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Mothers' Identities and Parenting in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989)

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Abstrak

Pola asuh dan identitas adalah dua topik yang berdampingan, terutama dalam konteks literatur. *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) oleh Amy Tan mengangkat isu pola asuh, terutama antara ibu dengan anak perempuannya, dan perkembangan identitas seseorang. Meskipun begitu, keterkaitan antara identitas sang ibu dengan kecenderungan pola asuh di dalam novel jarang diteliti. Oleh karena itu, novel *The Joy Luck Club*, terutama tiga dari empat ibu, An-mei Hsu, Lindo Jong, dan Ying-Ying St. Clair, dijadikan objek penelitian karena terdapat penggambaran keterkaitan antara identitas dengan pengalaman masa kecil, serta pula identitas dengan pola asuh. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti keterkaitan antara identitas para ibu dengan pengalaman masa kecil mereka, serta pula keterkaitan antara identitas tersebut dengan kecenderungan pola asuh mereka. Untuk mencapai tujuan tersebut, teori identitas oleh Erik Erikson akan digunakan sebagai landasan untuk menemukan hubungan antara identitas dengan pengalaman masa kecil mereka, lalu dikolaborasikan dengan klasifikasi pola asuh milik Diana Baumrind untuk menemukan keterkaitan antara identitas tersebut dengan kecenderungan pola asuh mereka. Analisis akan didukung oleh definisi identitas oleh Erikson dan klasifikasi pola asuh oleh Baumrind. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa identitas para ibu di novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) oleh Amy Tan berkaitan dengan pengalaman masa kecil mereka. Selain itu, dibuktikan pula bagaimana identitas mereka berkaitan dengan kecenderungan pola asuh mereka, sesuai dengan kalsifikasi oleh Baumrind.
Kata Kunci: Ibu, Identitas, Pola asuh, Pengalaman masa kecil

Abstract

Parenting and identity are two topics that coexist, especially in the context of literature. Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) includes the topic of parenting, especially between mothers and their daughters, and the development of someone's identity. However, the connection between the mothers' identity and the parenting tendency in the novel is rarely explored. Therefore, the novel *The Joy Luck Club*, especially three of four mothers, An-mei Hsu, Lindo Jong, and Ying-Ying St. Clair, is used as the object of the research because there are depictions of the correlation between identity and childhood experiences, as well as between identity and parenting. This study aims to examine the connection between the mothers' identities to their childhood experiences, and also the relationship between the identities of mothers with their parenting tendencies. To complete those targets, Erik Erikson's theory about identity will be the basis to find a connection between their identities and their childhood experiences, then collaborating it with Diana Baumrind's classification on parenting to find the relation between the identities and their parenting tendencies. The analysis will be supported by Erikson's definition of identity and Baumrind's classification of parenting. The findings of this study reveal that mothers' identities in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) are related to their childhood experiences. Moreover, it also discovers how their identities are related to their parenting tendencies according to Baumrind's classification.
Keywords: *Mother, Identity, Parenting, Childhood experience*

INTRODUCTION

Identity and parenting have been related to each other since then, a relation that, without the other, one would not be able to exist or be elaborated—two concepts that coexist with each other. For once, identity, according to Erik Erikson (1968), is something built from both familiarity and unfamiliarity that derives from one's life experiences. As a child, one firmly believes that one is a stand-alone person. Yet, it is undeniable that one would go through a process of identification with people around them, especially the closest ones—the mother and/or the father—no matter how illogical it seems (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1987) argues that parents' involvement as the first people or society around the children is considered critical to the development of the children's identity as individuals. However, he (1968) also explains that this development is not limited to parents, but also to their community and society. Additionally, Mead (1962) claims that identity is a combination of the singular qualities of

oneself while also maintaining the similarities between one's communities. Oyserman et al. (2012) further define identity as characteristics of oneself that are a dynamic construction and able to change and adapt, depending on one's role in society, others' reinforcements and one's personal goal, and what matters in the present moment. Overall, identity is defined as the dynamic characteristics of oneself that derive from familiarity and unfamiliarity with the family, mainly the parents, and the society and community.

On the other hand, it is arguable that parents' childhoods share similar experiences in how they treat their children—both are connected through the concept of parenting. Parenting, according to Brooks (2011), is a process of a two-way relationship between parents and children, also a mutual connection where a space is created where both parties are influenced by each other through the frequency of their interactions and the norms of the society they live in. Additionally, Baumrind (1966) elaborates that children's behaviours are closely related to the environment built from parenting, which, for example, harsher parents relate to more violent children. Moreover, a study by Caspi and Elder, quoted from Belsky et al. (2009), elaborates on their surveys, claiming that subjects with experiences in receiving hostile parenting during their childhood tend to project the same treatment—the hostile parenting—towards their children. In addition to it, another study in the same paper (2009), Belsky and others have researched New Zealand women and mothers and noticed that the mothers with either a non-authoritarian mother, a positive and expressive environment development, or a communicative family, would create a warm and stimulating environment for their children—further elaborating on the relation between parenting for each generation.

Additionally, Baumrind (1966) proposes three categories of parenting styles, namely permissive parenting, authoritarian parenting, and authoritative parenting. This categorisation is based on the adult control applied in the household. For instance, permissive parenting is a parenting style characterised by minimal adult control during the interaction between parents and children (Baumrind, 1966). Baumrind (1966) argues that behaviours that promote little to no punishment and a highly affirmative environment indicate the presence of this style. Moreover, Baumrind (1966) claims that the lack of reactions from parents with this type of parenting further provokes extreme and prominent behaviour changes in children, even compared to when the adults or parent-figure are completely absent.

