

# A Study of Intersectionality and Cultural Space in American Born Chinese

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## Abstract

This study explores the text of *American Born Chinese* (2006) through the lens of intersectionality. Intersectionality has been theoretically used for close reading of comics and graphic literature as a feminist lens. It has been primarily used for the interpretation of several contemporary North American graphic narratives. The study examines the text closely by drawing on Kimberlé Crenshaw's idea of intersectionality (1989). The concept of intersectionality provides the researcher with ideas like intersecting identities which are based on gender, class, socioeconomic status and immigration status. In the selected text there are two highly diverse communities which have all the cross-cultural elements. These cross-cultural elements intersect with the identities and power relationships among the characters. By applying the concept of intersectionality, the research recognizes the problems of those immigrants who hold multiple social identities. It highlights the complex pattern of social inequalities and exclusion of some members due to their individual backgrounds. It answers the questions like how the characters' cultural identities interact with other elements including ethnic background, sexual orientation, language, and status as immigrants by focusing on Jin and his immediate family in the novel. This approach emphasizes the particular difficulties and types of oppression that Asian people experience as a result of the compounding impacts of their intersecting identities. The study also looks at the manner in which the novel depicts the negotiation of personal identity and conflict of cultural spaces. It explores how Asian characters balance pressures to conform into Western society with ties to their cultural background. The study highlights on how intersectionality relates to the oppression and exoticization of Asian people in cultural settings and looks into misconceptions and prejudices that result from a poor understanding of their culture. This study examines significant passages, character interactions, and plot points to offer a comprehensive understanding of how the intersectionality theory influences how we read *American Born Chinese*.

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## Introduction

Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* (2006) is a graphic novel. It was nominated for several awards in 2006 and 2007, including National Book Award in young people's literature category (2006). It won Michael L. Printz Award (2007) and Eisner Awards (2007). There are three separate tales which are apparently different from each other but tied together at the end of the book. It tells the stories of three characters that are Monkey King, Jin Wang and Danny.

The story explores the themes of transformation, identity, assimilation, racism, marginalization and stereotypes. It blends a mythical story with the contemporary storytelling. By these interconnected stories Yang sheds light on the complex phenomena of racism and cultural identity. It highlights many issues of Asian American people by employing humor on the dogmatic themes like stereotypical attitude and self-negation. This novel has received huge critical acclaim for exploring the typical cultural authenticity and intersectionality. Its unique blend of myth, Christianity, cultural exclusion, humor and thought-provoking contemplation over social issues gets a lot of appraisal.

The selected text is analyzed through the application of the theory of intersectionality introduced by the legal feminist Kimberle Crenshaw through the close reading qualitative method. It uses visual analysis framework that helps us understand and interpret images, ads and media. The research follows the method of visual semiotics. The text has been examined by the framework of understanding comics by Scott McCloud. This art is a 1993 non-fiction work of comics by American Cartoonist. Scott McCloud has proven that comics have played a major part in documenting the rise of the world's civilizations. The theory of intersectionality has primarily been introduced for the elaboration of social inequalities and injustice. She has described the role of various intersections in development of oppressive attitude of people.

The study aims at exploring the role of cross cultural environment in the lives of Asian American people settled in the USA. It closely focuses on the images to find out the causes and effects of marginalization on the immigrants of Asian countries. It analyzes the possible reasons of indifferent behaviour of the people who have multicultural identities and thereby, live in a zone where cultural space prevails.

## **Review of the Literature**

Intersectionality is a tool and disposition that is rooted in black feminism and critical race theory. Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the term in her essay “Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Administration Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist politics.” Crenshaw further elaborated the framework in mapping the margins, two years later. She has exposed the discourses which operated and resulted in power relations. Crenshaw describes the subtle historical ways of sex and race discrimination by taking the example of white women and African American men (Carbado et al 2013).

Harris and Leonardo (2018) have introduced intersectionality as an analytical framework. The term intersectionality is provoked into legal studies in order to challenge the anti-discriminating doctrine and theory. It examines some of the issues raised by the intersections and analyze some of the debates surrounding the concept. Black Lives Matter is tagged as an instance of identity politics. This movement of human rights basically started from the twitter hashtag. Meanwhile, in response to this twitter hashtag another hashtag was introduced that was All Lives Matter. The founders of the BLM movement declare that the movement is explicitly based on all the principles that are key features of intersectionality. Micro level social identities are the foundation of macro level identities that result in system of social privilege and oppression.

