

**A STUDY OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS
IN *THE JOY LUCK CLUB***

**A MASTER'S PROJECT
BY
WARANGKANA SEHWISED**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in English
at Srinakharinwirot University**

May 2007

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AN ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to explore how different cultural backgrounds could lead to mother-daughter conflict in *The Joy Luck Club*. The novel shows conflicts of characters representing cultures of the two nations, China and America, which are expressed through characters of two generations; mothers and daughters. The first generation is the mothers from China, who are strictly conformed to the Chinese culture whereas the second generation is the daughters born and live in America. Even though they still have had problems because of having different cultural backgrounds in the family, they compromise to maintain the relations between mothers and daughters. It can be seen that the characters in the novel have encountered many problems including the lack of respect to the elders in younger generation, the problem of disobedience, the problem of divorce, and inequality of status of women in a family.

The result of the study indicated that the mothers are still strictly keeping the Chinese doctrine. Although they live the rest of their lives in the United States of America, they are accustomed to their former culture more than the new one. In contrast, their daughters who grew up in the new nation and new culture have unconsciously absorbed what the mothers have taught little by little even though they don't see the importance of it. It can be said that being nurtured in different environments or different cultural backgrounds may cause conflicts between people even in the same family such as mother and daughter. Although both generations live together, they hardly understand the background of each other. Because they have to live together as members of a family, they have to look over the problems in order to make reconciliation between them.

การศึกษาความขัดแย้งระหว่างแม่กับลูกในนวนิยายเรื่อง *The Joy Luck Club*

บทคัดย่อ

ของ

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เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งการศึกษา

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จุดประสงค์ของงานวิจัยครั้งนี้เพื่อสำรวจว่าภูมิหลังทางวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกันสามารถนำไปสู่ความขัดแย้งระหว่างแม่กับลูกได้ ในนวนิยายเรื่อง *เดอะ จอย ลัค คลับ* แสดงให้เห็นการผสมผสานระหว่างวัฒนธรรมของสองเชื้อชาติ นั่นก็คือ วัฒนธรรมจีนและอเมริกัน สองวัฒนธรรมถูกถ่ายทอดผ่านตัวละครสองรุ่น ก็คือ รุ่นแม่และรุ่นลูก รุ่นแม่มาจากวัฒนธรรมจีนและรุ่นลูกจากวัฒนธรรมอเมริกัน แม้ว่าพวกเขาจะยังคงมีปัญหาของภูมิหลังทางวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกัน พวกเขาก็ยังคงรักษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างแม่กับลูกเอาไว้ สามารถเห็นได้ว่าตัวละครในนวนิยายจะต้องเผชิญกับปัญหาความขัดแย้งต่างๆ เช่น ปัญหาการแต่งงาน การขาดความเคารพผู้สูงวัยกว่า ปัญหาการไม่เชื่อฟัง ปัญหาการหย่าร้าง และ สถานภาพที่ไม่เท่าเทียมกันของผู้หญิงในครอบครัว

ผลของการวิจัยระบุว่าแม่ประพฤติปฏิบัติตัวในกรอบที่เข้มงวดของคนจีน ถึงแม้ว่าจะใช้ชีวิตที่เหลืออยู่ในประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา พวกเธอก็ยังคงเคยชินกับวัฒนธรรมเดิมๆที่เคยอยู่มากกว่าวัฒนธรรมในประเทศใหม่ เช่นเดียวกันกับลูกๆที่เกิดและเจริญเติบโตในวัฒนธรรมของประเทศใหม่ มีอิสระทางความคิด แม้พวกเขาได้ค่อยๆซึมซับกับสิ่งที่แม่พยายามพร่ำสอนแต่ไม่เคยให้ความสำคัญกับสิ่งเหล่านั้นเลย อาจกล่าวได้ว่าเด็กที่ได้รับการอบรมเลี้ยงดูในสภาวะแวดล้อมที่แตกต่างกันหรือมาจากภูมิหลังทางวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกันอาจกลายเป็นสาเหตุความขัดแย้งระหว่างผู้คนได้ ถึงแม้ว่าคนทั้งสองรุ่นจะอาศัยอยู่ด้วยกัน โดยแทบจะไม่เข้าใจภูมิหลังของกันและกัน อย่างไรก็ตามการเป็นสมาชิกในครอบครัวเดียวกันทำให้คนสองรุ่นที่มีพื้นฐานทางวัฒนธรรมที่ต่างกันพยายามประนีประนอมและมองข้ามปัญหาเพื่ออยู่ด้วยกันอย่างสันติ

The Master's Project Advisor, Chair of English and Oral Defense Committee have approved this master's project as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. Background

American contemporary literature (1945 to present) is a trend of works in the present day. American literature is prosperous, diverse and constantly growing. The theme of contemporary literature blends impassioned feelings with important events in history. Particularly, a multicultural variety of authors in American contemporary literature reflects diversity, impact, sensibilities, their own lives and their attitudes. Actually, contemporary literature involves ethnicity because of the influence of immigration to America. As a result, contemporary literature reflects social condition of immigrants in America. Immigrants had to encounter hardship including poverty and unsafe when they migrated from their motherland to a new nation. Besides, there is also the hardship of new social condition that immigrants had to face: they needed to adjust their way of lives in order to survive in a multicultural variety within the new society. Furthermore, they encountered inner problem within ethnicity; especially, between first generation and later generations. It is possible that the later generations cannot accept the old way of life of the parents and are more accustomed to the new environment.

Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* is a novel that portrays the problems between two generations, mothers and daughters. Their conflicts are based on different cultural backgrounds. Mothers who were born and grew up in the Chinese society have learnt inequalities and subservience in the Chinese family. They have been planting filial piety and obedience to the descendants. In the novel, mothers represent the Chinese way of life; most of them had painful experiences in the past. In contrast, daughters

were born and grew up in America where they have absorbed freedom and individualism. Furthermore, it is important for American people to have equality in leading their personal lives. The daughters illustrate the American way of life with their independence to make their own decisions. Because of such differences, characters in *The Joy Luck Club* who are from different backgrounds possibly have conflicts with each other.

Conflict naturally arises from different perspectives, between and within groups, in the shared contexts. The conflict may lead to argument. According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the term conflict is defined as *A state of disagreement or argument between people, groups, and countries* (281). Deutsch further explains that “Conflict is an inevitable feature of all social relations. Conflict can take a constructive or destructive course; it can take the form of enlivening controversy or deadly quarrel” (1). Furthermore, Kenneth T.W. Yiu and Sai On Cheung maintain that conflict among the contrasting parties inevitably appears (356) because an individual in a society has a unique personality that has been shaped by their background, belief and experiences.

Disagreement can take place within any families. Bergman asserts that the disagreement between parents and children comes from problem of particular trait (381). The individual trait comes from environmental and early nurturing influences lead to the development of their behaviors. Bergman adds that individual development takes place within the first two years of life (396). In addition, children are sometimes stubborn and do not follow parents’ instruction. It is because children struggle to differentiate from their parents (Boyd 292). Especially, a conflict is of the first and the second generations. Tina Suyong Om explains that the second generation Asian Americans struggle to reconcile their ethnic heritage and individual nature (23).

Their individual difficulties arise from difference between their early development and the environment of a new society. Om further explains that living in a society with markedly different social expectations is supported by the different social environments (45).

