

## The Construction of Identity in the Process of Cultural Integration---Take the Joy Luck Club as an Example

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### Abstract

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With the development of economic globalization and cross-regional trade, people pay more and more attention to the identity in the field of spiritual culture. However, behind the cultural identity, the deeper level is the integration and conflict of different cultures. Through the study and interpretation of the main characters in the Joy Luck Club and the analysis of their role in cultural identity, we can see the collision and fusion between the two different cultures gradually to find their identity in the conflict and integration of culture.

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**Keywords:** culture different; culture identity; identity construction; identity; conflict; integration of culture.

### Introduction

With the development of global economy, culture exchanges between countries all over the world are becoming more and more frequent. Therefore, more and more attention has been paid to the identity construction in the process of cultural integration. Through the analysis and interpretation of *the joy luck club*, we can know that the main characters in the novel had entered a serious status crisis before they emigrated to the United States and they had no place in marriage and family in a male-centered society. Through the interpretation of the relationship between the four pairs of mother and daughter, and the fusion degree of Chinese and American culture embodied in *The Joy Luck Club*, it can be known that this cultural fusion will continue to take place in different culture. Culture integration does not mean that one side destroys the other. True cultural integration should find a way to truly live independently of yourself in the dynamic process. This paper will be divided into three parts. The first one is the background information. And next is a wonderful fantasy about different culture. The last one is cultural integration. From this structure, we will know the process the main characters in this novel finish the identity reconstruction. According to this paper, it is obviously that when the two different cultures collide, the identity cognition of the humanities will also change. And culture conflict is an inevitable process. Based on the study of the Joy Luck Club, this paper will analyze how the fusion of culture influences the construction of identity.

### 1. Literature Review

Michael Delucchi used George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interaction to examine self and identity among aging immigrants in Amy Tan's novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989). Social scientists have largely bypassed analysis of fictional accounts of the Asian diaspora. His motivation for employing Mead's theory is to extend social scientific analysis to novels on aging and ethnicity. By examining self-narratives in fictional representations of the aging immigrant experience, He assesses how identity develops out of particular social conditions and is achieved through social, psychological processes.

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Despite some limitations, symbolic interaction offers insights into the process whereby the present brings reinterpretation of the past and individuals are compelled to assign meaning to this paper will discuss from the following aspects: the infinite vision of Western culture, the collision and conflict of culture, the continuous integration and tolerance of culture, the way how to eliminate cultural differences and the construction of new id. Through the description of the four mothers before going abroad, the psychological exploration after going abroad and the analysis of the daily life of the four mothers and daughters, this paper discuss how to reconstruct the new id in the two different cultures.

## **2. Background Information**

### **2.1 Introduction to the Author**

Amy Tan, a famous Chinese-American female writer, was born in Oakland, California in 1952. She attended medical school and received a master's degree in linguistics. Works include *Joy Luck Club*, *wife of the Kitchen God*, *daughter of the Master*, *Fish of the Sink*, and so on. She began writing novels at the age of 33, and later published her first novel, the *Joy Luck Club*, which has since established her reputation in the literary world. It vividly describes the subtle feelings between mother and daughter. The novel not only won the National Book Award of the year, but also was adapted into a film, making a great box-office record. Amy Tan also published "*Kitchen God's wife*" (*The Kitchen God's Wife*) and "*100 Mysteries*" (*The Hundred Secret Senses*), after the *Joy Luck Club*. He attended medical school and received a master's degree in linguistics. She became famous for her debut, *Joy Luck Club*, and became the best-selling writer in contemporary America. His novels "*wife of God of Kitchen*", "*inspired Girl*" and "*Lady of the Moon*" for Children, "*Chinese Siamese Cat*", etc., have been translated into more than 20 languages and have been widely circulated in the world. Amy Tan is a contemporary storyteller. She is an excellent writer with rare talent and can touch people's hearts.

### **2.2 Introduction to the Work**

The *Joy Luck Club* is a famous work by Amy Tan, a Chinese American writer. The novel depicts the ups and downs of life of four women who emigrated from mainland China to the United States before liberation, as well as the psychological divisions and emotional conflicts between them and their American-born daughters. Love and resentment make people feel a great deal. Many films of the same name have been made. The film focuses on the four Chinese mothers and daughters in the United States, describing the experiences of several families in the past hundred years, thus contrasting that Chinese women have gradually grown from painstakingly humiliated grandmothers to a new generation of women with independent personality and economic status. The main plot is that Wen Ming-na 's Joan originally had a deep misunderstanding with her mother, but when she replaced her deceased mother to visit two sisters who had been forced to part from each other during the war of Resistance against Japan, deeply feel the previous generation and cannot be cut off the family. There is a duck, so he has been stretching his neck to be a swan, did not expect it to become a swan. The film *Joy Luck Club* tells the stories of four mothers and daughters. Every mother is regarded as a duck by her growing society, not worthy of a love, but they are not willing to the fate of being despised, put a desperate effort for their own fate, and finally give their daughter a noble status. They are like ducks stretching their necks, leaving their daughters swan feathers and future full of love and dignity.

