

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Kinship, Territory, and Spirit: A Socio-Psychological Analysis of Resilience and Community Formation in Laurence Yep's *Dragonwings*

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ABSTRACT

Findings from this study highlight the importance of immigrants' social networks as a psychological tool in the struggle against systematic marginalization. The plot revolves around Laurence Yep, the study will investigate the ways in which spiritual devotion, territorial enclaves, and familial ties helped early Chinese immigrants to the United States maintain their cultural identity, culture, and sense of community. This study draws on a variety of academic frameworks, including Social Identity Theory, Community Psychology, Berry's acculturation theory, and Ferdinand Tönnies' concept of community, to look into the social and psychological factors that allowed immigrants to endure and transition. Researchers found that those who have strong kinship ties and a strong sense of in-group solidarity are better able to cope with the psychological stresses of acculturation. Cultural customs could be preserved while assimilation into the host community is fostered in Chinatowns and other territorial groupings, providing a cognitive-emotional home for individuals. Take the rising spiritual communities as an example of how poverty may inspire cross-cultural solidarity and charity via shared goals and interethnic collaboration. The common perception holds that the 1906 San Francisco earthquake shows how prejudice can be turned into opportunities for people from different backgrounds to work together and build stronger communities through the face of hardship. Using methods from sociology and psychology, this interdisciplinary study posits that immigrant communities arose as a structural reaction to exclusion and a dynamic process of psychosocial maintenance. These examples demonstrate how grassroots groups can strengthen diverse cultures by promoting and preserving their distinctive customs.

Keywords: Chinese immigration; ferdinand tönnies; social identity; acculturation; community psychology; dragonwings; immigrant resilience; interdisciplinary analysis.

1. Introduction

Lawrence Yep, a Chinese-American writer, has won a slew of awards for his work, including the Newbery Silver Medal in Children's Literature, the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Award, the Children's Book Award from the International Reading Association, and the New York Times Outstanding Book of the Year Award, among many others. His works are so numerous that even his textbook series, *Literature:*

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World Masterpiece released by Prentice Hall in 1996^[1], included his works like *The Lost Garden* as the part of the textbook series. His most known work is perhaps the Golden Mountain Chronicles, an eleven-volume series detailing the hundred-year history of a Chinese family during their migration to the United States. As a common theme in “Gold Mountain Chronicles”, Yep ^[2], addressed cultural conflicts, identity crisis, and the impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act through the eyes of adolescent protagonists. Prior to Laurence Yep’s work, no novel had introduced the history of Chinese Americans, nor had any work addressed the cultural identity issues of Chinese Americans across different eras ^[3,4]. These issues include recognizing one’s own ethnic identity, living under the dual influence of two cultures, and making choices and compromises in cultural conflicts. These questions are all growth dilemmas faced by minority youths.

The early Golden Mountain serials focus on depicting the difficult living conditions of Chinese immigrants, who, upon their arrival on the new continent, occupied a precarious social position. American sociologist Ivan H. Light likened the livelihood of the Chinese community in the United States to a basket full of food, where only after the white population had their fill could the Chinese scrape the leftovers from the bottom of the basket ^[5]. This led to a pervasive sense of cognitive crisis among the Chinese, imposing significant psychological stress and compelling them to constantly re-evaluate themselves, seek solidarity, and rely on the power of community organizations to “compensate” for their inner discomfort. In this case, the immigrants entering the United States established a sophisticated network of community organizations—either families or kinship, or communities based on territory, integrating the Chinese community into an organized system, thereby forming a Chinese society that is both independent of American society and an integral part of the diverse American social fabric.

Dragonwings, published in the year 1975 and won the Newbery Award in 1976, holds significant research value. The novel is set against the backdrop of first-generation Chinese immigrants who have already settled in the United States. It follows the struggles of second-generation immigrants trying to survive in America, tracing the journey of Moon Shadow and his father, Windrider, who harbors a dream of becoming a pilot. Windrider sets out to realize his ambition with the help of Moon Shadow. The survival tactics depicted in the novel such as familial relationships that assist the immigrants in coming to the United States, territorial connection that allow the immigrants to gain a presence in Chinatown, are very valuable in research. Sociologically speaking, the processes through which early Chinese immigrant communities in the United States were created and evolved offer a plethora of empirical data that can be used to study the history of Chinese immigration. Such communities saved the traditional aspects of the Chinese culture, as it became a significant means of spreading Chinese culture abroad. The paper will utilize the community theory introduced by German sociologist/philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies and comment on the communities built in *Dragonwings* in order to comprehend the historical recollection and spiritual mood of early Chinese immigrants, their boldness and braveness in assimilating into the mainstream society. ^[6-9].

