



THE INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT IN LISA SEE'S *SHANGHAI GIRLS*: SECOND GENERATION EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

This study explores the intergeneration conflict and acculturation strategies of the second-generation Chinese American in Lisa See's *Shanghai Girls*. The novel depicts Pearl and May's experiences moving to America due to the Sino-Japanese war in China and facing the cultural conflict of choosing the Chinese or American culture. Therefore, the study uses the sociological approach by employing Hofstede's cultural dimension and Sam and Berry's acculturation model to examine the sociocultural experiences of Pearl and May. The result is that the conflict between the first and second generations is based on power distance, masculinity and femininity; individualism and collectivism; and the short and long term. As the result of the conflict, Pearl integrates two cultures on the dimension of power distance and short and long term, while May assimilates more into American culture. Those different strategies also imply the different reception experienced by Pearl and May while socializing within both the Chinese and American cultures.

INTRODUCTION

Chinese Americans have been a part of American society due to the Gold Rush phenomenon. Most of them left their mainland and found another opportunity to be more successful (Portes and Rumbaut, as cited in Misiuna, 2018, pp. 154–156). It started in the middle of the 1800s as the first wave, followed by the second wave in 1882 and the third wave in 1965 (Chen, 1992; Keister et al., 2016). The first wave came from developing society, and they were not fully prepared to adjust to American society. In contrast, the other waves had more stable economic and social conditions to assimilate into American society.

The recent wave, especially the 20th-century generation, has shifted the image of Chinese Americans brought by the first wave as unskilled laborers or workers (Misiuna, 2018). The language mastery and high achievement both in academics and profession have created Chinese Americans as the model minority among any other minorities or immigrants. Some evidence highlights that Chinese Americans are predicted to have more increasing numbers than Hispanics, and more than 50% have better English proficiency (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Similarly, Shih et al., (2019) point out that 50.5% of Asian Americans have obtained a bachelor's degree higher than the U.S population. Most of their employment areas are categorized into management and professional compared to other ethnicities as Hispanic African American.

However, as those generations live in one big community, a clash between intergeneration may occur. Lee et al. (2000 as cited in Kalibatseva et al. 2017, p. 127) also argue that the conflict results from acculturation. The children start adopting the host culture as the major society while the parents are still maintaining their original culture. Ying and Han (2007 as cited in Kalibatseva et al. 2017, p. 131) add another point on behavior expectation as one of the roots in the intergeneration conflict when the immigrants are expected to be more independent to develop a personal identity coming to the American society, which is clashed with the collective identity.

In addition, the parenting style also contributes to the conflict between the older and younger generation. Chao (2000 as cited in Thow 2020) noted the different levels of parental control, which are higher in Chinese and lower in Western parenting styles. Thus, children must demonstrate parenting obedience and put parents as the priority and expectation. Lau et al. (2002 as cited in Chung et al. 2021, p. 170) mentioned that if the tendency toward Asian values is higher, the conflict between parents and children increases. The conflict may continue when the cultural values are extended to the next generation and could give more pressure on being a model minority (Shih et al., 2019).

However, there may be a possibility that the family may borrow the values from the host country. Kim et al. (2014 as cited in Thow 2020) examined that “autonomy, personal agency, and self-determination” are embraced when children are living in the Western community. It means that various parenting styles may lessen the conflict within the family. The variation is likely happening in second-generation families when they cover their roles as mediators between their parents and American society (Rouse, 2019). Chung et al. (2021) also point out that the mediator roles in the second generation create more intergenerational conflict. The conflict emerges when the second generation acts as “instructors, models, or interpreters” to the next generation (Xu et al., 2018).

Consequently, there could be some issues between the first and the second generation of Chinese Americans, especially in modeling family values. Kim et al. (2014 as cited in Thow, 2020) state that the first generation has expectations of parental control. However, second-generation parents may want to let their children embrace their identities. However, some second-generation still prefer using the East Asian style to educate the children about their grandparents (Thow, 2020). Those different preferences show that other characteristics in the second-generation family may contribute to the degree of intergenerational conflict between parents and children.

