

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

**CULTURAL CLASHES IN THE LIVES OF FICTIONAL
CHINESE AMERICAN DAUGHTERS**

**A study of selected novels by
Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan**

A Pro Gradu Thesis

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää kiinalaisen ja amerikkalaisen kulttuurin eroavuuksia sellaisina kuin ne ilmenevät Hong Kingstonin ja Tanin kahdessa romaanissa. Tutkimuskohteena ovat erityisesti amerikankiinalaiset tyttäret, jotka ovat teosten päähenkilöitä ja jotka ajoittain kokevat elämässään kiinalaisten ja amerikkalaisten kulttuurikonventioiden yhteentörmäyksiä.

Tutkielman taustatiedoiksi esitellään valikoituja aineksia kiinalaisesta, amerikkalaisesta ja amerikankiinalaisesta kulttuurista ja osin myös historiasta, mikä myöhemmin helpottaa fiktiivisen materiaalin analysointia. Kiinalaisista ideologioista on tutkimuksen tukemiseksi valittu kungfutselaisuus ja kollektivismi; amerikkalaisista individualismi ja egalitarianismi. Amerikankiinalaisuudesta puuttuvat täsmälliset omat ideologiat, ja siksi sen yhteydessä keskitytään siirtolaisten historian kuvailuun. Taustatietojen toinen osuus käsittelee perheen ja naisen asemaa yllämainituissa kulttuureissa, mitä voidaan perustella sillä, että tutkimuksen pääkohteena ovat lähinnä kuvitteelliset naiset: äidit ja tyttäret.

Analyysiosuudessa keskitytään esittelemään viiden tyttären elämästä tapahtumia, joissa pääpaino on kulttuurisidonnaisten konfliktien esittelyssä ja pohdinnassa. Tyttäret ovat erilaisia luonteiltaan ja elämäntilanteiltaan, mutta heitä tuntuvat yhdistävän kahden kulttuurin erojen aiheuttamat ongelmat. He ovat syntyneet ja kasvaneet amerikkalaisessa kulttuuriympäristössä, mutta heidän perheensä arvostavat edelleen kiinalaisia perinteitä ja tapoja. Tällöin kulttuurien yhteentörmäykset ja niistä aiheutuvat konfliktit ovat lähes väistämättömiä. Tutkielman tavoitteena on tunnistaa ja pohtia syitä kyseisiin konflikteihin, joita esiintyy kaikissa teosten tyttäristä kertovissa osuuksissa. Kyseisiä kulttuurieroista johtuvia ongelmia ilmenee eniten äitien ja tyttärien välisissä suhteissa, mutta myös amerikankiinalaisten naisten ja heidän amerikkalaisten miestensä väleissä. Tällaisia ongelmia ovat esimerkiksi kollektivismi- ja individualismi -painotusten aiheuttamat väärinkäsitykset; suoran ja epäsuoran kommunikaation aikaansaamat väärinymmärrykset; ja rotuennakkoluulojen aiheuttamat konfliktit.

Asiasanat: Confucianism. collectivism. individualism. egalitarianism. cultural clash. fiction.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Joy = The Joy Luck Club

Woman = The Woman Warrior

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. A General Introduction

The aim of the present study is to examine some basic elements of Chinese, American, and Chinese American culture as shown in fiction by two Chinese American novelists. The primary material for the present study consists of two novels: Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. Culturally bound events in the novels are approached through cultural conflicts in the lives of fictional Chinese American daughters.

Broadly, the study as a whole is about Chinese American culture but, more precisely, it focuses on certain aspects of culture which in the present study are family and, more accurately, conflicts faced by the fictional daughters of ethnic families living in a multiethnic environment. Human culture is varying and it is constantly moulded by its carriers who are men, women and children who probably even cannot articulate its norms and values with clarity (Chan 1991). As immigrants confront a new environment, they unavoidably take on some of its characteristics while creating a new synthesis and that goes beyond a simple mixing of two cultures. Therefore, Chinese immigrant families are not, and cannot be, copies of those in Asia, either sociologically or culturally, neither are they copies of any other families. However, the ingredients of several cultures are present within any Chinese American family, of which the most eminent are Chinese and American cultural features.

In a short study such as this I cannot include long presentations of Chinese and American culture but, instead, have to be satisfied with displaying some generalizations. The first part of the present study that is titled *Observations on certain conventions within three cultures* aims at giving generalizations of Chinese, American and Chinese American culture, created by introducing certain main ideologies within each. The effect of the ideologies on people is later demonstrated in the analysis through events that the fictional characters encounter. Ideology is an important concept in the present study and, therefore, a short definition is in place: "An ideology is a belief or a set of beliefs on

which people, parties, or countries base their actions.” (Collins Cobuild 1994:718) In the present study the word ideology is not used so much with its political connotations but, instead, to define a set of values or beliefs. Within Chinese culture the main ideologies presented will be Confucianism and collectivism, and within American culture individualism and egalitarianism. It would have been possible to choose other ideologies and trace their impact in the novels but the above mentioned ideologies seemed appropriate tools to be used in analyzing the novels. The above Chinese and American ideologies are quite different and, thereby, they not only demonstrate the variety of the two cultures but also offer ground for comparisons between them. Consequently, in the present study some contrasts are made between Chinese and American customs and patterns of communication while further comparison of these two cultures is based on the analysis of the novels. Chinese American culture is not a mere combination but an individual culture of its own and, therefore, some concepts and generalizations related to it are discussed separately and one chapter is dedicated solely to Chinese American issues.

Due to my choice of framework that focuses on cultural clashes within family it is justified to dedicate one part of the study to an introduction of family life in three different cultures. An attempt is thus made to throw light on the effect of the ideologies discussed on family life and on the position of woman within family. Just as in the chapter presenting different ideologies here, too, Chinese, American and Chinese American communities are kept separated in order to concentrate on each individually although later in the analysis different ideologies and family conventions are described side by side. It is relevant to present family and woman’s position in it as a separate section since the focus in the present study is on the stories told by fictional Chinese American women about their childhood and family life.

The analysis concentrates on analyzing such conflict situations in the lives of fictional Chinese American daughters which are caused by clashes of different culturally bound ideologies and values. This part of the thesis contains the findings of the study and thus forms its core. The focus is on making use of the previously explained ideas of different ideologies and different customs within family by showing how they affect the lives of the daughters. Other events in the novels could have been used to clarify

cultural clashes - for example the mothers' experiences of life in the United States as compared to their memories of China - but conflict situations faced by the daughters seemed to be the clearest examples of cultural clashes and, therefore, a choice was made to concentrate on them.

1.2. An introduction to *The Woman Warrior* and to *The Joy Luck Club* and to their authors

The Woman Warrior

The Woman Warrior by Maxine Hong Kingston was first published in 1975, and in 1976 it won the National Book Critics Award for the best work of non-fiction (*Guide to Wo. Lit.* 1994). In *The Woman Warrior* Hong Kingston combines autobiography and fiction by reminiscing about her Chinese American childhood and by creating fantasies about Chinese history and culture (Gilbert and Gubar 1985:2337). According to Wong (1993:213-214), *The Woman Warrior* was the first major Chinese American novel published in the United States.

The setting of the story is briefly the following. The main character and the narrator in the novel is a young woman called Maxine who is the eldest daughter of Chinese immigrant parents. The father of the family first came to the United States alone while the mother, Brave Orchid, stayed in China and studied to become a village doctor. After finishing her studies the mother practiced her profession for a few years there but during the Second World War she followed her husband to the United States. The narrator and her five siblings were all born in the United States in the 1940's and at the beginning of the novel the family is living in a Chinatown in California where they all work hard in a laundry of their own.

The novel consists of two kinds of stories: stories of incidents from Maxine's life and stories based on Chinese folklore. The stories that are based on Chinese folklore are told to the daughter by the mother and they are called talk-stories. Firstly, they create the pure fantasy part of the novel, which is not often discussed in the present study but,

secondly, and what is more important to the study, they also contain a major part of the cultural heritage that the narrator receives from her mother. Evidently, with *Brave Orchid's* fantastic stories Hong Kingston brings to life a rich oral tradition of storytelling by Chinese women (Cheung 1992:164). Ling (1990:159-160) claims that in the talk-stories Hong Kingston symbolically writes about the wrongs Chinese women have been forced to endure during history since many figures in them have their examples in Chinese folklore. For example, the name of the novel *The Woman Warrior* refers to a female character in Chinese folklore, Fa Mu Lan, a woman fighter who saved her family and village.

In the present study “real” stories of Maxine’s life are regarded as the main source of information. The events in the narrator’s life cover as wide a time scale as between the 1940’s and the 1970’s but she mostly concentrates on events from her childhood and teenage years when clashes of Chinese and American cultures are frequent. The mother’s Chinese rules within American society are one of the reasons for cultural clashes in the narrator’s life. Since the mother is disappointed with the hardness of her life in the United States, she hopes that the family will return to China some day and, therefore, she tries to bring up her children according to her Chinese standards which causes conflicts. For example, the parents do not teach Maxine English at home and this creates problems at the beginning of her school years.

The main themes in *The Woman Warrior* are clashes of Chinese and American culture, Chinese American family life, and learning to understand one’s identity. One could argue that the novel is about Maxine’s growth into an independent person who learns to understand and accept both the Chinese and the American sides of her character. However, the focus in the present study is on comparing the features of Chinese and American culture as they are shown through conflict situations in the life of a multiethnic fictional daughter and not so much on discovering personal growth in the daughter’s character.

The Joy Luck Club

Amy Tan's first novel *The Joy Luck Club* was published in 1989. In 1990 it received the Bay Area Reviewers Award for Fiction while earlier it had been a finalist for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. (Tan 1992: back cover.) *The Joy Luck Club* tells about Chinese American women and, more precisely, concentrates on exploring conflicts between first generation American daughters and their immigrant mothers (*Guide to Wo. Lit.* 1994).

The Joy Luck Club is a novel told by four sets of Chinese American fictional mothers and their daughters. The mothers are named: Suyuan Woo, An-mei Hsu, Lindo Jong and Ying-ying St. Clair, while the daughters' names are: Jing-mei Woo, Rose Hsu Jordan, Waverly Jong and Lena St. Clair. The mothers have emigrated from China mostly because of hardships caused by the Second World War and they want to forget the painful memories from China by starting anew in the United States which represents a land of opportunities for them.

The Joy Luck Club is an invention of Suyuan Woo who has founded a similar club in China during the years of war. When she moves to the United States, she realizes that a peer club might be needed for her new Chinese women friends, too. The intention of the Club is to bring joy and luck to the lives of its members and an opportunity to share their life experiences in China and in the United States. The Joy Luck Club meetings are little parties where the four women talk, eat and play mah-jong. Suyuan, the founder of the club, tells why the women were in need of positive energy:

We all had our miseries. But to despair was to wish back for something already lost. Or to prolong what was already unbearable. How much can you wish for a favorite warm coat that hangs in the closet of a house that burned down with your mother and father inside of it?
(*Joy* 11-12)

Through the club the women form a female network a replacement as if it were to missing relatives but, even though they are good friends, they also compete with the successes of their children. The daughters feel that their mothers are constantly comparing their achievements and encourage them to do their best for the sake of the other Joy Luck Club aunts. Although one may claim that, because of the intimacy of the Club, the four families are connected in the novel, in the present study the daughters are

treated as individual cases with their own conflicts. However, many conflict situations chosen for the study are similar since they are all caused by cultural clashes.

From the reader's point of view the Club offers a functional context in which to follow the lives of four different Chinese American families. As already mentioned, the present study concentrates on the stories that the daughters tell and, especially, on cultural conflicts in their lives. However, the mothers' stories give valuable background information about family history that, without doubt, has an influence on the American-born generation. These stories help the reader to understand why the mothers bring up their daughters the way they do and, further, they show their dedication to Chinese past. Suffice it to say that the stories also justify the concentration on cultural issues in the present study since by reminiscing about their Chinese background the mothers demonstrate the importance of Chinese culture in their lives. Although the mothers' stories are not discussed in much detail in the present study their effect has been acknowledged.

As stated earlier, the present study pays most attention to the stories told by the daughters who are in their early thirties and describe their lives in the United States, both in events of childhood and of adulthood. The stories reveal that the daughters are often confronted with clashes of Chinese and American culture which are mostly realized in the relationship between the mothers and the daughters. These women are representatives of different generation and culture and, therefore, clashes of values are frequent in their relationship.

The two novels in the present study are similar in many respects. One of the main themes in both is the problematic Chinese mother - American daughter relationship while another important similarity is the frequency of cultural clashes. Ling (1990:130) claims that *The Joy Luck Club* could be seen partly as a response and partly as a continuation and expansion of Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. The childhoods of both Maxine and of the four daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* are influenced by their mothers' stories, by the mothers' mystical powers and by the unseen ghosts (Ling 1990:134). If one claims that Tan continues where Hong Kingston ended it appears that she has grown to be more sympathetic towards Chinese American mothers. In a way, by giving explanations for the behavior of the mothers in *The Joy Luck Club*,

Tan's characters give answers to the questions Maxine poses about her mother's actions (Ling 1990:135). Another connecting factor in the novels is that they both describe the search for a Chinese American identity and the process of learning to understand one's ethnic heritage.

The authors

Maxine Hong Kingston was born in California, in the United States in 1940. Her parents are Chinese immigrants and she grew up in the Chinatown of Stockton, California. She graduated from the University of California, at Berkeley in 1962, was married the same year, and in 1967 she moved to Hawaii where she has taught English at high school and at the University of Hawaii. Hong Kingston was inspired by a Chinese American author called Jade Snow Wong who wrote a book called *Fifth Chinese Daughter* in 1945 and she considers Wong to be her literary mentor who gave her the image of a Chinese American woman as a heroine in a novel. (Ling 1990:120.) *The Woman Warrior* is Hong Kingston's first book, which she originally was going to publish under the title of fiction but which she agreed to call a kind of autobiography since the publisher convinced her it would sell better (Ling 1990:121.) The sudden change of genre partly explains why *The Woman Warrior* is not a traditional autobiography but contains plenty of fantasy. Two other novels which have been published by Hong Kingston are: *China Men* (1980), and *Tripmaster Monkey: His fake Book* (1989) (Gilbert and Gubar 1985:2337, *Guide to Wo. Lit.* 1994.)

Amy Tan was born to Chinese immigrant parents in Oakland, California, United States in 1952. As a teenager she moved to Europe with her widowed mother but returned later to California and graduated from San Jose University with a master's degree in linguistics (*Guide to Wo. Lit.* 1994). *The Joy Luck Club* is Tan's first book where some elements from her own life are present. For example, Tan's mother had left three daughters in China and lost contact with them just like the character of Suyuan Woo in the novel. Another similarity is that when Tan's brother and father died at an early age her mother believed, just like fictional Ying-ying St. Clair, that the deaths occurred because of the imbalance in their house and, therefore, the rest of the family

fled to Switzerland. Apparently, Tan experienced cultural clashes in her life and, perhaps therefore, she chose to demonstrate them in her fiction. Other published novels by Tan are: *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991) and *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1996). (Tan 1992: back cover, Hart 1996:67.)

2. OBSERVATIONS ON CERTAIN CONVENTIONS WITHIN THREE CULTURES

In this section of the study some generalizations of certain conventions within three cultures - Chinese, American, and Chinese American - will be briefly introduced. The aim is to reveal some assumptions of chosen ideologies while including some historical facts of these three cultures. The idea is to use this background information to later explain in the analysis some possible reasons for the cultural clashes that the daughters in the novels encounter. In the present study the word culture is understood as ideas and customs that are created and shared by a particular society (Collins Cobuild 1994:345).

2.1. Observations on Chinese culture and history

The first generation Chinese Americans were born in America but their immigrant parents seem to have strong emotional connections with Chinese values and through their parents' behaviour the children's lives are also influenced by Chinese tradition. It appears that Chinese culture is one strong element in the lives of Chinese Americans and, therefore, some basic observations on Chinese tradition, values, and some main ideologies will be discussed below.

According to Huotari and Seppälä (1993:14-16), Chinese culture was independent without connections to other cultures until the 19th century. While this certain isolated independence enhanced the coherence of the nation, it also made the Chinese evade influences coming from outside by regarding their own culture as the best form of civilization. Brislin and Hui (1993:237-238) claim that most individuals,

often unconsciously, feel that they are from an advanced culture while people in other countries behave in a strange way. Chinese people do not make an exception to this rule but, on the contrary, they are very proud of the culture and history of their country.

The knowledge of history in China is valued and, generally, Chinese culture could be called “backward oriented”, since the importance of past is so evident. The past does not seem to disappear because the Chinese idea of time is cyclical with no beginning or an end, only a continuum of time (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:35). Han (1973:13) clarifies the idea of the circle of time by claiming that for Chinese people past, present and future are part of the same and everything in life continues according to previous events. Therefore, the importance of history is quite obvious; old events are not left behind but kept within the circle of time; the past does not disappear, it is an ingredient of the present.

Three most eminent philosophies that have influenced Chinese thinking are Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, although they have become synchronized and Chinese people use them flexibly (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:163-164). Besides the official philosophies, Chinese also respect primitive religions and, for example, believe in good and evil spirits, which have to be comforted by giving them presents or by performing traditional ceremonies to keep them favourable to one’s family. According to Chan (1991:64), Chinese tradition is based on a combination of official Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist ideologies, and on unofficial animal beliefs.

Brislin and Hui (1993:246) clarify what kinds of traditional beliefs many Chinese people, even today, have. For instance, in Southern China many people believe that the spirits of the wind and the water may have an influence on one’s happiness, health, fortune, or hardship. These spirits must be taken into account to receive good fortune instead of bad and many of the festivities in China are originally organized to honour gods and spirits and, thereby, to ensure happiness for the family (Chang 1993:67-68).

Confucianism became one of the most important ideologies in China. Especially, when the Western invasion began in the 19th century it received a more powerful position among the Chinese as an opposing force against the foreign imperialism (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:220-221). A following chapter on Confucianism below will

concentrate on explaining some basic elements of it and its impact on Chinese thinking. This will later help to understand what the consequences of Confucianism may be in the lives of Chinese Americans.

