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**ARE THE CHINESE A “MODEL MINORITY”? or IS THIS JUST A
MYTH? WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR DIVERSITY AND
MULTICULTURALISM IN THE USA and A POSTETHNIC AMERICA?**

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ABSTRACT

Asian Americans are called “model minorities” in the USA. This thesis will assess whether Chinese Americans are model minorities by examining traditional patriarchy, race, class position, gender and mixed cultural identity in the novels The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan and Paper Daughter by M. Elaine Mar. It will examine if the model minority concept is a myth created by white Americans and why the question of whether the Chinese are a “model minority” is important for multiculturalism and diversity in the USA and a postethnic America. These two novels are about the lives of female Chinese immigrants, and their daughters who were born in the USA.

The daughters become examples of the model minority at the end of both novels, but one of them thinks that the concept of the model minority is a myth. Whites take themselves to be the models, and the characteristics of the model minority are those that enable other ethnic cultures to assimilate into their culture, white Anglo-Saxon culture. This is the role the model minority plays in the myth of assimilation. In both of the novels, the second-generation immigrant daughters first assimilate into white Anglo Saxon culture, but they cannot be happy trying to be someone that they are not and they find their real identities, at the end of the novels, as Chinese Americans of mixed racial and cultural identities. If all the individuals can acquire mixed racial and cultural identities, then the differences between ethnic groups diminish and they understand each other’s cultures better. Assimilation becomes a meaningless word when there are no big differences between ethnic groups. In assimilation, a person should change her habits, tastes, thoughts and behavior totally. But it does not have to be that way. She/He can be multicultural. But there is one problem. Whites do not want to be multicultural since they claim that this country is theirs. As David Hollinger writes, whites should accept that they are Euro-Americans, one of the ethnic groups and a part of the diversity, and that this country does not belong to them, but is a country formed by different ethnic groups and cultures coming together.

Only then can there be optional ethnicity and America can go beyond multiculturalism to a postethnic America. For this to become true, all ethnic groups in the U.S. should accept that they formed a new ethnicity and culture called “American.” In the novels, we see that the daughters call themselves Americans. This will enable all the individuals in America to live in peace, enjoying diversity instead of living in racism, hostility and violence.

ÖZET

Amerika Birlesik Devletleri'nde Asya kokenli Amerikalılara “ornek azınlık” denmektedir. Bu tez, Amy Tan adlı yazarın The Joy Luck Club ve M. Elaine Mar adlı yazarın Paper Daughter adlı romanlarını, geleneksel erkek egemenligi, ırk, sınıf, cinsiyet ve cok kulturlu kisilik acılarından inceleyerek Cinli Amerikalıların gercekten de ornek azınlık olup olmadıklarını ortaya koyacaktır. Ornek azınlık olgusunun beyaz Amerikalılar tarafından ortaya atılmış hayali birsey olup olmadığını ve Cinlilerin “ornek azınlık” olup olmamalarının Amerika'daki cok kulturluluk, cesitlilik ve etnik olgusunu asmıs bir Amerika için neden onemli olduğunu inceleyecektir. Bu iki roman Cinli kadın gocmenler ve Amerika'da dogan kızları hakkındadır.

Romanların sonunda kızlar “ornek azınlık” haline gelmektedir ama bir tanesi bu ornek azınlık olgusunun bir hayal urununden baska birsey olmadığını dusunur. Beyazlar kendilerini ornek olarak gorurler ve ornek azınlık olma ozelliklerinin de kendi etnik Anglo-Saxon kulturlerine asimile olmayı saglayan ozellikler oldugunu dusunurler. Iste ornek azınlık olgusunun asimilasyonda oynadığı rol budur. Her iki romanda da gocmenlerin ikinci kusak kızları once Anglo-Saxon kulturune asimile olurlar, ama olduklarından farklı birisi gibi davranarak mutlu olamazlar ve romanların sonunda ırk ve kulturel acıdan bir karısım, yani Cinli Amerikalı olduklarını anlarlar ve gercek kimliklerini bulurlar. Eger her birey kulturel ve ırk acısından bir karısım olduğunu anlarsa, etnik gruplar arasındaki farklar azalacak ve birbirlerinin kulturlerini daha iyi anlayacaklardır. Etnik gruplar arasında cok buyuk farklar olmadığında asimilasyon anlamsız bir kelime haline gelmektedir. Asimilasyonda, bir kisi aliskanlıklarını, zevklerini, dusunce ve davranışlarını tamamen degistirmek zorundadır. Ama aslında oyle olmak zorunda degildir. Cok kulturlu bir birey olabilir. Ama bir problem vardır. Beyazlar, bu ulkenin kendilerine ait oldugunu dusundukleri için cok kulturlu olmak istemezler. Beyazların, bu ulkeyi bircok etnik grup ve kulturun biraraya gelerek olusturdugunu kabul etmeleri gereklidir.

Ancak o zaman, herkes ait olmak istedigi etnik grubu kendisi belirleme hakkına sahip olabilir. Amerika, cok kulturlulugun otesinde etnik kultur olgusunu asmıs bir Amerika olarak karsımıza çıkabilir. Bunun olabilmesi için, Amerika'daki butun etnik grupların biraraya gelerek “Amerikalı” adı altında yeni bir kultur ve etnik koken olusturduklarını kabul etmeleri gerekir. Romanlarda kızların kendilerini Amerikalı olarak kabul ettiklerini goruyoruz. Bu, ırkcılık, dusmanlık ve siddet yerine butun bireylerin cok kulturlulugun tadını çıkararak barıs icinde yasamalarını saglayacaktır.

I. INTRODUCTION

Asian Americans are labeled “model minorities” by white Americans in the USA. This thesis will assess whether Chinese Americans are model minorities by examining traditional patriarchy, race, class position, gender and mixed cultural identity in the novels *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan and *Paper Daughter* by M. Elaine Mar. It will examine whether the model minority concept is a myth created by white Americans and why the question of whether the Chinese are a model minority is important for multiculturalism and diversity in the USA and a postethnic America. The reason why these two novels have been chosen is the fact that they were written by Chinese-American female authors and they are about the lives of female Chinese immigrants, and their daughters who were born in the USA.

Whites thought that they were the models themselves and they perceived Asians to be the closest to white Americans in being models. In general, Chinese are hardworking and honest; they place a high importance on education and family, which are characteristics that show they are model minorities. We will study that all the daughters, Elaine, Lena, Waverly, Jing Mei and Rose, become model minorities at the end of both novels. They support the concept of the model minority. But we cannot call all Chinese people examples of the model minority because some were forced not to behave as model minorities at times. The Chinese families in *The Joy Luck Club* are closer to being model minorities, whereas Elaine’s family is not an example of the model minority and shows that model minority concept is a myth. Also, some characters become more successful. We will study the reasons for that. For example, Waverly becomes more successful than Jing Mei at the end of the novel. The Chinese were forced not to act as model minorities at times because of the hard living conditions, poverty, racism and class problems in the USA.

In the introduction to *Paper Daughter*, Elaine Mar writes:

I got tired of lying about who I am. For the better part of my life, I have struggled to live up to the image of the “model minority”, a stereotype that has long been used to describe Asian Americans. I wanted to dispel the stereotype, because I know from experience that it is not true. I grew up in the back room of a Chinese restaurant watching my family labor through thirteen-hour days, seven days a week. We served up foods defined as

“Chinese” by the restaurant owners, Annie and Casey Rosenberg, although we ourselves had never tasted egg foo yung or sweet and sour pork before.

...

We had a hard time making ends meet...

...

We didn't sustain ourselves with ancient fables and Confucian proverbs. Instead we watched “Gunsmoke” on a twelve inch black and white TV.

...

To celebrate the lunar new year, we went to a Chinese social club for a banquet that was really another excuse for gambling.

This was my vision of the Chinese in America. Restaurant workers and seamstresses who could never find the time, will, or energy to learn English, not even enough to read street signs. The entire time I was growing up, I had no idea that Asian American lawyers, doctors, scientists, architects, and business-people existed. “Model Minority” meant nothing to me.

The truth is, my childhood community- an informal Chinatown, since I grew up in Denver, where the boundaries were not defined by city blocks- has more in common with Harlem, Appalachia, and an Indian reservation than with the fantasy of a Horatio Alger story. The same entrenched barriers to success are in place, the same isolation from mainstream American culture, the same political disenfranchisement.

I wrote this book because I needed to reveal these truths about myself: that at my core I am more “minority” than “model”; that as an American I continue to lie if I perpetuate the myth of a classless, integrated America.

(viii-ix)

Elaine's words above and the two novels which will be studied tell us about the way the Chinese are trapped in lives dictated by ideologies or discourses of race, class, culture, gender and patriarchy and how it becomes hard at times to be a “model minority.” The class difference is obvious in Elaine's words. Elaine thinks that the model minority concept is a myth.

There are some points that make the model minority concept a myth. The patriarchy is pronounced in Chinese culture, which we will study in this thesis, and that

should not be taken as a model. Also, not all whites are hardworking and not all of them give importance to education, so it is not correct to say that they are the models and the Chinese are the closest to them in being models. Also, we cannot say that Asians have been as successful as whites because, as we will study in this thesis, Asians are not individuals and most of them work in the family business together. They did not become successful because of education or the hard work of individuals. Also, whites could get loans from the banks whereas the Asians got money from their family. Asians had to struggle harder.

There is a negative connotation in the concept of the model minority too. It says that all the other ethnic groups should take Asians as models and try to be like them. But this is not possible and not fair at the same time. Blacks are not immigrants. They were first brought to America as slaves and they were there from the beginning. They could not keep their culture. They did not have a choice like the Chinese. To some extent, the Chinese had the choice to remain Chinese or become American. Asians had to work harder than whites. They did not have the same opportunities. But blacks claim, like whites, that this country is theirs and that it is okay for an immigrant like the Chinese to work harder, but they are not immigrants themselves. The education and success of the Chinese are true to some extent, but it is not fair to say, "Look! Asians made it, why can't you?" This all stems from the fact that whites see this country as theirs, they do not accept that they are one of the ethnic groups and they want all the ethnic groups to assimilate into their culture, white Anglo-Saxon culture, and they use Chinese and other Asian Americans in doing this.

Orm Overland talks about two different views of the pattern of the USA in her book, *Immigrant Minds, American Identities: making the US home*;

Louis Adamic's "A Nation of Nations" is an early paean to a multiethnic America...He discusses two ways of looking at our history. "One is this: that the United States is an Anglo-Saxon country with a white-protestant-Anglo-Saxon civilization struggling to preserve itself against infiltration and adulteration by other civilizations brought here by Negroes and hordes of 'foreigners.' The second is this: that the pattern of the US is not essentially Anglo-Saxon although her language is English...the pattern of America is all of a piece; it is a blend of cultures from many lands, woven of threads from many corners of the world. Diversity itself is the pattern, is the stuff and color of the fabric."

(Overland, 2000:48)

The first view leads to nowhere other than hostility and violence, isolation and racism. The second view is the road to unity, integrity and happiness of all the cultures living in America. This thesis will defend that the different ethnic groups and especially whites should accept that this country does not belong to only one ethnic group, but is a country formed by different ethnic groups and cultures coming together. They should learn to live together and try to understand each other's cultures and benefit from multiculturalism for the unity and integrity of the USA. The contributions of the Chinese ethnic group to American civilization and the positive effects of Chinese culture to American culture should not be ignored.

This thesis will start by studying the relationship between the writers and the novels, the plots and the characters. Later, it will present the conditions that encouraged migration and the reasons why these immigrants moved to the United States rather than to other countries. It will provide information about life in China, the American Dream and the history of the Chinese in the USA. Later, there will be a section that shows whether the Chinese are the model minority and how they see themselves. It will cover their interaction and similarities with the other ethnic cultures in the USA and how they are seen by white Americans. Then we will see that the American Dream turns out to be a myth created by promoters who needed people to work for low wages. The essence of the American Dream is that a hardworking man with moral values can become rich in America. It was a disappointment for many Chinese people. They worked to reach American middle class living standards, but most of them lived in very poor conditions and did the jobs that white Americans did not want to do. Elaine's family lived in poor conditions in the USA, whereas the Chinese families in *The Joy Luck Club* were luckier because the Chinese mothers only had to live in hard conditions when they first came to America. Later, we do not see any hints that they lived in poverty like Elaine's family. We will study the reasons behind this. Chinese mothers had other disappointments, like losing their daughters to American culture, which we will examine.

Chinese are trapped in race, class, culture and language problems in the USA. But women are twice a minority because apart from these, they also experience problems related to gender and patriarchy. Chinese females who immigrated to the USA after the 1930s are the focus of this thesis.

Pre-Communist China was a very strict society. Confucianism ruled everyday life. According to these rules, women were not sent to school. Girls were brought up to

become good wives and mothers. We will see that these customs clash with the American values which see women as independent individuals. We will study in detail the patriarchy as a part of Chinese culture that cannot be a part of being a model minority as well as the isolation, economic problems, crisis of identity, race, class, gender, marriage and language problems of the characters in the USA. We will study the disappointments of these Chinese women, what they gained and what they lost, whether they could find happiness in the USA.

The Chinese immigrant mothers came to the USA with hopes and dreams for their children and future children. But when they came to the USA, they experienced poverty and isolation. They and their daughters learnt racism and class difference. They struggled with discrimination and prejudice. We see Elaine's struggles with these at school in *The Paper Daughter*. This caused the daughters to experience an identity crisis. At first, they did not know to which culture they belonged. Life was harder for the daughters because they had to survive in the American culture at school whereas their mothers were living at home and among Chinese people in the Chinese community. The mothers wanted to hold on to their culture. They had a hard life in China because of patriarchy and had faced poverty because of the Japanese invasion in the Second World War. It was not their choice to come to the USA. If there were no problems in China, they would not choose to come, and mainly because of this, when these women came to the United States, they could not assimilate into the white Anglo-Saxon culture. It was too late for them to get an education, so they could never overcome the language problem. Instead of the male characters, the mothers were the agents of patriarchy in both novels. They wanted their daughters to acquire Chinese characteristics and culture which entailed a harsh patriarchy, but the daughters saw a different life at school.

The daughters understood that they had to make a choice. They would either be like their mothers who are wives and mothers who they would live for the family until the end of their lives and wouldn't have an identity and career, or they would choose to be independent, successful American women who had a place in the society. They chose the second option. They realized that the only way to survive and become successful in this country was to learn English very well and to get a good education. Christianity, consumerism and intermarriage were also keys to their assimilation into white Anglo-Saxon culture. Waverly, Rose, Lena and Elaine all had white boyfriends or husbands and they always wanted to look like whites physically and to be accepted by them. They rejected their Chinese identity totally.

We will study the assimilation of the daughters into the white Anglo-Saxon culture at first, how they got trapped into patriarchy again in their intermarriages, how they could not find happiness and get over the crisis of identity in the depths of their hearts and how they acquired mixed cultural and racial identities (Chinese-Americans) in the end by returning to their roots, consciously in *The Joy Luck Club* and unconsciously in *Paper Daughter* at the end of the novels, and the importance of this for multiculturalism. Assimilation is a process by which individuals of a more or less distinct group are integrated or perhaps subsumed into the identity of a larger society. In assimilation, a person should change totally. She/He should change her habits, tastes, thoughts and behaviors. But it does not have to be that way. She/He does not have to change everything. She/He can be multicultural like the daughters. Nobody has to assimilate in a multicultural country and change everything about herself or himself to become someone that he/she is not. This is why the word assimilation becomes meaningless. There can be no such thing as just being Chinese or just being American in the USA; all individuals are mixtures of their tastes, habits, hopes, and memories. It is the same with other ethnic groups, too. For immigrants and their families, the contrasts within this mixture can bring pain as well as richness. David H. Hollinger, in his essay called "An Attempt to Move Beyond Multiculturalism to a Postethnic America," says that a variety of cultures now flourish within the United States and even within individual Americans. (Hollinger).

If all Americans could identify with mixed racial and cultural identities like the daughters in the novels, meaning, if they can get the good and beneficial traits from different cultures, they will become mixtures and understand each other's cultures more, show respect and, as a result, the differences between ethnic groups will diminish. Also we shouldn't forget that the number of mixed-race individuals is increasing rapidly due to intermarriage. America will go beyond multiculturalism to a postethnic America. All ethnic groups will combine to form an ethnicity and culture called "American." This does not mean that all the ethnicities and cultures should be erased. On the contrary, this means that diversity should enrich the individual's life in a multicultural society. This is how multiculturalism in America should be. Assimilation becomes a meaningless word at this point. Assimilation to what, if there are no big differences between ethnic groups? Whites think that model minority characteristics enable a person to assimilate to their culture, white Anglo-Saxon culture. This is the role the idea of the model minority plays in the myth of assimilation. Nathan Glazer, in his article called "The Emergence of an American Ethnic Pattern," states that all the ethnic groups and cultures

from different parts of the world came together to form “America” and the term “American.” He says that it does not belong to one culture or ethnic group (whites), but it is a country formed by all of them coming together.

United States has become the first nation that defines itself not in terms of ethnic origin but in terms of adherence to common rules of citizenship; that no one is now excluded from the broadest access to what the society makes possible; and that this access is combined with a considerable concern for whatever is necessary to maintain group identity and loyalty.

...

The definition of America should be a political one, defined by commitment to ideals, and by adherence to a newly created or freshly joined community defined by its ideals, rather than by ethnicity. Inevitably, “American” did come to denote an “ethnicity”, a “culture”, something akin to other nations. A common life did create a common culture, habits, language, a commonness which parallels the commonness of other nations. (Glazer)

As we can see from Glazer’s words, all ethnic cultures should accept that they created a new ethnicity and culture called “American,” and the opportunities in America are for everybody. (Glazer). David H. Hollinger, in “An Attempt to Move Beyond Multiculturalism to a Postethnic America,” draws a conclusion to the same point, as follows:

The United States is endowed with a non-ethnic ideology of the nation; it is possessed by a predominantly ethnic history; and it may now be squandering an opportunity to create for itself a postethnic future in which affiliation on the basis of shared descent would be more voluntary than prescribed. (Hollinger)

He says that America is going beyond multiculturalism to a postethnic future and that people like Alex Haley (whom Hollinger discussed), who has both African and Irish heritage, will be able to choose to identify with Africa or Ireland. (Hollinger). People like Lena in the novel *The Joy Luck Club*, whose mother is Chinese and whose father is a white American, will be able to say she is Chinese or white or Chinese-American. But it is hard at the moment, because white society says that she is not white.

Also, he should not only think that her father is white. Chinese and white people are equal. Being white is not superior to being Chinese. It will not matter whether she says she is white or Chinese in a postethnic America since there will be optional ethnicities and no big differences between ethnicities.

To be able to do this, whites should stop thinking that this country belongs to them and stop expecting all people to become like them. For example, they should not expect them to eat hamburgers. There should be optional ethnicity. A white person can eat Chinese food, too. All individuals are equal. Whites should stop thinking that they are superior to all the other races and stop seeing all the other races as being inferior to them. Hollinger's idea that whites are ethnic, but cannot be postethnic because they do not want to be, is true. He argues that instead of white, they should be called Euro-Americans (Americans coming from Europe) and should be accepted as an ethnic group just like African Americans, Asian Americans and Latin Americans. We have to get rid of the category of white, and some whites who do not accept multiculturalism should accept it. America should be perceived as a country that is formed by the mixture of different cultures. Only then can there be optional ethnicity and America can be a postethnic country. They can create a new ethnicity and culture called "American" and they can all call themselves Americans. The daughters in both of the novels called themselves American. This will enable all the individuals in America to benefit from more opportunities, become successful and live in harmony and peace, enjoying diversity instead of racism, hostility and violence. This is also very important for the unity and integrity of America.

II : THE WRITERS, THE PLOTS AND THE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVELS

Amy Tan, the author of *The Joy Luck Club*, was born in Oakland, California. Her parents emigrated from China in 1949, leaving three daughters there. Although Tan's mother tried to find her daughters after they found a place to live, the contact was lost. Amy Tan attended high school at Monte Rose Internationale in Montreux, Switzerland, and back in the United States, she completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in English and Linguistics at San Jose State University of California. *The Joy Luck Club* is not an autobiography, but the experience of the character Suyuan Woo in China resembles Amy Tan's mother's experience back in China. They both leave their daughters to find help during a Japanese attack and they cannot find their daughters when they come back. They lose contact with them.

The Joy Luck Club (1989) covers the years between late 1940s and early 1980s. It is about the relationships between Chinese immigrant mothers and their Chinese American daughters who were either born in the USA or who came to the USA at a very young age. The Joy Luck mothers are Chinese women who were able to enter the USA after the War Brides Act of 1945 and the Fiancees Act of 1946, and a separate bill passed by the Congress to allow the wives and children of Chinese Americans to enter the United States. The Joy Luck mothers experienced political oppression, personal tragedy and financial problems in China. They came to the United States to be able to offer a better future for their children, but we see that their daughters are in between two cultures.