The stories of intergeneration are written as the social experiences embody the values and culture which shape the identities through literary works. Literature does not only serve as rhetorical texts but also as memoirs recording the tradition and culture brought by the characters. Dubey (2013) argues that literature represents the societal issues combined with culture, myth, and religion. Similarly, Kowale (2005 as cited in Ifeoma, 2017, p. 109) quotes that literature is interconnected with society and transmits the social and moral issues throughout the time.

One of the writers who contribute to the immigrants’ story is Lisa See. Her novel *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* explores Chinese cultures such as *Nu Shu* writing (the secret writing among sisterhood), foot-binding, and the patriarchal issues as the centers of the story (Irmadani et al., 2019; Rakhmyta, 2018; Reisyer & Eviyanto, 2020). Unlike *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, *Shanghai Girls* transforms women’s roles in a global world by using several symbols in entertainment to redefine women in a modern period. The redefinition indicates that the global world has shifted women’s activities yet created a new problem on the culture clash (Li & Qiu, 2018). Several studies also highlight cultural issues between the Chinese and America as the major point depicted in the novel (Novianti, 2015; Terangpi, 2020). However, the

intergenerational conflict in *Shanghai Girls* between the first and the second generation has not been examined using Hofstede's cultural dimension, thus, becoming the focus of this study.

Therefore, the research will investigate the intergenerational clash experienced by the second generation, Pearl and May, who realize not all immigrants in Los Angeles meet their expectations. Most of them are the first generation that firmly maintains the heritage culture. This condition brings up two choices: they should learn about their heritage more or continue adopting American values as they did back in Shanghai. Thus, focusing on the culture clash between the generations and the acculturation process as the core problems will be essential to highlight the struggles of the Chinese American immigrants.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

The clash among generations is typically related to the tendency between the home or the host culture, Chinese and American culture, as the focus of this research. The conflict may differ depending on sociodemographic factors such as income, gender, or language mastery (Chung et al., 2021). For example, female Chinese Americans may have more struggles due to internal and external factors compared to male Chinese Americans. At the same time, the problem of language may create a gap between the first and the second generation. Thus, to assess the multiple contexts of intergenerational conflict, several dimensions of the culture clashes need to be understood.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are employed to examine the conflict in Chinese American families. The dimensions measure power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long versus short term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (Artina et al., 2020; Gao & Liu, 2018; Hofstede, 2011). The six dimensions were first used to examine the value system at International Business Machines Corporation related to the employees' behavior (Hofstede, 2011). The result suggested the different tendencies between Western and Eastern countries. The high preferences on power distance, collectivism, and short-term orientation are favored by Eastern countries, although they also consider combining both masculinity and femininity (Manrai & Manrai, 2011). Other studies also show a similar result by using the Hofstede model to compare the Western and Eastern countries indicating that the model is applicable to examine cross-cultural issues (Artina et al., 2020; Irawan, 2017; Yang & Congzhou, 2018).

Sam and Berry's Acculturation Model

The result of the cultural comparison indicates the urgency of the acculturation process. Thus, acculturation is viewed as the mediation process where they need to define their position to assimilate or probably separate from the host culture. Acculturation could transform the cultural behaviors, principles, attitudes, and psychological situations as the mediation between cultures (Fedi et al., 2018; Winaja et al., 2019). This transformation could be different depending on individuals' experiences. Mesoudi (2018) even states that acculturation is a process of conformist social learning where individuals adopt the most exposed culture in their environment. It refers that the social composition influences the choice to imitate the most common trait and requires the immigrant to be more fluid with the majority in their environment, whether the host or the home culture exposure. Sam & Berry (2010) identified four possible acculturation categories as cultural behavioral changes or strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Those different strategies demonstrate the various transformations experienced by the immigrants. Some could maintain their heritage and blend into the new society simultaneously called integration. However, another possibility could lead to either assimilation or separation by adopting only one culture. Otherwise, the immigrants choose to be marginal without belonging to one or both.

