

**CHINESE AMERICANS' ACCULTURATION  
IN GISH JEN'S TYPICAL AMERICAN**

**UNDERGRADUATE THESIS**

**BY**

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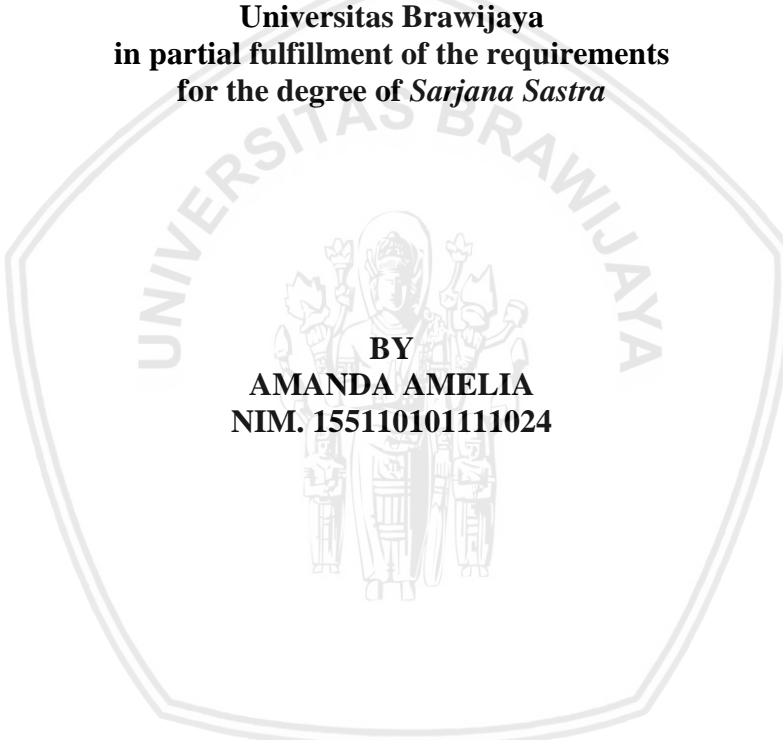


**STUDY PROGRAM OF ENGLISH  
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE  
FACULTY OF CULTURAL STUDIES  
UNIVERSITAS BRAWIJAYA  
2019**

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IN GISH JEN'S TYPICAL AMERICAN**

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**Presented to  
Universitas Brawijaya  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra***



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DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE  
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## ABSTRACT

Amelia, Amanda. 2019. **Chinese Americans' Acculturation in Gish Jen's Typical American**. Study Program of English, Department of Language and Literature, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya. Supervisor: Melania Shinta Harendika, M.A.

Keywords: Chinese-American immigrants, *Typical American*, Acculturation, Sociological Approach, Chinese values, American values.

*Typical American* is a novel by Gish Jen which tells about the struggle of living of Chinese-American immigrants in the United States of America. It is started when Ralph and his family moved into United States of America and they are trying to maintain Chinese values during their lives in the United States of America. In the process of adjusting a new culture, they experience any kind of event which somehow are not suitable with the old culture that they brought so that it effects on the cultural change. The cultural change that happened by the main character itself is called acculturation. This research was conducted in several stages. By using sociological approach and Berry's acculturation strategies, the researcher found that there are two types of acculturation strategies in the novel, which are: (1) separation which explains that Ralph's family is still trying to maintain their original culture through family reunification and woman's role as Confucius taught; and (2) assimilation which explains about there were rejections to maintain the original culture by the main characters since the main characters have been influenced by American doctrines. Through this research, it reveals that in *Typical American* novel, acculturation has a role in the process of adjusting a new which implemented by the characters. Furthermore, the next researchers are possible to analyze in a deeper focus on gender role process in the character named Helen as a problem of the study.

## ABSTRAK

Amelia, Amanda. 2019. **Akulturası Orang Cina-Amerika yang digambarkan dalam *Typical American* karya Gish Jen.** Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Brawijaya. Pembimbing: Melania Shinta Harendika, M.A.

Kata kunci: Imigran Cina-Amerika, *Typical American*, Akulturası, Pendekatan Sosiologi, Nilai-nilai Cina dan Amerika.

*Typical American* adalah novel karya Gish Jen yang menceritakan tentang perjuangan hidup imigran Cina-Amerika di Amerika Serikat. Hal ini dimulai ketika Ralph dan keluarganya pindah ke Amerika dan mereka berusaha mempertahankan nilai-nilai China selama hidup mereka di Amerika Serikat. Dalam proses penyesuaian dengan budaya baru, mereka mengalami berbagai kejadian yang tidak sesuai dengan budaya lama yang mereka bawa, sehingga hal ini berdampak pada perubahan budaya. Perubahan budaya yang dialami oleh para tokoh disebut akulturası. Penelitian ini dilakukan dalam beberapa tahap. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan sosiologis dan strategi akulturası oleh Berry, peneliti menemukan bahwa ada dua jenis strategi akulturası yang digunakan oleh karakter utama dalam novel yaitu: (1) Separasi. Hal ini menjelaskan bahwa Ralph dan keluarganya masih berusaha untuk mempertahankan budaya asli mereka melalui penyatuan kembali keluarga dan peranan perempuan dalam ajaran Konfusius. (2) Asimilasi. Hal ini menjelaskan adanya penolakan untuk mempertahankan budaya asli dikarenakan semua karakter telah dipengaruhi oleh doktrin-doktrin Amerika. Melalui penelitian ini terungkap bahwa di dalam novel *Typical American*, akulturası memiliki peranan dalam proses penyesuaian dengan budaya baru yang diimplementasikan oleh karakter. Selain itu, para peneliti berikutnya sangat mungkin untuk menganalisis secara lebih mendalam terhadap peranan gender yang terjadi pada karakter bernama Helen sebagai masalah penelitian.

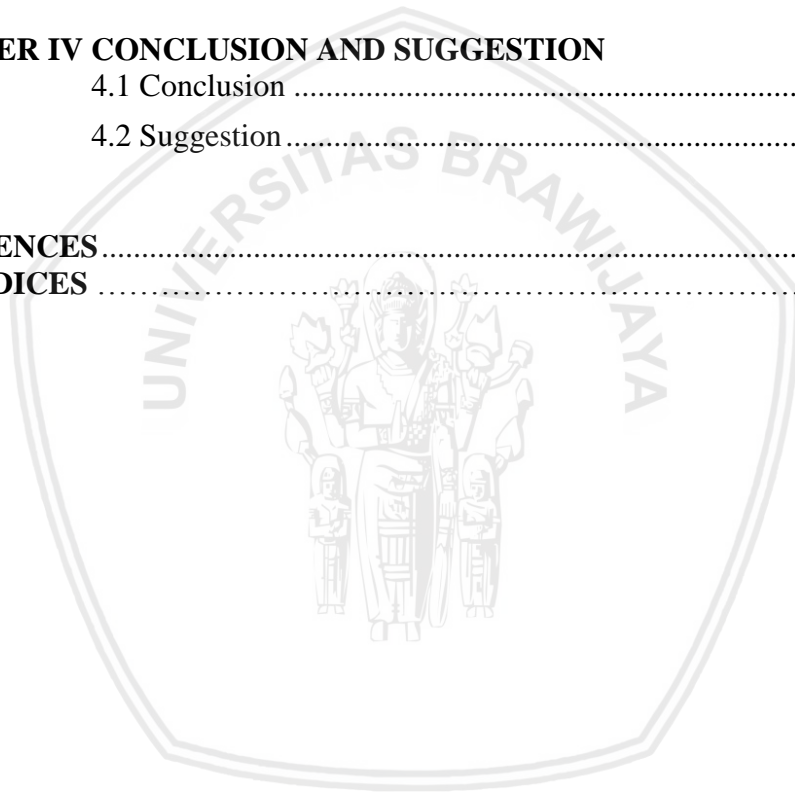


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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers three subchapters: background of the study, problem of the study, and objective of the study. Background of the study discusses what the topic is mainly about and why it is worth studying. Problem of the study is the question which this research attempts to figure out, and objective of the study is the aim of this research based on the problem of the study.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The United States of America is well-known as a home of thousand people from different nationality and cultural background around the world. These diverse individuals are mixed together forming American society in terms of shaping a new community. Therefore, it is caused a new multicultural society which some people might say multiculturalism.

“Multiculturalism” or “heterogeneities” in the United States of America is definitely the concept that represents communities containing multiple cultures in society. Between the end of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century, the political and cultural pluralism began as part of the pragmatism movement. From that phenomenon, those caused a new wave of immigration in certain countries such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern and Eastern Europeans to the United States and Latin

America. Many philosophies, historians, and earlier socialists defined that the developing concepts of cultural pluralism itself referred today as multiculturalism. Through multiculturalism, it can help to build a better way in egalitarian society (Raza, 2011, p. 14).

