



الهويات بين الأجيال في مرحلة الانتقال في *The Joy Luck Club*

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الملخص

يستكشف كتاب *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) هويات المهاجرين كبنى متطورة تتشكل في بيئات متعددة الثقافات وهجينة، متحديةً الفكرة التقليدية القائلة بأن الهوية مرتبطة حصرياً بتراث الفرد أو جنسيته. واستناداً إلى مفهوم ستوارت هول للهوية كعملية تفاوض مستمرة ضمن الشبكات الاجتماعية والثقافية، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى توضيح أن كل سرديّة تصور الهوية على أنها مرنة ومتجاوبة مع التأثيرات الثقافية العالمية. ومن خلال تحليل مقارن، يبحث البحث في كيفية انعكاس تجارب كل بطل مع التهجين الثقافي على مواضيع أوسع في أدب المهاجرين، مما يشير إلى أن الهوية ليست سمة ثابتة أو مفردة، بل هي نتيجة تفاوض مستمر في سياقات متنوعة. ومن خلال التركيز على التجارب الفريدة والخلفيات الثقافية لكل شخصية، تؤكد هذه الدراسة على الطبيعة المعقدة ومتعددة الأوجه لهوية المهاجرين في الأدب الحديث. يسعى هذا البحث إلى استكشاف كيفية تقاطع التراث الصيني للأمهات مع تجارب بناتهن الأمريكيات، مسلطاً الضوء على دور السرد القصصي كجسر بينهن بعد صراعات ثقافية ومحاولات للابتعاد عن بعضهن البعض. يساعد هذا الرابط البنات على التصالح مع جذورهن الصينية، مما يسمح لهن في نهاية المطاف بتطوير فهم أوضح لأنفسهن وتقبل هوياتهن المختلطة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التهجين الثقافي، الهوية، أدب المهاجرين، العولمة، القومية.

Abstract

The Joy Luck Club (1989) explores immigrant identities as evolving constructs shaped within intercultural and hybrid environments, challenging the conventional notion that identity is solely linked to one's heritage or nationality. Drawing on Stuart Hall's concept of identity as an ongoing



negotiation within social and cultural networks, this study seeks to illustrate that each narrative portrays identity as fluid and responsive to global cultural influences. Through a comparative analysis, the research investigates how the experiences of each protagonist with cultural hybridity reflect wider themes in immigrant literature, suggesting that identity is not a fixed or singular characteristic but rather a result of continuous negotiation in diverse contexts. By focusing on the unique experiences and cultural backgrounds of each character, this study emphasizes the intricate and multilayered nature of immigrant identity in modern literature. A great example of immigrant literature that explains the notion of identity as a result of continuous negotiation is *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan. This research seeks to explore the ways in which the mothers' Chinese heritage intersects with the daughters' American experiences, highlighting how storytelling serves as a bridge between them after enduring cultural conflicts and attempts to distance themselves from each other. This connection helps the daughters come to terms with their Chinese roots, ultimately allowing them to develop a clearer understanding of themselves and embrace their mixed identities.

Key Words: Cultural hybridity, Identity, Immigrant literature, Globalization, Nationality.

1. Mothers' Chinese heritage intersects with the daughters' American experiences

To understand immigrant literature, particularly regarding Chinese American narratives, it is necessary to have some historical context. Chinese individuals have been found in the United States since the 1800s, primarily working in railroads and mining. In spite of their contributions, Chinese immigrant faced significant discrimination, including low pay denial of basic rights and harsh treatment. The situation worsened with the Chinese Exclusion Act at the end of the 19th century, which barred them from entering America. This exclusion persisted until America and China allied during the Great War. During this war, the common enemy for both nations was Japan, which had



invaded China in 1937, leading to the 2nd Sino-Japanese War. This conflict leads to large suffering, including the brutal slaughter in NalaKing, where Japanese forces killed countless civilians. After America had beaten Japan by dropping atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, China reclaimed territory lost during the war. In 1943, the Magnuson Act succeeded, allowing Chinese immigrants to enter America and granting them some rights. This legislation marked a new chapter for Chinese immigrants: a secure environment to settle (Darraj 15).

Nevertheless, the incorporation of American society is not without challenges. The main challenge was the traditional differences in parenting styles. The movement to a more progressive community made it complicated for immigrant families, as children born in the U.S. often felt stressed to uphold their cultural heritage. This tension created a stressful family dynamic and strained mother–child connections, a theme that many Chinese-American authors explore in their novels.

Immigration refers to the relocation of people from their original home to different parts of the world. It describes a significant population that shares a common culture but has settled elsewhere for various reasons, including economic opportunities, social issues, natural disasters, or forced displacement. Many groups within immigrant communities strive to maintain cultural connections to their home, adhering to similar customs, traditions, and religious practices even in their new surroundings. In spite of efforts to integrate into a new culture. They often experience a deep longing for their native land and community, finding it challenging to forge new relationships. In essence, diaspora signifies a sense of displacement among people who, for numerous causes, find themselves separated from their homeland, often holding onto the hope or desire to eventually return. As Anh Hua notes in "Diaspora and cultural memory," "Diaspora is a term that describes groups of people who have been scattered from their original homes due to various hardships such as slavery, violence, war, forced relocation, or seeking better opportunities. To maintain their



identity and avoid losing their culture in a new place, these communities work to keep alive and develop their art, language, traditions, religion, and social practices. (Anh Hua 2010, 193).