2.2. General ideas about Confucianism

Confucianism, which was created by the philosopher Confucius during the Han dynasty in China in 221 BC, is a philosophy concerned with human life, especially with the issues of morality and society (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:174-175). According to Yum (1988:377), Confucianism considers proper human relationships to be the basis of society and Confucius has said: “If one cannot serve men, how can he serve the spirits?” The quote shows how highly human society and human relationships are valued within the ideology since humans and spirits are regarded as equally important. Although Confucianism is not an official dogma in China anymore, it still has a great influence on Chinese family life and, therefore, the basic elements of it will be briefly introduced.

Confucianism is based on the theory of the Five Code of Ethics, also called the Five Cardinal Relations, as well as on the principle of Yin and Yang. Besides, Confucianism sets forth Four Principles which are set to conduct a person to the right kind of life. (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:177, Yum 1988:377, Bond 1991:56). According to Confucianism, an individual, a family and a society are defined by a network of five basic relationships which in the life of a human being build up the Five Code of Ethics. These relationships are: 1) distinction in duty between husband and wife, 2) closeness between father and son, 3) obedience to orders between elders and youngers, 4) loyalty between king and subject 5) mutual faith between friends (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:181, Yum 1988:376). These basic relationships are made for men while women are only mentioned as wives and, furthermore, daughters and mothers are unimportant in this system. However, other relationships in a family are represented in three categories out of five and, moreover, family, friends and the king occupy all categories. Confucian philosophy views human relationships as asymmetrical and mutually obligatory and, as a result, a person is always indebted to others, who in turn are

pressured by debts of their own (Yum 1988:379). People who are not family members, friends or rulers are unimportant in the Confucian system since they are not mentioned in the Cardinal Relations.

The most important basic relationship is that of husband and wife since they also form the classic combination of yin and yang which are the opposing feminine and masculine forces and create the basis of the whole universe (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:181). Huotari and Seppälä (1993:171) claim that the respect for one's parents (*xiao*) is one of the most important things mentioned in Confucianism along with the honouring of deceased ancestors. Perhaps the respect for one's parents is connected with the above mentioned fact that they represent the classic yin and yang circle while the honouring of the ancestors is due to the belief that past and present are equally important in the continuum of time. According to Confucianism, yin and yang balance each other and they both include the possibility of the other in themselves (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:444). Chinese people consider both of them to be important and intertwined since defeats and victories exist side by side within the forces and there is an opportunity to either good or evil in every condition (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:35).

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, there are also Four Principles in Confucianism which help a human being to conduct his life to the proper direction. These principles are: 1) *jen*; humanism, 2) *i*; faithfulness, loyalty, justice 3) *li*; propriety, rite, and 4) *chih*; wisdom or a liberal education (Yum 1988:377). The most important of these four are *jen* and *i*; *jen* teaches that one should act in a humane way towards others and *i* recommends that human relationships should not be based on individual profit but rather on the improvement of the common good (Yum 1988:377).

Bond (1991:56-57) points out that strangers are often treated rudely in Chinese society since they have no place in the Five Cardinal Relations and, therefore, they are seen as indifferent. However, according to Confucianism, strangers should not be made into enemies and, therefore, they are usually treated in a humane way to avoid conflicts (Bond 1991:57). Humane behaviour within this ideology means loving other people although the amount of love is related to the closeness of relation and to the level of status (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:182). What Confucianism teaches about morality is realistic and the ideal is to follow one's expected social role in order to become what

one is destined to be (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:175). It is important to develop one's abilities within the limitations of one's place in the hierarchy and proper education is highly valued in Confucian tradition (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:179).

The above is a brief introduction of the Confucian principles. Later chapters will demonstrate the impact of Confucianism to Chinese thinking and to the female characters in Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior* and in Tan's *Joy Luck Club*. The aim of the present study is to show what kinds of problems the fictional mothers and the daughters face when surrounded by American and influenced by Chinese culture. The intercultural environment causes misunderstanding in mother-daughter relationships and often complicates the communication. The findings of the study will be based on a combination of background information and fictional material, which are built upon generalizations of Chinese, American and Chinese American cultures.

2.3. Observations on American culture and history

In the previous chapter some elements of Chinese culture were introduced to later demonstrate their effect on two particular cases of Chinese American literature. This chapter will concentrate on the other side of this ethnic origin which is American culture. The events in the daughters' lives in the novels take place in the United States and, therefore, American culture is also important in explaining the actions of the fictional characters in the books.

In this chapter some basic elements of American values and life style are briefly presented to strengthen and give background to the forthcoming interpretations of conflict situations which the main characters in *The Woman Warrior* and *Joy Luck Club* encounter. The aim of the chapter is to make some generalizations of American culture to form a background for the analysis of the novels while in the previous chapter Chinese culture was treated similarly.

According to Luedtke (1988:10), the ideal of life in America is crystallized in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which embody what it means to be an American. This ideal, which is based on the English tradition of liberty and equality, emphasizes

that all American people should be treated equally and be given freedom to decide for their lives. In the 1960's Albert and Williams (in Luedtke 1988:23) defined traditional American core values some of which are relevant for the present study, for example, democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance of diversity, recognition of individual personality over the collective identity, and respect of achievement and success. The above values show the high ideals of American people but whether they are realized in practice is not so certain.

The American nation has no clear ethnic majority but the largest is that of Anglo-Saxon ancestry: of the population 15% has originally British, 13% German, and 8% Irish roots (Luedtke 1988:9). According to Mann (1988:79), the founders of the republic were in favor of multi-nationalism and believed that not only the unity but also the diversity of American people will support liberty. Consequently, many Americans consider themselves both as Americans and as members of an ethnic group (Mann 1988:75). When they want to identify with a particular social group they are aware of their mixed identities as, for instance, Irish-Americans, African-Americans or Asian-Americans but when compared to other nationalities, Americans feel united and emphasize their common citizenship (Luedtke 1988:10). Mann (1988:75-76) agrees on the latter kind of unity and, moreover, points out that the United States is by no means a federation of nationalities since it gives no legal recognition to different ethnic groups. However, whether legally recognized or not, ethnic groups do exist in the United States and so do boundaries between them although there are ways to cross the barriers and enhance the feeling of unity, for example, through some common areas of interest, such as sports, arts and music (Powers 1988:217).

Power relations in the United States are somewhat complicated while certainly different from the previously mentioned old Chinese relationship-based system which has its roots in the Five Code of Ethics. Harris (1988:142) claims that Americans are reluctant to recognize traditional authority when forming hierarchies of honor and respect and, instead, want their leaders and other authorities to earn their status with their deeds and not to be born with it. It is hard to define power relations between people within American society since everyone is, in theory, supposed to have the same rights. Harris (1988:142) continues that Americans are suspicious of external control and

elaborate rules and, therefore, they, for example, tend to let their children decide independently for many things in their lives, such as their daily diet and choice of recreation.

Superficially, Americans have high standards of values but the reality is different. Bell (1976, in Luedtke 1988:24) proposes that there is something schizophrenic in the American nation since the country is drifting toward hedonism and consumerism although people still have faith in the old virtues of hard work, self-denial, and efficiency. Harris (1988:150) claims that old American values have been corrupted by violence, uncertainty, and a permissive ethic. Althen (1988), however, argues that Americans, generally, have plenty of self-confidence and trust in their culture while they believe that their country is superior and the best in the world, both economically, politically, and militarily. Simultaneously, Americans consider most of the other countries to be inferior to their own: people in them are supposedly not as intelligent and hardworking as Americans, political systems are full of corruption and abuse, and economic systems are less efficient (Althen 1988:xvi). As a result of the bias against other countries Americans tend to treat many foreigners as “underdeveloped Americans” who, because of their primitive economical and social systems and strange cultural customs do not achieve what they could if they were American (Althen 1988:xvi).

There seems to be a difference in American ideals and their realizations. Some reasons for this could be that the American nation is fairly young and its manners and values are influenced by disadvantages of youth, democracy, materialism, and ethnic heterogeneity (Harris 1988:147). As mentioned above, Chinese culture relies on history whereas American culture concentrates more on the future. Americans believe in progress which will bring them a better life since they think that changes, new things are for the better (Althen 1988:11). It appears that Americans rely on the future while Chinese on the past and, therefore, they have different point of views of the present.

2.4. Individualism and egalitarianism in America

One could argue that individualism is a natural part of American life and many sociologists claim (for example, as early as de Tocqueville 1835-40) that individualism is a basic notion in American value system. Luedtke (1988:28) proposes that American individualism has turned into a sacred and a moral obligation which means that individualism is highly valued in American life. According to de Tocqueville (in Glazer 1988:226), individualism was an inevitable consequence of democracy and equality in America.

Individualistic goals create competitiveness and aggressiveness which are individualistic qualities (Luedtke 1988:26). Americans feel that they have an obligation to succeed and to present the accomplishments of their success to other people, since they do not see themselves as mere products of American culture but as individuals who are responsible for their own deeds, and who have consciously and independently chosen the ideas and behavior they prefer (Althen 1988:xv, Luedtke 1988:26).

According to Althen (1988:xi, 4-5), Americans are taught since early on to behave independently and self-reliantly. Therefore, for example, old people rather go to nursing homes than be a burden to their offspring and children move out of their parents' home around the age of eighteen to demonstrate their maturity and individuality. Harris (1981:96) claims that the quest for independence has also caused involuntary isolation among many Americans but the traditional family pattern used to be different in the United States as shall be later discussed in chapter 3.2. on American family.

There are both positive and negative sides in American individualism (Glazer 1988:227). The positive image of it stresses the pioneer nature of American life since when the United States was inhabited government gave space to an individual and let him decide independently for several issues in the wilderness. Perhaps therefore, Americans still demand their Constitutional rights to do many things without asking the authorities. What is positive about individualism is that it gives an opportunity to the individual, grants his freedom and encourages diversity but, evidently, there are also negative sides in it. For instance, pure individualistic ideology is indifferent to the

preservation of landscape and old buildings and, yet more alarmingly, so called rough individualism is uninterested in those who fall behind in the race. Thanks to the values of the latter kind, for example, some industrial workers have been prevented from unionizing and many migrant laborers work for low pay for individual American farmers. (Glazer 1988:227-228.) It appears that the rights of individuals are protected better than the rights of groups in traditional individualistic ideology.

According to Glazer (1988:231), there are two branches in American individualism of which the first one is the rugged economic and institutional kind whereas the second one is concerned with environmental questions and equality while it is suspicious of big businesses and big organizations. Both are distrustful of government but willing to improve and conserve it although for different reasons (Glazer 1988:231). The first branch of individualism wants to change government in order to foster economic growth and individual profits whereas the second seeks changes to achieve a fairer and more just society. The latter is often called new individualism which started to flourish after some catastrophes occurred in the 1960's, for example, the conflicts in race issue, hints of governmental corruption and the assassination of president Kennedy (Glazer 1988:232). Many of the new individualists are also strong defenders of consumer rights, the environment, women, and minorities (Glazer 1988:232).

The two forms of individualism described above are quite different from each other. Wildavsky (1990:264) argues that it is a misunderstanding to join the traditional and new forms of individualism together into a single entity since these ideologies have such opposing preferences for policies and institutions. Instead, it would be better and more accurate to call these two different and distinct ideologies by the names of: competitive individualism and collectivist egalitarianism (Wildavsky 1990:264). Glazer (1988:236) agrees that what he calls the new form of individualism has egalitarian qualities since it threatens the traditional individualism especially by attacking the great American problem, the race issue. The question of race becomes most apparent when a person applies to higher education or to a job where he/she is evaluated as a member of a racial group and, therefore, does not receive equal treatment.

For the sake of clarity, the two kinds of individualism will from now on be called by the names of individualism and egalitarianism since there are clear differences

between the two. According to Wildavsky (1990:264), traditional individualistic culture prefers self-regulation to traditional authority and is in favor of minimum authority. By such means it aims at giving a person space to transact for his own benefit while not trying to force individuals to follow group decisions. Egalitarians, on the contrary, have collectivist tendencies and they prefer group decisions since they are in favor of sharing the responsibility (Wildavsky 1990:264-265.) Different attitudes toward authority highlight the contrast between individualistic and egalitarian ideologies and, consequently, the problems that the two pose for government are radically different (Wildavsky 1990:268). Individualism aims at minimizing authority whereas egalitarianism wants to change it to reduce inequalities. As mentioned above, the two ideologies also differ in their attitudes towards economic growth, technological advances, taxing and spending, and defence and foreign policy (Wildavsky 1990:265). Egalitarian culture tends to form collective units in decision making while individualistic culture does not (Wildavsky 1990:265).

The defenders of American egalitarianism believe that all American people are equal, all individuals have the potential to achieve a high standing, and everyone deserves some basic level of respectful treatment (Althen 1988:9). Harris (1988:141) points out that for many Americans clubs, associations, family alliances and religious groups are important centers of value since they create the groups American people want to be connected with. According to Lingeman (1988:102), these groups represent a kind of continuum to the old communal tradition in the old West when people, in an egalitarian manner, formed communities, towns and religious groups although, even then, there was a countertradition, individualism, which emphasized the frontier psychology of mobility and disposability. Evidently, both individualistic and egalitarian tendencies have existed in the United States since very early on and they still do.

2.5. Observations on Chinese American culture and history

Today one may well talk about Chinese American culture as a separate, although intertwined, form of culture created by two ingredients - Chinese and American. The

first Chinese people came to the United States in 1849 (Gardner et al. 1985:8). The main reason for their immigration between 1840 and 1930 was to earn a living which they did mostly by working in sugar plantations, in mining, and in building railroad for the Pacific Railroad company (Chan 1991:25-30). At first, European Americans were fond of Chinese since they wanted cheap labour to maximize profits (Chan 1991:25). Between 1850 and 1900 most of Chinese immigrants were bachelor men who had been sent to America by their families to make money. They were mostly building the railroads which were finished around 1880 by leaving 10 000 Chinese immigrants suddenly jobless (Chan 1991:30, Goellnicht 1992:191). Chinese people were prepared to work hard, however, and soon they found work as harvest helpers, tenant farmers, merchants, cooks, laundrymen, and restaurant workers or owners (Chan 1991:30). They soon learnt that they were valued in such areas of life where they could tend the needs of people in the dominant culture and, therefore, many Chinese American laundries and restaurants succeeded (Chan 1991:35, Wong 1993:55-56, 58).

When European Americans realized how persistent workers Chinese people were they suddenly became afraid of the competition and wanted to limit the immigration from Asia. Further, Chinese American enterprises, such as, Chinese laundries were attacked by unequal legislation, for example, by fining them heavily (Chan 1991:25, 94-95). The Chinese Exclusion Act that was given in 1882 limited the immigration of Chinese to the United States (Gardner et al. 1985:8). The act, which lasted for ten years, suspended the entry of Chinese laborers but, instead, allowed merchants, students, teachers, diplomats, and travellers to enter the United States (Chan 1991:54). Two years later, in 1884 also the entrance of the above Chinese people was made more difficult and an amendment was included to the act which requested that all Chinese needed a special certificate to step on American continent (Chan 1991:54). Another attack against Asian immigrants was the law made in 1880 that prohibited interracial marriage (Chan 1991:59). Officially, this law of limited marriage right was declared unconstitutional in California in 1948 but it took almost twenty years until it was considered unconstitutional in all states (Chan 1991:60-61).

In general, at the end of the nineteenth century Chinese Americans had different laws and political rights from European Americans: they were in an inferior position

while European Americans had the superior status (Chan 1991:46). However, Chinese Americans fought for their rights when their sense of justice was violated, for example, they had to fight to keep their restaurants, stores and laundries open (Chan 1991:95). Furthermore, Chinese Americans took complaints of unequal treatment to American court although only to realize that it was easy to discriminate them because their country of origin was weak (Chan 1991:96). According to Chan (1991:96-97), new nationalism arose in China in 1905 and, thereby, a boycott against American goods was arranged to support the Chinese in the United States. Thus the treatment of the immigrants improved: it was slightly easier to enter the country, and the police stopped raiding Chinatowns without search warrants. Moreover, Chinese immigrants developed a new political consciousness, and founded associations and newspapers (Chan 1991:97). According to Chan (1991:61, 63), Chinese Americans were the most active among Asian immigrant groups in establishing community organizations for themselves and some of them aimed at giving information to other American people about developments and life in China (Chan 1991:99). Most importantly, the organizations were aiming at finding a space for the Chinese in America, just like in Tan's novel *Joy Luck Club* is a small organization founded by Chinese American women to improve their life.

Chinese immigrants came across many kinds of problems at the United States and one of them was prejudice. One of the reasons why they were confronted by prejudice was that they were the first Asians who immigrated to America (Chan 1991:45). Chan (1991:45) names some of the hostilities against Chinese immigrants which are, for example, prejudice, economic discrimination, physical violence, immigration exclusion, and social segregation. They are not entirely different from other American ethnic groups but, instead, share some similarities with the immigration experiences of European ethnics, such as: poverty, prejudice, and conflicts between two generations (Wong 1993:43). According to Chan (1991:61), Chinese immigrants had something in common with both European immigrants and with oppressed American racial minorities: they were treated with contempt and curiosity, started from the bottom of the economic ladder, had poor knowledge of English and the American ways, there were laws that limited their opportunities, and they experienced legally sanctioned color

prejudice against them. However, European ethnics have more in common with the Anglo mainstream while, thereby, it is easier for them than to people of racial minorities to assimilate into the dominant culture (Wong 1993:43).

The assimilation process of the Chinese into American society has not always been easy. Still during the first half of the twentieth century dominant American culture did its best in showing the Chinese that they were inferior (Chan 1991:59). This undermining included children and Chinese American offspring suffered from laws set by prejudiced Americans. For instance, in the 1920's they were not allowed to attend public schools for white children since in most states Chinese were considered 'coloured' who should have attended schools set up for black children. In some places no exceptions were made even if schools for white were the only schools in the area (Chan 1991:58). The problem of schooling was especially vivid in southern states and, for example, in Mississippi Chinese American children were not officially admitted into white schools until 1950 (Chan 1991:58).