According to Gunew (n.d) multiculturalism's concept is amplified by nations and other aspirants to geo-political cohesiveness who attempts to portray as homogeneity. Somehow, multiculturalism is depicted as racial differences. From this definition, it can be seen that multiculturalism presented in society as a form of self-existence because of cultural differences. It has a big role in creating different culture since commonly, people are differentiated by races and ethnics. It is also supported by Watson (2000) saying the definition of culture contains common language, a shared history from the ancestor, a shared set of religious beliefs and moral values, a shared geographical origin, and it will be melting together as a sense of belonging to a certain group. Thus, it can be considered that America is a country that has a diverse culture. Here, multiculturalism also occurs between Chinese and America. It creates a more favorable environment with each other. Despite Chinese people are somehow considered as the minority, they can successfully gain respect in American society. For instance, Hirschman (2013) stated that Chinese people are able to dominate various fields such as trade, media, sports, literary works, and so on. Moreover, they always hold on traditional values in their lives. Since they are able to produce new writers from a minority group, Chinese American literature has contributed to mainstream writing of American literature.

The 1980s and 1990s became the witnesses of the flourishing of Chinese American literature. Gish Jen is undoubtedly one of the most well-known writers. According to Oxford Bibliographies (2017) on its article entitled *Gish Jen*, Gish Jen was born on 12 August 1955 in Long Island, New York. She is a contemporary American writer and the second generation of Chinese American. Jen's parents were Chinese immigrants from Shanghai who met in the United States. They initially returned to China, but they remained it due to Communist War took over in 1949. Jen graduated from Harvard University majoring English in 1977. She wrote many novels based on her experiences of being a Chinese-American. Her novel portrayed the cultural, social and monetary difficulties of the immigrants. One of her bestseller novels is *Typical American* highlighting the transformation of the Chinese family in the United States.

*Typical American* was published in 1991. Jen was an awesome writer to put the characters into the book in detail. The major characters are Ralph Chang who was born as Yifeng, Theresa as Ralph's Older Sister, Helen as Ralph's wife, Ralph's daughters Mona and Callie. It was started when Ralph got a fellowship from the government, such a field training to be an advanced engineer in the United States of America. Due to Yifeng has scored seventeenth on the department exam, he was one of the ten picked to go. The day when he was going to America, he set many goals to have a better life in the land of hope. There were six lists that must be done while he lives in the United States of America. One of them was to pursue his biggest dreams of being an engineer and brought the honor back to the family. In line with this novel, his journey was not

always perfect. When he wanted to go back to China, China collapsed because of the Communist takeover in China in 1948. Since he finally settled in America, he got experiences which somehow contradictory with Chinese tradition, such as changing his Chinese name into American name from Yifeng into Ralph, not being an American citizen who has no morals, he got stereotypes from an American citizen, and so on. Then, he transformed from Chinese into being American and it makes him losing his identity. He was confused about where the culture belonged to. Later, Ralph and his family as typical representatives of the Chinese-American immigrants were not only chasing freedom, equality, and happiness, but also dream of success, self-determination, and social acknowledgment. In the process of their pursuit of those dreams, Ralph and his family have been struggling between traditional Chinese and American values as their cultural identity.

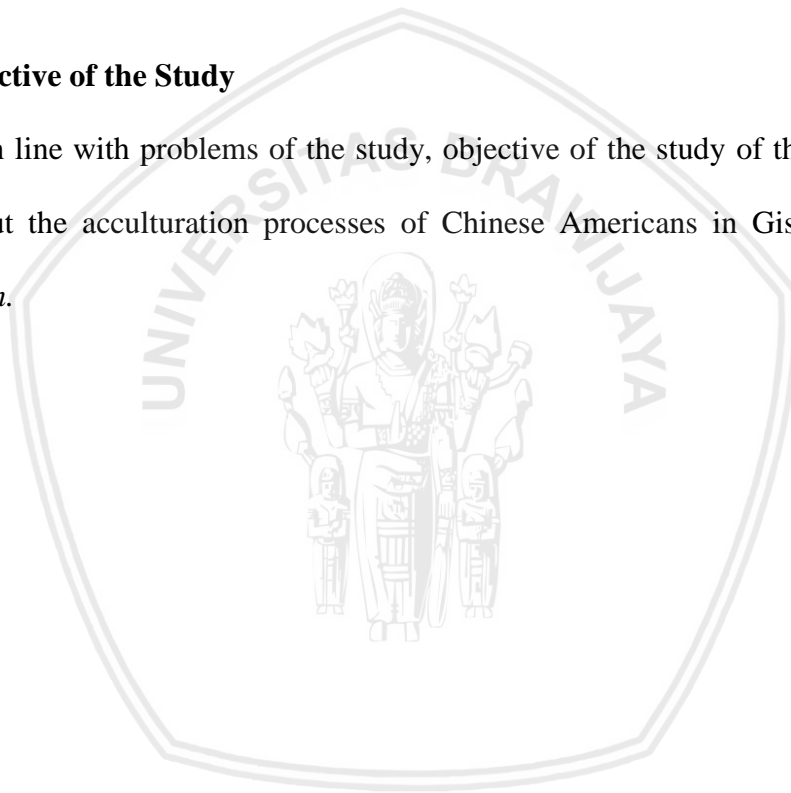
By reading this novel, the researcher can say that this novel is important to be discussed because it is found acculturation processes practiced in the novel. In addition, she also found that there is cultural change during the transformations of Ralph and the way he can differentiate his life to face the problems during in America as a new immigrant. That is why the researcher is going to analyze deeper about what the acculturation processes in this novel. Thereby, the researcher uses sociological criticism in analyzing the data and Berry's acculturation strategies. At last, this study will enrich the knowledge about the acculturation process that happened by most people in the world, because when someone moves outside their country, they will experience cultural changes as a new process of adaptation, particularly in this novel.

### 1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study discussed, the problems of the study are focused on: What are the acculturation processes of Chinese Americans in Gish Jen's *Typical American*?

### 1.3 Objective of the Study

In line with problems of the study, objective of the study of this research is to figure out the acculturation processes of Chinese Americans in Gish Jen's *Typical American*.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH METHODS

The second chapter is intended to present the approach which the researcher uses in conducting the research. In addition, this chapter also describes the previous studies which are conducted by the previous researcher to enrich the understanding of the researcher, and research methods are used to assist the whole data processing.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This subchapter consists of the review of related theories which are employed to analyze the object of this research. This research uses a sociological approach to literature, acculturation, the history of Chinese immigrants in the United States, Chinese and American values, and also the theories of character and characterization to cultivate the data.

##### 2.1.1 Sociological Approach to Literature

Jen's *Typical American* mainly talks about the struggle of living Chinese immigrant in the United States at the very first time. It was started when Ralph was picked as the one to go to the United States of America and he got many obstacles in the process of adjusting with the new cultures. In sociological approach, it also reveals how the main characters, Ralph and his family, faced everything during his



life in the United States. Therefore, the researcher uses a sociological approach to literature as the underlying concept to analyze the object of the study.

Sociology is firstly created from social structure. Henslins (2009, p. 86) defined that social structure is expressing certain patterns of the relationship of a group which has purposes for guiding people's behavior. It can be considered that sociological approach is a term which constructed to see how the relationship between human and society in their life. Therefore, that is also a tool to analyze the economic political and social values in the text.

In addition, Ogundokun as cited in Marfika (2018), stated that literature is a medium to convey ideas, views, opinions, experiences, feeling, a body of knowledge, cultural values as teaching moral lessons and healing souls. It can be seen that a sociological approach explores between the character and the society. The character is not standing alone as someone but it is seen as the representative of society in shaping culture. That is why the sociological approach is used to analyze the phenomenon occurred in the novel and to see how society constructs the characters in the novel.

### **2.1.2 Acculturation**

Spencer (2012) stated that culture is described as a variety of concepts, behaviors, artifacts, and systems which played a role in society. It is implied that culture are dynamic entities that can be flown in every aspect of live and changed in accordance with the condition in society itself. Regarding to that, Samovar and Porter as cited in Liu (2015) noted that cultural changes can be divided into three means, which are: invention, diffusion, and acculturation.

The process of acculturation can define as a result of cultural interaction between immigrant family and the new host family they are immigrating to. On its process, someone can build a social contact which will influence towards cultural changed with the new host culture. Birman (2016) argued that acculturation is a extensive process in which influences by the process of mixing two cultures both of the old and new one that deliberately done by parents. In transmitting a new culture, it can be the cultural practices, beliefs, values, and attitudes which are desirable to adopt. From the definition, it can be inferred that acculturation does not opposite with the old culture, but just experiencing a cultural change which affects their life as well. The cultural change which affects to someone's life is not always rejected. Berry (1997) stated that there are two kinds in positioning basic dimension of acculturations, which are by preserving of original cultural identity or its own cultural heritage and preserving the relation with the other groups in the larger host culture. By extension, Berry (2006) also categorized that there are four acculturation strategies, which are: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization.

**a. Assimilation**

Assimilation takes a place in the acculturation strategies if it refers to someone who rejects to preserve cultural identity and tend to adopt a new culture. In its implementation, someone has no obligation to preserve what the cultural identity he belongs to. It can happen because someone is probably affected by the host

culture at the first time and think that the host culture is richer rather than the old one.

**b. Integration**

Integration refers to someone who has a desire to preserve his cultural identity and at the same time, he is interested to adopt the new culture that exists in its surroundings by having an intergroup relations. From its definition, it can be understood that in integration strategies, someone value both cultural identity and intergroup relations. Thus, in its implementation, both of cultural identity and intergroup relations could be carried out in a balance and there is no conflict between the old and new culture.