2. The historical evolution of community theory

The term “community” originates from the Latin “communis,” signifying “common”. In the development of Western societies, as early as the Homeric era (around the 9th century BC), the Greeks already possessed the concept of common or public. The Homeric epics discussed common property, shared land, communal graves, collective fame, and a shared destiny. Ancient Greek and Roman philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero delved deeply into the connotations of the common good and the concept of the community, making significant contributions to the development of communal thought. Aristotle contended that the city state represented the quintessential community. Subsequently, Augustine critically absorbed the ideas of Plato and Cicero, and constructed his ideal community—the “City of God”. The ideal

community is centered on faith, “with ethics as the code of conduct for its members, order and harmony as its characteristics, and universal love as the driving force for its survival and development” [10]. Karl Marx, on the other hand, from the perspective of historical materialism, by unearthing the ideas of Greek and Roman city-states, Hegel’s core concept of the “state”, and the theoretical essence of utopian socialism, gradually constructed a community thought centered on the “essence of human beings” [11].

Ferdinand Tönnies provided a seminal definition of community in his 1887 work, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tönnies distinguished between “community” (*gemeinschaft*) and “society” (*gesellschaft*), positing the community as a form of “organism”. “Community means genuine, enduring life together, whereas Society is a transient and superficial thing”(Tönnies, 19). Thus, community could be defined as a group of people that share common bonds around traditions, beliefs or objectives. In formulating this concept, Tönnies drew inspiration from various thinkers, including Thomas Hobbes, G. W. F. Hegel, and Karl Marx, with Hegel and Marx exerting the most significant influence on his thought [12].

Tönnies outlined the development of community in three phases: community of kinship, community of locality, and community of spirit as the final stage. Community of kinship refers to social groups formed on the basis of blood relations, with the family or clan being the most archetypal example. In such communities, members share a natural connection and intimate relationship, which is innate and not contingent upon external conditions or agreements. For instance, families, clans, and extended family networks are typical examples of communities of blood. These relationships are often characterized by deep emotional bonds and a shared sense of identity. The home is not only a physical dwelling but also a site of kinship, where people live, share possessions, and partake in communal meals. The deceased are revered as invisible spirits, believed to continue caring for their descendants [13].

Community of locality pertains to neighborhood, referring to a group of people living in close proximity. Unlike community of kinship, community of locality involves non-kin living together, with homes, shared fields, and adjacent properties fostering familiarity and close acquaintances. There is a need for shared forms of work, organization, and management. In a community of place, members are connected primarily by the territory they inhabit and their shared land ownership. This type of community is based on the common use and dependence on land, reflected in the coexistence between people and land and the value placed on human relationships.

Furthermore, mutual assistance and cooperation in a community of place are based on the close connection between people and land. The formation of such communities is often linked to long-term common production and life, where people develop deep friendships and interdependencies through shared work and mutual care. Over time, mutual assistance can evolve into a pure, cooperative, and harmonious relationship that transcends blood ties, allowing unrelated individuals to form a union based on common values and goals.

Tönnies considered the community of locality as a more developed form of social organization, where the “Essential Will” is still dominant but begins to incorporate elements of rational choice.

To the utmost degree, a community of spirit, the connection between members transcends blood and geographical boundaries, based on common spiritual pursuits and inner spiritual connections. Members can belong to different locations and different backgrounds but they share common beliefs, ideals, moral values and cultural practices. A spiritual community is having a spiritual resonance between the members of the spiritual community, which is connected through empathy and emotional bond.