After the Second World War the treatment of Chinese Americans has gradually changed for the better since, for example, many Chinese immigrants served in the American army (Chan 1991:121). Especially, after the Japanese had bombed the American naval base at Bar Harbor in 1941 Americans started to alter their opinions from favoring Japan into favoring the formerly despised China (Ling 1990:56). The picture of the Japanese and the Chinese changed; now Japanese were considered unreliable while Chinese could be trusted and after the war Chinese Americans were described with adjectives: hardworking, honest, religious and intelligent (Chan 1991:121). Moreover, in 1943 the immigration exclusion was lifted for the Chinese and in 1945 a War Brides Act was given which allowed Chinese women to enter the country to become brides to Chinese American men (Chan 1991:121, 140). Many women immigrated to the United States under this act and, as a result, the number of Chinese American children rose rapidly (Chan 1991:140). In general, the number of Asian Americans has been growing since the Second World War. In 1980 there were 3,5 million Asian Americans which was 1,5% of the total US population and Asian Americans were the third largest racial or ethnic minority after blacks and Hispanics (Gardner et al. 1985:3).

Education is the traditional American gateway to success. Chinese Americans have been exceptionally successful in American schools and colleges and school enrolment rate is high among them (Gardner et al. 1985:24). For instance, among the age groups of 20 to 24, only 24% of white Americans who applied to college and graduate study in 1980 were accepted whereas as much as 60 % of Chinese American applicants were accepted (Gardner et al. 1985:26). Education, in general, is respected in Chinese American families (Gardner et al. 1985:26). This respect could be the result of Confucian tradition which, as mentioned previously, values the developing of one's abilities. Other reasons for the high school enrolment rates among Chinese immigrants could be that many immigrants in this century came to America to study (Gardner et al. 1985:26). These bright students get jobs, for instance, at the universities and in research labs and became fairly wealthy while they have little in common with the old Chinese immigrants (Chan 1991:141).

Although the status of Chinese Americans has improved they are still not treated as full American citizens. In the 1960's they were named "model minority" and were appreciated by the dominant society since they were working hard instead of using militant protests to gain their rights (Chan 1991:167). Chinese Americans were set as an example by the dominant society to the Black and Chicano activists in the middle of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960's (Chan 1991:167).

Wong (1993:38) claims that the idea of model minority, which is still often connected to Chinese Americans, can be suffocating and untrue in many cases. Chinese American children may have difficulties in finding their identity since they have to choose between being like their parents - spiritually outsiders, physically prepared to survive - or to forget their origins and become as "Americanized" as possible (Wong 1993:44). Gardner et al. (1985:40) point out that among Asian Americans it seems that none of the groups have made conscious efforts to retain their ancestral identity. While Chinese Americans feel compelled to assimilate into American lifestyle, they may also feel that they are failing their Chinese descent and thus assimilation may serve as a catalyst to frustration (Wong 1993:98).

American white majority has never regarded a non-white race as a full member of American society but today Chinese Americans are close to gaining such membership

although they still, as mentioned above, often are labelled as “model minority” (Gardner et al. 1985:38-39). Chinese Americans or, even more broadly, Asian Americans are hard working people and it is likely that America’s future will be increasingly Asian American (Gardner et al. 1985:4, 27). In the 1980’s Chinese Americans who were born in the United States were working in much the same occupations as white Americans (Gardner et al. 1985:30). Since they are so committed to education it should naturally follow that their income and occupational status will keep on rising in the coming years but there is also a risk when Chinese Americans become more and more Americanized that their exceptionally high level of dedication to learning and work may drop (Gardner et al. 1985:27, 39).

It is also possible that Chinese Americans will be able to combine the best things of two cultures in their lives. Erikson (1994:31) claims that some individuals learn to unite the values of the dominant culture with their own identity development and thus find it possible to assimilate to the surrounding society. The identity of people of mixed race is fluid and they have more choices of changing identities than people of one race (Ling 1992:306). Therefore, the fear of losing one’s own identity through adapting values of a new culture may be unnecessary since, instead, the combination of two cultures may have an enriching effect in one’s life. Chan (1991:59) points out that many Chinese Americans see their Americanization process as means for a better life.

Even though the status of Chinese Americans has improved still today there is prejudice against them. Ling (1990:20) claims that Chinese Americans are sometimes seen as threats to other Americans since they take too many jobs, win too many prizes or places in colleges and when they become more successful academically and economically they also face envy and resentment against them. Despite their success, Chinese Americans may feel like outsiders in America because they are non-white even though by education or birth they are American (Ling 1990:20). Ling (1990:165) points out that although Civil Rights Laws, which promise equality to every American citizen, have been passed many decades ago only few Americans are completely free of prejudice against race. It appears that racism against Asian Americans is not dead since the United States Civil Rights Commission recently reported instances of physical assault, harassment, vandalism and anti-Asian slurs against Asian Americans (Chan

1991:175). Gardner et al. (1985:39) propose that the United States has never been a real “melting pot” but, instead American people represent a variety of differences both in race and opinions. Although the status of racial minorities has improved, there is still a lot to do to make the United States into an equal society (Chan 1991:188).

Recently, ethnic studies have become increasingly popular in the United States and it seems that Asian American students want to create a culture of their own by learning about their origins and about their place in the history of the United States although earlier it was common for the Chinese to be silent in front of white Americans (Chan 1991:181, Ling 1990:126). In past few decades the silence behind which Asian Americans have been hiding their painful experiences has ended in a burst of voices when they have entered the literary world (Wong 1993:3). Since the 1970’s, Asian American artists have been active in producing, for example, novels, short stories, poems, plays, and films which represent Asian American themes (Chan 1991:181).

The way Chinese American young people see themselves was enlightened when Frank Chin (1976 in Wong 1993:179) asked some Chinese American college students to write down which were the aspects in their character that they thought were Chinese and which American. The students described their Chinese characteristics with the adjectives: old fashioned, inhibiting, dull, and cowardly, whereas their American traits with the following ideas: interest in sex, fun, art, adventure, and boldness. This small survey shows that Chinese American young people seem to find dualism in their character and, consequently, they describe their Chinese side in more negative terms than the American. Perhaps the above mentioned forms of Chinese American art have helped to change the opinions of Chinese American youth into a more positive direction and, thereby, their interest in ethnic studies has increased.

Chinese American identity is not easy to define since people with multiethnic background often feel that they are caught between two worlds and feel totally at home nowhere but, instead, may feel constantly homeless (Ling 1990:105, 178.) However, the idea of homelessness does not have to be a negative force but more like a source of strength - one may have several homes, not just one. For many immigrants there is no one home to come to and boundaries around one’s heritage are flexible since they do not have one culture to go back to or to idealize (Chambers 1994:4-5, 14, 42). The identity

of Chinese Americans is a result of several cultures and, therefore, they may also understand different cultures and their representatives better than most Americans.

2.6. Chinese collectivism versus American individualism

According to Hofstede (1980, in Yum 1988:375), one of the main dimensions in differentiating culture is whether it can be seen as individualistic or as collectivist and the actions of the members within it are greatly influenced by this basic preference. Chinese culture is relationship-oriented which may be claimed collectivist whereas American culture is individual-oriented and may be claimed individualistic.

Yum (1988:376) points out that North American culture concentrates on individual factors whereas Chinese culture focuses on social. Although Americans feel that they must get involved with other people, their involvement is individualistic and they want to be free from the past to define one's own self (Yum 1988:376). Generally, Americans want individual recognition and experience themselves as independent persons who make their decisions even regardless of their family but Chinese want to represent a group and to show where they belong. Hsu (1963, in Yum 1988:376) claims that a typical group of people in China is a clan whereas in the United States it is a voluntary club. China is a country with long history and the preoccupation with social relationships stems from the doctrines of Confucianism while in the United States individualism is the major ideology (Yum 1988:376). Bellah et al. (1985, in Yum 1988:375) state that individualism is a basic notion in American culture:

We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong it is sacrilegious.

The above quote demonstrates that American thinking differs a lot from Chinese which is based on Confucian ideas of power relations. American individualists want to be free to decide for their actions without too many obligations or acknowledged power hierarchies. No wonder, people from these two cultures may have some difficulties in understanding each other since, apparently, they experience the world and its people quite differently. It seems that Chinese attempt to maintain close relationships within

their family but also to live in a harmonious co-existence with other people and to avoid conflicts whereas American culture is more competitive and the goal is success, not harmony. In the present study the differences in Chinese and American culture may be regarded as one of the main causes in creating dilemmas in the lives of the fictional daughters who try to lead their lives in the middle of two cultures.

As mentioned previously, family forms an important unit in the Confucian Five Cardinal Relations. According to Yum (1988:379), Chinese have a strong ingroup - outgroup distinction in their relationships which remains powerful because the ingroup members believe that, eventually, they will have to depend on each other. People in the ingroup are one's family and close friends who take part in intimate events in one's life while the outgroup consists of strangers who are mostly ignored (Bond 1991:52-54). In China people also take into account the status of the persons involved in a particular context. (Yum 1988:378-379). As mentioned earlier, Chinese culture is 'relationship honouring' and, therefore, Chinese people often speak about group accomplishments while avoiding to mention individual contribution since this kind of humility is proper behaviour in Chinese society (Bond 1991:53.) Generally, Chinese like to be seen as members of a group rather than as individuals.

A good example of the preferences of either group or individual accomplishments was received in an experiment where both Chinese and American children were asked to play with the same game. Chinese children preferred co-operation while nobody wanted to win but their aim, instead, was to keep everyone happy but American children preferred competition and strived to win the game. (Bond 1991:65.) This shows that even a child is a product of his/her culture and acts according to its rules.

According to Confucianism, bringing up children in a proper way is important while just as significant is formal education (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:235). The quest for right kind of upbringing is aiming at harmonious society which can supposedly be reached when everyone knows his/her place in the hierarchy of the family and society and fulfils the responsibilities of his/her position (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:236). It makes the whole family, sometimes even the whole village, collectively proud when one of its members gains good results since both pride and shame are experienced in a

collectivist way and a person is always a representative of his/her group (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:235).

According to Yum (1988:386), close human relationships are essential in China, for example, in a working environment human relationships and humane treatment are valued above money. However, collectivity orientation is mostly limited and bound to social networks, which are formed by the family, relatives, and friends (=the ingroup), and which create a valuable set of contacts in the society (Yum 1988:375). Chinese treat familiar and unknown people very differently, whereas Americans, at least in theory, want to follow the code of fairness and equality and try to treat everyone in a same way (Yum 1988:378-379). Although American culture sounds democratic and equal, people may have problems in realizing where they belong and feel lost. Pure individualism may become a problem since, while people want to be free and have no commitments to larger entities, they may eventually drive themselves into a state of isolation (Yum 1988:386).

It appears that collectivism and traditional individualism are fundamentally different in many ways. They represent opposites where one prefers group decisions and actions while the other favours independence.

2.7. Communication in China and in the United States

Communication is a fundamental social process which is influenced by the philosophical foundations and value systems of the society (Yum 1988:374). Salo-Lee (1994:103) proposes that although culture and communication are often seen as separate they, in fact, co-exist since culture has a strong impact on the ways of communication of its members.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, one of the reasons why communication patterns differ in China and in the United States is because Chinese culture is collectivist while American culture is more individualistic and, therefore, communication in China is relationship-oriented but in the United States it is more self-oriented (Yum 1988:374). In the relationship-oriented style the speaker tries to adjust to

the feelings of the other parties since good, polite relations among the speakers are considered to be more important than the outcome of the conversation and it is important to reach a mutual feeling of harmony between the participants so that no-one feels threatened by the situation (Bond 1991:54). In indirect communication, which Chinese prefer, an illusion of peaceful co-existence calms the participants and makes them willing to do things together. In direct communication, which Americans prefer, the outcome of the conversation is more important than harmonious co-existence between the speakers.

It seems that silence forms a natural part of communication among Chinese since they prefer indirect style where it is essential. Salo-Lee (1994:110) claims that silences in Chinese communication are signs of respect, of reciprocal understanding, and of profound thinking. A research indicates that Chinese are more comfortable and less frightened than Americans by silent moments in a conversation since they are used to careful thinking before uttering a sentence to not ruin a relationship by possibly offending the opponent by saying something thoughtless (Bond 1991:53). Another reason why Chinese do not feel uneasy about silences could be the fact that they are reluctant to talk with strangers and rarely speak with someone they do not know. Americans, on the contrary, place a high value on conversation when establishing new relationships and are eager to speak when they, for example, meet a new business associate (Bond 1991:52). Althen (1988:145) points out that Americans feel particularly uncomfortable with periods of silence in a conversation unless they are in the presence of people they know well. Even in business life Chinese emphasize the importance of unofficial meetings outside the office to become acquainted with each other while Americans usually only meet their business associates when doing business with them (Salo-Lee 1994:106).

Group harmony is valued over individual assertion in the indirect style and Chinese people avoid confrontational, argumentative talk since they do not want to create discords in their relationships (Bond 1991:54). Evidently, an argument may have unpredictable consequences and Chinese prefer settling their disputes in an indirect way since they dislike quarrels and open arguments which are seen as an invitation to chaos (Bond 1991:65). Americans, on the contrary, tend to be direct in solving their problems

since they assume that conflicts or disagreements can be settled by forthright discussions among the opposing parties (Althen 1988:17). Although Americans are determined to listen to the facts that the opponent utters, they often disregard the mood of the person and give not much thought to harmony (Althen 1988:28).

Bond (1991:59-60) claims that occasionally Chinese use white lies to maintain balance and harmony in a relationship, which sometimes makes Westerners accuse them of being evasive, but Chinese may also regard Westerners as insensitive or blunt in their straightforward style of communication (Bond 1991:60). Chang (1993:527) points out that Westerners who are not sensitive enough to interpret Chinese indirect communication may understand quite the opposite of what they mean.

One may argue that North American communication is outcome oriented and emphasis is on direct communication since Americans want to “get to the point” quickly whereas the Chinese pay attention to politeness, and to proper, graceful way of speaking (Althen 1988:30-31, Yum 1988:374). East Asian languages have delicate ways, for instance, to state wishes and communication patterns allow speakers to preserve face while, thereby, the embarrassment caused by rejection or disagreement among partners is diminished (Yum 1988:383, Bond 1991:59). Chinese indirect style concentrates on allowing the participants to remain in peaceful relations whereas American direct style is less concerned with the atmosphere and among Americans being “honest” is more important than maintaining harmony in relationships (Althen 1988:19). Salo-Lee (1994:109) points out that the communication of East Asian people is highly developed in guessing the meanings of the partner by following subtle, often non-verbal hints and by carefully observing the reactions of the other. Yum (1988:385) claims that in the United States the emphasis is on improving the effectiveness of speakers by means of formal training, such as debate or public speaking, while in China it is on developing the receiver’s sensitivity. One strong example of the respect for such sensitivity is presented by Tsujimura (1987, in Yum 1988:385) who claims that the highest ideal is communication without the use of language at all.

As demonstrated in the chapter above, Chinese and American styles of communication differ greatly. It is not surprising that people from these two cultures may have difficulties in understanding one another since, while it is common to

misunderstand the other person inside one's maternal culture, the risk is even greater in intercultural communication (Salo-Lee 1994:103). Later, in the analysis part of the present study the mothers and the daughters in the novels give a good example of people who are influenced by two different styles of communication - indirect and direct.

3. FAMILY AS AN ESSENTIAL CONSTITUENT OF CULTURE

The aim of this subsection is to concentrate on an important constituent of culture which is essential in all societies within human culture - family. The following section of the present study aims at revealing some fundamental issues of Chinese, American and Chinese American family life. The position of woman within family is another area of interest in this part of the study.

3.1. Chinese family and woman's position

Traditionally, family forms an important unit in Chinese society. The original Chinese family was hierarchical, authoritarian, and patrilinear where the status of its members was determined by age and gender, so that the older were above the younger, men above women, and group before an individual while the oldest male, usually the father was the head of the family (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:105). The leader of the family was its pride and supporter and, therefore, several things were expected from him, such as, cultural preservation, maintenance of the family name, guardianship of junior family members, attainment of degrees in higher education, law-abiding citizenship, commitment to the work ethic, and good manners (Wong 1993:176). The head of the family was its highest representative and, apparently, that is why such numerous qualities were demanded of him. Wong (1993:175) points out that in Chinese tradition the eldest son was, and still often is, treated as the patriarch-in-training.

Chinese society treated family as a unit and, for instance, a whole family could be punished for the crimes of its one member (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:105).

According to Bond (1991:56), even today family forms an important entity in Chinese society and filial piety along with parental responsibility are essential factors in it. Chang (1993:110) claims that the obligation to the family surpasses one's own ideas of morality. Not only blood relatives but also close friends are regarded as part of the ingroup (=the family) and they are often called, for example, 'younger brother' or 'older brother' (Bond 1991:56). Originally, when the Communists gained power in 1949 they wanted to deprive the Chinese from all privacy as strongly as making the members of a family live in different working units. However, such reforms were not totally fulfilled since the old collectivist tradition was stronger and still today family forms an important, coherent unit in Chinese society (Chang 1993:149-150).

Woman's position in the old China was poor which is illustrated by some traditional Chinese proverbs: "A woman without talent is a woman of virtue." "It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters" (in Ling 1990:1). In a concrete way Chinese women were put down by: footbinding, concubinage, and female slavery (Ling 1990:1). Kristeva (1974, in Ling 1990:5) defined Chinese ideal of a perfect woman: an average person who is not too intelligent, clever, beautiful or talented and who, thereby, is easy to control. Marriage was one major way to control a woman since when a couple was married the wife moved to the husband's home because his family was considered to be the dominant one (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:105). When women married they became more or less servants in the husband's family without many rights and men were even allowed to have concubines, which meant there could be more than one wife in the house (Chang 1993:103).

Many Chinese farmers thought that educating daughters was useless waste of money because, eventually, girls become married and belong to other people (Chang 1993:468). The daughters of higher classes were taught but mainly in social manners and in literature to please their highly educated future husbands (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:244). The only thing that Confucian ideology says about women's education is that its purpose is to undermine females while cultivation and development of the mind should be totally forgotten (Ling 1990:3).