**c. Separation**

Separation is contradiction with integration. In separation, it refers to someone who chooses to preserve his cultural identity and there is no interest to adopt or get to know about the host culture he is immigrating to. In practicing their values, someone only maintains the cultural identity and he is avoiding to interact with the host culture. So from its definition, it can be seen that someone intends to preserve the cultural identity he belongs to even though he lives in the host country temporarily or even permanently.

**d. Marginalization**

Marginalization is described as a kind of acculturation strategy in which someone does not preserve neither cultural identity nor host culture. Berry (2006) stated that marginalization can happen as a result for someone's failure in adjusting

new cultures in his life. If someone cannot adjust with new things, acculturation stress will emerge and influence someone's life. Acculturation stresses' example are such feelings like depression, confused with the new things in its surrounding, insecurities, and even psychopathologies.

Therefore, from the four acculturation strategies above, these emerges are as a part of acculturation which can effect and influence immigrants. It will reflect on how someone faces obstacles in the new land as a part of acculturation processes in society and how they value their cultural identity and intergroup relations. Berry (2006) stated that through those acculturation strategies, it can use to adapt towards the new culture that might experience by immigrants and to avoid acculturation stress. Therefore, by learning acculturation strategies, it can decrease bad possibilities occurred by the immigrants.

### **2.1.3 Chinese Immigrants in the 1990s**

Chinese people are well known as travelers. Due to on that, Chinese people can be found everywhere around the world as Beňová (2016, p.5) stated that the movement was started as considerable hostility to face the moment they arrived in large numbers in the early 1850s. There were several reasons why Chinese immigrated to the United States, such as racial prejudice, common features of nineteenth-century America, white labor fears of unfree Chinese competition, and popular dread of Chinese heathenism, immorality, and foreignness combined to produce powerful anti-Chinese sentiment among whites that led ultimately to the

passage of the Chinese Restriction Act of 1882 and even more stringent subsequent legislation.

In 1848, Gold Rush in California was heard by Chinese. This was a chance for poor people to leave their country temporarily, gain wealth, and support their families in China. Then they come back after they have their own money to survive in better life condition. Furthermore, before they leave to the United States, they would marry and have wives and children so they could keep sending money for them. Due to that, many villages were built in there. In 1851, hundreds of people came to the United States but in 1851, more than 20.000 Chinese people came over in California to get a better life because of "Gold Mountain". They moved to the United States by sea. Since the shortest way to the United States was Canton, they had to survive between four and eight weeks to San Francisco. Their trip was not perfect. They almost died mainly because of hunger and disease. All of their sufferings was as an effort to get wealth in the New World.

In short, the movement of a thousand people in the United States became larger. In the 20s century, immigrants were still coming to the United States for the sake of getting a better way of life. In the beginning, they had worked as a waitress, cooking in restaurants, cashiers, and many more. By the time, their arrival is acceptable to society since the long story of them for coming at the USA. During the 1930s Chinese parents who were already American citizens had an idea that their children could study in the US and built their career in China. In August 1945, the Second World War was at the end. The government of the United States gave reward Chinese men for the military service and allowed them

to go back to China, marry a Chinese woman there and re-enter the United States with her freely. After the Second World War, the Chinese did not stop immigrating to the United States, but they migrated as a new member of American society or as family members of Chinese-American. They lived in Chinatown enriching American culture with their own food, fashion, music, and even literature. Even though they have lived in America for several years, they still preserve their cultural tradition. Their pride as Chinese immigrants is never getting lose and they are very proud of it. Thereby, this history will be the underlying background to see how the story of *Typical American* goes on.

#### **2.1.4 Chinese Values**

Culture value becomes the main key to living for Chinese. They have values as a rule and guidance for getting a better life. The values of Confucianism currently become the core identity that must be maintained by Chinese. The philosophy of Confucius is related to the belief to age and social hierarchy in society (Jandt, 2003, p. 38). As a result, it has played a dominant role in shaping the Chinese culture for thousands of years. You (1994) who presented several cultural values which relate with Chinese people's attitude and behavior as follows:

##### **a. Past-time orientation**

This value is related to the Chinese's saying (以史为鉴): *Yìshǐwèijiàn* which translated into English is "history is the mirror of the present". It means that Chinese people are always instructed to follow their predecessor based on the

knowledge or experience of them. In addition, the old saying is used to support their arguments while making the decision. That is why Chinese people have to hold high respect of the ancestor. This value is used to see how Ralph's family is trying to preserve their original culture when live in the United States of America.

#### **b. Respect for hierarchy**

Hierarchy is the prominent principal of Chinese people. It is such a respect for Chinese people to the past. Due to base on Confucianism, they believe that it will help them to sustain social order. It can be seen most of the Chinese people have a strong relationship and respect to the eldest or superior. As modern Chinese people stated that people may disagree with what the eldest said but it must be conveyed in a respectful manner. If they did not follow the pattern, it will lead to the failure of communication. Due to on that, respect for hierarchy is needed for most local Chinese people in their living as a way to respect and hold by the hierarchical system.

#### **c. Interdependence**

This third is used as the base of a sustainable relationship. In the long term, interdependence is involved reciprocity in which parties deserve to help and as well as will receive its benefits. By exchanging favors or goods, it will build a sense of mutual trust relationship in each people. Chinese people believe that they feel obligated to return what they received and giving a response by the feeling of affection, respect, or trust. They are principled if receive without returning means

as disrespectful, indifferent, or even untrustworthiness. Therefore, most traditional Chinese people believe that by returning the favors might be interpreted as a respectful manner to the others.

#### **d. Group orientation**

Chinese is well-known by living together with their family, started from the eldest to the youngest. Their existences are shown by collectivistic primarily as a group. The definition of “group” itself has variation across context, ranging from kinship group to a citizen of a prince, and all the way up to a nation. Somehow, their personal interest is also bound by the group’s interest. Therefore, Chinese people tend to build a relationship of a certain group by locating and emphasizing similar features such as by hometown, universities, college, military services, sports, *etc.*

From the characteristics above the researcher can see that the concept of Chinese people is having great significance for Chinese culture. Most importantly, these are still preserved by them from one generation to the next generations. Therefore, these values mentioned above of Chinese culture are used to analyze how the characters play a role in society based on the standard of living as Chinese people.

#### **2.1.5 American Values**

Based on the U.S Census Bureau’s Population Clock (2019), America is categorized as the third largest country in the world with a population of over 32



million in a year. It means that there are many people come from every country in the world bringing their own race, ethnics, and culture. They have a variety of customs, religions, values, foods, and so on to be shared with the other group of society. These activities in the United States are described as the result of “melting pot” because there are many cultures and background of life in it. That is why multiculturalism happens in the United States of America. Moreover, as Datesman (2005, p.28) said, since people already knew that America is called ‘the land of opportunities’, they come to the United States by their own special purposes. The term is used by an American citizen and all immigrants over the world to define a place where everyone has an equal chance to get a better life. Everyone deserves to be a successful person, has the freedom and an ability to qualify the better standard of living. These standards then become a core identity of America. In addition, Datesman (2005) also stated that the core of American values is divided into six major orientations, which are:

#### **a. Individual Freedom and Self-Reliance**

The idea of individual freedom in the United States is related to colonization. Their lives were controlled by king and governments, priests and churches, noblemen and aristocrats. In the shaping of the American character, they separated the power of government and church, eliminating a formal aristocracy in which emphasizes the freedom of the individual (Datesman, 2005, p. 28). The concept of individual freedom, then, became associated with Americans’ people mind. By freedom, people can express their own desire and the right of the

individual as his or her own behalf. It is the desire and the right of all individuals to control their own destiny, such as to act, to think and share about something without feeling interference by the government (Datesman, 2005, p. 29).

This strong belief, then, continues in self-reliance. Traditionally, this means achieving both financial and emotional independence from their parents as early as possible. It means that people should stand on their own two feet in facing problems (Datesman, 2005, p.29). They will lose their own freedom if relying too much upon families, government, or organizations. These ideas are used to identify how Yifeng or Ralph gaining his own goals while living in the United States.

#### **b. Equality of Opportunity and Competition**

People in the United States deserve to gain their success based on their ability in many ways such as degree, status, values, and right. For them, equality means that everyone should have an equal chance to enter the race and win (Datesman, 2009, p.31). It means that for being a successful person is not just because he or she was born as a wealthy person, but because of the belief in the equality of opportunity and how they gain the success. If they want to survive or compete with others, they will become a winner. Meanwhile, someone will be a loser if she or he does not want to compete with others. By learning competition, people can grow up in the United States. Therefore, equality of opportunity and competition cannot be separated from Americans' people life.

### c. **Material Wealth and Hard Work**

Since the United States of America becomes a land of plenty where millions of people can come to seek their fortunes, most of the immigrants tried to improve their standard of living. Wealth is the important thing for immigrants because it would make people to be accepted in terms of social status. So, then, material wealth became a value to the American people because it is a reward of being hard work (Datesman, 2005, p.33). These two things cannot be avoided by American values.

Since the United States of America is classified as a country which has high-oriented with time and dreams, these characteristics above are then becoming a standard of living by most American. This has occurred from generation to generation. Based on these six characteristics, it will help the researcher in conducting the research to characterize which part that includes American values represented in the novel *Typical American*.