Schieble (2011) describes that American literature presents Asian nation and people in a particular way that is especially dealt in a certain way in the graphic novel American Born Chinese. American literature says much about marginalization, race and identity politics. The research recognizes the problems of those immigrants who have different identities regarding the race, culture and color that are confronted by students of America and Asia together in the novel. This discrimination and difference have been portrayed through three interweaving story-lines. In an interview Yang describes that it is alright to consider the stereotypical character of

Chin-kee as funny but readers should enjoy the purposeful comic scenes of this character with a knot in their stomach. Multiple historic and present-day stereotypes are represented by the character of Chin-kee being Asian.

Yang has written the novel by perpetuating the stereotypical behaviour of Asian American characters in a complicated environment. Being Asian Chin-Kee becomes stereotypical for the white students around by showing the excess of his knowledge. Yang seems to perpetuate the stereotypes as he praises the offended behaviour of the readers as a desired response from their side. Because cousin Chin-Kee is intentionally drawn in a way that it comes out of the page and slaps the readers in their faces. Meanwhile all the white students including Danny show their hatred for the colored students who are not American. Asian students suffer from the dilemma of their identification and here subversion of cultural and moral values is portrayed.

By visually presenting the outfit and hair of Chin-kee, Yang has represented an overtly racist imagery that was prevalent in 1800s and early 1900s as stated by (Schieble, 2011). Yang has fused these modern racist visual images with the stereotypical images taken from a magazine published out of San Francisco in 1881. The title of that magazine was “The wasp”. Among multiple Asian characters, Chin-kee has been presented as an oriental comic relief by the author of the novel. America has considered many caricatures of Asians and Asian Americans as racist, since the Civil Rights movement that started in 1960s. When the text is analyzed from a critical standpoint, the readers come to know about the hidden messages about ideologies and power interests present behind every piece of multilayered information.

The author also explains that there is always a defined visual significance of every image. That significance is analyzed by referring to proper sign system that includes symbols, diagrams, font size and style and positioning of characters in the images etc. So, the choice and detail of each particular object or detail is quite significant. The readers or viewers of the graphical novels must get into the certain and ideal reading position for analysis. For example, any object that is placed in the centre of the image and larger within overall image are taken as more important and they also tend to have more power. The arrangement of images is not sequential but spatial that provides the readers with multiple modes of analysis. If the readers intend to build academic skills and want to form or articulate some ideas related to race,

power and justice, then they must interpret the placement of details and relations among people, places and event flow.

## **Methodology**

This study applies Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (1989) for the purpose of examining American Born Chinese from the perspective of cultural space and marginalization. Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality has had a significant impact on our understanding of how different types of discrimination interact with one another and compound, changing people's experiences within social systems. Crenshaw's theory, which was developed in the late 1980s, was an answer to the shortcomings of classic feminist and anti-racial frameworks, which tended to ignore the intricate and interwoven structure of inequities experienced by marginalized people.

Nash (2008) explains that intersectionality has become the primary analytical tool that feminist and anti-racist scholars deploy for theorizing identity and oppression. In addition, larger power systems in Western societies collide with intersectionality in hybrid societies. Like many racial and ethnic minority groups, Asian Americans must negotiate power relationships that are shaped by institutionalized racism and discrimination.

## **Analysis**

The research has been conducted by applying the Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (1989) for the purpose of examining American Born Chinese from the perspective of cultural space and marginalization. Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality has had a significant impact on our understanding of how different types of discrimination interact with one another and compound, changing people's experiences within social systems. Crenshaw's theory, which was developed in the late 1980s, was an answer to the shortcomings of classic feminist and anti-racial frameworks, which tended to ignore the intricate and interwoven structure of inequities experienced by marginalized people.

The creator and illustrator of *American Born Chinese*, Gene Luen Yang, uses visual storytelling to depict the cultural gap between Asian and American kids in the graphic novel. He uses a variety of visual techniques to highlight and investigate this

cultural division. This gap has been acknowledged earlier by the author and he has presented a young boy who wants to be a transformer. This transformation is very significant because many characters of the three interwoven stories transform themselves to fit into new culture. It is thematically very important as he says that the toy is a robot in disguise whereas, he himself proves to be a transformer residing with American people. He is very active in the image when he tells the old woman about his toy that it is more than meets the eye. (p. 28)

Cultural space helps to find out the similarities and differences present between different cultural norms. There are students from different backgrounds, who are getting education in America. They are psychologically distant from one another as they interact during the course of their lives. There has been an excellent depiction of the cultural hybridization in American educational settings. All the characters display traits that are related to hybrid identities related to race and culture.

