identity gap. As has been established, all frames of identity are always present in communication situations. In the course of them, other frames become more salient than others, which means that in the progress of communication also the identity gap seems to change from one to the other. There are instances, e.g., in *White Teeth*, where the frames of identity are so intertwined that the gaps change from one to the other within a single communication situation. Therefore, identity gaps are not always clear-cut and easily categorized.

Further, this analysis will concentrate on identity gaps that are dealing with cultural identity. This means identity issues that have something to do with gender, sex, age, racial, ethnic, religious, class, national, or regional aspects of one's identity (Martin & Nakayama, 2010).

Next, I will introduce the selected identity gaps with selected examples from *White Teeth* and *On Beauty*. All examples of identity gaps that were found in the data will not be covered here. The ones that will be analyzed in this study were considered as the best representations of the selected identity gaps. Omitted examples were seen as replicas of similar situations or themes to those that got through the pre-selection, therefore, they were left out to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Before moving on to the analysis part of this section, a few words about the typography must be mentioned. Because the data of this study is fictional text, the author of the novels has had the opportunity to use punctuation as a literary effect. There are quotations from the data where Smith (2001, 2006) has used the three dots (…) as so. To separate the

omissions of text made by the author of this study, the following procedure has been carried out: whenever the three dots are in square brackets, i.e., […], it signifies that the author of this study has taken some text out. Whenever the three dots are without brackets, i.e., …, it means that it has been written as such by the author of the novels.

In addition, in this section, two kinds of quotation marks will be used to save from confusion. These quotation marks, " ", signify direct quotations from the text being analyzed, these quotation marks, ' ', are used in the meaning of 'as if' or whenever the word is considered informal. Exceptions to this are the directly quoted dialogues from the novels since in *White Teeth* (2001) Smith uses the following quotation marks in her text: " " to mark the characters' dialogue, but in *On Beauty* (2006) she uses the different kind of quotation marks (' '). I have kept them to respect Smith's artistic rights.

## 4.1 Personal–Relational Identity Gaps

Personal–relational identity gaps occur when individuals view themselves differently from the identity that others have ascribed to them. In other words, others do not see you the same way as you see yourself. Reducing this gap should therefore result in identifications that match each other: one's personal frame of identity should match the relational one. Existing and/or expanding gap might affect the communication and the social relations in different ways, which in fact goes for all identity gaps.

### 4.1.1 Personal–Relational Identity Gaps in White Teeth (2001)

Samad Miah Iqbal, the father of the family Iqbal works in an Indian restaurant in London. He has to work there since there is no other job possibility for him, and even this job was given to him by his cousin who owns the restaurant. Samad likes to talk to people and discuss about

things, and he is very proud of his Bengali heritage, of which he really wants to talk about.

He gets bossed around by younger people working in the restaurant, and at times he wishes

he had a sign that said the following, so that people would know and understand who he

'really' was (personal frame):

> I AM NOT A WAITER. I HAVE BEEN A STUDENT, A SCIENTIST, A SOLDIER,
> MY WIFE IS CALLED ALSANA, WE LIVE IN EAST LONDON BUT WE
> WOULD LIKE TO MOVE NORTH. I AM A MUSLIM BUT ALLAH HAS
> FORSAKEN ME OR I HAVE FORSAKEN ALLAH, I'M NOT SURE. I HAVE A
> FRIEND – ARCHIE – AND OTHERS. I AM FORTY-NINE BUT WOMEN STILL
> TURN IN THE STREETS. SOMETIMES.

> But, no such placard existing, he had instead the urge, the need, to speak to every
> man, and, like the Ancient Mariner, explain constantly, constantly wanting to reassert
> something, anything. (Smith, 2001, p. 49).

Even after all the reasserting people still keep seeing him as something he feels like he is not

(relational frame). Samad does not see himself as a waiter. When he was serving Britain in

the Second World War his fellow white soldiers named him "Sultan", which was such a great

mistake that he had to correct them:

> "Sultan… Sultan…" Samad mused. "Do you know, I wouldn't mind the epithet, Mr.
> Mackintosh, if it were at least *accurate*. It's not historically *accurate*, you know. I am
> sure I have explained to you that I am from *Bengal*. The word *Sultan* refers to certain
> men of the *Arab* lands – many hundreds of miles west of Bengal. To call me Sultan is
> about as accurate, in terms of the mileage, you understand, as if I referred to you as a
> Jerry-Hun fat bastard." (Smith, 2001, p. 73).

This kind of 'misunderstandings' by others make Samad frustrated, a feeling that only grows

when other people do not seem to understand even after he has explained how things really

are. This could also be one of the reasons that have lead Samad resent the English culture and

why he feels that him and his family have been corrupted by it. Later, in a discussion with his

work mate he comments:

> I don't wish to be a modern man! I wish to live as I was always meant to! I wish to
> return to the East! [...] I should never have come here – that's where every problem
> has come from. Never should have had my sons here, so far from God. […] [M]y

dearest friend, Archibald Jones, is an unbeliever! Now: what kind of a model am I for my children? (Smith, 2001, p. 121).

This outburst is not only about frustration towards the English culture but also to himself, therefore, this could also be seen as an identity gap between personal and enacted identity frames. Samad has cheated his wife, Alsana, with his children's music teacher, which has caused him a lot of emotional pressure. He is having his own battle between his religious self (personal frame) and how he actually behaves (enacted frame) added with others' false ascriptions (relational frame).

Even after living decades in England, Samad's personal and relational identities do not appear to match. He sees himself as an academic (he has studied biology in a university in Delhi, India) and a soldier from Bengal, while others keep ascribing him such identities as a Pakistani immigrant (which is about as 'great' a mistake as calling a Finn a Swede) or a waiter. This is of course natural because restaurant is the only surroundings that some people see him, and many East Asian immigrants in England come from Pakistan. Cases that deal with personal–relational identity gaps go to show that people should not judge a book by it covers.

There are more discrepancies between personal and relational identity frames in the Iqbal family. The younger son of his twin sons, Millat, is having his own realizations about how people see him in certain way, but it is not necessarily how he sees himself.

A good example comes from Millat's music class when he is nine years old, and his father happens to be visiting the class. Their teacher, Miss Burt-Jones, has just let the class know that they would be getting to know music from other cultures, such as India. She says that people can learn about each other through each other's culture, and then turns to Millat asking what kind of music he likes. After thinking it for a while, Millat swings his saxophone to his side and begins fingering it like a guitar and singing:

"Bo-orn to ruuun! Da da da da daaa! Bruce Springsteen, miss! Da da da da daaa! Baby, we were bo-orn–" (Smith, 2001, p. 130).

But suddenly this reply does not seem to satisfy Miss Burt-Jones and she asks perhaps there is something else that he listens to at home. Millat's face falls as he thinks that his answer is not correct. He turns over to his father who is sitting behind the teacher trying to gesticulate a dance called bharata natyam by jerking his head and moving his arms. At that moment, Millat thinks he has got the right answer and replies:

"Thriiiii-ller!" sang Millat, full throated, believing he had caught his father's gist. "Thriii-ller night! Michael Jackson, miss! Michael Jackson!" Samad put his head in his hands. Miss Burt-Jones looked queerly at the small child standing on a chair, gyrating and grabbing his crotch before her. "OK, thank you, Millat. Thank you for sharing…that." Millat grinned. "No problem, miss." (Smith, 2001, p. 130).

This is a classic example of when stereotypes do not match the reality. Millat has grown up in a completely different environment than his father, yet, the teacher still assumes his children are similar to him (relational frame). She has ascribed Samad's treats to his sons, expecting that at home the family acts like they would in Bengal, listening to certain kind of music and perhaps eating certain kind of food. Millat, having been born and raised in England around western cultural influences, such as Bruce Springsteen and Michael Jackson, of course replies to Miss Burt-Jones's question as any other English child would in the beginning of the 1980's (personal frame). Hence Millat's confusion in the situation.

Later, as a teenager, Millat is like any other 'cool' young Londoner. As far as Millat is concerned, at the age of fifteen, he sees himself as English with a twist (personal frame). He has his own "crew" of friends that is called *Raggastani* who speak "a strange mix of Jamaican patois, Bengali, Gujarati, and English" (Smith, 2001, p.192). There is a scene at a railway station where Millat is trying to buy a train ticket to Bradford and refuses to pay 75

pounds for it. He and his crew then call the ticket salesman with a word that he does not understand and he assumes this word is in a "Paki language" (relational frame) to which Millat replies:

> First: I'm not a Paki, you ignorant fuck. And second: you don't need a translator, yeah? I'll give it to you straight. You're a fucking faggot, yeah? Queer boy, poofter, batty-rider, shit-dick. (Smith, 2001, 192).

From the sheer number of curse words in this caption, one could assume that almost any English teenager could utter Millat's reply. The way Millat talks shows where he has grown up and what kind of language he has acquired. He sees himself as English (personal frame) but he knows that others do not (relational frame) because

> He knew that he, Millat, was a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelled of curry; had no sexual identity; took other people's jobs; or had no job and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his relatives; that he could be a dentist or a shop-owner or a curry-shifter, but not a footballer or a filmmaker; that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep; that he worshiped elephants and wore turbans; that no one who looked like Millat, or spoke like Millat, or felt like Millat, was ever on the news unless they had recently been murdered. (Smith, 2001, 194).

