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**CULTURAL CLASH IN *THE JOY LUCK CLUB* AND
THE KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE BY
AMY TAN AND *THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET* AND *WOMEN
HOLLERING CREEK* BY SANDRA CISNEROS**

M.A THESIS

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**AMY TAN'İN THE JOY LUCK CLUB VE THE KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE
İLE CISNEROS'UN THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET AND WOMEN
HOLLERING CREEK ADLI ESERLERİNDE KÜLTÜREL ÇÖKÜŞ**

Özet

Bu çalışmada Amy Tan ile Sandra Cisneros'un eserlerinde kültürel çöküş konusu, postmodern ve oluşum romanı (bildungsroman) bakış açısı ile incelendi. Çalışmada Tan'ın The Joy Luck Club ve The Kitchen God's Wife eseri, Cisneros'un ise The House on Mango Street ve Women Hollering Creek eserleri ele alındı. Yapılan çalışmada Tan'ın romanlarındaki kültürel yansımaları onun büyüme çağındaki gerçek yaşamı olduğu, aynı zamanda genetik olarak Çinli olmasına rağmen Amerikan yöntemleriyle büyütülmüş ikinci nesil bir Amerikalı Çinli olarak büyüdüğü görüldü. Tan'ın annesi Amerika'da yaşamasına rağmen Çin'e ait bir yaşam biçimini sürdürmeye çalışan birinci nesil bir Amerikalı Çinli idi. Jenerasyon bağları ve farklılıklar, kültürel inançlar ve geleneklerden dolayı Tan, annesi ile sürekli olarak bir çatışma içerisindeydi. İşte bu yönüyle onun iki eseri de ikinci dünya savaşı sırasında kızlarıyla birlikte Çin'den Amerika'ya kaçan birinci kuşak bir Amerikalı Çinli anne ile Postmodern Amerikan toplumunda büyüyen ikinci kuşak bir Amerikalı Çinli kuşağın arasındaki kültürel çöküşü anlatmaktadır. Bu farklılıklara rağmen sonunda hem anneler hem de kızları Amerikan ve Çin kültürünü eşit bir şekilde idrak ettikleri anda birbirlerini anlamaya başlamışlardır. Öte yandan Cisneros'un eserlerinde de bu kültürel çöküşler bu kez Latin-Amerikan kadını üzerinden aynı şekilde yansıtılmıştır. Kitaplar tipik bir Chicana (Meksika Kökenli Amerikalı) edebiyatı ürünüdür ve The Woman Hollering Creek adlı eser bu noktada Meksika ile Amerika Birleşik devletleri arasında yaşanan bir kültürel kırılmayı Amerika'ya göçen bir Meksikalı çift (ana karakter kadındır) üzerinden sunar. The House on Mango Street ise tipik bir oluşum (bildungsroman) örneğidir. Ana karakter kendi kimliğini bir Latin Amerikalılık üzerine kurgulamaya çalışır, bunu da sonunda bir yazar olarak gerçekleştirir. Bu noktada kültürel çöküş de ana karakterin öz tanımlama çabası üzerinden olur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel Çöküş, Kimlik, Çinli Amerikalı Edebiyatı Chicano Edebiyatı

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BY AMY TAN AND *THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET* AND *WOMEN HOLLERING
CREEK* BY SANDRA CISNEROS**

Abstract

This study analyzed the theme of cultural clash in works of two authors, namely Amy Tan and Sandra Cisneros from a postmodernist and a Bildungsroman point of view. The two works of Tan are namely *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife* and the works of Cisneros include *The House on Mango Street* and *Women Hollering Creek*. It was discovered that Tan's demonstration of culture in her novels portray her real life when she grew up in the United States as a second-generation Chinese-American who had been brought up in American ways despite being genetically Chinese. Tan's mother was a first-generation Chinese-American who tried to preserve Chinese ways while living under American circumstances. Due to the generational gap and differing cultural beliefs and customs, the mother was always in conflict with Tan. The two novels portray how a culture clash occurs between first-generation Chinese mothers who escaped to the United States during World War II and their Chinese daughters who have been brought in the postmodern American society. The mothers and their daughters eventually come to understand each other when both decide to appreciate American culture and Chinese culture equally. In Cisneros' works, the theme of culture clash was also evident through the demonstration of Latino-American women. The works are typical of Chicana literature – *The Woman Hollering Creek* demonstrates a culture clash between Mexico and the United States through the experiences of a Mexican couple (the wife is the protagonist) that moves to the United States. *The House on Mango Street* is a typical Bildungsroman because the character struggles to establish her identity as Latino-American which she eventually does by becoming a writer.

Keywords: Culture Clash, Identity, Chinese America Literature, Chicanos Litterateur

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Dedication

To my lovely parents

To my dear brothers and sisters

To all my relatives and friends who supported me

To all my teachers who taught me a word in my life

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, a study that was published on the Journal of Frontiers in Psychology investigated the psychological dynamics of culture clashes and how this understanding could be used to catalyze change in the contemporary American Society (Hamedani & Markus, 2019: 1). The study defined culture clash as a cultural identity problem that arises when a person finds him or herself in a situation that he or she must fully conform with two or more cultural values and traditions (Hamedani & Markus, 2019: 1). Such conditions frequently arise when a child is born to parents who are non-Americans but live in America or when one of the parents is purely non-American, and the other is a pure or mixed-race American. This situation confronts many immigrants in the United States, whereby they are forced to hybridize to cope up with both cultures (Ngo, 2008: 4). Research on cultural clash is old as most novels portraying the theme were published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This study will focus on the works of two authors, namely Amy Tan and Sandra Cisneros.

The first work that will be critically analyzed in this research study is Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. The novel was published in 1989, a time considered as postmodern by scholars. The story presents a variety of themes but the central one, especially in regards to this topic, is the problem of immigrant identity in the United States (Tanritanir & Görürüm, 2017: 124). As stated earlier, problems associated with attempts for cultural identity are the root causes of culture clash in society. Mainly, this novel is about four immigrant Chinese families living in San Francisco in the United States who start a club called The Joy Luck Club. The theme of immigrant identity is manifested in the conflict evident between Chinese mothers and their daughters (Tanritanir & Görürüm, 2017: 123). In this novel, it is articulated that almost every character experience the inability to blend Chinese cultural traditions and values to the surrounding American culture. The daughters who are purely American by upbringing but genetically Chinese were seemingly enthralled with the American culture. Their mothers who still firmly hold Chinese cultural values and traditions are worried about their daughters who have become culturally swept and designate their mothers' ways as old fashioned (Tanritanir & Görürüm,

2017: 123). By studying this theme from a critical angle, a significant amount of light will be shed on the topic of culture clash and this understanding could help in revealing ways to promote hybridization to avoid real problems surrounding cultural conflicts among immigrant families in the United States.

The second work of Amy Tan that will be critically analyzed in this study is called *The Kitchen God's Wife* that was first published in 1991. This work furthers the theme of culture clash by introducing yet another immigrant Chinese family living in San Jose in the United States (Jie, 2016: 977). Mainly, this novel illustrates the life of a girl whose mother is purely Chinese, whereas her father is a Chinese-American. Seemingly, the father, who has already hybridized, can cope up with both Chinese traditions and values as well as live up well in American society. However, the daughter finds it extremely challenging to live both Chinese and American ways and ends up choosing one – the American culture. This decision brings more problems rather than finding a solution whereby she is finally forced to escape home. In this regard, the daughter clashes culturally with her mother, which, to some extent, depending on the individual, can lead to other mental problems such as guilty attacks on neglecting one's mother (Jie, 2016: 979). The central dynamic of culture clash that Tan illustrates in this novel is the generational gap between immigrant parents and their American-born children (Jie, 2016: 978). Thus, by studying this theme in this novel, a more in-depth understanding of culture clash will be gained thus shedding more light on how hybridization can be promoted so that immigrants do not abandon their cultures but as well have the ability to live up in the American society.

Moreover, Amy Tan's works are solely based on cultural identity problems among Chinese immigrants and their American-born children. American society is extremely culturally diverse today. Therefore, finding universal solutions to cultural identity problems in the United States is also extremely challenging. In this regard, by studying Chinese immigrant hybridization mechanism alone is inadequate to arrive at this universality, unless the Government takes a segmentation approach whereby different interventions are deployed on different cultures in the United States to promote hybridization (Li, 2016: 2220). Therefore, the works of authors who also present the theme of culture clash among non-Chinese immigrants will offer more insight into the roadmap of attaining cultural hybridization universality.

In this light, this study will also focus on the works of Sandra Cisneros that illustrate the theme among Mexican-Americans. From these works, it shall be demonstrated that the intensity and dynamics of culture clash in the United States differ from one race and ethnicity to another.

Moreover, from the two works of Amy Tan, it is evident that Amy Tan wants to play a role of promoting co-existence, especially between Americans and Chinese mainly due to the cultural differences between the two countries. Therefore, it is also essential to reveal the main cultural differences between China and America as a foundational background for this study. The two countries have significant differences, which must be reconciled to successfully promote the globalization agenda. The advent of the Internet and other powerful technological innovations have endorsed globalization considerably. Consequently, scholars like Kuqi and Hasanaj have expressed the need for exchanging cultures besides goods, services, information, and knowledge (2018: 1). Globalization is a welcome idea in the twenty-first century because it promotes economic integration among countries across the world (Kuqi & Hasanaj, 2018: 1).

Similarly, organizations like the American Psychological Association (APA) have revealed that the intersection between cultural beliefs, languages, and customs can lead to challenging situations, which, in turn, can provoke stress and mental illness (2018: 1). Moreover, in the United States, immigrants of the Asian origin are more likely not to seek mental health services due to these cultural and language barriers, a trend that can make them more susceptible to this stress and mental illness (APA,2018: 1). In line with these findings are the results of the US Census of 2010 that revealed that Asian-Americans are one of the fastest-growing ethnic minorities in the United States U.S. Census Bureau . Therefore, shortly, America might be hit with a mental health crisis among its ethnic groups unless more research on acculturation, enculturation, and family expectations is done (APA,2018: 1). In the view of the author of this study, one of the ways to fill the cultural gaps between the Chinese and Americans is to conduct a literal analysis of novels reflecting the personal experiences of Chinese-American authors. Amy Tan is a Chinese-American author of second-generation and her works are thought to contain autobiographical elements.

Moreover, scholars consider China as a collectivist country whereas the United States as an individualistic country, thus indicating their sharp cultural differences. Individualistic countries or societies are those whereby individuals are expected to look after themselves and immediate family (Staiger, 1983: 68). On the other hand, collectivist societies are those whereby society is expected to look after the individual (Staiger, 1983: 68). Based on this cultural dimension, it is evident that first-generation Chinese immigrants in the United States are more likely to struggle in a society that does not look after them, especially in moments classified as times of difficulty according to their cultural beliefs and customs. For example, in the United States, the number of Chinese students in higher education has been on the rise in recent times. In a collectivist society like China, the purpose of education is to learn how to do whereas, in an individualistic country like the United States, the purpose of education is learning how to learn. This difference can cause a cultural conflict among Chinese students studying in American universities and vice versa, which, in return, may affect their academic performance hence not getting the value of their money. In this way, the future of the United States is endangered.

Another major difference between the cultures of China and the United States that have implications in the contemporary issues of culture clash between the two nations is their long-term orientation. Long-term orientation is a cultural dimension that measures the degree in which different societies maintain their links with the past while dealing with the present and future challenges (Venaik, Zhu & Brewer, 2013: 361). China is a long-term oriented normative country because it prefers to maintain time-honored traditional beliefs and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. In this regard, the first-generation Chinese mothers used as the main characters in the works of Amy Tan that are referenced in this study tend to hold firm to their traditional values and customs because they are short-term oriented and tend to view societal change with suspicion. Even when they moved to the United States, they still viewed American values and traditions with suspicion. On the contrary, the United States of America is a short-term oriented country because it is less strongly tied to its past while dealing with the current and future challenges. This sharp contrast between China and the United States from this perspective also furthers the reasoning behind the need to bridge the gap between the cultures of China and

American to promote the co-existence of the previous with the latter in a meaningful way. This study will analyze the two chosen works of Amy Tan while focusing on the theme of culture clash to determine how Chinese Americans could successfully be integrated into the mainstream American culture.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

The first work of Sandra Cisneros that will be critically analyzed in this paper is called *Woman Hollering Creek (and Other Stories)* that was also first published in 1991. First, unlike Tan's works that illustrate a cultural conflict between American-born Chinese daughters and their Chinese mothers, Cisneros' works are mostly an illustration of how a married Mexican daughter to the United States struggles to maintain a cultural identity that can balance between that of her father's Latino culture and that of her husband's American culture (Yay, 2017: 3). The *Woman Hollering Creek* is a clear depiction of individualism versus cultural traditions in this culture clash scenario. From the theme of problems with cultural identity, two more themes emerge, namely alienation and love as power (Fitts, 2019: 2). The *Woman Hollering Creek* illustrates these two themes by using a Mexican-born female character, who when she gets married to an American man finds it extremely challenging to abandon her father's Latino culture to adopt that of her husband. The problem is more evident when the husband wants the woman to leave her father's ways altogether (Yay, 2017: 20). Therefore, this story introduces yet another complex issue of cultural identity in the United States that must be integrated into the overall decision-making regarding how to promote cultural hybridization in the United States.

Finally, another related work of Cisneros that will be analyzed in this study is called *The House on Mango Street*, which was first published in 1984. Unlike the work introduced in the previous paragraph, *The House on Mango Street* is about a girl named Esperanza who undergoes various stages of self-definition in society. Being Mexican, Esperanza finds it extremely hard to live in Mango Street. She is ashamed of her parents' poverty and prefers to leave Mango Street both emotionally and physically to establish her own identity (Ramirez, 2015: 7). At first, Esperanza changes her name to look different from her family. Afterwards, she pursues her sexual life where she wanted to be identified by men as sexy and attractive, and once she gets insulted in a particular instance, she abandons the journey. Esperanza establishes herself as a writer where she discovered a new channel of interaction with the outside world (Ramirez, 2015: iii). The writing journey indeed gave her a new

identity that further promoted her ability to leave Mango Street both emotionally and physically. In this light, the novel also illustrates a unique scenario of culture clash and furthers the understanding of different individuals of immigrant families undergo in the United States. Unlike *Woman Hollering Creek* that presents the story of marriage, this work offers how daughters of Mexican origin living in the United States establish their identity in society. Thus, this work is also useful in providing another insight into the theme of culture clash from a dual cultural identity perspective.