### **2.1.6 Character and Characterization**

Character is a prominent element when people read literary works. Character is presented as the portrayal of human life in general and seen as people, animals, things, *etc.* Through the character, the reader will know the perception of the story based on their understanding and imagination.

The definition of character is a visual design which intended to look like someone or something else (Childs & Fowler, 2006, p. 23). For instance, a person. It usually can be as the existence and object of critical attention in literary works.

Since the character has a very significant role in the developing story, readers can recognize either the story will good or bad. In addition, Klarer (2004, p. 17) differentiates that there are a round and a flat character. Round character denotes as anyone who has complex personality traits. Whereas, a flat character is kind of figure displays only one dominant character trait. Thereby, this concept helps the researcher during the process of analyzing the character played a role in the novel.

Regarding the explanation above, when character appears in the literary works, it is followed by characterization. Characterization itself has an important role to define and to wonder what character undergoes in the story. It cannot be separated with character. Characterization occurs when the author puts some characters onto text based on his or her imaginary. Klarer (2004, p.18) in *An Introduction to Literary Studies*, pointed out that in presenting a figure, there will be two ways through showing (dramatic method) and telling (narration). In showing (also called "the dramatic method"), the author simply presents what the personality of the characters itself playing in the literary text. The author may show not only external speech and actions, but also a character's inner thoughts, feelings, and responsiveness to events; for a highly developed mode of such inner showing, see a stream of consciousness. Meanwhile, in the telling (or narration method), the author reveals authoritatively in order to describe, and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters.

From the definition above, it can be seen that characterization is a prominent point in literary work in terms of building curiosity from the reader. Therefore, the reader can determine the interesting part of the story.

Characterization itself will be used as a tool to analyze the main characters in the process of living in the United States of America.

## 2.2 Previous Studies

There are two previous studies used as the reference in this research. The first previous study is conducted by Andi Sricing Sakti Asmawi from Faculty of Cultural Studies Universitas Brawijaya (2018) entitled *The Struggle of Living as Afghan Diaspora Depicted in Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner*. Through her thesis, she employs postcolonial criticism as the underlying concept in conducting the research. In addition, she added cross-cultural adaptation to analyze how the process of adaptation that is different for each individual can be viewed as the parameter of the success level to the adjustment process. It is revealed that Afghan diaspora in America has the struggle of living which consist of: (1) different rules and systems, and (2) sense of longing far away from home.

The second is conducted by Zahra Firdausiah from Faculty of Cultural Studies Universitas Brawijaya (2014) entitled *The Construction of Santosh Cultural Identity In One Out Of Many By V.S Naipaul*. In her thesis, she employs two concepts namely ambivalence and cultural identity. Those are supported with psychological approach to sharpen analyzing the object of the study. This thesis found that ambivalence can happen in the aspect of values, belief, and the using of currency. Besides, this research reveals how Santosh constructs his cultural identity by combining and negotiating both cultures, and how he gets dressed.

Different from those researchers, this current research focuses on how the different culture between Chinese and American influences the first generation of Chinese American immigrants in building an identity in his life. From this concept, this research tries to find out how Chinese immigrants can adapt and maintain the old culture and the new one. It is depicted through *Typical American*'s novel by Gish Jen. This research will use the sociological approach as the underlying concept since the object of the study mainly explores the relationship between the character and society.

### **2.3 Research Methods**

In conducting this research, the researcher will take several steps: deciding the material object and approach of the study, collecting the data, followed by analyzing the main characters and interpreting narration or dialogue found in *Typical American*. At the end of the analysis, the researcher draws a conclusion from the findings.

#### **2.3.1 Deciding the Object and Approach of the Study**

In this research, *Typical American* is chosen as the material object of the study. This novel was published in 1991 by Gish Jen. This novel portrays about the cultural differences experienced by the main characters in the United States of America. It is started from the main character named Ralph Chang who came from China and he wanted to pursue his dreams in there as a college to accomplish his degree on engineering. The problem was coming when he had different cultures

perspective which made a new problem in facing and solving the problems as a new immigrant in the United States of America. The reason why the researcher chooses *Typical American* in this research is because this novel has a lot of Chinese values practiced by the main characters since it has already known that most of Chinese people are very respect on what we call as Confucianism's doctrine. On the other hand, he and his family also try to adapt with American values which mostly have contradiction towards their live. Therefore, it makes them to accept two cultures at the same time in their daily life and it represents about how the acculturation works unconsciously in how they live.

As the material object was chosen, the writer determined that sociological approach is suitable to analyze this study because it tells about the phenomenon occurred and how society constructs the character in the novel. In addition, acculturation theory was chosen for *Typical American* novel because it shows the acculturation strategies faced by the main characters in how they preserve their own culture in the United States of America.

### **2.3.2 Collecting the Data**

In order to understand the novel deeply, there are several steps that must be accomplished by the researcher. First of all, the researcher has to read and understand the novel several times to comprehend the novel itself. Second, the researcher make some lists of sequence of plots which suitable that portrays about acculturation strategies done by the main characters. For the last step, the researcher tries to analyze the dialogue and narration by using theories to support the arguments. More addition, analyzing elements of literature is also the prominent

point here because it will help the researcher to understand deeper about how the story goes on in the novel.

### **2.3.3 Analyzing the Data**

In analyzing the data, the researcher will use table as an indicator to classify which one that suitable with the theories. The indicators of the table itself consist of values of Chinese and American, a sequence of a plot found after read the novel, excerpt page, character, characterization (showing method or telling method), and the comments from the researcher. After that, the researcher will match between Chinese and American culture and see how the main characters here maintain their own culture in the new land. Hopefully, by listing the indicators using that specific table, it is going to help the researcher to analyze the data from the novel easily.

### **2.3.4 Drawing Conclusion**

After the process of analyzing data, the researcher draws a conclusion based on the result of the data analysis.





### CHAPTER III

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Since *Typical American* portrays about how Chinese-American immigrants struggling in a way of life as a new immigrant, the story begins with Ralph moved to the United States of America to pursue his degree in engineering. At first, education became one important thing why he came to the United States of America. So, he wrote his dreams that must be accomplished when he arrived in there and wished that someday he would bring honor to his family in China. His journey in United States of America was not perfect all the time as he imagined before. He must do some sacrifices so that he could survive in America. During his transition, Ralph faced many obstacles whose made him gradually become “*Typical American*” which once mocked.

In the process of adjusting a new culture, sometimes people experience many difficulties when they try to maintain the cultural identity that they have. Here, China and United States of America as huge countries, are holding different perspectives and values in living. Both of them actually have big differences between perspective and values in their living. Hence, from that reason, it can be defined that every country in the world are multicultural. In *Typical American* novel, there are at least four characters that will be discussed, which are Ralph, Helen, Theresa, and Grover Ding. Ralph is the protagonist who becomes the father of a family, Helen is Ralph’s wife who personates

as a good traditional Chinese woman, Theresa who describes as Ralph's Older Sister, and the last is Grover Ding who personates as the antagonist character in the novel. Since they are first generation of Chinese-American who still holds their original identity, they face many difficulties in adjusting their living in the United States of America. It can be seen through the processes of acculturation and it will be analyzed below by using Berry's acculturation strategies.

### 3.1 Separation

China and United States of America are huge countries in the world which have different characteristics in their habits to the culture itself. The distinction of cultural background also makes them have different value orientation in which reflected in their lives as well. Like an iceberg, some culture might be visible and the others are submerged in the ocean.

According to Zhang & Yu (2016), Chinese people tend to place a lot of values in the group. This group can be seen as the family unit, the workplace or society as a whole. They really respect in the sense of togetherness since any success is not regarded as a success for him or herself, but for the company, the family, or the team they belong to. On the contrary, in the United States of America, people value things like individual freedom. American ideologies has been influencing all the fields of society, economics, politics, and culture itself. Since the ideology itself comes from the colonization, their lives were controlled by a king, governments and else which made them a person who emphasizes individual freedom. That is why China and United States of America have different point of view in terms of how they live.

Regarding the brief explanation above, the distinction between two countries which are China and United States of America also found in *Typical American's* novel by Gish Jen. Gish Jen displays widely description between two countries above in some characterization which can be seen in the novel. In the process of adjusting between two different cultures, somehow people or individual surely experience many obstacles in the new land. One of them is how the main characters here try to maintain their original culture in terms of living. After re-reading the novel, the researcher classifies acculturation strategies faced by the main characters in the novel as follows:

### **3.1.1 Ralph, Helen and Theresa Decide to Live Together**

China is considered as a country which has a large population in the world. According to the National Bureau Statistic (2013), the population in China is about 1.3 billion people who came from 31 regional areas and about 56 nationalities. About 40% of Chinese people live in urban areas while 60% live in rural areas. From its percentage, Chinese people mostly live in rural areas. It obviously can be seen that Chinese people mostly live in under one rooftop in a large family which we call as extended family. The extended family itself includes grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, and children, or even grandchildren. This is a common situation in China and even becomes an ordinary people's idea as illustrated below:

"In China, families lived in compounds; a splintering in the family was called *dividing the kitchen*, and often meant that literally" which becomes a foundation in China (Jen, 1991, p. 226).