Millat's personal–relational identity gap has not diminished over the years. It is still there since the white majority sees him as a Pakistani and he sees himself as English. But what has changed is the reason why it is so. When he was nine, he could not understand why his music teacher did not accept his answers, but now he knows that there are certain stereotypes ascribed to him. Clearly they are not matching to his personal identity frame and he is aware of that.

As a second generation Bengali immigrant, Millat has learned to play with these ascribed stereotypes. In another scene, Joyce Chalfen, a white middle-class woman, asks Millat where he is from. He replies he is from Willesden (a city area in London). This answer does not satisfy Joyce Chalfen, so she asks where Millat is from *originally*. This is the moment when Millat puts his fake accent in action and replies:

"*Oh*," said Millat, putting on what he called a *bud-bud-ding-ding* accent.
"You are meaning where from am I *originally*."
Joyce looked confused. "Yes, *originally*."
"Whitechapel," said Millat, pulling out a fag. "Via the Royal London Hospital and the 207 bus." (Smith, 2001, p. 265).

Joyce Chalfen does not seem to even consider that Millat actually might be English, which is a burden someone with a different skin color must bear as was seen in the earlier caption as well. Also the way Millat behaves is not consistent with the way Joyce sees Muslim children (relational frame) because according to her "[t]hey are usually so silent, you know, terribly meek – but he's so full of…spunk!" (Smith, 2001, p. 266). But in fact,

Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, Englishman or Bengali; he lived for the in between, he lived up to his middle name, *Zulfikar*, the clashing of two swords. (Smith, 2001, p. 291).

It comes across that not feeling like being a part of host society might have lead the character of Millat to make some drastic decisions later in his life (e.g., joining a Muslim fundamentalist group). Millat sees himself as a part of the bigger whole, after all he was born in England, but the hosts do not seem as welcoming since they are pigeon holing him into the Pakistani and Indian immigrant minority where he feels like he does not belong. Reducing this identity gap might have had different results in Millat's life.

## 4.1.2 Personal–Relational Identity Gaps in On Beauty (2006)

*On Beauty* gives a slightly different angle to cultural identity because many of the identity gaps in this novel are not so clearly ethnic or racial as in *White Teeth*. The cultural identity gaps in *On Beauty* deal more with class and status differences, especially the level of education and jobs. Questions about race and ethnicity are also present in this novel but they create less identity gaps per se compared to *White Teeth* as the characters seem to be quite

honest to who they are and how they present themselves when it comes to racial and ethnic issues.

Kiki Simmonds is a black American woman who was raised in Florida, moved to New York to study to be a nurse and later married a white English man called Howard Belsey. Kiki works at the administration of the local hospital while her husband is an Art History Professor at the university. Both Kiki and Howard come from lower-class background, but after inheriting a valuable big house close to the university at Wellington, New England, the Belsey family officially became middle class.

In a mostly white town where black women are usually maids, not the employers of maids, Kiki Simmonds is a rare sight. Her large figure strikes attention wherever she goes and certain attributes are ascribed to that figure. There is a situation at a local outdoor festival where Kiki stops to try on a pair of earrings at a table where a man is selling some jewelry.

> […] Kiki suspected already that this would be one of those familiar exchanges in which her enormous spellbinding bosom would play a subtle […] silent third role in the conversation. […] The size was sexual and at the same time more than sexual: sex was only a small element of its symbolic range. If she were white, maybe it would refer only to sex, but she was not. And so her chest gave off a mass of signals beyond her direct control: sassy, sisterly, predatory, motherly, threatening, comforting – it was a mirror-world she had stepped into in her mid forties, a strange fabulation of the person she believed she was. She could no longer be meek or shy. Her body had directed her to a new personality; people expected new things of her, some of them good, some not. (Smith, 2006, p. 47).

In this caption, non-verbal communication plays the leading role since Kiki has been ascribed treats of identity that she does not necessarily avow. She tries to adjust to other people's expectations of her looks. As she points out, the situation might differ if she was white (personal frame). Just her skin color is sending certain signals to others that they interpret in their own particular way (relational frame). Another attribute that Kiki has noticed as she is

getting older and bigger is that men seem to find her more funny than sexual. She has found a reason for this.

> But then, thought Kiki, they were brought up that way, these white American boys: I'm the Aunt Jemima on the cookie boxes of their childhoods, the pair of thick ankles Tom and Jerry played around. Of course they find me funny. (Smith, 2006, p. 51).

Kiki does not define herself as 'not funny', but this is another powerful example about how others ascribe meanings only based on a person's looks. Kiki is big, middle-aged, black woman, which apparently translates to 'funny' to white men (relational frame).

Kiki and Howard celebrate their 30th anniversary by having a party in the middle of the week. Kiki has been out for an errand and arrives a little late to her party, and is not wearing what she is supposed to be wearing. She sees that first guests have already arrived and starts offering them some food and drinks. When she does this, she realizes:

> Sometimes you get a flash of what you look like to other people. This one was unpleasant: a black woman in a headwrap, approaching with a bottle in one hand and a plate of food in the other, like a maid in an old movie. The real staff […] were nowhere to be seen. (Smith, 2006, p. 98).

Kiki is the hostess of this event and actually should not be serving the food and beverages (personal frame), therefore, this scene presents an interesting moment: Kiki behaving for a while what many Wellingtonians might expect of her to do if they did not know that this grand black lady was actually middle class and not a maid (relational frame). Of course their guests know that she is not a maid, but for an outsider, this glimpse might well be represented as such.

Being one of the few black women in mostly white middle class community makes Kiki feel like she has lost herself. This probably was not the life she ordered. In a conversation with her husband, Kiki lets Howard know her feelings of being an outsider in the community, which Howard does not seem to understand.

> And I don't know why I'm surprised. You don't even notice it – you *never* notice. You think it's normal. Everywhere we go, I'm alone in this…this *sea* of white. I barely *know* any black folk any more, Howie. My whole life is white. I don't see any black folk unless they be cleaning under my feet in the fucking café in your *fucking* college. Or pushing a fucking hospital bed through a corridor. I *staked my whole life* on you. And I have no idea any more why I did that. […] I gave up *my life* for you. I don't even know who I am any more. (Smith, 2006, p. 206).

This loss of one's self and yearning to go back to one's roots is similar to what Samad feels like in *White Teeth*, as we saw above. Kiki sees that she has sacrificed her life for the life that Howard wants. She would like to be surrounded with more black people who were in similar situation to hers. She cannot seem to be able to see herself as an 'upper-class' African American when she sees so many black people working in 'lower-class' jobs, such as cleaning. Kiki relates herself to this black lower class, not to the white middle class that her husband represents. To the 'black folk' that Kiki refers to, she is middle class whether she liked it or not, but she finds herself to be alone in that white mass. Discrepancies are therefore fully present: Kiki sees herself as 'black folk' (personal frame); the lower class 'black folk' sees her as middle class (relational frame); the middle class is 'too white' for Kiki (personal frame). No wonder she feels alone.

Kiki and Howard's youngest child, Levi, is sixteen, tall, and handsome boy with skin that is several shades lighter to his mother but several shades darker than his father's. Being mixed race can cause some misunderstandings with people who do not know him. Levi knows that some people act reserved around him because of the way he looks like:

> Maybe he could buy a T-shirt that just had on it YO – I'M NOT GOING TO RAPE YOU. He could use a T-shirt like that. Maybe like three times each day while on his travels that T-shirt would come in handy. There was always some old lady who needed to be reassured on that point. (Smith, 2006, p. 80).

Samad wanted a placard; Levi wants a T-shirt. So many assumptions are made from what people look like that it can make the other party's life stressful, especially when he or she looks different. Levi is into hip hop culture, thus, he dresses accordingly: baggy jeans that are

worn low, large shirts and hoodies (usually in many layers), listens to his iPod with big

earphones, and wears a doo-rag (a kind of head scarf that has a tight fit; or, in Howard's

words: "[…] a woman's stocking, thin and black […] tied in a knot, with a small inadvertent

teat like a nipple, on top") (Smith, 2006, p. 13). So, in fact, Levi does not have to deal with

only the stereotypes caused by his skin color but also the stereotypes ascribed to the members

of hip hop culture, which at times can come across violent. But the fact is that Levi

> […] had been raised soft and open, with a liberal susceptibility to the pain of others. While all the Belseys shared something of this trait, in Levi – who knew nothing of history or economics, of philosophy or anthropology, who had no hard ideological shell to protect him – it was particularly pronounced. (Smith, 2006, p. 355).

Levi might come across as a criminal because of the subculture he represents (relational

frame), but as this caption proves, he actually is quite sensitive young man (personal frame).

Because of this treat Levi joins a 'crew': his crew, consisting mostly of poor Haitians while

he is the only American, is demanding more rights to regular Haitians to make things just in

Haiti and wanting to stop the white men exploiting their country. Levi does not quite 'fit' that

picture for he is a middle-class American in hip-hop gear and wearing 120-dollar shoes, but

somehow he gets in to the group. Levi is neither poor Haitian nor a criminal, even though he

might look like one.