On the other hand, authoritarian parenting is the extreme opposite of permissive parenting. Baumrind (1966) claims that a household with authoritarian parents has higher levels of adult control. Behaviours such as restricting children's autonomy or freedom, delivering punishments and providing rewards for specific behaviours, and limiting room for arguments are the actualisation of the adult control of authoritarian parents, whose purpose is to shape the children to a parameter set by the parents (Baumrind, 1966). Additionally, Baumrind (1966) argues that this parenting style promotes passivity and dependency, and even delinquency in children.

In contrast to the extremes of parenting styles and levels of adult control, authoritative parenting provides a balanced environment within the household. Baumrind (1966) explains that authoritative parenting gives room for both parents and children to function rationally. Parents with authoritative parenting would give sufficient regulation and controls over their children while still maintaining their autonomy to share their inputs (Baumrind, 1966). Baumrind (1966) also elaborates that authoritative parenting, which collaborates parents' demands through adult controls while permitting autonomy, results in assertive yet non-rebellious children.

Altogether, an argument elaborates that parents'—especially mothers'—experiences with people around them in their childhood shaped their identity, which, in continuation, would affect their way of parenting. In literary works, such as *Die Verwandlung* (1915) by Franz Kafka and "Everyday Use" (1973) by Alice Walker, the relationship—or even conflict—between parental figures and their children has become a lever to elevate the tension between characters. Amy Tan is one of many writers who write about the relationship between parents and their children, especially in the context of Chinese-American households. Yu (2015) describes Amy Tan, or Amy Ruth Tan, as a Chinese-American writer who is sensitive to her culture, which is Chinese and American cultures, and often inserts parts of them into her works.

The Joy Luck Club (1989) by Amy Tan is a novel that elaborates on four different family dynamics—especially the dynamic between the mothers and the daughters—from the point of view of the daughter and the mother. In the novel, four families are friends with each other, namely Hsu-Jordan, Jong, St. Clair, and Woo. Each family has its problems, whether it is a conflict with another family or even their own, mainly with the mother of the family. Although the fathers do exist in the novel, the main focus is usually on the daughter and the mother.

Accordingly, many researchers have explored the theme of parenting in many works of literature, especially Amy Tan's. Jiajie Yu, in her work (2015), explained how the cultural experiences of the mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* shaped their view of the 'right' parenting, and how their view of the 'right' resolution did not help a lot in their new problem of being Chinese-American families.

Pattana's article (2020) also examines the parenting used in *The Joy Luck Club*. Pattana (2020) found that although the parenting style used was authoritarian parenting, the children did not agree with the theory used and instead showed their curious tendency and became different parents and people from their mothers.

In addition to the previous studies, Novitasari (2018) also used Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* as the research object. While Yu (2015) and Pattana (2020) focused on the parenting and its problems, Novitasari (2018) elaborated on a character in the novel, Jing-Mei Woo's, conflicting identity. Novitasari (2018) argues that Jing-Mei Woo's main problem was how she denied her ancestry as a Chinese descendant, and she did not want to accept any Chinese-like wisdom from her mother, who was a Chinese woman. Similar to Novitasari's research in 2018, Damaputra (2024) studied Jing-Mei's character development through the reflections of her cultural identity.

The listed studies have some minor differences with this thesis. In the previous ones, the main focus is either the parenting used and its complications or the identity of the characters. However, this paper will focus on the mothers' identity by analysing their childhood experiences using Erikson's identity theory and how it shapes their style of parenting, while applying Baumrind's classification of parenting to recognise the patterns. Therefore, the main objectives for this research are: 1) To examine the connection between the mothers' identity to their childhood experiences, and 2) to elaborate how the identities are related to their parenting tendencies.

METHOD

This research utilises Amy Tan's novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, as the primary source. Although the novel was originally published in 1989 by the publisher G. P. Putnam's Sons, this research uses an online version of it from a Chinese database of English collection, which was then distributed in the global field by an online library, Internet Archive (https://archive.org/). The narrations or scenes and dialogues that depict the behaviours and the choices of the subject of the research were collected and examined using a textual approach through close reading. In order, the detailed analysis procedures would be: 1) The e-novel file is downloaded from Internet Archive website; 2) The novel is read using the skimming method for every section before close reading it to find two main points: the point of identity and the point of parenting; 3) The data are divided into three sections based on mother-daughter pair: Hsu, Jong, and St. Clair; 4) The data then are analysed using two theories: Erikson's theory about identity to find clues regarding childhood's influence on the mothers' sense of self or identity and Baumrind's theory and guide of the classification for parenting styles (permissive, authoritarian, or authoritative parenting) to confirm the patterns of their parenting tendencies; and 5) The study then links the topic of identity and parenting styles by identifying patterns shown in the novel to answer the objectives of the research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into two divisions. One would examine the mothers' identities and how they are connected to their childhood experiences, while the other would explore the relationship between their identity and their parenting tendencies and styles. Each division would refer to each character based on the order of their appearance in the novel, which are: An-mei Hsu, followed by Lindo Jong, and lastly Ying-Ying St. Clair.