Furthermore, like Amy Tan, Sandra Cisneros also wanted to promote the co-existence of Latino American people in the United States. In this regard, it is also essential to examine cultural differences between Mexico and the United States. Also, similar to China, the Mexican culture is significantly different from that of the United States. Mexico is also another country that is highly collective thus differing from the United States sharply in this dimension. Therefore, in a country like Mexico, loyalty is paramount and every member of society is responsible for taking care of the other. In this light, in the short story *Woman Hollering Creek*, the protagonist who emigrates from Mexico to the United States finds different social situations – Americans define themselves as “I” when she is used to a definition of “we” which can bring about significant social problems. Therefore, for the protagonist to survive in American society, she must find a means of doing so. Also, like Amy Tan, Sandra Cisneros utilizes autobiographical elements in her works that are referenced in this study. Therefore, analysing the theme of cultural clash in her works will provide an in-depth approach to how the co-existence of Latino Americans could be promoted in the United States of America. Additionally, other cultural differences have also been noted between Mexico and the United States such as uncertainty avoidance, indulgence, and power distance but to lesser degrees than individualism versus collectivism. The United States and Mexico share a lot of similarities such as long-term orientation and masculinity versus feminism.

Furthermore, from the brief analysis provided above, it is evident that the leading cause of culture clash between children and their parents is mainly due to a generational gap. The main question that arises is why the youth of Chinese culture or Latino culture choose to follow the ways of surrounding American culture and

abandon that of their parents. Dr Tina Besley of the University of Glasgow attributes this pattern to the existence youth cultures in the postmodern era (Besley, 2002: 2). The way youths establish their identities in the process of hybridization differs significantly from that of their parents. Besley further notes that the postmodern era is mostly manipulated by globalization and consumerism. Also, the four works of the authors that will be analyzed in this paper use a female protagonist. Based on Besley's views of youth culture in the postmodern era, it is also essential to take a feminist viewpoint to discuss the theme of hybridization and culture clash in American society. The subsequent sub-section will provide the dynamics behind the youth subculture in the United States and its impact on children or youth of immigrant families, particularly Chinese and Latino.

1.1. The Rise of Youth Subcultures in the Postmodern Era

Postmodernism has been defined slightly different in various disciplines such as literature, philosophy, fashion, technology, communication and social sciences. It is a shift in perspective as well as a critical and socio-cultural theory (Mambrol, 2017 :1). It is thought that the postmodernist aspect emerged in the 1950s and continues today (Mambrol, 2017: 2). The four novels that are referenced in this study were written in the postmodern era, and they portray themes in a postmodernist perspective.

In literature, the postmodernist perspective is heavily reliant on the characteristics of Post-World War II literature such as fragmentation, paradox, questionable narrators, and more (Jagoda, 2009: 643). However, postmodern literature, just like postmodernism as a whole, lacks a consensus on definition and scope and little is known about its importance (Jagoda, 2009 :643). Fragmentation in postmodern literature is mainly intended to reflect the chaos of the world (Mambrol, 2017 :2). In the eighteenth century, when modernism was still active, story writers always reverberated logic, rationality, reason, science, and unity. After World War I, scholars noted that the world could be indeed very chaotic. The outbreak of World War II and the shift of superpower from Europe to North America further convinced them that the theory of enlightenment had become less useful in the world (Mambrol,

2017 :3). The change took shape in many disciplines, including architecture, social sciences, and literature. Postmodern literature is highly fragmented in terms of theme development, plot, characters, and even the setting. During modernism, most novels or stories were being told in one direction: why children should obey their parents, for example. In the sense of immigrant families, children would choose to follow their parents' ways strictly. However, in the dawn of postmodernism, children have become "chaotic" in their relationship with their parents. They can either choose to follow their parents' ways or develop their own because the postmodern society permits them. In this light, the youth subculture was born to represent the children who choose to abandon their parents' customs and traditions and develop their own (Shildrick, 2006: 61-74). Therefore, from a postmodernist viewpoint, it is also imperative to examine how different cultures welcome the youth subculture in society, especially in the American immigrant setting.

This section focuses on two cultures, namely Chinese and Latino, in the United States. Mainly, an in-depth analysis of how youth subcultures are formed in the United States is performed with a critical look at how they result in a culture clash between children born and bred in the United States with their immigrant parents. Since the four works that are referenced in this paper can be divided into children and their parents and wife and husband, another sub-section will be unveiled later to discuss how Latino girls who get married to American husbands seek hybridization in the United States with particular reference to *Woman Hollering Creek*. These analyses will provide background information to the overarching aim and objectives of this study that shall be presented later in this chapter.

1.1.1. Culture Clash between Chinese-American Children and Their Parents

Chinese culture is mainly portrayed in Tan's works. In a study that examined the Chinese diaspora life as described in *The Joy Luck Club*, it was indicated that the young generation is split between two cultural lines. In the novel, Lindo Jong hymns, "I wanted my children to have the best combination: American circumstances and Chinese character. How could I know these two things do not mix?" (Tan, 1989: 289). The culture clash expressed in this book depicts that social and political beliefs differ dramatically from culture to culture, and in this case, it is

not only between the Chinese culture and the American culture but also between the Chinese culture and the youth subculture (Loktongbam, 20018: 58). However, Loktongbam further indicates that the daughters represent the American culture whereas the mothers represent the Chinese culture (Loktongbam, 2018: 58). Also, in *The God's Kitchen Wife*, Tan illustrates that the daughter chose to abandon her mother's Chinese ways and customs and adopt the American culture. From this point of view, it is also crucial to examine why the youth subculture among children of Chinese immigrants is more inclined towards the American culture than the Chinese culture.

One of the reasons why the young generation is inclined more towards the American culture is postmodern consumerism. Sardar notes that “consumerism defines who you are, what you are, where you are coming from and where you are going to” (Sardar, 1999 :139). Similarly, Stevens indicates that “you are what you buy” because in the postmodern society, consumerism plays an influential role in life (Stevens, 2010: 199). What people consume shapes their creation and production of a sense of self (Todd, 2011: 48). For example, in the United States, most people buy items that possess particular marks. The most common one is fashion. In this regard, consumption functions as an aspect of communication to society where one fits within the social structure. Therefore, consumerism is one of the reasons the mainstream culture has evolved to several subcultures among them the youth subculture.

In his book titled “*Postmodernism and The Other: New Imperialism of Western Culture,*” Sardar argues that Western Culture is imperialistic due to influences inherent in postmodern consumerism. According to Sardar, postmodern consumerism refers to the type of consumerism that transfers meaning inherent in age-old sources of purpose like history, tradition and community (Sardar, 1999 :139). This type of consumerism undermines non-western cultures by creating an illusion of plurality, thus promoting its acceptance among non-westerners as well as acting as a torrential force for assimilation of other cultures (Sardar, 1999 :139). Indeed, most western products such as those originating from the United States often brainwash the consumer through illusioned advertisements that create a sense of plurality hence widespread acceptance among non-western cultures. Sardar goes ahead and

articulates that "...the illusion of plurality created by the market serves only to hide the reality that the West continues to despise non-western cultures while it continues to consume them" (Sardar, 1988: 140). Hence, non-Americans born and bred in the United States fall trap to this market plurality through implicit market campaigns that brainwash them those non-western cultures are inferior to the western culture. Consequently, most youths end up preferring the surrounding American culture to the native culture of their immigrant parents, thus resulting in a culture clash. From this viewpoint, it is also imperative to discuss why the youth often fall trap to market plurality in the postmodern society as their parents retain their native culture's beliefs and traditions.

In his paper, Singh indicates that in postmodern consumerism, mass consumption and production influence perceptions, values, constructions and desires of personal identity (Singh, 2011: 88). Singh further notes that some of the factors that influence consumer identity include but not limited to gender, age, social class, and ethnicity among many others (Singh, 2011: 88). The youths are more likely to get brainwashed with the torrential force that the Western culture is a plural identity for assimilated immigrants in the United States than their parents due to a generational gap (van Wel, 1994: 211). Also, research has shown that Asian-Americans are more likely to establish identities related to the surrounding American culture than Latinos and African Americans (Junn & Masuoka, 2008: 729). This finding further explains why the Chinese children of immigrant parents depicted in the works of Amy Tan defied the ways of their parents and adopted the American culture as their identity.

1.1.2. Latino-American Cultural Identity from a Feminist Viewpoint

Van Well discovered that Asian-Americans are more vulnerable to the drenching forces of the Western culture plurality as created in postmodern consumerism than their Latino and African American counterparts (van Well, 1994: 211). Indeed, how Sandra Cisneros depicts the theme of culture clash in "The House on Mango Street" and "Women Hollering Creek" reflects this difference. Like Tan, Cisneros is interested in exploring what happens when cultures come together, and in this case, the Latino culture and the American culture. In the Woman Hollering

Creek, Cisneros “depicts the situation of the Mexican-American woman: typically caught between two cultures, she resides in a cultural borderland. The topics of the stories range from the confusions of a bicultural and bilingual childhood to the struggles of a dark-skinned woman to recognize her beauty in the land of Barbie dolls and blond beauty queens” (Baxley & Boston, 2014: 92). In this case, the protagonist, who is an adult female, finds it extremely challenging to balance between her father’s traditions and customs and that of her American husband. When the protagonist chooses to reside in a cultural borderland, Cisneros tries to symbolize the nature of the complexities associated with being Mexican-American living in the United States. Apart from ethnicity, Singh also noted that age plays a significant role in the establishment of cultural identity (Singh, 2011: 88). Cleófilas, the protagonist, had gone past the age of an adolescent, and she had probably abandoned the youth subculture before deciding to get married. Undoubtedly, her age was the reason she was unable to fully adopt the American culture as per the husband’s demands. The age factor is further confirmed in “The House on Mango Street.” However, in “The House on Mango Street,” Cisneros introduces a new perspective called the Bildungsroman. The word Bildungsroman is German, whereby Bildung stands for dual meanings, namely “the external form or appearance of an individual” and “the process of giving form” (Sharma, 2014: 11). When the theory of the novel was introduced in the eighteenth century (Roman), scholars sought to eliminate the inherent ambiguity evident in the dual meaning of the word. The consensus reached was integrated with the theory of the novel, thus resulting in the formation of Bildungsroman, which treats a novel as a literary form in society and culture (Sharma, 2014: 11). Therefore, a Bildungsroman analysis involves an examination of form and its rapid proliferation in society. Explicitly stated, form is a person, usually the protagonist in a novel. A novel that demonstrates the rapid development of the protagonist in an urban setting is traditionally considered a Bildungsroman genre (Graham, 2019: 121). Therefore, *The House on Mango Street* is a Bildungsroman genre because Esperanza, the protagonist, can be considered a form in society that rapidly proliferates to establish her identity as a writer. For example, at the beginning of the novel, the 12-year-old Esperanza changes her name that reflects her ways and not those of her family heritage (Mexican). When she

became sexually aware, Esperanza pursues beauty and cruelty so that men can love her and not hurt her by becoming friends with Sally. After she is assaulted, Esperanza once more loses her sense of identity and continues to worry about who she is. Later, she decides to accept people in her neighborhood and community and realizes that changing her name would not help her to form a compelling identity. After establishing her position in society, Esperanza finally decides to establish her identity as a writer, which eventually worked for her. Therefore, while she was nearly getting alienated and forming a purely American identity while she is genetically Mexican, Esperanza came back to her senses and found a position in society that serves both her emotional and physical demands. This approach to acculturation among Latinos (Mexican), as depicted in the works of Sandra Cisneros, is different from that of Chinese Americans, as demonstrated in the works of Amy Tan.

1.2. Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim of this study is to explore the theme of culture clash in *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan and *The House on Mango Street* and *Women Hollering Creek* by Sandra Cisneros. The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To examine the theme of culture clash in *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan from a postmodern viewpoint.
2. To examine the theme of culture clash in *Women Hollering Creek* by Sandra Cisneros from a postmodern standpoint.
3. To examine the theme of culture clash in "*The House on Mango Street*" from both a postmodern viewpoint and a Bildungsroman perspective.

1.3. Research Questions

This research study intends to answer the following research questions:

1. How is the theme of culture clash portrayed in *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan when examined from a postmodern viewpoint?

2. How is the theme of culture clash depicted in *Women Hollering Creek* by Sandra Cisneros from a postmodern standpoint?
3. How is the theme of culture clash demonstrated in *The House on Mango Street* from both a postmodern viewpoint and a Bildungsroman perspective?

2. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AMY TAN'S WORKS FROM A POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE

2.1. Overview

This section addresses the first research question of this study which states that “How is the theme of culture clash portrayed in “*The Joy Luck Club*” and “*The Kitchen God's Wife*” by Amy Tan when examined from a postmodern viewpoint? The works of Amy Tan are based on a postmodern context. Thus, the literary analysis of these two works will majorly be performed from a postmodern perspective. A character analysis of the novels' protagonists and other significant characters will be conducted from a postmodern viewpoint to establish how the theme of culture clash emerges. Also, a literary analysis of the context, plot, relevant literary devices, as well as themes, will be performed from a postmodern angle to reveal how the issue of culture clash develops. However, before conducting this analysis, it is imperative to develop a quick overview of the Chinese America literature since both works are based on it.

2.2. The Chinese American Literature

This discussion will cover the Chinese American literature by examining Chinese immigrants and their descendants and the struggles and puzzles they encounter in the White dominant society. Also, a quick historicization of the Chinese American literature shall be provided to offer more background to the literary analysis of the two works of Amy Tan that are referenced in this study.