However, women's position in China started to improve in the twentieth century. According to Ling (1990:6), the dethroning of the last emperor in 1911 started the

change since when the Confucian bonds of loyalty and obligation between man and his ruler broke women simultaneously realized that they do not blindly have to obey their husbands any more either. In 1912 women from eighteen provinces in China wrote a petition to the First National Legislature and demanded several things, for example, equal rights for men and women, monogamy, prohibition of commerce in women, and freely contracted marriages but the Constitution, which was written after these demands, did not, however, ensure these rights for women and, therefore, Chinese women complained to the new president (Ling 1990:6). When president Sun Yat-sen claimed he could not help either, women attacked the Legislature and demonstrated their rage by smashing windows and beating the military guards (Ling 1990:7).

While Chinese women continued to fight for their rights, many liberal men joined them, one of them young Mao Tse-tung, and the Communist victory in 1949 changed woman's position in China for good, at least in theory (Ling 1990:6-7). Although the old Confucian family hierarchy was abolished at the Revolution, the old gender and age roles are still alive especially in the countryside in China (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:183). Ling (1990:8) claims that despite the new reforms and laws in favour of women's equal rights there is still a gap between the law and its enforcement and only a few women have gained positions of real power and influence in communist China.

Women are not forced to enter marriages against their will anymore but, however, marriage continues to be very much a family affair in China (Bond 1991:64). Chang (1993:25) proposes that marriage is regarded as a responsibility, a settlement between two families while love is considered to be of lesser importance. It appears that Chinese parents have much influence on their children's choices of friends and spouses. While western offspring might regard this much of parental power as oppressive, intrusive, and restrictive, Chinese children see it as a natural part of life (Bond 1991:61-62). They have grown up in a collectivist culture and it is natural for them to follow group decisions rather than to decide individually.

3.2. American family and woman's position

Traditionally, family was an important factor in American life. During the 19th century when immigration to the United States was at its peak immigrants found that nuclear family was one of the few institutions that could be trusted whereas church and state were not so reliable (Schlissel 1988:81). Immigrants who were separated from their relatives in the original home country learnt to rely on their nuclear family but, without doubt, roots for individualism were laid by the separation from an extended family (Schlissel 1988:86). It seems natural that many Americans of the present day are strong supporters of individualism since one could argue that, in a way, they are following the footprints of their pioneer predecessors who learnt to survive on their own in the new country.

Although it seems that the roots for individualism were laid in the nineteenth century, the old ideal of family in America follows strongly the idea of collectivism and is very similar to the old Chinese ideal. According to it, three generations are living under the same roof, relationships among the family members are very intimate, and there are no single-parent households (Hareven 1988:241).

However, the old American ideal of generations living together started to vanish at the beginning of the 20th century. Industrialization, urbanization and automation were considered to be the main cause for the breakdown of the traditional family and for the decline in old family values (Hareven 1988:241, Harris 1981:52-53). Consequently, today the ideal has altered and family and relatives do not conduct one's life so strongly as they used to do in the old days (Harris 1981:23). The way automation and industrialism alienate people is that, progressively, people will have less to know, less to think, and fewer things to do together.

Woman's place in the American family has altered along with the changing family ideals. The preference of the 19th century was that women should stay at home and concentrate on taking care of the household and children, instead of being an economic partner in the family (Hareven 1988:248). The role of women as mothers and homemakers was glorified and the average number of children declined (Hareven 1988:247). Although among urban middle-class families childhood was recognized as a

distinct stage of life, there were clashes between the ideals of family in American dominant culture and among minority families (Hareven 1988:254). Originally, the women of minorities usually worked outside home but since they wanted to be more American many minority families, who had regarded the family as a collectivist unit, started to follow the American ideology of domesticity (Hareven 1988:248). Although they had earlier accepted women working outside home, they now started to limit the family size, marry earlier, privatize the family, and withdraw women from work (Hareven 1988:254).

As the working-class grew larger, the role of women and children in American society changed again. The ideals of the nineteenth century were altered and woman's place was not necessarily at home anymore. At the beginning of the 20th century pre-industrial American families contained a large number of children but women, however, spent less time in motherhood than women in the 19th century and children were now viewed as productive members of the family (Hareven 1988:245). It was common among American working-class to consider the family to be an enterprise which, in a way, fulfilled collective ideology (Hareven 1988:246). Hareven (1988:246) argues that even today much of what is considered as individual labour activity in the United States, in fact, would have been perceived as collective family achievement in the earlier days. Probably the reason why there was collectivism within family during the early industrialization phase in America was because close kinship networks used to be significant in providing coherence in the urban working-class neighborhood (Hareven 1988:244). This kind of familial coherence still exists among some ethnic minorities in the United States but in a larger scale kin have ceased to be the main source of social security among American people (Hareven 1988:244).

Since the beginning of this century, American people have regarded home as a haven from the outside world (Hareven 1988:243). However, American families of today are not as close-knit as they used to be and the changes in family structure, such as, the rise of divorce rates and the fall of marriage and birth rates have caused involuntary isolation among many Americans (Harris 1981:96). According to Hareven (1988:342) what has been lost in the modern United States is not the great extended family but the flexibility of a family to expand when needed and to take relatives to live

in family settings rather than in isolation. In the chapter concerning Chinese way of life, there was the idea of ingroup - outgroup distinction which is sharp among Chinese people but it seems that the circle of ingroup members in America is even tighter and it contains even fewer people since most Americans consider their family to be a small group, not an extended network (Althen 1988:48). Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and the like are treated as relatives but not as a part of the family whereas in China they are treated as members of the ingroup. Further, Althen (1988:7) argues that many Americans do not show the same degree of respect for their parents as people in more family-oriented societies do since they tend to separate themselves from them and want to be individuals who are independent from their family relations.

As mentioned above, it has been a controversial and changing issue in the United States throughout the years whether women should work at home or outside of it. After the Second World War, along with husbands returning home from war and baby boom generations being born, the old 19th century ideal of mothers as homemakers was brought back to life. According to Harris (1981:80), baby boom was caused by economic advantages after the war - more young couples could afford to have children. The ideals of urban middle-class life momentarily handicapped the role of women as workers outside home since working women were seen as wives with low status and their husbands and children were pitied (Hareven 1988:248). However, women's employment rate started to gradually increase in the 1950's and it has been growing ever since: in the 1940's only 15% of married American women were employed, in the 1970's nearly 50%, and in the 1980's more than 50% (Chafe 1988:262). One reason why females started to join the work force with such vigour must have been the need for more money in the families (Harris 1981:80). Women brought second income although their wages still in the 1970's were much lower than men's (Chafe 1988:262).

During the 1960's and 1970's when the questions of racial discrimination were brought to surface in the United States also women began to demand equal rights in different aspects of life (Harris 1988:151). In the 1960's Civil rights movement, which was organized mainly by the blacks, also gave a start to the women's rights movement (Glazer 1988:230). Harris (1981:89), however, claims that it was not women's liberation that created the working woman but, on the contrary, it was the working

woman, especially the working housewife, who created women's liberation. In 1964 an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was founded to prevent discrimination against minorities and women in employment (Glazer 1988:228-229).

The position of women has been improving in America, at least in theory and as mentioned previously, the situation is similar in China. Women in both countries have gradually learnt to demand and fight for equal rights with men.

3.3. Chinese American family and woman's position

Chinese immigrants place high value on the unity of a family. Chinese immigrant couples do not get divorced very easily and in the 1980's 88% of Chinese American children lived with two parents (Gardner et al. 1985:22). Traditionally, Chinese American parents are willing to work hard even in low status jobs to ease the life of the next generation (Chan 1991:181). According to Gardner et al. (1985:21), it is common in Chinese American families to concentrate the money and energy on housing, schooling, and on other family related areas of interest.

It is fairly easy for American society to inhabit Chinese Americans who are a light burden to the state since they use little of public resources (Gardner et al. 1985:35). They are responsible people with reluctance to admit any possible need of welfare and, apparently, because of strong family ties and parental authority the rates of juvenile delinquencies are also low among them (Gardner et al. 1985:32, 36).

As mentioned previously in the chapter on Chinese American culture, Chinese American children are famous for their high educational achievements. One reason why they do well at school is that they receive, as stated above, strong parental pressure and support at home (Gardner et al. 1985:26). Parents expect their offspring to try hard and they do not blame the school or the teachers but, instead, put the pressure on their children (Gardner et al. 1985:27). Chinese American family is often based on a tight hierarchical structure of obligations and responsibilities where children are expected to act in an obedient way (Wong 1993:38). Some reasons for the existence of such structure could be that Chinese immigrants are often followers of Confucian ideology

which determines strict hierarchy within a family. According to Confucian based collectivist ideology one's individual efforts are aimed at the well-being of the whole family. It appears that Chinese American children have understood their parents preferences of hard-work since they usually succeed outstandingly at school.

In Chinese American families parents often make sacrifices to help their offspring but they also expect filial self-sacrifice in return and, therefore, the whole family may be trapped in endless cycles of pain (Wong 1993:32). A Chinese American child often lives under much pressure while trying to fulfil his/her parents' high expectations of success (Wong 1993:157). Some of the hidden, negative feelings that children may feel towards their parents can be caused by the pressure but also by white, racist society. School is usually the first place where Chinese American children become assimilated to American culture and, thus, they may turn out to be less Chinese than American (Gardner et al. 1985:38). According to Wong (1993:39), in the dominant society it is even fashionable to think the worst of one's parents and by complaining about their parents Chinese American children demonstrate that their Americanization process bears fruit.

The position of Chinese American women has been fluid. Their number started to grow at the beginning of the century although at the turn of the century there were not many of them in the United States. The Page Law which was set in 1876 prohibited the entrance of Chinese women into the United States mainly because some of them were suspected of being prostitutes (Chan 1991:105). It was not until 1943 that Chinese women were allowed to immigrate to America more freely, and they reached the number of Chinese men in the United States as late as in 1954 (Ling 1990:13).

At first, the relations between Chinese American men and women were not equal since the men felt inferior to European Americans but superior to the women (Goellnicht 1992:200). Old Chinese traditions and values affected the lives of Chinese American women since often immigrants, perhaps motivated by such things as homesickness and alienation, hold on tightly to their old ways of living (Ling 1990:9). According to Ling (1990:9), immigrants may create isolated enclaves where they keep the old customs alive although these probably have changed in the original home country.

Gradually, Chinese American women have gained more equality with the Chinese American men but still there are things to improve. Ling (1990:9) points out that even today young Chinese American women are occasionally haunted by the misogynist proverbs and attitudes of generations past. As mentioned above, immigrants carry on the history of their old home country since they are often unaware of the present situation. For example, a Chinese American woman of today wants to get married out of love and not according to her parents plans although, traditionally, parents chose whom the daughter should marry (Wong 1993:33).

Even though Chinese American women originally felt inferior to Chinese American men, their adaptation to American society has been somewhat easier than that of the men. The women are more verbal and they have their “talk-stories” while men often remain mute (Goellnicht 1992:206). It is not easy for Chinese American females to express themselves either but they seem more eager to do so than males and women’s culture of telling stories helps them to start to also write about their experiences. However, what makes the writing difficult is that, as mentioned previously, Chinese culture values silence and deep thinking before the use language. In this sense Chinese American women have to be a bit rebellious to break the silence and honestly write about their lives (Ling 1990:14). Ling (1990:15) points out that Chinese American females are vulnerable in three ways: they are Chinese in a European American dominated world, they are women in Chinese men’s world, and they are women in white men’s world. The females of ethnic minority have to overcome problems in several contexts where they cannot avoid occasional clashes of culture either. Therefore, it seems natural that Chinese American female authors often write about cultural clashes in the lives of Chinese American women.

4. CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN THE LIVES OF CHINESE AMERICAN DAUGHTERS IN *THE WOMAN WARRIOR* AND *THE JOY LUCK CLUB*

The aim of this section is to explain what kinds of cultural conflicts the Chinese American daughters in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and Amy Tan’s

The Joy Luck Club meet. The two novels have something in common: they tell about Chinese American women and in both a special emphasis is upon the relationship between the mothers and the daughters. Originally, my plan was to show what kinds of conflicts appear in the relationships between the mothers and the daughters but then I decided to include also fathers and husbands in some cases since for some daughters cultural clashes were clear also in other relationships rather than just mother - daughter.

I did not want to limit the study strictly on mothers and daughters but to allow some flexibility since the novels include many kinds of cultural clashes which are relevant for the study. The motives behind the conflicts rise from a wide cultural background and the books are full of clashes that could be caused by differences in the values and customs of American and Chinese societies. The aim is to detect some possible reasons for the conflicts by relying on information given in the previous chapters and the cultural clashes in the novels will be analysed considering what has been previously claimed about culture and family. Other kinds of interpretations based on, for example, psychological theory would naturally also be possible but in the present study a choice has been made to regard the events from a cultural perspective.

4.1. Cultural conflicts in the life of the daughter Maxine in *The Woman Warrior*

The focus of the present study is the daughter who is also the narrator of *The Woman Warrior* and her name is Maxine. She is born in America at the beginning of the 1940's to Chinese immigrant parents who have a laundry at the Chinatown of Stockton, in California. The novel is about her childhood, about her family, about Chinese traditions, and about American life. The main areas which create problems for her are connected with clashes of Chinese and American culture and could more precisely be divided into three groups: conflicts during childhood, conflicts during early adulthood and conflicts during adulthood. However, on the following pages, events from these three age categories are not presented in strict chronological order. The choice not to follow such order has been made because the novel does not follow it, either. Instead, the events described in the present study are classified on the basis of the type of cultural clashes.

At first, the emphasis is on conflicts which are caused mainly by Chinese culture and, gradually, the influence of American culture is taken into account. One of the American conflicts is the language problem, which complicates Maxine's life especially at the beginning of her school years. At the end of the novel the narrator starts to discover solutions to the conflicts when she finds understanding towards herself and her family. Eventually, she realizes that she has been influenced by two cultures, Chinese and American, while her identity is a mixture of these two. Because of the hints of reconciliation at the end, understanding one's own heritage could also be seen as an important theme in the novel.

I will first concentrate on some issues of Chinese culture that the narrator meets while spending her childhood in the Chinatown of Stockton. Despite the fact that her family is living in the United States, Maxine claims that Chinese culture and its values cast a shadow on her life. "Even now China wraps double binds around my feet. " (*Woman* 48) The suffocating effect of Chinese culture is most clearly illustrated through misogynist proverbs that old Chinese American immigrants like to utter. Examples of such degrading proverbs are:

- "Girls are maggots in the rice."
- "It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters."
- "Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds"
- "When you raise girls you are raising children for strangers."
- "Better to raise geese than girls." (*Woman* 43, 46)

These phrases are common enough in the Chinatown where Maxine lives as a child. It was previously pointed out that Chinese American girls may be haunted by attitudes of past generations (Ling 1990) and the quoted proverbs are a good example of this since they demonstrate how old Chinese beliefs are carried along into a new country. Sons were traditionally valued high above daughters in the old Chinese society. The undermining of girls was supported by the Confucian ideology which barely mentions women who are merely noted as mothers or wives. As explained previously, according to the Confucian principles (such as the Five Code of Ethics and *xiao*), one should respect one's parents, and the relationship between husband and wife forms one of the basic relationships. Mothers and spouses are recognized in Confucian categories but daughters, or girls in general, are not included into any important category.

The misogynist proverbs reveal the attitudes towards girls and, moreover, guide the actions of Chinese immigrant families where girls are treated differently from boys. For example, families have certain joy rituals for baby boys (rolling eggs, full-month party, picture to grandmother and so on) but such rituals are not performed to honor baby girls. When Maxine is old enough to understand how unfair the unequal treatment of boys and girls is, she starts to oppose it. She always gets upset when she hears degrading proverbs and decides to fight against the old Chinese values. However, since she has grown up surrounded by old Confucian rules which, as noted earlier, do not pay attention to women but merely want to keep them silent, it is difficult for her to get rid of the idea of her own uselessness and inferiority to males. The following two quotes illustrate the narrator's thoughts about herself:

I went away to college - Berkeley in the sixties - and I studied, and I marched to change the world, but I did not turn into a boy. I would have liked to bring myself back as a boy for my parents to welcome with chickens and pigs. That was for my brother who returned alive from Vietnam. (*Woman 47*)

But I am useless, one more girl who couldn't be sold. When I visit my family now, I wrap my American successes around me like a private shawl; I am worthy of eating the food. (*Woman 52*)

The quotations show how uncertain Maxine feels about herself. She is afraid that her parents will judge her according to their Chinese standards and uncertain as to whether her American successes will satisfy them but she tries, however, to understand Chinese culture, and continues: "From afar I can believe my family loves me fundamentally. They only say, "When fishing out for treasures in the flood, be careful not to pull in girls", because that is what one says about daughters." (*Woman 52*) It appears that the narrator tries to understand her parents who, while feeling homesick, want to cherish everything in their Chinese past and, thereby, try to keep China alive in their values and customs. As mentioned earlier, Chinese respect the past and since the immigrants do not want to give up their original culture they tend to emphasize the importance of history. One could argue that Chinese immigrants respect the past for two reasons: it is a Confucian custom to do so, and when following the old rules an immigrant also cherishes a glimpse of culture she/he has had to leave behind. In other words, Maxine's parents respect the wisdom of the past probably both for cultural and sentimental reasons.

First and foremost young Maxine is surrounded with Chinese culture at home where her mother, Brave Orchid, is her strongest connection to it. The mother neither learns to speak English well nor gets adjusted to American lifestyle but, instead, tries to live according to her Chinese customs and beliefs. She notices that most Americans do not behave in a proper Chinese way but since the family must make a living by washing clothes for American people Brave Orchid acts civilly towards them on a surface level. However, privately she calls most Americans “ghosts”.