In literary works, conflicts on multicultural range become fundamental element for contemporary writers. In this novel, the authors try to reflect not only diversity of two cultures but also the disagreement of two generations (the elders and the youngers). Especially in many literary works, there are conflicts between the first generation like mothers and the second generation like daughters. Particularly, it can be seen that many writers such as Jean Ure (1943-), Suzanne Fisher Staples (1945-), Sook Nyul Choi (1930-), Katherine Peterson (1923-), Jerry Spinelli (1941-), and Sarah Ellis (1952-) wrote about the problems of ethnicity. However, works are not especially narrated on conflict issues. Some writers portray other relationships between two generations such as Paule Marshall and Alice Walker. Paule Marshall wrote about a story of a small black immigrant community. A girl who is a protagonist in the story is caught between her mother who wants to conform to the ideals of American dream and her father who wants to go back to his homeland. It can be seen that both Amy Tan and Paule Marshall use the same theme about an immigrant community. Nevertheless, it may differ a little because the event takes place in a different immigrant community; Amy Tan wrote about what happens in a Chinese immigrant community while Paule Marshall wrote about a black immigrant community. Unlike Alice Walker, Paule Marshall wrote about the story of a young black woman. She recounts the evolution of a young black woman against the background of the politics of the Civil Rights Movement. It reflected conflict between regime and black women. It enables the readers to learn about the problem of social

condition of Civil Rights Movement and witness the hardship of a black woman in the period of movements towards equality.

Among the writers in the theme of conflict, Amy Tan (1952-) is a Chinese American writer whose works are well-known, especially *The Joy Luck Club* portraying the conflict between Chinese immigrant mothers and Chinese-American daughters. The problem stems from different cultural background of the first generation, Chinese, and the later generation, Chinese-American. The story *The Joy Luck Club* presents the stories of four Chinese immigrant women and their American-born daughters. The Chinese mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* presented through four women: Lindo, Suyuan, An Mei and Ying Ying came to America to escape from China's feudal society for the promise of the United States' democracy. Now; however, Suyuan has died and the three surviving members of the club invite her daughter, Jing-mei, to take her place. June belongs to the second generation of the Chinese immigrants in the U.S., those of Chinese heritage who grew up speaking English and learning American customs and traditions. In addition, the daughters, who are almost at the same age, are Waverly, Jing-mei, Rose and Lena. *The Joy Luck Club* portrays varied difficulties and tragedies involved in these mother-daughter relationships. Amy Tan uses the relationships between mothers and daughters to show that when the parents' experiences are from one world and the child's experiences are from a different world, misunderstanding, conflict, and negative long-term consequences can occur.

This study attempts to investigate the conflicts between mothers and daughters influenced by different cultural backgrounds. To do so, the researcher will apply cultural background and theories of conflict to analyze this novel. This study will

encourage the audience to understand the disagreement between mothers and daughters caused by different cultural backgrounds.

II. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore how different cultural backgrounds lead to mother-daughter conflict in Amy Tan's novel namely *The Joy Luck Club*.

III. Significance of the Study

1. This study may be used as a guideline to study factors that may cause conflicts between members of the family such as mother and daughter.
2. This study may be used as a guideline to study factors that may cause conflicts between people of different ethnic groups, living in a multicultural country. When causes are identified, people can solve the problems to end the conflicts and bring peace to the place of settlement.

IV. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on cultural background that leads to conflicts between mothers and daughters in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*.

V. Definition of Terms

Conflict arises from different perspectives between groups. It is the result of nurturing of individual family. What the family teaches is transmitted to children's attitude, performance, beliefs, and etc. Particularly, the more individuals are from different cultural backgrounds, the more different thoughts and attitudes they have. It can be seen that, in the case of different cultural backgrounds, people are nurtured in

different ways of life or from different social backgrounds. Therefore, it is likely that they have different viewpoints on the problem.

Cultural Background is defined by Linton as “The realization that different societies have different ways of life” (27). In general, the individuals who occupy or live in the structure of a particular society will respond to many situations in the same way.

Chinese People refers to women in a Chinese society. Their responsibilities are to follow the leaders who are men in the family such as father, husband and son. These men are like supervisor for Chinese women’ lives. In addition, women are under control or subservient to the seniors in the family because they believe in Confucius¹ who teaches about filial piety, and obedience to the elders. According to the teaching, the younger should not offer any ideas or dispute with the elders because it is not suitable.

American People reflects American way of life which focuses on freedom and individualism. American can dispute, discuss or offer ideas without any hesitation. Therefore, in the relationship of a family, both parents and children can be together without any seniors or juniors.

VI. Procedures

The procedures of this study are as follows:

1. Accumulation of Information

The information will be collected on the following topics:

¹ According to the teaching of Confucius (551-479 BC), women were considered second class citizen in those times (cited in Adeline Yen Mah’s *A Thousand Pieces of Gold* 171). Its belief that for a woman to be without ability is a virtue for living practiced within some contemporary Chinese polity.

1.1 Amy Tan's Biography.

1.2 The Previous Studies on Amy Tan's novel, *The Joy Luck Club*.

1.3 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

1.4 The Chinese Belief

1.5 Cultural Background

1.6 Women and the Family in Chinese History

1.7 Chinese Immigrants in America

1.8 Conflict Theories

2. Information Analysis

2.1 The cultural backgrounds of the Chinese and the American are studied to understand the characters.

2.2 Cultural backgrounds of Chinese mother characters and American-Chinese daughter characters presented in the novel are compared.

3. Report of Findings

Findings of this study are presented and discussed.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Study

The findings of this study are concluded and discussed. Recommendations are presented for further study and analysis.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of literature is divided into eight sections. The first section is Amy Tan's biography; her life, education, and literary works. The second section focuses on the previous studies on *The Joy Luck Club*. The third section is conceptual framework of the study. The fourth section is the Chinese belief. Cultural backgrounds of Chinese and American are presented in the fifth section. The sixth section is about women and the family in Chinese history and Chinese immigrants in America is the seventh section. The conflict theory is discussed in the eighth section.

I. Amy Tan's Biography

Amy Tan was born on February 19, 1952 in Oakland, California. Both of her parents were Chinese immigrants, John and Daisy Tan. John was a Baptist minister and electrical engineer. He immigrated to America to escape the turmoil of the Chinese Civil War. Daisy had divorced an abusive first husband and left her three daughters in China. After migrating to America, she remarried John Tan and had three children, Amy and her two brothers. Daisy was a vocational nurse and a member of a club called *The Joy Luck Club*. When Tan was young, she did not like her Chinese feature. Consequently, she always dreamed of getting plastic surgery in order to have westernized feature. The relationship between her mother and Tan started to have a conflict. It is because Tan left the Baptist College that her mother had selected for her and followed her boyfriend to San Jose City College. As a result, mother and Tan did not speak to each other for six months. Her mother wanted Amy to obey and followed her order. While Tan wanted her mother to understand that life is hers; therefore, she

can choose her own way of life. At last, both came to an understanding when her mother became ill. Tan made a promise to herself that if her mother recovered, she would take her to China. Finally, mother regained her health and departed for China with Tan. It gave Tan a new perspective on her relationship with her mother.

Tan completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in English and linguistics in 1973 and 1974 from San Jose State University. Afterward, Tan married Louis Demattei, her boyfriend while she studied in the college. From 1974 to 1976, she studied a Ph.D. in linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley, but dropped out because she was sorrowful from the murder of her close friend. She worked as a consultant to programs for disabled children from 1976 to 1981 and worked as a reporter, managing editor, and associate publisher for Emergency Room Reports from 1981 to 1983. Then, she worked as a freelance technical writer. Tan's writing reflects her experience of conflict in her family.

The Joy Luck Club was Amy Tan's first novel published in 1989. The story depicts four Chinese mothers who have had the shadow of their past. Four Chinese women held meetings and they called their gathering place *The Joy Luck Club*. When one of the members died, the daughter of the member comes to take her place because she wants to learn her mother's lifelong wish and the tragic way in the past. *The Joy Luck Club* rose to the top of the New York Times best-seller list and was selected as a finalist for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991) is a novel about the ten thousand hurts and deceptions between mothers and daughters. It is about the sudden recognition that sometimes brings them together. It was Tan's luxuriant and best-selling novel. *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995) is Tan's wisest and most enchanting novel. It is a superb and exciting tale of China and America. The contents of the story contain love, loyalty and

identities. *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *The Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994) are illustrated as combination of the style of ethnicity of Chinese. Sources of creation are orientalized images of China. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001) relates the first time that Amy Tan learned her mother's real name. As Tan and her siblings gathered to discuss her mother's and grandmother's pasts, she learned that she had not known their birth names and other secrets from their pasts. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* parallels that experience.