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It has been portrayed in the novel that you need to forget your soul if you intend to be perfectly suitable in a different culture. Jin Wang is very much perplexed about his new journey and thinks about his past when his teacher introduces him to his classmates. He says:

*“On the morning after we arrived, with the scent of our old home still lingering in my clothes, I was sent to Mrs. Greeder’s third grade at Mayflower Elementary school.”* (P. 30)

It is the same type of discourse that has been described by Crenshaw as an operation that results in power relations. Different cultural, ethnic and racial intersections are resulted in cultural gap and space. Jin Wang has been presented as alienated

through visual aid. All the American boys and girls are playing in the playground while Jin Wang is alone and he is eating his lunch. (P. 32)

Though Peter Garbinsky is a bad fellow who threatens Jin and takes his food but his mother calls Jin “A Friggin Riot” (P. 35) to make it more pathetic for him to be a different cultural entity. Jin Wang is alienated once again because Peter goes away to see his father during winter break and he never returns after that. Jin Wang realizes the cultural gap and likes to be alone. But it takes no time to be friend with Peter whereas it has taken many months to be friend with the boy who is having the same background with Jin Wang.

Yang has use of different art forms by which he shows the cultural environment. Each plot line in the work has its own visual style. The Monkey King’s story, for example, is illustrated in a classic Chinese comic style, emphasizing the character’s cultural heritage. This particular visual portrayal contrasts the Chinese cultural components with the more current American art style employed in the other tales, such as Jin’s.

American boys have been foregrounded who are playing with the ball. Meanwhile Asian boys are pushed back in the image who are sitting at a bench in the corner of the ground while observing their transforming toy deeply.

Yang’s usage of conversation and speech bubbles contributes to the visual representation of the cultural area as well. Different speech bubble designs, fonts, or even languages can be utilized to differentiate and highlight cultural variations in character communication. These visual signals serve to emphasize the cultural barrier as well as the difficulty of successful communication and comprehension between Asian and American students. For example, he puts the signs “< >” before and after the translated dialogues of Asian people.

The visual interpretation of page number 96 of the novel explains the cultural space in a meaningful way. There are three students with a different cultural and racial identity who are laughing and enjoying with each other in a relaxing posture but they instantly change their postures when American students pass by. Wei-Chen and Suzy take a posture with crossed arms and their legs are less stretched but more contracted while they are sitting on the bench. Meanwhile, Jin Wang is standing nearby them and he changes his posture simultaneously. He stands still while

putting his hands in the pockets of his pants. They mock at them by satirizing their language and dialect. They use the words like “Chink”, “Nippy”, “Gook Bumps”. They come to realize their cultural space which promptly affects their consciousness. In the same image that has been described above, we can clearly witness the marks of embarrassment on the faces of Asian students. Suzy is also different from other students who is Japanese American and wears striped shirt. Jin Wang is the only member among all Asian students who tries to fit in that culture. His permed hair has depicted a lot about his acceptance of internalized racism. He is internally as well as externally affected by the racial difference that prevails resulting in marginalizing their cultural identities.

The transition of his personality is only a source of false confidence for him. He transforms his external look in order to be loved by his beloved. This transformation is symbolically important as it shows the cultural space among them. On the other hand, Chin-Kee’s exaggerated behaviour and introduction is a caricature of derogatory Asian stereotypes. This kind of discrimination has been shown at the initial introduction of Chin-Kee, he enters with the language dialect that is stereotypically different from other native people. He can easily be distinguished by his Chinese dialect.

Marginalization and intolerance are illustrated in a variety of ways in Gene Luen Yang’s graphic novel *American Born Chinese*:

#### ❖ **Stereotypes and preconceptions**

Yang investigates how various characters, such as Chin-Kee, represent racial stereotypes, reinforcing preconceptions and discrimination. Chin-Kee is a caricature of derogatory Asian stereotypes, stressing the negative repercussions of such portrayals. This kind of discrimination has been shown at the initial introduction of Chin-Kee, he enters with the language dialect that is stereotypically different from other native people. He can easily be distinguished by his Chinese dialect.

*“EVERYONE RUVS CHIN-KEE” (P. 43)*

*“HERRO AMELLICA!” (P. 48)*

This kind of replacement of words is very significant and language is the medium of communication which separates people of a certain place from another. He speaks the first dialogue in which alphabets are weirdly replaced with one another i - e. L

and R. Moreover, his body starts sweating and he keeps his mouth open in his disillusion about the identity and background regarding himself.