The book starts and ends with daughter Jing Mei narrating her experiences. In between, there are three sections. The first is about the experiences of Chinese immigrant mothers with their own mothers back in China. The second section is about the problems of the daughters, which stem mainly from neglecting their Chinese heritage and conflicts with their mothers and in their marriages. In the last section, the mothers begin to understand their daughters and help them solve their inner conflicts and the problems in their marriages; they explain their life and experiences, the depth and secrets of their lives back in China. At the very end of the story, Jing Mei goes to meet her sisters back in China and she builds a bridge between her Chinese heritage that she neglected all through her life and her American self. This creates hope for all the daughters. We get clues also that the other daughters begin to understand their mothers and their Chinese heritage. The Chinese mothers in the book are Suyuan Woo, Lindo Jong, An-Mei Hsu and Ying-Ying St. Clair.

Suyuan Woo is Jing Mei's mother. She is the Chinese mother who starts the Joy Luck Club, a gathering of women to play mahjong once a week. She first launched the Joy Luck Club in China during the war so as not to lose her hope to survive and continued it in the USA. All the other Chinese mothers in the novel are members of this club. Lindo Jong is Waverly's mother. She is the mother who regrets raising her daughter in America the most. She thinks that she lost her daughter to American culture when trying to offer her American opportunities. She even thinks that she herself has assimilated into the American culture as well without realizing it. She thinks she has invisible strength and tries to give this to her daughter. An-Mei Hsu is Rose's mother. She is a woman who lost most of her faith in God because her son drowned, but she believes in the ability of human effort to overcome adversity. She learned from her mother when she was very young that she shouldn't be silent and she should speak up for herself. Even though she tried to transmit these beliefs to her daughter, she realized that she could not succeed. Later, she encouraged her daughter to divorce her dominant husband and to speak up for her rights for the first time. Ying-Ying St. Clair is Lena's mother. She was a very independent child, but in time, because of her bad experience in her first marriage, she began to perceive everything as fate and accepted everything without question. She kills her baby in the womb and develops an unstable character. She meets her American husband and regards him as her fate as well. She is afraid of everything and everybody around her. Later, she realizes that her passivity was a very bad model for her daughter when her daughter starts having problems in her own marriage for the same reason.

The daughters in the book are Jing Mei Woo, Waverly Jong, Rose Hsu and Lena St. Clair. Jing Mei (June) Woo is Suyuan Woo's daughter. After her mother dies, the other Chinese mothers want Jing Mei to take her mother's place at the mahjong table in the Joy Luck Club. Also, they give her money because they want her to go and meet her sisters back in China. At first, Jing Mei thinks she can't do it because she does not know much about her mother to tell her sisters. Waverly Jong is Lindo Jong's daughter. She grows up with her mother's teachings about invisible strength, which enables her to succeed in chess tournaments. Her success continues as she becomes a good attorney. There is always a rivalry between Jing Mei and Waverly because of their mothers' ambitions. This always makes Jing Mei feel inadequate because she is never as good as Waverly, as her mother expects her to be. Rose Hsu is An-Mei's daughter. She always lets her husband decide everything, even though she is herself a successful architect. Eventually, she finds herself in conflict in her marriage because of her lack of

confidence. Her mother helps her find her way out. Lena St. Clair is Ying-Ying's daughter. She is very affected by her mother's passivity and loses her confidence. She can't take control of her marriage and her job in her husband's company. Harold, her husband, thinks that they should have separate money and spending. She accepts this, even though it was Lena who first gave her husband the idea to open his own company, yet she can't get the salary she deserves when working at his company because she is his wife.

M. Elaine Mar (Man Yee), the author of *Paper Daughter*, came to the USA at the age of five with her mother in 1972. Her father had come to the United States in 1969. Her parents lived in Hong Kong when Elaine was born. *Paper Daughter* is Elaine Mar's autobiography.

Paper Daughter (1999) is set in Toishan, Hong Kong, and the USA. It covers fifty-eight years, from 1930 to 1988. Until 1972, it is set in China and Hong Kong. After that, it covers Elaine and her parents' life after they move from Hong Kong to Denver, when Elaine is five years old. They work in her aunt's Chinese restaurant at first, but because of a dispute between her father and uncle, they have to leave and form a life of their own, and descend into poverty and isolation. Elaine acts as a bridge between her family and the American world. She has to deal with American children at school who ostracize her because they have inherited their parents' racist beliefs. On the other hand, her family does not like the fact that she is taking on American characteristics, which are in conflict with Chinese traditions. She assimilates into white Anglo-Saxon culture, but she is unaware that she formed a mixed racial and cultural identity. She is not Chinese nor American, but Chinese-American. She becomes a self-confident, independent Chinese American woman through learning English well and working hard at her education. She is accepted to Harvard University. As her mother was her grandfather's paper daughter because she only knew her father through letters, Elaine becomes a paper daughter to her family by choosing a life far away from them deliberately. Elaine is a daughter of the Mar family only on paper documents and not in real life anymore. She wants to be away from them; she does not want to communicate with them and does not want to see them.

There are two main characters in the novel: Elaine and her mother. Elaine's (Man Yee's) mother comes to the USA with her daughter to live with her husband. She is strictly bound to the Chinese culture. She is against consumerism and wasting anything. She lives in poverty both in China and the USA. She has a fierce love for her daughter, but she cannot understand Elaine's difficulties at school and in her social life because

she either works in the restaurant kitchen where she has no contact with Americans or stays at home and lives among Chinese people. Elaine comes to the USA at the age of five. She struggles with prejudice and racism at school. She is very intelligent and hardworking. She starts to put a distance between herself and her family, and in time especially her mother, because the traditional Chinese values of strict obedience, criticism-enveloped expressions of love, and the concealment of excessive emotions all clash with Elaine's American ideas about autonomy, free and open speech, and self-esteem. To understand why the characters in both novels emigrate, in the next section we will study the conditions in China that caused them to leave their country.

III. COMING TO THE USA

A. Conditions in China and the conditions of the characters in China:

Chinese mothers in both of the novels had a hard life in China because of patriarchy and the poverty that resulted from the Japanese invasion in the Second World War. It was not their choice to come to the USA. If there had been no problems in China, they would not have chosen to come. It is mainly because of this that, when these women came to the United States, they could not be assimilated into white Anglo-Saxon culture. They wanted to hold on to their Chinese culture and wanted their children to acquire Chinese characteristics.

Japan invaded China's northeastern region of Manchuria in 1931. On July 7, 1937, Japan launched another attack near Beijing. This time, Chinese government began a war of resistance. This war was called the Second Sino-Japanese War. It is accepted as the beginning of World War II by some historians. Shanghai and, in December 1937, the capital city of Nanjing fell to the Japanese. The Japanese forces committed brutal crimes against civilians. When Nanjing was occupied, they killed 300,000 civilians within a month. China's war against the Japanese lasted for eight years without pause. Chinese people, after living under the military dictatorship of Chiang Kaishek in the early 1930s, suffered a lot from the bombings, the forced labor camps and the widespread famine as a result of this war. Japan declared that they could defeat China in three months, but China resisted for eight years at a cost of 35 million lives and 100 billion US dollars' worth of materials. Consequently many Chinese wanted to leave their country.

In *Paper Daughter*, Man Yee's, or Elaine's, family lived in a small room in an apartment building like a pension when they were in China. There were no toilets in the rooms. There was only one toilet in the hall, shared by all the tenants on that floor. They put their food on the shelves inside the room. They slept and cooked in the same room. We see their severe poverty. Man Yee's grandfather went to the USA to work and send money and could never save enough money to come back to his family in China. Man Yee's mother grew up not seeing her father. Man Yee's grandmother brought up her daughter by herself in poverty with the little money that her husband sent from the USA. Man Yee's father does the same, going to the USA to earn money and later takes his wife and daughter to the USA.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, the mothers suffered back in China. Rose's mother, An-Mei Hsu, grew up with her grandmother and did not see her mother until she was nine

years old. Her mother was made the fourth concubine of a rich Chinese man against her will after her husband's death. Rose's grandmother did not want to see her daughter anymore; she could not accept the fact that her daughter had become a concubine. She thought that Rose's mother had become a shameful person. When An-Mei turned nine, her mother took her to the house in which she lived with the other concubines and in the end, her mother committed suicide. An-Mei came to the USA and worked in a pancake factory where she met Lindo Jong.

Ying-Ying St. Clair's mother, Lena St. Clair, came from one of the richest families in Wushi. She was wedded to a man at sixteen by her family. She thought it was her fate and began to love him, but he started to go to other cities and frequent prostitutes. One day, he moved in with one of them and never came back. Lena became pregnant, but killed her baby in the womb. She then went to a big city and started to work in a shop even though she did not need the money. She met a white American client and, thinking he was her fate, married him and came to the USA with him.

Waverly's mother Lindo Jong was wedded to a young boy when she was very young. Her family was running away from the flood and they left her with her husband's family, whose house was on the hill. They thought she would be safe there, but her mother-in-law made her do all the housework and was cruel towards her. By playing a trick, she managed to leave this family without shaming her family's name. Later, she came to the USA. With the help of the addresses she got from a woman in China, she found a cheap apartment. It was very hard for her to find a job since she did not know English. She started to work in a pancake factory and got married to a Chinese man.

As Suyuan Woo, Jing Mei Woo's mother, was running away during a Japanese attack, she had to leave her two daughters at the roadside to find help. When she came back, they were gone. She then came to the USA, but never stopped searching for her daughters. She found them at last, but died before she could return to China. After her death, her daughter from her second American husband went and found them.

These are all tragic stories. The characters immigrated to the USA either because of poverty, war with Japan or problems they came across because they were women. They chose to come to the USA. Why? The factors that attracted them to the USA will be discussed in the next section.

B. American Dream, its effects in the novels and the History of the Chinese in the USA: History versus the American Dream:

Belief in the American Dream leads the Joy Luck mothers and Elaine's family to come to the United States to start a new life. They leave all their sorrows behind in the old world and come to the new world, America. They think it is the country that will give the immigrant what she does not have, that will make her experience what she hasn't experienced and make her see what she hasn't seen.

In *Paper Daughter*, we understand the American image in China from Elaine's teacher's words:

My teacher smiled indulgently. "Where is Den-veah?" she asked. "Is it a big place or a little one?"

Mother's forehead crinkled. "I think it's little, not big like San Francisco. I think that's what her father wrote."

My teacher answered briskly, "Ah, well, it's America, that's the important thing!..." (30)

Elaine's mother assures her before they leave China that America will be better for them:

"America will be better," Mother promised. "People there wear nice clothes all the time. It's safe, you can walk the streets and not worry about thieves stealing from you" (29).

In *Joy Luck Club*, Lindo Jong tells Waverly about opportunities that exist in America:

I taught her how American circumstances work. If you are born poor here, it's no lasting shame. You are first in line for a scholarship. If the roof crashes on your head, no need to cry over this bad luck. You can sue anybody, make the landlord fix it... In America, nobody says you have to keep the circumstances somebody else gives you. (289)

The Joy Luck Club shows us the American Dream of the immigrant with symbols:

The old woman remembered a swan she had bought many years ago in Shanghai for a foolish sum. This bird, boasted out the market vendor, was once a duck that stretched its neck in hopes of becoming a goose, and now look!—it is too beautiful to eat.

Then the woman and the swan sailed across an ocean many thousands of li wide, stretching their necks toward America. On her journey, she cooed to the swan: “In America I will have a daughter just like me...But over there nobody will look down on her, because I will make her speak only perfect English. And over there she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow! She will know my meaning, because I will give her this swan—a creature that became more than what was hoped for...” (17)

The old Chinese woman immigrant escapes tragedy, and she comes to America for a better life for herself, but especially for her future daughter. Here we see her dreams for her daughter. She does not want her to experience the sorrows that she experienced. The swan is a symbol for her hopes and the best future for her daughter. Here we see the American Dream.

Jing Mei Woo explains her mother’s American Dream and how she thinks that her daughter can be a prodigy in America:

My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America. You could open a restaurant. You could work for the government and get good retirement. You could buy a house with almost no money down. You could become rich. You could become instantly famous.

‘Of course you can be prodigy, too,’ my mother told me when I was nine.
‘You can be best of anything.’

America was where all my mother’s hopes lay. She had come here in 1949 after losing everything in China: her mother and father, her family home, her first husband, and two daughters, twin baby girls. But she never looked back with regret. There were so many ways for things to get better. (141)

Suyuan Woo thinks that her daughter can be anything she wants to be in the USA. First, she thinks she can be a famous actress like Shirley Temple. Then she forces her daughter to take piano lessons, thinking that she can be a famous musician some day. Chinese mothers do believe in American opportunities. They believe in the American Dream and want these opportunities for their children.

With the new regulations on Chinese Immigration in 1930 and 1945, many Chinese men were able to bring their wives or future wives to the United States and this is how the Chinese female immigrants started to come. They were the dependents of their husbands. The Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 brought in a new period in Chinese American immigration. Now Chinese Americans were liberated from a structure of racial oppression. Legislation restored many of the basic rights that were earlier denied to Chinese Americans. Under these new laws, thousands of Chinese people came to the United States each year to reunite with their families and young Chinese Americans mobilized to demand racial equality and social justice. (Wang)

The myth that promoters created was that a hardworking man could become rich in America because it was the land of opportunity, and this was the essence of the American Dream. They needed people to work for low wages. It was a disappointment for many of these Chinese people. They worked to reach American middle class living standards, but most of them lived in very poor conditions and did the jobs that the white Americans did not want to do.

Elaine's family had to live in one of the rooms in her aunt's house. When things went wrong, they moved to a bad neighborhood. Her parents worked in the kitchen of a restaurant. Elaine explains how she would not be able to buy a t-shirt at school if her aunt did not give her the money. Later, she did not eat lunch to save money to buy nicer clothes. Even though her mother and father worked hard, they couldn't earn enough money to afford a better life. Her mother started to say, "What rotten country," referring to the USA. She was disappointed.

When they first come to the USA, the Chinese mothers have to work in a pancake factory where they often burn their hands. Lindo explains how she had to rent a cheap apartment and had a very hard time finding a job because she did not know English. She explains her past difficulties to her daughter and thinks that her daughter does not understand them. We see Suyuan Woo's disappointment. She was affected by the American Dream and thought that her daughter could be a prodigy. Her strong belief in

the American Dream blinded her eyes and she could not accept her child for who she was. The immigrants faced a lot of problems, especially the women, who faced problems both inside and outside the house. We see these problems in both of the novels. They will be examined in the next section.

C. The Chinese as a model minority, their interaction and similarities with other races in the USA and whether the families in the novels are model minorities:

At first, people in America did not like Chinese because of their different looks and traditions, but later in time, people started to see them as a “model minority” and preferred to give jobs to them instead of whites and the black people. What was the reason behind this big change? Why were they called a “model minority”? Were they really model minorities or was this just a myth? According to Charles H. Mindel and Robert W. Habenstein in their book, *Ethnic Families in America*, “The Chinese were referred to as ‘Chinamen,’ ‘Yellow lepers,’ or ‘Chinks.’ On Broadway, the Chinese were burlesqued and ridiculed for the amusement of American audiences.” (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977, 126). They explain that the Chinese frightened other people because the part of the town where they lived soon began to look like a foreign settlement because of their clothing, the odd appearance of their written language, the symbols of beetles, snake bones and lizards, their funerals, local religious temples, the incense and their priests, which were all different for the Americans, who began to see them as heathens. (McClellan, 1971:34-35) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein, 1993:127). This was when the Chinese first came to the USA. But later in time, Americans’ thoughts about them changed.

Takaki relates the thoughts of a Chinese worker, Lee Chew, about his countrymen in his book *A Different Mirror*. This worker says that no one would hire an Irishman, German, Englishman or Italian when he could get a Chinese, because his countrymen were so much more honest, industrious, steady, sober, and painstaking. He adds that the Irish filled the almshouses and prisons and orphanages, Italians are among the most dangerous of men and Jews are unclean and ignorant. (Takaki, 1993: 209). People realized the fact that the Chinese were sober, duly law abiding, clean, educated and

industrious. Takaki, in *A Different Mirror*, relates how the employers' perceptions of the Chinese began to change: "Planters soon saw that the Chinese could be employed as models for black workers: hardworking and frugal, the Chinese would be the 'educators' of former slaves." (Takaki, 1993: 202). According to Takaki, A year after the Civil War, a planter declared: "We can drive the niggers out and import coolies that will work better at less expense, and relieve us from the cursed nigger impudence." (Takaki, 1993:202). Then he writes that the Chinese immigrant laborers were praised by the president of Central Pacific Railroad Company, Leland Stanford as "quiet, peaceable, industrious, economical-ready and apt to learn all the different kinds of work" required in railroad building. Stanford stated, "They prove nearly equal to white men in the amount of labor they perform, and are much more reliable." (Takaki, 1993: 196)

Kwang Chung Kim and Won Moo Hurh explain how the name "model minority" was given to the Asian Americans in their article, "Korean Americans and The Model Minority Myth, 1970s-Present." They tell us that sociologist William Petersen published an article in which he called Asian Americans the "successful minority" in 1966 and since then, many scholars and journalists have called Americans of Asian origin the "model minority". They said that they called Asians this because most of them were educated, had a high family income, and their level of social deviance was low. Kim and Hurh state that the media first cited Japanese and Chinese Americans as minorities that had achieved success in American society, and in the 1970's, they included Koreans in this success story. (Kim and Hurh). Kim and Hurh also give us the critics of the model-minority thesis. According to these critics, the reason that their social deviance was so low was that in the mid-1960's, the number of Asian American youths was still small, so those who got into trouble formed only a very small amount of the young people arrested for crime. There were several income earners in an Asian family, which was the reason that their family income was high. US immigration policy favored the entry of well-educated professionals and that was the reason for the high level of education of Asian Americans. (Kim and Hurh)

In time, people began to consider the Chinese as the minority closest to white people because they were a "model minority" and because of this, intermarriages between Chinese and white Americans were common. In *The Joy Luck Club*, all the girls had either white fiancées or husbands, and Elaine in *Paper Daughter* had a white

boyfriend. Gary Okihiro, in his book *Common ground: Reimagining American History*, talks about the Chinese being a “model minority” and being close to whites:

...Asians, as neither white nor black, pose a problem for the binary racial border patrol, and have been classed at times as “near blacks” or “nonwhite” and therewith with their debilities, and at other times as “near whites” or “model minorities” but without the full natures of whites. (Okihiro, 2001:133)

As employers began to consider the Chinese a model minority, the workers who were white and from the other ethnic groups, like blacks and Mexicans, were not pleased with the situation, because all the jobs were given to the Chinese, so they became violent. In his book, *A Different Mirror*, Takaki explains, “The Chinese were vulnerable, victims of racial violence and were blamed as ‘the source of the troubles’ of white working men and they suffered from racial attacks.” (Takaki, 1993, 208). He goes on to explain a Los Angeles Times report on August 14, 1893. It stated that the white men and women who wanted to earn a living were not happy with the situation. At first, they started peaceful protests against vineyardists and packers who were employing Chinese instead of whites, and later, the protests turned into violence. (Takaki, 1993:200). Takaki draws the conclusion by saying, “Ethnic antagonism in the mines, factories, and fields forced thousands of Chinese into self employment-stores, restaurants and especially laundries.” (Takaki, 1993, 201). So the Chinese became self-employed or began to work for other Chinese in Chinatowns. As a conclusion, we can say that throughout American history, blacks and Mexicans saw Asians as rivals because all the jobs were given to the Chinese by employers who thought that the Chinese were better workers. The Chinese and other races in the USA have gone through many things in common, but others did not like Chinese because of history. We see the example of this in *Paper Daughter*. Elaine was trapped by racism at school. The other kids ostracized her because she was Chinese. Nobody wanted to play with her. We saw that a black girl harassed her and called her bad names. The children’s behaviors reflected their parents’ attitudes.

What is the common point of all the ethnic groups in the USA? Whites always saw the other races as inferior. This is the common point of all the ethnic groups in American history. They are seen as inferior by whites. We can clearly see the situation from Takaki’s words, “Chinese and other people not white could not testify against

whites” (Takaki, 1993:206). According to Takaki, New York governor Horatio Seymour belittled the Chinese by saying that Americans do not let the Indian stand in the way of civilization, so they should not let the Chinese “barbarian” do so either. Seymour said that whites were driving Indians off their property through railroads, and this means that the whites are telling them to give up their homes and property, and to live on the corners of their own territories, because they are in the way of white civilization. He adds that they should keep away from another form of barbarism which has no right to be there, namely the Chinese. Takaki goes on explaining that a United States senator from Alabama said that the Chinese should be perceived as being the same and as inferior as Indians, and the government should control them and put them in reservations like the Indians. Takaki concludes, “All three groups—blacks, Indians, and Chinese—shared a common identity: they were all Calibans of color.” (Takaki,1993: 205).