The narration above becomes the strong foundation why Chinese people live as extended family. The sentence “In China, families lived in compounds” indicates that their tradition in living together as a group has been passed down to their children and grandchildren. So, when one of the family members leaves, they will feel lonely. The author gives highlighting point in the phrase ‘*dividing the kitchen*’ which means that they will share any goods to other family members, including food, room, and others. In more addition, since food has many symbolic of meaning, it is functioned to express the relationship between people and environments. The relationship itself can exist among individuals, community members, religious groups, and ethnic groups (Ma, 2015, p.1). In Chinese society, people usually treat others by serving foods or meals as a function to establish relationship.

For further details, it is found that phenomenon in Ralph’s family. It was started when Ralph and Helen were married and Theresa decided to live together. As she stated, “That’s like us, and our family,” said Theresa agreed (Jen, 1991, p.64). Theresa’s statement explains the sequence of plot at the beginning of new life between Ralph and Helen as a pair of newlyweds. Theresa chooses to follow Ralph and Helen living together as Chinese people mostly believe. Here, the author puts the conversation through telling method to show that the representation of Chinese people where tend to live as a group could understand by the reader. Even though he or she had been married, the datum itself can be seen easily and clearly by the reader. Hence, the reader also considered that the existence of independent has been belong to their lives towards family members.

The next evidence which proofs that Chinese people tend to live in a group instead of individually can be described on the conversation between Ralph and Theresa as illustrated below:

*“Just like now that you are a medical doctor, you mind less that you have no husband, right?”*

Ralph’s tone was teasing; still Helen held her breath until Theresa surfaced, brandishing the retrieved chopsticks. *“I mind less, it’s true. Anyway, since I have a home here, why should I have another one?”* (Jen, 1991, p. 127)

As the conversation shows, it tells about the question for Theresa to have a husband because she already has everything such as she earns her degree on medical doctor and has a good career in the United States of America as a lifetime doctor. Her answer is a little bit shocking family members because she chooses to follow Ralph’s family and it seems like there is no reason if Theresa does not have a husband. This is literally opposite with American culture which glorifies individual freedom. The thing that is unexpected before is Ralph’s family is willing to live together with Theresa’s husband and accept her husband in their home as well. They believe that family members are not allowed to leave because they are team. The Chinese Yankees or Chang-Kees for short is also a family name of Ralph’s family which has an intention to make their family to be known as a Chinese family. It was given by Ralph when they had a supper and the process of naming “Chang” itself is based on man’s lineage that is belong to Ralph. While Yankees represents the name of a baseball team which is the favorite of the Changs. (Jen, 1991, p. 127)

Moreover, the researcher stressed out the word “teasing” which means that what Theresa did to her live by being independent is not common in Chinese’s life. Chinese woman usually decide to get married at a young age. This is kind of

Confucius doctrine which compatible with they believe in. The author, Gish Jen, here also puts the dialogue through showing method to show about personal's motive appears in the novel whose stated by Ralph in the novel. "Ralph's tone was teasing" when he asked Theresa indicates that the author wants to show us that in China's life is a must to stick on its culture. If she or he did not follow the pattern, they might be judged as a disrespectful person towards culture and will be teased as Ralph did.

From that phenomenon, it is assumable to be a familiar thing happened in China. Yet, this is very uncommon when it is practiced in the United States of America since mostly people already know that American people tend to live independently without grouping or having interference towards each other. In accordance with Besharov (2001), they see that marriage is less important in contemporary American society, and it will continue as time goes on. People in America are likely to stand on their foot as they can. They will assume that living together with their relatives becomes such a limiting factor to gain their failure. Furthermore, Americans are still upholding a privacy life between children and parents.

In fact, a shocking but important differences between China and United States of America culture that children are encouraged to mature and leave immediately their parents. It can be inferred that, Ralph's family is still mixing two cultures between China and American culture in the way of their living. They cannot just let go off their root culture, but they still maintain it since they were still a first generation who definetly sticks on its own culture.

From these examples, it can be summed up that separation process is resulted from how Ralph's family identifies the society first. He and his family actually are preserving what we call as extended family and it is also practiced in the United States of America. Due in China they have a principle that family should live together and when they move to United States of America, they still preserve its cultural maintenance which indicates that these examples are treated as customs whose cannot be separated from their lives. Ralph's family also avoid to live individually as in America because it will make them losing his cultural identity. Even though they have different principles in terms of living, both of Ralph's cultural identity can mingle in the United States of America.

### **3.1.2 Ralph Wants to Have More Children**

In this sub-chapter, the researcher found that Chinese people have their own perspective about living together from generation to the next generation. One of the reasons why they live together as a group would make stronger than alone as shown below:

Like bamboo, they bent but did not break, agreeing as they did that, despite their difficulties, they were the luckiest people in the world, having each other, and the children – a family anyone would envy, even if there were no boys. How fast Callie and Mona had grown! It was hard to believe they were both in school already, much less that they could jump rope, and say the rosary, and play the piano. They were taking ballet lessons, Mona wanted to be a saint. Ralph and Helen talked again about having more children; two sons would be perfect. (Jen, 1991, p. 250)

This illustration becomes like a representation that Ralph's family is trying to maintain their own Chinese culture even though they have lived in the United States of America several years by having more children as many Chinese people mostly

do. After Ralph already earns anything during his life in United States of America; such as countless happiness as he conceives, having a car as many Americans do, a grand state, a good financial life, *etc*, the illustration conveys about Ralph's plan for having two boys which can make his family becomes bigger since Mona and Callie had grown so fast. Ralph's opinion, indeed, is very contradictory with American values which tend to have one child rather than two or more children. That opinion is a kind of Chinese traditional value which tend to have two or more children rather than less of it. In addition, through telling method, Jen describes how Ralph's family goes well and happily as he conceives. In more detail, the researcher also found that Ralph really wants to have more children especially boys in the conversation between him and his wife, Helen, as illustrated below:

She pressed herself against him, stretching. *"Let's have more children."*

*"As many as you want."*

*"Two more."*

*"Boys, right?"*

*"If we can manage."*

*"Boys coming up,"* said Ralph. *"Does it feel like boys?"*

*"A boy, anyway."* Helen laughed.

*"Hmmm,"* said Ralph.

What couldn't the house do. (Jen, 1991, p. 161)

From the conversation above, it tells about when Ralph just moved from his old house to the new one, Ralph wants Helen to have more children. To be a perfect family, he asks Helen to have boys because having boys as Ralph wants here indicating that Ralph unconsciously preserves what Chinese people do referring to Confucius doctrine. Adapted from Dariani (2010) which states that the reason why Chinese people want to have boys in his family are because boys have a high



position in the family rather than girls. As what Ralph asks to Helen, Jen, through showing method, wants to declare that Chinese's culture to have boys can represent in Ralph's household. Actually, boys have higher status rather than female children in traditional Chinese culture. In detail, the obligation of Chinese woman is to give birth a son to keep the lineage of the husband Chinese's family tree. In traditional Chinese culture, as Suliyati (2010) defines, the oldest son will replace father's position in the family. If the wife cannot give a son, she must allow her husband to have more wives until he gets the boys. That is why somehow in China, they will have a larger family or extended family.

As Global Dialogue Foundation (n.d) states that female children were considered as a bad economic and emotional investments. Their names were rarely used since Chinese women should stick to Three Obediences (*san-tong*) which means that they must be obedient to their fathers before marriage, obedient to their husbands after marriage, and their sons after her husbands die. They believe that female have no position in her ceremonial event of the family so they were not allowed to inherit the family or husband's estate.

On the contrary, Americans are not similar with Chinese tradition. Americans dislike if they have two or more children since family is not seen as a prominent thing. They might think that family becomes a barricade to reach their own dreams. In fact, many American believe that individual freedom can be reached by everyone without seeing generation, age, and hierarchy (Datesman, 2005, p. 25). Parallel with the line, it is said having boys or female for many American cannot influence as one of factors to gain their success.

From the evidence found by the researcher, it can be seen how Ralph maintains his original culture by having more children is described as separation because he chooses to preserve his cultural identity and he does not have any interest to follow the new culture in its surrounding. He believes by having more children is pertaining with a kind of Chinese culture that must be maintained wherever he goes.

### 3.1.3 Ralph, Helen and Theresa Come Back Home

Family is the prominent key in sustainable living for Chinese. They hold a principal that whatever the storm rocks them, family is a place to return. According to Confucianism as stated in Global Dialogue Foundation (n.d), family is considered as a thing must put first. They think that everything starts from family. Through family, they can build a great nation. Furthermore, another data found by the researcher is that family becomes a place for the return all things happened. It can be shown here:

Meanwhile, Theresa packed. It was her duty, she told herself. She was in many ways Americanized, but in this respect, she was Chinese still – when family marched, she fell in step. And wasn't this what she'd longed for? Reunification, that Chinese ideal, she could not eat an orange without reciting to herself, as she did at New Years, *quan jia tuan yuan* – the whole family together. (Jen, 1991, p.265)

This case happens when Theresa came home after the she left from home. It is begun with the confrontation between she and Ralph because Ralph insulted her has two boyfriends whom are Grover Ding and Old Chao. Since Theresa left, there have been many disputes between Ralph and Helen related to Ralph who is too focused to chase his dreams in the United States of America in terms of economy.