Mothers' Identities and Their Childhood Experiences

An-mei Hsu

In the novel, An-mei Hsu is described as "not stupid" but "has no spine" by Suyuan Woo—a mother character. According to Woo, An-mei is someone who will agree with someone's advice until someone else gives their opinion and other advice on her matter. This characteristic is built throughout her childhood, which provides an authoritarian environment for her and limits her autonomy. During the early years of An-mei's life, her parental figures were not her direct mother and father, but her grandmother, referred to as "Popo" in the narrative by An-mei. Popo uses tales and names or labels to put purpose on someone's existence, forcing an idea of identity on anyone, including An-mei. For instance, in the introduction chapter of her childhood, her mother is labelled as a "ghost". A ghost, to their culture and beliefs, is something that is forbidden to be discussed. It is also explicitly elaborated in An-mei's point of view that she knows the significance of this word. The word "ghost" not only means it is forbidden to discuss, but also something that is supposed to be forgotten over time. An-mei realises the label "ghost" on her mother, who is yet to die, is a way for the daughter to think that her mother is forgettable, and even when she is not, is should be forgotten. It is not only for those who have "shamed" the family that will receive a label from Popo. An-mei and her brother have also received a label from her. They are referred to as "stupid goose's eggs that nobody wanted". An-mei and her brother are

seen as a mistake, something unexpected and even unwanted, with how Popo refers to the goose as "stupid", a term full of disdain. They are also "eggs" that are "not even good enough to crack over rice porridge", signifying their irrelevancy in the family and highlighting the generosity of Popo, since she is willing to take the "unwanted eggs" home and nurture them. The usage of metaphorical terms by Popo throughout the narratives with An-mei is a sign of limiting autonomy, albeit indirectly. Popo does not give An-mei a chance to identify her community on her own to form an identity, her own "label", and pushes her ideals and opinion towards An-mei's identity instead, which is a sign of an authoritarian parent-figure.

The limitation of An-mei's autonomy is not only being done by Popo, but also by another adult, namely her aunt. An-mei's aunt, a little bit different from Popo, limits her freedom using force and physical punishment. An-mei's aunt often takes advantage of the power imbalance between the elder and the children. When An-mei's brother is being defiant against the aunt, she quickly overwhelms him. She also says that An-mei's brother could only "speak strong words" and is still "nothing" against her. She explicitly elaborates on her stance against the children, stating her superiority over both An-mei and her brother. Moreover, this exhibition of An-mei's aunt being 'superior' against An-mei's autonomy is when her mother comes home to get An-mei. When the daughter reaches for her mother, the aunt "slaps her face and pushes her back". The action of An-mei reaching out for her mother is an action resembling someone reaching something out of free will, while the action by the aunt is an action of limiting said free will. An-mei's interaction with her aunt always portrays her inferiority to her aunt, as she is unable to go against her, no matter how hard she tries.

Additionally, another adult in An-mei's childhood, her mother, is similar to both Popo and her aunt in terms of adult control and parenting. Although she is not as passive-aggressive in putting labels on someone's being as Popo or as aggressive as the aunt's punishments, her mother is authoritarian in her own version. For instance, when An-mei finds a liking towards a necklace given by one of the other wives—who is disliked by her mother—she takes immediate action to step on the necklace, breaks one of the beads, and then gives the missing-one-bead necklace for her daughter to wear as a "reminder of how easy it is to lose [herself] to something false". An-mei's personal preferences are immediately denied when it is against the mother's ideal of what is right and what is not. Instead of letting An-mei form her own opinion of someone, she gives her own opinion to her daughter and forces her to follow it through. She also gives An-mei a punishment by forcing her to wear the necklace. She covers this like it is a lesson, giving the adjective "false" for the necklace to put An-mei in a situation where she could not refuse something worth nothing. An-mei's mother, in other words, wants An-mei to be just like her—better, but still 'her' by how she was pushing her view, down to her hatred towards someone, to An-mei.

An-mei's identity development has been limited throughout her childhood, giving her no chance to have an opinion of her own. This is stated in the novel, taken verbatim: *I was taught to desire nothing, to swallow other people's misery, to eat my own bitterness.* (Tan, 1989, p. 121). An-mei, in her own words, is "taught to desire nothing". This phrase signifies that having her own opinion and ideal is not allowed. As a child, she is taught to follow everyone else's ideals: Popo's "stupid goose's unwanted egg", her aunt's powerless and obedient niece, and her mother's "self". Moreover, in the sentence, she is also taught to "swallow other people's misery" and to "eat [her] own bitterness". It indicates the limitation on her autonomy by stating that she is not allowed to express herself even when others are allowed to. It also signifies the inferiority of her well-being compared to others'. As she is told to "swallow other people's misery", An-mei is also unconsciously nurturing her sensitivity and perceptiveness towards others' intentions and feelings. When her mother dies, the adults around An-mei assume she has faked a suicide, following the other wife's advice, and fail. However, An-mei, who is still a child, understands that her mother would never do that. Deducing her true intention when An-mei recalls her words, saying that "[she] can't get enough of bitterness" when it is a sweet dessert she is supposed to eat at the moment. She acknowledges that everything her mother has done is intentional. When she realises her mother's true plan, she acts accordingly: a strong front, an opinion of her own, by learning how to push her thoughts on other people to be considered.

In conclusion, An-mei's identity could be traced back to Suyuan's opinion about her, "spineless". While the"spineless" trait of her could be a reflection of a Confucian practice on women, as a form of respectful yielding (Ruggiero, 2006), it is not peacefully built within her, but rather by the adults around her as a child in a forceful manner. In her childhood, An-mei is taught and told not to have her own opinion and stance. She has to function as an individual by following

others' opinions, advice, and orders, and should not include her point of view in every action she makes. The absence of an opinion and stance of her own makes her "spineless" as an adult, since she could not measure what is considered a proper response to something by her standards of worth because of the limitations set by the adults in her childhood. However, the authoritarian parenting by adults around her also shaped her perceptiveness about nuances, and the situation she is in, thus she would act accordingly. These characteristics of An-mei Hsu highlight Erikson's theory about identity, as her identity is affected by her childhood parents (Popo and her biological mother) and also the community at that time (her aunt and the adults of her mother's new husband's household).