The ethnic minority groups in America would not get the recognition that they deserved for their contribution to the USA for some time in American history. Orm Overland, in her book *Immigrant Minds, American Identities: making the US home*, talks about Frances Kellor’s thoughts in her article in the Yale Review in 1919. According to Overland, Kellor said that there was no clear authoritative statement of the contribution of different races to America or an observation of the material that is brought by them and information about what they take and what they want from America. She adds that a lot of literature is printed and sent out daily without asking the immigrant whether it fits the needs of his race and that race psychology is ignored in most racial meetings. (Overland, 2000:128)

Elaine, in *Paper Daughter*, said that she got tired of lying about who she was. She said that there were race and class problems in the USA and she grew up with them; a classless, integrated America was a myth and she was more “minority” than “model.” Elaine could not wear nice clothes because they were poor. For her, being poor was equal to being a minority, Chinese. Elaine thought that her family did not reflect the Chinese as a “model minority.” According to her, they were not educated, they did not know English and they were narrow-minded. Her father gambled, her mother was not as fashionable as American mothers. She was ashamed of being poor and all these things, so she belittled her parents and she was ashamed of them.

The Chinese were bounded to each other. In his book, *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies*, James A. Banks explains that a moneyless Chinese person borrowed money from a relative or fellow villager to pay for his passage to California and paid it

back through Chinese organizations (Banks, 1991: 410). Elaine's family was not one of them. They came to the USA without any money. Elaine's family lived in Denver, where there were not a lot of Chinese families around to help them. When they first immigrated, Elaine's aunt helped them a little, but because of her father's quarrel with her uncle, they had to live away from her aunt and family support. So they were not in a Chinese community, and Elaine's family became a very isolated family. Even though her mother and father worked very hard, they couldn't save money and they lived in poverty. As a result, we can say that Elaine's family was not a model minority. The Chinese families in the *Joy Luck Club* were closer to being model minorities because the Chinese mothers had a hard time only when they had first come to America. They had the Joy Luck Club gatherings where they gave each other support. The Chinese mothers went to social organizations together. They supported Waverly in the chess tournaments so that she could win. They all lived in a Chinese community.

As a result, we can say that the Chinese in the USA faced racism and class problems like all the other minorities in the USA. Even though we can say that they are model minorities because they are very hard-working and they have good characteristic qualities, they were forced not to act as one at times because of the hard living conditions, poverty, racism and class problems in the USA. But they did not give up. They worked harder, they got education and helped each other. Only the harsh patriarchy in Chinese culture is not a trait that can be taken as a model. Also it is not fair to say to other cultures that they should be like the Chinese by taking them as models. As I explained in the introduction section, blacks are not immigrants like the Chinese. They were in America from the beginning, and they claim that this country belongs to them as it does to whites. They do not accept the idea that they should take an ethnic group which is made up of immigrants as a model. Also, a model for what? The designation of "model minority" was given to Asians by whites who thought that the whites themselves were the models, and the Asians were closest to them. As I explained in the introduction section, we cannot say that this is true. Whites think that the model minority characteristics will enable other cultures to assimilate into white Anglo-Saxon culture. Some whites who do not want to be multicultural should accept that this country does not only belong to them, but it is formed by different cultures coming together. As Hollinger says, they should accept that they are one of the ethnic groups in America, Euro-Americans. When all the ethnic cultures learn to live together, respect each other and take each other's good traits, then there is no reason for racism, hostility and violence. They can live together enjoying diversity.

IV. RACE, CLASS, GENDER, CULTURE, PATRIARCHY, AND LANGUAGE PROBLEMS OF THE CHARACTERS:

A. Isolation due to racism, class difference, financial problems and the lack of family affection:

In *Paper Daughter*, after Elaine (Yee) starts school, the gap between herself and her family gets bigger and bigger, especially between Elaine and her mother, who always tries to transfer all her Chinese values to her daughter. Elaine tries to fit in, to be chosen during games of “heads-up-seven-up.” She wants to be a member of the dominant members of society; her classmates don’t accept her into their group, mainly because of her insufficient knowledge of the language and partly because of her Asian look. The children reflect their parents’ racist beliefs. Sometimes even her cousin San ignores her in class because he does not want other kids who accepted him as a friend to ostracize him like they do to Elaine. Peter Stalker, in his book *The Work of Strangers: A survey of international labour migration*, discusses racism:

Race is just one way of selecting a particular group to be scapegoated. Colour of skin and shape of features have the advantage of being superficially obvious, and if these are combined with different forms of dress or lifestyle they provide a ready means of identifying outsiders—the “other”. (Stalker, 1994:76)

In *Joy Luck Club*, Rose is a Chinese American girl who is isolated because of racism, too. She has a boyfriend, Ted, who is a Caucasian American. When Rose meets Ted’s parents, his mother speaks to her about the issue:

And then she spoke quietly about Ted’s future, his need to concentrate on his medical studies, why it would be years before he could even think about marriage. She assured me she had nothing whatsoever against minorities: she and her husband who owned a chain of office-supply stores personally knew many fine people who were Oriental, Spanish, and even black. But Ted was going to be in one of those professions where he could be judged by a different standard, by patients and other doctors who might not be as

understanding as the Jordans were. She said it was so unfortunate the way the rest of the world was, how unpopular the Vietnam War was. (124)

By these words, Mrs. Jordan discriminates and humiliates Rose. She talks about her good relations with the minorities, "even" with the blacks, but in fact her words give her away. She is one of those Americans who do not like minorities, but pretends she likes them. She does not want her son to marry a Chinese girl. She thinks that this marriage will not be approved by the people around Ted. Rose is accused of something over which she has no control. She feels isolated. Ronald Takaki, in his book *A Different Mirror*, shows the fears of the white people:

Like blacks, Chinese men were viewed as threats to white racial purity. At the 1878 California Constitutional Convention, John F. Miller warned: "Were the Chinese to amalgamate at all with our people, it would be the lowest, most vile and degraded of our race, and the result of that amalgamation would be a hybrid of the most despicable, a mongrel of the most detestable that has ever afflicted the earth." (Takaki, 1993: 205)

Even when Rose divorces after seventeen years, she blames her ethnicity. She tells Lena about it: "'At first I thought it was because I was raised with all this Chinese humility,' Rose said. ...But my therapist said, 'Why do you blame your culture, your ethnicity?'" (170). Even though she was born and brought up in the USA, she still feels isolated. Once she was accused of her ethnicity, and now she lays the blame on herself when things go wrong.

In *Paper Daughter*, Elaine's mother and father are also isolated from society and drawn to loneliness. Her father has a quarrel with Uncle Andy and he loses his job and their accommodation. Since Uncle Andy is the older man, Elaine's father is not supposed to argue with him. This is disrespectful according to the Chinese culture. It doesn't matter who is right. Elaine's father works with his sister and they stay in her house. Her aunt tells her father that they should go. Charles H. Mindel and Robert W. Habenstein state that the respect and obedience shown toward elders of the family are the traditional values of the Chinese family in their book *Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations*. He goes on to explain that it is enough for one to be slightly older than another, that he or she does not have to be very old to ask for respect. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 139) and they are called "Older Brother, Oldest Sister,

Second Older Sister, Third Older Sister and Fourth Older Sister” by the younger ones. (Wong, 1945: 2) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein, 1977, 139)

This event leads Elaine’s family into severe poverty and lack of hope. Her father can’t find another job in the same city. He is not happy anymore and begins to gamble and act irresponsibly. For example, he does not come home early in the evening, and many times, Yee cannot go to school on Mondays because her father forgets to take her to school because of gambling. We can say that there is a connection between poverty, race and class. Here, we can bring in Peter Stalker’s survey in his book *The Work of Strangers*, in which he says that the obstacles in the lives of the immigrants do not come to an end when they go to another country to find work. There is the possibility of unemployment from hiring discrimination, and even if they find a job, they come across discrimination in the work they do, their wages and promotion (Stalker, 1994: 95). In the same book, he adds that immigrants typically find unqualified work, so they earn less than nationals, but they often earn less than them even if they are working at the same job. (Stalker, 1994:98). He draws the conclusion that these immigrants can lose their jobs easily because they are the ones who are most likely to be dismissed first when business takes a downturn. (Stalker, 1994:101)

There is also class difference even among the Chinese in Chinatowns. Mario Maffi explains in his book *Gateway to the Promised Land* that in Chinatown, partly because of the Chinese feudal system (which acquired capitalist traits in the USA), merchants were at the top and laborers at the bottom, with some different social stations in the middle. (Maffi, 1994: 103). We can see this in the book *Paper Daughter*. There is a big class difference between Elaine’s aunt and her father. Her aunt has a big house and is responsible for the kitchen of a nice Chinese restaurant. She has a car, drives everywhere and knows English. Elaine’s family stay in one of the rooms downstairs in her house and Elaine’s father works for her in the kitchen. When she fires him, hard days start for them. They move to a very bad neighborhood and it takes a long time for her father to find a new job because he does not know English. He cannot work or drive for this reason. At last he finds a job as a waiter.

Her mother is unhappy, too. She is always confused. Whenever she does not understand the way things happened, she accuses America, saying, “what rotten country.” Nothing is the way she is used to in China. Her relationship with her husband is ruined in America. She does not know English. She is trapped in their room in the basement when they are at Elaine’s aunt’s house because she does not want to disturb her by going to the rooms upstairs. She tells Elaine not to go there either. Even when

Elaine has to go to the kitchen, her mother warns her to be quick and to hurry back to their own room. After her husband's quarrel with Uncle Andy, they have to leave the house, too. Her control over her daughter lessens as Elaine grows up and gets, according to her, undesirable character traits such as disobedience and independence. One of the reasons why Elaine's mother and Elaine feel isolated from each other may be the lack of expression of affection in Chinese families. We do not see any scene where Elaine's father shows affection to his wife or where Elaine's mother shows affection to Elaine. This is one of the reasons why a rift forms between Elaine and her mother as she grows up. She cannot find a mother who helps her through her teenager years. This lack of affection is one of the causes of her growing away from her family. She feels isolated both in her house and at school. There is no one to run to at home who understands her when the other kids ostracize her and act cruelly towards her at school. Elaine's mother never understands her mistake and loses her daughter at the end of the novel. We only see that, before coming to the USA, Elaine's father shows some affection to Elaine when she is little and this is not approved by their Chinese friends, who think that he is spoiling her and that she is not acting as a nice, obedient Chinese girl for this reason. Mindel and Habenstein talk about this subject in their book *Ethnic Families in America*. According to them, lack of showing affection is a distinct characteristic of the Chinese family. Chinese children never see their parents hugging and kissing each other. The Chinese smile and shake hands to show their joy or sorrow accompanied by shouts and talking when seeing relatives off or welcoming them at the airports and railroad stations, but they do not hug or kiss. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 135-136)

While Elaine is explaining about Christmas, she gives us hints about the fact that there is no place for affection in a Chinese family.

Parents didn't give gifts to their own children, because they had no need to respect us; they did their duty simply by feeding, housing, and clothing us. I understood this perfectly—all the years of my life, I'd been taught that the young respect the old, women respect men. (123)

Elaine's family members need affection to overcome their obstacles, but it is not there. It is especially important because it is an isolated family that is not living in a Chinese community and because of this, they are not protected by the other relatives and Chinese friends. There is no affection shown among family members. Also, in *Joy Luck Club*, the daughters view their mothers as always being critical. We do not see any scene where they show affection to their daughters. This creates a gap between the

mothers and the daughters and causes the daughters to run away from their Chinese culture. In the end, the mothers understand their mistakes. Jing Mei explains to her mother what she learnt in her psychology class:

...parents shouldn't criticize children. They should encourage instead. You know, people rise to other people's expectations. And when you criticize, it just means you're expecting failure. (20)

Elaine is the one in her family who is the least isolated. She works in the restaurant. She becomes friends with the white men working in the restaurant. She even has a relationship with a white man at the restaurant against her parents' will. We don't see the girls dating boys in *The Joy Luck Club*. They get engaged and married. Before her marriage, Rose's mother, An-Mei Hsu, one of the members of the Joy Luck Club, tries to protect her daughter from some unknown danger that lies in American circumstances. She is confused about everything in the outer world, including the date, because it is very different from Chinese the date, which is based on the lunar calendar.

Suyuan Woo is another Chinese woman who is always displeased with everything and everybody around her. She believes in the theory of Chinese Elements. She thinks that things are not in balance, something is missing and another element is always needed. She feels isolated from the American way of life and thinking. She and her daughter Jing-Mei (June) do not understand each other until Suyuan dies, because their way of thinking are different. After her mother dies, Jing Mei goes to China and begins to understand her. She says: "Something was missing. Something always needed improvement. Something was not in balance. This one or that had too much of an element, not enough of another" (19)

Ying-Ying St. Clair feels isolated from the moment she sets foot in America. Because she cannot be identified she is kept for three weeks at Angel Island Immigration Station. She is scared. In the end, she is declared a displaced person. Her daughter Lena says: "My father said they did not have rules for dealing with the Chinese wife of a Caucasian citizen. Somehow, in the end, they declared her a Displaced Person, lost in the sea of immigration categories." (107)

She was powerless and alienated from the unknown environment from the beginning. She isolates herself more and more everyday. For her, each circumstance includes some unknown danger in America, and Ying-Ying tries to avoid this unknown danger through a paranoid approach to everything:

My mother saw danger in everything, even in other Chinese people. Where we lived and shopped, everyone spoke Cantonese or English. My mother was from Wushi, near Shanghai. So she spoke Mandarin and a little bit of English. My father, who spoke only a few canned Chinese expressions, insisted my mother learn English. So with him, she spoke in moods and gestures, looks and silences, and sometimes English punctuated by hesitations and Chinese frustration: “Shwo buchular”—Words cannot come out... But with me, when we were alone, my mother would speak in Chinese, saying things my father could not possibly imagine. I could understand the words perfectly, but not the meanings. One thought led to another without connection. (108)

Ying-Ying lives in her own Chinese world. The only person she contacts is her daughter. She and her husband do not speak the same language or understand each other. Her husband is a white American who only speaks English, whereas Ying-Ying speaks Chinese and very little English. When they move to a new neighborhood, Ying-Ying is scared again. Foreign neighborhood adds to her fears. We see the same kind of isolation that stems from moving to another neighborhood in Elaine in *Paper Daughter*. It is the fear of losing attachments and belonging nowhere. In the end, Ying-Ying loses her balance because of being alienated all the time. She thinks that the new house is not in balance and thinks that bad things will happen. She says the same things when she goes to her daughter’s house. Lena believes that her mother has the mysterious ability to see things before they happen, but she says, “She sees only bad things that affect our family.” (161). It shows Ying-Ying’s pessimistic approach to everything. Ying-Ying’s being out of balance is related to the lack of contact with and isolation from the outer world. We see her uneasiness by the way she changes the places of the furniture every day. Lena, her daughter, explains the situation like this:

And the next day when I came from school, I saw she had again rearranged everything. Everything was in a different place. I could see that some terrible danger lay ahead.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked her, afraid she would give me a true answer. (112)

Lindo Jong, is another Chinese woman who is alienated and isolated. She loses contact with her Americanized daughter, Waverly, because she keeps with her Chinese way of thinking, like the aforementioned Chinese women. Waverly was born in the USA. Her mother gives her the name of their street in San Francisco. She does this thinking that her daughter will not feel alienated in the USA and will feel that she belongs to this country. She says, "...that's why I named you Waverly. It was the name of the street we lived on. And I wanted you to think, This is where I belong" (303). But still, she wants her daughter to live and think like a Chinese person. In the end, she starts to blame herself as she sees that even though she did everything to give a better life for her daughter, she could not succeed because of her daughter's American behavior. She says, "...American circumstances and Chinese character. How could I know these two things do not mix?"(289). We see her confusion in America, which is the reason for her isolation. When Waverly Jong is interested in chess, she wants to know all the rules. Her mother wants to have a look at the handbook. After a few minutes, she says:

This American rules. Every time people come out from foreign country, must know rules. You not know, judge say, Too bad, go back. They not telling you why, so you can use their way go forward. They say, Don't know why, you find out yourself. But they knowing all the time. (95)

Waverly's mother, Lindo Jong, cannot understand the handbook and thinks that these rules, like all the American rules, are designed to make the lives of immigrants harder and to push them into isolation. Here we see that, like the way Rose's mother-in-law is prejudiced against people who are not white, Lindo is prejudiced against Americans. These Chinese women, the first generation and members of the Joy Luck Club, live in isolation in this new country because of their cultural heritage and ethnocentric approach toward the American culture. Not knowing English is a big cause of isolation, too. We will examine not knowing English as a part of isolation in the next section.

B. Not Knowing English as a part of Isolation:

Not knowing English is one of the causes of isolation. Peter Stalker explains the disadvantage of not knowing English in his book *The Work of Strangers: A survey of international labour migration*;

The most immediate barrier facing the modern-day immigrant is an inability to speak the local language. Finding a job, getting an education or obtaining access to healthcare all depend on the ability to communicate. (Stalker, 1994: 82)

In *Paper Daughter*, during their first five months in America, Elaine stays at home with her mother in their room in the basement of Aunt Becky's house and because of this, they do not learn to speak English. Because of the fact that Elaine cannot speak English, she cannot answer her teacher's simplest questions when she first starts school. She knows the answers to these questions, but she cannot put her thoughts into English words: "I felt trapped inside my body. Language seemed a purely physical limitation. Thoughts existed inside my head, but I wasn't able to make them into words" (66). Peter Stalker states in his book *The Work of Strangers: A survey of international labour migration* that immigrant children should take special education not because they are handicapped in the conventional ways but merely because they do not speak the language. (Stalker, 1994: 87). Elaine needs a special education, but she is put in a public school. She goes through a lot of difficulties there. Stalker goes on to offer a solution for the problems that the immigrant children face because of racism;

Schools somehow have to balance the unifying effect that education can have with the opportunity to learn about other cultures and lifestyles. Mother-tongue language tuition, for example, is often part of a more general multicultural form of education, where even the indigenous children will learn a little of the languages of the foreign children with whom they mix.
(Stalker, 1994:88)

When she is tortured by other kids at school, she cannot go and ask for assistance from her teachers, partly because she thinks she will not be able to explain what happened because of her lack of English:

The teachers supervising recess helped when they could, but they were often distracted by other fights or children who'd fallen down or their own conversations. I was equally to blame for their negligence; I never sought these teachers out to ask for assistance, understanding instinctively that such a move would only incense my tormentors further. Besides, I didn't speak enough English to plead my case. (73)

At first, her mother makes her practice Chinese calligraphy. Mindel and Habenstein talk about Chinese parents' attitude on educating their children in Chinese language and culture in their book *Ethnic Families in America*. They explain that Chinese families realized that their children did not want to learn Chinese because they feared that they would be different from their Anglo friends. Cultural conformity can help immigrants decrease the discrimination and prejudice in the American society. But parents continued to educate them in Chinese language and culture, not caring that their children would feel a cultural conflict. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 137)

Later, Elaine's mother realizes the importance of speaking English and urges her daughter to do English language exercises instead. She says, "Go learn English so you don't end up stupid like your mother!"(106). When Elaine says that she wants to go back to Hong Kong, she takes her photo album away, saying:

We live in America now, you need to stop thinking about the past if you want to succeed...Study hard, learn English, be the best at school, and everybody will like you. People always like the most clever girl. She took away my calligraphy books and gave me a blank Big Chief notepad. "Write in English", she said. Practice your penmanship, A,B,C,D. (117)

Later, we see that Elaine learns English and gains the power to be the link between her family and the outside world. When they are looking for a house, we see an example of this situation:

I followed the adults out of the house, automatically understanding that I wasn't allowed to play. My parents had brought me to translate, not to visit. (186)

Mother opened the door. “Yee, come here, help me.” I went back inside.

Mother said, “Ask the woman if the rent covers utilities.”

I did. The answer was yes.

“Ask if she’ll leave us this furniture.”

I wrinkled my nose. I wanted to gag, but I did as I was told. Again the answer was yes.

Mother breathed out in relief. “The refrigerator, too?”

Yes.