Helen wants to help Ralph to earn money, but he does not permit his wife earning money. Ralph does not permit his wife to work outside home because the obligation to earn money is a husband. "That was how the fighting started, with a sense of ending. The incident had been punctuated, it could have been recorded in a book, which could have been closed" (Jen, 1991, 261). It indicates that Ralph's household was getting in many troubles because of economy. Helen got oppressed by her husband and could not go on looking for work. He oppressed his wife because Ralph was frustrated to find work. He has applied everywhere, but still he did not get any. At that time, the financial problems in Ralph was still in the lowest position. They stopped to subscribe a newspaper and drank powdered milk instead of fresh. All of these causes made Ralph to be rough to Helen. Miraculously, when Helen fight with Ralph, she had not broken anything but had a concussion.

Theresa who heard that Helen's household was in trouble, packed her stuffs and back to home. She thought that it was her duty to protect the family. Even though she was influenced in Americanized way, she is still Chinese in which preserving reunification as what Confucius taught. Theresa told herself which describes that there is an inner conflict between her and herself. As stated in the evidence above, it means that her Chinese blood is still flowing in the body since she is the first generation. They cannot live separately since Chinese people choose to live together rather than alone like many Americans do in their lives. When Theresa comes back, her presence was very welcomed by the family members as illustrated through the dialogue between her and family members below:

All the same, she braved a run at the border.  
"Welcome home!"

*“Little Brother!”* So thoroughly had Theresa prepared herself for alienation, that she was taken aback by the familiarity of Ralph – that bottlebrush hair, those stuck-on ears.

*“Older Sister!”* Ralph clasped her hand with the sharp-eyed equanimity of a diplomat. *“Come to save us”*. (Jen, 1991, p. 265)

As mentioned in the beginning, a family is the prominent value which cannot be abandoned from Chinese people. Because it has ingrained in Chinese ideology. Wherever they go far away, the sense of living together is always in their heart. *“Come to save us”* implies that by respecting to the Older Sister as well, it is indicated that they actually respect what Chinese ancestor believe. Their beliefs is dealing with family reunion or group orientation. Through Ralph and his family, the author wants to reveal that the family reunification becomes the solution of all problems. That is why Jen describes the narration through showing method more in detail.

Meanwhile, in the United States of America, family relationship is not as strong as in China. The individualism is more important culture in America since they were encouraged to live separately from their parents when they become adults. They do not want to rely on to their parents because they think that parents can be send into a nursing home. Therefore, from two different perspectives above, people should understand and respect both of the cultures

From these examples, the researcher stresses out that family reunification is being a strong foundation to Ralph’s family. When Theresa tried to leave the house, she felt it was in her. There are many insecurities blowing in her mind because of the different perception and she is still preserving her cultural identity instead of implementing the host culture. That is why, separation emerged through

these data above to show the reader that although they live in the United States of America, they do not have to be Americanized.

### 3.1.4 Ralph Avoids Helen Earning Money

Contrary with American woman who can earn money by herself, Chinese woman seem like to devote the entire of life to obey her husband in a home. They are seemingly forbidden to earn money as American woman do. Since she was young, Chinese woman were required to serve her husband. If they did not obey the rule, they will be tortured by society. To make a strong argument, the author also puts the evidence which shows that Helen is also trying to earn money as American woman do. Helen's idea is shown in the conversation below between Helen, Ralph, and Theresa when they had a supper:

They "just looked" some more. Until one day, at breakfast, Helen said, "*Maybe I should go to work, save up some money for a down payment.*"

"*To work?*" Ralph was shocked.

"*Janis is going to study real estate, become a broker.*"

"*You want to work? Outside of the house? For strangers?*"

"*Sure she can go to work if she wants to,*" said Theresa. "*Why not?*" (Jen, 1991, p. 138)

This conversation above tells about the desire of Helen to work to earn much money so that they can stay in a new house which Helen dreamt about. In addition, she is initiative to help Ralph by looking for a job and earns money together so that they can sufficient their necessary instead of staying in a new house. But the conflict happened in the excerpt above is Ralph did not permit Helen to look for a job or earn money as Theresa does. At first, the author stresses out in "'to work?' Ralph

shocked” which indicates that is unusual phenomenon an towards Chinese woman. To make sure Helen’s argument, she gave an example with Janis, her close friend. She compares herself with Janis because Janis can earn money by herself, why Helen does not permit as Janis too. Janis is actually an American woman who married with Old Chao. Old Chao is a first-generation of Chinese-American immigrant who lived in the United States of America before Ralph comes in. Here, the researcher can assume that Helen is not permitted by Ralph to go work since it is not compatible with Chinese woman tradition. According to Dariani (2010), Chinese woman are demanded to obey to her husband. Ralph’s anxieties is supported by this statement, “*You want to work? Outside of the house? For strangers?*” implies that Ralph wants his wife just sitting in the house and taking care of household necessities. He is afraid if someday there is men who like or love her or even having affair with his wife. Due to on Chinese cultural tradition, when woman or wives are caught cheating, it will be such a shameful disgrace, both of woman and man family.

To be more make sure the argument, Theresa who has influenced by many way Americanized, supports Helen’s idea to help Ralph since Theresa had lived in the United States of America. She agreed what Helen told to Ralph. Unfortunately, her arguments are not supported by Ralph. Theresa was different perspectives between Helen and Ralph. Ralph was very stuck and influenced with Confucius doctrine. Ralph inferred if woman’s field is only in the house, not earning money because the obligation to earn money is doing by men. So that is why, Ralph does not even permit his wife to go outside the house unless any of

circumstances. Helen's decision is supported by Theresa since the financial condition still in a low. Ralph's decision is also answered through this conversation below between Ralph and Theresa who also did not allow her to help him earning money:

*"I'm the father of the family,"* he explained instead. *"It's my job, the house. You are only –"*

*"I'm only what?"*

Ralph swallowed, chagrined.

*"Don't worry, I'm going anywhere. You'll see. Thirty, forty, fifty years from now, I'll still be here."* (Jen, 1991, p. 140)

From its short conversation, the researcher can imply that Ralph just wants Theresa to focus on her work as a doctor. Ralph's thought was whatever hoe hard their life, he must responsible to earn money as much as he can, so that his family won't be miserable. The word *"I'm the father of the family"* emphasizes that Ralph is responsible to endure all of family member's necessities, including Theresa's husband. And also, the statement *"Don't worry, I'm going anywhere. You'll see. Thirty, forty, fifty years from now, I'll still be here."* indicates that Theresa won't be going anywhere. She has full obligation to provide what his family member needs and also will protect and help whatever Ralph's distress. The author puts the words in detail by showing method since it is used to present the characters' itself playing in the novel and shown Ralph's inner thought towards Helen to work in the outside and Theresa's offer to help Ralph earning money for real estate down payment.

However, an American woman is not very strict as Helen. American woman sometimes chooses to be a hero. The hero here means like she goes to work to earn money or to get a good reputation in her work. This is pertaining with the

differences of culture belong to Chinese culture which believe that Chinese woman might be accepting money just from their husband and take care of children in home. From this statement, it also can be viewed in a character named Theresa who has a good reputation on her career. This can be seen in Theresa where she has a fight for her education and career because she had been living in the United States several years ago before Ralph. Theresa had a chance to get a medical school in the United States of America since there was an accident while she was in China. So, she decided to study medical school there.

He began to complain about Theresa, who was studying for medical school. How *nuli* she observed – how diligent. He began to call her Know-It-All again, first behind her back, then to her face. (Jen, 1991, p. 75)

Here, Theresa is considered as a studious woman that chasing her dreams through education. She is more superior rather than her brother in terms of education and as a result, Ralph called her Know-It-All which means that she knows everything. Knows everything here means that although Theresa is more succeed rather than Ralph, she does not underestimate her brother. Considering her brother's feeling, Theresa pays so much attention to maintain Ralph's dignity. Even, she lied to Ralph that her scholarship was canceled by her since Ralph did not accept scholarship yet. Moreover, she also knows how to save Ralph's family from all of the problems rock them. Theresa still holds Chinese values as well to appreciate Ralph as her brother.

From the brief explanation above, the researcher sees that woman role are dominated by man. If they want to be equal, they must look back on the hierarchy



sticks on. They cannot fly freely as American woman do in their country. Chinese woman live must be stick on what Confucius's said a few years ago.

In addition, as a leader in the family, the obligation to earn much money is done by men. They set a big role in controlling family's financially and Theresa tries to keep Ralph's dignity since she realized that Chinese culture is dominated by men rather than women itself. But, Theresa make it so that Ralph did not feel underestimate or else. Therefore, although they try to apply American culture, Chinese culture still becomes a root in their live. The perspective of gender role in China is still based on patriarchal system which put men on the top position whether women below on men. While it is compared with American culture, it will be different since they believe that people are in the same equality to gain their success.

From two different perspective above between Ralph and Helen and Theresa, it can be implied that Ralph wants to keep preserving Chinese belief. Whatever the reason, he has to obtain necessities that they need. No matter how miserable later, Ralph does not want to permit his wife and even his older sister to help him. It is also supported about the concept of first generations usually are more strict in the new land. He does not want to lose his cultural identity instead of preserving what American people mostly done.