Lindo Jong

Lindo Jong, as a child, spends her life as a girl who is promised to another family as a daughter-in-law. After she is officially betrothed to a boy younger than him, who is called Tyan-yu Huang, her family—especially her mother—treats her like "[she] belonged to somebody else." Her mother would have Tyan-yu's mother, Taitai Huang, instead of her own in her praises to Lindo, "Taitai's daughter" instead of "my daughter". Even when she is not yet wed to Tyan-yu, this choice to change the possessive pronouns relates closely to detachment from something. Lindo's mother acknowledges that Lindo's future is tied to the family of Huang, and to prevent herself from getting too attached to something that is already not the mother's and even not her own, she presents a new 'truth' of Lindo being Taitai's daughter instead of her daughter or Lindo as herself. Lindo also understands her mother's reasoning to detach herself from her daughter, and so she becomes a "very obedient child" and does not publicly lament her fate, complying with the new identity she is forced to have.

Lindo Jong, even when she is still a child, is an observant individual who always has a strong opinion on something that is based on careful analysis. When she moves in with the Huangs, she carefully observes the house and is quick to give opinions on each detail she understands. For example, when she sees the messy layout that does not follow a specific theme, she thinks of it as a reflection of the household having "too many opinions" that are shared within the big family. Furthermore, she describes the conscious choice in building grandiose ornaments as something which only purpose is "[making] the house seem important". For Lindo, things such as red-painted large pillars, dragon ornaments on the roof, and a fancy guest room serve no purpose but to have someone else's validation of their wealth and significance, providing a strong first impression but a non-sustainable, lasting impression.

Moreover, this nature of being a critical observer is also shown through the process of how Lindo perceives nuances and positions herself at her young age of twelve. When Taitai leads her to the kitchen instead of a room full of other kids, Lindo immediately understands the position she is given by Taitai. Being a daughter-in-law does not mean she would be equal to Tyan-yu or other children in the family, but instead, the Huangs' servant who is fortunate enough to be betrothed to one of them. And so, she learns to fulfil the label she is forced upon, an "obedient wife", who does not question the order from Taitai or even her future husband, Tyan-yu.

With the lack of understanding and a very limited familiarity with other people—since the most frequent people in her early life are her mother, Taitai Huang, and Tyan-yu Huang—Lindo tends to compare others' values to her own. Because she does not know other people in a similar situation to her, she makes her opinion and her stance the standard for comparison. As a result, Lindo would unconsciously put herself in the equation even when she says it is for the sake of the others. For example, a passage on page 26 in the novel says, verbatim, "*But I was also determined to honor my parents' words, so Huang Taitai could never accuse my mother of losing face."* (Tan, 1989, p. 26). In the sentence, she creates an image of herself as someone who will make the sacrifice for the sake of her parents' name. But then, in the next sentence after this, she explicitly uses "our family" to represent the one that receives the fruit of her sacrifice. The shift from "my parents" and "my mother", which signify 'them' or other people, to "our family", which includes herself to the consideration means she is not only doing a sacrifice for others, but also for herself. This selfish yet unconscious choice is made because she sees herself as a standard and therefore deserves the same or better treatment that she has given to others.

Lindo's seemingly selfish tendency does not occur once, but multiple times in the narrative. One of, if not the most, obvious sign of this selfish tendency is during her meltdown before her official marriage. In a passage on page 28, she narrates her dilemma thoroughly, but her selfish tendency is highlighted by this sentence, verbatim, "*I wondered why my destiny had been decided, why I should have an unhappy life so someone else could have a happy one.*" (Tan, 1989, p. 28). In the sentence, the utilisation of the possessive pronoun "my" by Lindo serves multiple purposes, including justifying her unconscious selfishness by comparing

her experience with others'. From her point of view, only her destiny has been decided (through the betrothal) and is set in stone. Her family has gone through hardships, but as far as she understands, they still have a choice to leave and start anew. The Huangs, especially Taitai and Tyan-yu Huang, have a lot of choices and the freedom to choose their fate, supported by their wealth. Lindo then compares her family and the Huangs' freedom to choose their own destiny to her own limited one. This comparison goes further, as she laments how it is her fate that should be sacrificed for the sake of others' happiness in the second clause. Lindo acknowledges that her sacrifice would allow others to have a better life, but the selfish side of her does not want to. In a better environment, she would have said that it is an act of chivalry. But when she is in her most vulnerable state, she naturally shows her true nature of selfishness.

In the end, what Lindo Jong is, as an individual, is defined by the differences between her values and others' values. According to Erikson (1968), identity could be constructed through familiarity and unfamiliarity. Lindo is a critically observant individual. Thus, when she does not find similarity in her experiences with others during the process of observation and familiarity as a child, especially since she does not experience social interaction with a lot of people at that time of development, Lindo naturally unfamiliarised herself with those around her. This, eventually, creates a process of standardisation with her self-worth as the centre and the base of her judgement, caused by the limitation of social identification she could have had during her childhood.

Ying-Ying St. Clair

Ying-Ying St. Clair sees herself as hidden, referring to herself as a "small shadow". A shadow is a projection, a side that is created by outlining someone's part of self. In Ying-Ying's case, she is a projection of others' desires—including Lena's, her daughter's. She unconsciously compares herself to her daughter, seeking validation on the supposed similarity and all the unfamiliarity between herself and the other one. Lena is described as the opposite of Ying-Ying. While Ying-Ying sees herself as someone who keeps quiet so "selfish desires would not fall out" from her, who tries not to catch any attention and does not wish to be perceived, she sees her daughter, Lena, as someone who is extravagant and attention-catching with her existence and her possessions. On page 34, paragraph 1 of the novel, Tan, in Ying-Ying's point of view, describes Lena with several opinionated adjectives.