One incident gives a good example of how the mother tries to live in America but still follows her Chinese rules. This event also shows how she uses the word “ghost” when referring to stupid, disrespectful Americans. Once in Maxine’s childhood a delivery boy from the local drugstore comes accidentally to a wrong address, to the family laundry, to bring medicine although no-one in the family is ill. The mother gets furious by such mistake and utters to her children after the boy is gone:

“That ghost! That dead ghost! How dare he come to the wrong house?” She could not concentrate on her marking and pressing. “A mistake! Huh! Revenge. We’ve got to avenge this wrong on our future, on our health, and on our lives. Nobody’s going to sicken my children and get away with it” (*Woman* 169)

Brave Orchid’s words show that she is a typical Chinese person in a sense that she does not only believe in official ideologies, such as Confucianism, but she also believes in spirits. From her point of view even a hint of medicine could lead into serious consequences unless the spirits are calmed and lead away from sickening thoughts. The mother’s angry outburst makes her children wait for some awful and embarrassing things to follow. The children, unlike their parents, go to school and learn to speak good English, and since Maxine is the oldest of the children Brave Orchid gives her the task of saving the family from the bad spirits. The mother and the daughter have the following conversation over the matter:

“You! The biggest. You go to the drugstore.”
 “What do you want me to buy, Mother?”
 “Buy nothing. Don’t bring one cent. Go and make them stop the curse.”
 “I don’t want to go. I don’t know how to do that. There are no such things as curses. They’ll think I’m crazy.”
 “If you don’t go, I’m holding you responsible for bringing a plague on this family.”
 “What am I supposed to do when I get there? Do I say, ‘Your delivery boy made a wrong delivery’?”
 “They know he made a wrong delivery. I want you to make them rectify their crime.”
 (*Woman* 170)

Brave Orchid believes that the curse and the ill-feelings caused by it would be soothed by giving the family candy. Maxine feels that she is trapped between two cultures - her mother wants her to operate according to her Chinese rules but the druggist is an American who probably is not aware of Chinese beliefs and, besides, how could a child explain to an American druggist that her mother has sent her to make evil spirits and curses disappear. Although she is a child Maxine realizes that she has to explain to the druggist something quite different from her mother's instructions. The girl hates her task, and it also makes her nervous, but she prepares herself: "Be cute and small. No-one hurts the cute and small." (*Woman* 171) To the druggist she explains: "My mother said you have to give us candy. She said it is the way the Chinese do it." (*Woman* 171) After some hesitation the druggist gives the child candy but not for the reasons the mother wanted him to and, in fact, the druggist starts to give the family off-season candy all the year round. The daughter thinks that the druggist considers them beggars but the mother is pleased: "My mother thought she taught the Druggist Ghost a lesson in good manners." (*Woman* 171) Maxine never eats the candy; it is her way of protesting against her mother and also against the druggist. According to Wong (1993:46), the daughter feels a hint of racism in the druggist's perpetual offerings of candy. The pharmacist represents white Americans who by giving the family off-season sweets shows his condescension, as if the family were so poor that they were not able to buy their candy just like the others (Wong 1993:46). Chinese and American culture do not meet and blend in this incident but, instead, they collide.

Brave Orchid, naturally, brought her ideas of ghosts from China. She tells her children stories of ghosts, for example, a story of a haunted room in her student dormitory in China from where she had been brave enough to chase out a ghost. "That was a Photo Ghost", said my mother. She was good at naming - Wall Ghost, Frog Spirit, Eating Partner. She could find descriptions in ancient writings - /.../ "What Confucius Did Not Talk About" (*Woman* 65) The title of the imaginary book in the previous quote - *What Confucius Did Not Talk About* - shows that the mother has explanations about the appearing of ghosts which have nothing to do with the official Confucian dogma. Evidently, she grew up believing that ghosts are a natural part of life that can be conquered if one is not afraid of them.

The mother is quite explicit when she tells her children how ghosts are created. According to her, Chinese family members who behave in an improper way could also be doomed to be non-visible, ghosts. For example, Brave Orchid tells Maxine about her aunt who gave birth to an illegitimate child and was cursed by the family: “Aiaa, we’re going to die. Death is coming. Death is coming. Look what you’ve done. You’ve killed us. Ghost! Dead Ghost! Ghost! You’ve never been born.” (*Woman* 13-14)

As mentioned above, the mother believes that the best way to defeat ghosts is to act unafraid and in such a manner she tries to treat the American ghosts, as well. She advises her children to do the same: “Act unafraid. Ghost chasers have to be brave.” (*Woman* 74) Usually, Brave Orchid calls all foreigners “ghosts” but there is one exception to this rule. When she tells her children about the Japanese invasion to China in 1939 she says: “The Japanese, though “little” were not ghosts, the only foreigners considered not ghosts by the Chinese. They may have been descended from the Chinese explorers.” (*Woman* 93) As mentioned previously in the chapter on Chinese culture, Chinese are proud of their country and culture and consider them to be the best in the world. This pride may be the reason Brave Orchid thinks of foreigners as ghosts who are not real people and can never totally understand the Chinese. She tries to prevent too much contact with Americans since her own values differ greatly from theirs and mutual understanding or respect towards Americans does not seem possible in Brave Orchid’s life. It could be claimed that the mother apprehends that her life in America consists of three groups of people; her family, the Chinese American people in their Chinatown, and Americans, strangers. The family forms the ingroup, other Chinese in Chinatown represent the villagers and the rest of Americans belong to the outgroup and are less important.

The daughter is affected by her mother’s resentment of American “ghosts” and has difficulties in finding her own place in the ghost country. When she and her siblings are not yet at school they try to hide from Americans since they do not feel like a part of American society but, instead, feel as if they were in the country by accident. As a child, the narrator has the following thoughts about American ghosts:

But America has been full of machines and ghosts - Taxi ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts, Tree Trimming Ghosts, Five-and-Dime Ghosts. Once upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe: I could hardly walk, limping my way

around the White Ghosts and their cars. There were Black ghosts, too, but they were open eyed and full of laughter, more distinct than White Ghosts. (*Woman* 96-97)

In fact, the mother directly encourages her children to avoid too many contacts with these American ghosts. She warns and comforts her children:

the White Ghosts can hear Chinese. They have learned it. You mustn't talk in front of them again. Someday, very soon, we're going home, where there are Han people everywhere. We'll buy furniture then, real tables and chairs. You children will smell flowers for the first time. (*Woman* 98)

It seems that Brave Orchid does not want her children to get too attached to American people since the family is planning to return to China but, as their stay lengthens, the mother's warnings of Americans complicate her children's lives. For example, when Maxine starts school she does not know any English and flunks the first year because she cannot understand anything.

Real clashes of Chinese and American culture in the narrator's life appear when she begins school where American society surrounds her. As mentioned above, at the beginning of her school years Maxine does not know English: "During the first silent year I spoke to no one at school, did not ask before going to the lavatory, and flunked kindergarten. My sister also said nothing for three years." (*Woman* 165) The child does not understand that she ought to speak in order to pass kindergarten since her parents did not advise her to do so because they neither knew English nor understood the American school system. Maxine adds: "It was when I found out I had to talk that school became a misery, that the silence became a misery. I did not speak and felt bad each time I did not speak." (*Woman* 166)

The narrator becomes frustrated at school and as a sign of her distress, she paints all her drawings black. "My silence was thickest - total during the three years that I covered my school paintings with black paint." (*Woman* 165) Her teachers are worried and ask her parents to come to the school to discuss why she makes such dismal paintings. The parents come but they do not understand a word the teachers say and, instead, become suspicious of the teachers. After the meeting the father claims: "The parents and teachers of criminals were executed." (*Woman* 165) The American teachers try partly to take care of Maxine's problems but they do nothing to lower the language barrier that prevents her from participating at school. Since the teachers have apparently

grown up in an individualistic American culture, it seems that they are convinced that everyone should find a solution to their problems independently. As mentioned previously in the chapter on American culture, Americans are defenders of individual rights and they expect everyone to be independent. After the teachers have informed Maxine's parents about their daughter's problems at school they leave the child to survive the best she can. Cheung (1992:170) points out that Maxine is treated by her American teachers as if she were retarded. However, most Chinese girls act the same way: "The other Chinese girls did not talk either, so I knew the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl." (*Woman* 166) The teachers usually leave the silent girls alone: " /.../ when my second grade class did a play, the whole class went to the auditorium except the Chinese girls." (*Woman* 167) It appears that on one hand, American culture gives individuals the freedom to be what they want to be but, on the other hand, everyone is expected to be strong enough to know what they want and overcome possible problems independently.

Language problems complicate Maxine's life immensely and she has to learn English the hard way, by herself, since her parents are unable to teach her. As a teenager she blames them for their lack of interest for her well-being but as a child she connects being silent with being Chinese. It is paradoxical when Maxine points out that all the Chinese girls in her class are silent since, partly, she claims that by being silent the young girls demonstrate their Chinese side but she also admits that Chinese people are not silent at all. According to the narrator, it is common for Chinese people to speak with loud voices. "Normal Chinese women's voices are strong and bossy. We American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine." (*Woman* 172) It appears that Chinese girls face a clash of two cultures when they have to choose not only the right language, Chinese or English, but also the right volume of voice in their communication situations. The paradox is created when the Chinese American girls try to deny their Chinese heritage by acting against tradition with their silence. Evidently, the girls have chosen the opposite volume of voice from their parents in an attempt to become American feminine since they do not want to be stared or judged by other Americans for their peculiar habits; they want to be American.

“Walking erect (knees straight, toes pointed forward, not pigeon-toed, which is Chinese-feminine) and speaking in an inaudible voice, I have tried to turn myself American-feminine. Chinese communication was loud, public. Only sick people had to whisper.” (*Woman* 11)

Maxine has also noticed that Americans look disgusted when they hear Chinese language and she suspects prejudice on their faces:

You can see the disgust on American faces looking at women like that (*speaking loud*). It isn't just the loudness. It is the way Chinese sounds, chingchong ugly, to American ears, not beautiful like Japanese sayonara words with the consonants and vowels as regular as Italian. (*Woman* 171)

The feedback that the narrator receives from Americans when she speaks Chinese is not encouraging but, instead, it makes her ashamed of her Chinese heritage and, therefore, she avoids speaking it in public. The collision of two cultures is strong in Maxine's language problem and she feels the pressure from dominant culture forcing her to give up her Chinese side to become totally American. When learning English, she also learns to act in an American way - not to raise her voice and to speak more monotonously than she would in Chinese. Although the narrator claims that as a child she connects being silent with being a Chinese girl, it appears that, in fact, through silence she finds her American identity. It may be argued that at school she learns to quiet the Chinese side of her character.

As a teenager, Maxine starts to consciously search for her own identity and define her set of values. It appears that her parents have not succeeded in transferring their collectivist ideas of obligations to one's family to their daughter who, instead, has more assimilated to American life and values. However, the girl's choice of American lifestyle is not a completely deliberate one, as can be sensed when she complains about her mother's ignorance to explain her children more about Chinese traditions. As noted earlier, the mother believes in, for example, spirits and performs many ceremonies at home but she does not include her children in them. Moreover, both the mother and the father get furious if the children try to ask them about Chinese traditions but yet if the offspring accidentally do something which tradition forbids the parents punish them. “They hit you if you wash your hair on certain days, or tap somebody with a ruler, step over a brother whether it's during your menses or not. You figure out what you got hit for and don't do it again if you figured correctly.” (*Woman* 185) The parents do not even explain the meaning of certain holidays and celebrations although the family, for

instance, eats special food on special days. These traditions have no deeper importance to the children since they are not aware of the real stories behind them. Maxine wonders: "How can Chinese keep any traditions at all? They don't even make you pay attention, slipping in a ceremony and clearing the table before the children notice specialness." (*Woman* 185) As noted previously (see Chang 1993:67-68), Chinese have many holidays when they honour different gods, for example, the Kitchen god who brings food to the family and they also have many customs, such as parades, which supposedly bring one luck, especially around the time of the Chinese New Year. Of course, one appreciates these celebrations more if one knows why they are performed.

The causes why Maxine's parents explain so little about Chinese traditions to their children can be many. One reason why they hesitate to tell about their cultural background is to avoid revealing secrets to the children who are too involved with the American ghosts. "They called us a kind of ghost." (*Woman* 183) The secrets could be connected with immigration problems or with precious memories that the parents were afraid would be misunderstood by Americans. Maxine is somewhat bitter that she has not been told much about Chinese culture:

I don't see how they kept up a continuous culture for five thousand years. Maybe they didn't; maybe everyone makes it up as they go along. If we had to depend on being told, we'd have no religion, no babies, no menstruation (sex, of course, unspeakable), no death. (*Woman* 185)

The narrator cannot help the influence of surrounding American culture and society which appear to be more willing to let her in while Chinese culture appears vague and unreachable. Young Maxine not only wants to be Americanized but her parents also unconsciously encourage her by not sharing their Chinese customs.

Evidently, it is easier for the daughter to follow American customs than to try to find out about Chinese tradition. Although the parents follow many of the Confucian principles in their own lives, such as honouring certain rites, they probably feel helpless with their children who are strongly influenced by American values at school. As mentioned above, they may be afraid that the children would not understand them correctly or would reveal secrets to the outsiders and, therefore, they choose to tell their children as little as possible about Chinese culture. However, the mother is disappointed with her daughter's approval of American manners and complains to her: "You're always listening to Teacher Ghosts, those Scientist Ghosts, Doctor Ghosts." (*Woman*

102) While the daughter picks up American ways of living, she simultaneously loses or silences a part of her vague Chinese identity and the mother is aware of it.

After overcoming the language problems of the beginning of her school years, Maxine receives good results at the American school. As claimed earlier in the chapter on Chinese American culture, Chinese American children usually do well in the American school since they have enough discipline to study. Maxine's outstanding results at school are a key to the formation of her American success and identity. One evening at the family laundry, around the end of her Senior High School, the daughter shows her parents that she is finding her independent voice and is willing to make her own decisions. She explains the following in a burst of anger:

“Do you know what the Teacher Ghosts say about me? They tell me I'm smart, and I can get into colleges. I've already applied. I'm smart. I can do all kinds of things. I know how to get A's, and they say I could be a scientist or a mathematician if I want. I can make a living and take care of myself.”

/.../

“Not everybody thinks I'm nothing. I am not going to be a slave or a wife. Even if I am stupid and talk funny and get sick, I won't let you turn me into a slave or a wife. I'm getting out of here. I can't stand living here anymore. It's your fault I talk weird. The only reason I flunked kindergarten was because you could not teach me English, and you gave me a zero IQ.”

/.../

“And at college I'll have the people I like for friends. I don't care if their great-great-grandfather died of TB. I don't care if they were our enemies in China four thousand years ago.” (*Woman* 201)

In her outburst Maxine demonstrates several sides of her identity: mainly her prejudice against Chinese customs and her adaptation to American life. She also defines a typical Chinese woman as something she wishes not to be herself - a slave or a wife. However, when she is referring to the submissive picture of a Chinese woman that she has learnt from her mother, she does not remember what Brave Orchid once also told her: “She said I would grow up a wife and a slave but she taught me the song of the warrior woman, Fa Mu Lan. I would have to grow up a warrior woman.” (*Woman* 20) Through the story of a warrior woman the mother has indirectly encouraged her daughter to fight for her rights although Fa Mu Lan saved her whole village when Maxine in a more American individualistic manner tries to save herself at first. As claimed earlier in the chapter concerning Chinese family and women, Chinese women learnt to fight for their rights even before the Communist Revolution and it shows that they are not merely submissive. Brave Orchid has also taught Maxine to stand up for herself with her story

of the Woman Warrior which gave the daughter an example of strong women. Although, in general, the mother has followed the old Confucian principles and cherished boys over girls, she has also read, as mentioned earlier, the book *What Confucius Did not Talk About*. While Confucius told little about women, Brave Orchid has added the missing parts by herself in her imaginary book of, for example, woman's position. The daughter has listened to her mother's stories and become strong.

Although she has encouraged Maxine to fight for her rights, Brave Orchid has never respected American achievements since she herself is unable to find satisfaction in the United States. The mother and the daughter have the following conversation:

“My American life has been such a disappointment.”
 “I got straight A's, Mama.”
 “Let me tell you a true story about a girl who saved her village.”
 I could not figure out what was my village. (*Woman* 45)

In the dialogue Maxine is seeking for personal gratification for her good grades whereas Brave Orchid wants to teach her daughter to consider the well-being of a whole group. The mother shows her appreciation of a person who does something to help everyone, in other words, acts in a collectivist manner.

The differences between American individualism and egalitarianism were introduced in the chapter on American culture. It appears that Maxine does not support pure individualism but she seems to prefer egalitarianism. In her angry outburst, which was quoted a page earlier in the present study, she demonstrates that she has egalitarian ideas of American college life - everyone has equal opportunities and freedom to choose one's friends. Following this ideology the narrator thinks that she is an independent individual who belongs more to herself than to her family. Therefore, she should be free to decide for her own future and choose the friends she prefers regardless of her parents opinions. At the end of Maxine's outburst Brave Orchid denies all of her accusations but the mother does not try to prevent her from further studies although she has another suggestion to her: “Everybody else is sending their girls to typing school. Learn to type if you want to be an American girl.” (*Woman* 203) As stated previously, education is highly valued in Confucian tradition except for the education of a girl which is seen as unimportant. Thereby, Brave Orchid is bending her old Confucian rules when she suggests typing school to Maxine even though she would like the daughter to choose a

simple career, such as a typist, which would enable her to stay with the family and follow the parents' decisions. However, Maxine's ideals of college education would mean the opposite; she would move out of her parents' house to become independent and equal with other students.

The daughter's attempts towards independence do not seem acceptable to the mother who sees a family as a unit where its members should search for common, collectivist good, not mere individual success. When Brave Orchid understands that Maxine is determined to leave she gets furious and tells her daughter what she really thinks: "Leave then. Get out you *Ho Chi Kuei*. Get out. I knew you were going to turn out bad. Ho Chi Kuei." Maxine adds: "I've been looking up "Ho Chi Kuei", which is what the immigrants call us - Ho Chi Ghosts". (*Woman* 204) The mother is disappointed in Maxine and accuses her of joining American society and forgetting her obligations to the Chinese family but she feels powerless to change the direction her daughter is heading. The mother may complain but she cannot help the strong influence of American society.