### ❖ Alienation and Assimilation

The narrative also explores the assimilation challenges of immigrants and their offspring. Yang depicts Jin's sentiments of isolation, perplexity, and shame as he struggles to integrate into American society while coping with his Chinese ancestry. From the very beginning of the novel Jin has been presented as a child who is alienated and marginalized. But after this type of alienation there comes a stage at which he starts comprehending and absorbing the culture and people around. After that he becomes more conscious about his personality and cultural identity and starts assimilating the American culture. When Amelia Harris puts off her upper gown in the class, he witnesses her beauty and assimilation starts from there.

*"Life was never quite the same again." (P. 87)*

*"This isn't Taiwan, you doof! Stop acting like an F. O. B.!" (P. 89)*

Jin starts accepting the cultural differences before his Chinese friend and tells him that he is acting like a fresh off the boat. He believes that he can freely propose the girl whom he likes because he is present in such kind of culture.

While we talk about Jin then it is alienation that has resulted in assimilation. When he feels that Amelia is getting free with Greg and he is being more alone and separate then he decides to change his hairstyle and looks more like that of Greg. He wants to be noticed by Amelia and accepted by the society he lives in.

### ❖ Internalized Racism

The novel explores the issue of internalized racism through the temperament of Danny, who also portrays the Monkey King. Danny is always sorry for his Chinese ancestry and attempts to suppress it, which leads to self-rejection and solitude. The topic of internalized racism is examined in the novel in both American and Asian pupils, illuminating how people from various origins may absorb and perpetuate negative preconceptions and prejudices.

Jin Wang, a Chinese-American character who battles with his identity, works as one template of internalized racism. Jin wants to fit into American society, but while he does so, he internalizes prejudiced assumptions about his background and himself.

He tries to remove himself from his Chinese identity out of shame since he believes it is inferior to being white. Jin feels cut off from his roots as a result of this internalized racism, which results in self-diffidence and humility. American boys also have hatred towards another group.

*“Afterwards, we would stage epic battles that left our toys smelling like spit.”(P. 26)*  
*“In the cartoon, he’s also got a trailer that magically appears whenever he transforms, but on the toy it’s a separate piece.” (P. 28).*  
*“<It’s easy to become anything you wish.....So long as you’re willing to forget your soul>”(P. 29)*

Talking about this inner trailer is very symbolic in nature. It is representational source of the inner trailer of the characters present in the novel. One needs to go through a trailer while transforming his own personality traits. But this kind of transformation needs to forget the soul of transformer. So, any kind of external change demands as internal modification too. The racial discrimination resides inside the heart of Jin and he ultimately changes his appearance and transforms into a white American boy named Danny. If we compare the images at pages 28 and 98, the external transformation of Jin is clear and evidential that has actually been resulted by the internal transformation. Initially he is confused and there are some signs of suspense and terror on his face which relate to the process of transformation. But in the figure that is provided at page number 98, he seems more confident and clearer as he has already transformed into an American boy.

### ❖ Appropriation

This novel also addresses the topic of cultural appropriation, which occurs when pieces of one culture are copied or adapted by another without sufficient knowledge or respect. The people and their tales throughout the book examine the idea of cultural appropriation. The Monkey King's trip and battle with his ambition to be regarded as alike to the divine in particular emphasize the problem of appropriated cultural identities. The Monkey's transformation into Chin-Kee, Jin's Chinese cousin, shows how appropriating other people's cultural and racial identities may lead to detrimental stereotypes. Exaggeration, distortion, and the maintenance of unfavorable stereotypes are characteristics of this appropriation, which highlights the negative consequences of taking cultural identities for one's own.

### ❖ Identity and Marginalization:

Generally, the problems which are related to identity start from the very beginning of the graphic novel when Monkey King is presented to be in a struggle of changing his own identity. First thing that is observed by Asian students is that of the language difference owed by them to that culture. Secondly, American students criticize their food and lifestyle. Thirdly, their thoughts and personalities are affected by such kind of satirical behaviour of their fellows. Ultimately, they start neglecting their cultural heritage and coordinate with the culture they are part of.

Chin-Kee tells the answers to some questions which are asked by Danny's teachers from them. He tells that he knows everything and answers to all the question in front of class. Danny becomes embarrassed, there are some lines drawn upon the face of him and drops represent that his body has started sweating just because of embarrassment. Apparently, it is seemed to be a positive thing to have knowledge related to every subject but when it comes to racial integration than it proves to be a negative thing. Chin-Kee is a stereotypical character but there are traces of ethnic centralization and exclusion. The first impression that comes into mind about him is that of sexist because he says that he is impressed by the beauty of American girl Amelia and she will bear his children.