## **3. A Wonderful Fantasy about Different Culture**

### **3.1 Culture Fantasy**

Lin Do, when she was four years old, after consultation between her mother, matchmaker and large family, was ordered it to be his wife. But she still lived with her mother. But since then her mother has treated her with "you are someone else's family", such as reminding her: "Don't eat so fast, they won't want you!" Never forget to remind her that she is no longer in her mother's house. On her wedding day, she waited for her husband to come in a red-haired veil. Waiting for the moment of her fate, she decided to remember her mother's words all her life: "never forget who you are!" she married a boy much younger than herself and scared her of lizards on the night of her marriage. He was also at the age of loathing girls, so she was not allowed to sleep in bed. But then she got into trouble. Her status in her mother-in-law 's family is determined by the birth of an unborn son in her belly. She could not make the boy have any desire for her, she certainly could not conceive, for which she was scolded by her mother-in-law for three days. In the end, she used a shrewd trick to get herself out of it. She overheard the maid talking to the rickshaw puller, knowing that the poor maid was pregnant from the rickshaw puller, but the rickshaw man denied it.

She took advantage of her mother's superstition and told her that the whole marriage was wrong, the result of the matchmaker's greed for money, and that his favorite wife was the maid, and that she had been planted from generation to generation. In this way, two women, who could never turn their fate upside down, magically reversed their fate; the maid became the great wife of a large family which the Ming media was marrying, and she got a ticket to Shanghai. A woman who can break free from her miserable fate, which would have been a life of misfortune, is strong and astute, but it is a great disaster to meet her daughter.

Ying Ying When she was young and young, fell in love with the young master with money and flowers, and got married in a hurry under the orders of the child in her womb. After she got married, she would never be able to guard him. He also humiliated her in an abusive manner, and he despised her. After nearly two years of painful marriage, she was depressed and dazed. One day, she murmured, "he has taken away my youth, love and ignorance." I will take away the only thing that belongs to him, too. "she drowned her own child. It was her everlasting nightmare, her everlasting pain. Until she came to America, remarried, she was still entangled in the pain of the past, she lost her life, and so did her daughter.

An Mei lost her mother when she was very young. Her mother was evicted from the house, grandmother and uncle taught her to despise her mother. But she never understood why. One day, when her mother came back, her grandmother was seriously ill, and her mother came to see her grandmother, who was always in suspense, and cut her own meat and soup for her grandmother to eat, which was a legend in their hometown. A mother who loves his mother will not die if he cuts her flesh for her mother to eat. But Grandma died. Grandma's grasp of her mother before her death was a pardon for the daughter who had been evicted from her home. She was desperate to follow her mother to her new "home". At that time, she had knew that her mother was very low, the fourth wife in this home. When her mother died, An Mei learnt how to resist the fact. Then she went to the USA.

Mother SuYuan she abandoned her twin daughters. At that time, she had to take her two daughters to Chongqing, but she was suffering from severe dysentery and had managed to escape with her two children for a while. She suspected that she was going to die on the road. What about the kids? She knew that if she died next to the child, no one would want to pick up the two children. Who would want the ghost spirit whose mother was dead to follow the child day and night? She left all her belongings to the twins, left letters and sent the children to her father in Chongqing. She left the child under the tree and left crying, waiting to die. Unexpectedly, she woke up, found herself saved, she survived, but the child? She would never know where the two children were, and she hated herself for giving up hope. When she arrived in the United States, she remarried and gave birth to a daughter. She placed all her hopes on her daughter, and even on the twins.

Although the four mothers had different life experiences, in those days women were subordinate to their husbands and had no place in the family. They fought hard against reality, in which they broke their heads and lost all hope. Despite too many tribulations, they still have the slightest hope. They decided to put all their bets on going to the United States.

### 3.2 Culture Conflict

The four have a good vision for America. The four put their hopes on their daughters to varying degrees. I want my daughter to be a real American and really fit into the upper class of American culture. This unilateral idea quickly met with opposition from daughters in real life. Taking Wu Suyuan 's family as an example, Su Yuan devoted all her attention to training her daughter to learn the piano, but her daughter was obviously not interested in the piano. At a gifted piano performance, Su Yuan's daughter unsurprisingly screwed up the performance, and the war between the mother and the daughter officially began. This mother-daughter war lasted for 20 years. Since then, mother-daughter relationship has entered the Cold War period, and daughter has gone further and farther away from her mother's wish. Wu Suyun died, Wu Jingmei did not feel a trace of relief, but a deep loss. Because Wu Jingmei never had a chance to fulfill her mother's expectations, nor did she have the opportunity to ask her why she had to design a "great future" for her so that she would never succeed. If we joined the *Joy Luck Club* at first out of filial piety to our mother, then we went to mainland China to fulfill our lifelong unfulfilled wish for our mother. It was more out of the thirst of Wu Jingmei to understand her mother and seek her mother's "shadow".