> *She sits by her fancy swimming pool and hears only her Sony Walkman, her cordless phone, her big, important husband asking her why they have charcoal and no lighter fluid.* (Tan, 1989, p. 34)

First and foremost, Ying-Ying uses the word "fancy" to describe her pool. Rather than preferring another adjective with a more neutral tone—such as adjectives that are measurable by the eyes, such as "big" or "blue"—she uses "fancy". The word "fancy" signifies that Lena wishes to be perceived as unique, and Ying-Ying sees her daughter as someone who flaunts her rich. Then she mentions Lena's Sony Walkman. The Sony Walkman is a device that allows people to listen to music on their own, unlike radio and television. This is specifically mentioned by Ying-Ying to elaborate on her daughter as someone who wishes to listen to anything she wants and does not pay attention towards her surroundings, making her vulnerable and sympathetic towards anything around her. Additionally, she also uses an opinionated adjective to describe even her husband. He is described as "big" and "important", which signifies a desire to be perceived. The word "big" could be taken as something eye-catching, the first to be noticed in a room full of people. On top of that, he is also "important", which indicates a significant value of his own, making him an ideal figure for attention. These three, altogether, are signs of Ying-Ying's projection towards Lena. She seeks validation by comparing her selflessness, by keeping her selfish side away, to boldly selfishness of her daughter.

However, Ying-Ying's "true nature", which she put away in a disguise of being selfless, is somewhat similar to Lena's. She is naturally bold, curious, expressive, and even confident—a total opposite of what she describes herself as in the beginning. These characteristics are often identified with a trait of the Year of the Tiger born individual, who is explained in the novel as someone whose spirit is strong despite being in a bad situation, and thus, "tiger" is one symbol to represent her identity. These tiger-like traits are especially evident in her early life as a child. Her natural boldness thrives in her childhood because the adults in her life let her be.

Ying-Ying lives in a permissive household made by permissive parents. This permissiveness is shown when Ying-Ying explicitly exhibits a behaviour that could get her into trouble, but none of the adults mention anything about it. For example, there is a sentence taken verbatim from the novel: *I sighed over*

and over again every time they started a new topic. (Tan, 1989, p. 36). In that sentence, Ying-Ying uses "they" instead of "we", implying that she is not included in the conversation, which states a difference between them and in this case, the difference is their age. And she has no interest in this conversation, which she is not included in because of their age gaps. The clear disinterest is shown by the usage of the word "sighed" to signify her boredom. Additionally, the phrase "over and over again" also symbolises the ability to show selfish desires without any restraint, her boredom without an adult's scolding. It would be impossible if the mother or any other adult expresses their annoyance and thus limits her from expressing her selfish desire. Furthermore, this environment of permissiveness is not limited to the lack of adults' control, but also Ying-Ying's awareness of her control towards the adults around her.

As a wealthy person, she mostly lives with her servants instead of her parents. Ying-Ying has a servant who is assigned to take care of her, whom she refers to as Amah. The parenting, mainly about taking care of Ying-Ying's physical and emotional needs, is done by Amah. Her Amah is often scolding her too, fussing over her childlike misconduct. However, this seemingly authoritarian action is dismissed by Ying-Ying because she understands her position as superior to the servants. In the novel, she explicitly states that she views Amah "only as someone for [her] comfort" before comparing her to "a fan in the summer" and a "heater in the winter". That is a selfish, self-centred point of view from a master to their servants. Ying-Ying acknowledges her superiority by seeing them as "[her] comfort" and asserts a non-mutual relationship. The phrases "a fan in the summer" and "a heater in the winter" express her view towards them as different people with different characteristics, but all have the same purpose—to provide her a comfortable and safe environment.

In the topic of Ying-Ying's identity, the word "shadow" is a recurring theme of her identity. Early in the introductory chapter of her character, she describes herself as "a small shadow", signifying her irrelevant presence in her adulthood. However, much earlier in her life stage, in her childhood, she perceives the shadow and herself a little differently. The first time she discovers her shadow, Ying-Ying sees it as something rather positive but nothing more than herself in a different form. Ying-Ying uses the phrase "dark side of me" to elaborate on her shadow, an extension of herself with the same outline of her personality and identity. On the way onwards, she uses her shadow as a projection of herself. During the Moon Lady Festival, after a distraught event of her drowning and no one comes to her aid, she uses her shadow to describe her circumstance, which she explains, verbatim, "*It was shorter this time, shrunken and wild-looking."* (Tan, 1989, p. 41). Since the shadow is an extension, a projection, of herself, she uses several characteristics to describe herself at the moment of distress. The shadow is, first, "shorter". It means that there is a difference between the initial state and the recent state, a change that makes her shadow its weaker version. Then, it is "shrunken", which signifies an unconfident state of herself and inferior to her usual self. Moreover, she also uses "wild-looking" to describe her shadow. The phrase "wild-looking" could indicate nervousness and anxious, unsure and scared, and a solid representation of her current state. Furthermore to the usage of "shadow" to represent herself is during her moment after her husband, whom she refers to as "the bad man" to signify detachment and a bad impression, left her.