Some scholars argue that being part of a diaspora can lead to a diminished sense of longing for one's original home as individuals adapt to their new environment and embrace their changes. Over time, diasporic communities often develop distinct cultures, traditions, and languages, diverging from those of their homeland. Many writers have documented their experiences through poems, stories, and other forms of literature, enriching the study of immigrant literature. From these writings, it is clear that migrants often feel nostalgic for their homeland and are dissatisfied with their new surroundings. While they may become multicultural and multilingual, they retain elements of their original culture and do not fully assimilate; instead, they form a unique subculture navigating between their native and new cultures, which can lead to challenges related to identity and cultural conflict. Displacement is one of the initial sensations that affect those in a diaspora. Immigration can happen for different causes, such as seeking better education or economic opportunities. Other people, particularly women who are having marital difficulties, are compelled to leave because of social injustices or political concerns (Mills 13).

Immigrant individuals often feel this after leaving their homeland, leading to a sense of instability, sadness, and nostalgia. This longing for home can make it hard for them to adapt to their new environment, causing ongoing distress. The first wave of an immigrant society frequently encounters significant challenges. They often feel solitary and detached, struggling to connect with people in their new country. Even when they attempt to integrate, they may face discrimination, deepening their feelings of alienation and loss. While they attempt to adapt to their new society, they often do not fully embrace the new culture, viewing their new home as just another country. The first might accept prejudice as a part of their experience, but the next wave, raised in the new



culture, feels the impact more profoundly. They regard the new place as their home and adopt its customs, but when they encounter prejudice, it can lead to confusion and contemplation about their identities. This treatment can create a divide between them and the local community. Fostering negative feelings about their environment for the second wave.

Renowned Chinese-American writer Amy Tan was born in Oakland, California, to Chinese immigrant parents. Tan chooses to dismiss her parents' expectations of studying medicine to be a doctor or becoming a pianist by studying linguistics and writing and eventually becoming an author. She builds a successful career and writes several significant works, particularly in literature. Tan can write fluent English with a unique technique and incorporates some words using Latin letters. Amy Tan discovered from her mother that her mother had previously been married and had left three kids in China while fleeing the Soviet onslaught after the deaths of her father and brother. Amy's relationship with her mother was complex, as is the case with many Asian Americans. This theme is central to her acclaimed novel. *The Joy Luck Club*, written in (1989) by Amy Tan, became a bestseller, selling more than two million copies and being translated into many languages, including Chinese.

The book deeply reflects Tan's own experiences with her mother, Daisy, and explores the mother–daughter connection. Tan and her mother's experiences are similar to those of the Joy Luck Club in a number of respects. Initially Similar to the story's daughters, Amy and her mother had a tense relationship that was frequently caused by miscommunications and expectations. Tan frustrated her mother by choosing writing over medicine or music, similar to how June in the story resists her mother Suyan's ambitions. Additionally, Like the moms in the novel, Daisy's mother committed herself when she was a young girl, which is similar to An-Mei Hsu's account in the "Magpies" chapter. Amy didn't know at first that Daisy had left behind three daughters when she



immigrated to America, just as Suyuan's daughters didn't know about her background. Finally, like June, Amy found a way to reconcile with her mother after visiting China.

2. Identity in Chinese American Literature

The examination of cultural identity within immigrant narratives has become increasingly significant in the context of globalization. Scholars like Stuart Hall argue that cultural identity is not a static characteristic but a fluid process that adapts to diverse cultural and social contexts. Hall asserts, "Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.'" It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (Hall 1996, 4). Narratives featuring immigrants, particularly those illustrating characters negotiating various cultures, demonstrate the complex ways in which transnational interactions influence identity formation. In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Hall notes that many individuals, especially immigrants, cultivate hybrid identities by integrating elements from both their native and adopted cultures. This amalgamation results in unique identities that reflect a blend of influences. He emphasizes that identity negotiation is often shaped by personal experiences and societal expectations, leading to feelings of being caught between one's cultural roots and the norms of a new setting, which can evoke complex emotions related to belonging and alienation (Hall 1996, 23-25).

"Cultural identity is not a static quality; instead, it involves a continuous process of development and existence. It is influenced by historical contexts and cultural elements, always undergoing negotiation. It encompasses not just historical aspects but also contemporary and future dimensions, illustrating the ever-evolving nature of cultural interactions" (Hall 222).