The book has successfully handled the intersections of popular culture in the form of racism. Once a person starts accepting the space between self-assumed high and low culture, he starts assimilating with the preconceived high norms. He treats his own culture through the lenses of intersections of race and norms. It happens with Jin because he keeps on mourning the fact that even if his Asian cousin leaves, but still people think of him as his cousin. He does not want to be recognized as a cousin of any Asian. Meanwhile American kids have also made the intersections and they believe that Jin eats dogs like any other Chinese.

The protagonists also face misconceptions and prejudices as a result of their insufficient awareness of their culture. The intersectionality framework aids in understanding that these preconceptions are created by factors other than race, such as cultural misconceptions or the foreignness of Asian cultures. In addition, the intersectionality theory aids in bringing attention to Asian people's experiences within the greater context of racism. While racism may be most commonly identified with the treatment of Black people, intersectionality acknowledges that all those groups that have different race and ethnicity experience regarding the specific types of prejudice.

Few critics examine how the novel's various cultural settings are shown in differing visual idioms. In contrast to the sequences involving the Monkey King, Jin's daily existence is depicted in visuals that are more aesthetically lavish and relatable. This contrast draws attention to the difficulties Asian Americans experience in maintaining their social recognition while still integrating into Western communities. It also shows the intricacies of cultural representation. In order to be recognized by the people of a separate culture immigrants lose their own cultural genuineness. Characters who are Asian Americans and are struggling with their multiple identities are at the center of the narrative. The novel discusses stereotypes of Asian Americans. Yang analyzes how these preconceived conceptions interact with cultural identity marginalization and prejudice through characters like Chin-Kee, who personifies unpleasant stereotypes.

In the text of the novel the ground realities of racism and ethnic discrimination are presented. Chinese cousin is being humiliated and disregarded just because of his ethnicity and background, but at the end it has been discovered that all of those thoughts and beliefs are only misconceptions about him. All the dogmas die along with the death of one entity called Chin-Kee. So, it has been proved that intersections are merely misconceptions and they cause disrespect for each other.

*"I'm sick of you ruining my life, Chin-Kee! I want you to pack up and go back to where you came from."* (P. 205)

*"please! no more! Cousin Da-Nee not know what he is doing! Cousin Da-Nee pray with fire."* (P. 206)

They are continuously navigating between two cultures and as a result fail to assimilate with even one of them. Yang analyzes how these preconceived conceptions interact with other cultural elements to perpetuate marginalization and prejudice through characters like Chin-Kee, who personifies unpleasant stereotypes. Characters who are immigrants, like Jin's parents, demonstrate how culture, disposition, and adaptability are intertwined. Yang discusses the challenges and sacrifices faced by immigrant parents who uphold cultural beliefs while trying to provide adaptability for their kids.

Yang analyzes the nuances of Asian American life, illuminates the difficulties of cultural integration, and challenges preconceptions and biases that affect Asian populations by including all kinds of intersections into the plot. Readers are

prompted to consider the multifaceted form of identity and the interconnections that mold people's lived experiences as a result of the tale.

The visuals in *American Born Chinese* have received a variety of interpretations from critics, who have also discussed the novel's representation of racism through these images.

Three narratives are present in the book, and they all interact with one another. Jin Wang, a young Chinese American child, is the focus of the first storyline as he battles with his self-perception and the urge to integrate. We can see how Jin's experiences are influenced not only by his color but also by his gender and lifetime through the intersectionality lens. He struggles to meet the cultural expectations that are placed on him while attempting to fit in.

The graphic novel uses item placement strategically to explore and highlight the kinship between Asian Americans. The arrangement of things on a page or inside a panel, for example, might have implicit meanings in a graphic novel. These placements can aid in expressing feelings, connecting with others, or cultural ties. In order to make these intersections comic the writer has put laugh tracks at lower side of every frame or picture. The story communicates a wide range of unnecessary pride leading towards racism in a variety of ways. The writer has tried to emphasize the importance of racism in many ways but most important of all these is parallel stories of Monkey king and Jin Wang. The former tries to fit into the world of divinity and later tries to cope with the stereotypical behaviour of Americans towards Asian immigrants.

Character appearance in *American Born Chinese* is utilized to symbolize the cultural clash between people with different identities. Gene Luen Yang uses visuals and verbal clues to examine the stress and difference of opinion brought on by cultural differences. Certain characters' appearances allude to common misconceptions and stereotypes about both Asian and American cultures. Chin-Kee, for instance, exhibits derogatory Asian stereotypes and has exaggerated features. His look is purposefully caricatured to highlight how Asian people can sometimes be depicted in Western societies in crude and disrespectful ways. He has slant eyes and salivates unnecessarily in the gatherings. He has an appearance of a traditional Chinese and represents the derogatory stereotypes American people have for them.