Additionally, Ying-Ying also relates the concept of shadow to the concept of tiger to elaborate on her identity. In the passage below, she uses the phrase "the black side" to refer to her tiger's stripes, but this is contextually synonymous with how she describes her shadow: "the dark side of [her]", which also hides her true body and eventually her true nature. She describes this side of her in this passage taken verbatim: *The black side stands still with cunning, hiding its gold between trees, seeing and not being seen, waiting patiently for things to come.* (Tan, 1989, p. 142). The gold (golden-orange hue) of the tiger takes up most of the animal, it signifies its true nature. Accordingly, the striking, flamboyant gold is also Ying-Ying's true nature. And this nature would be obstructed because she was hiding between the trees' shadows. The trees provide shadows to those who are smaller in size, which means that the tiger would hide amongst these darker and bigger shades, similar to how Ying-Ying would seek a bigger shadow to obstruct people's perception of her. Additionally, this "black side" of her "waits patiently for things to come". This is a sign of the permissive nature of an individual who does not provide intervention or even a warning if something is about to happen, and just waits for it to happen by itself.

In conclusion, her identity, of being a "tiger" like person who is bold and confident, is altered during her life stages, especially in her early life. Several events in her life, such as the after-drowning experience and her unsaid divorce, modify her identity to something more convenient and beneficial to her life. By being hidden and not under any perception of others, she

believes it would help her survive as an adult and eventually, as a mother. Her identity development highlights Erikson's definition of identity, as it is derived from the unfamiliarity between her and the environment during multiple events in her life.

Mothers' Identities and Their Parenting Tendencies

An-mei Hsu

An-mei, as a mother, is often unclear about her intentions, especially if they involve her daughter's, Rose's, well-being. An-mei and Rose's relationship is often hindered by miscommunication and misunderstanding. Rose sees her mother as someone who wants her daughter to listen to her mother because "a mother knows what's best since she knows the inside of her daughter". This concept of a mother has formed because An-mei used to 'spoon-feed' Rose with her lessons and wisdom, and the daughter is also used to not questioning them and to accepting them, even when she does not understand the substance of her mother's words. This dynamic carries on when both of them are adults, thus creating the idea that An-mei "wants Rose to listen to her" and to do the things she tells her to, without understanding the layers of her words. This opinion of An-mei plays a big role in the narrative, especially Rose's point of view. In the novel, Rose's marriage is "falling apart". Her husband cares less and less about her, and Rose cares even less about herself.

An-mei acknowledges her daughter's struggle—even when she rarely talks about it with her mother—and is giving her the push by saying that she should "speak up for herself" and "think for herself", as it is elaborated on in this passage: *And my mother says, "You must think for yourself, what you must do. If someone tells you, then you are not trying."* (Tan, 1989, p. 70). This specific action of An-mei in the narratives confirms that she understands the situation by sympathising with Rose to a degree, and acts accordingly. She understands that for her daughter to survive, she needs to think for herself. She has to solve her own problems. An-mei understands that only listening to others' opinions and directions, including her own mother, and never having her personal thoughts on a matter would cause harm in the future. The clause "then you are not trying" specifically lines up with the idea of her wanting to nurture her daughter to be independent, that she wants her to grow as her own person. However, Rose does not understand the intention and mistranslates it. The daughter understands An-mei's words as a force to save her marriage, and this idea has been on her mind since. And in the end, Rose does not question her mother's words even more. She accepts her own idea of the meaning to her mother's words and goes with it.

Although An-mei seems to stop at some point to let her daughter think for herself, she is too sympathetic to her daughter's suffering. At one point in the narrative, An-mei suggests that Rose talk to her husband, Ted. Rose, missing the layers of her mother's words and is influenced by the idea of her mother's wish of her to save the marriage, immediately denies the advice. She says, verbatim, "*Please. Don't tell me to save my marriage anymore. It's hard enough as it is.*" (Tan, 1989, p. 109). Since An-mei has not explicitly mentioned her desires about Rose's marriage, it is clear that Rose has been assuming about it for a while. The utilisation of the word "anymore" emphasises how Rose would correlate any of her mother's suggestions with one goal, which is the saving of her marriage with Ted, and this action has been done repeatedly. The second sentence elaborates on Rose's opinions, both of her marriage and her mother. The adjective "hard" is not only describing her state of marriage, but also her assumption about her mother. Plainly says "hard" gives a clue that Rose thinks that her mother would not know or understand her situation. In Rose's eyes, An-mei is a mother who could never understand her.

On the other hand, however, is An-mei's disproving of her daughter's assumption altogether by saying, verbatim, *"I am not telling you to save your marriage," she protested. "I only say you should speak up."* (Tan, 1989, p. 109). In this passage, An-mei, for once, says her wish explicitly. She no longer gives 'time' or 'room' for Rose to think of her and for herself. She states her view, understanding that this is the only way both of them could reach an agreement, is for her to make her intention clear. An-mei emphasises the disapproval of her daughter's idea of her wanting the daughter to save the marriage by repeating Rose's assumption, to "save her marriage", and stresses the phrase that "she is not" having any thought of that. She then repeats her advice, without any doubt for her intention or meaning this time. An-mei also uses the word "only" to clarify that there is no hidden meaning in her words, to explain that her advice is straightforward and unlike what Rose is thinking about her opinions this far.

In the end, An-mei is still herself even when she becomes a mother. Although she tends to become a permissive parent, she is also sympathetic and then unconsciously projects her own experience of living onto her daughter, which results in her advice to her

daughter. And about this advice, An-mei does not push it. At some point, An-mei's advice is for her daughter to figure it out herself. However, when her intention is misunderstood by Rose, she jumps in and makes it clear. This sympathetic side of her makes her understand her position as a mother, yet she also considers the similarities between her childhood experiences and the dilemma that her daughter is going through at the moment. The consideration she gives throughout Rose's ordeal is making her an authoritative parent, according to Baumrind's classification, who accepts Rose's autonomy without erasing her standards in the process of parenting.