2.2.1. Chinese immigration to the United States

The first immigration of Chinese can be traced back to 1848 when three Chinese men arrived in California in search of greener pastures on the other side of the Pacific Ocean (Bai, 2015: 15; Yin & Daniels, 2000: 12). They returned home with 240 pounds of gold, thus stirring the fanaticism of those who also wanted to become more prosperous (Yin & Daniels, 12). By 1851, there were more than 2000 Chinese immigrants in California (Yin & Daniels, 12). In subsequent years, political

and legal emergencies in China destroyed the country's economy, thus leading to an upsurge of Chinese people interested in searching for greener pastures in the United States. After 1852, Chinese immigration to the United States became a regular occasion whereby they were warmly welcomed to the foreign land (Yin & Daniels, 12). However, they could still be viewed in the eyes of Native Americans as exotic. The California Governor by then, John McDougal and local newspapers welcomed them by terming them as "patient" and obedient to domestic laws "...as if born and bred under them" (Yin & Daniels, 17). A few years later, this friendliness vanished. For instance, when Governor John Bigler assumed office in 1852, he announced Chinese immigration as illegal. Unhesitant, the Chinese reacted to the announcement through a well-crafted 5-page letter. Written by the members of the Six Companies, an association that protected the rights of Chinese workers, the essay was regarded as the first piece of Chinese American literature (Yin & Daniels, 18). They accused the governor of implicating class discrimination in the name "Coolies" that was literary given to them when the governor announced their immigration as illegal. The anti-Chinese immigration movement dominated the country whereby in 1882 the Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act and due to an increase in severity of racial discrimination in the country around these times, the Chinese Six Companies remained silent and stopped drafting letters anymore in the view that they were endangering their lives in the foreign land. Until 1943, they remained silent. The Chinese Exclusion Act was rescinded when China partnered with the United States during the Second World War (Chen,2016: 34).

After the 1960s, more Chinese immigrants moved to the United States. However, unlike the pre-1960 group, the new generation of immigrants comprised of a considerable portion of educated individuals such as university students and professional businesspeople. The pre-1960 group strictly followed the Chinese culture: they could come to work in the United States, and after making some savings, they could move back to their homeland. After the opening-up policy of China, university students and professionals moved to the United States. Most of them could not return home hence introduced the Chinese culture to America as well as the American culture to China. In the contemporary world characterized by multiculturalism due to globalization, Chinese form a vital element of the American

multi-culture. In this regard, since most Chinese immigrants regard the United States as their home, they often struggle to balance their native culture and American culture. Consequently, the assimilation process has become extremely complex as they have to remain flexible between the two cultures (Chinese and American) to form their identities (Ang, 1993: 34). Therefore, in this regard, the US policies expecting immigrants to slowly abandon their cultures and get wholly assimilated to the American culture remains a challenge to the government.

Therefore, the Chinese American culture comprises of the struggles and puzzles that Chinese immigrants and their descendants experience in America. Also, the analysis has shown a turn of events in regards to their experiences in the postmodern era. Thus, the study of the Chinese American culture as portrayed in themes of culture clash and identity formation can be explored from a postmodern perspective to understand the struggles that Chinese Americans undergo to assimilate in the United States culturally.

2.2.2. Modern Chinese American Literature

Chinese American literature flourished once more after the end of World War II after keeping quiet for about 60 years. The new generation of Chinese immigrants in the United States started expressing their struggles through literary texts. Yin and Daniels noted that most of these literary texts show how second-generation immigrants could not find strength in Chinese culture because they were born and grew up in America (Yin & Daniels, 2000: 118). However, they still looked “foreign” to the eyes of the whites in the dominant white society. Similarly, Zhang notes that, no matter how hard the second-generation Chinese immigrants tried, they could not be mixed up with whites because they were “foreigners” (Jie, 2016: 978). Some of the notable works that expressed this theme and related others such as the cultural conflict between the East and West, generational gap and formation of cultural identities include the works of notable authors like Pardee Lowe, Virginia Chin-Lan Lee, Jade Snow Wong, and many others. Most of these works were published between 1945 and 1975. Afterwards, a new generation of Chinese American authors like Amy Tan emerged also expressing their continued struggle for

being brought up in America and yet their physicality is associated with the Chinese. This generation of writers revealed the influence of the American culture that caused a value conflict between Eastern Collectivism and Western Individualism. Daughters running away from their homes was a typical scene in second-generation Chinese American literary writings. The daughters expressed eagerness to identify themselves with the mainstream culture. This identity formation approach always yielded a crisis mostly expressed by this generation of writers. A classic example of this Chinese American literature is Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*.

2.3. The Joy Luck Club

First work of Amy Tan that will be subjected to the analysis mentioned above is *The Joy Luck Club*. This novel was the first literary text by Amy Tan. She was born in 1952 in California (Sonquist, 2009: 1). She was born after the end of World War II. Thus, she grew under the influence of the new generation of Chinese American writers and particularly in the postmodern period. Tan has written about assimilating to the mainstream American culture at the expense of the Chinese heritage. She lost her father and brother to brain tumors when she was fourteen years old (Sonquist, 1). Tan attended various colleges both in America and Switzerland and finally received a Master's degree from San Jose State University (Sonquist, 2). Her book *The Joy Luck Club* that was published in 1989 won the L.A. Book Award and The National Book Award. However, before publishing the book, Tan had worked in different jobs such as a bartender and a counselor of physically disabled children (Sonquist, 2). She belongs to a movement of Asian-American writers such as Wakako Yamauchi and Maxine Hong Kingston. Her typical style of writing in *The Joy Luck Club* is a connection between the past and the present. For instance, when she starts each chapter in the book, she does it with a small parable that, to some extent, relates to the woman whose story is being presented in that chapter. Amy Tan has published five other books, including *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991). This subsection focuses on her first book, *The Joy Luck Club*.

2.3.1. Plot Summary

The novel is about four different immigrant Chinese American families.

They moved to the United States during the 1940s from different parts of China, but a club called the Joy Luck has connected them. The club was started by a woman named Suyuan Woo who has then been joined by three other women, namely Ying-Ying St. Clair, An-Mei Hsu, and Lindo Jong playing mahjong together. They had daughters each namely Jing-mei “June” Woo, Lena St. Clair, Rose Hsu Jordan, and Waverly Jong. The four mothers are strongly tied to Chinese traditions and customs, whereas their daughters chose to live American individualistic lifestyles. This sharp contrast in perception between mothers and their daughters caused a conflict between them. Mainly, the mothers prefer their daughters to grow up under American circumstances with Chinese identities. The daughters, on the other hand, prefer to be identified with white American culture and thus try to avoid their mothers’ ways. However, towards the end of the novel, the mothers reconcile with their daughters when each of them puts effort to understand one another. Finally, they establish Chinese American identities that resolved their conflict.

From the plot provided above, it is hard to establish a character who is the protagonist of the story. Instead, this novel has a heroine who is the founder of the Joy Luck Club, Suyuan Woo. However, depending on the angle from which this study is phrased, that is, examining the theme of culture clash in the novel, all the eight characters (the mothers and their daughters) are central to the story. Therefore, this analysis must focus on all the eight characters and how they relate to each other because they seem the protagonists of their own stories about how they culturally struggle in the United States. On a secondary level, the main protagonist of the story is the Chinese culture and heritage because it struggles to survive in the presence of the dominant American culture. If the four mothers and their daughters are discussed differently as a unique story, the Chinese culture and heritage are depicted to struggle in the American culture surrounding. Therefore, each of the eight characters will be discussed differently while pointing out to postmodern views and the resultant theme of culture clash.

2.3.1.1. Suyuan Woo

In other contexts, Suyuan Woo would have been regarded as the protagonist because she is the heroine of the story because she organized the original Joy Luck

Club in China in the presence of high levels of resistance from society and unfavorable conditions such as war. She says, “People thought we were wrong to serve banquets every week while many people in the city were starving (...).” (Tan, 1988: 11). Suyuan explains the mentality that enabled her to overcome the resistance from society when she says, “But to despair was to wish back for something already lost. Or to prolong what was already unbearable” (Tan, 11). Suyuan tries to explain that the current situation should not stop one from pursuing their philosophy of life because the opposite is equivalent to prolonging the current situation, which might be undesirable to oneself.

The main characteristic of Suyuan that she also shares with other mothers in the novel is her fierce love for her daughter Jing-Mei as manifested in her attempts to stop her from preferring the American culture to the Chinese culture. Suyuan is also in constant fear that she might be alienated from her daughter pointing out to their generational gap and different cultural upbringings thus aligning with Tanritanir and Görürüm’s observation that first generation Chinese immigrant mothers strongly hold Chinese cultural traditions and values that they always want to inherit to their obviously unwilling American daughters (Tanritanir & Görürüm, 2017: 123). Nevertheless, Jing-Mei questions this love considering that she hears her mother has two twin sisters back in China. However, her mother’s friends tell her that “And that’s why you can understand why a mother like this could never forget her other daughters. She knew they were alive, and before she died, she wanted to find her daughters in China” (Tan, 1988: 29). Indeed, it is only death that prevented Suyuan from going back to China to search for her twin daughters which she left by the roadside when she became ill (dysentery) while escaping the Japanese invasion of China in Kweilin during World War II. This illustration reveals that Suyuan was initially born in China, and she moved to the United States while fleeing the consequences of World War II and thus she had already established a Chinese cultural identity. In this regard, she belongs to the first generation of Chinese Americans who are characteristically conserving the Chinese culture while living in the American circumstances. Therefore, from a postmodern point of view, Suyuan was brought up during modernism, a period before postmodernism when the world was typically running on philosophies of enlightenment such as logic, science, and

unity.

2.3.1.2. An-mei Hsu

An-mei Hsu is the mother of Rose Hsu in the story. Just like any other mother in the novel, An-mei has a firm belief in the mother-daughter tie: “Not know your own mother?” cries Auntie An-mei with disbelief. “How can you say? Your mother is in your bones!” (Tan, 1989: 30). This observation tells the reason An-mei Hsu had a cultural conflict with her daughter at first. In a study, American parenting is different from Chinese (Asian) parenting: Chinese mothers are often very strict and highly control their children whereas in the American context, this parenting style is generally perceived as harmful to the lives of adolescents (Frances McClelland Institute 2). An-mei firmly believes that her daughter must follow her ways, and since she is Chinese, her daughter Rose Hsu must also adopt the Chinese identity while living in the American circumstances. However, since Rose was brought up in America, she finds it extremely challenging to choose the Chinese ways because, as Hamedani and Markus observes, a cultural identity problem arises when a person finds him or herself in a situation that he or she must fully conform with two or more cultural values and traditions (Hamedani & Markus, 2019: 1). The mother-daughter love is also manifested in many circumstances where An-mei tries to teach her daughter life. For instance, at some point, she tells her daughter that “Your tears do not wash away your sorrows. They feed someone else’s joy. And that is why you must learn to swallow your own tears” (Tan, 1988: 244). From this regard, An-mei wanted her daughter to adopt her approach to life. In their comparative study, Kyoon Yoo, Subba Rao and Hong revealed that cultural differences could be an attribute of differences in performance in the workplace because people from different cultures hold diverse perceptions of quality outcomes. From a postmodern standpoint, An-mei might have differed with her daughter at first due to a generational gap between them.

2.3.1.3. Ying-Ying St. Clair

The main characteristic of Ying-Ying St. Clair, the mother to Lena St. Clair is

passivity, whereby she leaves her husband to make almost every decision in her life. This passivity is an attribute of the Chinese culture during modernism: Postmodern America is characterized by active and independent women whose passivity related to their sexuality was erased by hard-won economic and legal independence during the 1950s and 60s and even beyond (Ho, 1997: 1). Her practice of inaction in the American culture is what brought about the culture clash. Ying-Ying always paid attention to signs and omens with little of it to her inner feelings. When her first husband died, she married Clifford St. Clair, who was purely an American. A culture clash occurred between the two, especially when Clifford could mistranslate her clipped sentences, her gestures, as well as her silences. Sharifian notes that this kind of miscommunication usually occurs when two speakers of different cultures have different perceptions of experience (2010, 3367). Indeed, their different cultural upbringings exposed them to different experiences and their divergent perceptions of their experiences lead to miscommunication between them. Even so, Ying-Ying was a useful member of The Joy Luck Club. However, unlike the other mothers, she does not show fierce love towards her daughter Lena. Ying-Ying is a distant mother to Lena, and when she realized that she had passed her passivity and fatalism to her, she tries to teach her how to take control. At some point, she says, “And I want to tell her this: we are lost, she and I, unseen and not seeing, unheard and not hearing, unknown by others” (Tan, 1989: 67). This quote depicts how her practice of Chinese culture in an American context resulted in a crisis that she solves by accepting the perilous side of female passivity in marriage. Therefore, although she also wanted her daughter to establish her identity as Chinese, Ying-Ying’s acceptance that passivity is harmful to her stay in the United States indicates she is the only mother that showed some degree of willingness to accept some American ways that would act as an alternative to her “weak” Chinese ways.

2.3.1.4. Lindo Jong

Lindo Jong is the mother of Waverly Jong in the novel. She is also the narrator of “Double Face” and “The Red Candle.” Lindo also has strong ties with the Chinese culture as evidenced by her strong beliefs in Horse, a Chinese Zodiac which means hardworking and strong. At a tender age of 2 years, Lindo was arranged to be

married to Tyan-yu based on the compatibility of their zodiac signs. Lindo says, “I came to think Tyan-yu as a god, someone whose opinions were worth much more than my own life” (Tan, 1989: 56). At the age of 12, Lindo moved to Tyan-yu’s home whereby her mother in law treated her like an unindentured servitude. This maltreatment led to a divorce which Lindo planned niftily. These events unfolded during modernism and the generational gap between Lindo and her daughter Waverly eventually leads to a culture clash between them. Waverly was born and bred in the United States and throughout her life, although genetically Chinese, she was subject to American mass consumption that influenced her cultural perceptions and desires of cultural identity (Singh, 2008: 88). Also, as Sharifian observed, Lindo was brought up in China and thus her perceptions of experience were different from that of her American daughter, Waverly (Sharifian, 2010: 3368). Consequently, miscommunication occurred between them leading to a culture clash. For example, based on the ingenuity that Lindo used to divorce Tyan-yu, she observes that her daughter has also inherited it but she fears that she is too Americanized to appreciate the Chinese culture and heritage.