Chen et al. (2008 as cited in Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 246) stated that some bicultural generations might not blend the two cultures simultaneously due to the contrasting differences; however, some adapt and integrate both into one culture. These different tendencies could also be due to the reaction from the surrounding. Stainer (2009 as cited in Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 241) mentioned that the low-skilled immigrants who contributed less to the host country might experience more discrimination. Still, the skilled ones may be more welcomed and experience less discrimination. Before the immigrants learn the new habit in the new environment, rejection might come first, resulting in the tendency to maintain the family tradition.

As the novel *Shanghai Girls* is a part of American literary works, the use of an interdisciplinary study is recommended to examine the Asian American experiences from different disciplines (Basuki, 2017). One of the disciplines is sociology, in which the research focuses on social and cultural experiences. In addition, the issue of transnational conflict represented in the novel is closely related to the "cultural, political, economic, and literary power" in which the specific group or community struggles to find equality due to discrimination or stigmatization (Pfister, 2011, p. 49). As a result, the research employs the sociological approach. It combines the sociology theories: Hofstede's culture clash dimension as the basis of intergenerational conflict and Sam and Berry's model on acculturation as conflict

resolution. Thus, the issue of discrimination, cultural conflict, and social adjustment can be explored further from those theories as another discipline to integrate into this research.

The data were analyzed using the qualitative method and adopting the narrative analysis. The data were taken from a fictional story of the immigrants from the beginning until the last experience (Hennink et al., 2020). The study examined the characters' actions and thoughts as the story is narrated. Thus, the timeline is essential to explore the characters' development related to the intergeneration conflict and the acculturation model.

DISCUSSIONS OF MAIN THEMES

The Dimensions of Culture Clash

Since the novel *Shanghai Girls* emphasizes the contrasting social culture as the social setting, See (2009) highlights that half the population of Shanghai is used to “worshipping all things foreign, from the Westernization of [the] names to the love of movies, bacon, and cheese” (p. 11). In other words, Asian values are less represented even in their motherland. Thus, having the Western cultural experiences certainly puts Pearl and May clashed with the family-in-law, who might not have even lived in Shanghai before and still maintain the Asian values. This culture shock also indicates several pressures from the social environment and the domestic aspects that lead to clashes among the generations. Therefore, the discussion on the clashes focuses more on the women's roles as the domestic issues within the family by analyzing power distance, masculinity and femininity, individualism and collectivism, and short- and long-term dimensions.

Small and large power distance

The first power to identify is related to absolute obedience when the Old Man Louie, as the head of the family, instructs Pearl and May to speak “Only Sze Yup” and threatens them to “put a nickel in a jar” for him if they talk in English or other dialects (See, 2009, p. 129). Those aspects indicate that the first generation is the ruler to be respected at most in the family hierarchy and the symbol of male domination. Unfortunately, the power of male domination may not be consistent in small power when power is divided equally. One of the power equalities is the American parenting style. The children are given a space to express their opinion indicating a low level of parenting control, as mentioned by Chao (as cited in Thow, 2020). This parenting style benefits all family members, including women, to be decision-makers in the family. The first example was when May closed the argument with her father by

leaving dinner (See, 2009, p.7) or when their mother created the solution to save the daughters from Green Gang:

Seeing the looks of betrayal and fear on our faces, Mama hurries on. "We are going to trade in your tickets to America and buy passage to Hong Kong for all of us. We've got three days to find a ship. Hong Kong is a British colony, so we don't have to worry about the Japanese attacking there. If we decide it's safe to come back onto the mainland, we'll take the ferry or train to Canton. Then we'll go to Yin Bo, your father's home village." Her jade bracelet hits the side table with a resolute *thunk*. "The Green Gang won't find us there" (See, 2009, p. 59).

Those two examples show although a man can be the head of the family, the power can be less in some conditions, and a woman can fill the position to lead the family or disapprove of the hierarchy. This disapproval is reflected again when Pearl negotiates to speak another dialect to the Old Man Louie: "May doesn't know Sze Yup," I explain, but inside I reel from what he's proposing for Joy, whose cries are shrill in the disapproving silence around her (See, 2009, p. 129). In addition, another disapproval also happens from May's "disgust and irritation" to believe in "ghosts, spirits, potions, the zodiac, what to eat and not eat, all that mumbo jumbo" (See, 2009, p. 142). Those reactions imply how the American parenting style can give more space for women to speak but at the same time may lead to rebellion acts for unlimited freedom. Therefore, a conflict of interest occurs in which Chinese culture, as the bigger power, suppresses this liberation by pushing absolute obedience and parent/teacher-centered education, including the spiritual belief (Hostede, 2011).

