

The collision and fusion of parenting views from the cross-cultural perspective—An analysis of the Joy Luck Club based on Hofstede's cultural dimension theory

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ABSTRACT

Driven by the tide of globalization, the problems in the field of cross-cultural family education are becoming more and more obvious. This study focuses on Amy Tan's novel *The Joy Luck Club*, and with the help of Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, analyzes the differences between Chinese and American parenting concepts and the cultural causes behind them from six dimensions: individualism and collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity and femininity, long-term orientation and short-term orientation, indulgence and restraint. By combining the careful study of the text with the theoretical model, this paper explores the cultural tension reflected in the intergenerational conflict and reconciliation between the four Chinese mother and daughter pairs in the novel, and explores the dynamic changes in the child-rearing concepts of immigrant families in the process of cultural identity reconstruction. The research shows that Hofstede's cultural dimension theory can effectively explain the differences in parenting views in the *Joy Luck Club*, and the reconciliation of mother-daughter relationship shows the possibility of cultural integration. This study provides theoretical support and practical guidance for the practice of cross-cultural family education, emphasizing the construction of inclusive education models on the premise of respecting cultural differences.

KEYWORDS

Hofstede's cultural dimension; Cross-cultural parenting view; *The Joy Luck Club*; Cultural conflict and fusion

1 Introduction

Under the background of globalization, cross-cultural family education has become the core challenge of immigrant families. In Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, four Chinese mother and daughter stories show the conflict and adjustment of Chinese and American parenting views. The mother generation is influenced by Chinese collectivism culture, which emphasizes family responsibility, authority obedience and long-term planning. The daughters grew up in an individualistic environment in the United States, pursuing individual autonomy, equal communication and instant happiness. The differences in values caused many conflicts, reflecting the dilemma of cultural identity reconstruction.

Current academic studies on the *Joy Luck Club* mostly focus on discrete identity narrative or gender power relations, and rarely analyze the root causes of differences in parenting views from the cultural dimension theory. The six dimensions included in Hofstede's cultural dimension theory can transform abstract cultural value differences into comparable indicators, and have methodological value in cross-cultural education research, but they have not been systematically used in the text analysis of the *Joy Luck Club*.

This paper, for the first time, uses Hofstede's cultural dimension theory to interpret the cultural logic of differences in parenting views in the *Joy Luck Club*. Through the analysis of mother-daughter interaction plots in the novel, it is revealed that the mother's "authoritative parenting" reflects high power distance and strong uncertainty avoidance, while the daughter's "autonomous struggle" reflects low power distance and individualism tendency. The study also explores the ways of intergenerational reconciliation, from conflict to empathic communication, to achieve "difference coexistence" through cultural integration. This study expands the application scope of the theory, provides an example of "seeking common ground while reserving differences" for cross-cultural parenting, and helps family education move from confrontation to dialogue.

2 The relationship between Hofstede's cultural dimension and Chinese and American views on parenting

Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions was developed by Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede. It aims to quantitatively analyze the differences in values of different countries or cultural groups through six core dimensions of "individualism and collectivism", "uncertainty avoidance", "power distance", "masculinity and femininity", "long-term orientation and short-term orientation", and "indulgence and restraint". This theory originated from the empirical study of IBM's global employee values, and has been revised and expanded many times, becoming an important tool for cross-cultural research (Hofstede, 2001).

In an individualistic society, everyone attaches importance to their own value and needs, and personal interests come first. In a collectivist society, people expect to be taken care of by members of the team, but at the same time maintain absolute loyalty to the team in return (Wang Yue, 2012). As a typical individualistic society, American parenting values focus on cultivating children's autonomy and critical thinking. American parents encourage their children to pursue personal interests and goals and emphasize the importance of "being yourself". As a collectivist society, China's parenting practices emphasize more on family obligations and social integration (Hofstede Insights, 2023). Chinese parents often restrict their children's behavior with "family honor" and require them to make sacrifices for the overall interests of the family.

Power Distance refers to citizens' acceptance of the phenomenon of unfair power distribution, and its judgment is based on the value of PDI (Power Distance Index). In China, as a country with high power distance, parents are inclined to authoritative education, establishing authority through imperative language, and children should obey their parents' decisions unconditionally. As a country with low power distance, the parent-child relationship in the United States becomes more democratic (Hofstede, 2001). Parents pay more attention to equal consultation with their children and encourage their children to express their personal opinions and participate in family decision-making.