Lindo Jong

Lindo Jong, in her daughter's point of view, is often associated with composed posture and gracious motions. When she is interacting with other people, Lindo would put on a facade that does not show her actual desires and intentions. For instance, when Waverly wins against people in games of chess, Lindo does not exaggerate her reaction. In Waverly Jong's, Lindo's daughter's, eyes, the mother "sits proudly" while responding to people's admiration with "proper Chinese humility". These two are contrasting points, as one illustrates pride and the other humility. Lindo, as a person and a mother, is one that does not wish for her true desires to become obvious to other people's eyes. Therefore, on that specific occasion, she tries to not visibly feel the pleasure of her daughter's success but unconsciously shows her pride and delight through her posture.

Another example is when she is asked to allow Waverly to compete in local chess competitions. Lindo does not answer the request directly, although she "smiles graciously" instead. To Waverly, these actions "mean nothing", even implying her reluctance to let the daughter compete. However, this idea is later disproved by Lindo, as she says, verbatim, "*is shame you fall down nobody push you*" (Tan, 1989, p. 49) after Waverly refuses to participate in the competition. In that passage, the word "nobody" refutes Waverly's idea of her mother not wanting the daughter to compete by saying that no one is involved in her decision—including Lindo herself. These two highlight how Lindo's true intention is not visible to anyone, including her daughter Waverly, unless she explains it on her own accord and inclination.

Furthermore, the invisibility of her true nature is supported by the misunderstood intention that is provoked by certain actions done by her in the process of parenting. Lindo, as a mother and a person, would often project her identity to judge every action that is done by the people around her, including her daughter, Waverly. For example, her sentiment towards the rules for a game of chess. After she reads the manual for chess, she concludes that the chess rules written in the manual are "American rules". In the narrative, she explains her reasoning by elaborating on how immigrants would have a hard time in America if they do not know how Americans live. The projection of her identity is clear in how she would use an allegory that reflects her experience. Instead of relating chess to Waverly's experience or a game that both know to put a common ground of sentiment, Lindo Jong uses her own experience for a comparison. This action implies her tendency to identify things with her own experience, as she would relate to the closest example, namely her own, before forming a proper judgement for that specific thing.

The sentiment that she has formed by identifying the problems with her experience and identity then becomes the basis for her parenting tendencies. Lindo applies punishment and rewards in her parenting, albeit they are not regarded as such by herself or Waverly. After Waverly wins multiple competitions in chess, Lindo allows her not to do her chores and let her sons—Waverly's brothers—to do them in behalf of her. She explains her reasoning by saying that Waverly's achievements are enough to be counted as her contribution towards the family. This is Lindo's method to reward Waverly for her achievements, acknowledging a child who is fulfilling her standard.

On the other occasion, however, she also applies punishment when Waverly's actions are against her standards. When the daughter voices her opinion, Lindo reacts by inquiring further. She does not immediately punish the daughter for sharing her own opinion, but instead provides room for her daughter to speak up. However, her daughter misinterprets this and decides to run away and abandons her mother instead. The moment she fails to hold her opinion accountable and runs away from her family (her mother) is the moment Lindo decides to punish her accordingly. Further in the narrative, Lindo punishes Waverly by ignoring her and says, verbatim, "*we not concerning this girl. This girl not have concerning for us*" (Tan, 1989, p. 51) to justify her action. The main point of her reasoning is that Waverly is not 'concerning' them. The pivotal essence of her punishment is not because of Waverly voicing her discomfort and disagreement with her mother, but how Waverly would abandon the family the moment she feels she is not heard. How the daughter would not hesitate to leave and pay no

consideration towards the family, just like how she runs away without attending to her mother's call.

In conclusion, Lindo's parenting tendency is often misunderstood by her daughter, and her intention is misinterpreted. However, by Baumrind's classification, Lindo's parenting is still considered authoritarian parenting even when she has an authoritative trait. She provides guides, alongside the rewards and punishments for them. When Waverly, the daughter, does something that does not go against her ideals, or even boost her ego, she celebrates it by rewarding her—and in Waverly's case, by freeing her from the chores. However, how would she allow Waverly to have her autonomy, as long as it is within certain boundaries, serves as a prove that she is an authoritarian parent with an authoritative parent's quality in her parenting. This way of parenting is a projection of her identity, which often involves unfamiliarizing her perspective with others' and thus resulting in her experience or traits as the standard—just how she would compare Waverly's traits, feelings, or experience to her own.

Ying-Ying St. Clair

Ying-Ying to Lena is a mother that always present physically, but not exactly the same for spiritual and emotional matters. Lena sees her mother as someone who is only a shell of a person. Ying-Ying is a ghost of her past; her sense of self is altered by fear and psychological trauma. Ying-Ying's parenting and care towards Lena are mainly driven by an intense emotion that the daughter takes as fear. One of the cases is when she and her mother have an accident. Both of them encounter a drunk man who pushes Ying-Ying to the edge, at least from Lena's point of view. Ying-Ying's immediate reaction is to "drop her hand and cover her body with her arms". Unknown to Lena, this response from her is indeed from her fear of her previous husband. By abandoning everything to protect herself, just as she put herself aside to build a barrier around her, she believes it is the right thing to do, until much later she realises that it is not herself that she abandons, but her daughter. That realisation is present in the way she "clutches Lena's hand so tightly it hurts", as a way to profess her apology and care towards her daughter after the event passes. From the passage, taken verbatim, "*she grabbed my hand back so fast I knew at that instant how sorry she was that she had not protected me better.* (Tan, 1989, p. 56), Lena immediately understands in that exact moment that her mother cares about her. While this moment is relatively harmless since they got away from the man already, Lena unconsciously links her mother's behaviour as an apology to the previous ordeal with the old man, where Ying-Ying has "abandoned" her, showing her ability to understand the nuance and deduce her mother's feelings and responses.