Consequently, it can be seen that Tan's further works are obviously comparable with her actual life. The themes are mostly about the relationship between mothers and daughters. The relationship reflects cultural backgrounds and beliefs of the writer all of which expressed and portrayed through the main characters in the novel.

II. The Previous Studies on *The Joy Luck Club*

David Gaviloli studies maternal characters in three novels: "In search of the mother's lost voice: Mariama Ba's *Une si longue lettre*, Francesca Sanvitale's *Madre e figlia*, and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*," The studies focus on maternal speech from silence. The silence can tell the characteristic of mother's speech. The speech refers to the premise of the mother's absence and repression in a society. The concept contained the base of the mother's deficiency and repression covered by the women status in the society. Furthermore, the mothers tried to combine cultural, historical, and social perspectives. Nevertheless, it is hard for the mothers to assimilate differences between mothers and daughters.

In "Women becoming: A feminist critical analysis of mother-daughter relationships in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*," Carman

C. Curton analyzed Tan's first two novels. The findings revealed that the female characters suffered from tension. It is a result from double paradox of filling the roles of mothers and daughters as minority women in the white society.

In "The relationship of mothers and daughters in *Beloved*, *The House of Mirth* and *The Joy Luck Club*," Hollis June Davis Anderson analyzed the relationship between mothers and daughters in three works portrayed in different times, places, and social classes. Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* examined the conflicts of different generations of contemporary Chinese-American women. Two diverse cultures between mothers and daughters were blended in order to be one. Anderson examined the importance of cultural attitudes of women and the identity of mothers and daughters who struggled with the influences and expectations of society.

In Thailand, the researcher found two studies on *The Joy Luck Club*. To begin with, "A Study of the Impact of "Talk-Stories" on the Main Female Characters in *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Woman Warrior*," Sitapinee Sangkasem studies the impact of "Talk-Stories" on the main female characters. She discovered that the Chinese-American daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* understood the relationship between the Chinese immigrant mothers and the first generation Chinese-American daughters. In addition, Sangkasem maintained that the Chinese American values were assimilated into the American values.

On the other hand, Watcharee Poonpipatpon examines the relationships between the immigrant mothers and their Chinese-American daughters in the topic of "An Analysis of the Relationship between Mothers and Daughters as Presented in *The Warrior* and *The Joy Luck Club*," The result shows that the bonds between the mothers and daughters remained strong. Conflicts were caused by two main factors, biculturalism and patriarchy.

In short, the relationship between mothers and daughters was considered by many researchers. They studied on assimilation between two generations, the issue of biculturalism and patriarchy as well as cultural, historical, and social perspectives. In this study, the researcher aims to analyze conflicts between groups influenced by different cultural backgrounds by using the theories of conflict in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*.

III. The Conceptual Framework of the Study

The framework of the study is to investigate two different cultural backgrounds between the first generation and the second generation that lead to conflicts between four pairs of mother-daughter in *The Joy Luck Club*. The cause of diversity between them comes from cultural background. Particularly, mothers were brought up and taught the Chinese way of life while daughters were born and live in American way of life. In order to approach the analysis, the conflict theories are used for analyzing those characters.

IV: The Chinese Belief

Belief is defined as something we accept as true. Belief may be an idea about religion, politics, etc. (Wehmeier 52). The concept of belief includes doctrine, way of life, and attitudes, all of which will form a living pattern for people to follow so as to make them peaceful and of doing well. In China, Chinese have their traditional way of life; although, Buddhism introduced by India and Christianity brought by European do not made China become the real Buddhist country or real Christianity. It is because nothing will be able to take the place of the native Chinese beliefs. The pattern that the ancestors have held on for over three thousand years became concept of society. It

constructed social institution that finally became the family system. It consists of values and attitudes that underlie Chinese behavior. Moreover, they are the fundamental root of social characteristic (Yao 17). The elementary ethics of Chinese is Confucianism (Thomson 113).

Confucianism, in literal meaning, is defined as “The School of the Scholar”; or, in less accurate meaning, “The Religion of Confucius”. Several other meanings of Confucianism exist in Chinese that are “Study of Scholars”; “Teaching of Confucius”; and “Religion of Confucius”. All of these meanings came from Chinese terms namely *ru*, meaning “scholar”; *jia*, meaning “family and house”; *jiao*, meaning “teaching” and *xue*, meaning “study or studies”. The environment of values and attitudes that underlie Chinese behavior are learned and considered to be the root of social characteristics. The theme of Confucianism in the function of social institutions is the family system. According to *An Introduction to Confucianism*, Confucius preached that the family system is the basis of society (10). The village system was the family system raised to another level, and that was all of Chinese social life.

Confucianism constructed a family mind as an implication of relationship of members in the family (Yao 11). Furthermore, it is able to reflect the conduct and manner through society of people in the family. The main function of the family is to provide good opportunity for children to learn social obligations. They learn self-control, courtesy, a sense of duty (obligation), gratitude toward parents and respect for elders. These things are family continuity or sense of immortality.

Due to Confucianism (system of moral, social, political, and religious thought), this system has a great impact on the history of Chinese civilization down to the 21st century. Besides, in western view, Confucianism is considered as a state religion of imperial China. However, there is a promotion of Chinese government on

Confucian virtue during the Warring States Period and prohibition during the short-lived Qin Dynasty. Eventually, Emperor Wu of Han chose to use Confucianism as a political system to govern the Chinese state until the 20th century. Nevertheless, during the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China, Confucianism was repressed and has been eventually revived in mainland China again. It can be seen that Confucian doctrine is tied with the Chinese society until it becomes a part of life. The way of Chinese virtues are 'filial piety' (the foundation of the human relationships), 'jen' (the love of humanity or benevolence and the desire to help each others) and 'li' (the rules of proper behavior). They are a general rule of a family that Chinese children are taught to perform the proper conduct.

V. Cultural Background

Different cultural backgrounds may lead to disagreement between people. In *The Joy Luck Club*, the mother believes in her individualistic of China while the daughter has her own viewpoint of American way. Both of them are influenced by Chinese and American cultural backgrounds.

Chinese Cultural Background

The nature of family and experience of individual are related to the cultivation of the mind and manners; as a result, the type of customs and the ideas of society reflected the conduct or behavior. The cultural backgrounds of Chinese that reflect nurturing of the mind and manners from Chinese background are filial piety, jen and li.

Filial piety has been regarded as the first of all virtues. It involves family life, religious worship, social activities and political affairs. It can be seen that filial piety

influences the way of living of the Chinese people. It emphasizes the foundation of the five human relationships: relationship between father and son reflecting affection and union, relationship between ruler and minister reflecting righteousness, relationship between husband and wife reflecting attention to their individual functions, relationship between the old and the young reflecting a proper order, and relationship between good friends reflecting reliance (Chau 6). The virtue of filial piety requires children to serve parents during their lives and when they die to bury them and to sacrifice to them (McAleavy 5). It is a relationship in a family unit. The implication of filial piety in Chinese society is to serve the seniors in the family. In essence, it means that the children take care of their parents. Chinese culture emphasizes respect for the elders in the family. Hugh D.R. Baker has referred to respect for the family as the only element common to almost all Chinese people (374). In the Han Dynasty and other eras, traditions such as ancestor worship were enforced by law upon all of the emperor's subjects. Those who did not obey were punished. In Confucian doctrine, the juniors offered strong observances of reverence and service to their seniors (Baker 375). The younger generation is still taught to believe in the Chinese traditional values, especially the value of filial piety (Che 179). In other words, the seniors also have duties of benevolence and concern toward the juniors. For example, Solomon points out filial piety that:

“The filial piety with which the superior man serves his parents may be transferred as loyalty to the ruler: the fraternal duty with which he serves his elder brother may be transferred as submissive deference to elders; his regulation of his family may be transferred as good government in any official position” (275).