“So lucky!” Mother murmured. (187)

We see that Yee becomes aware of the fact that she has more power over her family as she learns English better each day. She explains her feelings like this:

I had a dreadful power over my mother, one that grew with each word in my American vocabulary. As I gained fluency in English, I took on greater responsibility for my family, and parent and child roles became murky. Mother spoke and read virtually no English. She needed my help to buy groceries, interpret the news, and complete manner of forms. I filled out the “alien registration” cards. I wrote out bank deposit slips. I showed mother where to sign my report cards.’(159-160)

None of the parents in both of the novels know English, and this makes their life very hard. In *The Joy Luck Club*, when Waverly’s mother Lindo Jong comes to San Francisco from China, she explains the difficulties she came across when trying to find a job because of her lack of English:

With the address this old woman gave me, I found a cheap apartment on Washington Street. It was like all the other places, sitting on the top of a little store. And through this three dollar list, I found a terrible job as a salesgirl, but you had to know English for that. I tried for another job as a Chinese hostess...(297)

In *Paper Daughter*, Elaine’s mother explains the relation between knowing English and getting a good job by giving the example of Elaine’s father when, in the end, she realizes the importance of learning English: “We’re not like Americans, with

their English and their four-dollar-an-hour Mc Donald's jobs! Don't you think your father would work at Mc Donald's if he could speak English?" (98)

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Ying-Ying St. Clair has difficulty communicating with other people, even with her husband and daughter, because she does not know English.

Where we lived and shopped, everyone spoke Cantonese or English. My mother was from Wushi, near Shanghai. So she spoke Mandarin and a little bit of English. My father, who spoke only a few canned Chinese expressions, insisted my mother learn English. So with him, she spoke in moods and gestures, looks and silences, and sometimes English punctuated by hesitations and Chinese frustration: "Shwo buchular"—Words cannot come out. (108)

...

But with me, when we were alone, my mother would speak in Chinese, saying things my father could not possibly imagine. I could understand the words perfectly, but not the meanings. One thought led to another without connection'. (109)

Through the end of *Paper Daughter*, we see that Elaine has to go to an interview with Dr. Risotto. His father does not want to take her because he is afraid he will not be able to find the way because he does not know English. Her mother explains this reason to her daughter Elaine:

Mother said, "He's afraid, you know."

My pencil stopped. I looked up. "Huh?"

"He's afraid of getting lost."

I pointed at the notepad. "I have directions."

"How is he going to read them? He doesn't know English."

I stared at her dumbly. I honestly didn't understand. "But he drives," I stammered. "He takes us places."

My mother looked sad. "Only places he knows. Never far, because he has to memorize directions. Why do you think we never visit your Cousin Dani? Her new house is too far away. He's afraid he'll get lost. And then what would he do? He can't read street signs. He doesn't speak enough English to ask directions." (261)

Then we see that he takes her there with the help of her daughter. He gives her money for the taxi because he has to return to the restaurant immediately. But later, we learn that he does not go and waits for Elaine. Even though her father has been in America for a long time, he cannot even read the short signs and directions.

The parents' situation is sad in a way in both of the novels because their daughters translate for them and sometimes lie or do not translate everything. We learn from the following dialogue that Ying-Ying's daughter Lena in *The Joy Luck Club* sometimes lies when she translates to her mother. She also talks about being ashamed of her mother because she is uneducated:

I often lied when I had to translate for her, the endless forms, instructions, notices from school, telephone calls. "Shemma yisz?-What meaning?" she asked me when a man at a grocery store yelled at her for opening up jars to smell the insides. I was so embarrassed I told her that Chinese people were not allowed to shop there. When the school sent a notice home about polio vaccination, I told her the time and the place, and added that all students were now required to use metal lunch boxes, since they had discovered old paper bags can carry polio germs. (109)

Also in *Paper Daughter*, we understand that Elaine doesn't translate everything to her mother, either when she doesn't want to hurt her mother or simply decides how much she has to know:

One Saturday morning, Mother dragged me out of bed to help her carry home a coffee table from the Salvation Army Store....

"What's the rush?"

Mother charged out the front door. She answered me over her shoulder, "We don't want someone else to take it."

I laughed, "It must be a special table."

Mother retorted, "Special nothing, it's free." She described how she'd been walking by the Salvation Army Store when she noticed a pile of furniture in its parking lot. "It must be trash day," she mused. "But the things people throw away! The gui are so wasteful. Some of the furniture can still be used, it's hardly broken at all..."

As soon as mother began talking, I knew she meant the donation dropoff spot outside the store. It was clearly marked with big red letters on a white sign. If she could read English, she would know this, too. I wanted to tell her, but I couldn't find the words. She sounded so excited. The truth would only make her unhappy. How could I point out how far we'd fallen? I knew we were picking through the trash or stealing from the Salvation Army, depending on how you looked at it. I wasn't sure which one was worse. Wordlessly, I helped carry the coffee table home. (197)

As we see in the above dialogue between Elaine and her mother, her mother depends on her to communicate with the outside world because she has no knowledge of English. And like Lena in *The Joy Luck Club*, Elaine also feels ashamed of her family because they do not know English when she shoplifts and the store wants to call her parents. She thinks explaining the store that her parents did not know English was worse than the position she was in because of shoplifting:

But the worst part had been explaining that the store couldn't call my parents, because they wouldn't understand a word the guard said. He thought I was lying.

"Oh, come on," he'd sneered. "How could your father live in this country for nearly ten years without speaking English?" (217)

When she gets the scholarship and goes to TASP for the summer, we see that she is ashamed of the fact that she mispronounces English words because she grew up in a household of non-English-speakers:

My friend scoffed, "Yeah, but you can tell he's only read the words on the page. Half his vocabulary's mispronounced."

I blushed knowing that I had the same problem, having grown up in a household of non-English-speakers. (273)

Katarzyna Marciniak talks about this subject in her book *Alienhood*: "Andre Aciman compellingly describes accented identity: An accent marks the lag between two cultures, two languages, the space where you let go of one identity, invent another, and end up being more than one person though never quite two."(Marciniak, 2006: 61)

Elaine explains the language problem with her parents, again in the same school: “I prowled the mailboxes for letters and care packages. But I never got anything. My parents and I didn’t read the same language, so letters from them were impossible.” (273)

Elaine says she tries to talk to her parents and relatives in English publicly even though it is regarded as embarrassing among the Chinese people: “...I only spoke Chinese when absolutely necessary with my adult relatives. Even this was embarrassing, and publicly, I sometimes tried to talk to my parents in English.” (158)

As a result, we see that not knowing English is detrimental to assimilation. The daughters see that the only way out is to learn the language, but nothing can be done for the parents since they are not living in the American community, even though they are in America, and they are not getting language education. The isolation due to language, racism, class difference and lack of affection leads to a crisis of identity which we will evaluate in the next section.

C. As a result of isolation due to racism, class difference, language and Chinese culture clashing with life in the USA: Crisis of Identity:

In her book *Alienhood*, Katarzyna Marciniak talks about the experience of an immigrant, Ewa, who is the narrator of Eva Hoffman’s 1989 autobiographical narrative *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*: “Ewa: I share with my American generation an acute sense of dislocation and the equally acute challenge of having to invent a place and an identity for myself without the traditional supports. (Hoffman:197) (qtd. In Marciniak, 2006: 81)

Mindel and Habenstein explain the duration of the crisis of identity in their book *Ethnic Families in America* by citing Lee. Lee (1960) stated that the delinquents in cases she studied had parents who were born in China, and culture conflicts were the reason for their emotional upheaval. Their parents wanted them to remain Chinese and follow Chinese traditions, whereas the children who were born in America wanted to identify with their American peers. As a result, culture conflicts occurred in these children as a part of an assimilation and integration process. Culture conflict was cited as a factor more important than the economic status of these families. Apart from the cultural difference, there is also a racial difference from the majority group. Lee goes on to explain that a Chinese mother said that her that her six-year-old daughter came home

from school one day and said, “Who wants to be Chinese anyway!” (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 143)

In time, until they find their identity, the children who come to America with their Chinese parents or the ones who are born in America experience a crisis of identity. They are in between two cultures and we cannot say that they belong to one of them. In *The Joy Luck Club*, when Waverly wants to go to China for her second honeymoon, her mother Lindo tells her that in China, people will identify her as an outsider:

“When you go to China,” I told her, “you don’t even need to open your mouth. They already know you’re an outsider.”

“What are you talking about?” she asked. My daughter likes to speak back. She likes to question what I say.

“Aii-ya,” I said. “Even if you put on their clothes, even if you take off your make-up and hide your fancy jewelry, they know. They know just watching the way you walk, the way you carry your face. They know you do not belong.” (288)

Waverly is a Chinese-American, and no matter what she does, she is “the other” both in the USA and in China. She has a Chinese side as well as an American one. She does not belong to either America or China. In other words, she is the different one, “the other,” everywhere she goes, even back in her own country.

In *Paper Daughter*, Man Yee comes to Denver at the age of six. Chinese culture at home and American culture outside causes conflicts in her. At school, the kind of children who come to America at a very early age are seen as Asian outsiders, and at home, they are seen as children who adopt American characteristics. At school, they have problems with their friends and at home, they cannot fulfill their parents’ expectations.

As soon as she comes to America, Yee is given the American name “Elaine” by her family:

“You need a name that the teachers can say,” Mother replied. “Man Yee is too hard for Americans. Like my name, Ching, nobody can pronounce it. ...Your aunt has an American name, ‘Becky.’ You can’t go to school until you get an American name.”

...

Becky snapped impatiently, "...You need an American name to fit in"

"Mother won't be able to say my name if it's American. She doesn't know English. A horrible thought struck me: I don't know English, either. How will I know my name?" (61).

"Man Yee" means intelligence and righteousness. Man Yee was known to be an intelligent child in Hong Kong. When she came to the USA, she already "knew multiplication tables up to nine-times-nine, wrote one hundred Chinese characters, and spoke five words in English—cap, ball, hello, yes, no" (21). Her old name reflected her character and intelligence, but when Yee and her mother learn that her new name does not have a meaning, she feels surrounded by emptiness:

Becky and my mother consulted one another. "Eee-laine", they murmured awkwardly. "What does it mean?" Mother asked. Bill translated for Carmen, and she shrugged. "It's just a name." Mother and Aunt Becky nodded.

...

Your American name is 'Elaine'," my mother said. "Say it".

I repeated the sound. So that's who I was. My life cleaved in two. (62)

Having the name "Elaine" means a hollow identity. She realizes that she will have two different identities starting from that moment. In the U.S.A, everybody thinks that she is stupid at first, and this hurts her very much. She does not know English and she cannot explain herself because of that. In time, she starts to learn English, but still the other kids make fun of her:

I spoke English, I played hopscotch, I owned a McMeen Meenies t-shirt. What could be wrong with me? I tried harder. I got one hundreds on spelling tests, I read better than anybody else in my class. Nobody cared. They pushed in front of me in line to the drinking fountain. They pulled up the corners of their eyes mockingly. "Chink eyes, slant eyes, you're so ugly, why don't you go back to where you came from?" (116-117).

The children's behavior reflect their parents' point of view at home. James A. Banks in his book, *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies*, says that whites thought the

Chinese were strange because of their traditional Chinese clothing, language, queue hairstyle (which whites called pigtails) and skin color. Almost from the beginning, the Chinese were the victims of curiosity and racism. (Banks, 1991:410). Charles H. Mindel and Robert W. Habenstein talk about the same subject—how the Chinese race is viewed by white Americans—by observing that Colville’s *Gazeteer of San Francisco*, published in 1856 but referring to the year 1851, described the Chinese as “unique”. Their appearance seemed devised “to make people wonder;” the writer thus established a dichotomy between the Chinese on one hand and people on the other- “to make people wonder that nature and custom should so combine to manufacture so much individual ugliness.” On the same page, he writes of Chinese women as “the most degraded and beastly of all human creatures.” He had apparently not yet made up his mind whether Chinese were or were not of the human condition; but that they were different and “degraded” was beyond question. (Saxton, 1971: 18) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 124-125)

Elaine wants to be a part of her class community, which is some sort of representative of a bigger community. At home, Elaine cannot tell her mother about these incidents because her mother would say that she does not send Elaine to school to play. Her mother would not understand because she does not know anything about the world outside the Chinese community. She would not accept Elaine’s desire to be one of the accepted members of the majority. She would just think that her daughter needed education and that is all. Elaine explains her feelings and the situation like this:

Accustomed to being treated as an object and hearing such blatant criticisms, I had no filter against schoolmates’ taunts. I accepted their view of me as truth, absolute. Over the years I came to believe that being Chinese in itself constituted ugliness and asexuality. By the time my schoolmates learned the social grace to check their comments, I’d internalized their criticisms so completely that I supplied the taunts for them, silently and constantly, inside my own head. I never outgrew this habit; looking in the mirror, I always saw myself as ugly, so whenever anyone complimented my appearance, I assumed that they were mocking me. If a boy expressed interest in me, I wondered what was wrong with him. (220)

Then Lindsey, a white busboy at the restaurant, becomes interested in her. She cannot understand how a white man could be interested in her:

I knew that he had a crush on me, and I was excited, confused, and thankful. I couldn't imagine what Lindsey saw in me. I thought that he must have been deceived by my contact with Lisa, misled into believing that I was as beautiful and desirable as she. (227)

Physical appearance is a part of the crisis of identity. She is not confident about her physical appearance. she thinks she is ugly and does not want to believe that a boy can be interested in her. Appearance is a part of Waverly's and Lena's the crises of identity, too, in *The Joy Luck Club*. When Waverly is getting married for the second time, she takes her mother to a beauty parlor. Mr. Rory does Lindo Jong's hair and comments that their physical appearances are similar:

Mr. Rory pats my hair more. He looks at me. He looks at my daughter. Then he says something to my daughter that really displeases her. "It's uncanny how much you two look alike!" (291)

Waverly is not happy to hear that she looks like her mother. Since she is not Chinese on the inside, she does not expect to look Chinese on the outside. Then we see that like Waverly, Ying-Ying St. Clair's daughter Lena is also ashamed of being Chinese. She hates to have the physical appearance of a Chinese person.

Most people didn't know I was half Chinese, maybe because my last name is St. Clair. When people first saw me, they thought I looked like my father, English-Irish, big boned and delicate at the same time. But if they looked really close, if they knew that they were there, they could see the Chinese parts. Instead of having cheeks like my father's sharp edged points, mine were smooth as beach pebbles. I didn't have his straw-yellow hair or his white skin, yet my coloring looked too pale, like something that was once darker and had faded in the sun.

And my eyes, my mother gave me my eyes, no eyelids, as if they were carved on a jack-o'-lantern with two swift cuts of a short knife. I used to push my eyes in on the sides to make them rounder. Or I'd open them very

wide until I could see the white parts. But when I walked around the house like that, my father asked me why I looked so sacred. (106)

Here, we see that Lena feels trapped in a body that she does not like, that does not reflect her inner self. She wants to be white like her father, but she looks like her mother, who is Chinese. There is nothing that she can do about it. We see that the second generation is left somewhere between the old and the new world. They cannot belong to either one of them. They want to look and be American, but their bones, their own families and the prejudiced dominant culture won't let them be one hundred percent American. Again, in *The Joy Luck Club*, we see that Rose, another daughter, chooses her white husband mainly because of his looks and the fact that he is not Chinese:

I have to admit that what I initially found attractive in Ted were precisely the things that made him different from my brothers and the Chinese boys I had dated: his brashness; the assuredness in which he asked for things and expected to get them; his opinionated manner; his angular face and lanky body; the thickness of arms; the fact his parents immigrated from Tarrytown, New York, not Tientsin, China. (123)

Even though the daughters reject their Chinese heritage in both of the novels, they always have the conflict of crisis of identity in their hearts. In *Paper Daughter*, though Elaine was trying to be American and escape from her Chinese background, at the same time, she is very affected when her family has to move from Aunt Becky's house when her father quarrels with the older uncle. She suffers a lot because of her separation from her extended family. English, which she thinks is a language of harmony, is not enough to explain her feelings here:

The words family and home wouldn't carry the meanings I intended. Compared to their Chinese correlates, the English words were limited; they didn't imply generations bound up in one identity, rooted in one place. Using English I couldn't convey my sense of loss. I couldn't make my friends understand how much it had hurt to leave Aunt Becky's house, how lonely it was to live in Glendale now. (215)

In *The Joy Luck Club*, we see that Rose, even though she feels that she is American, feels the same way as Elaine. We can say that their crises of identity are within them. She thinks about what her mother said.

Back home, I thought about what she said. And it was true. Lately, I had been feeling hulihudu. And everything around me seemed to be heimongmong. These were words I had never thought about in English terms. I suppose the closest in meaning would be “confused” and “dark fog.” But really, the words mean much more than that. Maybe they can’t be easily translated because they refer to a sensation that only Chinese people have, as if you were falling headfirst through Old Mr. Chou’s door, then trying to find your way back. But you’re so scared you can’t open your eyes, so you get on your hands and knees and grope in the dark, listening for voices to tell you which way to go. (210)

We see that, when Waverly’s mother explains to her years later when she is going to China after Waverly’s second wedding that she will feel she doesn’t belong there, Waverly is not pleased.

My daughter did not look pleased when I told her this, that she didn’t look Chinese. She had a sour American look on her face. Oh, maybe ten years ago, she would have clapped her hands-hurray!- as if this were good news. But now she wants to be Chinese, it is so fashionable. And I know it is too late. (289)

We see that crisis of identity never ends in the second generation. They choose to be like white Americans, but they always carry the conflict in their hearts. While they are dealing with this conflict, they have to deal with patriarchy at the same time too, which is a very big problem in the Chinese woman’s life. Women are trapped in patriarchy, the institution of marriage and the lack of family affection because of their gender. We will examine these problems in the next section.

D. Patriarchy, which cannot be a part of being a model minority, and gender problems: Caused by being a Chinese woman, marriage and the lack of family affection:

There is only one aspect of the Chinese culture that does not combine with being a “model minority.” It is patriarchy. We will study the influence of patriarchy in the families, the institution of marriage and the lack of family affection towards daughters because of their gender in this section. The lack of family affection starts from the birth of a baby girl, as the family is disappointed and cannot accept that they had a baby girl instead of a baby boy. Then they focus only on raising a daughter who is obedient and marriageable; they do not want to invest in her because they think she will get married and serve her husband and her husband’s family in the end; they do not show understanding towards her feelings; they never ask what she wants and they do not show sympathy or love. The parents do not say what they want their daughters to do directly; instead, they expect her to understand by making allusions and criticisms. It is very sad that this lack of affection mainly exists between the mothers and the daughters, as it is in both of the novels. They are all women, but the mothers teach patriarchy to their daughters. Even if they experienced the same lack of affection and harsh patriarchy all through their lives, they do not show any effort to save their daughters from it by helping them to become independent individuals. They want to raise them as dependents of men. This is the main reason among others in the novels why a gap forms between the daughters and the mothers. The daughters see the opposite in American culture, where women are independent individuals who stand on their feet, and for this reason the daughters and the mothers cannot understand each other. The mothers do not try to understand their daughters until the very end of *The Joy Luck Club* when they understand their mistakes and try to save their daughters from unhappy marriages by telling them their own experiences. In *Paper Daughter*, Elaine’s mother never tries to understand her daughter or show affection toward her, not even at the end of the novel. That is one of the reasons why Elaine does not return to her roots, whereas the daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* do. After the lack of affection in their own families, the daughters go on enduring the lack of affection and patriarchal attitudes of their husbands.

To understand the place of women in Chinese culture, we will start by evaluating other writers’ and scholars’ thoughts. Ronald Takaki deals with the subject in his book *A Different Mirror*:

Confucianism defined the place of a woman: she was instructed to obey her father as a daughter, her husband as a wife, and her eldest son as a widow. According to custom, the afterbirths of children were buried in different places, depending on the sex of the baby- in the floor by the bed for boys and outside the window for girls. This practice symbolized what was expected to happen to a woman: she would leave her home to join the family of her husband. As a daughter-in-law, she would take care of her husband's aging parents. A daughter's name was not recorded on her family tree; it was entered later next to her husband's name in his genealogy.