Towards the end of the novel the daughter starts to understand the mother more. As an adult when Maxine has already entered working life, she discovers similarities in the characters of her mother and herself. For example, Brave Orchid tells her daughter that she cannot stop working in the United States:

"This is a terrible ghost country, where a human being works her life away. Even the ghosts work, no time for acrobatics. I have not stopped working since the day the ship landed. I was on my feet the moment the babies were out. In China I never even had to hang up my own clothes." (*Woman* 104)

Maxine discovers that she has the same symptoms: "I'm like that too, Mama. I work all the time ... I know how to work when things get bad." (*Woman* 106)

Later when Maxine fights against her racist boss she realizes that she has to be a warrior and that work is important to her identity: "It's not just the stupid racists that I have to do something about, but the tyrants who for whatever reason can deny my family food and work. My job is my own only land." (*Woman* 49) As an adult the daughter starts to understand the mother's value system and her work becomes her tool to fight for the rights of her Chinese family. She understands that her problems are a mixture of things while, therefore, she cannot simply accuse the mother for her

problems. “I continue to sort out what’s just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just the village, just movies, just living.” (*Woman* 205) Through different conflicts in life Maxine starts to picture her Chinese American identity and understand that she is a mixture of two cultures. As an adult, she has also grown to accept and appreciate her Chinese family which is living in the middle of American society and she cannot deny either her Chinese or her American sides but by accepting both of them she becomes more self-confident and whole.

4.2. Conflicts met by the daughters in *The Joy Luck Club*

In *The Joy Luck Club* four Chinese American mothers and daughters within four families are the center of attention. They both tell about their lives but the present study will concentrate on information regarding the fictional daughters. The choice has been made since most of the stories told by the mothers take place in China whereas the American-born daughters tell about their lives in the United States. The present study concentrates on Chinese American life and, therefore, it seems natural to emphasize the Chinese American aspect in the novel which is done by demonstrating certain cultural clashes in the lives of the daughters, likewise in *The Woman Warrior* where the focus was on the events experienced by the American-born daughter.

Although the daughters’ lives are analyzed through conflicts they encounter, it does not mean that the novel would only describe problems in the lives of the fictional daughters. However, conflict situations seem to be a connecting factor between the four daughters and, therefore, they make an interesting area of study. All the conflicts chosen for the present study reveal clashes between Chinese and American culture. More precisely, the main types analyzed in each chapter are given in the title along with the name of the daughter. As mentioned above, the same general theme of cultural clashes seems to connect the lives of the four different daughters probably for the reason that they are all products of two cultures - Chinese and American. Just as in *The Woman Warrior*, disputes are often encountered in the relationship between the mother and the

daughter although the husbands also play an important part in many of the daughters' lives.

In the present study the lives of the different daughters are described in four subsections in order to clarify what happens to whom. The names of the fictional Chinese American daughters are: Waverly Jong, Lena St. Clair, Rose Hsu Jordan and Jing-mei Woo, and their mothers are: Lindo Jong, Ying-ying St. Clair, An-mei Hsu and Suyuan Woo. From now on all the characters will be mentioned only by using their first names.

4.2.1. Waverly Jong: collectivism versus individualism, direct versus indirect communication

As mentioned above, the present study will concentrate on clashes of American and Chinese culture. There are two clear incidents in the novel when Waverly encounters problems connected with such clashes of which the first one appears along with her success in chess as a child and the other one with her plans of second marriage as an adult. These two incidents will be discussed in detail while some other cultural aspects in Waverly's life are mentioned more briefly. Lindo, the mother, is the most important connection that the daughter has to Chinese culture and, consequently, cultural clashes are most often realized in the relationship between the mother and the daughter.

The seeds of the first cultural clash are sowed when Waverly becomes interested in chess around the age of eight. She is persistent in learning how to play well and starts to develop herself by studying at first all the books that she can find about chess at the Chinatown library. After her brothers get tired of playing with her she finds a mentor, an old Chinese American man Lau Po who plays chess at a park and he teaches her during one summer all he knows about chess. As mentioned previously in the chapters on Chinese American culture and family, Chinese Americans are known to be hard-working at school and at work. Waverly's persistent work to learn to master chess shows that she has high work ethic just like Chinese Americans often do (see Gardner et

al. 1985: 4, 27). Although she, without any doubt, is talented, she is also prepared to work hard to achieve the best results.

Waverly becomes famous for her talent in the Chinatown while she plays at the park against anyone who wants to.

A small weekend crowd of Chinese people and tourists would gather as I played and defeated my opponents one by one. My mother would join the crowds during these outdoor exhibition games. She sat proudly on the bench, telling my admirers with proper Chinese humility, "Is luck". (*Joy* 97)

The daughter tells about a strategy that her mother taught her when she was six. "I was six when my mother taught me the art of invisible strength. It was a strategy for winning arguments, respect from others, and eventually, though neither of us knew it at the time, chess game. "Bite back your tongue." (*Joy* 89) Lindo advises Waverly not to beg for the things that she wants but to win in an indirect way which is something the mother has learnt in China: one should not ask directly but, instead, to find a delicate way to make the opponent understand what one wants. The idea of Chinese indirect communication was explained in the chapter concerning differences in Chinese and American communication and the mother's lesson of invisible strength is a good example of it.

Waverly shows understanding of Chinese indirect communication since although she would be eager to play in a local chess tournament she asks Lindo's permission in an indirect way. "I knew she would not let me play among strangers. So as we walked home I said in a small voice that I didn't want to play in the local tournament. They would have American rules. If I lost, I would bring shame on my family." (*Joy* 97) The daughter is clever with her words and demonstrates her proper Chinese humility by letting the mother decide what is best for her and the hint of bringing shame on the family shows that she understands the idea of collectivism. She would bring shame on them by loosing since, as explained earlier about collectivism in Chinese family, what happens to one member happens to the whole group. Waverly knows that Lindo will think of her daughter as a representative of the whole family since she is accustomed to collectivist ideology.

The mother lets her daughter attend the tournament and after it many more which the girl constantly wins. Lindo sits in the front row in every game and advises her

daughter although she knows nothing about chess. Both parents support Waverly in her playing by letting her practice as much as she wants to while she is freed from her household duties. The parents are fulfilling collectivist idea of success - when one member of the family succeeds everybody else aims at helping him/her and, thereby, the fame of one is the result of efforts of many. Waverly's Chinese American brothers are the only ones complaining: "Why does she get to play and we do all the work," complained Vincent. "Is new American rules," said my mother. "Meimei (=little sister) play, squeeze all her brains out for win chess. You play, worth squeeze towel." (*Joy* 99) Interestingly enough, the mother is talking about American rules but perhaps she means American in a sense that in the old China where she grew up girls did not have the opportunity to develop their talents as much as the boys did. Therefore, Lindo has created an American version of her collectivist family ideals by giving her daughter a chance to develop her ability. In fact, the mother is also following Confucian tradition which values education and encourages everyone to develop their talents although, as stated previously, Confucianism does not mention girls in connection with talent and education. However, in general, Confucian idea of a person is optimistic and everyone is thought to have the potential to the right kind of moral conduct and to learned knowledge even though, in practice, wealth and status set some limitations and so does gender (Huotari and Seppälä 1993:236). Lindo thinks that in America you can affect your own life even if your background is not the best possible. "In America, nobody says you have to keep the circumstances somebody else gives you (*Joy* 289) As mentioned above, it seems that the mother is bending Confucian ideology by letting a daughter develop her talents but perhaps it is the American taste in her Confucian ideology.

Many people in the Chinatown are proud of Waverly's success as well. A Chinatown bakery displays a congratulation cake for her in their front window and a flower shop, a headstone engraver, and a funeral parlor offer to be her sponsors. The whole community is collectively proud of the success of its one member. The girl's talent is finally recognized nation-wide in the United States: "By my ninth birthday, I was a national chess champion. /.../ I was touted as the Great American hope, a child prodigy and a girl to boot. They ran a photo of me in *Life* magazine." (*Joy* 99) All of the

sudden Waverly is fully accepted to American society since she has shown that her existence might be of value to it. It appears that the best way to become accepted as something else than just a member of an ethnic minority in the United States is to succeed in life.

The mother is overjoyed at her daughter's achievements and wants to show her fine offspring to other people on Saturday market days. "My mother would proudly walk with me, visiting many shops, buying very little. "This my daughter Wave-ly Jong," she said to whoever looked her way" (*Joy* 101) When Waverly knows that she is respected by many people, she starts to pull herself apart from the influence of her Chinese mother since she wants to be seen as an individual. The mother and the daughter have the following conversation which is a dispute between them and a start of separation:

"I wish you wouldn't do that, telling everybody I'm your daughter.

"Aii-ya. So shame be with mother?"

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

"Embarrass you be my daughter?"

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

"What you say?"

"Why do you have to use me to show off. If you want to show off, then why don't you learn to play chess?" (*Joy* 101)

The above quote shows that Waverly and Lindo apparently see things from two different view points: collectivist and individualistic. The daughter fails to understand the mother's good intentions which in Chinese sense are even modern since they are aimed at the support of a girl. Instead, Waverly thinks of her success as something that is genuinely made by herself and demonstrates the impact of American individualistic tradition by her selfish outburst. She does not experience the family as a unit but strives for individual recognition and thinks of her mother's support as an attempt to steal the honor of success from her daughter.

After shouting her accusations Waverly runs away and returns home late in the evening. When she comes in the mother tells to the other family members: "We not concerning this girl. This girl not have concerning for us." (*Joy* 103) The quote shows how hurt Lindo is by her daughter's outburst and afterwards she completely stops supporting her in chess. When the girl loses the encouragement of the mother her self-confidence and talent in chess seem to disappear and she first starts to lose the games and then totally quits. It appears that Waverly is more dependent on her mother than she

thought since without her support she becomes uncertain of herself and somehow powerless. American society, although interested in her success, cannot support her enough and her Chinese American family apparently acts according to the idea of collectivism while they encourage Waverly only if she agrees to represent the family in her actions. It seems that the collectivist support of the family is an important force in the lives of Chinese Americans while pure American individualism leaves them to struggle on their own.

Two ideologies clashed in the dispute which the mother and the daughter had. Lindo and Waverly clearly demonstrated collectivist and individualistic tradition in their behaviour. The mother was at first attempting to realize a Confucian concept of the coherence of family by strongly assisting the daughter in her chess playing although, as mentioned earlier, she was bending the rules a bit by supporting a female. When Waverly's lack of appreciation made Lindo furious and disappointed she decided to follow the American tradition of individualism by giving up her support. It seems that the Chinese custom of hard work and collective family support made the daughter a chess champion while the American striving for individual recognition made her drop from the top.

Another strong clash of two cultures is experienced in Waverly's life when she is planning to get married for the second time. Even as an adult she has not learnt to understand her mother's intentions but, instead, is afraid of her comments. Although Waverly is in her thirties now and has a daughter of her own, she still does not feel equal with the mother. Despite her age and life experience she feels nervous to break the news of her marriage to Lindo and when she tells about her thoughts to a friend they have the following conversation: "Why are you so nervous? It's not as if Rich is the scum of the earth. He's a tax attorney like you, for Chrissake. How can she criticize that?" "You don't know my mother. She never thinks anybody is good enough for anything." (*Joy* 183)

Waverly tries to confide in her mother at first during lunch and then by asking Lindo to visit her apartment to make another attempt of telling. "My mother had not been to my apartment in months. When I first married, she used to drop by unannounced, until one day I suggested she should call ahead of time. Ever since then,

she has refused to come unless I issue an official invitation.” (*Joy* 185) As mentioned in the chapter concerning communication, the Chinese prefer indirect communication. Lindo has grown up in a culture which prefers careful thinking before uttering a sentence for not to hurt the feelings of the other and one should be careful with words since they cannot be drawn back whereas Waverly is used to more direct American communication. As mentioned earlier, Americans concentrate on improving the effectiveness of speakers by the means of formal training such as debate or public speaking while Chinese aim at improving the receiver’s sensitivity. In the American school children learn to debate and discuss matters in a straight forward manner (Yum 1988:385). Even though the daughter’s apartment is full of things that belong to Rich, the mother says nothing about him. Despite her American education Waverly finds it hard to tell about her plans to her mother in a straight forward way since she would not like to hear any disparaging comments from Lindo and, instead, she finds it better to remain silent. The daughter’s sensitivity of the proper way of telling her mother shows that she has unconsciously grown to understand the rules of indirect communication.

Eventually, Waverly and Rich have dinner at her parents’ home and during the dinner the daughter realizes that although she herself does not always understand her Chinese parents Rich understands them even less. Through her thoughts about the things that the American fiancée does wrong Waverly demonstrates her Chinese side and the following quote explains what happened at the dinner table from the point of view of the daughter:

But the worst was when Rich criticized my mother’s cooking, and he didn’t even know what he had done. As is the Chinese cook’s custom, my mother always made disparaging remarks about her own cooking. That night she chose to direct it toward her famous steamed pork and preserved vegetable dish, which she always served with special pride. “Ai! This dish not salty enough, no flavor,” she complained, after tasting a small bite. “It’s too bad to eat.” This was our family’s cue to eat some and proclaim it the best she had ever made. But before we could do so, Rich said, “You know, all it needs is a little soy sauce.” And he proceeded to pour a riverful of the salty black stuff on the platter, right before my mother’s horrified eyes. (*Joy* 197)

This incident is a good example of a misunderstanding between people of whom one is used to indirect and the other to direct forms of communication. A clash of Chinese and American culture is evident since Rich seems to be quite unaware what is proper and what is not proper in Chinese culture. He could not understand the indirect hint that

Lindo gave him when criticizing her own cooking but, instead, he thought she was serious with her disparaging comments about the food. It appears that the Chinese mother is used to an indirect method of communication while the American fiancée is more familiar with direct communication.

Rich is friendly in an American way but he is quite unaware of Chinese customs and, for example, Waverly finds it odd that when they are leaving he shakes hands with her parents and says: “Linda, Tim, we’ll see you again soon, I’m sure.” (*Joy* 198) First of all Waverly’s parents’ names are Lindo and Tin and secondly only old friends call them by their first names. It appears that Rich is following the American code of equality when he treats everyone in a similar manner.

Although Waverly has grown up in the United States, her parents have tried to teach her certain respect for one’s parents (*xiao*) and for elderly people in general. Therefore, she is aware of what kind of behaviour her parents expect from her even though she does not always fulfil their wishes. The mother, for example, has tried to teach her children that promises one makes to one’s parents are important to keep:

“I once sacrificed my life to keep my parents’ promise. This means nothing to you, because to you promises mean nothing. A daughter can promise to come to dinner but if she has a headache, if she has a traffic jam, if she wants to watch a favourite movie on TV, she no longer has a promise.” (*Joy* 42)

The quote shows that Lindo is not satisfied with her daughter who, although aware of proper Chinese behaviour, does not act according to her mother’s preferences. She says about 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. /.../ Why Chinese thinking is best.” (*Joy* 289) Moreover, the mother adds: “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?” (*Joy* 289) Lindo’s last sentence contains the essence of this study: two cultures cannot be mixed without occasional clashes. This idea is demonstrated in several occasions throughout the two novels of which some are introduced in the present study.

Through the actions of Rich at the dinner Waverly starts to understand the Chinese side in herself. Her fiancé gives a good example of an American individualist

who is not used to any kinds of natural hierarchies. As mentioned in the chapter concerning American family above, Althen (1988:4-5) refers to the lack of respect Americans often have towards their parents and Rich is a good example of such lack. The age of his fiancée's parents does not mean to him that he should treat them differently from anyone other. Therefore, later when Waverly mentions to him that he had not understood her mother Rich once again misunderstands and says: "Whew! You can say that again. Her English was so bad." (*Joy* 198) He seems blind to his failure to give a good impression of himself to his fiancée's parents while his ignorance also gives a somewhat insensitive picture of him.

Waverly partly blames her mother for what she feels about Rich after the dinner filled with misunderstandings. " /.../ this latest failure, made worse by the fact that Rich seemed blind to it all. He looked so pathetic. My mother was doing it again, making me see black where I once saw white." (*Joy* 199) Although the mother has not said much about Rich, the daughter thinks she does not like him. It seems that Waverly has bad conscience for not fulfilling her mother's wishes and it makes her think that Lindo does not appreciate her fiancé.

The following day after the evening of misunderstandings the daughter goes to see the mother in a furious mood and decides to sort things out. As it happens, Lindo is asleep on the sofa looking almost as if she were dead and, then, all of the sudden Waverly manages to see her mother differently.

"Ma!" I said sharply. "Ma!" I whined, starting to cry. And her eyes slowly opened. She blinked. Her hands moved with life. "Shemma? Meimei-ah? Is that you?" I was speechless. She had not called me Meimei, my childhood name, in many years. She sat up and the lines in her face returned, only now they seemed less harsh, soft creases of worry. "Why are you here? Why are you crying? Something has happened!" I didn't know what to do or say. In a matter of seconds, it seemed, I had gone from being angered by her strength, to being amazed by her innocence, and then frightened by her vulnerability. (*Joy* 200)

For the first time Waverly sees the mother as an old lady, a human being, not just her mother. Nevertheless, they have the following conversation concerning Rich:

"And then when you met him, you said he had spots on his face."
 "Is this not true?"
 "Yes, but, you said it just to be mean, to hurt me, to..."
 "Ai-ya, why do you think these bad things about me? So you think your mother is this bad. You think I have a secret meaning. But it is you who has this meaning. Ai-ya! She thinks I am this bad!" (*Joy* 201)

Finally, the daughter starts to understand the mother and realizes that Lindo is her link to her Chinese side which she cannot suppress but has to learn to accept as part of her identity. Waverly grows from being afraid of mother's comments into understanding that her mother is not the frightening, witty person the daughter thought she was but merely an old lady who tries to live between two cultures while attempting to help the members of her family the best she can. Waverly also learns to respect Lindo in a new way.

I saw what I had been fighting for: It was for me, a scared child, who had run away a long time ago to what I had imagined was a safer place. And hiding in this place, behind my invisible barriers, I knew what lay on the other side: her side attacks. Her secret weapons. Her uncanny ability to find my weakest spots. But in the brief instant that I had peered over the barriers I could finally see what was really there: an old woman, a wok for her armor, a knitting needle for her sword, getting a little crabby as she waited patiently for her daughter to invite her in. (*Joy* 203-204)

As mentioned previously in the chapter concerning Chinese family, Chinese women are strong when needed. Waverly has always seen her mother as an example of a strong woman but now that Lindo is old she finally understands that mother is just an old Chinese woman who has her weak weapons against American culture which are symbolically her wok and her knitting needle. Although the mother has fought in a collectivist manner to keep the family united, the daughter has grown to be an independent individual and the situation has caused tension between the mother and the daughter. Finally, as an adult Waverly understands that Lindo is her strongest connection to the Chinese side of her own character and she wants to stop fighting against it. By "letting her mother in" Waverly also gives her own Chinese side a better chance to survive in the American world.