Levi is not as well read or into academia as his older siblings, Jerome and Zora. He is

more down to earth and political minded like his mother. When he becomes interested in the

situation in Haiti, he starts reading about it. His family does not expect him to be into

studying since he skips school quite often, but this is a different case as Levi points out:

> I know you all think I'm some kind of a fool – I'm not a fool. And I been reading, I been watching the news – this shit is *real*. (Smith, 2006, p. 429).

With this Levi asks some respect for his opinions. He is not as stupid (personal frame) as

others may think he is (relational frame).

As mentioned, Levi's father Howard Belsey is an Art History Professor at the prestigious Wellington College, which is as close to Harvard as Howard is ever going to get. As a character, he tends to be so into his academic profession that he misses out what is going on around him. He talks to his family members as if they were his students by using words and sentence structures that some people might find snobbish, such as "[…] the onus is on me, I know that. It's for me to – to – explain my narrative in a way that's comprehensible" (Smith, 2006, p. 204). He sees the world through theories, which sometimes makes him blind to 'the real world':

> Like many academics, Howard was innocent of the world. He could identify thirty different ideological trends in the social sciences, but did not really know what a software engineer was. (Smith, 2006, p. 33).

Even his wife says to him at one point:

> You know what's weird? Is that you can get someone who is a professor of one thing and then is just so *intensely stupid* about everything else? (Smith, 2006, p. 15).

She is referring to Howard's capability of not understanding relationships. His colleague at the university, Claire Malcolm, expresses outsiders' general view of Howard:

> It was her old joke that Howard was only human in a theoretical sense. This was the general feeling in Wellington too: his students found it near impossible to imagine that Howard should have a wife, a family, that he went to the bathroom, that he felt love. (Smith, 2006, p. 225).

This assumption is false since Howard indeed has a family where he is loved. Thus, the ascribed identity (relational frame) does not match the reality (personal frame). Though, there are a few conversations between him and his wife where they seem to be talking almost in different languages. An example of this is the earlier caption where Kiki is trying to explain her feelings of being an outsider to Howard; another one will be covered in the Relational– Enacted Identity Gaps part.

The town of Wellington is located half-an-hour drive from Boston, Massachusetts. In Boston, there is a city block, or neighborhood, that is called Roxbury, which has quite rough reputation. The character of Carl Thomas, an African American young man, is from this part of Boston and has different kind of background to that of the Belseys. Through some circumstances Carl gets to know the family, and especially Levi takes an instant liking to him when he finds out that Carl makes his own rap music. He is not "an educated brother", so he is surprised when Howard asks him whether he studies at Wellington: "Do I *look* like I'm at Wellington?" (Smith, 2006, p. 77). To Carl, a young guy with his background and his skin color, to which he refers quite a lot, is far away from a Wellingtonian (personal frame). Howard, on the other hand, sees a guy like Carl possibly attending the college because academic talent does not recognize what a person looks like (relational frame).

Through other series of circumstances Carl actually ends up studying in a poetry class at the prestigious Wellington College. The teacher of the class, Claire Malcolm, finds him from a talent night where he is performing his rap lyrics and asks him to join the class. This is a kick-start of Carl's transformation into a Wellingtonian.

> Large sections of Carl's personality had been constructed on the founding principle that classrooms were not for Carl. […] Claire had that special teacher thing he hadn't felt since he was a really small boy […] She wanted him to do *well*. And he wanted to do well *for* her. […] Carl looked down at his poem every now and then and felt a sensation he'd never experienced in a classroom before: pride. (Smith, 2006, pp. 259–260).

Carl's personal frame has been built on a foundation that he is an 'uneducated brother', and he is very hesitant at first when he is asked to join the poetry class. Not having money, Carl does not see himself as a part of a college community. Others, on the other hand, see him as a possible and talented part of it, like Howard and Claire (relational frame). This identity gap starts to reduce when he is given the chance to join Claire's class. He starts to feel proud of himself.

Carl is not an actual student of the Wellington College because he does not pay for his education. Therefore, he is a privileged outsider for being able to attend a class in the institution. Some teachers at the college are against this idea that outsiders take places in classes from the actual students. Claire wants to keep Carl in her class, hence a job is created for him as a librarian at the music library at the Black Studies Department. Carl dives into his job with his whole enthusiasm, working even on days when he is not supposed to. He gets paid for buying records and listening to music, which is a dream job for him. His peers at Roxbury cannot believe it: "Dog, you stealing they dollars from under they noses! Damn, that's sweet!" (Smith, 2006, p. 373). Instead of agreeing with them

> Carl surprised himself by getting little pissed at this kind of congratulation. Everybody kept telling him what a great gig he had, getting paid for doing nothing. But it wasn't nothing. (Smith, 2006, p. 373).

Carl's personal–relational identity gap has taken a turn. If earlier he could not see himself as being a part of the Wellington culture, now he is starting to resent his past's opinions. His relational frame is leaning towards Wellington College and personal frame towards an employee who loves his job; a while ago he was neither.

As Carl is diving into his new job and new life at Wellington, he starts to forget his past. This results in losing credibility in Levi's eyes. They bump into each other at the college.

> "What you doing here man?"
> "Damn – didn't you know?" said Carl, smiling cheesily and popping his collar. "I be a *college* man now!"
> Levi laughed. "No, seriously, bro – what you doing here?"
> Carl stopped smiling. He tapped the knapsack on his back. "Didn't your sister tell you? I'm a college man now. I'm working here."
> "*Here*?"
> "Black Studies Department. I just started – I'm an archivist."
> "A *what*?" Levi transferred his weight to the opposite foot. 'Man, you screwing with me?'
> "Nope."
> "You *work* here. I don't get it – you cleaning?"
> (Smith, 2006, p. 387).

Carl is offended by this assumption. Levi, on the other hand, does not mean it to be as harsh as it sounds like. He is just used to the fact that people with Carl's background very often are the cleaners at Wellington. Levi is having great trouble understanding that Carl actually works in a library. The final straw for Levi is when he finds out that Carl is not making music anymore. Carl has stopped because "it's all gangstas and playas now" and "it's all these really angry brothers kinda…*ranting*" (Smith, 2006, p. 388). To Levi

> […] it was *so* strange to stand next to this ex-Carl, this played-out fool, this *shell* of a brother in whom all that was beautiful and thrilling and true had utterly evaporated. (Smith, 2006, p. 389).

In Levi's opinion Carl has sold his soul to the devil because Levi despises the university life. Having spent his whole life in different university campuses in different countries, he does not see the glory of it. Carl, on the other hand, is having his honeymoon phase with Wellington. To him, he is a new and improved man (personal frame), but Levi does not see him the same way (relational frame). When Carl was a man of the street from Roxbury, he was cool, but this new Carl has lost Levi's respect.

## 4.2 Personal–Enacted Identity Gaps

When there is discrepancy between personal and enacted identity frames, i.e., when there is an identity gap between personal and enacted identity frames, it means that individuals act differently from how they perceive themselves. Sometimes this might have to be done to gain acceptance from other people (e.g., immigrants behaving according to the norms of their new host culture as opposed to their original one).

**4.2.1 Personal–Enacted Identity Gaps in White Teeth (2001)**

When Millat reaches the age of eighteen he has joined a Muslim fundamentalist group called KEVIN ("Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation") and is ranked quite high in the group (Smith, 2001, p. 245, 368). He did not join the group because he is a Muslim but because he loves clans and the outfit the KEVIN group wears (black suit and a green bow tie). Trying to live as a 'proper' Muslim by the teachings of the Koran is the most challenging part of his membership to the group. Millat admires western film industry, especially movies about gangsters and mafia, but as a member of KEVIN he should abandon all western influence.

> As for KEVIN's more unorthodox programs of direct action, Millat was right in there, he was their greatest asset, he was in the forefront, the first into battle come jihad, cool as fuck in a crisis, a man of action, like Brando, like Pacino, like Liotta. […] It was his most shameful secret that whenever he opened a door […] the opening of *Good Fellas* ran through his head and he found this sentence rolling around in what he presumed was his subconscious:
>
> **As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster**. (Smith, 2001, p. 368).

Millat clearly wants to gain the acceptance of the group by 'sacrificing' a part of his personal identity, the 'western' part. He is acting out like a 'proper' Muslim to his KEVIN group members (enacted frame), but at home, in the privacy of his own bedroom, he lets the West out when nobody sees him (personal frame). Like for example when he is playing a gangster from a mafia movie in front of a mirror and saying to his reflection

> *You lookin' at me? You lookin' at me?*
> *Well, who the fuck else are you looking at, huh?*
> *I can't see anybody else in here.*
> *You lookin' at me?*
> (Smith, 2001, p. 380).

If his KEVIN brothers were to witness this moment, it would be devastating. He would lose his face and respect in front of his peers, so, he keeps his love for the western cinema to himself.

Millat's father, Samad, has similar problems with his identity. He talks a lot how to be a proper Muslim and live by the teachings of the Koran, but in reality, as his son Millat puts it

> He's a bloody hypocrite, man […] he prays five times a day but he still drinks [alcohol] and he doesn't have any Muslim friends […] And he wants me to stop hanging around with KEVIN. I'm more of a fucking Muslim than he is. (Smith, 2001, p. 277).