Women of all classes were regarded as inferior to men and were expected to remain at home, attentive to family and domestic responsibilities. (Takaki, 1993- 209)

Mario Maffi, in his book *Gateway to the Promised Land*, explains how the Chinese viewed women in New York Chinatown. According to him, Chinatown was a male society because man was the family authority and women acquired a limited amount of prestige if they bore a male child. Women rarely appeared in public and when they did, it was in the company of their husbands walking a few steps ahead. (Maffi, 1994: 103). Maffi continues with the experiences of women in New York Chinatown. He states that in the 1910s, a Chinese woman said that when her mother had to go from one block to another in Chinatown, she would call for a coach because women were ashamed to be seen on the street in those days. In the 1920s, she said that she was very lonely because she stayed at home all the time, sewing and reading newspapers. Women were not allowed to help out in the store because if they did, men would stop shopping there. This continued for a few decades. (quoted in Luk, 1985) (qtd. in Maffi, 1994: 103)

Mindel and Habenstein, in their book *Ethnic Families in America*, explain the grounds for divorce and how Chinese men view women who have steady boyfriends or who are divorced. These are important to know the place of women in Chinese culture in depth. They quote from Hsu:

Grounds for divorce generally favored the husband, for example, a wife could be divorced if she happened to be disrespectful to her parents-in-law,

especially if she were quarrelsome toward her mother-in-law. (Hsu, 1970:142) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 133)

Charles H. Mindel and Robert W. Habenstein go on:

Few Chinese young men today, either American born or foreign born, would consider going with a girl who had been engaged or gone steady with another man before, let alone a divorcee. It would be very difficult for the Chinese to understand why an American bachelor would marry a divorcee with several children. From their standpoint, he either had to be mentally deranged or a social misfit. No decent Chinese man would consider marrying “used merchandise.” (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 133)

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Lindo Jong explains the difference between Chinese and American marriages by talking about her first marriage. Chinese women cannot even decide whom they will marry. She starts by giving an example from an American movie that she has watched:

“The American soldier goes home and falls to his knees asking another girl to marry him. And the girl’s eyes run back and forth, so shy, as if she had never considered this before. And suddenly!-her eyes look straight down and she knows now she loves him, so much she wants to cry. ‘Yes’ she says at last, and they marry forever. This was not my case. Instead, the village matchmaker came to my family when I was just two years old.” (43)

“Of course, now I know the tree-trunk lady was the old village matchmaker, and the other was Huang Taitai, the mother of the boy I would be forced to marry.” (43)

“So I didn’t have instant love for my future husband the way you see on television today.” (46)

Then later on, she talks about what was expected of her in her marriage. Her mother gives her advice when she is about to marry: “Obey your family. Do not disgrace us.” she said. “Act happy when you arrive. Really, you’re very lucky.” (48)

The Chinese girl has no power over her future here. Her future and marriage are planned by the elders and they are the ones who decide whether she is lucky or not. The mother of her husband immediately starts teaching her what she should and should not do. She orders the servants:

“Teach her to wash rice properly so that the water runs clear. Her husband cannot eat muddy rice.”

Another time, she told a servant to show me how to clean a chamber pot: “Make her put her own nose to the barrel to make sure it’s clean.” That was how I learned to be an obedient wife. I learned to cook so well that I could smell if the meat stuffing was too salty before I even tasted it. I could sew such small stitches it looked as if the embroidery had been painted on. And even Huang Taitai complained in a pretend manner that she could scarcely throw a dirty blouse on the floor before it was cleaned and on her back once again, causing her to wear the same clothes every day.” (50)

Women should be perfect, obedient housewives according to the Chinese culture. Though Lindo Jong cannot accept this situation in the end and plays a trick in order to separate from her husband, she tries to teach her daughter to be obedient. So there is irony in her actions. It is surprising that it is not the males who teach these kinds of patriarchal values, but the female and especially the mother. We can see what is expected from a Chinese girl with Waverly’s mother’s words when looking at her daughter:

“The eyes are honest, eager,” she said. “They follow me and show respect. They do not look down in shame. They do not resist and turn the opposite way. You will be a good wife, mother and daughter-in-law.” (293)

In Chinese culture, mothers teach their daughters to be obedient. Asian values encourage women to be submissive, shy, obedient and passive. We see that Chinese women cannot make their own decisions. They are not free to show their happiness or sorrow. Chinese mothers teach their daughters to be obedient. Rose explains what her mother told her when she was a small child.

She said that if I listened to her, later I would know what she knew: where true words came from, always from up high, above everything else. And if I didn't listen to her, she said my ear would bend too easily to other people, all saying words that had no lasting meaning, because they came from the bottom of their hearts, where their own desires lived, a place where I could not belong. The words my mother spoke did come from up high. As I recall, I was always looking up at her face as I lay on my pillow. (206)

Rose is deeply affected by her mother's words and she even dreams about them. She explains her dream like this:

And my mother, who was not there but could see me inside out, told Old Mr. Chou she knew which doll I would pick. So I decided to pick one that was entirely different.

"Stop her! Stop her!" cried my mother. As I tried to run away, Old Mr. Chou chased me shouting, "See what happens when you don't listen to your mother!" And I became paralyzed, too scared to move in any direction.

The next morning, I told my mother what happened, and she laughed and said, "Don't pay attention to Old Mr. Chou. He is only a dream. You only have to listen to me."

And I cried, "But Old Mr. Chou listens to you, too."

More than thirty years later, my mother was still trying to make me listen... (208)

Let's remember what Suyuan Woo said to her daughter Jing Mei in one of their arguments:

"Only two kinds of daughters." She shouted in Chinese. "Those who are obedient and those who follow their own mind! Only one kind of daughter can live in this house. Obedient daughter!" (153)

When the Chinese talk about being clever, they mean obedience. In *Paper Daughter*, Elaine's friend Moy Moy is referred to as smart in China. Her parents say, "She obeys instructions so well!" (21).

The first thing expected from the Chinese girls is to be obedient. They can't voice their own feelings or oppose an idea. They are always expected to flow with the wind. In *The Joy Luck Club*, we see that Lindo Jong complains about her daughter, Waverly:

...I couldn't teach her about Chinese character. How to obey parents and listen to your mother's mind. How not to show your own thoughts, to put your feelings behind your face so you can take advantage of hidden opportunities.' (289)

Chinese women first learn to obey their parents, then they start to obey their husbands, but we see that this is not the road to happiness. In *Paper Daughter*, we learn that Chinese culture expects "the young to revere elders, women to revere men" (16). Being yourself and being self-confident, being able to voice your thoughts and speaking out for your rights are the keys to real happiness. Chinese mothers understand this in the end.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, we see that An-Mei's mother teaches her not to cry or show her feelings through a short story.

"'Now you see', said the turtle, drifting back into the pond, 'why it is useless to cry. Your tears do not wash away your sorrows. They feed someone else's joy. And that is why you must learn to swallow your own tears.'" (244)

Then we see Rose's mother complaining about the Chinese character of her daughter (which is ironic, because she was the one who raised her daughter with a Chinese character) when she realizes her mistakes in the end and helps her daughter get out of an unhappy marriage.

And now all she can do is watch it falling. She lies down on a psychiatrist couch, squeezing tears out about this shame. And, I think, she will lie there until there is nothing more to fall, nothing left to cry about, everything dry. She cried, "No choice! No choice!" She doesn't know. If she doesn't speak, she is making a choice. If she doesn't try, she can lose her chance forever.

I know this, because I was raised the Chinese way: I was taught to desire nothing, to swallow other people's misery, to eat my own bitterness. And even though I taught my daughter the opposite, still she came out the same way! Maybe it is because she was born to me and she was born a girl. And I was born to my mother and I was born a girl. All of us are like stairs, one step after another, going up and down, but all going the same way. (241)

We see that being a wife, raising kids, cleaning and cooking are regarded as the good Chinese character by the first generation. We see that Waverly's mother invites Rich, Waverly's future husband, to dinner to show that she cooks better than her friend Auntie Su who had invited them before. Waverly explains it like this: "I knew she would do this, because cooking was how my mother expressed her love, her pride, her power, her proof that she knew more than Auntie Su." (195). The Chinese teach the female role, which they think is right, at schools, starting from very young ages. In *Paper Daughter*, when Elaine is in China, she describes her school books. She is only three years old:

"I like helping mother clean," I read pointing at the picture of the girl smiling and making beds. "I take care of my little brother. I keep him away from danger." I showed Moy-Moy the drawing of the girl pulling a smaller boy away from an electric fan. (21)

Elaine's mother teaches her to cook rice when she is only three. Her mother panics when she has the chicken pox: "You said that if chicken pox blisters break, the child will be scarred for life. I don't want to have a deformed child-what would I do with her? Who would marry her?" (26). Here, we see that it is very important for them to raise daughters to be marriageable. When they come to the United States, we see that even her aunt, who seems like an Americanized woman, is still under the pressure of Chinese culture:

'We'll teach her to be feminine', Mother promised to Yee's aunt who criticized her having boyish manners such as fierceness and passion. Her mother went on telling "Yee will always wear dresses. We'll grow her hair long and protect her skin from the sun" (11)

We will now study how the daughters of the Chinese women in *The Joy Luck Club* experience difficulties in their marriages because of their lack of confidence and because they are raised in Chinese culture, which teaches them that they have to first obey and show respect to their families and later to their husbands; that even if they are educated and have good jobs, they are not individuals; that they depend on their husbands for everything and need their protection. The Chinese mothers and Elaine's mother are different from each other. Elaine's mother marries her husband back in China. She lives there with him, and then waits for him when he comes to the USA. She comes to the USA to live with her husband and to help him. She endures poverty and harsh living conditions both in China and in the USA. The Chinese mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* either marry Chinese men living in America or white Americans to be able to escape from hardship in China and to come and live in the USA to raise their future children with American possibilities. We talked about their dreams in the American Dream section. We see that they only face economic problems when they first come to the USA. Later, we do not receive any accounts of economic difficulty when they get married. Nor do we see love.

The daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* do not marry their husbands because they love them, just like their mothers. They get married because they are Caucasians and because they think they will be privileged when married to them. We understand this because Rose and Lena explain that they like them because they are white and elegant. Their affections are shallow. They do not try to understand their husbands' real characters before they get married. And this continues with their passivity in their marriages. It is, in a way, fatalism; or maybe they think that, as they got married to these men against their family's will and it was their choice, they do not have the right to complain. They think this is how they should act: meek and passive. It is the same kind of feeling that Lena's mother has in her first marriage to the man in China who cheats on her and in the end leaves her. She starts to love this man against her will. She thinks he is her fate. Rose and Lena have bad husbands, too, and these women think that they should stay with their husbands even though they are not happy because their husbands are their fate. Lena looks back and remembers that her mother had once told her that she would marry a bad man:

My mother had looked in my rice bowl and told me I would marry a bad man.

“Aii, Lena,” she had said after that dinner so many years ago, “your future husband have one pock mark for every rice you not finish.”

She put my bowl down. “I once know a pock-mark man. Mean man, bad man.” (164)

Lena believes that her mother can see the future with her mysterious ability. She thinks her mother had predicted that she would marry a bad man like Harold. This again shows her belief that Harold is her fate.

The patriarchy exists both in China and in the USA, but they are different in many ways. The women in China simply cannot do anything about it because of the severe oppression of women in society. But Rose and Lena are educated women. They have good jobs and careers and they are living in a more flexible society. But even if they see the situation in their marriages, they choose not to do anything about it. Their mothers help them change these situations in the end.

Rose is a Chinese daughter who is married to a Caucasian American, Ted. Ted leaves no room for Rose to take on responsibilities; he is always dominant, protective and makes all the decisions:

Over the years, Ted decided where we went on vacation. He decided what new furniture we should buy. He decided we should wait until we moved into a better neighborhood before having children. We used to discuss some of these matters, but we both knew the question would boil down to my saying, “Ted, you decide.” After a while, there were no more discussions. Ted simply decided. And I never thought of objecting. I preferred to ignore the world around me, obsessing only over what was in front of me: my T-square, my x-acto knife, my blue pencil.’ (126)

Patriarchy shows itself in their relationship. Ted is powerful, active, protective, and authoritarian. Rose is a production assistant for graphic artists, and she can only be self-confident in her work. She is pushed into a corner by Ted’s patriarchal behavior and words. In time, she quits discussing matters with him altogether and lets him make all the decisions, big or small. Ted is a doctor. Things continue like this until Ted’s self-confidence is shaken by a big mistake he makes during an operation. He loses the ensuing malpractice lawsuit. He turns his anger upon Rose by forcing her to make decisions. When he wants to escape responsibility, and expects her to make decisions

and take the responsibility for it. It is a hard situation for a woman like Rose, who has been protected by him for fifteen years. When she gets confused, he starts to insult her.

I thought about things, the pros and the cons. But in the end I would be so confused, because I never believed there was ever any one right answer, yet there were many wrong ones. So whenever I said, “You decide” or “I don’t care” or “either way is fine with me” Ted would say in his impatient voice, “No, you decide. You can’t have it both ways, none of the responsibility, none of the blame.” I could feel things changing between us. A protective veil had been lifted and Ted now started pushing me about everything. (126-127)

...And it was as if something snapped in him. “How the hell did we ever get married? Did you just say ‘I do’ because the minister said ‘repeat after me’? Did it ever occur to you? (127)

We once again see the lack of confidence in another Chinese daughter’s, Lena’s, behaviors in her marriage:

All I can remember is how awfully lucky I felt, and consequently how worried I was that all this undeserved good fortune would some day slip away. When I fantasized about moving in with him, I also dredged up my deepest fears: that he would tell me. I smelled bad, that I had terrible bathroom habits, that my taste in music and television was appalling. I worried that Harold would some day get a new prescription for his glasses and he’d put them on one morning, look me up and down, and say, “Why, gosh, you aren’t the girl I thought you were, are you?” (169)

Lena gives her husband, Harold, the idea that he can establish his own company. They quit their jobs and do so. Lena starts working there as a project coordinator. In time, Harold gets ideas from Lena and succeeds in his job, but he starts taking credit for her ideas. Also, he pays other people at work fairly, but when it comes to his wife, he pays her very little so that no one will gossip that he pays a lot to his wife. Lena is intelligent and beautiful, but she loses her self-confidence. She feels bad about the way

Harold treats her, but she cannot do anything about it. Lena is subject to Harold's unequal treatment just because she is his wife.

I love my work when I don't think about it too much. And when I do think about it, how much I get paid, how hard I work, how fair Harold is to everybody except me, I get upset. So, really, we are equals, except that Harold makes about seven times more than what I make. He knows this, too, because he signs my monthly check, and then I deposit it into my separate checking account. (173)

She cannot speak out for her rights. Instead she acts like a child. This makes her husband very angry. In one of their arguments, we see that instead of acting like a confident adult, Lena starts to cry like a child:

"I don't know...I don't know. Everything... the way we count for everything. What we share. What we don't share. I'm so tired of it, adding things up, subtracting, making it come out even. I'm sick of it."

"You were the one who wanted the cat."

"What are you talking about?"

"All right. If you think I'm being unfair about the exterminators, we'll both pay for it."

"That's not the point!"

"Then tell me, please, what is the point?"

I start to cry, which I know Harold hates. It always makes him uncomfortable, angry. He thinks it's manipulative. But I can't help it, because I realize now that I don't know what the point of this argument is. (179)

We see that Lena is trapped in her marriage. Her husband wants to have the authority and power all the time. Lena is helpless. She doesn't know what to do and instead of fighting for her rights, she gives up and starts to cry. Crying is a way of running away here. In both of the examples, Rose and Lena, we see that they cannot fight for what they think is true. They choose to pretend that nothing is wrong in their marriages, which are a way of running away from reality. This can be because of the way they were raised. In *Paper Daughter*, we see that Elaine never fights back. She

always runs away from her aggressive friend at school, and at the end of the novel, instead of staying and fighting, she chooses to run away from everything. Mindel and Habenstein explain in their book *Ethnic Families in America* that Sollenberger (1968) found that 74 percent of Chinese parents wanted their children not to show any aggression or defend themselves, and taught them that they should give up pleasure and comfort in favor of someone else's and that they should always be gentle and polite. Giving up during a quarrel and a polite refusal in favor of someone else are regarded as good qualities. (Sollenberger, 1968: 18-19) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein 1977: 134)

The Chinese daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* and Elaine's aunt in *Paper Daughter* have similarities in the way they fail to escape the patriarchy. Just like the married Chinese daughters in *The Joy Luck Club*, we see that Aunt Becky also works outside, has a good job, provides the money and has power over men at work just like an independent, self-confident American. But still, inside, like the daughters, she is under the influence of Chinese thinking, because this is how she was brought up, just like the other girls. She is still in need of dependence to a male. She does not do anything when her brother, Elaine's father, and her common-law husband quarrel. Her husband makes the decision to send Elaine's family away from the house. We see Elaine's aunt's opinion about baby girls:

“I remember how San and Yee were born so close together. Shing was happy to have a little girl. Not me. They're no good. You can't invest too much in a girl. You have to marry them off to another family in the long run, what a waste of energy! I'm glad to have a boy, to stay and take care of me in my old age.” (43)

Mario Maffi, in his book *Gateway to the Promised Land*, explains how the Chinese valued baby boys over baby girls. If the baby was a boy, they performed rituals, but did nothing if the baby was a girl. On his third day, the baby boy received a bath in scented water full of herbs and aromatic leaves and was given an onion and some cash. After a month, a big dinner was given for relatives. They named the baby there, shaved his head and leaving a small tuft at the top of the head which in time would grow to be the traditional queue. (Maffi, 1994:106). According to Mindel and Habenstein, if a wife did not give birth to a son, then the man could divorce her or bring in concubines who would bear baby boys and continue the male line. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977:133)

When Elaine grows up, she wants to date a white American boy. Her family does not accept this. Also, her aunt gives her no support. Instead, she says that she will shame her father's name if she does not obey them. Elaine asks if she does not exist as an individual. She answers, "You're no one without your father's name." (228). Mindel and Habenstein explain in their book *Ethnic Families in America* that the segregation of sexes in Chinese culture went on for thousands of years. The only men girls could meet were their cousins. Moreover, Chinese families do not discuss sex with their children like Anglo families. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977:135). Here, we see that dating a boy in Chinese culture is cause for shame. Elaine's aunt thinks that her family is right and that she should obey her father because women are nothing without men. According to her, women need men to depend on no matter who they are. Also, we see that her mother, four years after immigration, signs her husband's name on all papers, such as school reports, bank deposits and registration cards. She does not value herself as an individual:

She continued to sign Father's name. I threatened legal action: "That's forgery! It's not your name."

Mother explained again, "You always sign the man's name. It's the only one with meaning." (160)

I always wrote myself the same note: "Please excuse Elaine's absence. She was sick."

Mother signed Father's name to it, explaining that her own name wouldn't count-she was a woman. (203)

We can understand, in a way, why Elaine's mother acts this way, but it is hard to understand how Elaine's aunt and the daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* fail to escape the patriarchy. We know that they are raised in the Chinese culture, but this cannot be an excuse since they are independent American women. It is even more ironic that these daughters are saved in the end by their Chinese mothers, who resemble Elaine's mother with their lack of English and the way they do not come out of the Chinese community.

In this section, we analyzed patriarchy in Chinese culture and saw that it is not a characteristic that can be counted as a part of being a "model minority." Other ethnic cultures in the U.S. should not take this trait as a model. We saw that it is a very big problem in the lives of Chinese women. In section IV, we also studied other problems

of the characters, like isolation, not knowing English and crises of identity. All these problems caused the daughters to escape from Chinese culture and to feel closer to white Anglo-Saxon culture, which meant freedom and being independent. There would be no more harsh patriarchy, no more isolation, no more crisis of identity... The ways out would be learning English, getting an education and intermarriage, which they did consciously. There were other keys to assimilation in their lives that affected them unconsciously starting from their childhood, like Christianity and consumerism, which we will study in the next section. Were they right? Would there be no more patriarchy, isolation and crisis of identity? We already saw that they could not escape patriarchy fully by running away from their families and marrying white Americans. The patriarchy was still there, but it was not as harsh as it was in Chinese culture. In Chinese culture, the women had no chance to escape from it, but in American culture, as they realized in the end, they had the choice not to live in patriarchal marriages, which made them unhappy because they were independent individuals who had careers, earned their livings by themselves and lived in a flexible society. But what about isolation and crisis of identity? Would the road they chose lead them to a place where there was no isolation and crisis of identity? Would it lead them to happiness or would they need more to find out who they really were? We will find out the answers to these questions in the next section, called "Assimilation."

V. ASSIMILATION:

What do we mean by assimilation? Peter Stalker, in his book *The Work of Strangers: A survey of international labour migration*, defines assimilation of immigrants as “dispersing them throughout the community and steadily absorbing them so that eventually they become indistinguishable from a homogenous host community”. (Stalker, 1994: 72)

Assimilation to what exactly? When we talk about assimilation in these novels, we mean white Anglo-Saxon culture. The daughters want to look like whites physically, and they even marry white Americans to be a part of that community. If we accept that the pattern of America is diversity, that there are no big differences between individual ethnicities, and that being “American” is the ethnicity and culture itself, it becomes meaningless to become a part of a certain group and to try to be someone (a white American) you are not. The daughters do not realize in the beginning that their ethnicity, being Chinese, equals being a member of the model minority and is not something to be ashamed of. They cannot accept themselves as they are. They do not see that they are Chinese-Americans, a part of the diversity. But will they realize this in the end? We will come to a conclusion at the end of this section after we study the keys to assimilation and the differences in assimilation in both novels, as well as mixed racial and cultural identity.