Seemingly, jen is a core of moral teaching. Chau states that jen is love or benevolence of humanity and a good desire to help others (6). Consequently, the doctrine of jen involves the foundation of social order and the realization of self. Firstly, the foundation of social order is to create one's own character and mutually seek to establish the character of others. Secondly, the realization of self is loyalty in dealing with others wishing to succeed by finding out the way to help others succeed (Chan 34). The moral teaching of jen emphasizes society as the most important thing. It is necessary that people learn the doctrine of jen namely earnestness, broadness, truthfulness, diligence and generosity so as to make peace in society. Mencius, one of Confucius disciples, contended that the mental basic of human is good. He stated, "To love one's aged parents, one would also seek to love all aged persons; to care for one's little child, one would also seek to care for all little children."

Li is to teach the rules of proper behavior. The reason of the relationship of hierarchy will identify individual appropriate behavior (Chau 7). Chinese have been cultivated about social order; as a result, they have to learn the rules of etiquette, propriety including ritual. It is essential for everyone to study and have good conduct due to different individuals' responsibility in a family and a society. For example, parents have to pay attention to and have benevolence to their children whereas children have to obey and respect their parents, ancestors and the senior. Therefore, it can be said that people in the society have their different roles such as the role of father to the children; the role of the elder brother to the younger brother; the role of wives to husbands; the role of friends to friends. Each individual has status and responsibility to members of the society. It depends on the role that they are responsible (Thompson 38). The individual's responsibility that is under the limitation of role cannot be intervened by the other roles. For example, daughters

cannot deny getting married though they are not satisfied because marrying is the responsibility of daughters to the family. They cannot deny or avoid their responsibilities. Consequently, men have already been defined a status in the society and his relationships with others.

Consequently, the norm of human behavior is in all social circumstances. The filial piety, li and jen have become the way of Chinese life that all Chinese have held on to and have followed the teachings up until now. They become traits or characteristics of the Chinese people.

American Cultural Background

An American has freedom to plan for his or her personal life. American people have the rights to do what they want to do without any restriction from family or society. The respect that an American can get is in the form of competence to manage working problem not seniority. Therefore, an American has his own viewpoints that are not restricted in any narrow frames. As a result, the American holds on to individualism to make a decision.

Freedom is the rights of every individual to seek and receive without any restriction (Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Q & A 2). People in individualistic culture are encouraged to express emotions because individual freedom is a valuable thing. In individualistic countries like America, parents cannot completely cover or a control a child's thought. They merely have the primary responsibility for rearing children (Garnett 3). Individual Americans are commonly found they have more dates, small-talks, and initial acquaintance than people in countries like China. Moreover, individuality leads to misinterpretation about freedom. Its meaning in children' thought is lacking of discipline, appreciation, and respect for their parents

(Sussman and Cogswell 435). They tend to ignore their parents' concern for their social life and personal safety: "I do my own thing" and "My parents don't understand me" are common viewpoints of American teenagers (Sussman and Cogswell 437). Children in America may disagree or dispute their parents and offer any ideas to the elder in family freely.

Wilfred M. McClay described individualism as a new social philosophy that "disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his family and friends" (1). Besides, for Americans, individualism is part of what it means to be an American. J.R. Pole supports that individualism is very important (380). Austin Cline states that, "People could argue publicly and directly against individualism without being looked at as if they came from outer space" ([www. atheism.about.com](http://www.atheism.about.com) Online 39 July 2006). Being an individual is the status of being unique and setting yourself. From Interpretation of Individualism/ Individualisme, An American would allow his uniqueness to shine through, as opposed to conforming to the norm (5). Therefore, individualism has long been considered a crucial principle of American culture.

However, freedom and individualism can cause problem between parents and children in the U.S. Freeman maintains that parents in America indicated that they felt they were not respected by their children (256). Parents perceive that their children think that they annoy and trouble them. Moreover, the children thought parents' conversation was boring, irrelevant, and different from their perceptions. Since they were young, children have been absorbed notions of personal freedom and individualism. In contrast, the Chinese hold on parents' doctrine. They cannot offer or analyze any actions of the older in the family. The responsibility of the younger in the family is to the senior at home.

VI: Women and the Family in Chinese History

The features of the Chinese family were large multigenerational families with several married brothers living together (Ebrey 1). It can be said that a Chinese family is a large family called extended or joint family. The extended family consists of parents, their unmarried children, their married son or sons and the son's wives and children. In the joint family, the father is the head, or one of the brothers supervising unmarried and married brothers, with their wives and children (Chao 11). Especially, women in Chinese family were bound with responsibility and command of the head of the family. They had to marry whomever their fathers chose. Women were rarely involved in lineages.

Chinese women could not hold any position of power in society. They were considered as objects of her family. Chinese history has often painted Chinese women as subservient in society (Baker 421). Gale Billingsley maintains that Chinese women were expected to be totally subservient to men and had no legal rights in society (35). Dennis Bloodworth explains that Chinese customs surround marriage and the role of women at home (71). Men ruled the world outside; women were controlled by the functions of the home. Furthermore, the role of women in the family is from the perspective of an inferior position. It is because women are inferior, morally pure and physically weaker than men. Women gained nearly equal rights to men. The alternative for women to do something else with her life depends entirely upon the consent of the others in her family.

In the Chinese culture, the family was the primary social unit that advocated the primacy of women in the domestic sphere. Her position in the hierarchy was determined by rank and responsibility. Daughters were expected to obey their parents' authority and assist their mothers in domestic tasks. For the obedience of a

daughter in Chinese family, when the time came, young women would marry into a family of their parents' choice, leaving the home of their birth permanently. The wife was always subject to her mother-in-law's authority in addition to her husband's. She took management of the household when those duties were given by her mother-in-law, ensuring that the family members were well cared for.

In the family, Chinese children should respect the senior. They can sacrifice their own lives for the satisfaction of parents, and they feel grateful to the elders' teaching. However, the Chinese don't have freedom and individuality to do what they want.

VII: Chinese Immigrants in America

Some Chinese migrated to America because they aimed to seek reunion with their families or as refugees (Lankevich 401). The two main reasons for immigration are seeking to live in independent countries and having better political economy. The first reason is that people in China who were under control of the Communist regime aimed that there would be the way to seek freedom and development for their lives; especially those who are from the poor family. The second reason is that they can work and build more effective existence in a new society. The main objective is to resolve poverty and escape persecution within their country. Additionally, it enables them to get opportunity to commence their lives on the new land.

Nevertheless, in American views, they see that Chinese immigrants got lower incomes (Mobasher and Sadri 144). In addition, Chinese Americans do worse than other immigrants because the closed society of Chinatown provides low paying job. The history of immigrations has revealed that the earlier Chinese immigrants came from the laboring classes. They worked in the United States on railroads, in mines, on

farms and as domestic servants. Chinese immigrants worked every thing of all trades. Chinese were satisfied with low wages and willing to perform any jobs in America. At last, the Chinese were forced to find out employment directing competition with the whites because of riots, expulsion and lynching (Kung 30). They gradually adapt their position from the menial jobs to the laundry and the restaurant business. Characteristics of the Chinese in the United States have changed. Because of the benefit of social, economic and political progress in World War II, the Chinese can make proper living and give their children a good education. Their patience and hard work have enabled them to be better accepted in American society.

In short, the earlier Chinese struggled to have better life. They chose to move to an independent country like America. Although the rights on the position of the immigrants were rather bad in the earlier time, Chinese immigrant can eventually endure and struggle until they have better lives.