2.3.1.5. Jing-mei Woo

Jing-mei Woo is the daughter of Suyuan Woo in the novel. She is, to some extent, the main character because she represents the daughters of the other three mothers. Also, the way she assimilates culturally presents a bildungsroman, to some degree. For example, at first, Jing-mei, who also has an English name, June, is in a serious conflict with her mother mainly due to cultural differences. At first, Jing-mei was completely unable to live both Chinese and American ways: as Hamedani and Markus note, this can lead to a cultural identity problem because Jing-mei must fully conform to both Chinese and American cultures simultaneously (2019, 1). Her mother, on the other hand, followed the ways of the Chinese heritage and lived American circumstances, which can also initiate a cultural identity problem because she is supposed to adopt an identity that can act as a bridge between the Chinese and American cultures (Hamedani & Markus, 2019: 1). It is not until her death that Jing-mei comes to understand why her mother had these wishes. Jing-mei says, “Once you are born Chinese, you cannot help but feel and think Chinese” (Tan, 1989: 267).

Her mother also wished her daughter Jing-mei adopts the same approach. However, Jing-mei was Americanized wholly. After experiencing various crises regarding a culture clash that occurred between her and her mother, Jing-mei comes to accept to adopt Chinese American culture whereby one appreciates both cultures equally – a bildungsroman to some extent because Jing-mei finally established her identity through her experiences (Sharma, 2014: 11). For example, when she travels to China, she finds a deep connection with the Chinese heritage. This discovered essence makes Jing-mei understand her late mother. When she was reunited with her twin sisters, Jing-mei discovered further why her mother preferred her to live Chinese ways and customs under American circumstances rather than identifying herself as American and yet she was a “foreigner” to the eyes of the whites. At this point, if viewed from a bildungsroman perspective, Jing-mei established her identity by unconsciously realizing that she never appreciated the Chinese culture mainly because of forces of plurality that were introduced to make American culture superior to the Chinese culture through consumerism dynamics as evidenced in youth subcultures in the United States (Sardar, 1999: 139). Therefore, from a postmodern perspective, where globalization is a prevalent characteristic, Jing-mei acts as a bridge between China and America in the postmodern era. The appreciation that Jing-mei rendered to both Chinese and American cultures also provided value to the other three mother-daughter relationships. If literary interpreted, after World War II, East and West had a culture clash that mostly prevented some events like globalization from taking place. Globalization took place when the two cultures found a reconciliation avenue as portrayed by Amy Tan.

2.3.1.6. Rose Hsu Jordan

Rose Hsu is the daughter of An-mei Hsu in the novel. Her main character is passivity. However, after facing a marriage crisis due to her indeterminacy, Rose chooses to become decisive to her life. She culturally clashed with her mother just like the other three daughters. Rose was purely Chinese but chose to live American ways – mainly due to consumerism forces that implicitly bore the youth subculture where most immigrant Chinese children abandoned their Chinese ways for American ways (Sardar, 1989: 139). She says, “It was only later that I discovered there was a

serious flaw with the American version” (Tan, 1989: 191). In this quote, Rose refers to her husband Ted. She says these words after they grew apart the moment Rose became too much indecisive in the marriage. However, Rose does not seem to regret about her past because “There were too many choices” (Tan, 191) and as a child, she was confused which one to select – which is also a bildungsroman as evidenced by struggle to establish a cultural identity which came to happen successfully (Sharma, 11). Due to consumerism patterns in the United States, Rose was convinced to follow American ways which she later admits it contained too many flaws for any pure Chinese living in the United States to adopt (Sardar, 139). Rose admits that she was wrong when she defied her mother’s pieces of advice that would have made her a decisive and strong woman. According to Rose, the American ways taught her to choose what to be without her mother’s dictation. The divorce with her husband confirms to her why she needs to listen to her mother because that is how one also listens to inner self rather than going to a psychiatrist. Thus, from a postmodern angle, a generational gap between Rose and her mother Mrs. Hsu brought about their misunderstanding – Rose, due to her age and upbringing in America, she was influenced by the youth subculture whereby she chose to abandon her mother’s old-fashioned ways (Singh, 88). At first, she rejected her mother’s ways when she chose to live American ways by growing up as a timid child who is unsure of where to find the truth, that is, in her mother’s ways or in American ways. Rose later realizes that choosing to be passive was itself a decision: a decision to continue in a situation of subservience, subordination, and eventual discontent. Female passivity was also a common trait of American women pre-World War II. However, when their husbands went to war and the women filled their vacancies in factories, they were empowered economically and the eventual realization of female potential in society which finally led to the women movements in the 1950s and 60s (Ho, 1997: 1). Female passivity in America was therefore eroded by the unfolding of postmodernism, and seemingly, as Rose and her mother easily appreciate, female passivity is a must-have-not for every American woman, whether immigrant or native. It is the core of the bridge between the American culture and the Chinese culture.

2.3.1.7. Lena St. Clair

Lena St. Clair was the daughter of Mrs. Clair in the novel. Her mother, Mrs. Clair, a pure Chinese woman, was married to a pure white man, St. Clair. Lena is the only mixed-race daughter of the “four daughters” in the novel. The theme of culture clash also surrounds her character. For example, there was always a culture clash between her mother and father due to miscommunication attributable to their cultural differences – the miscommunication was a result of divergent perceptions of their life experiences (Sharifian, 2000: 3367). While growing up with them, Lena always acted as an interpreter between them. However, she later feels guilty of not always translating important conversations perfectly thus ruining family relationships to some degree. In this regard, Tan tries to communicate that one of the causes of a culture clash between the Chinese and Americans is miscommunication since Chinese conversational symbols may hold different meanings in the American context as attributable to divergent perceptions of life experiences of the two speakers of different cultures (Sharifian, 3368). Also, from a postmodern perspective where cultural identity is easily manipulated by consumerism patterns (Singh, 88), Lena experiences difficulties in her marriage with Harold. The two used a balance sheet to monitor their expenditure and as much as Lena tried to maintain an equal relationship between them, she later loses track of the nature of equality in a matrimonial relationship. Lena is consequently disillusioned and silenced in her husband’s presence. In this light, it is evident that Lena adopted American culture in disfavor of the Chinese culture even in her marriage mainly because of its strong appeal as portrayed in consumerism patterns in the United States (Singh, 89). The use of a balance sheet to monitor equal spending in a matrimonial relationship is an indication that her husband treated her as a “foreigner” due to her physical looks rather than an American based on her cultural practices and beliefs. Additionally, Lena had inherited superstition beliefs from her mother that nobody can control the future which led her not to take any important action to save her marriage despite having knowledge of its dysfunctionalities. In this regard, Lena picked wrong attributes of the Chinese that she could not blend with the American values and customs. Therefore, besides dropping female passivity for successful assimilation,

while one stays in America, he or she must also drop superstitious beliefs for effective blending of the two cultures.

2.3.1.8. Waverly Jong

Waverly Jong is the daughter of Lindo Jong in the novel. Unlike other daughters like Jing-mei, she is portrayed as in constant struggle in the novel. She can be described as a driven lady in the novel because she is depicted as ambitious, proud, and intelligent, although sometimes cruel and arrogant. As a child, she became a chess champion whereby she was featured in the Life Magazine. However, she fails to win again in her subsequent plays thus resulting in giving up. Her main weakness is that she always laughed at those beneath her success-wise. Waverly was a successful woman financially as evidenced by her fashion sensitivity: she always wore fashionable clothes and attended high-end salons – as Stevens observed that “you are what you buy,” it is apparent that Waverly was easily influenced by the mainstream American culture through consumerism that eventually manipulated her desire to establish an American identity in disfavor of Chinese identity (2010, 199). Through her character, the theme of culture clash is also portrayed. Waverly always despised her mother’s teachings of wisdom, humility, and respect – due to the influence of youth subcultures in the postmodern America (Mambrol, 2017: 6). When she took her mother to see Rory, a hairdresser, Waverly was extremely upset when Rory said that she resembles her Chinese mother because she did not want to be associated with the Chinese heritage probably due to a brainwash from consumerism patterns that are inherently intended to promote the Western culture among Easterners (Besley, 2002: 2). Her mother said, “So she asked me to go to her beauty parlor, her famous Mr. Rory. She is ashamed of my looks” (Tan, 1989: 254). Although Lindo and her daughter were in constant argument and conflict, she blesses her to marry Rich, an indication that the fierce quarrel between the two was mainly due to mother-to-daughter love. At the end of the novel, Waverly comes to appreciate her mother’s heritage that she has tried to instill in her. Thus, she ultimately identifies herself as Chinese American, which is why to some extent her depiction in the novel is a portrayal of a bildungsroman – she struggles to establish a cultural identity.

Moreover, as stated earlier, apart from the four mothers and their daughters, the Chinese culture versus the American culture could be regarded as the secondary protagonist of the story. Apart from the protagonists, many other characters demonstrated the theme of culture clash in many ways: for example, miscommunication due to cultural differences, struggle to establish cultural identities, alienation, and many more. Therefore, it is also to further the discussion on culture clash in the novel by discussing other ways that the theme emanates from the story while considering other characters that were not considered for character analysis.

2.3.2. Cultural Clash and The Joy Luck Club

Also central to the topic of this research study, the main theme of the novel is culture clash as portrayed in many versions such as miscommunication between characters of the Chinese origin and American origin, struggle for the daughters to establish their identities in the United States as well as alienation. This section will focus on this theme and offer a grand discussion drawing evidence from a wide variety of instances from the novel.

The first instance where Tan portrays the theme of culture clash in the novel are the very reasons why the four mothers chose to set up the Joy Luck Club. The four mothers were originally born in China hence they grew up under Chinese circumstances including traditions and customs. They only moved to the United States escaping miseries of World War II in China. They believed that "...you could be anything that you wanted in America" (Tan, 1989 :132). However, before deciding to move to the United States, the mothers had not considered the cultural aspect because all they wanted at the time was freedom. When they arrived in the United States, they experienced a lot of challenges related to their cultural orientations. However, due to immigration policies during that time, the mothers had to keep silent as they could not share their miseries with the white dominant people (Chen, 2016: 34). Therefore, because they could not survive individually, the mothers decided to form the club to support each. The club acts as a shelter for the successful formation of the Chinese American culture (Yin, 2016: 149). In this light, Amy Tan tries to communicate that adult immigrants to the United States are more

likely to establish effective cultural identities within the shortest time possible, unlike the second-generation Chinese Americans who have been brought up in America but actually look as “foreigners” in the eyes of the native Americans. The four families lacked a blood kinship but due to their similar circumstances and experiences in the United States, they formed a new community through which they can effectively assimilate under the American circumstances. Thus, the new community offers a unique environment where the mothers (or families) could link to the lives they have left and their homeland where they will never return. From a postmodern perspective, it could be said that the mothers experienced a cultural conflict with the native Americans which affected their quality of living negatively thus leading to the birth of the idea of forming the Joy Luck Club. Yin establishes that the novel portrays the Chinese culture as negative “Other” while the American culture as positive “Self” because the mothers had to drop some of their Chinese ways like female passivity in order to successfully orient or assimilate in the United States (Yin, 2005: 149). The activities that they used to hold in this club offer further revelations as to why there was a culture clash between the mothers and their daughters.

The theme of culture clash also derives from the way Amy Tan depicts the mother-daughter relationship in the novel. One of the main activities that the four mothers perform in *The Joy Luck Club* is sharing ideas on how to teach their American daughters. Particularly, the mothers considered the Chinese culture as the best when compared to the American culture and thus they wanted their American daughters to identify themselves with it. However, based on the opinion of Yin, the mothers lost the battle because of the strong torrential forces of consumerism that implicitly portrayed the American culture plurally and the positive “Self” to middle-class Americans (Yin, 2005: 149). Although the daughters also benefited from the club, they once disliked it saying it is “...a shameful Chinese custom, like the secret gathering of the Ku Klux Klan...” (Tan, 1989: 28). In this light, the force of consumerism patterns easily swept the daughters more than their mothers could hence they ended up preferring the American culture. Their abhorrence of the club demonstrates the theme of culture clash between the daughters and the mothers. Particularly, the theme originates from the identity crisis that the daughters undergo

by objecting their mothers' wishes mainly due to their identities inclined towards youth subcultures in the American context. At the end of the novel, the daughters demonstrate that they benefited a lot from the club as it helped them assimilate by identifying themselves as Chinese American. Explained from a postmodern perspective, the second-generation Chinese immigrants were brought up in a postmodern world. Therefore, the issues of culture clash demonstrated by Amy Tan, especially between mothers and their daughters, is a depiction of the typical issues that Chinese American undergo in the contemporary world.

One of the main causes of a cultural conflict between the mothers and their daughters is miscommunication. The kinds of miscommunication that take place between them is not only due to a generational gap but also due to their different cultural upbringings – they developed different perceptions of their life experiences due to this cultural difference (Sharifian, 2010: 3368). Miscommunication between two generations is a common theme in most literary texts that were published in the 1960s and beyond (Kohn, 70). In *The Joy Luck Club*, the mothers and their daughters tend to disagree on the meanings of different ideas. For instance, Lindo Jong narrates that while she was a little kid back in China, she was obligated to marry a matchmaker's decision and not a man of her dreams. Consequently, Lindo sacrificed her happiness so as to fulfil the dreams of her parents by marrying her matchmaker's choice. She says, "A lot of bad luck fell on our wedding day, even though the matchmaker had chosen a lucky day..." (Tan, 57) which indicates that she respected the wish of her parents at the expense of her own happiness. Now in the United States, Lindo complains that her daughter Waverly Jong does not no more demonstrate the heaviness of the word "promise" as it used to be back in China. This misunderstanding between them as well is largely attributable to their different perceptions of life experiences attributable to their opposing cultural upbringings. For her daughter, she can easily disregard the promise of having dinner with her parents merely because of a headache. Thus, throughout the story, these kinds of miscommunication also emerge with the other mothers and their daughters. It is inevitable that the miscommunication that leads to the culture clash is due to a generational gap between mother and daughter coupled with Chinese immigration status in the United States. Otherwise, a generational gap itself cannot satisfactorily

explain the culture clash because it will sound false in most cultural contexts.