### 3.1.5 Helen as a Good Wife

Women are considered as the second class citizen in the patriarchal structure. At that time, a traditional Chinese woman in Qing Dynasty was controlled by men. As a result, she must obey what her husband commands. This has been happened for centuries. “The wife should obey the husband; this, according to the Three Bonds of Confucianism” becomes the strong evidence underlying why Chinese woman must obey their husband (Jen, 1991, p. 259). Confucianism strongly cannot be separated from Chinese’s life. In the novel, the researcher found that Helen is an example a good representation of a traditional Chinese woman. She, indeed, obeys Ralph as much as she can. She is also a good wife for Ralph and a good mother for her children, Mona and Callie. She did not go to work unless forced by any circumstances. Helen follows Chinese tradition and provides great care to her husband. Her duties as a wife include all things as the narration shows below:

It was as if, once she resigned herself to her new world, something had taken her over – a drive to make it hers. She made her own Chinese pancakes, made her own red bean paste, boiling and mashing and frying the beans, then using them to fill buns, which she made also. She made a curtain, made her own Chinese pancakes, made bedspreads, she rewired Ralph’s old lamp, and etc (Jen, 1991, p.76).

Here, the author puts the narration through the telling method which describes representation of Helen to the reader. By reading this excerpt, the reader can imagine how Helen is. This excerpt tells about Ralph, Helen, and Theresa moved into a new small apartment which leaked on the ceiling. When they had supper, the weather was at its extreme rate, Helen had to climb through the trap door into

the roof to check a look around. At that time, Ralph had no a job. Some days, he stayed at home but Helen did not interrupt or even mocked him. All of the difficulties were passed joyfully by Helen. Even if it was the hardest time of her household, she was still able to be a good wife such as stated in the narration above. Moreover, when they had financial problems, Helen tried to be an American woman who would work if it is necessary. It is seen in the narration below:

As a first step toward cutting costs, Helen volunteered to go to work in the chicken palace, as the cashier. Ralph objected, but they both knew there was no choice; and so she found herself sitting at the front register, on a stool, no lady at all. The whole trick is to watch the overhead, she told herself. once she's gotten used to the idea of leaving the house, of going *outside of work* – after all these years in America, she still envisioned a wall between her home and the world – she did not particularly mind the work involved (Jen, 1991, p. 240 -241).

Regarding this narration, the reader can see that during the time, she just stays at home to carry out her household duties as a traditional Chinese woman should be. She obeyed her husband and be a good mother for her children. Later, because of circumstances, she decided to work like many Americans do. It can be proven by her willingness to be involved as a cashier in Ralph's restaurant. Actually, this is such a common phenomenon since it shows how our respect to the society although Helen's mind becomes trouble when she faced two different choices between house and work. But, there is a conflict in Helen's mind. At that time, she became a cashier who welcomed every customer, but later on, she thought about her children at home. Her insecurity then becomes a presage that Ralph's chicken palace will be falling down.

What Helen did in the narration above indicates that Helen is not gotten used to work outside her house. Helen is regarded as a representation of a good traditional Chinese woman who practices all Confucianism doctrines. She cannot be free as American woman since she is still thinking between her home and the work itself. It is not a usual thing for Helen.

Meanwhile, in the United States of America, woman has the same equality with man who can earn money as much as they could. Even though the salary perhaps is different with man, they can enjoy earning money as they want. Everyone can compete to show how strong their capabilities. Competition that most American believe is a kind of value and it affects their various aspects. In there, Zhang & Yu (2016) state that the competition can include competition between countries, economy area, political life, and even people's daily life. From that, American must believe and keep the rule.

It is different with China, if they want to get equal, they cannot do that since China still sticks on its own culture. Those different point of view, it can be signified that China and America are two different countries which have much of culture that people should be respect for.

From these examples, it can be summed up that in the process of adjusting with a new culture, separation process is resulted from how Helen still maintain her insight about Chinese woman as Confucius taught. The principle emerges through the cultural distincion between two countries. It happened as cultural change which later implies as separation. As mention before, inequality which emphasizes in its cultural heritage resulted in how Helen values her life of being

a good wife in her family. Therefore, if the doctrine is flowing up in someone's mind, it is hard to separate from its life since it becomes as culture. If someday there is belief which does not follow them, they will get social sanction from society.

### 3.2 Assimilation

Chinese and America are obviously very contradictory in terms of any aspects of life. Both of them have the different characteristics to face their life based on cultural background they have. One of them is cultural time orientation. As Li (2008) defines that cultural time orientation is the vital component of communication since it is used as a mirror reflecting to a deep value which structures as a life philosophy. In particular, the traditional China culture still preserves to believe on what we call past orientation. Since it has unique values which contain about philosophical thinking before taking an action. Whereas, it contrasts with Western culture which mostly taking an action is based on logical thinking and modern perspective. Due to on that, the distinction between both of them somehow make many people will consider a certain case in taking decision. Through short description above, it also reflects in *Typical American* novel whose portrays in Grover Ding. Grover Ding is an antagonist character who had lived in the United States of America permanently. He was a second generation of Chinese-American immigrant. His lived was actually affected with American's dream who lead him to be modern instead of odd in many perspective of living. The shifting between different values above leads people to experience

assimilation strategies. The researcher found that it also happened in the protagonist character, which are Ralph, Helen, and Theresa. All of them changed their name from China into America because of any reason. In addition, Theresa also decided to leave Ralph house because she realized that she must not depend on Ralph's family again. To be more in detail, it is proven in the findings based on the sequences of plot as listed below:

### 3.2.1 Grover Ding Finds His Own Jobs

Whereas, American is more future in order to make a decision instead of past orientation as Chinese people did. The way of thinking in American society comes on logical thinking, such as American dream which has a term that people pursue their own decision to be individually instead of relying upon their fate to others. That is why they did not believe in something which does not make sense in their mind. American people tend to believe in their self-help. Self-help here means that they can solve their own problem by not depending themselves to others. In addition, somehow they also did not believe in God or choose being atheist.

In *Typical American's* story, it is denoted in the character named Grover Ding. Grover Ding is one of characters which has a significance point in this story. He is an American-born Chinese man who had stayed in the United States of America permanently. The researcher did not find any data which explains about Grover's life background. When he met Ralph, he tried to embezzle Ralph's mind to only chase about material wealth during in the United States of America rather than religiosity or anything else. Later, he becomes a fetish for Ralph's life since

Grover has a chance to own anything. Here, Grover is characterized as a tricky man who gets success from dirty means such tax evasion and swindling to his clients. He also has a thousand way to break Ralph's lives such as lying to Ralph that his building was in troubles, so it makes Ralph almost runs into bankruptcy, having affair with Helen, and *etc.*

Grover is more modern rather than Ralph in terms of how he solved his financially problems and the sense of being modern person as American people can be found in him. In order to give an evidence, the researcher found that Grover Ding is one of self-made men who can be seen in the following dialogue between him and Ralph:

“I'll tell you who you remind me of.”

Ralph waited.

“Myself. You remind me of myself, back when I was nobody.”

Slouching again, Ralph twiddled his spoon.

“You know, back then, I worked every lousy job in town, you name it. I was a jack-of-all-trades. I painted houses. I drove cab . . .”

No wonder he drove so well! thought Ralph.

“ . . . I washed dishes. I even sang in a music show, get that.”

(Jen, 1991, p. 106)

At first, he tells to Ralph that his successful comes from low position. Due to he met guy who needed somebody that could trust, it made Grover became a millionaire. It happened as if a sleight of hand which makes Ralph astonished. Parallel with this illustration, the researcher assumes that he did not involve a Chinese proverb on his achievements. Although he was born as an American who has Chinese blood, he did not obligate to maintain culture as Ralph does. It becomes an unique thing since Ralph and Grover are different in terms of generation. Here, in the novel, Grover is a second-generation Chinese-American immigrant while

Ralph is a first-generation of Chinese American immigrant. Both of them definitely have the different perspective in living. Grover is many way Americanized while Ralph is many way Chinese ideal. Grover is not really believe on what Chinese proverbs said, so when he took a decision, he did not consider any mystical thinking. Grover grew up based on his capability to do anything but unfortunately he was nothing for any specific job. He only believes that if everyone want to succeed, she or he must be sacrificed in their capability. Different with Ralph, he cannot as what Grover does. Ralph is still preserving what Chinese people must to in which believing in some proverbs or something outside himself. That is why the differences between Grover and Ralph can be seen by the reader in the novel.

In this scene, Jen tries to put the dialogue through showing method because it implies about character's inner thought, feeling, and responsiveness to events which can be read in the novel. Therefore, the reader can imagine how the characters did struggles to catch the dreams.

### **3.2.2 Ralph, Helen, Theresa Change Their Name into American's Name**

Name is one of urgent things in introducing ourselves toward other people. It can be kind of stuff, human, product, idea, or even opinion. By naming, we can recognize and differentiate something around us clearly. In most cases, every name indeed, has the significance meaning to represent about in the unique context given in some of group. In personal name, Kałużyńska (2015) explained that it contains any of specific information which can be often related with the culture that belongs



to, history, religion, social organization, mentality, values, preference or symbol. Hence, it is inferred that name can carry on some important messages in it.