VIII: Conflict Theories

Conflict theories agree that society and culture influences individual behavior (www.sociology.org Online June 27, 2006). They emphasize the importance of structure and its influence on the individual. Alfred Adler states that society limits certain obligations which influence the norms and forms of our lives (38). A human being must know the situation in which he grew up and the family condition in different society which occupies personal perspective. For example, sex inequality is rooted in the Chinese society while equality is rooted in American society.

In terms of culture which influences individual behavior, Kimball Young explains that the development of personality has been drawn from individual own culture (136). Variation in personality derives from different sources. Argument with

parents in the Chinese society is not suitable; in contrast, the youth in America can offer opinion. Culture provides the content and the direction that people will take and operate in interaction. Furthermore, the relations of culture and personality influence early childhood training which carry over to the adolescent and adult personality (Young 137). For example, filial piety is rooted in the Chinese culture; on the other hand, freedom is rooted in American culture.

Conflict is hard to explain because it has several causes which lead to disagreement between individuals. In order to approach conflict better, theory of conflict becomes necessary to be used in analysis and maintain the details of problems.

According to *The myth of the father: Rethinking Oedipal theory in father-son conflicts*, Lawrence Nichols Hennessy stated that oedipal theory extends throughout the structure of contemporary psychology as well as into numerous academic and intellectual disciplines (25). It is often used by psychological theories to describe psychological phenomena. Oedipal was a universal stage of human development. It started since the experience in children stage. Hennessy further maintains that the source of many of the conflicts between the parents and the children was traced to the external effect of parents toward children as opposed to any innate feature present in all children (28). Jin Young Kim stated that the relationship between parents and children has important meaning for understanding human being (137). Oedipus complex can investigate understanding of interpersonal relationship served as a valuable resource in interpreting the subjects' experiences. This led to understand the difficulties in individuals.

Freud's Oedipus complex is an explanation of conflicts. Freud devoted the theory of Oedipus complex for males; in the case of females, the theory is Electra complex.

The Electra complex is an ambiguous psychiatric concept which attempts to explain the maturation of the human female. It is said to be the female counterpart in Oedipus complex. The Electra complex is in the stage known as the phallic stage, during the fourth year to approximately the fifth year. It is the female counterpart to the Oedipus complex in males. According to *Psychoanalysis and Neurosis*, Electra complex for Sigmund Freud is concept of the feminine Oedipus attitude in young girls. According to Sigmund Freud, the girl is originally attached to the mother as well; however, when she discovers that she lacks a penis during the phallic stage the daughter becomes attached to her father. In later life, the girl will grow into the character type that her mother has developed as a means to attract a man similar to her father.

In conclusion, cultural influences, different cultural background and human development in the conflict theories are used for analyzing conflicts between mothers and daughters in *The Joy Luck Club*.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF CONFLICTS

BETWEEN MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN *THE JOY LUCK CLUB*

This chapter is an analysis of eight main protagonists in the novel of *The Joy Luck Club*. The characters represented two generations. The first generation is the mothers who have Chinese cultural background. They are Lindo, Suyuan, An-mei, and Ying-ying. The second generation is the daughters who were born in the United States of America and have American cultural background. The daughters are Waverly, Jing-mei (June), Rose, and Lena. The eight characters will be analyzed as a pair of mother-daughter and investigated resolutions for each pair. The background of cultural belief, conduct, way of living, behavior, language and opinion were analyzed in order to show the disagreements.

I: Conflicts between Lindo and Waverly Jong: The Problem of Marriage and Lack of Respect to the Elders

Lindo was born in a poor farmer family in a suburban village, Taiyuan. In her early age, she spent her life in China. Later, she immigrated to America and spent her remaining life in America. Before moving to America, she married a boy from a prosperous family, the Huangs, when she was twelve years. Nevertheless, the relationship between her and her husband was not good. They never had sexual relationship as any other married couples. She lived in the Huangs family for a short time and then she divorced her husband. After that, Lindo moved to America to start her new life again.

Waverly was the youngest daughter of Lindo; she has two brothers, Winston and Vincent. Waverly was born and grew up in San Francisco's Chinatown. Besides, her family was a member of the First Chinese Baptist Church whose foundation has provided help for the poor Chinese. They attended the annual Christmas party; the missionary ladies held the party to distribute food to the Chinese children. Waverly got a twelve-pack of Life Savers; Winston got an authentic miniature replica of a World War II submarine; Vincent got the chess set. Waverly seemed interested in a game of chess; as a result, she spent her time practicing and attending chess competitions for many times. Finally, she became a chess champion. She was married to her boyfriend when she was a student and she had a four-year-old daughter, Shoshana. She was finally separated with her former husband. Nevertheless, when the time passed and Waverly grew up, she became a tax attorney. At present, Waverly was intending to get married again to Rich Schields, a tax attorney like her. She was trying to tell her mother about her new marriage and also wanted acceptance from her.

Generally, relationship is related to understanding. If people understand each other, they will talk and discuss things to exchange ideas. Different cultural backgrounds between two generations can cause problem of understanding between mother and daughter. In *The Joy Luck Club*, different opinions and viewpoints of mothers and daughters enable the two generations not to oppose of.

Waverly disputes inside her own mind about value of her mother and hers. Once a doctor checks Lindo's health and proclaims that she has the blood pressure of a sixteen-year-old and the strength of a horse. After Waverly heard such good news of her mother, she compares herself with her mother.

“A horse, born in 1918, destined to be obstinate and frank to the point of tactlessness. She and I make a bad combination, because I’m a rabbit, born in 1951, supposedly sensitive, with tendencies toward being thin-skinned and skittery at the first sign of criticism.” (Tan 183).

Although Waverly is adult, she still perceives the difference between her mother and herself. Waverly discusses about a bad combination between herself and her mother. She portrays her mother, a woman born in the year A.D. 1918 as being obstinate, frank, and tactlessness. On the other hand, Waverly herself has sensitive feeling and cannot manage with her problem. She is a woman born in the year A.D. 1951, new age or new generation. It can be seen that both are entirely different. Waverly even thinks that she and her mother do not have a good combination. Kenneth T. W. Yiu and Sai On Cheung maintain that conflict among the contrasting parties inevitably appears (356). This is a point of the different viewpoints in Waverly’s mind; moreover, it is the discussion inside her own thought. It is not quarrel or argument with each other; however, Waverly still converses with her mother. Essentially, the discontentment and unacceptance are still consistently inside Waverly’s thought. In addition, Waverly claims to both ‘horse’ and ‘rabbit’ in order to compare the value of human being.

In Waverly’s viewpoint, her mother is an old woman in the ancient time; nonetheless, she praises her mother. She portrays that her mother is like a horse. It can be said that the implicit meaning of ‘horse’ is strength. Moreover, the conceptional framework of horse is dignified and also brave. On the other hand, Waverly describes herself “like a rabbit” whose nature is coward, fearful, alarmed, and unconscious. Although Waverly is Chinese-American daughter, she still admired her mother.

Unconsciously, she has been absorbing Chinese way of life from her mother little by little day by day; other values including giving honor and respect to the ancestor of the family. According to the rule of proper behavior; children should obey their parents, Chau stated that the reason of the relationship of hierarchy will identify individual appropriate behavior (7). For example, the juniors are under the seniors. The above mentioned is what the mother has been teaching to Waverly since she was young. However, Waverly does not obey and follow her mother. She decides and does what she thinks suitable by her own value. Therefore, some viewpoint between two generations causes them to reject mutual acceptance.