Samad realizes this himself too and likes to blame the English cultural influence for his and his sons' bad behavior as we saw in one of the captions in Personal–Relational Identity Gaps part above (pp. 34–35). He thinks he is weak for giving in to the English influence and gives big rants at home that whole family seems to have forgotten what the Koran says. On the surface, he seems to be acting like a proper Muslim by praying and seeking consultancy at the mosque (enacted frame), but then come afternoons and his daily meetings with his long-time friend Archie Jones at the O'Connell's pub where they eat and have beers (personal frame). In a way, Samad is a Muslim in theory but not in practice.

Millat's mother and Samad's wife, Alsana, is also a complex character. Her personal–enacted identity gap is witnessed, for example, when in a parent–teacher association meeting, she grudgingly supports her husband's suggestion of not celebrating an English holiday at the school. When this happens, some women "[…] looked over to her with the piteous, saddened smiles they reserved for subjugated Muslim women" (Smith, 2001, p. 110). The truth, on the other hand, could not be further from what they think because Alsana is far from being subjugated. In fact, Alsana

> […] was not as meek as he [Samad] had assumed when they married […] Alsana […] was prone to moments, even fits […] of rage. […] In his naivete Samad had simply assumed a woman so young would be…easy. But Alsana was not… no, she was not easy. (Smith, 2001, p. 51).

Much like her son, Alsana keeps up appearances for the sake of her family's reputation (enacted frame). She comes across as a vulnerable wife in a leash, but, as we can see from Samad's description, she can be violent at home (personal frame). It is not unusual that in the family Iqbal the parents have very physical fights where they are throwing each other around their yard while their children are betting which one is going to win the fight, a fact that the women at the PTA meeting do not have any idea of.

Archie's daughter, Irie Jones, is the same age as Samad's twin sons Magid and Millat. Her father is a white Englishman and her black mother is originally from Jamaica. Hence she is mixed race, half black and half white, which brings particular identity issues for her as well. She has got thick, curly black hair and large figure, as women with African descent tend to have. At the age of sixteen, she decides to dye her hair red and have it straightened because she is in love with Millat who at the time has his eye on a red-haired English girl:

> She had it all planned; she was going to go round to Millat's this very evening with her new mane, all tied up in a bun, and she was going to take off her glasses and shake down her hair and he was going to say *why Miss Jones, I never would have supposed… Why Miss Jones, you're–* (Smith, 2001, p. 229).

As spoken and written communication are not the only means to communicate, Irie wants to give a message to the outside world by changing her hair color. She wants to be perceived as an English girl with straight, red hair so that Millat would like her (enacted frame). As we will see in the next part, Relational–Enacted Identity Gaps, the message may have not gone through as she was hoping for. Irie's hair incident, which started as a personal–enacted identity gap, later progresses to an identity gap between relational and enacted identity frames.

The Chalfen family represents the white English middle class in the novel. Their eldest son, Joshua, is also the same age as Irie, Magid and Millat. There is an event at their

school where Millat, Irie and Joshua are caught with marijuana cigarette. Joshua is the typical 'nerd' who likes roleplaying and is quite invisible at school. But when he is caught holding the marijuana cigarette for Irie, things change. At he headmaster's office Irie is trying to defend him by saying that Joshua had nothing to do with the smoking of marijuana (which is true) when to everyone's surprise he refuses this defense and says that Irie is just trying to cover for him (which is a lie). All this because

> […] in the past two days, Joshua had gained more respect, been patted on the back by more people, and generally lorded it around more than he ever had in his life. Some of the glamour of Millat seemed to have rubbed off on him by association […] He liked being connected with them, however tenuously. He had been plucked by the two of them out of nerddom, accidentally whisked from obscurity into the school spotlight. He wasn't going back without a struggle. (Smith, 2001, pp. 250–251).

By letting other people think that he is not just a 'nerd', Joshua is enacting differently from his personal identity. This is proven at the principal's office where Joshua desperately tries to keep his 'cool-factor' alive but fails. Millat is not buying Joshua's alleged drug problem and asks him to measure an eighth of an ounce of the headmaster's tobacco. Joshua picks an amount, shows it to Millat and Millat says: "Barely a five-pound draw […] I wouldn't buy shit from you" (Smith, 2001, p. 251). Even the headmaster agrees: "I think we can safely say the game's up. Even *I* knew that wasn't anywhere near an eighth" (Smith, 2001, p. 251). Joshua may still have the respect of the rest of the school but he loses it in front of the two that matter to him the most, Irie and Millat. As Irie and Millat still see Joshua as a 'nerd', this same caption could also be an example of a relational–enacted identity gap. Quite like the scene about Irie's hair, also this communication situation progressed from one kind of identity gap to another.

### 4.2.2 Personal–Enacted Identity Gaps in On Beauty (2006)

Partly because his father is tight with giving Levi money and partly trying to 'keep it real', Levi has a weekend job in a mega record store in Boston. Levi glorifies the street life, probably because so many hip-hop artists have climbed the economical ladder starting from the bottom and having a hard life. He feels a little bit embarrassed to be from a middle-class family that has no financial problems. This weekend job is also his way out of the 'Wellington bubble'.

> [I]f he didn't get his measly thirty-five dollars a week, then there was no money to escape Wellington on a Saturday night, no chance to dance with all those kids, all those *girls* who didn't give a fuck who the hell Gram-ski was or why whoever – *Rembran* – was no good. Sometimes he felt that those thirty-five dollars were the only thing that kept him half normal, half sane, half *black*. (Smith, 2006, p. 193).

The "Rem-bran" refers to his father's work as he is an art history expert on Rembrandt. Levi is not doing his weekend job just for the money: it makes him feel to be someone else than 'Levi-from-Wellington-with-easy-life' (personal frame).

At his job, Levi pretends to be poorer than he actually is (enacted frame), especially for a charming lady called LaShonda. He has a small crush on her and she has always expected Levi to be as poor as she is, but he has not corrected her. Whenever Levi talks with her he allows "[…] his accent to slip a few rungs down into closer relation with LaShonda's own" (Smith, 2006, p. 183) (enacted frame). But the truth is, as has been established, that "[…] Levi was only sixteen, living with his parents in the middle-class suburb of Wellington" (Smith, 2006, p. 183). Levi has decided that he is not going to tell anything about who he is and where he really comes from (personal frame), so he keeps his 'poor' act on (enacted frame).

Later, Levi joins a group of black men that consist of people from Angola, Haiti, Cuba and the Dominicans. He is the only American in the group. They want the Haitian word to be heard and make people realize the real state of the island country in question. He gets in

to the group by pretending to be from Roxbury (enacted frame). And "[b]eing *in* was a weird feeling […] Try walking down the street with fifteen Haitians if you want to see people get uncomfortable" (Smith, 2006, p. 243).

Levi really gets his act on when he and another crewmember Choo are assigned to go and sell some fake designer handbags and pirated DVDs.

> 'Bottom line is, Choo, the only thing you got to worry about really is keeping an eye out for the cops and just giving me the holler when you see them. A holler and a hoot. And you got to *see* them before they even there – you got to get that *street* sense so you can *smell* a cop eight blocks away. That takes time, that's an art. But you got to acquire it. That's *street*.'
> 'I see.'
> 'I lived on these streets all my life, so it's like second nature to me.' (Smith, 2006, p. 244).

This 'street' act (enacted frame) is a lie that Levi wants to believe in, but, as will be covered in Relational–Enacted Identity Gaps part, he is not fooling anyone.

In the same scene, Choo is using the personal–enacted identity gap to his advantage when trying to sell handbags. When two ladies approach them, "Levi noticed that his colleague's English transformed at once into something simpler, monosyllabic" (Smith, 2006, p. 246). This technique seems to be effective since the ladies buy two bags and continue their stroll at the park. Choo is actually quite fluent in English (personal frame), but in this case he acts like he does not speak the language to get some sympathy from the women (enacted frame).

When Carl was still 'Carl-from-the-block', he sometimes visited Wellington's college court to play some basketball. On these occasions "[…] you just walked right in and acted like you belonged there" (Smith, 2006, p. 105). At that point, Carl was an outsider to Wellington College (personal frame), but he behaved as if he was part of it (enacted frame).

Levi's older sister Zora Belsey is a combination of both of her parents: Kiki's attitude and Howard's brain. She is a very bright and hard-working student who does not let things go

easily. When she decides to do something, she will do it with strong determination. She is a sophomore (i.e., the second-year student) at the Wellington College, and on her first day of the new academic year she is wondering what she should now feel like. Because

> Last year, when Zora was a freshman, sophomores had seemed altogether a different kind of human: so very definite in their tastes and opinions, in their loves and ideas. Zora woke up this morning hopeful that a transformation of this kind might have visited her in the night, but, finding it hadn't, she did what girls generally do when they don't feel the part: she dressed it instead. (Smith, 2006, p. 129).

In *White Teeth*, Irie tried the same with changing her hair color, in *On Beauty*, Zora wants to give a message to the world by dressing up (enacted frame). 'Not feeling the part' is Zora's personal–enacted identity gap. She was hoping to feel something else than she actually is (personal frame), so, she puts on a mask (enacted frame) and attempts to 'feel the part'.

Irie and Zora are similar in many ways: both half black, half white; both slightly over weight; both having problems with accepting themselves as they are. Kiki tries to assure Zora that she is fine, to which she replies: "Right. I look fine. Except I don't." (Smith, 2006, p. 197). This insecurity reaches also the intellectual level because Zora often thinks ahead conversation topics even before the conversation takes place.