Jin Wang gets a misconception about the hairstyle of Greg and follows that in order to be accepted and love by Amelia. Whereas he falls in love with her when she takes her coat off during the class and he watches her beautiful white body. He himself is impressed by the appearance of different people like Greg and Amelia, and in the same way he thinks about transforming his own appearance to be liked.

The story highlights the conflict faced by those who are torn between their Asian cultural heritage and their desire to connect to conventional American society through the presence of characters like Jin. As Jin strives to blend in, his look evolves throughout the narrative, changing his hairdo and attire to suit Western norms. This shows his internal dilemma by stressing the cultural tension between American and Asian standards of beauty and Asian customs and beliefs.

The cultural clash between Asian and American identities is skillfully shown by Yang through the get up of characters in American Born Chinese. He uses visual signals to convey the difficulties and conflicts brought on by cultural differences, stereotyping, assimilation, and identity conflicts in a multicultural society.

However, as the narrative progresses, Jin comes to see that attempting to fit in with society's expectations and ignoring his ancestry only results in emotions of rejection and loneliness. The representation of the toy acts as a constant reminder of Jin's inner turmoil and his path to self-acceptance. The notion of ambivalence and the complication of recognition is further reflected by the transformer toy. Jin struggles with his dual identity as both a Western and an Asian, similar to the toy that can change its form. The toy draws attention to the conflict between appreciating one's cultural history and assimilating into the mainstream culture.

The relevance of the transformer toy in American Born Chinese ultimately resides in its representation of Jin's identity crisis and the examination of topics around absorption, reception, and hold of one's ethnic heritage. It stands as a potent representation of the inner struggle experienced by characters who frequently feel caught between competing expectations and worlds.

*"Now that I've revealed my true form, perhaps it is time to reveal yours..." (P. 213)*

*"I came to serve as your conscience - as a signpost to your soul" (P. 221)*

The bond between Jin Wang and Amelia Harris in the book illustrates the difficulties and complications that can occur when people from various ethnic backgrounds mingle. In their school, Amelia Harris, an American of Caucasian descent, and Jin Wang, a lad of Chinese descent, become friends. Jin initially has a crush on Amelia and views her as a representation of acceptance and absorption into American culture. He thinks that if he can gain Amelia's love, he will eventually be in a position to get rid of the alienation and feelings of otherness that come with his Chinese origin.

Overall, *American Born Chinese* uses the connection between Jin and Amelia as a reflection on the difficulties of cultural identification, the effects of cliché, and the value of self-acceptance. It highlights the need of having sincere empathy, understanding, and respect while forging bonds with people from other cultural backgrounds.

The characters learn to accept their identities, grow personally, and realize the value of acceptance and connection via their interactions. Through their connections, they are able to fight their cultural constraints and get over their personal fears. The characters' struggle with their self-perception and ethnic recognition are another noteworthy example of the concept of metamorphosis in action. Characters like Jin and Danny first struggle with accepting themselves and fitting in with cultural norms. However, they come to appreciate their history while also creating their own distinctive identities via their friendships. The significance of self-love and staying loyal to oneself is emphasized by this transition.

The phrase "American Born Chinese" describes people who are Asian by ethnicity or culture yet were born and reared in the United States. The name alludes to the mixing of these two cultures and emphasizes the difficulties and complications that result from it. Characters like Jin struggle with their multiple identities throughout the book as they navigate the expectations and assumptions placed on them by both their Asian origin and the Western culture they are growing up in. The title implies that having American ancestry does not inherently negate or eliminate one's cultural heritage, which might cause an impression of cultural conflict and an identity crisis.

The title's importance draws attention to the assimilation and pressure to fit in with prevailing cultural norms as a larger subject. It tackles the conflict between trying

to preserve cultural authenticity and ties to one's ancestry while simultaneously attempting to blend in and be accepted by American society. The struggle and difficult identity navigating that the characters go through throughout the book are captured in the title *American Born Chinese*, which also highlights the conflict between cultural identification and the need for acceptance in American culture.