Chinese mother feels painful when she knows that her teen-age daughter is pregnant with her high school sweetheart. With teaching and nurturing from the Chinese family in her past, Lindo cannot accept her daughter's behavior. For the Chinese, sexual intercourse without the acceptance of seniors and without the arrangement of appropriate marriage is a horrified conduct for a good woman. Moreover, in Lindo's viewpoint, marriage should be approved from both families, not an agreement between lovers. Although Lindo does not like matchmaking, she obeys and marries the man her parents arrange for her. Hugh D.R. Baker referred to the respect for the family as the only common element to almost all Chinese people (374). Furthermore, the status of Chinese women is subservient and they do not have much authority. They have to respect their parents' decision and do their responsibility as good daughters. As Lindo accepted her fate after she knew that she had to get married to the man in a prosperous family, she said, "I was actually a very obedient child, but sometimes I had a sour look on my face." (Tan 45). This is a conventional behavior of Lindo; on the other opposite, her daughter did not choose to do such a behavior. Waverly chooses love and profound relationship with her lovers more than an old

good conventional behavior like her mother. When Lindo knows that her daughter is pregnant, she cannot keep her feeling inside. She damages things and disputes to Waverly. Her extreme anger was shown by “She threw her shoe at us”, said Waverly (184). It can be seen that pregnancy without marriage is such a big problem for someone who is accustomed to a traditional convention. It is extremely against the belief and nurture of the first generation. In other words, the mother’s viewpoint was influenced by motherland culture. Because a stage of human development started ever since children stage, the experience in children will become important roots of individuals when they grow up (Hennessy 25). It was hard to change someone’s thought; therefore, Lindo threw her shoes at her daughter when she knew the truth. Actually, in Waverly’s view, making love with her own boyfriend was something common because she is an American student. However, having a baby is a mistake because she never prepares to cope with such a situation. Finally, Lindo wants Waverly and Marvin to get married and have a baby instead of having abortion or continuing to study at high school. With a strong guilt in the past that Lindo kept in her memory, Lindo ignores Waverly’s behavior of having a couple tell her mother about her new boyfriend, Rich, who is getting married to Waverly soon. It is because Lindo does not want to feel sad again.

Another different viewpoint which enables two generations to reject mutual acceptance is that Lindo who sees the accomplishment of her daughter wants others to perceive her pride as well. Therefore, she proclaims to others in the market about Waverly’s winning the chess championship. Lindo said, “This is my daughter Waverly Jong” (101). Waverly suddenly counters her mother, “I wish you wouldn’t do that, telling everybody I’m your daughter” (101). From the discussion between mother and

daughter upon the same topic, mother does not have the same viewpoint as her daughter.

In Waverly's understanding, her mother is going to tell others in the market that she is a part of the victory of the chess competition. Actually, Lindo was against her daughter playing chess. Furthermore, Waverly understand that her mother is trying to show off. She told her mother, "Why do you have to use me to show off? If you want to show off, then why don't you learn to play chess? (101). Waverly does not understand what her mother is trying to do in the market. She only knows that she is not an object that whoever should use her to respond to his or her own desire even her mother. In American's viewpoint, individual freedom is a valuable thing; therefore, parents cannot completely control children's thought (Garnett 3). The primary responsibility of parents is just rearing children. In addition, freedom of thought can lead to misunderstanding between two generations. Therefore, Waverly has freedom of thought to express to her mother. She is not under control of anyone; she can tell her feeling whether she likes or dislikes.

On the opposite, Lindo does not have the same idea as her daughter. She introduces her daughter to many people in the market because she is proud of her daughter's accomplishment. Therefore, expression of anger of her daughter shows disapproval of her pride so she was angry and stops talking to her daughter and lets her compete the chess game without any suggestions from a Chinese mother. In China, parents make the decision on what children should do or should not do. Therefore, every achievement of the children is that of their parents also. According to Che, he said that the younger generation is still taught to believe in the Chinese traditional value, especially the value of filial piety (179). Consequently, argument of Waverly to her mother is an unacceptable behavior. In a Chinese mother's viewpoint,

she may think that her daughter is rude because Waverly argues with her mother in front of many people in the market place. Although Lindo decided not to talk to her daughter, she could not avoid doing so because Waverly was too sick; Lindo started speaking to her daughter again. However, she did not pay attention to the chess competition.

It can be seen that the discussion between mother and daughter is on the basis of different viewpoints. It can be seen that mother and daughter have their own reasons to explain but it is from different perspectives. However, different viewpoints do not cause any physical injuries. They dispute and express their viewpoints to each other; nevertheless, there is no point to change their minds to believe another person's viewpoint. They insist to believe and to perform the way they believe suitable based on the value guided by cultural background.

II: Conflicts between Suyuan and Jing-mei Woo: The Problem of Disobedience

Suyuan was a Chinese woman who was born during the war. At that time, the Japanese army invaded China in World War II. Suyuan's husband was a soldier of Kuomintang party, so Suyuan had to find a safer place to live as a request of her husband. Suyuan and her twin daughters waited for her husband in Kweilin. Later the Japanese soldiers bombed it, so Suyuan gathered four women to attend the club namely 'The Joy Luck Club' in order to remind a little happiness in the midst of the war. Each week the hostess had to serve special foods to bring good fortune of all kinds and the members play mahjong together. One day Suyuan's husband sent an army officer to tell her about moving to another safer place in Chungking. Nevertheless, traveling was rather far and full of dead people because of starvations and hard accessories. On the way, Suyuan loses her twin daughters because of her

tiredness and weakness. When she reached Chunking, she found that her husband was dead. She was painful due to the loss of her husband and her twin daughters. She decided to move to another place, San Francisco, so as to start her new life again. She found her new husband at the refugee camp. Suyuan and her husband met the Hsus, the Jongs, and the St. Clairs there. They started the San Francisco version of *the Joy Luck Club* again. In the remaining of her life, she spent her life in San Francisco with her husband and they had a daughter, Jing-mei. Suyuan was the first member who has just died of cerebral aneurysm.

Jing-mei is the only daughter of Suyuan with her new husband. Jing-mei was born in San Francisco, The United States, in 1951. Her mother tells her that she has twin daughters in China but they are separated from her and her former husband because of the war. However, Jing-mei never believes that it is a true story. She understands and believes in her mother's story after her mother passed away. Jing-mei was once invited to The Joy Luck Club after her mother died. She plays mahjong and also sits on her mother's seat. After playing mahjong for a moment, the aunties tell her about the story of her twin sisters whom her mother tries to find all her life but, at last, she cannot see her daughters. The aunties give some money from winning mahjong to Jing-mei to go to China. They want Jing-mei to tell her twin daughters about her family in America and the story of her mother. At the beginning, Jing-mei is shocked to hear the entire story, but later she feels shocked when the aunties want her to tell the story of her mother. Actually, she does not know anything about her mother. Nevertheless, Jing-mei decides to travel to China to see her twin sisters once.

Although Jing-mei is a Chinese daughter, she never appreciates or absorbs her Chinese. She used to listen to her mother's story in China but she thinks that her mother is telling her a lie. It is not a true story. "I never thought my mother's Kweilin

story was anything but a Chinese fairy tale” (12), Jing-mei said. Jing-mei thinks that her mother is making a new story every time she tries to tell her past. With the ending which is often changed, it enables her mother to make the story unbelievable. She does not understand what her mother’s objective is. It looks as if she cannot approach her mother or probably she does not want to do so. Jing-mei lets the story in the ancient time of her mother pass without giving any attention.

Once a friend of Jing-mei tells her that her appearance is very much like her mother’s. Jing-mei tells her mother but her mother says, “You don’t even know little percent of me! How can you be me?” (15). Although Jing-mei is in the status of daughter, it is not necessary for her to understand all about her mother. However, Suyuan implies that Jing-mei does not know anything about her. Understanding someone well, one should know about his or her background as well as his or her behavior. Many times, Suyuan tries to tell her story in the past to Jing-mei but she does not pay attention to her mother. Although the appearance of both may look the same as what Jing-mei’s friend comment, the character is definitely different. The result of different characters is partly because of different cultural backgrounds. Kimball Young maintains that the development of personality has been drawn from individual own culture (136).