The reason that many Chinese parents came to America was to improve their socioeconomic situation. They wanted to survive and provide a comfortable future for their children. When they came, they led a very isolated life. They were in their Chinese community all the time and they isolated themselves from the outside world. They did not learn the language because they were only communicating with other Chinese people. They did not want to lose their language and culture. Also it was too late for them to get an education in English because they were already adults. So they continued living with the culture of their homeland. The first generation believed their own culture to be superior to American culture. They did everything not to adjust to American culture. They tried to pass their traditions to their daughters, who were born and raised in America. Therefore, they could not be integrated or assimilated into the dominant culture. Their social, cultural, religious, national and family ties and the memories that they brought from their homelands play an important role in this.

Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco, Carola Suarez-Orozco and Desiree Baolian Qin in their book *The New Immigration* draw the conclusion that Chinese parents do not want their children to acquire the characteristics of American youth. They do not like their thoughts about school (the children think school is boring), their lack of respect to authority and their violent and sexual behaviors. (Orozco and Qin, 2005: 79)

Mindel and Habenstein make references to other books about this subject in their book *Ethnic Families in America*:

One major difficulty in the intergeneration adjustment is that the old Chinese family system, which is still dominant in the villages in Kwangtung, and which lives on in the minds of the “old skulls” of American Chinatowns, is strongly patriarchal. (Hayner and Reynolds, 1957: 663) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 142)

Mindel and Habenstein go on to explain that Chinatown is not quite China or quite America. One set of customs is in transition and the other is not yet acquired. Their children read English newspapers and they can hardly speak or read Chinese, but on the other hand, their parents read only Chinese papers and celebrate births with traditional ceremonies, keep their wives at home, hold banquets after funerals (because for them, it is rude to appear sad) and they go only to Chinese restaurants and eat from the same bowl because it is a symbol of fraternity. (The New York Times, December 15, 1946) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 142)

The second generation is the opposite. They either come to the United States when they are very young or they were born in the United States. Their parents are salesmen, tailors, grocers, etc, but they go to American schools and grow up in the dominant culture. Their friends are Americans, their teachers are Americans, they communicate in English, they start to lose their Chinese background, and in the end, they choose the new culture, which gives them space to be individuals and offers them more opportunities. In Chinese culture, they are always a part of the family, whereas in American culture, they taste the freedom to have an identity. They see that they can become individuals who have careers in this culture. Chinese culture could only make them good mothers and wives at home, nothing more. They became aware of the fact that their future is in American culture.

This time, Mindel and Habenstein explain the situation of the second generation in their book *Ethnic Families in America*:

The young Chinese who grew up in a brand-new world, finding that their parental generation is full of obsolescent precedents and out-of-date responses, have had to resort to looking for new models among their peers. “These peers present them with more practical models than those of the elders, whose past is inaccessible to them and whose future it is difficult for them to see as their own. (Mead, 1970: 31) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein, 1977:142-143)

We will study the keys to assimilation that cause the second generation to be a stranger to their own Chinese culture in the next section.

A. Keys to assimilation:

1. Language and Education:

Language is the primary key to assimilation, then comes education. They are seen as the ways out by the daughters in the novels. Katarzyna Marciniak cites (the immigrant) Ewa’s feelings about the new language that she learned in the new country in her book, *Alienhood*:

Perhaps I’ve read, written, eaten enough words so that English now flows in my bloodstream. But once this mutation takes place, once the language starts speaking itself to me from my cells, I stop being so stuck on it. Words are no longer spiky bits of hard matter, which refer only to themselves. They become more and more a transparent medium in which I live and which lives in me- a medium through which I can once again get to myself and to the world...But now the language has entered my body, has incorporated itself in the softest tissue of my being. (Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*)
(Marciniak, 2006:77)

In *Paper Daughter*, after being in America and getting the name Elaine, Yee starts to realize that American values do not degrade women as Chinese values do. She wants to be a whole person: successful, independent and wanted. In Chinese culture, she is seen as a waste of money and energy because she is a girl. Her mother tells her this,

which results in her feeling guilty and like an annoyance. She sees that she will be nothing more than a wife and mother if she sticks with Chinese culture. Elaine first hears English when she is in China and she likes it;

On our final round of visits, I heard an English conversation for the first time. Some of mother's friends owned a television set. They tuned it to a British program, pointing out, "Little Yee, that's English. That's what you'll speak in America." I listened for a minute before responding, "How strange. It sounds like they're singing, not speaking!" I thought the adults must be teasing me—I would never speak like that! (32)

But when she comes to America, she learns the language and studies hard at school. She sees that she is more accepted by her American friends as she studies harder. She knows that these are fake friendships, but she thinks that it is better than nothing.

Embarrassed by my own solitude, I started doing homework in the free time before each class. While the cool kids gossiped and flirted, I wrote book reports and found numerical values for the variable x . (214)

I got a reputation: One, I was weird. Two, I was smart. The cool kids approached me when they needed homework help, trading conversation for algebra solutions, French translations, and novel synopses. Amused, I flaunted my straight A's like the cool girls' grosgrain headbands. I didn't mind sharing answers, but neither was I fooled. I knew I was being used. (214)

Elaine is clever at school and is praised by all her teachers. This makes her annoyance at her mother, who says that she is nothing, grow: "I had trouble respecting her. I grew increasingly willful, violating the most sacred of cultural tenets: absolute fealty to family and elders." (160)

Elaine's family tries not to invest much money in their daughter, but they do not prevent her education. They believe that their daughter can succeed only through education and can even become a "senator." When Elaine is accepted at Harvard University, her mother is against it because it is far away. Her father looks into the

university and learns from his friends that it is a very important university which is very hard to get into. He is proud of his daughter and he knows that the only way to have a good job and a place in the community is to get a good education:

“The entire Chinese community knows,” Mother added. “Don’t you shame us.”

I started to open my mouth.

“She won’t shame us,” Father said quickly, averting a fight. “She’ll be another Kissinger. Too bad she wasn’t born in this country. She could be President.” (289)

Mindel and Habenstein, in their book *Ethnic Families in America*, explain the importance that Chinese parents give to education:

Most Chinese parents consider education as one of the most important symbols of success as well as channels for upward social mobility. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 137)

In the same book, they observe that Sollenberger (1968:19-20) found in his study that 100 percent of the mothers thought that success in school was very important. Only one percent of the mothers said it is enough if their children finish high school, and 99 percent wanted them to go to college and graduate school. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977:136). Elaine’s father and mother want her to get an education, but her mother is a little bit more concerned about what other Chinese people will say about her daughter getting her education in another city. Yee gets the language and education, but she is not Yee anymore. She is Elaine, their paper daughter. She experiences an identity crisis, but in the end chooses to untie herself from her past and ethnic background. When she graduates from Harvard, she explains her feelings like this:

...over four years the distance between Denver and Cambridge had grown until I was far away as another country. My parents weren’t able to visit. Like my grandfather, I’d immigrated with no way to send for my family.’ (292)

When Elaine is working in the restaurant, she envies the rich white boys working in the restaurant part-time because they are going to a university far away. Eventually, she makes her dream come true. But part of it is to get away from her parents, whom she is ashamed of. We learn her feelings about her parents through her dialogue with Lisa, a beautiful white girl working at the restaurant.

“Really.” Lisa elaborated bitterly. “Guys like to look, but that gets old fast. And once they get tired of looking at you, they stop caring. I’m...I’m not good enough for the guys at Creek. They want to go out with girls from families like theirs—girls with lawyer fathers and neurosurgeon mothers—not someone who has to bus tables to make extra money because her mother’s a cocktail waitress. They can’t relate to someone like that.”

I was silent, upset by her revelation. I didn’t want to hear that beauty was not enough—that popularity depended on having the right family. Because beauty could be bought. I could save up for Izod shirts and plastic surgery. No amount of money could change my family. (226)

When she is at the TASP for the summer, she explains her feelings about her parents with these words:

I wanted to tell my parents about my revelations, but I didn’t have the language for it. How could I describe my essay on Narcissus as metaphor for the artist? How could I talk about our debates over the existence of external reality? My family and I didn’t relate to each other on this level. (273)

She thinks she is educated, belittles her family and sees them as uneducated people who do not even know English. But because she is ashamed of her family, she doesn’t tell this to her friends and just says that they can’t communicate enough because of the language barrier.

I was unable to explain the brevity of these conversations to my friends. “Don’t you get along with your parents?” Alice asked sympathetically. I said, “I do, but they don’t speak English.” Confused, Alice said, “I thought you spoke Chinese.”

“I do”, I answered sadly.” Just not enough.”(274)

In all her conversations with other people at the university, we see how she is ashamed of her parents because they are uneducated:

The most publicly embarrassing encounter was another conversation with an alumnus...

Then, remarking on how proud my parents must be, he asked, “Where did they go to college?”

“They didn’t go to college,” I replied.

He was so confused by this answer that after a few awkward “oh’s” and some frantic chewing of the ice from his glass, he excused himself to get another drink. Sometime later I discovered his son’s middle name adorning one of the buildings in Harvard Yard. (291)

In *The Joy Luck Club*, the daughters go to American public schools and learn English and American values. Lindo Jong expects her daughter to speak Chinese. Refusing to speak the ethnic language is an important part of the assimilation process of the second generation. She tells of how life at school changed her daughter Waverly with these words:

All those years I tried to teach her! She followed my Chinese ways only until she learned how to walk out the door by herself and go to school. So now the only Chinese words she can say are sh-sh, houche, chr fan, and gwan deng shweijyau. (289)

The school is the outside world where they are assimilated into the dominant culture. Scientific reasoning takes the place of Chinese superstitions taught by the Chinese mothers. Suyuan Woo always criticizes her daughter Jing Mei’s laziness and her lack of enthusiasm. Jing Mei takes psychology classes at the university. She explains that she feels that her mother is wrong with these words:

In my twenties, while taking Introduction to Psychology, I tried to tell her why she shouldn’t criticize so much, why it didn’t lead to a healthy learning environment.

“There is a school of thought,” I said, “that parents shouldn’t criticize children. They should encourage instead. You know, people rise to other people’s expectations. And when you criticize, it just means you’re expecting failure.”

“That’s the trouble,” my mother said. “You never rise. Lazy to get up. Lazy to rise to expectations.” (20)

Rose looks back. She remembers the words her mother told her to make her obedient.

“A girl is like a young tree,” she said. “You must stand tall and listen to your mother standing next to you. That is the only way to grow strong and straight. But if you bend to listen to other people, you will grow crooked and weak. You will fall to the ground with the first strong wind. And then you will be like a weed, growing wild in any direction, running along the ground until someone pulls you out and throws you away.”

But by the time she told me this, it was too late. I had already begun to bend. I had started going to school, where a teacher named Mrs. Berry lined us up and marched us in and out of rooms, up and down hallways while she called out, “Boys and girls, follow me.” And if you didn’t listen to her, she would make you bend over and whack you with a yardstick ten times. I still listened to my mother, but I also learned how to let her words blow through me. And sometimes I filled my mind with other people’s thoughts—all in English—so that when she looked at me inside out, she would be confused by what she saw.

Over the years, I learned to choose from the best opinions. Chinese people had Chinese opinions. American people had American opinions. And in almost every case, the American version was much better. (213-214)

Learning English and getting an education at school caused Elaine, Rose and the other daughters to assimilate. We will see that there are other keys to assimilation as well in the next sections.

2. Christianity:

Christianity is a key to assimilation that affects the daughters unconsciously starting from their childhood. We see it in both of the novels. In *Paper Daughter*, we see that Elaine enjoys going to church after school twice a week with her friends by school bus. Her parents let her go.

On Sundays and Wednesdays after church, I told her [her mother] about Jesus, and all the rest of the week she told me about the spirits. To me, church and mother were like math and spelling, two different parts of truth.

Nancy liked church because of heaven. I liked Jesus. I liked the idea of a holy man who was foreign and misunderstood, wise and loving, ultimately revered.

...

There I was six years old, in the church schoolroom, learning about Jesus as truth, Jesus as history. (114-115)

We see that Elaine meets Christianity as soon as she comes to America. In the beginning, she is between two beliefs. She listens to the Chinese beliefs of spirits from her mother and listens to Jesus and Christianity at church. But later, we see that she makes her choice as a child:

I continued to go to the church twice a week. I liked the easy assertion that the Bible was truth. All I needed was to believe in God and Jesus, and I would be saved. Jesus loved me even if nobody else did. I lay in bed talking to God every night before I fell asleep. I memorized the books of the New Testament. (121)

I liked my second American Christmas for the same reason that I'd liked the first: presents, glitter and a day off from work for the entire family. (123)

We see that Elaine's family and her aunt prepare for Christmas:

Early in December, San and I helped Aunt Becky tape sparkling Mylar snowflakes to the front window. We strung colored lights above cutouts of candy canes and Santa Claus. I was very proud of our work. Our window was the most colorful on the block-you could barely see through it.

A few days later, Becky came home from the restaurant early with a tree in the trunk of her red Chevrolet. We dragged the big, scratchy fir into a corner of the living room and covered it with tinsel strands and blinking lights.

(123)

In *Joy Luck Club*, we see that the Chinese mothers join the English lessons held by the church. They mainly go there to socialize with their Chinese friends. They see it as a gathering like their Joy Luck Club. Even though they are not Christians, they celebrate Christmas and let their children have fun with Santa Claus. Waverly tells us about a Christmas day at the church where they gave presents to the kids. She went there with her mother and her brother Vincent:

My older brother Vincent was the one who actually got the chess set. We had gone to the annual Christmas party held at the First Chinese Baptist Church at the end of the alley. The missionary ladies had put together a Santa bag of gifts donated by members of another church. None of the gifts had names on them. There were separate sacks for boys and girls of different ages. (92)

[Santa Claus] then solemnly asked if I had been a very, very good girl this year and did I believe in Jesus Christ and obey my parents. I knew the only answer to that. I nodded back with equal solemnity.

...

As I peered into the sack, I quickly fingered the remaining presents, testing their weight, imagining what they contained. I chose a heavy, compact one that was wrapped in shiny silver foil and a red satin ribbon. It was a twelve pack of Life Savers and I spent the rest of the party arranging and rearranging the candy tubes in the order of my favorites. My brother Vincent chose wisely as well... Vincent got the chess set... (93)

My mother graciously thanked the unknown benefactor, saying, “Too good. Cost too much.” At which point, an old lady with fine white, wispy hair nodded toward our family and said with a whistling whisper, “Merry, merry Christmas.” (94)

As we can clearly see, Waverly’s mother, like all the other Chinese mothers at the Christmas party, see no harm in taking their kids to the party held at the church. Santa Claus gives presents donated by white Christians to the Chinese kids after asking them if they believed in Jesus Christ. It is very easy to affect children and make them believe what you want them to believe by giving them presents. We see that the church is using this technique for assimilating them into American culture through Christianity. It is very interesting to see that the Chinese mothers who cling to their culture and traditions cannot or don’t want to see the situation because they are having fun and at the same time benefiting from the situation. We will see consumerism as a key to assimilation in the next section.

3. Consumerism (and its relation to isolation and financial problems in the novels):

Consumerism and the efforts toward being stylish are keys to assimilation that affected the daughters in the novels unconsciously starting from their childhood. In this section, we will also study the relation between consumerism, isolation and economic problems. In *Paper Daughter*, we see that Elaine meets consumerism when she first starts school in the USA. At school, the teacher passes out order forms to the students for Meenie (the school mascot) t-shirts, which cost ten dollars each. Almost all the kids in the class buy the t-shirt. Elaine wants to buy it too, to become a part of her class, to be accepted by the other kids, to become a Meenie like them. But her mother explains their poverty to her and that she thinks it is a waste of money:

She sighed. “Ah Yee, your school must have gone crazy! Ten dollars is too much money! We don’t have ten dollars for a t-shirt.”

...

I didn’t say anything. I knew that she was right—ten dollars was a lot of money. Nothing I owned cost that much. My shoes were two dollars, my socks fifty cents, my dresses three-fifty-on-sale. When we went shopping, I

knew not to ask for anything that cost more than five dollars. But I had never wanted anything the way I wanted the McMeen Meenies t-shirt. It was magic, like Cinderella's glass slipper. It had the power to change my life. (99)

The teacher encourages the students to buy the t-shirts. She does not think about the kids who will not be able to afford it. In a way, the kids are pushed into consumerism. Her mother goes on explaining why she thinks it is a waste of money:

Mother was studying my face. She said, "If the money was for books, or paper and pencils, I would give it to you. If it was for something you really needed, I would provide it immediately. This is a t-shirt! You have plenty of clothes...It's not even a nice piece of clothing! It's underwear!" (99)

Elaine explains how she wants to be stylish like the other American kids at school. As she grows older, this becomes a bigger problem for her:

More than anything, I wanted to obscure my foreignness, that combination of ethnicity and poverty. I would have given anything to slip into the ordinary. But my parents foiled all attempts. They turned me into an object of ridicule. Mother chose my clothes for me, cotton dresses and skirts sewn out of restaurant flour sacks, acrylic sweaters from K Mart, and-the best of the lot-hand-me-downs donated by Diana, a waitress's daughter. During the fall and winter chill, Mother sent me to school in taupe nylon stockings and knee socks beneath my skirts. I cringed when classmates touched my gauzy, discolored legs curiously. If only I could be normal and wear Levi's, I wished. I wanted stiff, new jeans badly, but I never bothered to ask. I already knew the answer—too expensive. (158)

Elaine thinks that her ethnicity, being Chinese, equals poverty. She thinks that the cheap clothes her mother makes her wear causes her isolation at school and that she has to get away from being seen as a poor Chinese girl. She thinks she will be more accepted by her friends and will overcome isolation at school if she wears stylish clothes. To get stylish and expensive clothes, she saves her lunch money, buying cheaper things. Eating less and less, she deliberately gets thinner to look like Farrah

Fawcett, who was the symbol of female beauty at the time. She finds herself ugly since she cannot be blonde, buxom and white. She thinks the only way for her to look more like Fawcett is to be thin and to wear beautiful things. By saving her lunch money, she wants to achieve both.

The gap between Elaine and her mother gets bigger and bigger and she starts to think that her mother reflects poorly on her. She thinks being American is being stylish and thin. Her mother thinks that buying new clothes is a waste of money. She mends Elaine's old clothes. Her mother is against unnecessary consumption. For Elaine, being fat means being unstylish, so she wants her mother to be thin and stylish. She explains the differences between them with these words:

We were entering a long period of mutual struggle over our identities. I believed that she reflected poorly on me, and vice versa. I thought she should become more stylish—a code for “American.” She dreamed of a dutiful Chinese daughter with my face, inhabiting my body. (159)

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Chinese mothers are not good American consumers either because they don't buy fashionable clothes and change cars every two or three years. They knit their sweaters and wear Chinese dresses. They don't care about fashion. They never waste anything. They get angry with their daughters for wasting food and buying things only for looking good. Lindo Jong, Waverly's mother, reproaches her daughter's behavior:

“Finish your coffee,” I told her yesterday. “Don't throw your blessing away.” “Don't be so old fashioned Ma,” she told me, finishing her coffee down the sink. “I'm my own person.” (290)

Then we see how Lindo is pushed into consumerism by her daughter and how she does not feel good about it.

My daughter is getting married a second time. So she asked me to go to her beauty parlor, her famous Mr. Rory. I know her meaning. She is ashamed of my looks. What will her husband's parents and his important lawyer friends think of this backward old Chinese woman?

“Auntie An-mei can cut me,” I say.

“Rory is famous,” says my daughter, as if she had no ears. “He does fabulous work.” (290)

She thinks that going to a beauty parlor is a waste of money when one of her friends can do the same job for free. Lindo also thinks that American people do not worship God, only money.

“Save Today for Tomorrow, at Bank of America.” And I thought to myself, this is where American people worship. See, even then I was not so dumb! Today that church is the same size, but where that short bank used to be, now there is a tall building, fifty stories high, where you and your husband-to-be work and look down on everybody. (296)

Lindo feels that money and consumerism play the leading role in the American way of life.

In this section, we observed that consumerism is a part of the American culture and a key to assimilation. It helped the daughters assimilate, but put a barrier between the mothers and assimilation. Even though Elaine and her family had serious financial problems, Elaine was trapped in consumerism. She preferred buying fashionable clothes to eating with her lunch money. She thought buying stylish things would enable her to be accepted by other children at school and that if she did, they would not isolate her anymore. When the daughters grew up, they thought they found another way to be accepted, intermarriage. We will study intermarriage as a key to assimilation in the next section.