Homi Bhabha's conception of cultural identity, especially as expressed in *The Location of Culture* (2012), emphasizes the fluid and hybrid characteristics of identity formed through colonial legacies, migration, and intercultural interactions. By applying Bhabha's theories to Amy Tan's story *The Joy Luck Club*, it can be looked into several important themes and objectives. This



narrative depicts characters who struggle with their hybrid identities as they navigate the tension between their cultural heritage and the influences of their new surroundings. Bhabha's idea of the "third space" is particularly applicable, as these characters often inhabit a transitional zone where they actively negotiate their identities. The protagonists commonly face cultural dislocation, prompting a quest for belonging. Utilizing Bhabha's insights allows us to analyze how these characters forge their sense of belonging within their familial and social frameworks.

"The emergence of intermediate viewpoints enables the negotiation of cultural differences. The third space serves as a realm for translation, where identities are created and reshaped, facilitating a hybridization that goes beyond simple dichotomies"(Bhabha 37).

It is important to talk about 'Diaspora' before exploring Chinese-American Literature, but we have discussed it in the previous chapter. Asian Americans represent the largest cultural collections in the United States, and their fiction is a significant part of the Diaspora. Park argues that Asian American fiction, which includes different Asian roots, creates a common American encounter. This blending leads to a unified Asian identity within American society. However, like other underrepresented groups in the U.S., Asians have faced prejudice and rejection, leading to the neglect of their language, tradition, and literature. (Park 165)

The themes of racism, stereotypes, gender, and cultural conflict continue to be prevalent in Chinese American literature. The evolution of Chinese American literature demonstrates that, from the 19th century to the present, identity has been a common issue. Finding a balance between identities shaped by first-world and third-world societies is a complex challenge. Marie Paule contends in her research paper "Cultural Identities in the Chinese Diaspora" that a number of contributing elements make it challenging to develop a cross-cultural identity. People's identities are influenced by their personal involvement as well as the political, social, and economic circumstances in their home or host nation. Marie Paule helps her argument with insights from the global Chinese community written by Wang Gungwu. He categorizes Chinese migrants into groups,



each with its own identity. One group were laborers treated similarly to slaves, working in farms and pits. Due to racial discrimination and harsh treatment, they often could not learn English or incorporate into the community. As a result, they maintained their Chinese identity and formed tight-knit communities in Chinese towns, which was essential for their living. In contrast, businessmen could leverage their 'cheesiness' to succeed in their work in America. These businessmen spent extended time in America and were able to preserve their cultural identity through networks (Ha 45–62). Other groups refer to all Chinese people living abroad who aid their homes financially and who hold nationalist beliefs. The final category consists of the 'Returnees,' which comprises Chinese people who have returned to America in the last fourteen years in order to progress in their careers. These people frequently want to make a difference that lasts while being true to their cultural identity.

The journey to self-expression includes not just political activities but also involvement in creative works, especially literary works. Authors of Chinese descent in the U.S. have faced criticism from both their own community, who see them as phony, and from the public, who encourage them to pen in English; these writers have sought to produce their own unique voice. Known for using honest language, Frank Chin has criticized other writers for changing their vocabulary, including Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston. American audiences typically enjoy their works. For instance, Maxine Hong Kingston skillfully expresses emotions in *Woman Warrior* through precise translation. Amy Tan uses Chinese terms to emphasize the disparities between mothers and daughters in *The Joy Luck Club*. She frequently interprets these words to help the reader better understand them (Zeng 67).

The idea of identity has long been challenging for individuals born in the U.S. to Chinese parents. These individuals often form mixed identities that straddle both American and Chinese cultures, leading to feelings of not fully belonging to either community. This struggle raises the



question of self. A Chinese American individual may feel out of place among Americans while also lacking a complete understanding of Chinese customs. Len Ang discusses this issue of hybridity.

"Hybridity is a concept that challenges and complicates the idea of cultural boundaries, but it does not eliminate them. It shows us that identities can be unsettled. When we encounter different cultures—where the local meets the global, and Asian meets Western—we see how easily misunderstanding conflicts can arise. The evidence suggests that hybridity, which exists in the space between cultures, is not about simply getting along or merging seamlessly. Rather, it underscores the difficulties of coexisting with diverse identities and their reluctance to fully merge. That is to say, hybridity helps us analyze these complex relationships" (Ang 8).

Identity is a complicated matter, especially in women's literature. At the start of their journeys, Chinese American authors mainly focused on ethnic bias and challenges faced by immigrants in the U.S. However, the feminist movement led to new perspectives on literature, with women surpassing men in both quantity and quality. Women actively fought for equal rights and opportunities. Feminist goals included the right to express themselves freely. Fearless of rejection or stereotypes, female writers began using their real names to raise awareness regarding the struggles confronted by Chinese women both in their native country and the U.S. Amy Tan, a notable Chinese American author, is distinguished in feminist literature. She effectively represents Chinese women in a way that resonates with American readers. Vidhyavathi and Anbazhagan, in their study "Cultural Conflicts in Amy Tan's Novels," Amy Tan illustrates the conflict between cultures and the resulting challenges and achievements with remarkable insight and sensitivity. Her works reflect the experiences of the Chinese community. In America, showcasing her role as a significant cross-cultural author. (Amy 2)

Chinese American women authors must affirm their identities, with gender playing a crucial role. In Asian culture, rigid gender norms are enforced; women are expected to be obedient and helpless, while men are seen as controlling and powerful. This dynamic is reflected in the belief that



men represent 'paradise' and women represent 'planet,' suggesting that men give orders while women obey.