> She found it difficult, this thing being alone, awaiting the arrival of a group. She prepared a face – as her favourite poet had it – to meet the faces that she met, and it was a procedure that required time and forewarning to function correctly. In fact, when she was not in company it didn't seem to her that she had a face at all… And yet in college, she knew she was famed for being opinionated, a 'personality' – the truth was she didn't take these public passions home, or even out of the room, in any serious way […] [W]aiting to be come upon by real people, she felt herself to be light, existentially light, and nervously rumbled through possible topics of conversation, a ragbag of weighty ideas she carried around in her brain to lend herself the appearance of substance. (Smith, 2006, pp. 209–210).

Zora 'prepares a face' (enacted frame) before she meets other people so that she can meet their expectations and gain their acceptance. In a way, she is always playing a part, not being her 'real' self. Very few people know the 'real' Zora, probably only her family where she does not have to act. Like it is said above: "she didn't take these public passions home". At

home she can be herself (personal frame) without anybody judging. Her personal fame at the college has caused this identity gap ("she knew she was famed for being opinionated, a 'personality'"), and as it can be seen, it is causing Zora a lot of stress. Though, by the end of the academic year, this identity gap is reduced as this following transformation takes place:

> For the first time in months, she got dressed without attention to anything else except the basic practical covering of her body. She didn't do her hair. No make-up. No contact lenses. No heels. How much time she saved! How much more she would get done in this new life! (Smith, 2006, p. 420).

## 4.3 Relational–Enacted Identity Gaps

Relational–enacted identity gaps occur when individuals attempt to be perceived in a certain way but others view them differently. In other words, the way a person acts out, or communicates, his/her identity is not consistent with the ascriptions others have appointed to him/her.

### 4.3.1 Relational–Enacted Identity Gaps in White Teeth (2001)

The eldest son of the Iqbal twins, Magid, would give anything to be in another family than his own. On his ninth birthday, he decides to be someone else. Alsana goes to the door where a group of white boys have come to their doorstep and ask for Mark Smith.

> "Mark? No Mark here" […] "Only the family Iqbal in here. You have the wrong house."
> But before she had finished the sentence, Magid had dashed to the door ushering his mother out of view.
> "Hi, guys."
> "Hi, Mark."
> "Off to the chess club, Mum."
> "Yes, M-M-Mark," said Alsana, close to tears at this final snub, the replacement of "Mum" for "Amma". (Smith, 2001, p. 126).

Later when his father hears about this episode, he is not happy at all. When Magid comes back home from the chess club that evening, he runs to his bedroom while his father is yelling at him:

> I GIVE YOU A GLORIOUS NAME LIKE MAGID MAHFOOZ MURSHED MUBTASIM IQBAL! […] AND YOU WANT TO BE CALLED MARK SMITH! (Smith, 2001, 126).

Magid enacts like he is not a Muslim at all, but his father sees things differently: Magid is indeed a Muslim ("Dammit, you are a Muslim, not a woodsprite!") and should therefore act like a good Muslim son (Smith, 2001, p. 127). There is a gap between his relational and enacted identity frames because he is acting out as English (enacted frame), but others, in this case his father, still see him as a Muslim (relational frame).

As the captions above show, the identity gap in this situation causes a big row at home and affects the relationship between Magid and his father. This is not the only example from Magid's life where he turns out to be a disappointment to his father at the cultural front. In fact, both of his sons are not behaving as their father expects them to. Magid "[…] is nothing but a disappointment to me [Samad] […] [m]ore English than the English" (Smith, 2001, p. 336). And Millat "[…] is fully paid-up green-bow-tie-wearing fundamentalist terrorist" (Smith, 2001, p. 336). In Samad's opinion

> They have both lost their way. Strayed so far from the life I had intended for them. No doubt they will both marry white women called Sheila and put me in an early grave. All I wanted was two good Muslim boys. (Smith, 2001, p. 336).

These scenes exemplify that Magid and Millat do not behave (enacted frame) in ways that are expected of them (relational frame), causing the friction between them and their parents. This identity gap escalates to a point where – without any warning to Alsana or his sons – Samad decides to send his eldest son, Magid, to Bengal to learn the 'right' way to live; only to realize that later, when his son returns, he is 'more English than the English'.

Let us return to Irie Jones's hair incident that was mentioned earlier. She wanted to dye and straighten her hair in order to be more 'English' and charm Millat. This aim did not succeed. One of the first comments she receives about her new hair is: "Bloody hell! […] What the fuck do you look like!" (Smith, 2001, p. 235). This comment comes from Neena, Alsana's niece. She cannot understand why Irie has changed her beautiful hair because "[t]he Afro was cool, man […] [i]t was wicked […] [i]t was yours" (Smith, 2001, p. 237). If relational–enacted identity gap occurs when individual tries to be perceived in a certain way but others see them differently, this incident is exactly that. Irie was aiming to have cool, straight and beautiful hair (enacted frame) but the feedback was not quite like she was hoping for (relational frame).

**4.3.2 Relational–Enacted Identity Gaps in On Beauty (2006)**

The eldest child of the Belsey family, Jerome, is the only religious member of the family. In general, the Belseys do not recognize any belief, they do not even celebrate Christmas in any way. Jerome, being a dedicated Christian, is therefore somewhat of a rebel in the family. He does not hide his religiosity but the rest of the family does not seem to respect him for it. Jerome spends a summer interning for a zealous Christian art history expert, Monty Kipps, in London (as it happens, this expert is also his father's rival in the academia) and lives the whole time there with the professor's family. In an email to his father, he explains how

> […] it's very cool to be able to pray without someone in your family coming into the room and (a) passing wind (b) shouting (c) analysing the 'phoney metaphysics' of prayer (d) singing loudly (e) laughing. (Smith, 2006, p. 4).

During this summer of "un-Belsey" Jerome

> […] had *liked* to listen to the exotic (to a Belsey) chatter of business and money and practical politics; to hear that Equality was a myth, and Multiculturalism fatuous dream; he thrilled at the suggestion that Art was a gift from God, blessing only a

handful of masters, and most Literature merely a veil for poorly reasoned left-wing ideologies. (Smith, 2006, p. 44).

The Belsey children have been brought up following liberal ideology whereas the Kippses are very conservative. Being such a dedicated Christian is not what Howard Belsey would expect from his own son (relational frame), but Jerome does not mind as he keeps wearing his cross necklace, prays everyday, and wishes God's bless for everyone (enacted frame). This identity gap affects their relationship so that Howard barely speaks to Jerome because he does not know how to have a conversation with his son. Howard is having a hard time accepting the fact that his eldest son is rather following his rival's ideology than his own.

What is fascinating is that Howard is somewhat a rebel himself. His father, Harold Belsey, is not an educated man. Before retiring he was a butcher in London. Howard had attended university against his father's wishes, moved abroad, and married "outside his color and nation" (Smith, 2006, p. 295). For a father, Howard

> […] had wished for someone other than a butcher, for someone who used his brain at work rather than knives and scales – someone more like the man Howard was today. (Smith, 2006, p. 26).

These both examples, Jerome and Howard, remind of Magid's act for wanting to be English in *White Teeth* with which he was rebelling against his father. Howard's father wanted him to get a decent working class job (relational frame), but Howard resisted and found his way to university and middle class (enacted frame). This identity gap has caused similar problems with their relationship as it does between Howard and his son: they do not know how to talk with each other without someone getting upset.

> He [Howard] did not mean to be so aggressive, or to raise his voice or to pick fights. He meant to be kind and tolerant. Equally, four years ago, Harry [Harold] surely hadn't meant to tell his only son that you couldn't expect black people to develop mentally like white people do. He had *meant* to say: I love you, I love my grandchildren, please stay another day. (Smith, 2006, p. 296).

In addition, the class difference affect their communication as Howard "could hear his own accent climbing down the class ladder a few rungs to where it used to be" when he talks to his father (Smith, 2006, p. 297).

The question of language is present also in Howard's relationship with Kiki. Sometimes when they are a having a fight, Kiki likes to remind Howard that they are not in his class.

> To this Howard groaned. He abhorred the reference […] to a separation between his 'academic' language and his wife's so-called 'personal' language. She could always say – and often did – 'we're not in your class now' and that would always be true, but he would never, *never* concede the point that Kiki's language was any more emotionally expressive than his own. (Smith, 2006, pp. 204–205).

In this caption, the enacted frame is the language. We express our identities through communication, and in this case the means of communication is language. Relational frame, on the other hand, refers to the differing versions of the language: they both speak English but in different ways, which is causing problems in understanding each other.

Levi is the biggest poser of the Belsey family. As has been established, he pretends to be from the rough neighborhood of Roxbury when in fact he is from the middle-class suburbs of Wellington. He also relies on linguistics when he is putting on his street face by speaking in a fake accent. For example,

> Kippses who? Where they at? [...] So? And what? I know about Kippses? I don't know nothing about no Kippses. […] I just ahks a question, that's all, and you gotta be all… […] I don't need drivin'. (Smith, 2006, pp. 11–13).