In summary, examined from a postmodern perspective, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* is a demonstration of the struggles that the first- and second-generation Chinese Americans underwent in the United States in the postmodern era. Following the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act, many Chinese suffered silently in the United States. Some of these sufferings were directly associated with their cultural orientation in the surrounding American culture. Due to the culture clash that occurred between the first-generation immigrants from China and the native Americans, Amy Tan portrays how they finally reconciled by establishing a Chinese American identity which served as a bridge between the American and Chinese cultures. Particularly, the formation of Joy Luck Club served as a shelter for the newly found cultural identity, which is even in use among Chinese immigrants in the United States today, after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Also, the novel is a bildungsroman to some degree because it demonstrates how the daughters struggle to establish their identities in the United States. Particularly, being American but genetically Chinese, the daughters at first choose to identify themselves as American but it leads them through numerous crises and they eventually accept that Chinese American is the most effective cultural identity for individuals who follow American values and customs but still physically look "foreign" to the eyes of the natives.

2.4. The Kitchen God's Wife

Just like *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan also demonstrates experiences of mother-daughter relationships among Chinese Americans from a cultural perspective. This novel will be analyzed from a postmodern perspective while considering feminist aspects as Tan tries to depict them in the novel. The setting of the novel is based on the postmodern era whereas the main theme portrayed is cultural identity among female Chinese Americans. The novel was published in 1991 and it gives a story relating to womanish issues such as motherhood and the effects of cultural forces on their identity establishment. In summary, the novel is about the relationship between a mother, Winnie Loue, and her daughter, Pearl Loue Brandt. The main protagonist of this novel is Winnie, the mother. Therefore, the character analysis that will be inclined towards postmodernism and feminism will be on the

protagonist and her daughter, Pearl.

2.4.1. Plot Summary

The novel is dominantly about mother-daughter relationship in the Chinese American context. Winnie is the major character and protagonist of the novel because she majorly dominates it. The dialogues of the two reveal the nature of their relationship from a cultural perspective. Pearl starts by reflecting on her childhood: “anger and cynicism” (Tan, 45). Her mother Winnie, on the other hand, admits that they live like strangers. She says, “...always trying not to bump into each other, just like strangers” (Tan, 1989: 82). At the beginning of the novel, their relationship is generally depicted as distant. Pearl and Winnie held secrets to each other. The distance is probably attributable to their cultural differences and a generational gap. Winnie was born and grew up in China. Before moving to the United States in 1949, just at the dawn of postmodernism, Winnie was married to an abusive husband in China called Wen Fu. However, she never revealed this secret to her Americanized daughter. On the other hand, Pearl suffered from multiple sclerosis and had a troubled marriage but kept them as secrets as she never revealed to her mother about them. The evident distance between them does not portray a typical mother-daughter relationship. However, in the midst of the novel, their relationship becomes closer when they inevitably decide to reveal their secrets to each other. This change could be attributable to Pearl’s realization of the significance to appreciate both American and Chinese cultures. Before revealing their secrets, Pearl described their relationship as “...we both won and we both lost, and I’m still not sure what our battle was” (Tan, 46).

Their relationship took a different shape when Helen, Winnie’s close friend, threatened to expose Pearl’s secrets such as her disease multiple sclerosis because according to the Chinese customs, one should not hold secrets beyond the New Year. The Chinese New Year ritual of clearing secrets also motivated Helen to threaten Winnie that she will expose every secret of her to Pearl. Winnie says, “She wanted to expose everything! – my past, my marriage to Wen Fu, everything I had worked so hard to forget” (Tan, 79). However, before Helen could expose her, Winnie

decided to tell all the realities to her daughter Pearl. She starts by saying, “I have to tell you something, can’t wait any longer. And then I will start to tell her, not what happened, but why it happened, how it could not be any other way” (Tan, 86). Seemingly, Winnie’s biggest worry is to explain to Pearl how and why she got married to Wen Fu, a man with an evil heart. She tells her daughter that she got married to him because she was once an innocent, lonely girl who wanted too much, and when Wen Fu knocked in with charming looks, she had to let him in. After learning the secrets of each other, they felt closer to each other. Pearl came to appreciate the cultural origin of her mother, and thus, established her identity as Chinese American rather than purely American. Therefore, the theme of culture clash emanates from the initial misunderstanding between mother and daughter due to their differences in cultural backgrounds of upbringing. The next subsection will analyze the characters of Winnie and Pearl in order to offer more insight into how the theme of culture clash is depicted in the novel.

2.4.1.1. Winnie Louie

Winnie is the English name that she was given by her late American husband Jimmy Louie. Otherwise, her Chinese heritage name was Jiang Weili – she also had several other names to different people. As Ramirez observes, when characters constantly change their names in a fictional diasporic writing like Amy Tan’s works, it is an indication of social struggle to establish a cultural identity (Ramirez, 2015: iii). Winnie was born in China in 1918 to a wealthy family in Shanghai. She moved to the United States in 1949, after the end of World War II – Winnie enjoyed all her childhood during wartime in China. Winnie was brought up in China during the time when political violence cases were popular – in 1918 during her birth year, more than 3,000 individuals were killed in political violence (Pletcher, 2011: 265). China was in political chaos during this time. She endured all the turbulence of World War II in her home country China and only moved to the United States after the end of the war – therefore, she is a first-generation immigrant in the United States.

In their paper that was published on Global English-Oriented Research Journal, Dr. Isaac Jebastine and Sweta Ravindran indicated that *The Kitchen God’s Wife* contains some autobiographical elements. Winnie and Pearl represent Tan and

her mother (Jebastine & Ravindran, 2015: 62). Similarly, according to Huntly, "...Amy Tan has said on a number of occasions that...is her mother's story, and indeed, the outlines of the novels and many of the specific details in the text are congruent with the story of Daisy Tan's life" (Huntly, 1998: 83). Tan represents the generation of Asian diasporic writers who depict their actual experiences narrated in a fictional autobiography. Mainly, most of these fictional autobiographies are often written by the daughter and the mother is always depicted as a first-generation immigrant to the United States between 1910 and 1949. Indeed, Winnie moved to the United States in 1949 – Jebastine and Ravindran describe her as a brave woman who journeyed from her war-torn homeland to a politically stable country (Jebastine & Ravindran, 2015: 62). The first-generation immigrants from Asia often considered the culture of the home country as superior to that of the host country (Jebastine & Ravindran, 2015: 60). Second- and third-generation immigrants, influenced by torrential forces of consumerism, often considered the culture of the host country as superior to that of their parents. Consequently, a culture clash often happens between mothers and their Americanized daughters.

In the very beginning of the novel, a culture clash between Winnie and her daughter is depicted. Pearl says, "Whenever my mother talks to me, she begins the conversation as if we were already in the middle of an argument" (Tan, 1991: 11). This indicates the culture clash that is aggravated by miscommunication between them: miscommunication usually occurs when two speakers of different cultures have different perceptions of experience (Sharifian, 2010: 3367). Amy Tan, in her non-fictional work called *The Opposite of Fate*, reveals that language limitation between first- and second-generation immigrants from non-speaking countries is the root cause of their culture clash (Tan, 1991: 274). In the novel, she says that her mother had "broken" English and this limited her perception of her. She goes and says, "I believed that her English reflected the quality of what she had to say. That is because she expressed them imperfectly, her thoughts were imperfect" (Tan, 274). This phenomenon explains the culture clash between Winnie and Pearl.

As stipulated earlier, the mother-daughter culture clash occurs due to differences in their cultural upbringings hence they have different perceptions of their experiences in life. Before she moved to the United States, Winnie was a strong

woman who always paid attention to the dictates of the Chinese cultural traditions and customs. In her study, Jandy explains as follows:

Tan once again brings the female Chinese culture to life. Winnie is a strong-minded woman, not the obsequious female always walking a few paces behind her husband and meekly accepting his dictates. Yet she is completely ruled by him; the culture of the country will allow nothing else. This story is straight-forward, in chronological order once Winnie starts telling Pearl her history (Tan, 1989: 325).

Coupled with the fact that Winnie had undergone numerous untold bad experiences when she was back in China, such as mistreatment in marriage and being jailed for two years, their cultural differences with her daughter always led to a misunderstanding between them. They had different perceptions of life experiences which is why Pearl never understood her mother as portrayed in the first part of the plot of the novel. Their relationship turn healthier after Winnie narrates her history when she was back in China to Pearl.

2.4.1.2. Pearl Brandt

Pearl Louie Brandt is the daughter of Winnie Louie and Jimmy Louie. The novel merely depicts her childhood experiences as the most part describes when she is already married with children in her forties. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan depict the struggles of four Chinese American daughters at their different ages. Considering that nearly all Tan's fictional works portray the cultural struggles of female immigrants in the United States, and the works contain some elements of autobiography, it could be said that in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan also tries to portray a new aspect of culture clash: between a mother and her adult daughter. Hence, the theory of youth subculture formation as described in the first section of this paper does not apply in the context of this novel. However, in an attempt to explain how Pearl ended up identifying herself as American even at her adulthood, the theory might apply to some extent. For instance, it could be said Pearl was among the youth (during her adolescence) who resisted the mainstream culture of their parents and choose their own due to torrential forces of consumerism in the American market (Sardar, 1999: 139). Also, Pearl, married to a white man, finds it

extremely difficult to relate well with her mother because she does not understand her properly. Pearl, introduced in the novel at her forties, does not know the history of her mother when she was back in China. Thus, she does not have a reason to understand her mother, which is also why they are distant and she cannot disclose her multiple sclerosis to her because she is dreadful of her mother's reaction. In the American culture in the postmodern era, a woman at her forties has established personal autonomy and agency (Howard-Hassmann, 2011: 433). Married to a white man, Pearl was unable to attend the wedding of her cousin because she does not value her family much: her husband is the only white in the family thus this makes her feel the odd one out. This phenomenon also indicates a culture clash between an individual and family.

Also, to some degree, the transformation and change that Pearl undergoes in the novel is a bildungsroman. Just like the four daughters of *The Joy Luck Club*, Pearl also undergoes some transformation and change to establish her cultural identity in the novel. However, unlike the four daughters, Pearl who has some American genes inherited from her mixed-race father, she does not seem to struggle much with the American culture. Instead, she struggles with her own family due to a misunderstanding between her and her mother. However, due to her late discovery of her imperfect but perfect cultural identity, the bildungsroman perspective has limited applicability in the novel. According to Thamarana, a typical bildungsroman depicts rapid moral and cultural growth of the protagonist from his or her young age through adulthood (Thamarana, 2015: 21). The case of Pearl in the novel misses some elements of a bildungsroman because she does not undergo rapid development as she only comes to understand her beloved mother when she is at her forties, a language therapist for children with disabilities. Thus, the most applicable viewpoint, in this case, is postmodernism as it depicts a new scenario of second-generation immigrants who struggle with their whole family as they are much oriented with the mainstream American culture with little to no understanding of their parents' culture (Wong, 2011: 1). For instance, at the beginning of the novel, Pearl is unfamiliar with several customs of her Chinese heritage and she even recognized that she is utterly unfamiliar with the rituals of Auntie Du's Buddhist funeral. However, after understanding her mother towards the novel, she

demonstrates some level of connection with her Chinese heritage. With only a single meeting with her mother, Pearl becomes thoughtful of American identity and rethinks about Chinese American identity. Many other events such as when she received an altar of Auntie Du's will and when her mother had narrated to her the story of Cleo and Tess, she became pensive and established a connection between her and her mother as well as her present and the past – when a character does this, it is considered a bildungsroman (Thamarana, 2015: 22).

In summary, the character analyses of Winnie Louie and her daughter Pearl Louie Brandt as the main characters of the novel has revealed their mother-daughter relationship from a postmodern angle. It is evident that a culture clash is evident in their relationship not only due to a generational gap but also due to their conflicting cultural orientations. However, the theme of culture clash is also evident throughout the plot of the novel. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the theme from a postmodern perspective by examining other characters as well as the plot of the novel.

2.4.2. Cultural clash and *The Kitchen God's Wife*

In the previous section, the characters of Winnie and her daughter Pearl reflected a culture clash in the mother-daughter relationship. Although the novel has duo settings (China and California, United States), the novel is mostly set in China. Amy Tan, who also depicts some elements of autobiography in the novel, revealed that she, at first, did not appreciate the Chinese culture as she grew up in a Chinese household under American circumstances. However, in this novel, she has demonstrated rich knowledge of the Chinese culture by using Chinese symbols and other elements of the Chinese culture. Therefore, apart from the culture clash proved in the mother-daughter relationship, the duo setting of the novel also depicts further the theme of cultural differences. This section will, therefore, examine the cultural differences between China and America that lead to the conflict between mother and daughter, but from a postmodern perspective.

Loktongbam observes that social and political beliefs differ dramatically from culture to culture even in the postmodern era: for example, between East and West

(Loktongbam, 2018: 58). This assertion indicates that Amy Tan's purpose in writing *The Kitchen God's Wife* and other novels was to indicate how the Chinese culture differs from the American culture. Seemingly, she believes that this knowledge will help her readers (Chinese Americans in her purpose) to assimilate effectively. Therefore, the culture clash that takes place between the Chinese mother and her American daughter is fundamentally intended to exploit how the Chinese and American cultures differ socially and politically. As such, it is also critical to study cultural differences between China and America as depicted in the novel in order to provide a grand discussion on the theme of culture clash from a postmodern angle.

In his study, Zhang Jie indicated that the main source of the theme of culture clash in the novel is the way Amy Tan calculatedly depicts how the Chinese culture and the American culture differ (Jie, 2016: 977). Jie writes, "Mostly in old China, represents the culture differences discrepancy of the two cultures" (Jie, 977). Jie further argues that in the 70s of the twentieth century, first- and second-generation immigrants were at "the [brink] of society" (Jie, 978). The overseas Chinese, as reflected in the novel, experienced problems to assimilate mainly due to misunderstandings that exist between the two cultures. The 70s of the twentieth century, in this case, echoes the postmodern era under which the story is set. Therefore, examining cultural differences between China and America during this time will help shed light on the theme of culture clash from a postmodern perspective.

The first cultural difference between America and China that Jie notes is the issue of marriage (Jie, 978). In the novel, Winnie makes the following expression:

Perhaps this was wrong of me to blame another woman for my won miseries. But that was how I was raised—never got criticize men or the society thy ruled, or Confucius, that awful man who made that society. I could only blame other women who were more afraid than I (Tan, 1991: 325).