As for the concept of uncertainty avoidance, Hofstede (2001: 110) believes that uncertainty avoidance reflects the comfort level of members of a culture in unfamiliar situations, as well as "the degree to which a society tries to control uncontrollable factors". In China, uncertainty avoidance is high. In the parenting view, parents tend to avoid risks through strict academic planning, make clear life blueprint for their children, and hope that their children will have a stable career and life. In the United States, the degree of avoidance is relatively low. Parents encourage their children to explore independently (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012), support their children to try multiple career choices, believe that failure and uncertainty are part of growth, and allow children to deal with risks independently.

In the dimension of "masculinity and femininity", it is mainly observed that in a certain country and society, there are more representative qualities of men such as competitiveness and dogmatism, or more representative qualities of women such as modesty and caring for others (Zhang Hong, 2015). In China, the goal of parenting is to focus on academic achievement and social status. Parents define the value of children by "success" and pay attention to the cultivation of children's sense of competition and external achievements. Americans prefer femininity and pay more attention to their children's happiness and mental health (Hofstede Insights, 2023). American parents emphasize that happiness is more important than success and pay attention to their children's emotional needs and intrinsic motivation.

The dimension of "long-term orientation and short-term orientation" determines whether an activity is more inclined to long-term interests or short-term interests. As a typical long-term oriented society in China, parenting strategies emphasize savings education and career planning. Parents save education funds and plan career paths for their children, hoping that their children will work hard for long-term goals. In the short-term oriented American society, parenting strategies attach importance to immediate experience and individual expression (Hofstede, 2001), and parents support their children to "follow their interests" in choosing their life direction and pay attention to current happiness and satisfaction.

The culture of indulgence allows individuals to freely express their desires and emotions, while the culture of restraint emphasizes the restraint of individual behavior through social norms. China is a restrained society. Rules and discipline are emphasized in parenting. Parents strictly restrict children's behaviors and hope to cultivate children's self-discipline by limiting their social and entertainment norms. As an indulgent society, the United States allows children to explore freely (Minkov, 2011). American parents encourage their children to grow up in trial and error, believing that free exploration is conducive to the development of independence and creativity.

In short, according to Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, the traditional Chinese parenting model is embodied in the multi-dimensional interaction of "collectivism", "high power distance", "high uncertainty avoidance", "masculinity", "long-term orientation" and "indulgence". With the continuous penetration of globalization, the mode of cultural development has undergone a profound transformation from isolation to interconnection, and cross-national and cross-regional cultural differences have become increasingly heterogeneous. In the face of the complicated trend of cultural image, the single dimensional interpretation paradigm has been insufficient, and the construction of multi-dimensional comprehensive analysis framework has become an urgent need for academic research. It should be pointed out in particular that the indicators in Hofstede's cultural dimension theory are not independent variables separated from each other, but have dynamic synergistic effects. Take the family education scene as an example, through the introduction of negotiation mechanism (reduce power distance) and progressive autonomy conferencing (weaken uncertainty avoidance), while retaining collectivist care, the autonomy spirit of individualism is integrated. Specifically in the context of cross-cultural families, the cultural tension of high power distance and strong uncertainty avoidance can be reconciled through the mechanism of "responsibility sharing" - parents retain the right to guide key decisions (reflecting collectivism), but allow children to explore independently within a safe range (incorporating individualism). This multi-dimensional synergistic practical logic fully indicates that Hofstede's cultural dimension theory provides a rigorous

theoretical paradigm for analyzing the deep relationship between Chinese and American views on parenting by revealing the interaction mechanism of cultural elements.

3 Cultural dimension mapping of the conflict and integration of parenting views in the Joy Luck Club

3.1 Dimensions of individualism and collectivism

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Aunt Lindo sees Waverly's chess talent as a "credit to the family" and demands that she "must win the game or disgrace the family." This collectivist view of parenting, which ties children's achievements to family prestige, forces Waverly into the anxiety of "living for others." Waverly eventually chose to give up chess, declaring that "my talent belongs to me," reflecting individualism's defense of individual sovereignty. At the end of the novel, Aunt Lindo acquiesces to her daughter's choice and reflects that "perhaps her happiness is more important than my face." This shift implies a loosening of the boundary between collectivism and individualism, as mothers begin to recognize the value of their children's independence and daughters come to understand the cultural significance of familial responsibility.