Cultural disparities contribute to intolerance against Asian people since some non-Asians are unfamiliar with and don't comprehend their rituals, traditions, and values. The causes of this intolerance are a mix of apathy, stereotypes, and ethnocentrism. Stereotypes might become more ingrained as a result of cultural differences and they become a source of prejudice at a large scale. In the book, non-Asian characters that are molded by cultural ignorance frequently label and assume things about Asian people based on preconceptions. These stereotypes, which can breed intolerance and prejudice, may include generalizations about a group's behavior, appearance, or customs. All these elements are foregrounded in this graphic novel because Chinese cousin Chin-Kee is an embodiment of unfamiliarity between two cultures, with different appearance, harsh behaviour and modest customs.

The story depicts a few instances where Asian and non-Asian characters misunderstand one another due to cultural differences. These misconceptions are caused by a lack of multicultural understanding, communication difficulties, or preconceived ideas about Asian traditions. As people may react adversely or with dread toward something they do not understand, misunderstandings can contribute to intolerance. Instead, it is replicated and taught to the next generation as a narrative of complicated, growing progress made via educational experience. With three different genres, Yang reaches the widest range of readers. By doing the use of stereotypical actions, provocative language, and sarcastic depictions of Chin-Kee in the novel, Yang shows them how minority youth culture is created and warped in academic environments.

The novel uses Chin-Kee and Jin's stereotypical actions to illustrate how minority youth culture is warped. Such kids continuously struggle to fit in and acclimate to American culture. Incommensurability, as used in anthropology, describes how some characteristics of one culture are challenging for individuals from different cultures to understand. In order to depict the incommensurable subgroups from the dominant culture, *American Born Chinese* claims that Yang exaggerates situations

in which Chin-Kee and Jin are frequently bullied or rejected from school by their white peers for the stereotypical behaviors they exhibit. For instance, Chin-Kee's white classmates talk openly about the fact that he consumes crispy fried cat gizzards with noodle.

Additionally, Jin, who is presented by the educator on the very first day of class, is denigrated by the small white child. The youngster insists, with a grave and contemptuous attitude that his mother says Chinese people consume dogs. Yang continues to press the point, prompting the teacher to say that she believes Jin's family "probably" gave up their old practice in an effort to more closely resemble Americans. The white pupils appear to be making an unconscious distinction between what "we eat" and what "he eats" in these two instances. They are unable to see that the food they criticize should not be a factor in their perception of their culture as being superior.

## **Discussion**

The cultural values are very precious for any member of a specific culture. By sticking to these norms and values one discriminates the other groups as different. But it becomes a custom to deal the people of other groups in an unfavorable way because of their cultural values. Such type of behaviour generally results in lack of confidence, discrimination, anxiety, exclusion and ultimately isolation for the victims. In the same way Yang has depicted the isolation and psychological trauma faced by the people of Asia when they visit America. Both Americans and Asians have their set of beliefs which lead them towards distance and space that relates to culture.

Yoo (2022), explains the vitality of American Born Chinese for showing up a positive ending of the story in which protagonist realizes the value of his own development. He states that though it is generally problematic context as it adheres to the conventional and stereotypical elements but towards the end of the story it becomes enriched and positive. The recent study has explored the novel to extract the presumption that are related to Chinese people. It explores that there are various interpretations of the graphic novel but it has also tried to diminish the embarrassment of people related to their personalities. Danny becomes even more confident as he embraces his real personality of Jin Wang. He tries to teach Wei-Chen to be more honest towards himself as well. This globalization has caused

cultural space too as Americans do not want to be friends with Asian students. Greg even does not appreciate the love affair between Jin and Amelia and rebukes Jin to avoid Amelia. In the same way he teaches him that she deserves a better man.

Any person residing in a multicultural society becomes hybrid. This hybridization has been symbolically presented in the novel by a robot toy. In order to highlight the significance of transformation, norms are divided into intersections of race and language by the creator of the text. The character of Chin-Kee is a perfect example of racial discrimination and cultural gap. This study focuses on the explicit portrayal of cultural gap present between Asian and American students. The story of Monkey King illustrates the value of cultural mythology and identity formation.

Moreover, People from diverse cultural backgrounds choose food in unique ways, and this should not be ignored by anyone because, in doing so, one automatically negates a component of one's own culture. Yang wants to make clear in the second scenario that teachers should use their cultural influence to teach pupils about politics and knowledge while avoiding prejudice and inequity. By highlighting the negative preconceptions that the little child Jin, who has just begun his tenure at a primary school, must deal with, he elicits pity from the viewer.