Chinese American women face a double oppression, being objectified by American and Chinese cultures. The traditional view of Asian women is compounded by discriminatory beliefs in America, where they are often seen as sexual objects. To fit into American society, women often feel pressured to alter their identities to meet these expectations. Familiar position is a vital part of Chinese identity. In Asian culture, family takes precedence over individual desires, fostering independence and sacrifice. Each member relies on the others, creating a harmonious community where identity is shared. It is emphasized the role of society in shaping individual identity. In contrast to Western views, Chinese culture highlights the society over the individual, indicating that people are identified more with their community affiliation than as individuals (Fong 94-101). Amy Tan's fiction offers a perspective on society through the experiences of Chinese American women. The mothers bring their traditional Chinese beliefs to America, emphasizing family over individual desires. The Joy Luck Club explores a blended approach that helps daughters of Chinese immigrants navigate the contrasting traditional expectations while maintaining connections with their mothers. In Chinese culture, belonging to a society with common values is essential. To thrive within a new country, the Chinese mothers establish The Joy Luck Club, which serves as greater than just a social gathering. Similar to their homeland, the club symbolizes an assistance network that provides pleasure and optimism regardless of the distinctions among its members (Amy 30 - 40).

3. Understanding Immigrant Literature Through the Joy Luck Club

Immigrant literature includes works created by writers who have left their home countries and write from abroad. This genre is distinguished by a unique theme that sets it apart from other literary forms. As an immigrant writer, Amy draws on her own cross-cultural encounters, weaving



autobiographical elements into her novel. Amy has expressed that her mother's tales about her original home and her journey to the U.S. deeply influenced her narrative.

"While I was writing, my main focus was on my mother and myself. I aimed to share my views about China and my experiences growing up in the United States. I wanted my words to be so clear that they would leap off the page, allowing her to truly grasp the story. I hoped the language would be straightforward, like a curtain lifting to reveal what I wanted to convey" (Lew 19).

The varied fiction perspectives in the story mirror the writer's moods, passions, and practices as a next-wave immigrant. The historical backdrop of China from the beginning of the twentieth century till almost the middle of it. All the mothers in the story were born in China, and their lives are connected to the country's political and social history, particularly the conflict between China and Japan. For example, Suyuan Woo recounts her practice as a military officer's wife, emphasizing the urgency of her situation. "One morning, a military officer arrived at my home and urged me to hurry to find my husband in Chungking. In the moment, I realized he was instructing me to escape from Kweilin" (Amy 15). During that time, many people migrated to America, including the mothers in the novel. Amy Tan was born in America to Chinese parents who escaped the war between China and Japan in 1949. Like one of the characters in the novel narrates her mother Suyuan's journey to America: "My mother..." in 1949, two years prior to my birth. That was the year my parents departed from China, taking with them a single rigid leather trunk filled solely with elegant dresses. My mother told my father that there was no opportunity to bring anything else once they were on the boat (Amy 8).

In *The Joy Luck Club*, mothers share their life journeys and reflections of their native home through tales, which they frequently tell their daughters throughout adolescence and into adulthood, embedding these narratives in their daughters' minds. As one character reflects, "As the year went by, she shared the same story with me, but the ending became sadder, leaving a lasting impact on



her life and eventually on mine" (Amy 9). This illustrates how newcomer immigrants maintain their original country's reflection through the recollections of their children, making narration a vital element of immigrant fiction. Amy Tan's own family background heavily affected her literary work.

In the novel, she incorporates different aspects of her family's background. For instance, Amy's grandpa died when her mother's age was just two years. Her grandma later suffered as a fourth wife to a wealthy trader, enduring a life of oppression alongside his other wives. Eventually, she was unable to bear her miserable existence and ingested opium. Amy's mother faced hardship when she married a violent man, ultimately fleeing to the U.S. and leaving her daughters behind in the hopes of reuniting with them. The effect of Amy's family background is evident, showing a strong self-referential element. The story of An-Mei Hsu's mother, a character in the novel, parallels that of Amy's grandma; both women are widows who become fourth wives to cruel men. When An Mei is introduced to her new home, she learns about the hierarchy of wives: "Yan Chang explained which women were the first wife and which were the other concubines, known as the second wife and third wife" (Amy 222). The harrowing depiction of An Mei's mother's suicide by opium mirrors the grandmother's fate.

"My mother's room was filled with bright light; when I entered, I immediately spotted her. I hurried to her and climbed onto the footstool. Lying on her back, her arms and her legs were moving rhythmically and aimlessly, turning her head from side to side. Suddenly her body became rigid and straight, as if she were trying to escape her own form. Her jaw hung low, and I noticed it was swollen; she was coughing in an attempt to clear it ... she has taken too much opium, yelled Yan Chang" (Amy 235).