3.2 Power distance dimension

Yingying's piano training for her daughter Lina is full of authoritarian overtones: "You must become a genius, otherwise my sacrifice is meaningless." The imperative education in the high power distance culture completely ignores Lina's interests and wishes. And Lina's resistance - "I hate the piano, more hate your control", is the appeal of low power distance culture, requiring equal reconstruction of parent-child relationship. When Lina gave up the piano due to a psychological breakdown, Yingying finally gave in: "Maybe I shouldn't bind you with my scars." The mother began to negotiate instead of command, and the daughter understood the traumatic logic behind authority by telling her mother's story - "she once set fire to escape her marriage" - and realized the renegotiation of power relations.

3.3 Uncertainty avoidance dimensions

Rose's mother planned an elite path for her as a "doctor or lawyer", believing that "stable career can avoid suffering", reflecting the aversion to risk of a culture of high uncertainty avoidance. Rose chose art and design, declaring "I want to try the unknown", echoing the tolerance of exploration in low-uncertainty avoidance culture. When Rose independently solved the problems in the marriage crisis, the mother gradually accepted the rationality of the existence of uncertainty and sighed that "her choice may be right", and the daughter integrated her mother's thinking of "preparing for a contingency" in her career exploration, forming a dynamic balance of risk awareness and innovative spirit.

3.4 Dimensions of masculinity and femininity

Wu's exquisite mother saw chess victory as a tool to "prove that Chinese people are not inferior to white people," and the masculinity culture's view of parenting equated success with competitive victory. And Wu exquisite because of the pressure to produce psychological disorders, asked her mother, "Why my value depends on the definition of win or lose?" . Mother finally admitted that "I was wrong, your happiness is the most important", this reconciliation is not to deny the value of achievement, but to combine the sense of competition (masculinity) and happiness (femininity) to form a new understanding that "success should not be at the expense of self".

3.5 Dimensions of long-term orientation and short-term orientation

Chinese mothers save for their daughters' education funds and make career plans, and believe that "today's pain is for tomorrow's success", reflecting the long-term orientation of the culture of deferment of gratification. Daughters pay more attention to the present experience, such as Lina believes that "happiness is more important than being a genius", reflecting the immediate thinking of short-term oriented culture. Daughters begin to consider the long term in their career choices (Rose combines art and design with business), and mothers learn to appreciate the value of "useless things" (Aunt Lindo collects Waverly's chess trophy as a souvenir rather than a show), creating a symbiotic logic of planning and experience.

3.6 Dimensions of indulgence and restraint

Chinese mothers strictly restrict their daughters' behavior, such as prohibiting late return and restricting social interaction: "Good girls should not go out at night", reflecting the importance of rules in the restraint culture. The

American daughters pursue freedom, for example, Rose refused to intervene with her mother in the marital crisis, insisting that "my life is led by me", showing the liberation of personality by indulgent culture. The mothers gradually loosen the rules, such as Yingying allowing Lina to attend the school dance; The daughters take the initiative to establish a sense of responsibility in the free exploration, such as Waverly in the business to take into account the needs of the family, to achieve "freedom of self-discipline" - not only to retain personality space, but also to inherit the sense of order in the culture.

Despite the intense culture clash between mother and daughter, "The Joy Luck Club" ends up pointing to reconciliation. This reconciliation is not a compromise of one side to the other, but a renegotiation of cultural identity. This process confirms the dynamic nature of Hofstede's theory: cultural dimensions are not static labels, but can be reconstructed through cross-cultural interaction.

4 Conclusion

Hofstede's cultural dimension theory provides a scientific framework for interpreting the conflict of parenting views in the Joy Luck Club, and the narrative of the novel feeds back the dynamic nature of the theory - cultural dimension is not only a yardstick of difference, but also a bridge of integration. In the context of globalization, this path of "conflict-dialogue-symbiosis" provides practical enlightenment for cross-cultural family education to transcend opposition and move toward integration.

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