4. Intermarriage (and its relation to race-mixing and patriarchy in the novels):

Now, we will study intermarriage as a key to assimilation. We will also explain its relation to patriarchy in the novels. Charles H. Mindel and Robert W. Habenstein, in their book *Ethnic Families in America*, explain an old Chinese saying that says that one should marry someone whose front door faces his own, meaning that they do not want their children marrying someone from out of their province, let alone from out of their country or race. They tried to continue this tradition in the USA, but because of the unbalanced sex ratio and difficulties in going to China to find a Chinese girl, many

Chinese merchants, restaurant owners and laundrymen had intermarriages. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977:129)

Mindel and Habenstein, when explaining the modern Chinese American family, explain why Chinese men started not liking the Chinese-American girls and why educated Chinese-American girls started not liking Chinese men. According to Mindel and Habenstein, educated Chinese girls who became citizens in America did not like the bachelors in Chinatown because they saw them as men who could not speak English properly and who acted as if they belonged to their grandfather's generation because of their traditional attitudes, whereas the girls themselves could speak fluent English and came from large cosmopolitan cities. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 130) In the novels, Elaine chooses a Caucasian boy as a boyfriend and Lena, Rose and Waverly choose Caucasian husbands. In the same book Mindel and Habenstein explain why Chinese men thought that Chinese-born girls were better than American-born Chinese girls. Chinese men think Chinese-born women do not like showing off by spending money on pretty clothes and fancy shoes; they stay home and help their husbands to save money. According to these men, American-born Chinese girls do not know Chinese customs and they do not like big families. (Hayner and Reynolds,1957:360) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein, 1977:129)

Mindel and Habenstein's book quotes Chen, who says that both male and female Chinese-American youths are marrying Caucasians in increasing numbers, and offers the words of one Chinese American male of the second generation:

Certainly one of the most tangible evidences of an individual's assimilation into a culture is for that individual to take a spouse of that culture. The members of our group have until now so unanimously married non-Chinese persons that it was a standing joke among us that fifty-dollar prize would be awarded to the first one to take a Chinese mate. (Chen, 1972:7) (qtd. in Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 132)

Mindel and Habenstein talk about Beaudry's studies on the same subject:

Beaudry (1971:59-67) found that the degree of acculturation and assimilation had a great deal to do with whether one would approve of intermarriage. The more assimilated were more likely to approve of intermarriage. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 132)

The girls, because they are assimilated, think that intermarriage is very normal. In fact, they think that this is a key to being a part of white Anglo-Saxon culture. Beaudry's words show us why the Chinese mothers do not approve of their daughters' intermarriages in the depths of their hearts and why Elaine's family does not want her to have a Caucasian boyfriend. Rose's and Lena's mothers cannot accept the fact that their daughters are married to white Americans. Waverly's mother at first cannot accept that her daughter has a white fiancée. The problems between Elaine and her family get worse when Elaine is not allowed to date a white boy working at the restaurant. Elaine complains to her aunt Becky, whom she thinks is Americanized:

It's my life! I shouted, storming past him to the back stoop. I fumed. How dare they treat me like I had no rights of my own? I was sick of living for my family. I was sick of having to conform, to be meek and obedient just because I was born Chinese (228)

Elaine begins to talk about the identity and individuality connected to American culture, which shows that she assimilated. We see that she fights for what she wants here, which is a trait that does not go with being an obedient Chinese daughter. She fights for her right to have a white boyfriend.

Intermarriage mixes races, and as a result causes mixed racial identities. David H. Hollinger, in his essay, "An Attempt to Move Beyond Multiculturalism to a Postethnic America," says that racism is real, but races are not because someone's ancestors can come from more than one race. He asserts that Ethno-racial pentagon (composed of different ethnicities like Afro-Americans, Euro-Americans, and Asian Americans) is now under severe pressure because of intermarriage and by the greater visibility of mixed-race people. For a long time, there was hostility towards racial mixture in the USA and people denied its reality, but now there is an increase in mixed-race families and individuals. (Hollinger). In *The Joy Luck Club*, Lena's father is a white American and her mother is Chinese. The daughters, Lena and Rose, have white husbands. Moreover, Waverly has a white fiancée and Elaine has a white boyfriend. Hollinger also adds that there is an increase in double minorities and multiple minorities, too. For example, a person's ancestry can be a mixture of African-American and one of the non-white races. (Hollinger)

We studied patriarchy in one of the previous sections. We saw its influences in Chinese culture. We studied its harshness in the first marriages of Chinese mothers back in China, and later we analyzed the role of the patriarchy in the intermarriages of the daughters. The daughters escaped their Chinese culture because of the harsh patriarchy and the place of women in the Chinese culture, and married white Americans. They used intermarriage to be a part of the white community. But they got trapped in the patriarchy again in their marriages. This is ironic. They could not find happiness running away from their culture. Their crises of identity, isolation and problems with patriarchy did not come to an end as they expected. The women in China did not have a chance to escape the patriarchy, but the daughters had the choice of not staying in a patriarchal, unhappy marriage. They could stand on their feet. They had careers and earned their own money. They did not need to stay with their husbands because they were not dependent on them like women in China and in Chinese culture.

B. Assimilation, differences in assimilation in both novels, and mixed racial and cultural identity:

In *Paper Daughter*, Elaine learns that she can't trust her mother's teachings in the US soon after she arrives in the country when she is five. She realizes that what her mother taught her in Hong Kong is not valid in America. For example, in Hong Kong, Elaine was told not to take off her shoes anywhere, but in America, her Aunt Becky gets angry with her because she wears her shoes inside:

“We don't wear shoes in the house! This carpet is new, very expensive! Shoes will make it dirty!”

When Yee's mother tries to explain, “Yee never takes off her shoes. She doesn't want her feet to get dirty. In Hong Kong we used to tease her...”

She is cut off by Aunt Becky, “You're not in Hong Kong anymore...In America things are different. In America people have carpets. I vacuum this carpet once a week. I rent a cleaner and shampoo it once a year, do you understand?” (43).

One time, Elaine's mother tells her to use nail polish remover as perfume:

Becky gave me a vial of scarlet liquid, with its own miniature brush, and a plastic bottle of scented water. She assumed that these gifts were ideal for a girl, but I'd never seen such things. I thrust the containers at my mother, inquiring.

Mother stroked color on my nails. "Fingernail polish," she said. She sniffed the water. "And perfume. Isn't that nice? Say thank you." She dabbed scent on my wrists and neck.

Two days later, only the smallest red freckles dotted my nails. Aunt Becky wiped them with the "perfume"...

"This is polish remover," she informed me. "Don't wear it on your neck. It's bad for your skin."

I could not rely on Mother's judgment, I realized for the first time.(44)

This experience shows Elaine that her mother knows very little about American life and that Elaine cannot rely on her judgments. Elaine begins to ignore her Chinese identity and to drift away from her family:

I was proud of how American I'd become: I answered to "Elaine" first and only spoke Chinese when absolutely necessary, with my adult relatives...More than anything, I wanted to obscure my foreignness, that combination of ethnicity and poverty. I would have given anything to slip into ordinary. But my parents foiled all attempts. They turned me into an object of ridicule. (158)

We see that Yee accepts her new name, "Elaine," and with it, she accepts being American. We see that she believes she created her own identity:

I was the American voice of the family, the connection between our basement room and the outside world. I'd accepted a hollow name, an empty construct, and created an identity with it in four short years. "Elaine" was adored by teachers, got A's in everything except penmanship, and watched *The Brady Bunch* faithfully after school (160)

Elaine considers herself an American and speaks English with Sam and her other friends even at home to exclude her mother from her conversations. She uses her

American name, Elaine, even in her neighborhood. A gap starts to form between Elaine and her mother starting from her childhood. She thinks that her mother is uneducated, does not know English and is not stylish like American mothers. Elaine wants to be like stylish Americans and doesn't want to wear old or cheap clothes that show her poverty. According to her, her ethnicity equals poverty.

The gap between Elaine and her Chinese background gets bigger and bigger as she gets older. She turns her face to American culture. She criticizes Chinese people in America for not trying hard enough to learn the English language. Also, she cannot identify with her Chinese relatives. She does not want to be among them. She explains her feelings like this when her uncle comes to stay in America with them:

Watching my uncle shuffle through the house and restaurant, I couldn't bring myself to feel anything but annoyance and guilt. He embodied everything I hated about my family—the inertia, the displacement, the lack of hope. (278)

When she is deciding which universities to apply to, we see that she chooses the ones away from Denver to be away from her parents, relatives and Chinese culture:

“Nothing in-state”, I repeated.

Mrs. Braverman sighed. “Elaine, someday that arrogance is going to get you in trouble.”

I didn't answer. I didn't want to explain that it was fear, not arrogance, that motivated me. If I applied to an in-state college, I wouldn't have any excuse not to apply for a Boettcher. If I applied for a Boettcher, I might get it. If I got it, there wouldn't be any reason not to accept. If I accepted, I would never get away from home. (277)

After some time, we see that she lies about her parents because she is ashamed of them. She does not go and visit them and does not want them to come and visit her:

I quickly learned to evade, or even lie, in order to avoid the agonies suffered Freshman week. I spent the next four years creating excuses for my parents' failure to visit me, and pretending that I really would rather stay in the dorms over Thanksgiving and spring breaks to get work done.

I mixed up my stories only once: The month before graduation, I told half my friends that my parents weren't attending the ceremony because they were angry at me for not moving back to Denver afterwards. I explained to the other half that my parents were too busy with "business" to take time off. Eventually the two groups compared notes and confronted me about the differing stories. In response, I mumbled, "Well, it's a little of both. They're mad at me, and they're busy." I walked away with downcast eyes.

I didn't want to explain that over four years the distance between Denver and Cambridge had grown until I was as far away as another country. My parents weren't able to visit. Like my grandfather, I'd immigrated with no way to send for my family. (292)

Elaine travels far from her parents' way of living by the end of the novel. First she immigrates to the USA from Hong Kong and then she migrates to Boston from Denver. She leaves the name Man Yee behind and becomes Elaine. She becomes a new person.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, the Chinese mothers think that the meaning of life is hidden in Chinese mystery and superstitions. They are in the United States, but they continue thinking about China and their memories there. They cannot be assimilated. They see the Chinese way of thinking as the answer to everything and they do not accept American thinking based on science and logic. Not knowing English causes them not to change. They want their daughters to live in better conditions in the United States and benefit from the opportunities available there, but the mothers want them to maintain Chinese way of thinking. They don't want their daughters to change and be assimilated, but they cannot see the fact that assimilation is inevitable. The gap between the mothers and the daughters is one of the causes of the assimilation of the daughters. When the Joy Luck aunties hear that Jing Mei (June) Woo does not know what to tell her twin sisters living in China about her mother, they feel angry and frightened:

And then it occurs to me. They are frightened. In me, they see their own daughters, just as ignorant, just as unmindful of all the truths and hopes they have brought to America. They see daughters who grow impatient when their mothers talk in Chinese, who think they are stupid when they explain things in fractured English. They see that joy and luck do not mean the same to their daughters; to those closed American-born minds "joy luck" is not a

word; it does not exist. They see daughters who will bear grandchildren born without any connecting hope passed from generation to generation. (31)

Chinese mothers are the first generation in America, and they are desperate about their daughters ignoring the truths and hopes that they have brought from China and not passing onto their grandchildren, the third generation. They are afraid that their culture, beliefs and the Chinese elements theory will be lost in this new world.

The Joy Luck Club, which started in Kwelin because of the pain and fear of the Japanese attacks, continues in the United States. Suyuan Woo says, “We could hope to be lucky. That hope was our only joy. And that’s how we came to call our little parties Joy Luck.” (12). It is a tradition which keeps the Chinese way of life alive and it is like a resistance to the dominant culture that wants to assimilate them. Hope is the joy of these Chinese mothers in the old world and the new world. Now their hope lies in their grandchildren, because the second generation, their daughters, is frustrating their hopes and expectations. We see that Jing Mei Woo, Suyuan Woo’s daughter, does not even know what Joy Luck Club is while she is growing up:

In those days, before my mother told me about her Kwelin story, I imagined Joy Luck was a shameful Chinese custom, like the secret gathering of the Ku Klux Klan or the tom-tom dances of TV Indians preparing for war. (16)

We see that Jing Mei has no interest in Chinese traditions. She doesn’t even care what her mother is doing at the Joy Luck parties. When her mother dies and she is assigned to replace her mother at the mahjong table, she does not know what to do. She feels uneasy because the environment is not American. It is a totally different culture to her. The old Chinese women in this environment are unassimilated. She does not know what to tell her twin sisters in China about her mother. She feels that she never really understood her mother. They were living in two different worlds;

I had always assumed we had an unspoken understanding about these things: that she didn’t really mean I was a failure, and I really meant I would try to respect her opinions more. But listening to Auntie Lin tonight reminds me once again: My mother and I never really understood one another. We translated each other’s meanings and I seemed to hear less than what was said, while my mother heard more. (27)

Here it is very obvious that Suyuan Woo and her daughter never really understood each other. They only tried to translate each other's meanings, but they never tried to understand each other. In Jing Mei's words, we can feel the gap between the mother and the daughter and their different worlds. The daughter was American and assimilated, while her mother resisted assimilation and chose to live in her Chinese world with her Chinese friends. They were two foreigners living together. We see that her daughter does not understand the suffering and pain she went through in China. Her daughter does not have anything to say to her sisters about her. Bones show the roots of the Chinese daughter even though she was born in the United States. The mothers are afraid of being forgotten by the coming generations, so they make the second generation feel restless in order to make them find out about the mothers' suffering and sacrifices.

To Chinese people, fourteen carats isn't real gold. Feel my bracelets. They must be twenty-four carats, pure inside and out. It's too late to change you, but I'm telling you this because I worry about your baby. I worry that someday she will say, "Thank you, Grandmother, for the gold bracelet. I'll never forget you." But later, she will forget her promise. She will forget she had a grandmother. (42)

Here, Lindo wants to think that her grandchildren will remember and appreciate her Chinese way of thinking, but she knows that the third generation, which will be raised by the second, will ignore and forget her hopes, the hopes of the first generation. In a conversation between Lindo and her daughter, we see how proud Lindo is to be Chinese.

I shrugged my shoulders and said, "Some boy in my class said Chinese people do Chinese torture."

"Chinese people do many things," she said simply. "Chinese people do business, do medicine, do painting. Not lazy like American people. We do torture. Best torture." (92)

She sees Americans as lazy and incapable people. She is proud of everything that Chinese people do. For her, this can be either business or torture. Here we see her strong belief that their culture is superior to American culture in every way. This is how the

other Chinese mothers feel as well. For this reason, they cannot be assimilated into American culture. She is very sad because she sees that her daughter does not think the same way as she does. She sees that she is ashamed of her mother and her Chinese background and the way she looks.

...But inside I'm becoming ashamed. I'm ashamed she is ashamed because she is my daughter and I'm proud of her, and I'm her mother and she is not proud of me.

Mr. Rory pats my hair more. He looks at me. He looks at my daughter. Then he says something to my daughter that really displeases her. "It's uncanny how much you two look alike!" (291)

Lindo understands that her daughter, Waverly, is not happy to hear this. She doesn't feel Chinese and she doesn't want to look like one. We see how American she feels here and how her ethnic background and even her mother seems so far away from her. And her mother sees this. We see the gap between a mother and daughter. When Waverly was young, she made her mother feel the same way with her words:

"I wish you wouldn't do that, telling everybody I'm your daughter." My mother stopped walking. Crowds of people with heavy bags pushed past us on the sidewalk, bumping into first one shoulder, then another.

"Aiii-ya. So shame be with mother?" She grasped my hand even tighter as she glared at me.

I looked down. "It's not that, it's just so obvious. It's just so embarrassing."

"Embarrass you be my daughter?" Her voice was cracking with anger.

"That's not what I meant. That's not what I said."

"What you say?" (101)

Waverly did not feel comfortable because of the way her mother bragged about her fake success in playing the piano and the way she seemed to approve of the fact that Waverly was interested in playing chess. Her mother insisted on seeing her in a way she was not. She thought her daughter could be anything she wanted to become in the USA. She did not want to accept that her daughter was not a genius, but just an ordinary kid. Here, we see that the daughter and the mother do not understand each other.

In another instant, Lindo Jong says these words about her daughter, Waverly:

Only her skin and her hair are Chinese. Inside—she is all American-made. It is my fault she is this way. I wanted my children to have the best combination: American circumstances and Chinese character. How could I know these two things do not mix? (289)

She explains about the American opportunities and then adds:

She learned these things, but I couldn't teach her about Chinese character. How to obey parents and listen to your mother's mind. How not to show your own thoughts, to put your feelings behind your face so you can take advantage of hidden opportunities. Why easy things are not worth pursuing. How to know your own worth and polish it, never flashing it around like a cheap ring. Why Chinese thinking is best. (289)

Here, we see that she is aware of her daughter's assimilation to American culture and she is not pleased with it. She tells what she thinks about the American character with these words:

Americans don't really look at one another when talking. They talk to their reflections. They look at others or themselves only when they think nobody is watching. So they never see how they really look. They see themselves smiling without their mouth open, or turned to the side where they cannot see their faults. (290)

We once again see that she doesn't approve of the American character and behavior. We see that she knew in a way that Waverly would grow up someday and leave her and her Chinese thinking. She knew that she would lose her daughter to the dominant culture, as she expressed in these words:

I wanted everything for you to be better. I wanted you to have the best circumstances, the best character. I didn't want you to regret anything. And that's why I named you Waverly. It was the name of the street we lived on. And I wanted you to think, This is where I belong. But I also knew if I

named you after this street, soon you would grow up, leave this place, and take a piece of me with you. (303)

We understand that Lindo and her daughter Waverly do not understand each other at all. Lindo thinks that her daughter does not understand her circumstances, her life, her background and her suffering and pain back in China. She thinks that her daughter makes fun of her circumstances and sometimes just interprets them the way she wants. She says, “You must understand my real circumstances, how I arrived, how I married, how I lost my Chinese face, why are you the way you are”.(296). Again it shows the big gap between mother and daughter. Waverly sees her mother’s circumstances from her American point of view since she is assimilated and has an American identity. Then we see Lindo Jong talking after she goes to China and comes back:

I think about our two faces. I think about my intentions. Which one is American? Which one is Chinese? Which one is better? If you show one, you must always sacrifice the other. It is like what happened when I went back to China last year, after I had not been there for almost forty years. I had taken off my fancy jewelry. I did not wear loud colors. I spoke their language. I used their local money. But still they knew. They knew my face was not one hundred percent Chinese. They still charged me high foreign prices. So now I think, What did I lose? What did I get back in return? I will ask my daughter what she thinks. (304-305)

Even though she did not assimilate, Lindo thinks that even she herself changed in the dominant culture and that she is not the same woman who came from China years ago.

An-Mei, Rose’s mother, raises her children according to a book based on Chinese thinking. We see how much she believes in the superstitions written in this book. This shows that she did not internalize the American analytic way of thinking. It shows that she is not assimilated. Rose talks about this book:

It was explained in a little Chinese book called “The twenty-six Malignant Gates.” There on each page, was an illustration of some terrible danger that awaited young innocent children. In the corners was a description written in

Chinese, and since I couldn't read the characters I could only see what the picture meant ...

It could have been enough to think that even one of these dangers could befall a child. And even though the birth dates corresponded to only one danger, my mother worried about them all. This was because she couldn't figure out how the Chinese dates, based on the lunar calendar, translated into American dates. So by taking them all into account, she had absolute faith she could prevent every one of them. (131)

Chinese ways do not properly fit American circumstances all the time. An-Mei approaches the American circumstances with Chinese ways and it is a mistake. Rose's mother An-Mei Hsu says to her daughter,

It is shou so deep it is in your bones. The pain of the flesh is nothing. The pain you must forget. Because sometimes that is the way to remember what is in your bones. You must peel off your skin, and that of your mother, and her mother before her. (41)

She wants Rose to understand the suffering and the pain her ancestors went through. An-Mei thinks if she understands this, she will win her daughter over, make her feel Chinese, make her understand her Chinese background. But no matter what she says or does, she will lose her daughter to the American culture in the end. When Rose's mother warns her that her husband Ted is "American," Rose says, "I'm American, too." (124) Rose feels American, and this is the reason why she chose an American husband. Later on, when Rose feels bad about her marriage with her American husband falling apart, she starts to go to a psychiatrist. Her mother once again is unhappy because Rose doesn't choose to talk to her mother about her pain and accept her advice. An-Mei thinks the Chinese way of thinking is always the best and is the only solution to all problems. We see her dialogue with her daughter:

"I don't think we should talk about Ted now, not here."

"Why can you talk about this with a psyche-atric and not with mother?"