“I didn’t budge. And then I decided. I didn’t have to do what my mother said anymore. I wasn’t her slave. This wasn’t China. I had listened to her before and look what happened. She was the stupid one” (152).

Garnett states that parents cannot completely control their children’ attitude; they only have the primary responsibility of nurturing children (3). Seemingly, Suyuan who cannot control Jing-mei’s life appears to be a failure. From the above statement, Jing-

mei denies her mother's suggestion and acts as if she were a genius as her mother wants. Jing-mei feels that her mother wants her to be someone that she is not.

Therefore, Jing-mei frankly tells the truth to her mother, "You want me to be someone that I'm not. I'll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be" (153). In the Chinese way of life, parents or the senior in the family can make a plan of living for their descendants. The juniors have to obey their parents. However, it seems that an American daughter like Jing-mei does not obey her mother. In American way of life, freedom of a private life is a very valuable thing. Any individual's personal life should not be violated.

In conclusion, transferring cultural background from one generation to another is a difficult thing. It can be seen that culture is a part of development of characteristic and culture influences individual behavior. Nevertheless, convincing someone to believe and changing the belief is what someone should learn to investigate and find strategies to bring about mutual agreement. In order to have good result of being together; probably, both generations should be tolerant of each other so as to keep the family institution compatible.

III: Conflicts between An-mei Hsu and Rose Hsu Jordan: The Problem of Divorce

An-mei was born and grew up in Ningpo, China. She lived with her uncle, auntie, grandmother and little brother. After An-mei was born, her mother remarried and moved out to live with her new husband. She left her children at auntie's house. The person who looked after and instilled the way of Chinese daughter in An-mei was her grandmother. Nevertheless, An-mei's mother came back again to take care of grandmother when she was sick. After grandmother died, An-mei decided to go along

with her mother. Soon, An-mei lost her mother because she took too much opium to kill herself. She planned to commit suicide before New Year so as to help her daughter and stop her terrible fortune. At that time, Chinese believed that the date of death near New Year time was a disaster, and misfortune will go behind the family. Wu Tsing did have such a belief of death, too. Therefore, the consequence of dying made An-mei and Syaudi (Syaudi was a little brother, a son of Wu Tsing with her mother) become Wu-Tsing's honored children. Moreover, he promised to revere An-mei's mother as if she was his first wife, his only wife. Consequently, the position of An-mei in Tientsin was changed.

An-mei had seven children; Rose was the sixth child (Matthew, Mark, Luke, Janice, Ruth, Rose and Bing). Rose was born and grew up in America. She was very proud of her American nation. Rose used to believe everything her mother said when she was a child. She believed her mother because her mother repeatedly told her about the disaster after disobeying: it was not good if she wanted to risk of bad consequence. As a result, she chose to obey her mother. While growing up, she learned that what her mother said was not all true; it is because her mother was trying to make Rose obey. While she was studying at UC Berkeley, she met Ted in an ecology class in her second semester. Rose was proud of Ted because he was an American man not a Chinese man whom she had a date before. However, the relations of both were not good. It is because Ted's mother and Rose's mother were rather displeased with them because they are from different nations. However, both of them eventually got married. The marriage between Ted and Rose made several people in Ted's family and Rose's family discontented. Lastly, their relations ended with divorce.

As a daughter of Chinese people, Rose saw that she should stop being sad and start to be pleasant. In addition, she should request freedom from her husband who left responsibility as the head of the family; she has to encounter truth on the subject of divorce. After she had already decided to divorce, she told her mother. However, An-mei disagrees and says, "This cannot be" (123). An-mei does not want her daughter to get divorced. After knowing about the divorce, she tries to persuade her daughter to revise the case of divorce in order to keep the status of husband and wife.

On the background of Chinese culture, women had to have their duties in the family. The charge was consistent with the husband who is the head of a family and the lord of wife's life. Husband will assign each member of the family. According to Kenneth K. L. Chau, he said that between husband and wife will reflect attention to their individual function (6). Each person will have to take and keep his own responsibility. The duty of women is to look after their husband and do the chore at home. Therefore, An-mei extremely disagrees with Rose's decision to divorce.

However, Rose does not have the same idea as her mother. She thought that everyone has liberty not only to demand but also to maintain their own rights because there is equality between people. Therefore, she has the right to request some properties from her husband when they get a divorce. Knowing that her husband has a new girlfriend and prepares for a new marriage, Rose immediately makes a decision to demand the right of ownership of the resident house from her husband in an exchange of a divorce license. She knows that it was useless to hold back the romantic love they once had in the past. Now, her husband is bored with her, and what he wants is the divorce license so that he can marry another woman. Although her mother tries to persuade her to change her mind, Rose affirms to get divorced. Generally, people in individualistic cultures are encouraged to express emotions because individual

freedom is a valuable thing. According to Rick Garnett, in individualistic countries like America, parents cannot completely control children's thoughts because they have the primary responsibility of rearing children (3). Although, Rose's decision to get divorced is protested by her mother, Rose confirms her decision, and keeps doing what she had already planned to.

From the different viewpoints between An-mei and Rose on the topic of marriage, it makes them dispute. However, the argument ends with stopping to talk about it. It can be seen that each person presents individual viewpoint, but each still holds on to his or her own belief. Although disagreement causes misunderstanding and resentful feeling to mother and daughter, they still talk to each other. Mother is quietly showing her concern. Mother is worried about her daughter's feeling after she has to get divorced. While the daughter still asks for the mother's opinion before giving the answer to her husband about the license of divorce. It shows that the daughter still seeks advice from her mother. Anyhow, her first intention to divorce does not change because she has her own belief and she is the one who makes decision about her life.

IV: Ying-ying and Lena St. Clair: The Status of Women in the Family

Ying-ying was born in a prosperous family of China. She was beloved of parents. Nevertheless, the wealthy status did not prevent her from breaking away from Chinese strict convention. Ying-ying had to get married with a groom that her parents chose when she was fifteen years old. Her marriage life was not beautiful and happy. Her husband was unfaithful to her; he had a minor wife. As a result, Ying-ying had to encounter failure and grief. After Ying-ying had known that her husband had another wife, she revenged him by taking the baby from her womb before it could be born and

throwing it in the lake like a fish. The disappointment extremely influences her feeling. However, she separated from that man and started her life again. She worked as a clerk in a shop where she met Clifford St. Clair. She got married with him after she knew that her former husband died of being killed with a sharpened longest kitchen knife of a woman whom he tried to leave her. Ying-ying and her new husband moved to America and lived in houses smaller than the one in the country. She had a new baby, Lena St. Clair.

Lena was the only daughter of Ying-ying. Lena was born in Oakland, America and spent her life in American community. Lena did not tell her friends about her half Chinese. She was proud of her surname and her appearance similar to her father. She started to work in the restaurant design and development division of Harned Kelley & Devis, where she met Harold. After he started a new company, he invited Lena to be his associate. They both started to live as a couple with equality. Although Lena felt bad, it was agreement between her and her husband.

The relationship between Ying-ying and Lena seem tranquil without any problems or arguments. However, the topic of marriage appears to be an argument between mother and daughter. Different viewpoints about marriage are the consequence of painful feeling due to the unfaithfulness of the former husband. Her first marriage brought her a nightmare. She felt defeated and was afraid to venture a new marriage. On the opposite, in the daughter's viewpoint, freedom to love someone and to have equal status between husband and wife is theme of spouses.

Ying-ying feels astonished with the relationship of spouse like her daughter and her son-in-law. It is because the lists of what they had bought and paid are stuck on the refrigerator door. The list says "Lena" and "Harold" and under each of the names are things that they have bought and how much those cost.