4.2.2. Lena St. Clair: mixed parentage, direct versus indirect communication

Lena is a daughter of a Chinese American mother and an Irish American father and she is the only one of the five daughters in the present study with mixed parentage. The problems of Lena's mother are different from the problems of the other mothers and, therefore, parts of Ying-ying's and her husband's story will be included in order to

clarify the situation in a family with mixed parents. The times of conflict in the daughter's life, which are chosen to be used as material in the present study, are the complicated situation of her parents when she is a child and her own problematic marriage as an adult. Lena's stories of her parents are from the point of view of a child but, naturally, of her marriage from the point of view of an adult.

The parents meet in Shanghai in the 1940's and marry without sharing a language or knowing much about each other's background. The father knows only a little Chinese and the mother a little English. In China Ying-ying is the only legitimate daughter of a wealthy man but at the time when she meets Mr St. Clair she is utterly disappointed with her life since she has been married to a man who is a drunkard, a gambler and unfaithful to her. Moreover, Ying-ying has aborted their son in her desperation. Because of the hardships in China she is willing to leave the country and start a new life in the United States but, however, when the mother reminisces how she decided to marry a foreigner the memory is bittersweet, apparently, because the change in her life was such grave. "I decided to let Saint marry me... I willingly gave up my *chi*, the spirit that caused me so much pain.. I became an unseen spirit." (*Joy* 285) Ying-ying's words show that she respects Confucian four principles which were previously discussed in the chapter concerning Confucianism. She shows her despair through her thoughts of giving up her *chi* which means wisdom in Confucian ideology. Moving to the United States is the mother's attempt to escape from her pain and receive a state of oblivion.

As previously stated in the chapter concerning Chinese American history, Chinese women could not easily enter the United States in the 1940's. Ying-ying's story follows some historical facts since she has to stay in an immigration station for three weeks as her daughter later tells:

".../ until they could process her papers and determine whether she was a War Bride, a Displaced Person, a Student, or the wife of a Chinese-American citizen. My father said they didn't have rules for dealing with the Chinese wife of a Caucasian citizen. Somehow, in the end, they declared her a Displaced Person, lost in a sea of immigration categories." (*Joy* 107)

The marriage of a Chinese woman to a Caucasian man was complicated indeed since, as was stated previously in the chapter on Chinese American culture, according to the

American law at the time, it was not acceptable for two people of different race to marry.

Ying-ying's change of identity is complete when her American husband even changes her name. Lena tells: "My father proudly named her in her immigration papers: Betty St. Clair, crossing out her given name of Gu Ying-ying." (*Joy* 107) Perhaps Mr St. Clair wants to disguise his wife so that she would not have to hear racist comments of her name but what he fails to understand is that the name is part of his wife's identity, a link to the Chinese family who gave her the name.

As an elderly lady after her husband has died, the mother still ponders whether she could tell her daughter what her true feelings towards her American husband were. "Can I tell my daughter that I loved her father? .. How could I not love this man? But it was the love of a ghost. Arms that encircled but did not touch. A bowl full of rice but without my appetite to eat it. No hunger. No fullness." (*Joy* 286) It appears that Ying-ying does not have a close relationship with her husband since they do not understand each other's language or customs and like the mother in *The Woman Warrior* she also refers to foreigners as ghosts who are not real people but more like shadows. As mentioned previously, in China foreigners are not considered to be as good as the Chinese since they think of their own culture as the best form of civilization. Evidently, there are many things of her past that Ying-ying is unable to share with her husband who is a representative of a different culture. Thus Lena experiences a clash of Chinese and American culture at home in the relationship of her parents.

Consequently, the daughter becomes one of the few links that the mother has to her Chinese heritage. Lena and Ying-ying speak Chinese together and, moreover, the daughter acts as an interpreter between her mother and the English speaking world around them. The father cannot understand much of what his wife has to say but, instead, he tries to put words into her mouth. For example, he would explain to Lena: "I think Mom is trying to say she's tired," He would whisper when my mother became moody." (*Joy* 109)

Daughter's job as a mediator between two cultures is not easy and she often chooses to translate what she thinks her mother wants to hear while leaving out some complicated parts. "I often lied when I had to translate for her, the endless forms,

instructions, notices from school, telephone calls.” (*Joy* 109) It appears that Lena experiences a cultural clash while translating to her mother - she herself is living in an American world while her mother is more like an outsider. As a sensitive child Lena tries to avoid the clashes by translating only such things which will not upset or confuse the listener.

Already as a child the daughter feels responsible for her parents’ relationship. A good example of this sense of responsibility is displayed when her baby brother dies and she has the conversation below with her mother.

Ying-ying says:

“And then this baby, maybe he heard us, his large head seemed to fill with hot air and rise up from the table. The head turned to one side, then to the other. It looked right through me. 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!”

I could not tell my father what she had said. He was so sad already with this empty crib in his mind. How could I tell him she was crazy. So this is what I translated for him: “She says we must all think very hard about having another baby. She says she hopes that this baby is very happy on the other side. And she thinks we should leave now and go have dinner.” (*Joy* 116)

The translation which the girl chooses to give to her father shows that she is apparently unable or afraid to mix two cultures but, instead, she wants to avoid cultural clashes the best she can. As mentioned above, Lena is a mediator between two cultures - Chinese and American. As mentioned in the chapter concerning Chinese culture, Chinese people often believe in spirits and it appears that Lena’s mother, too, believes in bad omens and spirits while her father does not seem to have a faintest idea of his wife’s thoughts. It seems that therefore Lena tries to translate her mother’s Chinese beliefs and abstract fear of the reasons why the baby died into more American expressions of grief while adding a good amount of hope into her words. When she talks to her father her style of communication is directly aimed at helping him in his grief whereas her mother’s words resemble more of babbling to oneself.

On one hand, Lena demonstrates her sensitivity between two cultures while she does not translate from word to word but, instead, finds American sentences to please her father but, on the other hand, she seems to have given up hope that her parents would ever understand one another and her only concern is in keeping them together. It appears that the clash of Chinese and American culture takes place inside the daughter’s head since she finds no way to combine the beliefs of two cultures. Evidently, Lena

thinks that Chinese and American communication should be separated but perhaps this separation complicates the formation of her own Chinese American identity since her two cultural sides of identity are kept apart.

Ying-ying becomes deeply depressed after the death of the baby and her daughter can sense it: "After the baby died, my mother fell apart, not all at once but piece by piece." (*Joy* 117) Lena also thinks: "I wondered why my father never worried. Was he blind? Why my mother and I see something more?" (*Joy* 113) However, the death of the baby affected the father as well and eventually the girl understands: "My father seemed to fall apart in a different way. He tried to make things better. But it was as if he were running to catch things before they fell, only he would fall before he could catch anything." (*Joy* 117) The relationship between the parents is a complicated one indeed and their daughter lives in a turmoil of two cultures inside her childhood family.

As an adult, Lena has marital problems with her architect husband Harold whom she admires so much at the beginning of their relationship. When they start dating she demonstrates her inferiority complex by being honored that such a fine man as Harold wants to be with her. "All I can remember is how awfully lucky I felt, and consequently how worried I was that all this undeserved good fortune would someday slip away." (*Joy* 168) It appears that Harold and Lena are quite different by nature, for example, while he wants to split all bills in half she would like them to share their monetary affairs more freely which bothers Lena. Another thing that bothers her is that they own a firm where Harold treats and pays everyone well except his own wife. He seems to take her for granted and expects her to be submissive and satisfied with his decisions.

Some reasons for Lena's tendency to be submissive could be in the indirect style of communication that her mother is acquainted with and which she witnessed at her childhood home. During that time the indirectness is enhanced by the fact that Ying-ying knows so little English while, perhaps therefore, the daughter never hears her parents fighting. As an adult Lena does not know how to stand up for herself but, instead, she prefers silent communication. "Because when I want something to happen - or not happen - I begin to look at all events and all things as relevant, an opportunity to take or avoid." (*Joy* 165) It appears that although the daughter has grown up in the United States she prefers indirect communication which is typically Chinese and which

she has been taught by her mother. Lena seems to wait for things to happen while she takes the role of a passive observer.

Since the daughter knows that the mother is a master of silent communication she is afraid Ying-ying will guess that she has marital problems without her even mentioning about them. "To this day, I believe my mother has the mysterious ability to see things before they happen. I remember this ability of my mother's because now she is visiting my husband and me in the house we just bought in Woodside. And I wonder what she will see." (*Joy* 161-162) As the daughter guessed, the mother understands that there is something wrong in Lena's marriage since when Ying-ying walks around the house she thinks: "All around this house I see the 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." (*Joy* 275) What the mother does not understand, however, is that her daughter knows her well since Lena has grown up in the influence of her indirect communication and, therefore, she, too, can guess Ying-ying's thoughts. The mother seems to be unaware of her daughter's ability and, therefore, she complains in her mind:

For all those years I kept my mouth closed so selfish desires would not fall out. And because I remained quiet for so long now my daughter does not hear me. She sits by her fancy swimming pool and hears only her Sony Walkman, her cordless phone, her big important husband asking her why they have charcoal and no lighter fluid. (*Joy* 64)

Ying-ying thinks that Lena has not understood her silent wishes or hints. As mentioned previously, American culture prefers direct communication and the mother seems to think that her American daughter will not catch her meaning unless she directly tells her about her life and preferences:

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. And now I must tell her everything about my past. It is the only way to penetrate her skin and pull her to where she can be saved. (*Joy* 274)

The importance of past experiences which Ying-ying refers to was previously discussed in the chapter concerning Chinese culture. Traditionally, Chinese respect history since their idea of time is cyclical and according to this idea, when one learns about the past one will also understand the present since they are united in the course of time. It seems that the mother is not just imitating American directness but also following Chinese

tradition when she is planning to tell her daughter about their family history. Ying-ying thinks it will help Lena to understand her present life when she reveals her some secrets of the past which are ingredients of the present.

Further, what makes the mother to decide to tell her daughter more about her life in China is Ying-ying's worry that when she dies Lena will not remember her. "She has no *chi*. This is my greatest shame. How can I leave this world without leaving her my spirit?" (*Joy* 286) As mentioned earlier in the chapter on Confucianism, *chi* is one of the four Confucian Principles which help a person to conduct one's life into a right direction. If the mother does not share her *chi* (which means wisdom or spirit) with her daughter who is the closest person in Ying-ying's life there will be no-one to remember her. The mother also appears to feel that it is her obligation to pass on to her daughter all the wisdom that she has learnt during her life. Although Ying-ying at one point claimed that she had given up her *chi* when she came to the United States, it seems that as an old lady she has regained her spirit and thus can transfer her knowledge to her daughter.

4.2.3. Rose Hsu Jordan: egalitarianism versus individualism, prejudice of race

Rose is a daughter of a Chinese American family with eight children. Like Lena also she has conflicts concerning her childhood family and her marriage. Both of Rose's parents are originally Chinese and, perhaps therefore, the conflicts within her childhood family do not resemble those in Lena's but the marital problems which the two daughters face as adults are of the similar kind.

A good example of a cultural clash in Rose's childhood is an incident and its results which take place on their first family picnic at a beach. Rose is fourteen at the time. "We were all blind with the newness of this experience: a Chinese family trying to act like a typical American family at the beach." (*Joy* 130) The family is attempting to adapt an American custom but, unfortunately, their effort has a terrible outcome since it is early fall and there are hardly any other people or, least of all, lifeguards present at the beach. The family members are all busy enjoying their leisure time except that the mother asks the daughter to take care of her three younger brothers. The two brothers

are playing in the sand and Rose is in her own thoughts while all of the sudden she notices that her youngest brother, a four year-old Bing, has disappeared. Even though the whole family and later the coast guard are trying to find the boy he is never discovered and has apparently drowned.

The next day after losing Bing the mother An-mei returns to the beach to search for the body and Rose joins her since she feels responsible for the loss because she had been told to keep an eye on her brothers and she had failed. When An-mei came to the United States she had turned to Christian faith but at the time of desperate need it appears that she uses all possible means to detect her son. She not only prays that God will show her where Bing is but she also tries to calm some Chinese spirits and tells Rose:

An ancestor of ours once stole water from a sacred well. Now the water is trying to steal back. We must sweeten the temper of the coiling Dragon who lives in the sea. And then we must make him loosen his coils from Bing by giving him another treasure he can hide. (*Joy* 137)

After saying these words An-mei throws a cup of sweet tea in the water and a precious ring, a gift from her deceased mother. As previously explained in the chapter on Chinese culture, Chinese people have often synchronized their beliefs and do not only believe in many different ideologies but also in spirits. An-mei appears to be a believer of many things who has also accepted Christian faith but only as one more item to the list of things she believes in while not abandoning any item of the list. Rose doubts that they will find Bing by using her mother's methods and it seems that there is a cultural clash in the mother's and the daughter's beliefs.

The daughter does not believe in the things her mother does but, instead, she respects American values and traditions and although her family follows many Chinese customs, Rose wants to assimilate to American manners. She says: "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." (*Joy* 214) However, the daughter is not happy when she tries to completely abandon her Chinese side since when she relies only on her American identity she does not feel very self-confident and her mother knows this. An-mei tries to advice Rose by saying: "A girl is like a young tree. 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.” (*Joy* 213) When the mother tells this to her daughter, Rose thinks:

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. (*Joy* 213)

It seems that Rose is confronted by the same problem as all the other daughters in the novels: on one hand, if she follows her mother’s example of values she will be separated from American society but, on the other hand, her concentration on American values separates her from her Chinese heritage and parents. It is not easy to mix two cultures but often one of them remains the dominant one while the other one is pushed to the background.

As an American adult, Rose is confronted with new problems when in the middle of American people she starts to realize that she cannot deny her Chinese side, after all, but has to learn to accept it. Apparently, the major problem area in her adult life is her marriage. Rose meets her husband Ted when she is studying at the University of Berkeley in California. She is attracted to him since she sees him as an incarnation of an American man.

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 his arms; the fact that his parents immigrated from Tarrytown, New York, not Tientsin, China. (*Joy* 123)

When Rose and Ted start dating they are confronted by prejudice from both of their families. As mentioned previously in the chapter concerning Chinese American culture, prejudice and discrimination have not vanished in the United States and in the novel Ted and Rose face the prejudice of race. An-mei does not want her daughter to date a non-Chinese man and Ted’s mother makes it clear when she talks to Rose during a family picnic that she would not like to see them united either:

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 would 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. "Mrs Jordan, I am not Vietnamese," I said softly, even though I was on the verge of shouting. (*Joy* 124-125)

It appears that although the parents are prejudiced, their children try to be egalitarian since they are the young of the 1960's when, as mentioned previously, egalitarian ideas were brought to American society along with the Civil Rights movement. The mothers who mean good make their children keep together even more strongly and when Rose tells Ted about the prejudiced things his mother has told her he gets upset, apparently, because as an American independent, individualistic man he wants to show that he does not let his mother to decide for his life. As mentioned earlier in the chapter on American family, according to American ideal of independency, one should have the right to decide for one's life. Perhaps therefore, Ted becomes even more attracted to Rose when he can demonstrate his individualism by being with her. "With imagined tragedy hovering over us, we became inseparable, two halves creating the whole: yin and yang." (*Joy* 125) While Ted follows a typically American ideology of individualism by dating the girl he wants Rose herself thinks of their relationship as part of Chinese ideology. It may be claimed that she demonstrates her awareness of her Chinese side by referring to their relationship with one of major doctrines of Confucianism: yin and yang where Ted represents the masculine force of yang and Rose is the feminine yin. The combination of yin and yang was explained in more detail in the chapter concerning Confucianism.

Although she marries an American man who is able to decide for his life individually, regardless of his family's preferences, Rose herself is not used to living in an equally independent manner. Therefore, Ted makes all the decisions in their family and their relationship is far from being equal. As mentioned previously, obedience is one of the basic qualities in a woman in Confucianism and it seems that Rose behaves like a proper Chinese woman who lets the husband be the leader in the family. At one point, after Ted loses a lawsuit of malpractice in his profession as a plastic surgeon, he suddenly starts to lose his self-confidence and demands his wife to decide. "No you decide. You can't have it both ways, none of the responsibility, none of the blame." (*Joy* 126) Now the husband shows that he would like them to be equal partners in the family since he cannot bear to be the "stronger" and the more independent one anymore.

As mentioned previously in the chapter on American culture, Americans are often either defenders of individualism or egalitarianism. It appears that, fundamentally, Ted is an American individualist who mostly cares about himself and is not ready to support a wife who suffers from an inferiority complex. He is expecting everyone to survive on their own and fails to understand why his wife has chosen to act the way she does. Just before their separation when Ted and Rose are having one of their last arguments he says to her: "How the hell did we ever get married? Did you just say 'I do' because the minister said 'repeat after me'? What would you have done if I had never married you? Did it ever occur to you?" (*Joy* 127) All of the sudden Ted is tired of an obedient wife. Superficially, it seems that he has started to change his individualistic tendencies towards egalitarianism since he realizes that individual decisions mean individual responsibility but, however, he is not ready to share responsibilities and would simply want Rose to make the decisions alone. Therefore, it may be claimed that Ted still resembles more a defender of individualism than egalitarianism.

At first Rose is devastated by her husband's request of divorce and she cannot help thinking that her mother will be disappointed in her failure to satisfy a man. The mother and the daughter have the following conversation:

"Why do you not speak up for yourself? Why can you not talk to your husband?"

"Ma. Please. Don't tell me to save my marriage anymore. It's hard enough as it is."

"I am not telling you to save your marriage. I only say you should speak up." (*Joy* 216)

This conversation shows that Rose has been wrong about her mother. It appears that An-mei has realized that a woman can fight for her rights in the United States and, in a sense, the mother is more Americanized than the daughter since she understands the rights of an individual. When An-mei further tells about her own mother who committed suicide in her desperation in China she tries to encourage her daughter with her story and show that she has high expectations of the life in America. "That was China. That was what people did back then. They had no choice. They could not speak up. They could not run away. That was their fate." (*Joy* 272) An-mei wants her own daughter to defend herself, instead of hiding behind her sorrow, because Rose has her American means to do so.