Masculinity and femininity

The second dimension highlighted the favor of assertion and firmness rather than sympathy or any weak emotions in masculinity (Hofstede 2011). The Old Man Louie expresses this assertion for not giving any personal comfort to Pear and May upon their arrival: "May and I expect questions about where we've been and why it took so long to get here, but the old man has no interest in us whatsoever" (See, 2009, p. 128). Thus, the only way to gain the attention of masculinity is by giving birth to a baby boy as the symbol of strength and achievement: "You give the old man the grandson he wants, you'll become his favorites" (See, 2009, p. 133). Those spoken statements highlight the minimum roles of women by placing their position in the domestic issues and favoring the baby boy as the prospective offspring. This reality results from a Chinese wife's duty to give birth to a son as the continuation of a family name, and having a daughter is the ending of a family line (Chan et al., 2002). In addition, Zuo (2009) notes that a wife is considered an outsider in the husband's family, diminishing her existence. Therefore, the limited position and the submissive demand for Chinese women create imbalanced roles in the patriarchal family, as in Pearl and May's in-laws.

Another imbalanced role is expressed when Vern, the youngest son, takes control of the parents instead of Pearl and May, who are older:

But by now May and I have learned there's no point in arguing with our in-laws. We just have to be happy that we have a day off from work.

"I want to go to the beach," Vern suggests. ...

"Too far," the old man objects.

"I don't need to see their ocean," Yen-yen scoffs. "Everything I want is right here."

"You stay home," Vern says, startling everyone in the room. ... "It is a Christmas present for my brother, May, Pearl, and the baby. Mama and Baba, you stay home" (See, 2009, p. 159)

Vern's instruction to his parents emphasizes that a son's voice is much preferred to a daughter's voice to ask for a reward, although he is not contributing to the family earning of his younger age and bad physical condition.

Besides the son preference, the masculinity of Chinese culture also confines the women's space to exercise themselves in society (Reisyer and Eviyanto, 2020). This limitation is presented from argument within the family on the woman's profession and activities:

He [Tom Gubbins] wants my sister [May] to work as an extra in the movies; naturally, Old Man Louie objects, saying, "That's a job for a woman with three holes."

...

But nothing and no one is better to fight over than Joy. If Yen-yen says, "She should wear a sweater," May responds with "She's roasting like corn on fire." If Yen-yen observes, "She should learn to embroider," my sister argues back, "She should learn to roller-skate." (See, 2009, p. 176-180)

The arguments present that both men and women of Chinese first-generation still believe that women should exercise their skills at home. This belief contrasts with American women's belief as feminists that profession is not determined by gender, and men and women should have equal responsibilities for domestic chores and social activities (Stork & Hartley, 2014). Thus, as the product of American imitation and a woman of the second generation, May shows her negative reaction to her in-laws' criticism.

Individualism and collectivism

The third dimension is rooted in the issue of collectivism by using clans or surnames as an important role in loyalty (Hofstede, 2011). The Old Man Louie indicates the loyalty to protect the family as the illegal immigrants:

A slight smile curls in the corners of Old Man Louie's lips, but for time. I don't see it as heartless. "Don't worry too much," he says. He turns to Sam. "Now you know my secret, and I know yours. Like a true father and son, we are bound together forever. The two of us not only protect each other but we also protect the uncles (See, 2009, p. 187).

This family bond shows that a father is responsible to his children and his children are also responsible to their father. It means interdependency and family reliance are more valued than a personal interest. The interdependency also emphasizes that a woman should commit herself

as a dedicated daughter and mother without any exception to support the collectivist relationship in the family.