### 3.3 Approach to Culture Conflict

Wu Jingmei is Wu Suyun's daughter. Although Wu Jingmei, 36 years old, is close to bewildering and her mother Wu Suyun has died, she is still upset that she has not become the "successful person" her mother hoped for.

Wu Suyun imposed traditional Chinese ideas on Wu Ching-mei, saying that "only a submissive daughter can live in this house." However, Wu Ching-mei envisioned a free western way of life, believing that although she was a mother's daughter, she was not her slave, and deserved democracy and equality. After the Piano incident, the differences between Wu Suyun and Wu Jingmei were caused by different cultural backgrounds and different values for more than 20 years. Until Wu. After she returned to mainland China, she was able to get to know her mother. When she was a child, her mother, Wu Suyun, bought her a chance to learn the piano at the expense of a domestic helper, but she stubbornly believed that what her mother had done was merely an attempt to increase the amount of capital she could show off in front of her poker friends. So everywhere is contrary to the mother's wishes. It is not difficult to see from the war between mother and daughter that the mother is determined to make her daughter a talented, learned, upper-class American, and to make her completely lose her past memories which are unthinkable. But the daughter is obviously against the arrangement of the mother, the strong attitude of the mother, the daughter shows the reverse mentality. Although the daughters of the blood of the Chinese, but they are exposed to Western culture. Although mothers have lived in the United States for decades, they are ideologically complete Chinese ideas. It is this conflict and conflict of ideas that has led to the inability of the two generations to communicate well. Until her mother, Wu Suyuan, died, Wu chose to return to China to find her long-lost twin sister. Returning to the motherland, Wu, who got off the plane, realized what his mother had done. Perhaps we can see from the plot of this novel that conflicts between the two different cultures are inevitable. But when Wu returned home, he understood his mother's hard work. It is not hard to see that it is the understanding of where the mother lives that makes her feel. As the communicators and communicators of culture, only when we have tried and experienced this culture that we have not hacked out can we truly understand and identify with it.

#### **4. Culture Integration**

##### **4.1 Relaxation of Culture Conflict**

In the third chapter, the daughters gradually understand and accept the mother's practice and change their attitude towards the mother. The relationship between mother and daughter has been greatly improved. In the last chapter, Wu Jingmei becomes a new Wu Jingmei because of her understanding of her mother and her understanding of different cultures. The recognition of her twin sisters made her feel different about Chinese culture. In the "four structure" model, the characters understand each other and the relationship between the protagonists and daughters in the novel *Joy Luck Club* is the basic motive force to promote the development of the whole "story ring" and the stories in the ring. The story from a tense mother-daughter relationship to relaxation began with Wu's death. The *Joy Luck Club* was originally a mahjong club. After Wu died, her daughter accompanied the three aunts to play mahjong. At first, the three aunts are still concealing that Wu has two twin sisters in China. Later three aunts chose to tell Wu Jingmei exquisite. Wu decided to go back to China to find two sisters who had been separated for many years. As soon as she set foot, Wu Jingmei realized her mother's feelings and past experiences, and she began to understand her mother. The two sisters are over 30, and their status is opposite to Wu's. There are always tears when relatives come together.

##### **4.2 Construction of New Identity**

The fourth part of the text begins with Wu Jingmei sitting down at the mahjong table in the Joy Luck Club instead of her dead mother. This process from east to east indicates the inevitability of culture from estrangement, conflict to final integration. Time flies, their daughters experience years of baptism, career and marriage setbacks, finally understand their status, and become mature. There has also been a shift in ideas that they had so deeply agreed with. The harshness of their mothers that they felt when they were young was but a sign of self-protection. They gradually woke up and eased the conflict between their daughters and their mothers. "take off" It represents the integration between mother and daughter and the resolution of communication barrier. The protagonist Wu Jingmei feels guilty about the past after her mother's death, and regrets that she did not cherish and listen to her mother's teachings. Wu Jingmei returned to China to see her twin sisters. When she stood on the land of her mother's birthplace, hugging her twin sister, she truly understood her mother's words of the past and her expectations for her future. At this point, the cultural gap and conflict between daughter and mother really disappeared, the two generations resolved the contradiction and moved to fusion, and finally got the return of the soul.

## Conclusion

Though the systematic analysis of the text, we can see the development and change of Chinese American culture in the process of communication, and this change of the subject's identity. Unlikely most works in which cultural identity must be explored, this paper aims to find other ways of thinking.

Thus, the construction of cultural identity is a two-way process, but also a dynamic process. In the context of migration, better treatment of home and local cultures requires a process in which subjective and objective factors are involved if the process is to proceed more smoothly, with interference from State policies, there is also the degree of communication between people from different cultures. Although mothers still insist on their Chinese identity, they will adapt to American life to survive. Even passively accepted, they are no longer a single Chinese identity. And their daughters, born in the United States, and educated in the United States, but it are not pure. The oriental temperament inherited from their mothers is always imperceptibly reflected in their cultural identity. This is the affirmation and identification of a culture, and this process will present a more harmonious choice of cultural identity along with the deeper level cultural exchanges.

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