According to his parents, "[t]his faux Brooklyn accent belonged neither Howard nor Kiki, and had only arrived in Levi's mouth three years earlier, as he turned twelve" (Smith, 2006, p. 11). Levi wants so much to be 'street', but as his sister so eloquently puts it when trying to explain to their father what the concept of 'street' means for Levi:

> 'Street, street,' bellowed Zora. 'It's like, "being street", knowing the street – in Levi's sad little world if you're a Negro you have some kind of mysterious holy communion with sidewalks and corners.'
> 'Aw, man, shut *up*. You don't know what the street *looks* like. You ain't never been there. […] *Please*. This ain't America. You think this is America? This is *toy-town*. I was *born* in this country – trust me. You go into Roxbury, you into the Bronx, you *see* America. That's *street*.'
> 'Levi, you don't live in Roxbury,' explained Zora slowly. 'You live in Wellington. You go to *Arundel*. You've got your name ironed into your underwear.' (Smith, 2006, p. 63).

Levi is acting as if he is the expert of America because he is the only one of the three children who was born in the USA, Jerome and Zora were born in England. His sister catches up his act because she knows Levi is far away from 'being street' (relational frame). Despite of it, Levi keeps posing as if he was (enacted frame). His family is not the only one who is not falling for Levi's lies. For example, his boss at the record store says to him in one scene:

> *Don't – act – like – a – nigger – with – me – Levi […] I know where you're from, brother […] I know where you pretend to be from*. (Smith, 2006, p. 191).

Later also his crew member Choo becomes curious:

> 'And you – ' said Choo, pursuing him. 'You live in Roxbury, Felix tells me.'
> […] 'Yeah, man, that's right.' […]
> 'But they say they never see you there, in Roxbury. The others. They say they never see you.'
> 'Yeah, well. I pretty much keep myself to myself.'
> 'I see. Well, maybe we shall see each other there, Levi,' said Choo and his smile grew wider, 'down in the hood.' (Smith, 2006, p. 248).

Levi is desperately trying to play his role as a 'Levi-from-Roxbury', therefore, he keeps lying to his friends. Even after when he finds out that Felix, who is the leader of their crew, also lives in Wellington and has spotted Levi there, Levi explains that it is because his uncle lives there. There clearly is relational–enacted identity gap since Levi is posing as someone he is not (enacted frame) but others do not see him that way (relational frame). This identity gap is causing Levi having to come up with a lie after life and his friends never truly know who he really is.

Carl's honeymoon phase with Wellington comes to an end when he finds out some secrets about what has been going on around the campus (relational frame). Yet, people keep acting as if nothing drastic has happened (enacted frame). This behavior is his ammunition for Zora when they have a quite heated discussion about Wellington and the people there.

> 'You people don't behave like human beings, man – I ain't never *seen* people behave like you people. You don't tell the *truth*, you *deceive* people. You all act so superior, but you're not telling truth! You don't even know a thing a about your father, man. My daddy's a worthless piece of shit too, but at least I *know* he's a worthless piece of shit. I feel sorry for you – you know that? I really do.' (Smith, 2006,p. 417).

In this caption, the enacted frame of identity refers to a whole group, the Wellingtonians. Their façade does not match the reality, and Carl knows it (relational frame). The Wellington culture is not as appealing to Carl anymore as it once was.

Zora is not blind to this Wellingtonian fact though. She becomes upset of what Carl has said earlier, and she replies

> Carl, please don't talk about our father. We *know* about our father. You go to Wellington for a few months, you hear a little gossip and you think you know what's going on? You think you're a *Wellingtonian* because they let you file a few records? You don't know a thing about what it takes to belong here. And you haven't got the *first idea* about our family *or* our life, OK? Remember that." (Smith, 2006, p. 417).

In this scene, the identity gap remains but the frames switch places. It is now Carl who is pretending to know what it is like to be a Wellingtonian (enacted frame). In her reply, Zora points out that a few months in Wellington does not make one a Wellingtonian (relational frame). To Zora, he is still 'Carl-from-Roxbury'. Carl is not convinced with Zora's comeback, and he closes the discussion

> I'm just trying to get a stage higher with my life […] But that's a *joke* around here, man. People like me are just toys to people like you…I'm just some experiment for you to play with. You people aren't even black anymore, man – I don't know *what* you are. You think you're too good for your own people. You got your college degrees, but you don't even live right. You people are all the same. (Smith, 2006, pp. 418–419).

Apparently Carl was hoping for some respect from his 'own people', after all Zora is half black, and he feels rejected when he finds out that Zora is more white than black, more Wellingtonian than street. In their identity journeys, they both tried to be something else than they really were. This unresolved identity gap resulted in them breaking up.

## 5 DISCUSSION

This study explored three different identity gaps in Zadie Smith's two novels *White Teeth* (2001) and *On Beauty* (2006). The identity gaps covered were personal–relational, personal–enacted, and relational–enacted. Thus, this study provides wider analysis of the data than studies that have concentrated only on two identity gaps (see, e.g., Drummond & Orbe, 2009; Jung & Hecht, 2004, 2008; and Wadsworth et al., 2008). The focus was on the cultural aspects of the identity gaps. The study revealed that these cultural identity gaps have significant impact on the characters' relationships, communication, and how identity gaps functioned as identity sources. In many cases, identity gaps had negative influence to these three areas. This meant that the greater the gap was, the more likely it was for the gap to create negative outcomes in all three.

Incidentally, these effects also correspond to the three identity frames that were covered in the analysis: effects in relationships (relational frame), effects in communication (enacted frame), and how identity gaps functioned as sources of identity (personal frame). In addition, a few links between identity gaps and intercultural communication concepts or phenomena surfaced from the data. Personal–relational identity gaps seemed to function as a factor in forming stereotypes. Personal–enacted identity gaps, on the other hand, were used as a tool when trying to gain other people's acceptance, while relational–enacted identity gap seems to be involved with the absence of mutual respect. These phenomena can rise in intercultural encounters as well.

The data of this study consisted of fictional novels, which allowed the researcher to get "inside" the characters' minds. This helped revealing more information about the characters' personal frame of identity and showed in more depth how great the identity gap actually was between the frames. Finding this kind of information may be more challenging in studies that deal with real life since the researcher needs to trust their research subjects to tell the "truth" concerning the information they provide. In this case, there were no trust issues on that front.

As similar phenomena concerning identity gaps have been found also in real-life research (to be covered later), it could be safe to say that these novels illustrate the concept of identity gaps quite well. As consumption of fiction tends to be greater than scientific literature's, these novels provide good examples in more "consumer-friendly" form to those who would like to have some kind of picture about immigrants or various cultural identity issues, for instance. Thus, this kind of novels could work as material for intercultural training.

In the following, I will go through the three themes that prompted out from the data in more detail and show how they exemplify real-life phenomena.

## 5.1 Identity Gaps as a Factor in Relationships

We do our identity work in relationship with others and, at best, the identity that we avow to ourselves should match to the one the others ascribe to us. In the case of identity gaps, this does not happen. Jung and Hecht (2004) and Jung (2011) have shown that identity gaps are problematic for effective communication. This has also been illustrated in this study.

The existing identity gaps impact social relations in various ways. From the data of this study, one can point out at least that identity gaps resulted in resenting the host culture (in the case of immigrants), causing friction and communication problems in families, and leading to sometimes drastic decisions when trying to gain acceptance from others.

As relationships are one of the vital parts of identity according to CTI, it is quite evident that identity gaps should have an effect on them. In the results of this study, identity gaps had more negative than positive impact on relationships. Especially, frictions in families caused by identity gaps were evident in both novels. This notion is along the same lines with Kam and Hecht's (2009) study on identity gaps and grandparent–grandchild relationships where it was shown that especially the personal–enacted identity gap caused less satisfaction in communication between grandparents and grandchildren.

In this study, in contrast to Kam and Hecht (2009), the personal–relational and relational–enacted identity gaps could be seen as causing the biggest problems in relationships. One important notion from the data of this study could be Samad Iqbal and his relationship with the English people and English culture in general. Something must have gone wrong with the acculturation process if even after decades Samad feels lost with the host culture. An example like this is easily applied to real-world cases: for example, it could be useful for people who work with immigrants to take into consideration the concept of identity gaps as it might help understanding the new identity formation process that the immigrant needs to go through to be able to adjust in and be accepted by the new host culture.

The relationship between identity gaps and acculturation has been noted also by Wadsworth et al. (2008) who demonstrated that smaller identity gaps resulted in more acculturated international students in the United States. In addition, Jung and Hecht (2008) recommend that intercultural communication competence training should be offered to immigrants because incompetence in that area may impact the identity gaps, and later result in depression (see also Jung, 2013). The concept of identity gaps might therefore be useful tool when planning intercultural training for those who work with immigrants as well as to immigrants themselves. In a way, knowing about identity gaps and trying to come to terms

with them in intercultural encounters is a way of improving intercultural communication competence.

This study has also demonstrated a similar notion as Urban and Orbe (2010) that there is no "prototypical immigrant experience" (p. 317). The Iqbal family in *White Teeth* (2001) serves as an example of a non-typical Muslim family where the wife controls her husband and the children do not respect their parents. As it is often reminded in the field of intercultural communication: when one meets someone, they always meet an individual, not "a culture", which means that every case is special in their own right. The Iqbals serve as an example of it.