Besides the family bond, a surname also plays an important role in business as a symbol of trustworthiness, as has been told to May:

“If you’re a Louie, you have to buy from a Louie, even if you pay five cents more. Everyone knows no help will come from the lo fan [white people], but even a Mock, Wong, or SooHoo won’t help a Louie” (See, 2009, p. 139).

The kinship entity then carries the segregated community based on the family lineage, and an individual is shadowed by the family background to socialize in the public place. Yang and Congzhou (2018, p. 53) also mention that “individual interests should be subordinated to social interests, social interests to national interests, and national interests are the top concern.” This public interest indirectly pushes the family members, including women, to keep the dignity and image of society, which gives them more pressure to choose the proper social roles.

However, the idea of collectivism clashes with American individualism that individuals are eligible to have a self-righteous to decide their destiny and separate themselves from the family (Yang and Congzhou, 2018). This individual freedom also gives a consequence that someone should be responsible for the decision made and have self-reliance to survive. This survival strategy is implemented when May works to “helping him [Tom Gubbins] find extras, making sure everyone arrives on time for the bus to take them to the studio, and translating on sets” at Tom Gubbins’ company (See, 2009, p. 190). This individual action is probably creating a clash which is regarded as disobedience. However, May’s decision shows that she is keeping her determination to work in entertainment, although that profession can ruin the family’s image in the Chinese tradition. She is also willing to take that risk as an individualist to pursue a personal goal and get social recognition in American culture.

Short- and long-term

The last dimension is examining the different values based on the timeframe. The Chinese values perceive people need to sacrifice themselves by saving and working or studying hard for future life (Hofstede, 2011). This value is reflected by the Old Man Loui’s dream to “save ten thousand dollars and return a rich man to his ancestral village” (See, 2009, p. 153). The scarification also appears from the business competition:

People say that the opening of these two Chinatowns is the beginning of good times for Chinese in Los Angeles. I say it’s the beginning of hard feelings. In China City, we have to do more and make a better effort. My father-in-law uses his iron fist to make us all work even longer hours (See, 2009, p.151).

That working style indicates that long-term investments need more effort by all means to succeed from the competitors and put aside the individual needs or desires. Jaw et al. (2007) argue that Confucian teaching urges people to suffer in the short term by emphasizing perseverance. Although they can have self-enhancement and dreams to pursue the long goal, that goal should be relevant to the family value as a social contribution. Thus, the long-term principle may benefit the powerful party, such as the Old Man Louie's ambition, and use the other parties, his family, to realize the goal.

However, the concept of suffering may not always fit in the short-term concept when life security is already obtained along with stable earnings (Ye et al., 2021). Yoo et al. (2021) also add that social spending is a part of social connection and well-being activity in Western countries as an individualist community. Pearl's and May's life in Shanghai show how night parties are used for social activity along with the social status:

As members of the bu-erch'iao-ya—bourgeois class—our family is prosperous enough that our seven servants take turns eating their meals on the front steps, letting the rickshaw pullers and beggars who pass know that those who work for the Chins have regular food to eat and a reliable roof over their heads.

...

We arrive at the Casanova, where friends will be meeting us later. May and I are recognized as beautiful girls and shown a good table near the dance floor. We order champagne, and Z.G. asks me to dance (See, 2009, p. 11-17).

That prosperous life signifies that a stable life creates an increasing lifestyle and special treatment needed. Nevertheless, when a person stands between two contrasting cultures and priorities, spending management might be the solution to accommodate both short and long-term needs. This method is presented from Pearl's calculation to "give a third to Father Louie ... Another third is put aside for Joy. And I [Pearl] keep a third to spend as I [Pearl] please" (See, 2009, p. 189). Although Pearl is demanded to contribute to the family saving, she still expends the money for personal satisfaction to justify her well-being needs. In other words, material consumption gives her a short escape from the suffering of family working hours.

The Acculturation Strategies

As the result of intergeneration conflict, the second generation may have variations in the acculturation process to integrate both cultures or prefer one culture unequally. Pearl's opinion on happiness exemplifies the different variations in the cultural reception that it "has nothing to do with money," referring to the non-material satisfaction and May's statement about their past life: "Our lives would have been very different if he [their father]'d saved our money instead of lost it" (See, 2009, p. 254 – 255). The different perspectives about happiness or satisfaction note that this second generation has other tendencies to maintain the culture. One

takes two cultures in several aspects, and another is dominated by the American culture, which is material well-being.

