

Abstract

The dissertation focuses on Chinese American women's autobiographical writings – Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* – and from the context of family, examines how Chinese American women writers represent the exploration of American-born daughters as it relates to their female subjectivity within the paradoxes of the Chinese American immigrant family. My chief argument is that family is a site of oppression, resistance, and empowerment, within which Chinese American daughters construct that subjectivity.

More specifically, my dissertation serves to illustrate that the Chinese American immigrant family is a site of oppression – visited by the first-generation immigrant parents on the second-generation Chinese American daughters. It is also a site of resistance – of the Chinese American daughters to their parents' oppression. Furthermore, it is a place of empowerment – passed from the first-generation mothers to their daughters. Finally, the family is the location of the daughters' formation of their female identity and subjecthood. It attempts to place at the center of the mothers and daughters plot, the female figures neglected by the previous studies and submerged in traditional literature and criticism.

The dissertation utilizes the theoretical frameworks of feminism, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, and post-colonialism: feminist theory supplies a perspective through which to examine the issues of sexual discrimination and gender institution in Chinese American women's writings; post-structuralism helps to clarify the binary opposites of culture and gender and reconstruct Chinese American women's identities; psychoanalysis is a key to understanding the formation of gender structure; and post-colonialism is a tool with which to discuss the problems of "Otherness" and identification in Chinese American women's construction of multiple and subjective identities in the American diasporic context.

The dissertation consists of the following parts. The first chapter discusses Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, a starting point for Chinese American women's autobiographical writings, focusing on her way of rebelling against her parents' traditional cultural oppression, and the empowerment received from her grandmother and mother's continuum of

talking-stories, and her establishment of individualist female subjectivity in the site of the Chinese immigrant family.

The second chapter explores Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* by discussing the familial oppression of No Name Woman in China, of Moon Orchid in both China and America, and of the narrator Maxine in America, No Name Woman's and Maxine's resistance against that oppression. In addition, it examines Maxine's empowerment from her paradoxical mother's talking-stories of Fa Mu Lan, Ts'ai Yen, and Ngok Fei and her establishment of female subjective identity as a Chinese American woman in the space of Chinese immigrant family.

The third chapter probes into the diverse oppression, resistance, empowerment, and formation of Chinese American daughters' female subjecthood in the site of Chinese American family by investigating the relationship between the four pairs of mother and daughter in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. It makes a thorough inquiry in the oppression from the mothers' high expectations, the daughters' resistance against the oppressive control of the strong-willed mothers, the empowerment from the mothers' personal stories about their suffering and struggling against their women's destiny with firm determination when in China which rescues the trapped and self-split daughters, and the daughters' formation of their subjective female subjectivity.