The Chinese mainstream culture is dominated by the dogma of obedience. At age two, Winnie's match-maker had already determined her husband – Wen Fu. Due to the Chinese doctrine of obedience, Winnie had no other option other than marrying her match-maker's choice. She says, "What else could I do? I let him in" (Tan, 1991: 159). This culture differs sharply in the American context. Since the

novel is mostly about a mother-daughter relationship, a comparison with Pearl's marriage with that of her mother in China would help to reveal this difference. Pearl is happily married to a white man. They share matrimonial equality whereby both are employed and help each other to financially maintain their family. Even during modernism, the assertion of natural rights of "man" is conventional in the American culture. In America, women possess a natural right of choice in marriage. For instance, before dying in 1826, Thomas Jefferson said, "...the form which we have substituted restores the faith in unbounded reason and freedom of opinion..." (Jie, 979). 1826 marked the 50th anniversary of the American independence whereby women were recognized as equal to men – however, women's movements in the 1950s and 1960s was an advancement of their right to equality with men, such as voting. Otherwise, conventionally, mainstream American culture recognizes women's rights in marriage. Therefore, the sharp difference in the life experiences of Winnie and her daughter Pearl as defined by their cultures of upbringing, such as marriage, makes them lack understanding of each other thus keeping them distant. Perceptibly, as Sharifian observes that different perceptions of life experiences can result in miscommunication between two speakers of different cultures, there was some form of miscommunication between Winnie and Pearl that keeps them far away from one another. Other cultural indicators that depict how Winnie and Pearl might have misunderstood each other include the name identity of Chinese (for example, Bao-bao means "precious boy") and Chinese symbols such as the dragon.

In summary, in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Amy Tan is more interested in depicting the cultural assimilation of Winnie, the protagonist. In other words, the novel is more about how first-generation immigrants from China successfully assimilated to mainstream American culture than the assimilation of second-generation Chinese immigrants. According to Tan, the successful assimilation to the American culture for first-generation immigrants entails accepting both cultures equally. Winnie had a deep understanding of Chinese culture. However, she experienced a lot of miseries under its doctrines of marriage that rendered her weakness. However, inherently, Winnie was a strong woman who desired personal autonomy and agency. Her immigration to the United States to seek this right is an indication that she was also well oriented to mainstream American culture. For

instance, she says, “Of course, he did not hug me and kiss me, not the way you Americans do when you have been reunited after five minutes’ separation” (Tan, 176), which indicates that she understands the Western culture. Thus, in this way, she successfully assimilated culturally as demonstrated in the plot of the novel. Winnie never favored any of the two cultures when she expresses the differences between them.

In summary, this chapter has analyzed the theme of culture clash in Amy Tan’s major works namely *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God’s Wife*. The first sub-section of the chapter analyzed *The Joy Luck Club*. Unlike most fiction novels, the protagonist of this novel is not specific – the four mothers and their daughters are the central focus of the novel hence their characters were analyzed individually from a postmodern perspective. It was revealed that the mothers, who are all Chinese by origin, experience a cultural conflict with their Americanized daughters mainly due to a generational gap between them. Also, since the mothers were initially brought up in China whose culture differs sharply with American, they have different perceptions of their life experiences from that of their daughters. Consequently, there is a depiction of constant miscommunication between them that leads to the clash. As well, language barriers between the two cultures were also another reason for the culture clash. Towards the end of the novel, the mothers come into a common understanding with their daughters, who are hugely influenced by youth subcultures in the West, thus bridging the gap between Chinese culture and American culture. Particularly, Amy Tan demonstrates that the best solution for reconciling Chinese culture with American culture is to appreciate both heritages equally. The mothers at first favoured the Chinese culture and always preferred their daughters to also establish a Chinese identity but live under American conditions. Their daughters were purely Americanized. These extremes bring about crises in their relationships. Since the mother-daughter bond is unbreakable, both had to come to a consensus – appreciate one another equally.

Similarly, *The Kitchen God’s Wife* is subjugated by the theme of cultural differences between America and China that cause the culture clash between the characters mainly mother (Winnie) and daughter (Pearl). The second sub-section of this chapter analyzed the theme of culture clash in the novel from a postmodern

angle. However, unlike *The Joy Luck Club* where three of the daughters are in their youthful ages, the theory of the formation of youth subcultures was merely applied in this analysis because Pearl is introduced in the novel while she is in marriage in her forties. Amy Tan tries to demonstrate the culture clash between mother and adult daughter. Examined from a postmodern angle, it was discovered that the mother and her daughter remained distant because they lacked understanding of one another's perceptions of life experiences owing to their cultural differences. However, the two loved each other unconditionally. This love is expressed when the two reveal their secrets of life and their willingness to understand each other. Towards the end of the novel, both establish a Chinese American identity thus leading to successful assimilation to mainstream American culture. Overall, both novels literary depict the struggles that both first- and second-generation female Chinese immigrants undergo in the United States. They cannot fully identify as American because they still look foreign in the eyes of the natives. As well, they cannot solely identify themselves as Chinese living under American conditions because it hinders them both socially and politically. As such, they come to discover that appreciating both cultures equally is the only solution for successful assimilation. Both novels divulge exhaustive undercurrents of how one can establish a Chinese American identity.

3. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF *WOMAN HOLLERING CREEK* BY SANDRA CISNEROS FROM A POSTMODERN STANDPOINT

3.1. Overview

Apart from *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991), Sandra Cisneros is also the author of the famous *The House on Mango Street* (1983), which was her first work to be published. Others include *My Wicked Wicked Ways* (1987), *Loose Woman: Poems* (1994), and *Caramelo, or, Puro cuento: A Novel* (2002). She has also published autobiographical works with the *American Review* such as “Ghosts and Voices: Writing from Obsession” (1987) and “Do You Know Me? I Wrote *The House on Mango Street*” (1987). She was born to a Mexican-American mother and Mexican father in 1954 in Chicago, Illinois (Mathias, 2009: 2). Cisneros was born to poor parents, something she always thought was temporary. In one of her works that contain her autobiographical elements, she says, “...I couldn’t understand why our home wasn’t all green lawns and white wood like the ones in ‘Leave It to Beaver’ and ‘Father Knows Best’” (Tan, 2003: 72). Cisneros even became infatuated with a book called *The Little House* – she admired the house described in the book. She knew her parents were poor through the superimposition of the class norm in a TV screen. Cisneros also had six brothers and she was the only girl in the family – she lacked sisters and friends, so, apart from moving between Chicago and Mexican City without settling in one place, she also buried herself deeply into reading books. Her writing career dates back to when she was in high school. However, Cisneros admits that her writing career was a long journey because, besides writing a creative work in 1974 when she was in college, it took her a bit longer to establish her voice.

Moreover, Cisneros’ writing was majorly informed by her life experiences in America as a Latina youth. However, at first, before adopting her way of writing, Cisneros says that she was informed by male writers and poets such as Theodore Roethke, James Wright, and Richard Hugo. However, she notes that this was “all wrong for [her]” (Tan, 2003: 72). Cisneros earned BAs in English and Writing from Loyola University and the University of Iowa respectively. She worked as a teacher

of high school dropouts in the Chicano barrio in Chicago as well as an administrative assistant at Loyola University, and through these jobs, Cisneros gained more insight into the problems that Latino youths undergo in the United States. She became famous after publishing *The House on Mango Street*. Cisneros has won several that have given her an opportunity to become a full-time writer. Cisneros is one of the outstanding Chicano writers in the United States today.

3.2. Plot Summary

The plot of the short story *Woman Hollering Creek* is nearly an exact match of Sandra Cisneros' biography as described above. The story's protagonist is called Cleófilas, a Mexican wife married by an American called Juan. Cleófilas grew up with her father and six brothers, with no mother and sisters. She, thus, decides to learn how to be a good wife by watching a TV program series called *telenovelas*. Cleófilas then learns that "...one does whatever one can, must do, at whatever the cost" (Cisneros, 2013: 44). According to Cleófilas, love is worth the pain one undergoes before finding her love – after learning how to be good a wife from the TV program, she finally finds her love Juan who carries to a village called Seguin in Texas.

While in the United States, Cleófilas lacks support from the surrounding community. She and Juan live in a moderately isolated home and lacks an autonomous means of transportation. Cleófilas applies the principles of a good wife she learned from the TV program to provide for her husband and maintain their home. She eventually gives birth to a son called Juan Pedrito. Both her and Juan are foreigners in Seguin, Texas – he has a menial job that pays poorly that it cannot support the minimum standards of life in Texas. While pregnant for the second child, Juan adopts a strange habit of regularly beating her wife to compensate for her powerlessness and life frustrations. This trend deteriorates their matrimonial relationship.

While pregnant for the second child, Cleófilas requests Juan Pedro to take her to a prenatal clinic for a check-up. The doctor notices bruise of abuse and decides to help her escape. The doctor calls his friend called Felice who drives Cleófilas back

to Texas for escape. Cleófilas then realises that Felice owns her a track and makes in life without a husband. While crossing La Gritona (a river that means a woman hollering), Cleófilas screams with happiness for her discovery of happiness once again. Observably, the plot of this short story depicts a new form of the La Llorona, a Chicano form of oral legendary literature that tells about a spouse beating the other. Therefore, before analyzing the story from a postmodern viewpoint, it is also imperative to quickly provide a background to Chicano literature.

3.3. The Origin of Mexican-American Literature

Mexican-American literature, also known as Chicano literature, originated back in 1848 when the American-Mexican war ended (Athawale, 2017: 95). This form of literature focuses on themes like identity discrimination, history, culture, and ethnicity (Athawale, 94). It focuses on the experiences of Mexican-American who are permanent residents in the United States for an extended period. Today, there could be more than 50 million Latino immigrants in the United States. It is the largest minority group in the United States. Thus, Chicano literature holds significance in the American context as it helps the large group of Latinos to assimilate to the American culture effectively. Unlike China and America that represent East and West respectively in the Chinese-American literature, Chicano literature is all about the struggles Mexican immigrants undergo to cross the border and the quest of the border (Athawale, 2017: 95). Sandra Cisneros is one of the renowned Chicano literature writers among Oscar Zeta Acosta, Sabine Ulibarri, Rodolfo Anya and many others.

Moreover, most Latino Americans are politically and socially oriented to Chicano nationalism in the postmodern era. Particularly, in the 1950s and 60s, racial and ethnic discrimination against Americans of the Latino ancestry increased. Stereotypical phrases such as “No Dogs or Mexicans” increased. Lower class individuals of the Mexican ancestry suffered most. Chicano nationalism developed from the movement to retain their pride of Chicano identity which was enhanced by the proximity between America and Mexico. It was shaped by highly influential members and intellectuals of the Mexican ancestry who motivated for the need to

establish a sense of self-identity. In the 1960s, Chicano Civil Rights movement was formed to enhance a number of social and political factors such as promoting education among Mexican-Americans because of inequality in educational attainment, enhancing their political rights, workers' rights, land grants, and awareness of collective history (Athawale, 95). Athawale further noted that the Chicano literature particularly emerged during the 1960s and 70s when these movements were active. However, it dates back to 1929 when the League of United Latin American citizens was formed to counter discrimination in public and private institutions. This form of literature is characterized as individualistic and self-critical voices for opening the voices.

3.4. Characters

The protagonist of the short story is Cleófilas. As stated in the introduction section of this paper, despite that the setting of this short story is the postmodern era, it also reflects some elements of feminism. Thus, while analysing the character of Cleófilas, both postmodern and feminist views will be incorporated.

3.4.1. Cleófilas

The main character of Cleófilas is that she is a subservient woman in the short story. Cleófilas learned to be submissive while she was at her father's house back in Mexico by watching a TV series (soap opera). However, her submission to Juan Pedro, her husband, leads to violence and abuse. However, generally speaking, Cisneros tries to indicate that Juan Pedro, who is also Mexican, beats her wife regularly due to economic disempowerment and frustration in Seguin, Texas. In other words, as Athawale observes, the origin of the Chicano literature dates back to the 1950s and 60s when discrimination against Mexican-Americans had become widespread (Athawale, 95): Cisneros goes an inch further to explain the consequences of this discrimination. In this case, because Juan Pedro was Mexican by origin, he was unable to secure a good paying job in Seguin, Texas. It is also illustrated in the story that Juan Pedro was not learned, one of the reasons discriminations against him was more intense. This claim aligns with Regua's

observation that “Limited employment opportunities commonly funneled Mexican Americans into low wage agricultural and construction occupations” (Athawale, 118). Educational discrimination against Mexican Americans Regua goes on and explains that, “...administrators were expelling Mexican American children for minor violations of the rules and sending them to juvenile homes without first speaking to their parents” (Athawale, 118). Although Juan’s lack of learnedness was not as a result of this discrimination because he was born and raised in Mexico, the whole social situation in Seguin Texas depicts that Mexican Americans were not only educationally discriminated but also from every aspect of their social, political, and economic lives. Consequently, unknowingly, Juan reacts to his frustrations and powerlessness by beating his wife on a regular basis. Indeed, when intellectuals observed that this pattern was worsening, they originated the Chicano literature to protect the interests of powerless Mexicans like Pedro who had indulged into heavy drinking and family violence.

In addition to the postmodernist viewpoint above that explains why Cleófilas was at first submissive to her husband, a feminist standpoint can also offer another insightful approach to explaining her character. Particularly, the Chicano feminism movement is intended to help women of Mexican ancestry to reclaim their cultural identity in the United States. In his study of the role of women during the Chicano Movement in the 1960s and 70s, Regua observed that the Chicano Feminist Movement proved to be a true vehicle for fighting gender-based discrimination in San Jose, California. Therefore, from a feminist viewpoint, it is apparent that Sandra Cisneros means that culture clash usually occurred between Mexicans and Americans in general – Juan and Cleófilas were both Mexican by the origin and both experienced the harshness of the high levels of discrimination in society during the 1970s and 1980s in the United States. The theme of culture clash emerges from their relationship with other American characters like Felice.