Integration strategy

Pearl adopts the integration method by combining both cultures separately and having more sides to Chinese culture. One of the examples is related to education:

But Sam and I don't want her [Joy] to go to the school that passed Vern from grade to grade even though he couldn't read, write, or do sums. We want her to attend school outside Chinatown, which means Joy has to say she lives in that district. She also has to be taught the official family history. Father Louis' likes about his status were passed to Sam, the uncles, and to me (See, 2009, p. 213).

The quote indicates that Pearl expects what she demands from Joy is academic achievement as a part of filial piety. However, she also indirectly acknowledges that the American formal education might contribute more to academic achievement, which will impact Joy's future. This belief could be highly influenced by her past experiences as Pearl underwent and observed the Western education system in Shanghai that she was "working ... graduated from college ... had American and British teacher" resulting in more opportunities for women (See, 2009, p. 8). The belief system on education quality is an example of a social capital theory that stresses the influence of parents' educational level on academic quality (Li & Qiu, 2018). Thus, Joy will follow the same path as her mother had by experiencing the American society and dedicating herself to the family as the filial piety value already internalized by her mother. Another filial piety implemented requires Joy to "dress properly and give respect" to the elders contrasting with what Pearl did when she was young (See, 2009, p.196). The behavior changes happen because Pearl needs to become the mediator by teaching Joy about the family history, modeling respect to the elders, and interpreting the grandparents' message to Joy. She highly maintains obedience and discipline to educate Joy in a Chinese way at home. Xu et al. (2018) identify that the roles of the middle generations are extended from instructors, models, and interpreters to the third generation.

Another integration presented is related to the religiosity in which Pearl converts herself to be a Christian from these statements: "Now it has come at last. ... I begin to pray- ... to bring peace of mind, to make sense of all bad things in my life, and to believe that maybe all this suffering will be rewarded in Heaven" (See, 2009, p. 248). It implies that she may combine the spirit of Puritans and the Chinese spirituality to find the media of relaxation and self-healing by dedicating herself to being closer to the Gods and the ancestors. At the same time, she also believes that faith and peace would be found in the heart of God (Lee & Chan, 2009).

In terms of social roles, Pearl puts an image of being modest and practical by sewing “jumpers made with two pieces of felt, Chinese jackets with raglan sleeves made with cotton bought from the remnant bin” for Joy (See, 2009, p. 226). This clothing symbolizes how a Chinese woman is taught to dedicate herself to domestic chores and sacrifice all the luxuries to survive. Jorae (2010) mentions that clothing and accessories represent the survival strategy for living in the American society, as implied by Pearl. Another survival strategy is when Pearl asks Joy to go home with her peers and be aware of her look as “yellow in the race and red in ideology” (See, 2009, p. 244). The warning reveals that individual identity is dangerous and discriminative, and only the communal society will be the defense for a minor. Another example of communal society is when Pearl rejects the amnesty to protect the uncles by saying, “You know it’s not enough for him [Sam] just to confess his own status. He’ll have to expose others- Uncle Wilburt, Uncle Charley, me -” (See, 2009, p. 282). The choice symbolizes that she will be the savior for the whole society and live her fullest life dedicated to the family, which is a defense mechanism to get protection from the family. The protection itself is her husband’s suicide “where Sam hangs” himself to close the investigation (See, 2009, p. 289). The sacrifice this couple made is an example of interdependence. One individual is helping each other achieve the same goal and maintain the harmony within (Renzaho et al., 2011; Volkema et al., 2016; Babatunde-Sowole, 2015, as cited in Wali & Renzaho, 2018).