It is essential to highlight the influence of Amy's mother, Daisy, on her identity. Amy uses the challenges, stemming from traditional and intergenerational gas, to enhance her writing skills. Her complex experiences fuelled her ambition to create *The Joy Luck Club*, a novel that, in spite of being fictional, reflects many of her own life stories. Becoming a writer, a selection she has made,



has made her mother upset; she has hoped for her daughter to be a doctor or a pianist. Besides her academic options, several factors strained the connection between Amy and her mother. The daughter raised in the U.S. expressed little interest in her Chinese heritage, disliking the traditional meals, feeling marginalized on the gym team, and even being unhappy with her own looks. The personality of the mother deeply influences Tan's view of her Chinese background. At times, Daisy warns of self-harm or coming back to China, leading Tan to associate that country with disease rather than a place of her heritage. The struggle is worsened when the mother's harsh care becomes apparent. For example, during the burial of a young neighbor, the mother has told Tan that this destiny awaits girls who disregard their mothers. When Amy is just ten years old, she has learned about Daisy's tumultuous first marriage and the tragic suicide of her grandma, who overdosed on opium in front of young Daisy. This revelation began to clarify Amy's understanding of her family dynamics (Amy 15-25).

Multiple causes contribute to her development as a skilled author. Amy is an avid reader, often finishing a book in a single day. Reading provides her with an escape from her difficult life. In the opening to *The Best American Short Stories* (1999), Amy writes, "I was captivated by tales of the macabre: the decapitations, the stoning, and the story of a man who returned to life after being dead for three days and reeked of decay. These were individuals facing destinies far more tragic than my own." (Amy 2)

The dynamic between Amy and her mother does not significantly enhance until Daisy falls. While on a journey to Hawaii with her husband, Tan's friend accesses her email and discovers a distressing message from home. It informed Tan that her mother has suffered a cardiac arrest and is in critical condition. When Tan calls the hospital, she faces a lengthy wait during which she is overwhelmed by guilt for seldom communicating with her mother and feeling estranged from her. From that point on, she says a prayer for her mother's recovery and for an opportunity to mend their



strained tie. Eventually the call goes through, revealing that the mother is still alive and thrilled to hear from Tan. Following her revealing, the two travelled to China, a promise Tan had made, which later motivated her to pen *The Joy Luck Club*. (Darraj 11)

Following examining Amy Tan's life, it becomes clear how it parallels *The Joy Luck Club*. Similar to the mothers depicted in the story. Amy's mother enjoys playing mahjong, a tradition she has brought to America. Suyuan Woo's experiences closely mirror those of Amy's mother, including a troubled marriage, fleeing from a Soviet attack, and leaving their children behind to settle in America and marry again. Both mothers are highly pressing and aspiring for their daughters to excel in all endeavors, particularly in music, a wish that ultimately goes unfulfilled by their daughters. In a conversation with the American Interest, Amy remarks, "My parents were immigrants who valued practicality. Their primary goal was for us to succeed in our new homeland. They were not in favor of us pursuing careers as struggling artists, as they viewed a career in the arts as a privilege reserved for the wealthy" (Amy 4). This feeling reflects the pressures faced by both Amy and her character, June. Both endure harsh care from their moms, choose not to use conventional East Asian names (An-Mei Ruth and Jing Mei), and pursue careers as authors.

Moreover, Tan and the other characters in the narrative grapple with the challenge of maintaining their Chinese heritage while forming misconceptions about their mothers. The journey to China serves as a moment of restoration for both Tan and her mother, in addition to for Jing-mei and Suyuan. This journey represents not only a healing of the relationship with their moms but also a reconnection with their identity. In a meeting with the New York Times, Tan expresses, "When I set foot in China, I embraced it. My Chinese identity. I understood that I was not fully Chinese, yet I felt a deep bond. I had a feeling of wholeness, akin to having both a father and a mother. With China and America in my life, everything started to align beautifully" (Amy 8).

4. Mother–Daughter Dynamic and Cultural Disconnection



The Joy Luck Club invites readers to engage in interpreting its significance, presenting the theme as generally relatable. A notable transition occurs from 'I' to 'you,' illustrating the fluidity between the roles of identities of mothers and their daughters. This general aspect is highlighted through the fictions of mothers, daughters, or sisters from diverse origins, age groups, and societal norms. The mother-daughter dynamic can often be universalized across hybrid households. Before delving into the narrative, the structure of the novel itself reflects the complexities of mother-daughter ties. The narrative comprises sixteen stories told from various views, functioning as "a compilation of cherished recollections." Amy employs a postmodern method of disintegration to convey the overarching interpretation of the written content. While utilizing narration, she favors 'showing' over merely telling. Through first-person narration, characters articulate their ideas, passions, and perceptions about themselves and others. This real portrayal allows readers to connect with the characters on a deeper level, fostering empathy and understanding of their conduct (Shen 4).