Another character of Cleófilas depicted in the short story is her hidden eagerness to overcome male dominance in a patriarchal society. One of the motivations of the Chicano Feminist Movement was to establish gender equality in a patriarchal society. Baxley and Boston indicated that in the short story, Cisneros “depicts the situation of the Mexican-American woman: typically caught between

two cultures, she resides in a cultural borderland. The topics of the stories range from the confusions of a bicultural and bilingual childhood to the struggles of a dark-skinned woman to recognize her beauty in the land of Barbie dolls and blond beauty queens” (Athawale, 92). In this regard, Cleófilas was caught between the American culture and the Mexican culture. At first, as she learns from the soap opera that she used to watch at her father’s house, a wife should passionately serve her husband and “his” household submissively – this indicates the elements of a patriarchal society. However, when she discovered that that kind of submission to a husband can lead to deterioration of a matrimonial relationship, Cleófilas gets slightly inclined towards the principles of the American culture. Particularly, while crossing the river in Felice’s half truck, she screams with happiness for her newly found happiness and freedom. She initially used to think that getting married to her lovely husband is the ultimate discovery of happiness. After experiencing an abusive marriage, Cleófilas learns from Felice, an American that women can also be autonomous – can lead their lives successfully without a husband. Felice, the nurse that helped her to escape Juan Pedro, owned the truck that she used to transport them and has no husband. This autonomy of a woman gives Cleófilas inspiration. Thus, it is apparent that Cleófilas had initially decided to endure her husband’s beating as per Mexican cultural heritage. However, she is also influenced by Felice, who is an American, a depiction of culture clash. From this viewpoint, it is apparent that Cleófilas is caught between two cultures and even if she returns to Mexico, she will not be able to employ the American beliefs of feminist autonomy, unless she stays in America. In this regard, it is also apparent that it is extremely challenging for Mexican-American women to build a bridge between the two cultures, which is why, in real life, Sandra Cisneros kept on travelling to Mexico and Chicago interchangeably to maintain her Mexican-American identity.

Therefore, to further the argument on culture clash from a feminist viewpoint in this short story, it is also imperative to analyse the character of Felice and how it is influenced by Americanism in comparison with the character of Cleófilas as explained above.

3.4.2. Felice

In the short story, Felice is the nurse that helped Cleófilas to escape her abusive marriage while she was pregnant for her second child. Felice is portrayed as an autonomous woman who owns a pickup truck and lives happily without a husband. Before the two met at the antenatal clinic where the doctor noticed Cleófilas' bruises of abuse, Cleófilas was strongly attached to Mexican traditions. Therefore, their meeting acts as the turning point in the life of Cleófilas. Observably, examined from a postmodern viewpoint, their meeting creates a new form of La Llorona. La Llorona is a Mexican oral legendary that depicts a story of a woman who was abandoned by her husband with two children, and out of grief and anger, the woman drowns the children. The woman also eventually dies and her ghost starts searching for the drowned children in a river – the ghost of the woman is heard as a hollering creek. Harden says, "...a ghostly spirit woman who has been seen and heard roaming the Rio Grande, searching for her children, for centuries" (n.p). However, in *Woman Hollering Creek*, the story is slightly modified to fit changes that have taken place in the world postmodernism.

Particularly, in this short story, instead of the husband abandoning the woman (as an element of the patriarchal society), the woman instead abandons the husband. Also, instead of the woman drowning her two children out of grief, Cleófilas instead screams with happiness when they cross La Gritona with her son Juan Pedrito and her unborn child. The story of Felice's autonomous life particularly fascinated her and discovered a new way she can live happily. In this light, Felice represents the modern American culture whereas Cleófilas represents the traditional Mexican culture. The modern American culture was formed through various women movements that took place during the postmodern era such as detachment from their husbands so that they can vote independently as they have an autonomous say in society (Guyo, 2017: n.p). In the United States, women empowerment was a theme of women movements that occurred after World War II when they discovered that they can do what men do: they occupied vacancies that were left in factories when their men went to fight in the war and performed perfectly thus offering them this confidence. Cleófilas identifies the weaknesses of the Mexican culture and comes to

understand why it made her feel isolated and lonely whereas at Seguin, Texas. She, therefore, accepts some of the beliefs of the American culture as depicted in the postcolonial period. Overall, from the meeting between Felice and Cleófilas, the theme of culture clash is demonstrated in the evident conflict between tradition and modernity.

3.5. Summary

In summary, this chapter has analyzed the theme of culture clash by comparing the characters of Cleófilas and Felice. The analysis indicated that, in the short story, Cleófilas represented the traditional Mexican culture that is dominated by patriarchal elements where a woman must always remain submissive to his man whereas Felice represents the modern American culture. The isolation of Cleófilas and her husband Juan Pedro at Seguin, Texas is an indication that of a clash between traditional Mexican culture and modern American culture. The culture clash was further confirmed when the two meets at the antenatal clinic and their eventual travel together as they cross La Gritona. Like the real-life experiences of Sandra Cisneros, Cleófilas accepts the modern American culture as indicated by her fascination when she discovers that Felice is an independent woman and lives happily without a husband. However, this discovery does not influence her to change her mind from returning to Mexico. Cisneros, as a Mexican-American who lives in the United States, she constantly travels to Mexico City and back to Chicago regularly. According to her, this approach can help Mexicans who migrate the United States to assimilate effectively while maintaining their Chicano identity.

4. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF *THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET* BY SANDRA CISNEROS FROM BOTH A POSTMODERN VIEWPOINT AND A BILDUNGSROMAN PERSPECTIVE

4.1. Overview

This section focuses on another work of Sandra Cisneros called *The House on Mango Street*. The work was written in 1980 and was published in 1984. Many scholars have analyzed it from various viewpoints namely feminism (for example, Ying-xi, 2018: n.p), postmodernism (for example, Burcar, 25-38), Bildungsroman (for example, Karafilis, 63), and from the perspectives of economic, social status, and masculine hegemony (for example, Ariyanti, 25). However, in this study, only two viewpoints shall be used to analyze its theme of culture clash, namely postmodernism and a Bildungsroman.

4.2. Plot Summary

The main protagonist of *The House on Mango Street* is called Esperanza, who, at the start of the novel, is 12 years old and undergoes social displacement and longs to have her own house. At the start of the novel, she says, “I lived there. I nodded. I knew then I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to. But this isn’t it. The house on Mango Street isn’t it” (Cisneros, 2009: 5). Esperanza is a teenager who undergoes her rite of passage to adolescence within the plot of the novel – the novel covers a whole of her life. She is the narrator of the story whereby she uses short sentences – a child’s voice.

Moreover, arranged into forty-four vignettes with varying length ranging from half a page to several pages, the tale is set on the year when Esperanza moves with her family into a new house on Mango Street, which is a phenomenal improvement from the previous one. However, she is not happy about the new house because she does not still find her discretion. Besides, Mango Street is located in Chicago in a neighborhood that is crowded by poor Latino immigrants who are highly ghettoised in society. Esperanza resolves that she will one day move out of Mango Street both physically and emotionally – this indicates that Esperanza is not

comfortable with a Chicano identity. This thinking was the starting point of her sexual and emotional maturation – she starts to make friends, develops physical features of an adolescent, develops her first affection, stomachs sexual assault, and finally decides to write to express her identity and way of thinking. The novel also includes characters from Esperanza’s neighborhood as a way of portraying its image and its surroundings. Overall, at each point, the novel provides images of the many paths that Esperanza is likely to take in the future.

4.3. A Bildungsroman Perspective

Considering that Esperanza is the protagonist, her character will be analyzed from a Bildungsroman perspective in this sub-section. Particularly, many scholars have acknowledged *The House on Mango Street* from a Bildungsroman perspective (Karafilis, 63; Grum, 39-48). For instance, Veras indicates that “In this Chicano Bildungsroman, the narrator must escape the oppressive conditions of her community and the limited options that are available for her, especially marriage” (Veras, 2011: 229). A Chicano Bildungsroman is evident in the novel when Esperanza says, “I knew then I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to. But this isn’t it. The house on Mango Street isn’t it” (Cisneros, 2009: 5). However, the definition of oppressive conditions in one’s community is entirely based on one’s perception because, undeniably, there are a number of ethnic Americans, especially from the Latino ancestry who still find a place like Mango Street comfortable for them. Therefore, it is also imperative to examine the particular perception of Esperanza that she applies to define her neighborhood as oppressive thus resolving to escape from it both emotionally and physically.

Esperanza experienced an internal cultural conflict of identifying herself as a Latino and at the same time as American because she already stays in a poor neighborhood that is ghettoised for Latino Americans. She tells about her mother that, “I could’ve been somebody, you know? My mother says and sighs. [...] She can speak two languages” (Veras, 2011: 90). In reference to this, Latino Americans are oriented to two languages namely Spanish and English, an indication of co-existence in two cultures. Esperanza struggles to establish a cultural identity in the novel as

evidenced by her continuous transformation from the beginning to the end of the novel. The theme of the struggle for self-definition is common in a bildungsroman. This observation aligns with the definition of a classic bildungsroman. According to Svensson, "...a classical Bildungsroman generally takes the course of the protagonist's growth from child to adult, [], the child must be of some sensibility and he or she (mostly he) grows up in the country or in a provincial town" (Athawale, 3). The theme of culture clash in this novel develops from the theme of the struggle to establish a cultural identity. Particularly, Esperanza is experiencing the struggle to establish self-definition due to the cultural conflict between the Chicano culture and American culture. The clash between the two cultures leads to a distorted identity of oneself – Esperanza does not know where she belongs in the mainstream culture in the United States. The sexual assault confirms that she is perceived as a foreigner despite that she was born and raised in the United States.

Overall, from a Bildungsroman perspective, the theme of culture clash develops from the struggle for self-definition that is particularly caused by one's co-existence in two cultures, Mexican and American. As stated in the previous chapter, Chicano literature developed as a result of efforts to counter discrimination against and social, political, and economic inequalities among Latino Americans in the postmodern era (Athawale, 95). They wanted their co-existence to have a Chicano identity. Thus, because they were economically, socially, and politically disadvantaged during this time, most Latinos could not afford the pure American lifestyle. For instance, it is stated in the novel that Esperanza's family moved to a better house on Mango Street. Due to their social and economic disadvantage, they could not afford a better house than that; however, because Esperanza was highly influenced by the American culture after reading *The Little House*, she was still unsatisfied with its condition. The next section provides another perspective that better explains the theme of culture clash in the context of the novel.

4.4. A Postmodern Perspective

From a bildungsroman viewpoint, one question remained partially answered: why did Esperanza initially decide to identify herself different from her cultural

heritage, which is Mexican in this case? From a postmodern point of view, this question can be answered from the viewpoint of the youth subculture, provided she was a teenager at the beginning of the novel. In the postmodern era, the youth subculture is purely a product of the American cultural pluralism as depicted in consumerism patterns in the contemporary market (Sardar, 140). Esperanza's choice of a beautiful house was purely based on the consumerism patterns in the United States because, as Sardar observes, what one buys defines what they are as well as provides various avenues whose extrapolation can provide where one is headed in the future. Esperanza's choice of her house is influenced by the house described in the book called *The Little House*. Provided that she was a teenager, the manner in which she interpreted the book might slightly or significantly differ from the way literary scholars can interpret the novel. As a child, she was easily swayed by the little house described in the novel. She thinks the novel describes the house because it is superior. From this perspective, it can be said that consumerism forces hit Esperanza in a different form thus struggling to establish her identity from that outlook. Esperanza's struggle to establish her identity was mainly influenced by a clash between the Chicano culture and American culture. The novel *The Little House* was authored by an American illustrator and children's author called Virginia Lee Burton. Thus, the manner in which she illustrates the house in the novel completely aligns with the American culture. Consequently, Esperanza was influenced by the pluralistic nature of the American culture, the reason she is not physically and emotionally comfortable not only with their small house that lacks privacy on Mango Street but also her neighbourhoods. She eventually decides to even change her name so that she cuts her association with her Latino family members. However, in the eye of the white man, she remained a foreigner, as evidenced by the sexual assault when she tried to establish her sexual identity as a beautiful and lovely lady. However, unlike Chinese Americans who establish their identities by appreciating both cultures, most Chicanos tend to retain their original identity and just live in the American circumstances.

4.5. Summary

This chapter has analysed the theme of culture clash by focusing on two theoretical standpoints. The first one is a bildungsroman stance – throughout the novel, it is depicted that Esperanza initially struggles as a child to define her identity, but as she grows up, she learns from her past experiences to form a stronger identity in her later life. In this regard, Cisneros develops the theme of culture clash from the main characteristic of a bildungsroman – struggle for self-definition. In other words, the theme emerges when Esperanza experiences challenges of balancing between American culture and Mexican culture. On the other hand, when examined from a postmodern perspective, it is evident that the theme of culture clash emerges from a cultural conflict that develops when Esperanza tries to act American after reading *The Little House* that was authored by an American illustrator, but she is genetically Chicano. She is even sexually abused when she tries to establish her sexual identity from an American perspective, yet her physical looks resemble Chicanos. She later establishes her identity as a writer because this was the only way she could effectively express herself to society and the community surrounding her.

5. CONSOLIDATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Overview

This section aims to consolidate the findings of the previous chapters and offer new in-depth insights into postmodernism and a Bildungsroman while maintaining the focus on the theme of culture clash and how its depiction in the selected works of Amy Tan and Sandra Cisneros could help in promoting co-existence of Chinese immigrants and Americans as well as Mexican (Latino) immigrants and native Americans. In this way, the author of the researcher will justify how the perspectives of postmodernism and a Bildungsroman could help in achieving the aim of this study while focusing on issues at hand in contemporary society.

5.2. Postmodernism

In the first section of this paper, it was indicated that postmodernism is a theory of social existence – however, it differs from one discipline to another. In the previous three chapters, the analysis of the novels has been done from a postmodern perspective in a shallow way because the little emphasis has been put on the particular characteristics of postmodernism – both stylistic and ideologic. For example, some of these characteristics include fragmentation and paradox. The previous analysis has not captured them properly because much of the investigation is time-oriented. In other words, the novels portray postmodern features because they were authored after World War II. This subsection will provide a more in-depth analysis of the individual novels from a postmodern perspective while consolidating the findings of the previous three chapters such as character analyses and more.