In addition, Urban and Orbe (2010) suggest that "…competing cultural worldviews impact immigrant identity negotiation and influence each identity gap" (p. 315). This was also exemplified in the data of this study, especially in the case of Samad and his relationship with the English culture, but also with Kiki and her feelings of not fitting in the white American middle class. Though she was not an immigrant per se, her lower class and ethnically black background influenced the relationship with her white husband. Therefore, it serves as a good reminder that issues with identity gaps do not concern only immigrants but they could also be applied to, e.g., class differences or subcultures. For example, Murray and Kennedy-Lightsey (2013) have also detected the relationship between identity gaps and feelings of not fitting in in their quantitative study about college students and their wanting to leave college because of them.

Identity gaps should be noteworthy in intercultural communication relationships as they seem to be linked with some basic intercultural communication concepts and phenomena, at least according to the data of this study. Personal–relational identity gaps resulted quite often with stereotyping, which is one of the basic concepts in intercultural communication (Bennett, 1998). For example, Millat was often at the receiving end of

negative stereotypes (like the incident with the ticket salesman at the railway station), while Kiki's black looks formed probably a bit more positive associations with her white counterparts (such as big black women are funny). Personal–enacted identity gaps are also involved with intercultural communication in the sense that they were often used when trying to gain other people's acceptance (phenomenon that was found among immigrants also by Urban & Orbe, 2010). According to Bennett (1998), acceptance is one of the aims in intercultural communication, especially when the issues concern how people deal with difference, while the major goal of intercultural communication is mutual respect. The lack of it can be seen in relational–enacted identity gaps. For example, when Irie colored her hair to impress Millat she ended up losing respect in Alsana's niece's eyes by trying to be something she was not. Identity gaps can, thus, help us to understand intercultural communication relationships.

However, the problems brought out by identity gaps are not causing problems only with intercultural communication since the data showed a lot of dissatisfied communication that occurred inside families and peer groups as well. Intragroup encounters are therefore as vital ground for identity gaps as intercultural ones. This notion supports the results of Drummond and Orbe (2009) who investigated identity gaps within intraracial encounters and found out that identity gaps can exist between racially similar but ethnically different people.

## 5.2 Identity Gaps and Communication

In their quantitative studies, Jung and Hecht (2004) and Jung (2011) have found negative correlation between identity gaps and communication outcomes (i.e., communication satisfaction, feeling understood, and conversational appropriateness and effectiveness). Illustrations of this effect can also be found in this study. The identity gaps caused many rows and misunderstandings in almost all the families in both novels. At times, family members

did not even talk to each other because they did not know how. Whenever they did talk, the conversation ended in someone hurting their feelings, in a verbal fight, or leaving the situation. Effectively, the communication problems in the family resulted in problems in relationships within the family as was noted in the previous section.

In this study, communication problems were found especially in intergenerational communication (e.g., first and second generation immigrants). This is a similar notion to Kam and Hecht's (2009). One explanation to why problems in communication later lead to problems in relationships is that because, according to CTI, identity is inherently communicative – and thus involved in all identity frames – problematic communication can causally affect all identity layers (Jung & Hecht, 2004). The enacted identity frame is all about communication (i.e., how we communicate our identities to the outside world), and identity gaps that included this frame were problematic causing most of the rows in the data (e.g., Howard and his father's communication filled with misunderstandings, or Samad and his sons' communication where everyone was disappointed with each other). This is also something to be considered when planning social integration programs for immigrants: it could be useful to make the parents be aware of the fact that communicative problems may arise not only with the members of the hosting society but within families and other ingroups as well.

In addition, Song (2003) talks about how the second-generation immigrants are skillful at choosing and playing with their ethnic identities. Similar phenomenon was found in some communication situations in this study as well: Choo lowered his English skills to sell handbags and Millat wanted to embarrass Joyce Chalfen by deliberately changing his accent to match the alleged stereotype by Joyce. Thus, personal–enacted identity gaps are not only a tool for trying to get others' acceptance but they also seem to serve as a playground for this kind of behavior where the other interlocutor has no idea that the other one is lying to

their face (N.B. This "ethnic identity playing" by Millat was under Personal–Relational Identity Gaps part in the analysis to demonstrate Joyce Chalfen's false assumptions, but Millat's act itself falls better under personal–enacted identity gap). This is a good reminder that what we see is not necessarily the absolute truth. In this kind of intercultural communication situations the immigrant seems to know how to play with the member of the host culture, which shows that they have learned a thing or two during the acculturation/adaptation process.

All identity frames are interpenetrated during communication situations. Jung and Hecht (2004) state that "[t]he four frames of identity explain various aspects of identity but it is the interpenetration that explains the dynamic nature of identity" (p. 279). Therefore, it is also the interpenetration that can explain why problems with one identity gap can also cause problems in another. All of frames of identity are present in every communication situation, though, one or more can be more salient than others. Nevertheless, they all are intertwined and cannot "escape" from each other. Thus, the identity gaps are also somewhat interpenetrated.

The dynamic nature of identity caused by the interpenetration of identity frames, which naturally has an effect also on the identity gaps, was noted in this study as well. In the course of the research process it became clear how the identity gap "lives" in the course of communication situation. In other words, the gap can change from one to another. For example, the conversation may have pointed out personal–enacted identity gap in the beginning, but as the communication progressed, the identity gap evolved with it, and, in the end, the identity gap had changed to relational–enacted identity gap. Another way that interpenetration proved its existence was in another case where the identity gap remained the same, but the salient frames switched places between the interlocutors.

Interpenetration shows that we do not live in a vacuum and our identities are like amoebas that switch their forms according to different situations. At times, discrepancies between the intertwined identity frames are bound to happen since a complete harmony between all the frames might be unlikely.

**5.3 Identity Gaps as Positive and Negative Source of Identity**

Identity gaps can function as a positive or negative identity source. Earlier studies have shown more negative correlations (Jung & Hecht, 2004, 2008; Kam & Hecht, 2009), but more recent studies have also found some positive sides to identity gaps (Drummond & Orbe, 2009; Maeda & Hecht, 2012). For example, Drummond and Orbe (2009) found out that identity gaps could be a part of satisfying communication, as long as racial similarity was considered salient. In addition, Maeda & Hecht (2012) came into conclusion that identity gaps can affect positively in time since identity gaps may be "…associated with positive growth and change" (p. 60).

As a term, identity gap might have a negative connotation as it deals with discrepancy. Therefore, Drummond and Orbe's (2009) and Maeda and Hecht's (2012) findings are intriguing. The data in this study suggested that identity gaps functioned as a more negative identity source (e.g., Millat joining the terrorist group) than positive, even though a couple of positive outcomes could be found from the data of this study as well. For example, Zora stops trying to be something else than what she is when she decides not to care what other people think of her, and Carl realizes that perhaps university life is not for him.

This opens up the possibility for a new kind of thinking and approaching identity gaps: perhaps we should try to see the possibilities in them rather than seek problems and conflicts. In time, identity gaps can become a resource or, to the very least, one can learn to cope with them as the teenage Millat did. Dealing with identity gaps is, thus, a part of

growing up. But, if identity gaps are clearly causing problems, then it would be recommended to try to reduce them so that the situation does not escalate into something worse, such as depression.

## 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Evaluation

As in many qualitative research, also this one has its limitations, which I will introduce next. After limitations, I will go through the research process, and, finally, I will conclude this study by giving some proposals for future research.

### 6.1.1 Limitations

The starting point of this study was to show what multicultural fictive literature like *White Teeth* (2001) and *On Beauty* (2006) "teaches" to their readers. Fictive literature can shape their readers' thinking, thus, I found it intriguing and important to know what is out there and what people can learn from them. As we saw in the previous section, the novels illustrated the cultural identity gaps quite vividly. Still, some limitations can be found.

Despite the fact that using fictive data allows the researcher to get into the characters' "real" thoughts, it has its limitations. One of them is precisely the fact that the data is *fiction*, i.e., not directly from real life. One could argue that the phenomena illustrated by fiction *could* easily happen also in reality, but there is no definite proof of that. The scenes from the novels have been formed in the author's imagination and then found their ways to the pages of her books. Therefore, the validity of the results can be argued. They do not provide generalizable results, which is an argument that tends to apply to qualitative research approach in general (Barbour, 2008).

On the other hand, when it comes to theoretical generalizability in qualitative research, to prove that the theory does work, the research does not have to be repeated often. In Barbour's (2008) words:

> Since qualitative research does not seek to recruit representative samples, but to encompass diversity, expanding sampling…does not pose a problem in terms of generalizability, since statistical generalizability is not a goal in the first place. (p. 30)

Furthermore, Collingridge and Gantt (2008) introduce a term called *analytical generalization*. This means that the research process involves a "reasoned judgment of about the extent to which the findings in one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation" (Kvale, 1996, in Collingridge & Gantt, 2008, p. 391–392). In analytical generalizations, the researcher "…point[s] out similarities (and differences) between situations and draw[s] on relevant theoretical frameworks for interpretive understanding", and later "…allows others to decide the soundness of the arguments being made" (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008, p. 392). The illustrations of this study can serve as a "guide" to the phenomenon of identity gaps. The results of this study might thus be generalized on a theoretical level but, as has been noted, they are not generalizable in wider sense.

Another limitation of this study is that it is only one interpretation of the data by one person. If this study was to be repeated by someone else, they might see things differently and thus have different results. Though, those results would not make the results of this study less valid. This is, again, in nature of qualitative research where repeatability is not necessarily an aim as the concentration lies elsewhere: to demonstrate the phenomenon as in-depth as possible.