The intertwined narratives transcend just stylistic approach; the audience's comprehension of each narrative relies on the others, mirroring the autonomy between mothers and daughters. Similar to the narrative, disjointed yet interconnected, the individuals struggle to find meaning in their lives independently. Despite intergenerational and traditional divides, daughters often navigate their challenges with their mothers' guidance. Through this support, they learn self-appreciation, strive for success, and overcome sad marriages to attain the fulfilling lives they desire. Furthermore, narration serves not only to express the individuals' perception to audiences but also facilitates self-discovery for the individuals themselves. Due to communication barriers, daughters remain largely unaware of their mothers' experiences. In this scenario narration transcends mere cultural transmission; it becomes a vital link that reconnects them. As Shen notes, "The mothers ultimately



realize that sharing stories is the most effective method to connect with their daughters emotionally and intellectually" (Shen 12).

The daughters suffer from preconceived notions about the cultures of China due to the parental styles of their voiceless mothers. This maternal dominance and oppression can be contextualized by the assertion that "All the mothers have faced two very different types of challenges: one involves famine, warfare, coerced marriages, and shattered families in China, while the other includes cultural estrangement, the collapse of traditional family structures, and conflicts between mothers and daughters in America" (Lautin 17). Constantly, daughters born in the U.S. struggle to interpret their mothers' harsh care as expressions of love or good intentions.

A key source of conflict between moms and daughters is the linguistic obstacle. In a fresh cultural landscape, migrant mothers cling to their traditions, including their native language. This adherence often limits their engagement with the American community and their daughters. They tend to dismiss their mother tongue, resulting in a breakdown of dialogue. For instance, when Jing-Mei attempts to talk to her mother, she responds in Chinese, which creates a sense of alienation; the daughters feel estranged from their mothers. They experience shame for their fluency in English and confusion due to their mothers' limited English proficiency. Conversely, mothers view their use of a hybrid language as a form of resistance against cultural marginalization (Liu and Peng 4). Ying-ying and An-mei, Lindo, reflect on their upbringing in China, where society is revered and selflessness is essential for achieving unity. This is exemplified when An-mei's mother cuts her own body to make a therapeutic stew for her mom. The faith in which family takes precedence helps explain why Chinese women often lack personal desires, with their destinies largely determined by their husbands or parents. While the women from China in the book experience challenges within such a collective community, they internalize its values. Consequently, the mothers exert control within their households, attempting to impose rules based on their Chinese upbringing onto



daughters who have been raised in an American context. What exacerbates the situation is the mothers' reluctance to explain or validate their action to their daughters. Moreover, in the United States, mothers continue to bring up their daughters according to traditional Chinese parental methods.

The mothers perceive themselves as knowledgeable enough to influence their daughters' decisions. Although Waverly desires to pursue her own path, her mother, Lindo, actively promotes her engagement in chess. Her mother derives greater joy from Waverley's achievements than Waverley herself does, leading to Waverley's annoyance at her mother's tendency to boast about her achievements. As Waverly matures, marries, and becomes a parent, she recognizes that her child's accomplishments serve as a source of honor for both parents. This realization allows her to appreciate her mother's unwavering assistance and belief, which contributed significantly to her own success. Furthermore, Ying-Ying's silence is interpreted as a form of dialogue, yet Lena does not understand that this silence carries a burden of painful memories. In moments when words fall short, silence becomes a poignant alternative. Despite her passive demeanor, Ying-Ying ultimately protects her daughter from an unfulfilling marriage. Additionally, An-Mei plays a crucial role in helping Rose recognize her own value and claim her rightful place in the world. Overall, mothers often apply traditional solutions to the contemporary challenges faced by their daughter (Amy 3 - 9).

The link between mothers and daughters significantly shapes their daughters' perspectives and identities; without this connection, they would not be who they are today. Grown up in a Western environment, these daughters tend to prioritize personalism, after overlooking the integral role their mothers play in their identities and disregarding their Chinese heritage. While their interactions may be limited, these mothers guide their daughters toward discovering their expressions, thoughts, and sense of self. For instance, Jing-mei must learn about Suyuan to find her



own voice, a journey that culminates when she connects her mother's stories and travels to China to resolve this intricate narrative (Foster 19-20).

The arrival of Chinese immigrants in America introduced diverse elements to American society and fiction. The next wave of Asian American authors emerged as pioneers, boldly showing their distinct identities and cultural dignity. Their literary participation infused new perspectives into the American literary landscape, producing works that reflect the complexities of both American and Chinese experience. This body of literature enhances readers' understanding of the similarities and differences between these two cultures. Chinese American literature, both in stylistic approach and thematic content, reveals the challenges faced in a postmodern society, particularly for women. For these authors, literature serves as a powerful tool to combat stereotypes and racial discrimination. Notable figures such as Amy Tan exemplify this movement, illustrating the hybrid identities of second-wave immigrants. Her narratives often explore the complexities of belonging and the duality of being perceived as 'the other' by both American and Chinese communities. A prevalent thematic in her operates is the mother-daughter link, which highlights the challenges of coexisting with traditional Chinese mothers. In Amy Tan's novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, the significance of cultural history is emphasized, showcasing how American-born daughters inevitably inherit aspects of their Chinese lineage. The exploration of mothers passing down their cultural history to their daughters will be further examined next. The paradox is in the fact that, despite differences in time, culture, space, and education, the Chinese tradition of the parents invariably influences the U.S. lives of their girls. This tradition, whether acknowledged or not, becomes an integral section of the girls' selves that cannot be overlooked. Regardless of their generational and societal differences, the girls remain connected to their maternal. It is evident that they acquire aspects of their personas from their maternal figures, where the moms' past experiences often intertwine with the girls' future. The excessive closeness and unhealthy interdependence often