The mother knows what she is talking about since it appears that she is the only one who fully understands her daughter's problems of submissiveness and she thinks,

below, about the reason why her daughter seems defenceless although she has grown up in America where she has all American opportunities without the weight of Chinese rules:

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 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. (*Joy* 241)

An-mei has been unable to avoid the effect of Chinese culture when bringing up her children. It seems that while Rose has felt and seen what her mother is like she unintentionally has followed her example and, instead of listening to her mother's words, the daughter has learnt from her deeds. It appears that Rose has captured the proper behaviour of a wife from her mother's example. In the quote above An-mei's idea of mothers and daughters as stairs which follow one another is one major metaphor in the novel since it shows the unitedness of the two. Like the stairs are connected to each other mothers and daughters are, too.

Of course, Chinese culture is not the only factor which causes conflicts in Rose's life but for some reason she often blames Chinese influence when she is in trouble. Her ideas of what is Chinese in her character are similar to the ideas of some Chinese American students who were asked to define what is Chinese and what is American in their character (these students were described earlier in the chapter concerning American culture). In general, the students connected negative adjectives with the word "Chinese" and positive with the word "American". Rose's thoughts about Chinese influence in her character are described when she tells about her session with a therapist:

At first I thought it was because I was raised with all this Chinese humility. Or that maybe it was because when you're Chinese you're supposed to accept everything, flow with the Tao and not make waves. But my therapist said, Why do you blame your culture, your ethnicity? And I remember reading an article about baby boomers, how we expect the best and when we get it we worry that maybe we should have expected more. (*Joy* 170)

It seems that Rose demonstrates her American side when she remembers what she has learnt about the baby boom generations and she is relieved when she realizes that she belongs to an American group of people. Although Rose had general ideas of Chinese humility and taoism, she prefers the connection to American baby boomers. The above quote is also a good example of the fact that reasons for our actions in life are a mixture

of several factors. Especially, in the case of mixed heritage culture, values and ideologies become intertwined and all of the four daughters are products of two cultures.

4.2.4. Jing-mei Woo: collectivism versus individualism, reconciliation between two cultures within the daughter's character

Like the other three daughters Jing-mei is also confronted with conflicts that are connected with cultural clashes. There are two cultural confrontations in Jing-mei's life which I shall explain in more detail of which the first one takes place in her childhood when her mother is trying to discover a talent in her while the other could be called Jing-mei's realization of her Chinese identity which happens in China where she as an adult is visiting her relatives. Jing-mei is the only one of the four fictional daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* who is or has not been married and, therefore, conflicts concerning marriage could not be included in her case.

The first cultural clash in Jing-mei's life starts to build up when mother Suyuan decides to find the hidden genius of her young daughter. At first the child is excited about this search for her talent, too. "In all my imaginings, I was filled with a sense that I would soon become *perfect*. My mother and father would adore me. I would be beyond reproach. I would never feel the need to sulk for anything." (*Joy* 143) Jing-mei's thoughts illustrate that she seems to be a product of an individualistic culture since she believes that her hidden ability would lift her into a level above the others, even above her own parents. Jing-mei is apparently aiming at individual glory even though she thinks her parents would be proud of her she, herself, would be the perfect one, not her whole family. Thus she seems to respect American individualism while her mother is a follower of collectivism.

Wong (1993:40) points out that Suyuan is projecting her hopes of success in America upon her daughter. The mother is a product of a collectivist culture and she tries to make her daughter fulfil her wishes of success since Jing-mei, as a representative of the family, would prove that it was worth coming to America by bringing prestige to the whole family. In a way, the daughter understands what her mother expects of the life

in America. “America was where all my mother’s hopes lay.” (*Joy* 141) However, it appears later that what Jing-mei fails to understand is that to her mother success could be experienced through the achievements of a family member, for example, her daughter since the mother is a product of Chinese collectivist culture. Mother’s hopes are connected to the prosperity of the whole family.

Suyuan gives endless tests to her daughter which eventually start to depress and exhaust the girl and, finally, all the testing makes Jing-mei decide: “I won’t let her change me, I promised myself. I won’t be what I’m not.” (*Joy* 144) The quote shows how Americanized and independent the daughter is. When she is determined to decide for her own life individually she simultaneously demonstrates how little respect she has for her parents’ will. As mentioned previously in the chapter concerning Confucianism, respect for one’s elders is one fundamental rule in Confucianism and it is something Suyuan is unable to teach her American daughter. Instead, Jing-mei demonstrates what she has learnt in the United States about individualism and about individual success.

The mother decides that Jing-mei’s expertise should be found in playing the piano and Suyuan dreams of her daughter becoming famous nation-wide for her talent. Consequently, the mother and the daughter have different ideas of the reasons why Jing-mei should learn to play and they have a dispute over the playing:

“Why don’t you like me the way I am? I’m not a genius! I can’t play the piano. And even if I could, I wouldn’t go on TV if you paid me a million dollars!” I cried. My mother slapped me. “Who ask you be genius? Only ask you be your best. For your sake. You think I want you be genius? Hnnh! What for! Who ask you!” (*Joy* 146)

The mother would like her daughter to work hard in order to succeed in life while the daughter is asking for her mother’s acceptance. In fact, the mother and the daughter are talking of two different things: Suyuan would like her daughter to work hard for good results while Jing-mei is asking whether the mother will care about her unless she proves her worthiness through achievements. It appears that the daughter detests the pressure her mother is trying to put on her and Jing-mei also shows that she is determined to decide for her own life in an individualistic manner. As a child she is so obsessed with her independent decision making that she chooses to show her individualism by not properly practicing to play the piano. As an adult Jing-mei thinks about her reluctance to practice:

So maybe I never really gave myself a fair chance. I did pick up the basics pretty quickly, and I might have become a good pianist at that young age. But I was so determined not to try, not to be anybody different that I learned to play only the most ear-splitting preludes, the most discordant hymns. (*Joy* 148)

The lack of practice causes a humiliation at a piano recital after which Jing-mei decides to quit playing even though her mother insists her to continue practicing. The mother and the daughter have a severe argument over the playing since Suyuan wants her daughter to be obedient and tries to force her to practice but Jing-mei is stubborn. She is determined to give up playing although her mother strongly opposes. “And then I decided. I didn’t have to do what my mother said anymore. I wasn’t her slave. This wasn’t China.” (*Joy* 152) The previous quote is a clear example of what Jing-mei thinks about Chinese and American culture. According to Confucian principles, a child should respect his/her parents and let them decide for his/her future and this is what Suyuan has taught her daughter at home but it appears that at school the daughter has learnt about American ideology of individualism. Now she wants to follow American customs and decide for her life independently regardless of the wishes of her Chinese parents since she is convinced she has the right to make her own decisions in a country other than China.

Jing-mei and Suyuan argue about the playing and they both show traces of different culture in their utterances. The mother tries to remind the daughter of the responsibilities one has for one’s parents. “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!” (*Joy* 153) Jing-mei wants to upset her mother when she answers: “Then I wish I wasn’t your daughter. I wish you weren’t my mother.” (*Joy* 153) Finally, as a climax of her anger the daughter shows her lack of respect for her mother by throwing hidden family secrets on Suyuan’s face. “I wish I’d never been born. I wish I were dead! Like them!” (*Joy* 153) With her last sentence Jing-mei refers to her half sisters whom her mother lost when she was escaping from the Japanese in China. The words have a strong effect on the mother who backs up looking pale and defeated.

Obviously, Suyuan is not prepared for this kind of an outburst and it is likely that she would not have uttered anything like it to her own mother in China and, therefore,

she does not have prior experience of a same kind of a situation from her own youth. The mother does not expect a strong clash of culture within the relationship of her daughter and herself since she thinks that her American daughter should understand the importance of Chinese values. Suyuan expects that her daughter would understand how essential it is to obey one's parents (*xiao*) while a child shouting accusations to his/ her elders is something quite unheard of in Chinese hierarchical culture.

As mentioned above in the chapter regarding communication, it is a custom in Chinese culture to avoid disputes in every possible way and harmonious co-existence is the goal in the relationships. Chinese preference for harmony may also be one of the reasons why Suyuan hesitates to argue with her daughter. Since the mother detests arguments, she simply escapes the situation and refuses to continue with the same subject later on. As an adult Jing-mei tells:

And for all those years, we never talked about the disaster at the recital or my terrible accusations afterward at the piano bench. All that remained unchecked, like a betrayal that was now unspeakable. So I never found a way to ask her why she had hoped for something so large that failure was inevitable. (*Joy* 154)

Although the daughter claims that it was her mother who had unrealistic hopes of her success it seems more likely that it is Jing-mei herself who expected that the mother was hoping she would become a genius in playing the piano. Suyuan had merely suggested that Jing-mei should use the possibilities that were open to her in the United States and that she wanted her daughter to work hard and do the best she could. In such a way not only Jing-mei's family but also the girl herself individually would succeed in life and, thereby, both individualistic and collectivist aims could be fulfilled. As mentioned previously, the Chinese prefer indirect communication and perhaps Jing-mei is unconsciously prepared to her mother's indirect communication methods when she automatically presumes that Suyuan means more than she utters. She is convinced that the mother expects too much from her. "For unlike my mother, I did not believe I could be anything I wanted to be. I could only be me." (*Joy* 154) The quote shows that apparently the daughter sees herself as an individual, not as a representative of her family.

The other clear incident of cultural clash in Jing-mei's life takes place when she is an adult and her mother has died. Because of the death of her mother she feels a need

to find out more about her Chinese heritage and, therefore, she starts to entangle the ingredients of her own identity to find out what is her Chinese side under the American surface. Jing-mei goes to China with her old father to meet some relatives and her twin half sisters from whom she received a letter which was addressed to the mother few months after her death. In China Jing-mei's father tells her the whole story of how Suyuan lost her twin daughters in the turmoil of the Second World War and how she tried all her life to get in touch with them although she was not sure whether they were alive or not. Ironically, Jing-mei learns new things about her mother's persistent love and stubbornness to give up hope only after the mother has died. "Finding my mother in my father's story and saying good-bye before I have a chance to know her better." (*Joy* 330) Gradually, the daughter learns to respect and understand her mother.

When visiting China Jing-mei learns new things about her own identity which she has not considered before although her mother had told her: "Once you are born Chinese, you cannot but feel and think Chinese. Someday you will see. It's in your blood, waiting to be let go." (*Joy* 306) The unification of Suyuan's daughters helps the youngest one to understand her own self better and, thereby, come to the same conclusion as her mother: "And now I also see what part of me is Chinese. It is so obvious. It is my family. It is in our blood. After all these years, it can finally be let go." (*Joy* 331) As an adult Jing-mei understands how important it is for her to know about China because only then she can appreciate her parents and thus understand her own Chinese American character. One may claim that when Jing-mei meets her Chinese sisters she realizes why the mother had hoped her to work hard in the United States. Apparently, Suyuan could not forget the lost daughters and was trying to replace them by concentrating on her youngest child whose life she still could influence. Reconciliation between the mother and the daughter seems to be reached when Jing-mei sees her twin sisters and understands the pain her mother must have felt when losing them. Symbolically, Jing-mei welcomes her Chinese side by meeting her sisters and learns to value her multiethnic character.

5. DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study is to examine Chinese, American and Chinese American culture as seen through two selected works of Chinese American fiction. The study is divided into three sections of which the first one concentrates on giving some generalizations of the three cultures whereas the second part claims certain ideas of family life within each culture and the third forms the analysis of the fictional material. Culture is the connecting factor in all the sections and the present study is a combination of fact and fiction since the first two sections present factual background information while the third focuses on fictional material.

In the section on culture general ideas of Chinese, American and Chinese American culture are introduced in order to later use the observations in the analysis. At first Chinese culture is presented briefly. Although there are several ideologies which have influenced Chinese culture, the present study concentrates on introducing the basic elements of Confucianism, and Chinese culture is regarded through Confucian principles and set of hierarchies. Collectivism, which is the major ideology in Chinese society and family, seems to be strongly based on the Confucian structure of hierarchies and, therefore, it seems justified to introduce first Confucianism and later collectivism. The implications of the above ideologies are seen in *The Woman Warrior* and *The Joy Luck Club* and it appears relevant to discuss them in the background section.

The chapter on American culture and history describes general ideas of American society by revealing common assumptions of its values. Two American ideologies - individualism and egalitarianism - are introduced since they seem appropriate for the later interpretations of the fictional material. Since Chinese collectivism and American individualism differ greatly from each other, one chapter has been used to compare the two ideologies and a similar kind of comparison has been made of different communication styles in China and in the United States.

Chinese American culture and history are discussed in more detail than Chinese and American equivalents since they seem relevant because the present study aims at presenting some kind of general picture of Chinese American people who form the American ethnic group that both *The Woman Warrior* and *The Joy Luck Club* describe.

However, main Chinese American ideologies are not introduced since not any clear seem to exist although both Chinese and American aspects may be traced in this multiethnic culture.

The section which is titled *Family as an essential constituent of culture* introduces what family life is like in Chinese, American and Chinese American societies and the position of woman within the family is also described briefly. This section seemed relevant because family relations are an important factor in the novels.

Finally, the third section of the thesis, which is titled *Cultural conflicts in the lives of fictional Chinese American daughters in The Woman Warrior and The Joy Luck Club*, concentrates on the fictional material used on the study. *The Woman Warrior* and *The Joy Luck Club* are discussed through conflicts in the lives of the Chinese American daughters. The conflicts chosen from the material all represent clashes of Chinese and American culture and the generalizations of the three cultures, which were made earlier on in the study, seem to help to explain many of them.

In *The Woman Warrior* the mother, the family and the surrounding Chinatown represent Chinese values in the daughter's life. As it is shown in the present study Confucian principles and preference of collectivism can be seen in the actions of the parents (mostly the mother) in Maxine's life while American society with its individualistic and sometimes egalitarian tendencies confronts her first at school and later in studies at the University. Ever since she learns English and starts to succeed in the American world Maxine also starts to drift away from her Chinese side and to live between two worlds - Chinese and American. Gradually, towards the end of the novel Maxine begins to understand her own flexible and complex identity - she realizes that she will never be completely American or completely Chinese but, instead, she will have a fluid personality which contains assets both from Chinese and American culture.

In the interpretation of *The Joy Luck Club* the aim is to present certain events of the four daughters' lives where they encounter conflicts connected with clashes of Chinese and American culture. Although all daughters appear within the same novel the observations on them are separated in the present study and each daughter is dealt within individual chapter. One may claim that by such individual interpretations the idea of American egalitarianism is followed by giving the daughters' conflicts equal attention

within the study. It would have also been possible to observe the stories in a more collectivist manner and to analyze them by following different themes rather than individuals. One may argue that the four Joy Luck Club families form a Chinese ingroup since they keep so closely together. Perhaps it would have enhanced the idea of collectivism to unite the stories of the four daughters thematically in the present study. However, one may also argue that the American quest for individualism encouraged the writer of the present thesis to treat the daughters separately. It was a deliberate choice to concentrate on each individual character but it is acknowledged that all choices include limitations. In this particular case due to separate chapters less focus is on the unification of the themes of cultural conflicts that the daughters meet but, instead, their conflicts are discussed as independent examples of cultural clashes.

The present thesis gives a limited view of possible factors that guide the actions of the characters in *The Woman Warrior* and *The Joy Luck Club* and, naturally, several other ways of viewing the issues would have been possible. For example, one could have used psychological theories to define the development of identity since finding one's identity is an important theme in the novels. More focus could also have been on feminist issues such as a thorough evaluation of mothers' and daughters' roles within different culture where the characters in the novels could have been used as examples of these roles. In the present study the novels have been used almost as if they were real documents of the lives of Chinese American women instead of analyzing them as works of art and searching for, for instance, stylistic factors in the novels, which also would have given a different viewpoint to the interpretation of the novels. However, in a limited study choices have to be made between many interesting and fruitful viewpoints and the present study concentrates on clashes between Chinese and American culture which are also relevant and frequent in the novels. This viewpoint is justified because one may claim that it respects the fact that both the authors and their fictional characters are Chinese American women whose identity is a combination of two cultures. By concentrating on different cultural issues, the writer of the thesis pays homage to the multinationalism of the women in the study.

Although conflict situations have been emphasized in the present study the two novels are not merely a collection of them. However, conflicting events are the

interesting points in the novels since often cultural clashes are seen most clearly in them. The conflicts, which often are connected to crises of identity, are not catastrophes but, instead, they help the person grow, recover and change and they are the crucial points when development must move one way or another (Erikson 1994:16). By writing about their lives, also about the conflicts, ethnic writers create a collective recovery since through writing they rise from namelessness, invisibility and facelessness into an identity of their own (Erikson 1994:25). Ling (1990:128) proposes that, for example, the writing of *The Woman Warrior* helped the author in discovering her own Chinese American voice. Both *The Woman Warrior* and *The Joy Luck Club* describe a daughter finding her identity, and her reconciliation with the mother so that finally “a hated bondage is revealed to be a cherished bond” (Ling 1990:141.)

In the present study only a few aspects of the three cultures have been dealt with but there would be many more factors to examine in *The Woman Warrior* and *The Joy Luck Club* which are connected with Chinese, American and Chinese American culture than those presented in the study. It would be interesting to continue the search by reading more background material on the three cultures and to point out more events in the novels which are connected with cultural clashes and culture in general. Another interesting field of study would be to concentrate on the mother’s talk-stories in *The Woman Warrior* and the mothers’ stories of Chinese life in *The Joy Luck Club*. One could choose to present the two novels from the point of view of the mothers. Then the emphasis would be on the realizations of Chinese culture in the United States while it in the present study has been on the combination of Chinese and American culture.

What I have considered important in the present study has been an examination of some possible cultural factors that have an influence on the identity and actions of Chinese American women. My greatest disadvantage has been that I have been doing the research far away from the actual Chinese Americans. It would have been helpful to interview Chinese American women and link the information received from them with the information in the novels. The present study has also been an attempt to find out whether historical and sociological facts may be used in interpreting fiction. It appears that implications of certain dominant ideologies - such as collectivism and individualism - have had their impact on Chinese American fiction. Thus traces of

certain major Chinese and American ideologies could be found in the works of fiction analyzed here. Hong Kingston and Tan help to create Chinese American culture in their novels and they help us to understand what it is like to live between two worlds.

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