The security strategy is also reflected by Pearl’s investment in Joy’s education in the future. She doubts if her plan to buy a new home will take some of her savings (See, 2009, p. 221). Her expression is probably a natural response and a responsibility of a mother to give full comfort and security to her daughter. However, it is also deniable that she spends her money for personal comfort “to buy face cream embellished with ground pearls hoping to make my [her] face as fair as Joy’s mother should be” (See, 2009, p. 192). This small consumption may show she is still dreaming of being a model but is restricted by her role as a mother. That restriction becomes the line for her to manage the present and future cost as she integrates both short- and long-term spending.

Assimilation strategy

The acculturation method adopted by May shows a contrasting approach by assimilating with American and less preference for Chinese culture. These distinctions may result from different participations and engagement during the adjustment process influenced by psychological and sociocultural aspects (Berry & Sabatier, 2010). Thus, the different status of being a wife between Pearl and May already influences their behaviors and social participation,

separating them into different methods of acculturation. May, who has less responsibility as a daughter-in-law and does not have a role as a mother, is engaged more in the American social life, enabling her to get more social activities and personal choices resulting in the assimilation strategy.

One of the American values modeled by May is the personal touch to “indulge Joy with treats, kisses, and letting her stay up all nights on shoots,” as what she did to her father (See, 2009, p. 196). This interactional behavior completely contrasts with Chinese culture, in which intimacy should be dismissed as a sign of respect. Physical contact is considered taboo or even rude to elders. Another American culture presented is related to the social leisure in which May prefers going to “matinees” and expresses her disagreement when Pearl invites her to sing Psalm (See, 2009, p. 255). This social behavior directly could increase the imitation behavior to adopt American culture by participating in public activity. (Fedi et al., 2018) mention that the higher contact with receiving group members benefits the immigrants more to integrate into the American society besides being proficient in English. Therefore, her professional and leisure activities have invested in American assimilation.

As a result of cultural investment, May also exemplifies her luxury style by buying “a sky blue party dress in dotted swiss, another with exquisite smocking, and a blouse with ruffles .. patent later shoes” (See, 2009, p. 225-226). However, this clothing style is also considered the ability and willingness to copy the American society to assimilate or blend. Jorae (2010) argued that second-generation Chinese Americans might use fashion as one strategy to transform their identity to be accepted by American society despite the criticism. Another identity transformation is the individual expression. May suggests Joy be brave by saying, “Don’t ever feel that you have to hide who you are. Nothing good ever comes from keeping secrets like that” (See, 2009, p. 245). Those recommended actions may result in some consequences for scrutiny or discrimination. However, at the same time, individual expressions teach life survival to exist in public by eliminating the fear of being abandoned or discriminated against. In other words, May reinforces independence as one of the main qualities of American individualism instead of public reliance (Yin & Yang, 2007 as cited in Kalibatseva et al., 2017, p. 131). Nevertheless, it does not solely mean that the collectivist values are being undermined since this action resulted from being a minority in a patriarchal family. Being independent and a risk-taker could separate May from the gender bias in her family-in-law.

Another point of independence is reflected in the short-term dimension that May has no hesitation in buying branded dresses as she looks “like a millionaire’s wife in vermilion silk. She dresses well, because she can afford to spend the money she earns frivolously” (See, 2009,

p. 218). Though her job is criticized harshly to be an actress, she still puts her pride as an independent woman and shows financial success in her family. At the same time, her financial security breaks stigmatization for being a minor in her family. It also implies that her increased spending is affected by the financial stability in which the present moment is a part of her priority (Ye et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis between generations has resulted in the different strategies on the impact of the intergenerational conflict between the first and the second generation. The dimensions have created some tendencies, as represented by Pearl, who combines both cultures in two dimensions, and May, who prefers assimilation by keeping his American cultural adoption. In May's situation, she reacts negatively toward her in-laws resulting in her decision to maintain the American culture adopted from Shanghai. This distinctive acculturation method also implies that Pearl is more respected than May as the older sister and mother by the family law. In other words, the degree of women's discrimination in their heritage culture is different based on the hierarchy and rank. As this study focuses on the struggle of second-generation Chinese Americans, third-generation issues remain open for further discussion. Another possible avenue to explore is analyzing the patriarchal dimension of hegemony, as this study limits the concerns with the female characters.

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