seen in the mother-daughter dynamic lead to a contrasting outcome: a reality where the burden of past pain ultimately destroys the hopeful future that should belong to the daughter (Elliott 146).

To comprehend the U.S. offspring context, one must reflect on the Chinese history. Amy employs a narrative technique that weaves together distinct tales across different time periods, illustrating how daughters draw upon the past to better understand their maternals as well as their own lives and futures. "The tales connect through their overarching structure, creating a narrative that highlights the need to revisit the past to move forward into the future. Additionally, she suggests that multifaceted progression can address the time-based conflicts of Chinese American women's identities" (Singer 325).

Every immigrant narrative addresses the challenges faced by those who have departed their home countries for various causes. Amy Tan's novel specifically explores the clashes between newcomers and the next wave of immigrants. These clashes arise from distinctions in heritage, communication, and habits. In immigrant fiction, two key stages are common: disquiet and integration. Amy introduces eight figures who embody these stages. The mothers represent the newcomers of immigrants and experience the disquiet stage, which includes the psychological and material struggles of integrating into a different home and customs. In contrast, the next wave of daughters, raised in a different environment, often integrate into the customs of their new home, unlike their parents, who strive to maintain their native traditions. The four maternals in *The Joy Luck Club*, Suyuan Woo, Lindo Jang, An-Mei Hsu, and Ying-Ying St. Clare, are obliged to depart their native home and reside in the U.S. for various causes. They receive assistance from the newcomer support association; these gatherings support uniting the mothers and cause the creation of a local version of *The Joy Luck Club* (Amy 8).

The novel becomes a space for the mothers to escape their historical hardships. They hold celebrations, indulge in food, engage in activities, and exchange tales about both "their happy



memories and hopes for the future" (Amy 13). Their assemblies, filled with laughter and camaraderie, are a source of joy, hence the name 'Joy Luck.' Although they appear cheerful, many believe the mothers carry deep emotional pain. Jing-Mei Woo, Lena St. Claire, Waverly Jong, and Rose Hus Jordan are the children of immigrant elders. Mothers who impose their cultural values on them raise them in the United States, far from their families' homeland. As girls of immigrants born in the U.S., these next-wave figures adopted American customs and values. They prioritize personal autonomy over their mothers' hopes and often disregard their Chinese heritage.

The narrative explores the traditional tension between China and the United States, particularly through the dynamics of the mother-daughter link. These individuals inhabit vastly different traditional spheres, leading to misunderstandings. Their inability to communicate effectively, mothers speak Chinese while girls communicate in English, exacerbates their clashes. Each generation struggles to validate its cultural identity, which stems from a fear of losing its origin in a foreign environment. Chinese moms desire their girls to adhere to traditional norms, yet this insistence can create distance between them. Girls often feel embarrassed by their moms' actions and resist their attempts to enforce cultural practices. When mothers assert their expectations, girls frequently push back or refuse to engage.

5. Daughters Embracing Their Mother's Heritage

Interestingly, regardless of differences in time, culture, and education, the Chinese heritage of the mothers continues to influence their girls' lives in America. The tradition is an essential part of their identities that cannot be ignored. In spite of differences in age and culture, the girls often see traits of their mothers in themselves. Sometimes, the mother's history struggles intersect with the daughters' future. Jang Elliot notes, "...The excessive identification and unhealthy interdependence often associated with the mother-daughter relationship lead to a contrary outcome:



a reality where the burden of past suffering ultimately eliminates the positive future that the daughter deserves" (Elliot 146). To understand their lives in the U.S., the girls must look at their mothers' Chinese past. Amy Tan's storytelling method, which weaves together various narratives across different times, reveals how daughters connect their moms to understand their own lives better: "These stories interact in a way that emphasizes the significant of looking back in time to move forward toward the future... and suggest that this multifaceted approach can help reconcile the complexities of Chinese American female identity" (Singer 325).

The newcomer immigrant mothers often grapple with the anxiety of being neglected by their daughters, stemming from their own struggles to embrace their heritage. This anxiety frequently leads to controlling parenting styles, where they impose control over their girls' lives. However, such excessive guarding can foster resentment in their daughters. This dynamic is evident in Jin-mei's story. Her mom, Suyuan, had high aspirations for her girls, constantly seeking to uncover hidden talents. Suyuan's desire for Jin-mei to excel led her to enroll her in esthetics school, yet these efforts proved unsuccessful. Ultimately, the relentless pressure and expectation imposed by her mom resulted in Jin-mei's self-loathing.