From the explanation above, it is also found in *Typical American* novel. First datum found in Ralph. Before he moved to the United States of America, his name was Y.F. Chang. It was changed into Ralph after he got his trouble when Foreign Student Affairs secretary asked his name. At that time, he got confused because he did not understand what the secretary said. Yifeng's face turned into red because of that question. It can be seen in the conversation between Yifeng and the secretary below:

“Naame,” she said, writing it down. She’s seen this before, foreign students who could read and write and speak a little, but who just couldn’t get the conversation. N-A-M-E.

“Name Y.F. Chang,” (His surname as he pronounced it then sounded like the beginning of *angst*; it would be years before he was used to hearing Chang rhyme with *twang*.)

“Eng-lish-name,” said Cammy. E-N-G-L-I-S-H-N-A-M-E.

“I Chi-nese,” he said, and was about to explain that Y.F. were initials when she was laughed.

“Eng-lish-name,” she said again.

“What you laughing?” (Jen, 1991, 10)

From the conversation above, it is seen that Cammy as Foreign Student Affairs's secretary stressed out many times about Yifeng should change into English name. It is also indicated that in the United States of America, Y.F. Chang is something not common and funny to be heard so that when Cammy asked his name, she was laughing at Yifeng many times. And finally, she showed him her typewriter that she had to fill out the form related with student's registration. Due Yifeng did not has English name, he asked Cammy to give it. The datum itself can be seen into the conversation below:

“I-give-you-a-name?”

“Sure. You give.” There was something about speaking English that carried him away.

“I’ll-hang-onto-this-form-overnight,” she tried to tell him.

“That-way-you-find-a-name-you-like-better-you-can-tell-me-tomorrow.” (Jen, 1991, p.10)

Because Yifeng did not anything about what Cammy meant, he asked Cammy to give him an American name. In the next day, Cammy finally gave Yifeng with a new name who is Ralph and he accepted to be known as Ralph on his surroundings. Actually, at the first time, he had been thinking in the way he went home. He felt like it was not him at all. But when he asked his friends who were also Chinese students, they had all stuck with how their picked initials when they introduced themselves. They also had wise people in helping those picking initials so that when they will be easy to be known as another citizen.

The second datum found that Helen also changed her name into America. Helen is her name when she is in the United States of America. It was given by Theresa for her delicate friend because she is graceful and it was suitable with her attitude. It is displayed into this narration below:

Hong Kong, Tokyo, San Fransisco. Theresa picked the English name Helen for her delicate friend. Like Helen of Troy, she explained: also it sounded like Hailan, her real name, Sea Blue. (Jen, 1991, p. 52)

From the datum, it infers that by saying Helen is easier to pronounce instead of Hailan in the United States of America. Furthermore, Theresa gave her a name because they are a close friend who usually having gotten along in China to travel. Hence, name Helen is used as a new identity to make people feel easy to pronounce her name without using Chinese accent.

The third datum also found in Theresa's name. Her real name was in China is *Bai Xiao* who means Know-It-All (Jen, 1991, p. 4). That is indeed Chinese name which was given by Theresa's parents. Theresa is actually Ralph's Older Sister. They are siblings, but Theresa moved to the United States of America first because at that time she got a complicated problem. When she moved into United States of America, she changed her name in Theresa. It is used to make people easy to know her. In addition, when her real name was introduced as what it is, it will make another people get confused to call it. Therefore, she changed it.

From three examples of the datum, it can be summed up that there are the reason why they change their name. It is because there are cultural differentiation between Chinese and American. When they were in the first time trying to adjust with the new culture, they experienced cultural shock. It can be seen in Ralph's part. He got shocked that Cammy was laughing to him because of his name. She thought it is such a something weird to hear since Y.F.Chang is not common name in the United States of America. Due Ralph was shocked, he asked Cammy to give a name and accepted a new name without considering that his Chinese name is also important to be preserved. As similar as Ralph, both of them, Helen and Theresa, also have tendency to use their American name instead of preserving their Chinese name in the host country. Moreover, it is also related with social condition happened in China where at that time, there was Communist war which made them could not go back to their own country. Therefore, it can be implied that changing Ralph, Helen, and Theresa's name are indicated with assimilation process as Berry stated. It relates with the cases since there is rejection to preserve cultural identity that the

main characters have and they tend to look for another one by adopting a new culture in the host family.

### 3.2.3 Theresa Decides to Leave Ralph's House

In spite of presenting about Chinese values, the writer also found that the desire to maintain the host culture is also occurred in Theresa. Theresa, as stated in the story, was living in the United States of America since she was young. She studied at medical doctor and earned her degree on medical science (Jen, 1991, p. 120). She was a portrayal of a Chinese-American woman who follows traditional Chinese culture although she received western education.

At first, she had a problem with Ralph as he criticized her having two boyfriends whom are Grover Ding and Old Chao. Helen tried to stop it, but due to Ralph was on half-drunk, he still continued. The next day, Theresa decided to move away and live separately from Ralph's family. It can be shown below:

Since Theresa's moving out, Helen had called her four times. In each case, the conversation had been stilted; they had tiptoed through the talk as though through the bedroom of a fitfully sleeping child. How much worse the separation seemed them! – at least for Helen – how much more real. She had fondly believed that all that was happened could be undone. Why couldn't it? (Jen, 1991, p. 226).

From this illustration, the researcher concludes that Theresa realizes if she must leave Ralph's house. At first, it is hard since Theresa and Helen have the same characteristics and they usually live together. Helen is still imagined about Theresa in her life. Parallel with this condition, Theresa used to depend on Helen to decorate the furniture at their home. But when Theresa left the house, she felt empty.

While as Fischer (2008) stated that people in the United States of America get used to be individual as they are. They do not just rely on everyone even their parents. They are encouraged to achieve both financially and emotional independence. What Theresa did in the excerpt above indicates that the sense of interdependence between the character and others are still embraced on their body. Therefore, it cannot be released in their lives in the United States of America. They cannot live as Americans do since they are first generation of Chinese. They believe that a family goal bases on how the commutation goes on the inside its family.

From the findings, it can be summed up that through the events explained above, acculturation as Berry (2006) mentioned, it can happen if there is a contact between old and new culture. Here, Theresa came first and of course influenced many American beliefs instead of Ralph who came in a few years later. So, when Ralph argued to her, she decided to pack her stuff and moved to her new apartment. It indicates that at that time, she had tendency to follow the host culture instead of staying at Ralph's house since she has influenced by American ways of life. Therefore, assimilation is suitable to describe the cases occurred towards this scene.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This last chapter consists of a conclusion and suggestion. It consists of suggestion for the future researchers who want to conduct using different approach or with a similar approach but different object of the study.

#### 4.1 Conclusion

*Typical American* is a novel tells the struggle of living of Chinese immigrants who live in the United States of America. The struggle itself leads the main characters encountering acculturation in the process of adjusting between old and new cultures there. From the data, it is found that in the process of adjusting with new culture in its surroundings, the main characters which are Ralph's family mostly tend to preserve their cultural identity. It influences how they transmit their cultural beliefs, values and attitudes which are shared in the same place. There are two types of acculturation strategies which were experienced by the main characters: separation and assimilation.

In separation process, there is an activity which refers to preserve the cultural identity in the place where they immigrate to. It is depicted through Ralph. As the father of a family, he has an obligation to preserve his cultural identity through family reunification. He is really believe that the sense of family reunification can be tied up among family members. If the family members leave the team, they will lose the sense

of togetherness that they built before. Besides, Confucianism's doctrine becomes one of reasons why he is preserving that woman should obey what her husband's command. Although their environment was surrounded by American life, they still chose to preserve the concept of family reunification and woman's role in the United States of America.

In assimilation process, the researcher found that there is a rejection to preserve cultural identity portrayed in the novel. It emerges as an affect from someone does not want to preserve their cultural identity. It is depicted in the character named Grover Ding who tends to avoid preserving Chinese beliefs. It is because he was a second generation of Chinese American immigrant who actually has no obligation to preserve. In addition, he thinks that in the United States of America, people can do anything without looking back to the cultural identity that belongs to them. Moreover, changing Ralph, Helen, and Theresa's name are also indicated as assimilation. As their names are not very common in the new land, they change it into a familiar one. Therefore, American people can recognize their name clearly in daily life.

In this novel, the author wants to reveal that cultural shock can happen in all of immigrants in the world. Jen reveals it through Ralph and his family in *Typical American* novel, if immigrants want to survive in the United States of America or another countries around the world, they should mingle between new and old values, absorb between their own culture and America culture as their own cultural identity, and many more.

In sum, it is concluded that values are something that is dynamic entity. Culture is definitely rich and something which could blow in every element of society. It is used to everyone when they live in a new place and becoming immigrants. Through acculturation, someone can gain more an extensive relation between two groups or more. At last, multicultural society will teach us to be respected many things in our lives.

#### **4.2 Suggestion**

Throughout the novel, it can be seen that there are many aspects of why this novel is interesting to be discussed for the future researchers. Since this novel mostly portrays about Ralph's family, it is also suggested for the future researchers may only focus on one character, named Helen. Therefore, using feminism theory is suitable to see Helen's role in making Ralph becomes a successful man. In sum, the researcher hopes that this research will be beneficial for those who are interested to take the similar topic especially in gender role as a problem of the study



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