In addition to Ying-Ying's parenting, she eventually uses the same intense emotion of fear of the past and the future as a way to deliver her wisdom. During her time as a parent to Lena, Ying-Ying normalises the application of lying to avoid unexplained dangers. When Lena falls down the stairs to the basement out of her childish curiosity about the room, Ying-Ying prevents further accidents by saying that there is a "bad man who lives in the basement". The word "man" is not followed by other adjective but "bad", leaving the supposed danger unclear and unexplained. The phrase "bad man" is clear enough to avert her daughter's curiosity, yet vague enough to give a hint of how clueless Ying-Ying is to the danger in her own house, in herself.

Additionally, she uses fear—now, it is Lena's fear—to deliver wisdom. By saying "her future husband has one pock mark every rice she does not finish", she puts an unrealistic scenario to manipulate Lena's autonomy. Moreover, in the narrative, Ying-Ying also elaborates on this action through this line: *But my mother sighed. "Yesterday, you not finish rice either."* (Tan, 1989, p. 82). Even if it is not directly harming and limiting Lena's autonomy, Ying-Ying uses Lena's past misconduct to create an understanding between her wisdom and Lena's freedom. She "sighs" also adds the elaboration on her disappointment of Lena's repeated disobedience. However, she does not push this ideal using any force. The repetition of this misconduct only signifies how she allows this disobedience, even when she is against it herself. This is a similar parenting style to that shown by her mother in Ying-Ying's childhood.

Furthermore, Ying-Ying in the novel is aware of her permissive parenting, and eventually the relationship between her and Lena, her daughter. In a passage on page 138, Ying-Ying describes how "[she watches] her as though from another shore", highlighting her passiveness in the parent-child relationship. Ying-Ying, from the phrase, acknowledges how she only 'watches' her daughter. She does not fully participate in the daughter's growth, letting her live on her own without any type of adult control or demands, which is a sign of a permissive parent. The phrase "another shore" signifies the distance between Ying-Ying and Lena, confirming Ying-Ying's passivity in the parenting process while

also underlining Lena's inability to connect herself with her mother—both physically and emotionally.

Evidently, Ying-Ying is a typical permissive parent in the narrative, according to Baumrind's classification of permissive parents. She sometimes teaches her daughter how to live as a proper individual but never puts on an authoritarian front as she allows every antics done by her daughter. She gives Lena a piece of her thought, of her opinion and standard, but never rewards her when she goes the same way with her or gives punishment when Lena does not submit to her standard. Being a permissive parent aligns with her identity as a "shadow". A shadow could only follow, observing whatever the main body is doing, just like her letting Lena do anything as she pleases with her warning and advice.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has analysed the connection between parenting and identity in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) using Erik Erikson's definition of identity and the classification of parenting by Diana Baumrind. The two objectives of this study: 1) to examine the connection between the mothers' identities to their childhood experiences; and 2) to elaborate how the identities of the mothers are related to their parenting tendencies, have been achieved. By applying the theoretical structures towards the data of narration and dialogues in the novel, it is found that there are connections between childhood experiences and identity, as well as between identity and parenting.

The overall findings of this study elaborate the identity of three characters in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, namely Lindo Jong and Ying-Ying St. Clair, as well as their childhood experiences. Using Erikson's theory on identity, it is found that each character's life experiences, especially in their childhood, shape their identity in their adult phase. For instance, An-mei Hsu's autonomy as a child is limited by an authoritarian household, making her an adult who is "spineless" because of her inability to set a standard on her own, but also a sympathetic person, as her childhood environment requires extra awareness of nuance. On the other hand, Lindo Jong's identity, which tends to make her the base of judgment, is influenced by the limitations of her social circle and the process of unfamiliarization during her childhood. While the shift of Ying-Ying's identity, from bold and confident to "hidden" and passive, is caused by her experiences, which make her believe it is required to survive as an adult.

Furthermore, the findings show that these identities are related to the mothers' parenting. Using Baumrind's classification of parenting tendencies to classify the type of parents, this study then analyses mothers' identities that are implied through their parenting. For example, An-mei Hsu's "spineless" and sympathetic identity makes her a natural authoritative parent who allows her daughter to express herself while maintaining required control as a mother. On the other hand, how Lindo Jong's authoritarian parenting is caused by the standard for her daughter's life being the mother's life, making the parenting itself a projection to her experience. And Ying-Ying St. Clair's permissive parenting relates to her identity as someone who is "hidden" and passive, even against her daughter.

SUGGESTION

This study is specifically examining the identity of the mothers and how it is related to their childhood experiences and their parenting styles. The findings are presumed to provide insight into the relationship between these three subjects, especially in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. However, while it is insightful, this study has its limitations. The findings cover the identity through Erik Erikson's definition of identity, which relates oneself to their childhood experiences. The data is analysed generally in a universal context with little consideration for any other kind of identity, especially racial and gender identity. Thus, future research might provide further insight into identity and parenting by utilising different approaches to different kinds of identities. Moreover, it is further encouraged to explore different kinds of literature, considering variations of data that are not limited to textual sources.

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