After seeing my mother's disappointed expression once more, I felt something within me begin to fade. I loathed the tests, the elevated hopes, and the unmet expectations. That night before going to bed, I looked in the bathroom mirror and was confronted by my reflection—an ordinary face that would always remain the same. Overwhelmed, I started to cry. I felt like such a sad, unattractive girl! I let out high-pitched sounds like a frantic animal, desperately trying to erase the face I saw in the mirror (Amy 12).

The girls frequently question their mothers without considering whether their mothers are acting in their best interests. As one girl reflects, "I vowed not to allow her to alter who I am. I refuse to become someone I am not" (Amy 128). Woo desires for her girl to strive for excellence, but this leads to annoyance and disappointment in her girl, who questions, "Why cannot you accept



me as I am? I am not exceptional." The clash comes to its peak when she is obliged to take piano classes and ultimately perform in an art competition, where she does not succeed in meeting her mom's hopes. She lamented, "I never truly allowed myself a real opportunity...I was resolute in not attempting or becoming anyone other than myself" (Amy 132).

Conclusion

Writing in a mixed cultural setting reflects many different experiences, particularly in the works of women writers. These women play a major role in Chinese American literature, and their stories represent the identity of Chinese American females. Second-generation writers often explore this theme, focusing on the relationships between mothers and daughters.

In *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), Amy Tan highlights the challenges of growing up with traditional mothers in a more modern society. Various factors often tense the mother-daughter bond, a situation evident in many multicultural families, including Tan's own.

In the novel, the four Chinese mothers struggle to connect with their daughters due to their differing cultural backgrounds. Each mother has a unique perspective that the others find challenging to understand. The mothers have faced difficult experiences that their daughters cannot fully grasp. They have endured severe oppression in a male-dominated culture, often sacrificing their desires to survive. They may even give up their families to serve their husbands and lack the freedom to work or express their opinions.

For these mothers, the American dream means more than just financial security; they hope for their daughters to have better lives than they did. This desire for their daughters to be successful and confident leads the mothers to behave in ways that can seem harsh. However, their good intentions often become lost in translation. Conflicts arise because the mothers communicate in ways shaped by their Chinese upbringing—through criticism, pressure, and silence. These behaviors are often not accepted in American culture, where daughters expect freedom, praise, and



open conversation. Since neither side is willing to adjust their expectations, the mothers struggle to convey their feelings of pride and love, leading to misunderstandings. The daughters rely on their mothers' behaviors to learn about a China they don't know. They often see Chinese women as old-fashioned, restrictive, and uninformed, especially when their mothers speak broken English. However, they shouldn't forget that they are also Chinese, or half-Chinese in Lena's case. Even though they live in a modern world, both Rose and Lena are still part of patriarchal households. While American culture promotes women's independence, Lena and Rose often accept being voiceless and locate comfort in their submissiveness. This humility is tied to Chinese culture, which the daughters are trying to reject.

On the other hand, June and Waverly are more outspoken about their desires, like many American women, and are not afraid of their parents' disapproval. Although the daughters strive to be independent, they still seek their mothers' approval and love. Lindo and Suyuan may seem quiet but are determined in pursuing their goals, just like their daughters.

The Chinese mothers want to maintain their cultural identity and resist blending into mainstream American culture. In contrast, the daughters refuse to accept that this cultural identity is a part of them. They admire American values while rejecting Chinese ones. This clash of cultures causes an identity crisis. The mothers struggle to fit into American life, while the daughters feel caught between two worlds. The girls feel lost, sometimes acting and looking Chinese while claiming to be Americans. The characters can only discover who they are and appreciate their mixed identities through storytelling. The mothers' stories may seem strange, filled with myths and superstitions, but they play a crucial role in understanding their heritage.

The daughters consider their mothers' stories to be strange, but they are full of lessons. Even though they live in a modern world, the girls can always connect these stories to their current lives.



These tales help explain their mothers' difficult behaviors and unique ways of showing love. The girls, raised in the U.S., also begin to understand their personalities and issues, finding solutions in their family history.

Since the mothers are the main influence on how the daughters interact with others, their Chinese heritage brings a sense of harmony and balance. Despite the challenges that hinder communication—like cultural differences, language barriers, generational gaps, and identity crises—the Chinese past shapes the daughters' present experiences. The idea of interdependence is always present; the daughters rely on their mothers for support. "Like a mother, like a daughter" highlights that the connection between mothers and daughters is unavoidable.

This research seeks to explore the ways in which the mothers' Chinese heritage intersects with the daughters' American experiences, highlighting how storytelling serves as a bridge between them after enduring cultural conflicts and attempts to distance themselves from each other. This connection helps the daughters come to terms with their Chinese roots, ultimately allowing them to develop a clearer understanding of themselves and embrace their mixed identities.



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