"Psychiatrist."

"Psyche-atricks," she corrected herself.

“A mother is best. A mother knows what is inside you,” she said above the singing voices.

“A psyche-atricks will only make you hulihudu, make you see heimongmong.” (210)

Ying-Ying St. Clair is another Joy Luck Mother who cannot be assimilated into American culture because she sees danger in everything. Lena explains her mother’s attitude when she is pregnant: “She did not speak of the joys of having a new baby; she talked about a heaviness around her, about things being out of balance, not in harmony with one another.” (113). Then she continues to relate her mother’s attitude when her baby is born without a brain:

My fault, my fault. I knew this before it happened,” she babbled. “I did nothing to prevent it.” (116)

“I knew he could see everything inside me. How I had given no thought to killing my other son! How I had given no thought to having this baby!” (117)

We understand from these words that Ying-Ying believes in superstition. She thinks that everything depends on harmony, balance of thoughts and objects. She cannot see the situation from the medical point of view. We see that her thinking is very different from the American way of thinking. She blames herself for everything. These reactions show us that it is not possible for her to be assimilated. When her mother talks like this, Lena thinks that she is going crazy because Lena started to see things from the American perspective. On the other hand, Ying-Ying St. Clair sees that her daughter Lena has grown too far apart from her. They cannot understand each other anymore. The mother remained Chinese and the daughter has become American. Ying-Ying explains her feelings like this:

All these years I kept my true nature hidden, running like a small shadow so nobody could catch me. And because I moved so secretly now my daughter does not see me. She sees a list of things to buy, her checkbook out of balance, her ashtray sitting crooked on a straight table.

And I want to tell her this: We are lost, she and I, unseen and not seeing, unheard and not hearing, unknown by others. (64)

Lena's American life looks empty and unbalanced to Ying-Ying. According to her mother, she can only see her shopping lists or checkbook. Ying-Ying sees behind the objects and feels whether they are out of balance. She thinks that the house they live in "will break into pieces."

All around this house I see signs. My daughter looks but does not see. This is a house that will break into pieces. How do I know? I have always known a thing before it happens. (275)

In a way, she senses the problems in her daughter's marriage and life, even before her daughter does, from the way Lena and her husband separate their money in everything, even when buying food or clothing. She says what she thinks about her daughter's American identity.

My daughter has put me in the tiniest of rooms in her new house.
"This is the guest bedroom," Lena said in her proud American way.

I smiled. But to Chinese ways of thinking, the guest bedroom is the best bedroom, where she and her husband sleep. I do not tell her this. Her wisdom is like a bottomless pond. You throw stones in and they sink into the darkness and dissolve. Her eyes looking back do not reflect anything.

I think this to myself even though I love my daughter. She and I have shared the same body. There is a part of her mind that is part of mine. But when she was born, she sprang from me like a slippery fish, and has been swimming away ever since. All her life, I have watched her as though from another shore. (274)

Here again we see that mother and daughter think in totally different ways. The second generation is assimilated into American culture whereas their mothers cling to their Chinese culture. This causes a big communication problem between the mothers and the daughters. In both of the novels, Chinese mothers cling to their Chinese culture

and want to raise their daughters with that culture while offering them American opportunities. But they cannot understand that their daughters are going through different experiences outside of the home and are struggling to live in the dominant culture. In time, the daughters adapt to American behavior and thought, and start to put a distance between themselves and their mothers.

The differences in assimilation in the two novels begin here. Elaine's mother does not try to understand her daughter or to build a bridge between them. The mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* do not fully understand their daughters either. In the end, however, when they see their daughters struggling in their marriages partly because of their Chinese behaviors, the mothers relate their own life to their daughters and help them find their individual identities in their marriages.

When she was young, Lena's mother Ying-Ying St. Clair's nursemaid told her that girls should be meek and passive. At that point, Ying-Ying began to lose her self confidence. She started to believe in fate and destiny without questioning things and this made her passive. When her father told her that she would marry a family friend, she thought that this was her fate, and even started to love her husband. When he died, she married her American husband, Clifford, because she thought that he was her destiny as well. When Lena married Harold, she followed her mother's passive model in her marriage and her career. Lena St. Clair's marriage to Harold is unhappy. However, she just thinks that it is her fate even though she realizes that some things are wrong. She does nothing to change the situation. Ying-Ying realizes that she has passed on her passivity and fatalism to her daughter Lena and regrets it. First, she tries to change herself, and then her daughter. She urges her daughter to take control. She tells Lena her story for the first time, hoping that Lena might learn from her mother's own failure to begin expressing her thoughts and feelings. Becoming close to her mother and understanding her has a positive effect on Lena. She feels confident and accepts her Chinese heritage. She felt trapped in her body before, but now she starts to see its beauty:

Of course, Harold and I are equals, in many respects... And I may not be a raving beauty, but a lot of women in my aerobics class tell me I'm "exotic" in an unusual way, and they are jealous that my breasts don't sag, now that small breasts are in. Plus, one of my clients said I have an incredible vitality and exuberance. (170)

Rose marries Ted, an American man, despite Ted's mother's racism and her own mother's opposition. But she can't continue with the same strength in her marriage. She makes Ted decide everything. She chooses to be someone who has no opinions or thoughts. She can't express herself in her marriage and in time, this becomes a problem. She finally needs her mother, An-Mei helps her realize that to refuse to make decisions is in fact itself a decision: a decision to continue in a state of passivity, inferiority, and unhappiness. When An-Mei is at a young age, her mother teaches her to swallow her tears, to conceal her pain, and to distrust others. An-Mei later learns to speak up, but she realizes that she taught passivity to her daughter because she thought that it was part of the character of a good Chinese woman. An-Mei believes in human effort to change things. Rose's husband was cheating on her and wanted to divorce her without giving her anything even though they had worked together all those years. Her mother warns her daughter that she knows there is another woman by listening to her senses. She opens her daughter's eyes: "I am not telling you to save your marriage," she protested. "I only say you should speak up." (216) Rose listens to her mother. For the first time, she feels strong when talking to Ted and tells him that she is not leaving the house because it is her house:

"You don't have to move out right away," he said. "I know you'll want at least a month to find a place."

"I've already found a place," I said quickly, because right then I knew where I was going to live. His eyebrows raised in surprise and he smiled-for the briefest moment-until I said, "Here".

"What's that?" he said sharply. His eyebrows were still up, but there was no smile.

"I said I'm staying here," I announced again.(219)

Before, Rose would strictly say that the American version of everything and American thinking were best. But she realizes the difficulties in it, too:

It was only later that I discovered there was a serious flaw with the American version. There were too many choices, so it was easy to get confused and pick the wrong thing. That's how I felt about my situation with Ted. There was so much to think about, so much to decide. Each decision meant a turn in another direction. (214)

Lindo thinks that she is responsible for the fact that her daughter Waverly has assimilated into American culture. She thinks that she had started this by giving her daughter the name of their street in America, Waverly, to make her feel that she belonged in America. She also realizes during her trip to China that even she herself has assimilated into American culture to some extent. There, everybody sees her as a tourist. She starts to understand her daughter in a way. If she had changed this much even though she resisted, it was normal for her daughter to have adopted American characteristics.

Waverly thinks that her mother Lindo is a critical, narrow-minded old woman. She thinks that her mother does not like her Caucasian fiancé, Rich, and that she will not want her to marry him. But Lena realizes that her mother in fact does like Rich. She starts to understand her mother and realizes that she misunderstood her mother ever since her childhood. She realizes that she saw her mother the way she wanted to see her. This makes her understand herself, too. She understands that she has done a very wrong thing by totally neglecting her Chinese heritage and her mother.

We don't see this kind of understanding between Elaine and her mother at the end of *Paper Daughter*. The distance between them grows bigger and bigger. Elaine moves away from home and she is happy that her family and Chinese culture cannot reach her.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, the daughters return to their Chinese roots. At the end of the novel when Jing Mei travels to China and meets her Chinese sisters, she starts to understand her mother's past life in China. She understands that she made a mistake by putting a distance between herself and her mother instead of trying to understand what she was trying to teach. In a way, she becomes ashamed of the fact that she thought she didn't know enough about her mother to tell her sisters. She builds a bridge between American and the Chinese culture. She regrets having neglected her Chinese background. Waverly also goes to China on her honeymoon with Rich, and we see that she regrets having neglected her Chinese heritage before going there as well. Her mother explains her situation with these words: "But now she wants to be Chinese, it is so fashionable. And I know it is too late." (289)

Also, Jing Mei's words tell us her feelings when she arrives in China:

The minute our train leaves the Hong Kong border and enters Shenzhen, China, I feel different. I can feel the skin on my forehead tingling, my blood rushing through a new course, my bones aching with familiar old pain. And I think, my mother was right. I am becoming Chinese.

...

I was a sophomore at Galileo High in San Francisco, and all my Caucasian friends agreed: I was about as Chinese as they were. But my mother had studied at a famous nursing school in Shanghai, and she said she knew all about genetics. So there was no doubt in her mind, whether I agreed or not: Once you are born Chinese, you cannot help but feel and think Chinese.

“Someday you will see,” said my mother. “It is in your blood, waiting to be let go.”. (306)

The mothers were integrated to a limited extent, but they could not be assimilated because of the facts explained above. At first, the daughters thought that all their problems, like patriarchy, isolation and crisis of identity, would end if they chose to assimilate into white Anglo-Saxon culture. To them, assimilation meant freedom and being independent, but they could not escape these problems. Lindo Jong explained how the Chinese in China would not accept them as Chinese anymore in the Crisis of Identity section. The daughters did not belong to Chinese or white culture. They were isolated from both of them to an extent. They could not find happiness. The daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* returned to their roots consciously. They realized that they became Chinese-Americans, accepted themselves as they were rather than trying to be someone (white Americans) that they were not and were at ease because they reconciled with their Chinese roots. In *Paper Daughter*, however, Elaine does not come to the same realization. In both of the novels, whether they realized it or not, the daughters adopted mixed racial and cultural identities. They were not only American or Chinese. They became Chinese Americans who had Chinese and American traits in their characters. This is the basis of being a multicultural nation. If all ethnic groups can be mixed, meaning, if they can understand and respect one another more, this will enable them to live together in harmony, and this will be important for the unity and strength of the USA. Charles Mindel and Robert Habenstein talk about the hopes of the Chinese Student and Alumni Services in their book, *Ethnic Families in America*:

It is one of the hopes and dreams of CALC “to promote unity and strength of the United States of America by cultivating understanding and appreciation of both American and Chinese culture heritages.” (Newsletter of the Midwest Chinese Student and Alumni Services, 1973:10)

The girls had mixed cultural and racial identities, in other words, richly mixed identities. They worked very hard throughout their education and became independent and successful individuals, which makes them examples of the model minority. Their families were different. Elaine's family could not be called a model minority, whereas the families in *The Joy Luck Club* were closer to being model minorities, as we explained before. Elaine saw the deficiencies in her family, like the lack of language and education problems, and she tried not to make the same mistakes. So she started by learning the language, then worked hard and got a good education; in the end, she was accepted to Harvard. The daughters in the other novel became model minorities as well. They received good education and in the end had good careers. They were independent and hardworking individuals. They were "Americans."

It is understandable to some extent that, for reasons already explained, the mothers could not be a part of America and that they could not be Americans, but this made their life very hard. Living in a country whose language and culture are foreign to you is a very hard thing. One cannot reject other cultures and live in isolation within walls she or he has created. She/he should at least try to integrate and diminish the differences, or he/she should go back to where he/she came from. What is the point of living in a country that you reject totally? Only to use the opportunities like the mothers thought? How can someone use the opportunities in a country if she is not a part of that country? It is meaningless. One can not arrive anywhere with this kind of thinking. The daughters struggled, lost some things, but gained some things in the end, too.

VII. CONCLUSION:

In time, a huge gap formed between the Chinese mothers and Chinese-American daughters in the two novels. The daughters started to think that their mothers were uneducated; they did not understand their mothers and thought that their teachings could not be applied to the American culture in which they were living. They started to become ashamed of their mothers. Most of them had spent their childhoods trying to escape their Chinese identities: Lena would walk around the house with her eyes opened as far as possible so as to make them look European. Jing Mei denied during adolescence that she had any internal Chinese aspects, insisting that her Chinese identity was limited only to her external features. Lindo considers that Waverly would have clapped her hands for joy during her teen years if her mother had told her that she did not look Chinese. On the other hand, the mothers started to feel that they could not raise the children of their dreams, obedient daughters who live according to and respect the Chinese way of life while benefiting from American opportunities.

The points stated above are similar in both novels, but there are differences between them, too. In *The Joy Luck Club*, with time and age, the second generation shows a tendency to turn its back symbolically to its ethnic roots. As they mature, the daughters begin to sense that their identities are incomplete and become interested in their Chinese heritage. Their mothers begin to understand their mistakes as well as their daughters. They see that their daughters are trapped in unhappy marriages partly because of the way they were brought up by Chinese traditions and patriarchy, which place the women in a submissive position. The gap between the mothers and the daughters becomes smaller, and the daughters begin to understand their mothers and their Chinese heritage. Waverly speaks wishfully about blending in too well in China and becomes angry when Lindo notes that she will be recognized instantly as a tourist. One of Jing-Mei's greatest fears about her trip to China is not that others will recognize her as American, but that she herself will fail to recognize any Chinese elements within herself. In *The Joy Luck Club*, we see that Waverly goes to China for her honeymoon with her second husband, who is a white American. Then we see Jing Mei Woo going to China to find her half sisters with her father after her mother's death. But it was too late to integrate with the Chinese culture that they rejected in their childhood and early adulthood. As Waverly's mother stated, they were not regarded as Chinese in China. People could see that they were foreigners from the way they were walking and carrying themselves. The daughters accept that they are not Chinese or American, but they are

Chinese Americans. Also, their mothers helped them overcome the obstacles in their marriages and the daughters and the mothers started to understand each other.

In *Paper Daughter*, we cannot come to the same conclusion about Elaine. Elaine totally rejects her Chinese background and family and accepts that she is only American. She does not come to an understanding with her mother and her Chinese heritage because we do not see any hints that her mother tries to understand Elaine and shows affection to her starting from her childhood through her teenage years and even at the end of the novel, unlike the Chinese mothers in *The Joy Luck Club*. This is the main cause for this conclusion. But for both of the novels, we can bring in Mindel and Habenstein's conclusion about how the second generation sees America and China in general in their book, *Ethnic Families in America*:

When American Chinese parents send their children to visit Taiwan, Hong Kong and lately The People's Republic of China, they no longer say they are returning home, but going for a visit to the homeland of their ancestors. Home is here in America, a country in which other ethnic families have also come and settled. (Mindel and Habenstein, 1977: 145)

The adaptation period, discrimination, identity crises, language problems, cultural differences, assimilation of their daughters and the severe poverty... We studied that the American Dream turned out to be a myth created by promoters because they needed to find people to work for low wages. The Chinese worked to reach American middle class standards, but most of them lived under very poor conditions and did the jobs that white Americans did not want to do. The Chinese female immigrants could not find the wealth and the comfortable life they were looking for in the USA (Elaine's family lived in very poor conditions, whereas the Chinese mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* had a more comfortable life compared to them, as we saw), and their daughters assimilated into white Anglo-Saxon culture for some time, lived feeling that they did not belong to either the new or the old world and they could not overcome the crisis of identity in the depths of their hearts. They lost some things, but gained some things in the end too.

Whether they realized it or not (the daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* realized it and Elaine in *Paper Daughter* did not), the daughters in both of the novels ended up having a mixed cultural and racial identity, which is the essence of ethnic America. Jing Mei's experience in China at the end of the book certainly seems to support the possibility of a richly mixed identity rather than an identity of warring opposites. She realizes that

China itself contains American aspects, just as the part of America she grew up in (San Francisco's Chinatown) contained Chinese elements. Her first meal in China consisted of hamburgers and apple pie, as per the request of her Chinese relatives. Globalization helps in forming the mixed cultural and racial identities as well when we consider that all the ethnic groups in America come from the different parts of the world. As the number of the mixed racial and cultural identities increase in the USA, the differences between ethnic groups diminish. To preserve the unity and integrity of America, all the ethnic groups should learn to understand and respect each other and benefit from the positive sides of each culture. They should not neglect each other's contributions to American culture and civilization.

As the differences between cultures, ethnicities and races diminish, a postethnic America is formed, which is a place of harmony and peace. It does not mean that individual cultures or ethnicities should be erased. On the contrary, diversity and its richness, which contribute to an individual's life, should be celebrated. Multiculturalism in America should be the point where ethnicities formed by race and culture mix together. But whites do not want to be multicultural, claiming that this country is theirs and that all the other ethnic groups should assimilate into their culture, white Anglo-Saxon culture, taking the Chinese as models. They do not accept Hollinger's idea of optional ethnicity and postethnicity. The dominant society (whites) thinks that an Irish American or a Polish American can be white. But even if a Chinese or a black person has a white mother or a father, he cannot say that he is white. The whites tell him that they are white and not him. But if whites accept multiculturalism, an African American can then say that he is white. Then a white American can eat Chinese food and a Chinese can eat hamburgers. The only ethnicity can be "American." Hollinger explains one of the steps taken in forming a common identity, in other words, a postethnic identity, by using the term Asian Americans. By calling the Americans whose ancestors were Koreans, Cambodians, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Japanese Asian Americans (Orientals), we are diminishing the differences between them. (Hollinger)

Asian Americans are called model minorities, but we cannot call every Asian American individual or family the same because hard living conditions, racism, poverty and isolation prevent them from acting as one. Elaine realized the deficiencies in her family, like the lack of language and education. We explained why Elaine's family could not be called a "model minority" in section III, "Chinese as a Model Minority." She learned English, worked hard through her education and became a member of the "model minority" herself. On the other hand, as we explained in the same section,

Chinese families in *The Joy Luck Club* were closer to being model minorities because the Chinese mothers did not have serious financial problems except when they first came to America. They lived in a Chinese community where all the families helped each other. They had gatherings like The Joy Luck Club where they gave each other material and moral support. For example, they gave Jing Mei money to go to China to meet her sisters. The Chinese families supported Waverly in the chess tournaments. The daughters became model minorities as well. They got good educations, had good careers, earned well and had comfortable lives. Some became more successful than others. For example, Waverly was more successful than Jing Mei because Jing Mei's mother wanted her to become a prodigy and misled her. Waverly followed up her success in the chess tournaments by becoming a successful attorney. But they all tried hard, which shows that they can be taken as members of the model minority.

Kwang Chung Kim and Won Moo Hurh summed up the statements of scholars like sociologist William Petersen, who think that Asian Americans are a “model minority,” in their article, “Korean Americans and the Model Minority Myth, 1970s-Present”:

Portrayals of Asian-American success contained the message that the United States is indeed a land of opportunity; if African Americans and Latino Americans do not seem to be “making it” in America, this failure must be due to their own “deficiencies.” After all, it was implied, despite the discrimination that Asian immigrants also have suffered, they are pulling themselves up by their bootstraps by dint of their reverence for education, their hard work, and the strength of their families. (Kim and Hurh)

It is not fair to say to other cultures, “Look! Asians did it and you could not.” Blacks were in America from the beginning and they claim that this country is theirs, like whites. They say that they are not immigrants, so they should not have to work harder like the Chinese who are immigrants. Also, they did not have the choice to keep their cultures. The Chinese had the choice to decide whether they should remain Chinese or become Chinese American. It is true that most of Asians are hardworking, honest, think that education is a must and respect their families, which makes them a model minority. Whites thought that Asians were most similar to them because they are the model minority, but we cannot say that all the whites are for education, are hardworking and honest and respect family. Also, they could get bank loans and worked

as individuals, but Chinese are not individuals. They got money from their families and worked in family businesses. So it is not correct to say that they are as successful as whites. Also, patriarchy is very pronounced in Chinese culture, and it is not a characteristic that can be taken as a model.

The concept of the model minority plays a role in the myth of assimilation. Nobody has to assimilate in a multicultural country and change everything about her- or himself to become someone that he/she is not. Assimilation is meaningless. All people can have richly mixed identities. The designation of “model minority” is given to Asians by whites who think that they are the models themselves and that all the other ethnic cultures should assimilate into white Anglo-Saxon culture because this country is theirs. They think that model minority characteristics will enable them to assimilate. Some whites do not want to be multicultural. They are ethnic, but they do not want to be postethnic. Hollinger says they should be called Euro-Americans and should accept that they are one of the ethnicities in America, like African Americans, Latin Americans and Chinese Americans. They should accept that this country is formed by all the cultures and ethnicities coming together. This is necessary for the postethnic ideology to be realized in America, which will help people live in harmony and peace and enjoy diversity instead of living in hostility, racism and violence.

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