Davis (2013), examines the novel from a literary view point and he explains that this piece of art is a blend of many features. For example, Bildungsroman, sitcom and legend are blended together to make it more vivid for the audience and readers. He has analyzed the text to find out the causes and effects of Asian American visibility. Through verbal and non-verbal cues Yang has foregrounded the issues of this kind of visibility and invisibility. Yang has successfully manifested the scenario in which Americans always behave with Asian people. The present study explores all of these blended issues in order to find the elements of marginalization and cultural space within the text. By applying the theoretical framework of Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, all of these complex intersections are examined in which people become isolated and try to transform themselves.

It has been extracted from the comic scenes of Chin-Kee that what type of preconceived ideas does people have in their minds regarding Asian people. These ideas gradually lead towards marginalization and communication gap between them. His character has been intentionally created to make Asian people recognize their true positions. It becomes clearer that no matter how does you look like,

behave, eat, sing and convey your knowledge but still there is a permanent reaction of white people towards you.

Wang 2021 explains that American Born Chinese is a border writing because it has explained the border metaphor. The book which focuses on language, culture, genders or memories becomes a border writing. These kinds of books focus on the interlingual and intralingual aspects of those who cross borders. He puts the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* in this category. This story has challenged the disappointing aspect of boundary and border. This book has a potential of multimodal story that creates laughter and self-pity among its variety of immigrant readers at the same time. It tackles with the story in a very beautiful manner that reader comes to know about the process of migration and sentiments of the immigrant young boy.

The recent study adds into this research about border metaphor. It elaborates the differences present between native people and immigrants. It explains the devastating aspects of migration, how it leads towards transformation, identity destruction and rebuilding and space among the members of a single community. For example, Jin is even aware of the smell of his old home that is still present in his clothes when he comes to new school for the first time. The smell coming out of his clothes is representing his memory of cultural association. Crenshaw has called these kinds of differences as intersections; these intersections eventually lead towards the cultural space.

Every immigrant suffers from the dilemma of self-negation and attempts to modify themselves except Chin-Kee who is representing the permanence of cultural norms. The present research explains the elements of assimilation presented in the story, every immigrant tries to be called perfectly suitable for new culture and tries to transform. The writer has tried to show the language discrimination too, by demonstrating the translated dialogues in a certain way. It is very valuable to change the language if someone wants to settle down into the new place as Wei-Chen has been told by Jin to “you are in USA, speak English”. it is a major constituent of one’s culture and can be opted to eliminate the cultural space.

## Conclusion

The present research “A Study of Intersectionality and Cultural Space in American Born Chinese” aimed at the exploration of the novel American Born Chinese, in order to analyze the influence of cross-cultural elements on the lives of major characters, by applying Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality. It examines the themes in both visual and textual ways and compares it with other well-known graphic novels such as *Persepolis* and *Maus*. *Persepolis* is a series of autobiographical graphic novels written by Marjane Satrapi. It elaborates writer's brought up during the Islamic revolution in Iran by the use of visual literacy. Whereas *Maus* that is often published as *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* is a graphic novel by American Cartoonist Art Spiegelman. It depicts the interview of writer's father about his experience as a polish Jew and Holocaust survivor. It has displayed its characters as mice, cats and pigs. In the same way there are several images in the American Born Chinese which aid in the understanding of these cross-cultural apprehensive strategies. The theme of cultural space, identity formation and marginalization are elaborated with references taken from the text. It has been universally acknowledged fact that Asians are bullied and humiliated for their belongingness to their cultural heritage.

It has been concluded that exploitation and ostracism are not implemented by law but people are manipulated by their own peers and their ideological and cultural thoughts. They have to struggle in order to be included in the mainstream and otherwise they are isolated. This isolation results in intolerance among people and they create a battlefield inside themselves. In this book Yang has presented that immigration does not merely result in physical hegemony but it causes sentimental and psychological hegemony too. It has been successfully dwelt upon the idea that how various ethnic origins absorb and direct negative preconceptions and prejudice towards each other. The ending of this novel emphasizes the idea of embracing the genuine selves of people, it perpetuates that it is very important to reject those restrictions inflicted upon them by racial stereotypes and societal norms.

The book comes to a happy conclusion. Wei-Chen appears to be almost unrecognizable in his new adult shape as a tobacco user, jewelry-wearing, sports-car driving teenager, yet the two friends are able to quickly reestablish their friendship. The pals end up giggling together as they become closer over how awful

their Boba tea is. Yang provides the audience with this illustration to convey to the reader that Jin has attained inner peace by recognizing his true identity.

The findings help the anti-racist education to get a better understanding of the immigrants' identities and their discourses. The research throws light on the trials that are experienced by Asian American people. They suffer from identity crises and try to fit into that culture by each possible route. At the end the significance of one's own identity has been explicitly shown.

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