5.2.1. Authorial Self-reference

First, one of the stylistic features of postmodernist literary texts such as those of Amy Tan and Sandra Cisneros is authorial self-reference (Nöth, 1). This characteristic was implied in the previously analyses whereby it was indicated that all the works contained some autobiographical elements of the authors. For example,

it was identified that Amy Tan's mother escaped the chaos of World War II in China and moved to the United States in 1949 (Sonquist, 2009: 1). While in China, her mother was married to another man and had other three children. Tan's mother married an American man whom together they had two children, Tan and her brother. While Tan was aged 14 years old, her father and brother died to a brain tumor. At this time, she also learned that her mother was married to another man in China whom she had children together, a situation that is similar to June of *The Joy Luck Club*, which was her first novel (Sonquist, 2009: 1). One of the probable reasons why most postmodernist literary texts employ authorial self-reference is to enhance memory specificity of the novel (Hamami, Serbun & Gutchess, 636). According to Hamami et al., self-referencing enhances memory in people of all age groups ranging from children to adults.

Also, it is believed that author Sandra Cisneros uses self-reference in her works. Particularly, it is believed that *The House on Mango Street* is an autobiographical work because the plot of the story aligns with the author's life experiences. In real life, Cisneros came across a book in the library called *The Little House*. She read the book over and over because she admired the house being described in the book (Mathias, 2009: 2). Cisneros, as a Latino child who was brought up in the United States, hated her family's poverty and eventually formed a belief that the situation was temporary, and so pursued determinedly into solving the situation (Mathias, 2). Cisneros' real-life story aligns with the story of the protagonist of *The House on Mango Street*. Therefore, she was also influenced by postmodernist forces to use self-reference in the work to promote its memorability among its audience (Hamami et al., 2011: 636).

Indeed, the use of authorial self-reference in works cited above improved their memorability considerably. *The Joy Luck Club* achieved the status of the bestselling book in *The New York Times*. On the other hand, *The House on Mango Street* has gained much popularity across the world, whereby it has been translated to more than twenty languages and it has sold over six million copies. The novel is also a mandatory reading in all stages of education including elementary, high school, and university.

5.2.2. Faction

Another common stylistic feature of postmodern literature is "faction," which refers to the mixing of real historical and fictional elements in a text without distinction between what is real and what is factual (Conolly & Haydar, 2008: 347). This characteristic is common in both the works of Amy Tan and Sandra Cisneros. For example, in *The Joy Luck Club*, the presence of historical aspects is evident such as the mass migration of Asians to the United States after the end of World War II. The four protagonist mothers moved to the United States a time when the wave of migration from East to West had risen following the end of World War II and the abolition of an anti-Chinese constitutional act. Similarly, *The Kitchen God's Wife* portrays that the protagonist Chinese mother (first-generation) moved to the United States when Asians were massively immigrating to the United States for various reasons such as escaping the chaos of World War II in their country. However, Tan does not distinguish to the reader that these were actual historical events that took place in the United States just before the 1950s and early the 1950s. As well, as analyzed in the previous chapters, the motives of Tan's authorship were to promote the co-existence of Chinese Americans in a society that is dominated by European Americans. In addition to the actual historical aspects of the novel, the author also uses fictitious characters, places, and more, but fails to clearly distinguish between what is actual and fictitious. This finding confirms the preciseness of the previous analyses of the two works because it was among the main assumptions of the author of this paper. In other words, the author believed that the works contained both actual historical and fictitious elements and thus approached the analysis with this in mind to provide the inferences given. In regards to the theme of culture clash, the author also assumed that it was a problem that existed and still exists in the United States whenever first-generation immigrants from Asian countries like China interact with second-generation Chinese immigrants. Typically, from an individualism versus collectivism dimensional standpoint of culture, first-generation immigrants from China are more likely to firmly hold their cultural heritage customs and beliefs whereas second-generation Chinese-Americans are more likely to adopt purely American ways despite being physically and genetically

Asian. Besides, there could be miscommunication between them due to language barriers. Hence, first-generation Chinese-American parents are more likely to experience a culture clash with their second-generation children. Amy Tan proposes a solution to this problem in her novels by indicating that the best approach to end the culture clash is by both the parents and their children to appreciate both cultures equally.

On the other hand, Sandra Cisneros also employed the postmodernist aspect of fiction in her two works that were chosen for analysis in this study. As indicated earlier, Cisneros also utilises authorial self-reference in her two works – *The Woman Hollering Creek* and *The House on Mango Street*. In the actual historical aspect of fiction, Cisneros depicts the border migration of Mexicans to the United States such as the protagonist of *The Woman Hollering Creek* and the challenges they face in the United States. In the fictitious aspect of fiction, Cisneros uses fictitious places and characters in her two works. Similarly, in *The House on Mango Street*, it is historically true that there are a group of Latino Americans who were born and bred in the United States and still experience unique challenges. However, the author uses fictitious characters and places in the work and never reveals the distinction between the two. Therefore, if the findings of the analyses of the two novels are combined, it could be said that Sandra Cisneros' works both describe the challenges of first- and second-generation Mexican immigrants in the United States. However, like Amy Tan, Cisneros does not examine familial relationships between first- and second-generation Latino immigrants in the United States. Instead, *The Woman Hollering Creek* depicts culture clash between first-generation Mexican immigrants with the general American society. This clash, however, teaches the protagonist one thing: how to survive without a man, thus, eliminating the patriarchal elements of society. On the contrary, *The House on Mango Street* depicts culture clash between second-generation immigrants with the overall American society

Moreover, one of the reasons why the researcher of this study selected the novels of this study is because, seemingly, they have presented research findings of the cultural challenges that first- and second-generation Chinese-Americans and Latino-Americans face in the United States. If the research findings were reported by the experts professionally, they could have been inaccessible to the general

public. Therefore, the novels have explored a professional problem in an accessible way that is appreciable in this regard. All these are attributes of the use of fiction in postmodern literature (Kang, 1993: 35). Others include its ability to convey complexities and ambiguities of different viewpoints such as how first-immigration Chinese Americans perceive the functioning of the American society and how it is different from second-generation immigrants (Kang, 35). Finally, through how the works of Sandra Cisneros and Amy Tan are narrated, readers are left with unfilled gaps which they must fill through finding the unresolved plurality meanings of the problems at hand.

5.2.3. Minimalism

Another element of postmodern literature that was portrayed in both novels is minimalism. In the view of Rezaei, minimalism is a narrative approach of postmodern literature whose purpose was to reconstruct modern literature. Rezaei notes as follows:

They removed so much as to reach Minimalism, in which the functioning of the remaining elements was based on the principle of “less means more.” Narrative was reduced (in “Ulysses” and in the French nouveau roman). Tendencies have crystalized to shape new genres (Rezaei, 2019: 16).

One of the ways minimalism is utilized in postmodern literature is through the use of common characters and events that are unexceptional. In modern literature, authors could utilize highly exceptional characters such as the humanization of animal characters – however, in postmodern literature, authors opted to drop them and rather use common and unexceptional characters. Indeed, in the cited works of Amy Tan and Sandra Cisneros, common characters such as real Chinese mothers and their Americanized daughters and Mexican female characters respectively.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the theme of culture clash in the works of Amy Tan and Sandra Cisneros. Amy Tan is a Chinese American and her works demonstrate the diasporic experiences of first- and second-generation immigrants. Tan's works particularly illustrate a culture clash between Chinese culture and American culture through a mother-daughter relationship. The mother characters used in her novels are depicted to have moved to the United States, after World War II and the appeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The law had silenced Chinese Americans subjecting them to social, political, and economic suffering. The mothers were brought up in China hence they understand the DNA of the Chinese culture and just resolve to retain it while under the American situations. Their daughters are completely Americanized because they were born and brought up in America. However, due to physical looks, the Native Americans could still perceive them as foreigners thus causing an identity crisis among themselves. The mother-daughter conflict as portrayed in the works indicates cultural differences between America and China. However, towards the end of each novel, the mothers and their daughters appreciate one another, thus paving the way for the Chinese American identity. Therefore, the Chinese American culture was a result of appreciating each culture which creates a bridge for co-existence in the two cultures. For example, the daughters who have taken physical features of their Chinese heritage find it easy to navigate their identity when they decide to appreciate both Chinese and American customs and beliefs.

On the other hand, the works of Sandra Cisneros are diverse but generally validate the experience of Chicanos in the United States. Cisneros chiefly depicts the understandings of Latino women endure after staying in the United States for an extended period. In the short story *Woman Hollering Creek*, Cisneros illustrates that Latino women find themselves caught between two cultures and they thus resolve to reside in a cultural borderland. The protagonist of this short story faces confusions of biculturalism – she learned to be submissive to her husband while at Mexico, but when they move together to the United States, she later recognizes that mainstream culture dictates women to be equals to their spouses. This clash leads to a confusion that is never resolved – the protagonist decides to move back to Mexico. In real life,

Cisneros, autobiographically, used to constantly move between Chicago and Mexico City so as to balance her Latino American identity. Also, the novel *The House on Mango Street* demonstrates the experiences of a bilingual childhood and the ultimate struggle of a "...dark-skinned woman to recognize her beauty in the land of Barbie dolls and blond beauty queens" (Baxley & Boston, 2014: 92). The novel is majorly a bildungsroman as it explains the continuous improvement of the protagonist's identity based on her past experiences. In the novel, it is merely demonstrated that the protagonist established her identity by appreciating both cultures. Instead, she establishes her identity by becoming a writer because she finds out that writing is the ultimate way of expressing oneself to others who easily misinterpret one's choice for individuality in real life. Thus, the works of Sandra Cisneros indicate that there is no single solution to cultural differences between America and Mexico as each protagonist of the two works establish their cultural identities in their own ways.

The theme of culture clash was examined in the four works of the two authors by using the theory of postmodernism. Predominantly, the relevance of this theory was driven from the fact that all the novels were published in the postmodern era which started in the 1950s to the present times. The intricacies of postmodernism such as the emergence of the youth subcultures and the feminist movements in the United States were considered while analyzing the characters of the protagonists of each of the four works so as to systematically determine how a culture clash develops. However, the theory was more applicable for Amy Tan's works, especially *The Joy Luck Club* because it was observed that the daughters were influenced by consumerism patterns of pluralizing American culture to identify themselves as Americans despite being genetically Chinese. In Cisneros' works, the theory of postmodernism was also applicable when examined from the angle of the Chicano Feminist Movements that took place in the 1960s and 70s. The theory indicated that culture clash between America and China can be resolved when both cultures are appreciated equally. Also, a characteristic of the Chicano literature, the theory of postmodernism suggested that there is no specific way of resolving the culture clash between America and Mexico – the solution is purely based on individuality and the specific forces of influence that one has been exposed to in society.

The theory of a Bildungsroman was also applied in analysing the theme of culture clash in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*. The protagonist of the novel seeks her identity from her past experiences. Since the main characteristic of a Bildungsroman is that the protagonist grows old and wiser (Black, 2016: 78), some characters of Amy Tan's works were also analyzed from this perspective. The theory of a Bildungsroman indicated that the theme of culture clash develops from the main characteristic of a bildungsroman called "struggle for self-definition" (Veras, 2016: 90). Particularly, the protagonist struggles to define her- or himself due to cultural differences.

In conclusion, culture clash is a central theme in all the four works analyzed in this study. However, the extent of culture clash differs between Chinese Americans and Mexican Americans due to ethnic differences between Chinese and Mexicans as well as the proximity between China and America and Mexico and America. Van Well discovered that Asian-Americans are more vulnerable to the dowsing forces of the Western culture plurality as created in postmodern consumerism than their Latino and African American counterparts. Indeed, Amy Tan's works indicate that the second-generation Chinese immigrants are easily swayed to identify themselves as American which leads to a cultural conflict with the first-generation Chinese immigrants who still strongly hold and follow their Chinese heritage. Due to the strong conflict between the two generations, they only resolve to form Chinese American identities whereby they appreciate each culture equally. Cisneros' works depict that Mexican Americans have individual choices of establishing their identities without necessarily appreciating both cultures equally. Their subjectivity to consumerism patterns is countered by the close proximity of Mexico to America – individuals can easily move between the two countries to balance their identities without necessarily forming a completely new cultural identity. Therefore, the mechanisms of assimilation differ ethnically and the Government of the United States should employ different approaches of assimilation to different cultural groups rather than utilizing the principle of universality.

Moreover, provided that the novels are based on the autobiographies of the authors, the findings of the analysis can be useful in immigration policymaking in the United States. Previously, the Government of the United States has been making an

effort in ensuring all immigrants in the country adopt American ways. From postmodernism and principles of a Bildungsroman, it has been discovered in this study that it is psychologically impossible to convince individuals who were not born in the United States to adopt American ways wholly. Classic examples are the mothers of Tan's novels and the protagonist of Cisneros' *Woman Hollering Creek*. Because they were born and bred in their original culture and moved to the United States in their adulthood, the characters demonstrate that it is impossible for them to completely leave their native cultural beliefs and customs to adopt American ways. They are only willing to preserve their native beliefs and customs while living in American circumstances. Also, second-generation immigrants feel displaced in society when they discover that they are physically (or genetically) different from the natives despite being fully accustomed to American ways. Their continuous struggle for self-definition depicts that they must establish a particular identity in Society. Besides, since their parents already portray native characteristics and they cannot disown them, their established cultural identity must also consider both American ways and the native ways of their parents. Therefore, the policy of trying to promote homogeneity in an inherently heterogeneous country is ill-informed and ineffective.

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Yıl	Yer	Görev
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Yabancı Dil
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Hobiler:

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VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZ ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

15/12/2019

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: "CULTURAL CLASH IN THE JOY LUCK CLUB AND THE KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE BY AMY TAN AND THEHOUSE ON MANGO STREET AND WOMEN HOLLERING CREEK BY SANDRA CISNEROS."

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu belirlenen tez çalışmamın Kapak sayfası, Giriş, Ana bölümler ve Sonuç bölümlerinden oluşan toplam %67 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 06 / 12 /2019 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından turnitin intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtreleme uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 10 (yüzde on) dir.
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