

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONCLUSION

After analysing the conflicts in Gloria Chao's *American Panda* using sociological approach, I would like to draw some conclusions in this chapter. The novel tells the story of a Taiwanese girl named Mei Lu who is born into an immigrant family in America. Mei lives with parents who still hold on to Chinese values tightly, but as a second generation Chinese immigrant who has been living in America since she was born, Mei herself is more influenced by American values. The differences between Mei's and her parents' cultural values then cause Mei to experience several conflicts, which are especially seen when Mei has some personal goals that are not in line with her parents' Chinese values. Nevertheless, all conflicts are resolved in the end, and Mei is eventually able to live a life she wants to have and become the person she wants to be. In total, there are five conflicts that are discussed in the previous chapter.

The first conflict that happens in the novel is an inner conflict within Mei herself. This conflict occurs after Mei accepts an offer to teach dance from her friend while she is studying pre-med in college. Mei realizes that she should back out from the offer as she has to obey her parents who want her to focus on studying pre-med, but she

wants to continue teaching dance as she feels she has the right to pursue her real dream and passion. In the end, this conflict is solved when Mei chooses to continue teaching dance without her parents knowing.

The second conflict that happens in the novel is a social conflict between Mei and Mama. Mama wants Mei to marry Eugene Huang because she believes that Mei can build a strong marriage if she marries a fellow Chinese. However, Mei disagrees with Mama as she thinks she can also build a strong marriage even if her partner is a non-Chinese. In the end, this conflict is solved when Mama finally allows Mei to have a relationship with a non-Chinese instead of marrying Eugene Huang.

The third conflict that happens in the novel is another social conflict between Mei and her parents when Mama and Baba find out that Mei does not feel motivated in her pre-med study. Mei's parents want Mei to follow their decision to keep studying pre-med because they believe their decision is the best for Mei. Nevertheless, Mei does not want to follow her parents' decision as she knows what is the best for herself and she believes she has the right to pursue her own dream. In the end, this conflict is solved when Mei chooses to change her major from pre-med to business.

The fourth conflict that happens in the novel is a social conflict between Mei and Mama. This conflict occurs immediately after the third conflict in which Mei and her parents have an argument regarding Mei's future. Mama advises Mei to act like a Chinese and to hold on to their Chinese traditions because Mei comes from a Chinese family. However, Mei does not want to hold on to only Chinese values as she thinks she is a Chinese-American and she should be free to choose which traditions she wants to follow. This conflict results in Mei being disowned by her parents, but in the end, this

conflict is solved when Mama finally trusts Mei to follow her own values and pursue her own dream.

The last conflict that happens in the novel is an inner conflict within Mei herself during the time when Mei is being disowned by her parents after having an argument with them. On the one side, Mei wants to go back to her parents as she feels empty without her parents. On the other side, Mei wants to continue with her own path as she thinks she cannot be herself if she keeps living under her parents' authority. In the end, this conflict is solved when Mei decides to continue with her own path.

Based on the five conflicts discussed above, there are some conclusions that can be drawn. First, it can be seen that all of the conflicts that the protagonist faces are rooted in the tension between two different cultural values, which are Chinese and American values. The Chinese values, on the one hand, are depicted to revolve around family-orientedness and filial piety, where the young are expected to prioritize their family's interests, respect and follow the elders' choices. The American values, on the other hand, emphasize more on individualism, where people have the freedom to do and be what they want without being limited by others' interests. The fact that all of the conflicts in the novel are rooted from these opposing cultural values shows how immigrants indeed live in two worlds and will always have to deal with such cultural problems that come with it.

Second, it can also be seen that all five conflicts are solved when the protagonist follows the values of her own choice which, in this case, are American values. Mei is depicted to stick to the values she believes in, and as a result of her perseverance, she is able to get what she desires at the end of the novel. This indicates how immigrants need

to create their own identity by choosing whatever values they themselves believe in, even if this means letting go of some of their home culture's values.

In general, after conducting this analysis, I am of the opinion that Gloria Chao as the author of *American Panda* has succeeded in providing a realistic depiction of the struggles immigrants have to experience while living in a grey world. At the same time, Chao has also shown that identity is not something fixed; on the contrary, it is something fluid, created through an individual's own choice.