Lena

Chicken, veg., bread,
 broccoli, shampoo,
 beer \$19.63
 Maria (clean + tip) \$65 groceries
 (see shop list) \$55.15
 petunias, potting soil \$14.11
 Photo development \$13.83

Harold

Garage stuff \$25.35
 Bathroom stuff \$ 5.41 Car
 Car stuff \$ 6. 57
 Light fixtures 87. 26
 Road gravel \$ 19.99
 Gas \$22.00
 Car smog checked
 Movies & Dinner \$ 65
 Ice Cream \$ 4.50

(Tan 175)

The list is not only divided into two parts, but also shows the relationship of spouse. They both have the equality of status in the family. Every item brought into the house must be identified which one is Lena's and which one is Harold's. When Ying-ying saw the details in the list stuck on the refrigerator door, she feels rather displeased. In her view, husband should be responsible for the expense and wife should be in charge of the husband. On the other hand, her daughter shares the responsibility of expense in the house with her husband. It is fair for both because they are in American culture of equality. Therefore, they have to share the expenses. Nevertheless, under each item, Ying-ying feels there is something not equal for Lena. It can be seen that Lena has to pay for chicken, bread, potting soil, broccoli, beer, and shampoo. All of these are not used by Lena alone. It can be seen that most of the things that Lena bought are accessories for both Lena and Harold. On the opposite, garage stuff, car stuff, gas and

ice cream are for Harold's benefit. Even though some of them are advantageous to Lena, she hardly uses them personally.

When Ying-ying said, "This, you do not share!" (176); Lena does not give her any explanations. She just listens and when her mother asks again, "Why you do this?" (176). Lena wants to tell her mother that they are equals. They can eliminate false dependencies; moreover, love for them is without obligation. Lena is afraid that Ying-ying cannot understand this truth; consequently, she tells her mother, "I don't really know. It's something we started before we got married. And for some reason we never stopped" (177). Lena does not want to explain her viewpoint of marriage to her mother who is full of old Chinese traditional viewpoint. The decision is not upon parents like Chinese. It depends on individual life. It is because American nature will support individualism (J.R. Pole 380). Consequently, Lena does not want her mother to know or understand her due to different points of view between them. She knows that whatever she tries to explain; her mother will not be approved because her mother still holds her Chinese way of belief.

Ying-ying was planted by Chinese tradition. She learned how to be a good daughter and good wife. When she was a daughter, she wanted to ask someone about her suspicion. When she starts asking a few questions, she is blamed by elder people. It is much better for Chinese people to follow parents' advice because they are taught to obey the senior in the family. According to McAleavy, Chinese culture emphasizes respect to the elders in the family (5). In addition, after marrying, women had to obey her husband instead of parents. Ying-ying's marriage life is accepted by both families as appropriate. She had to respect parents' teaching without any protest even though the marriage of hers ends up a failure.

In conclusion, Lena; even though, knows that her mother is rather displeased with her husband, she tries to understand and listen to her mother's warning. Lena does not think that she will have to tell her mother the truth; however, she does not obey or follow her mother. Likewise, Ying-ying thought that she cannot accept the equality of her daughter and her husband. In Ying-ying's view, she thought that men are like the head of the family; therefore, they had to pay for all expenses. It is not the women's responsibility. Therefore, her daughter should not share the husband's responsibility. Here are different viewpoints between a Chinese mother and a Chinese-American daughter.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

There are many interesting points in *The Joy Luck Club*. However, the point that interests the researcher is the conflicts between four pairs of mother-daughter. In the research, conflict is identified by different cultural backgrounds of Chinese mothers and American daughters. They would express different viewpoints that are of individuality of each background. The objective of this study is to explore how different cultural backgrounds lead to mother-daughter conflict in *The Joy Luck Club*.

Each pair of mother-daughter conflicts relates to individual cultural background. The problem of marriage and lack of respect to the elders become disagreement between Lindo and Waverly Jong. The problem of obedience is argument between Suyuan and Jing-mei woo. The problem of divorce is dispute between An-mei Hsu and Rose Hsu Jordan. Lastly, the status of women in the family is discussion between Ying-ying and Lena St. Clair.

However, the arguments between mothers and daughter do not end with the breaking up relationship between mother and daughter. They only have disagreement on certain values. Each expresses her view to let the other knows. At the end, they still believe and hold to what they have learned from their culture as correct decision. They do not intend to believe or follow the other's attitude or belief. What each generation does is to keep silent, not having any discussion, after exchanging ideas of each individual. Moreover, they look over the disagreement or problem in order to be reconciled.

The problem of marriage and lack of respect to the elders, the problem of disobedience, the problem of divorce and the status of women in the family are

common topic of conflicts between mother-daughter in *The Joy Luck Club*, in chapter three. However, each pair of mother-daughter does not have the same problem.

Possibly, there are not only conflicts between mother and daughter, but also conflicts between mother-mother and daughter-daughter.

For example, disagreement between Suyuan and Lindo, they discuss about accomplishment of their daughters. However, they both forget to think about the daughters' feeling; both Jing-mei and Waverly may not like what their mothers want them to do. Lindo tells Suyuan about Waverly's chess champion. She is very proud of her daughter winning the chess championship. While Suyuan, who does not have the same interest, tries to push her daughter to be a good student and to be a genius because she wants to show off and brags about her daughter's success. Jing-mei does not like the way her mother wants her to make accomplishment on something in order to tell her success to her friends.

Moreover, Jing-mei thoroughly feels that she never defeats Waverly even once. She feels jealous of Waverly but she does not want to be like what her mother wants her to be. It is because that is mother's desire. With the basis of denying her mother, she tries to deny everything her mother tells her. She always thinks that it is not her own desire. It can be seen that it is conflicts inside herself not outside with other people.

Likewise, Ying-ying who has problem about her past has conflict within herself. She is sorrowful and painful from her past but she never tells anything to her daughter or even her new husband. Ying-ying loves her former husband very much; however, she gets married again. She does not love him but she thinks that he is a good man.

Anyhow, Lena, Ying-ying's daughter, has a problem with her husband. She feels that things are bought and used together; some are not used by only her but by her husband also. She feels that it is not fair. In addition, her mother tells her that it is not fair for her to take care of the expense at home because this responsibility belongs to the husband not the wife. However, American share is normal for American people. In addition, it is common for Lena to accept sharing expense between spouses. She grows up in American culture. Although Lena has conflicts inside herself, she accepts that she should hold to her culture, American share.

Conflict between people in the family can easily happen. Human cannot avoid having conflict with other people. However, the ways to express can be either polite or impolite. If people choose to express impoliteness or bad manners to their opponent, the consequences may result in argument, discussion, fighting or destruction. In contrast, polite or good manners towards opponent may not cause problem. However, disagreement may exist between people of different groups. If people in either group choose to tolerate with each other, they will be able to live together in the same society peacefully.

Suggestions for Further Studies

In this study, there are some important points that I have not discussed on conflict. Therefore, I would like to suggest some interesting topics for further studies as follows:

1. More issues of conflicts presented through personal problem of mothers and daughters should be studied.
2. The issue of conflicts arises from the different social background between mothers and daughters should be interesting topic to explore.

3. There should be a further study of language styles used in presenting different cultural backgrounds in other novels of Amy Tan.
4. There should be a further study of the reflection of writer's real life through the novels.
5. Other works of Amy Tan should be compared with *The Joy Luck Club* to study and analyze her ideas about conflicts which arise from cultural differences.

There are many races of people from all over the world migrating from hometown in order to get a new life on a new place. People have to live under suffering of difference in order to have a new life; everybody needs to tolerate in multicultural backgrounds and to reconcile with each other. However, people still keep their own culture such as Chinese in China town in the United States of America.

In short, people who have different cultural backgrounds can endure and tolerate with each other because they have motivation to live a happy life in a new society. Therefore, living together and accepting difference are beneficial for people from all cultures.

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