**6.1.2 Research Process**

The research process of this study was, in general, dynamic and probably more challenging than expected. First, in the beginning of climbing the master's thesis mountain, it was realized that using fictive literature as data is not used a lot in the field of intercultural communication. Later I heard that these kinds of studies tend to be conducted at the English departments. Therefore, I did not have a wide range of literature from the intercultural communication field to back me up. That was a moment when I questioned my data since it might have been easier to prove my point and find more literature if I had gathered real-life data. Later, after coming into conclusion that having fictive literature as data did not make it necessarily "worse" data – after all human beings are storytellers (Fisher, 1984, 1985, in Gring-Pemble, 2008) – I decided to continue on the path I had chosen. I found support from Talbot (1995) who states:

> Fictional resolutions become…narrative paradigms that transmit a message on their own and strongly influence people's expectations in and outside of fiction. The contradictions that are "solved" are real world phenomena. Fiction and reality are not as clearly distinguishable as we might like to think. (p. 8)

In addition, these novels seemed useful to be investigated from the intercultural communication point of view.

Next, I had to decide what kind of qualitative approach should be used to analyze the data: inductive or deductive. After having found a strong theoretical framework (CTI), I decided to dive into the data with theory first. Along the way, I realized why discourse analysis tends to let the data "speak" and not try to fit the data into a chosen framework. At times, it was very difficult to find suitable examples for the identity gaps, and sometimes it was challenging to detect which gap it actually was that prompted out. Thus, letting the data speak without having my CTI glasses on might have given different kind of analysis of the data.

There are not many CTI studies conducted on fiction either. The study on the television show *Northern Exposure* is one of the few and probably the first CTI study that has used fiction as data (Hecht et al., 2002). So far, there has not been any more, until this one. Hecht et al. (2002) argued that TV programs influence one's identity development since they include themes and characters from respective social groups from which individuals can draw identity treats. The study by Hecht et al. (2002) was about Jewish American identity and concentrated on the communal identity frame of the theory. Selected episodes of *Northern Exposure* were chosen as data because "…salient issues within the Jewish community are made visible through Jewish portrayals on television" (Hecht et al., 2002, p. 854).

Hecht et al.'s (2002) claim about the importance of the influence of television in identity development could also be argued in literature. The novels that are used as data in this study have introduced themes and characters from which others can draw identities and influences. Compared to Hecht et al.'s (2002) work, this study has taken steps further since it does not concentrate only on one identity frame. In fact, three are covered: personal, enacted and relational frames. This identity gap study gives more information about the identities of the characters in the novels than Hecht et al.'s (2002) that concentrated only on one character's communal identity (religion) in the TV show. This study took a peek to various characters' identities, and introduced more than one aspect of cultural identity. In addition, this study is the first to apply the concept of identity gaps in fiction.

Despite the limitations and arguable questions of validity concerning this study, it was noted that the theory, CTI and identity gaps, works also in this context. Therefore, this study adds its own contribution to the theory by showing that CTI does have potential of becoming an interdisciplinary theory, which it aims at becoming. It has now been applied in fictive literature, which can serve as a start for applying this theory in later identity studies on fiction literature that want to take communicative point of view.

**6.2 Implications for Future Research**

Connections between identity gaps and intercultural communication can be found from the present study. The identity gaps that were covered in this study offer an identity based point of view to some of the basic concepts of intercultural communication: personal–relational identity gaps often dealt with stereotyping, personal–enacted identity gaps were connected to wanting other people's acceptance, and relational–enacted identity gaps caused communication problems and a lack of mutual respect among interlocutors. The last one is an important notion since, according to Bennett (1998), "…mutual respect is a major goal of intercultural communication" (p. 11). Thus, knowing about identity gaps and coming to terms with them might help in reaching that goal. Therefore, it could be worthy of knowing if reducing the personal–relational identity gap would result in less stereotyping; if reducing the personal–enacted identity gap would result in mutual acceptance; and if the relational–enacted identity gap was reduced, would it lead to the major goal of intercultural communication: mutual respect. This would probably require a longitudinal study that could test (intercultural) training methods that aim at reducing identity gaps. Naturally, the data in that kind of study would have to come from real life as it is impossible to train fictional characters.

Identity gaps concerning relationships lead to some drastic decisions by the characters in the data, therefore, reducing the gaps might have resulted in less drastic life decisions, such as sending one's child to another country or joining a fundamentalist terrorist group. Thus, the way we deal with identity gaps shows also how we deal with difference: Samad could not handle his son turning to an English boy, so, he sent him to Bengal; Millat did not know whether he wanted to be a regular English young man or a devoted Muslim, so, he turned to radical Islam that combined his faith and the western mafia movies that he so much loved.

According to Bennett (1998), "…the topic of difference – understanding it, appreciating it, respecting it – is central to all practical treatments of intercultural communication" (p. 2). Therefore, when aiming at improving intercultural communication competence (which usually is the aim of intercultural training), more studies on identity gaps in the field could offer an additional identity based point of view to how we deal with difference.

Intercultural communication field tends not to use fictive literature as data, but I could see possibilities in approaching the data of this study also from the acculturation and intercultural competence point of view. As the analysis showed that the data demonstrated cultural identity aspects quite well, it might do so also in other intercultural communication concepts too. If the data was analyzed by using another theoretical framework (e.g., Kim, 2001), it might provide more material, for example, for intercultural training. This would then add more to the existing literature of using fiction as a part of teaching intercultural communication phenomena (see, e.g., Lewis & Jungman, 1986; Fox, 2003).

In addition, this kind of fiction-based data that was used in this study could serve as a fruitful ground for more investigations for illustrating identity negotiation (see e.g., Ting-Toomey, 2005). Identity related tensions in these novels were quite salient for the needed twists of the storylines (similar tensions are likely to be found also in real life) and hence probably make them interesting to read. Likewise with identity gaps, also identity negotiation is present in the novels, which would make them a good source for that theoretical framework as well.

Parent–child relationships might offer another point of view to the data. Kam and Hecht (2009) have already studied grandparent–grandchild relationships by using CTI and identity gaps, therefore, studying parent–child relationships would add to the theory. Again, it must be kept in mind that fictional data can only serve as an illustration of the phenomenon, therefore, the possible results could be used to exemplify it, not to prove real-life situations.

The reason why the kind of an approach that this study has taken could be useful for these above mentioned themes and theories is that fictive literature data can illustrate phenomena in a more real-life way if real-life examples are not available: something abstract (such as a theory) is made into a more comprehensible – and probably more entertaining – form (such as a story). This is needed when issues like adaptation, acculturation, or identity negotiation are taught to people who have no previous knowledge about intercultural communication. Intercultural communication issues are already brought to life with different kinds of games (BAFA BAFA simulation might be one of the most famous ones) or by using multicultural movies such as *East is East*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, or *Bend It Like Beckham* as teaching material. Novels like *White Teeth* and *On Beauty* could serve similar purpose. Thus, the approach in this study enhances the understanding of these theories among those people who are only taking their first steps in the field of intercultural communication. Something abstract (like identity gaps) is now more realistic to them.

This study tested the applied theory (CTI) in a new context, which may or may not have worked in it. This time it did work, but had it not been so, it would have limited the usability of this theory. When the theory aims at being an interdisciplinary theory, this kind of testing is needed. For example, the above mentioned identity negotiation theory is considered an interdisciplinary theory (Hecht et al., 2005). If it was tested with a data like *White Teeth* and/or *On Beauty*, would it work? If it did not, the theory might not be as interdisciplinary as is thought. If it did, it would strengthen the theory and expand its usability. It is impossible to know the weaknesses and/or strengths of a theory until it is challenged and tested in different contexts, especially if it is wanted that the theory could be used in more academic fields than one. Because of the fictive literature element, this study paved CTI's way to a more interdisciplinary theory since it now has been used in a new

context. Same could apply to other intercultural communication theories, like those mentioned above, if someone dared to test them in new contexts.

Not only has this study tested if CTI works in a fictive literature context, but it has also showed that these novels do serve as examples of illustrating the theory and its concept of identity gaps. Had it not been so, it would have shown that these books are not suitable for intercultural training. Thus, more multicultural novels – such as Zadie Smith's two other novels *The Autograph Man* (2002) and *NW* (2012) – could be tested the same way to see their potential in intercultural training or exemplifying other existing theories in fictive form.

This study itself could also be expanded in the same manner as Hecht et al. (2002) did in their study on *Northern Exposure*. The results of the analysis of this study could be shown to members of respective cultures and ask them whether they think the results are truthful or not. That might add (or decrease) the validity of the results obtained here.

All in all, I would like the field of intercultural communication to welcome more research that uses fiction as data since it could be a useful tool in teaching intercultural matters. Especially, to people who have less experience in intercultural encounters fiction can open up a new way of thinking. The point is not to strengthen or lessen any stereotypes of certain cultural groups, but to demonstrate how, for example, acculturation process or identity negotiation might happen. This might help understanding that, for instance, it is not only the new surroundings that the immigrant needs to adapt to but also a great deal of identity work is done as well. Thus, I wish that in the future, not only the English departments, but also the intercultural communication field would try to see the possibilities in fiction (such as literature, TV, movies, theatre, etc.).

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