Tönnies regarded the community of spirit, as the highest type of community, in which the Essential Will is united with the Chosen Will. Such a community is very rational and action-oriented. Tönnies’ community

of spirit describes a social group formed on the basis of common spiritual pursuits and cultural values. Members of this group are united through internal spiritual connections and resonance, forming a new type of social union that transcends traditional blood and geographical relations.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the British sociologist Anthony Paul Cohen advanced a view that departed significantly from earlier sociological orthodoxies. In his book, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Cohen argued that “community” was not a social practice but, rather, a symbolic structure, thereby displacing the centrality traditionally accorded to spatial determinants. Benedict Anderson likewise reconceptualized community as an imagined and fictive artifact. Jean-Luc Nancy subsequently radicalized this departure in *The Inoperative Community*, repudiating all prior definitions of community by asserting that “community has no interiority; hence any community predicated on such interiority is illusory”^[14].

A synoptic review of the Western intellectual history of the concept of community reveals two dominant interpretive trajectories. The first construes both community and society as affirmative modes of human association—relationships constituted by mutual facilitation, convenience, and efficacy—and therefore maintains that these two forms of positive sociality coexist in every historical epoch. The second, by contrast, posits an inherent antagonism between individuality and communality, concluding that a viable community is, at best, precarious and, more often unattainable. The choice of which theory of community one adopts is decisive for the analysis of community in literary works. In the present essay, “community” is understood in its common-sense meaning: a group of individuals who are, by and large, capable of mutual understanding and living together in harmony^[15].

Although Ferdinand Tönnies and his work, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, (1887), is still highly relevant to community theorisation, it is essential to note that his typology was created in the intellectual community of late-19th-century Europe. To use his three components of tripartite framework such as kinship, locality and spirit to a Chinese immigrant story in the 20th century in the US, it becomes important to adapt it critically. The importance of the Tönnies model is that it focuses on organically built and long-lasting social relationships; however, its Eurocentricism failed to explain the racialised exclusion, migration pressures and diasporic negotiations processes that was a characteristic feature of the Chinese immigrant life in the United States.

Later scholarship has revealed these limitations and has reformulated the notion of community in new manners that add to modern analysis. Anthony Cohen (1985) shifted the focus of structural forms to the symbolic boundaries in which communities reproduce meaning and thus highlights the fact that immigrant associations are not only based on material practices but also shared symbols and narratives. The concept of imagined communities (1983) by Benedict Anderson even extends the framework by showing how collective identity is being shaped over distance, which is especially applicable in the case of diasporic communities that have links back to their country of origin. In *The Inoperative Community* (1991), Jean-Luc Nancy provides a radicalization of his criticism, saying that community is never complete, closed, or total—a discovery that resonates with the negotiated and fragile solidarities outlined in *Dragonwings*^[16].

Although Tönnies provides the primary analytical lens, the incorporation of other following viewpoints ensures that the framework is not blindly adhered to. Instead, events take place inside the lived experiences of Chinese Americans, whose collective actions demonstrate the continued relevance and necessity of Tönnies' theories, which require revision and expansion.

2.1. Tönniesian and socio-psychological perspectives

Ferdinand Tönnies' traditional sociological paradigm of community serves as the major theoretical basis for this research. Tönnies distinguished amongst three distinct kinds of groups: family, neighborhood, and

spirit community. This model provides a framework for studying immigrant groups; adding ideas from the social and psychology sciences might make it even better by adding explanations. Community frameworks can aid in multicultural understanding, resilience, and self-discovery, even though these scholarly perspectives can't supplant Tönnies' paradigm.

Culturally significant, Social Identity Theory elucidates societies that place a premium on familial ties. Families of immigrants are more than simply a social institution; they strengthen the members' sense of self and ability to persevere through adversity. To further illustrate how a sense of family and shared responsibilities may alleviate acculturative stress and establish emotional safety in strange and possibly hazardous places, *Dragonwings* also employs structured kinship networks ^[14,17].

According to Berry's (1997) Acculturation Theory, spatially based groupings are even more significant. While Chinatowns provide a physical home for Chinese immigrants, enclaves enable people to accept the values of their new community while yet holding on to some of their cultural heritage. The cultural and financial support that members of territorial communities receive from one another helps them avoid the psychological and emotional costs of assimilation, and it also strengthens their sense of community.

Important and related themes in community psychology include transcultural solidarity, meaning-making in times of crisis, and the community of spirit exhibited by Tönnies. In times of societal upheaval and tragedy, spiritual groups can bring people of all walks of life together, which can be a great comfort and source of strength for everyone.

This study will use the Tönniesian framework to build a multi-dimensional picture of China's immigrant populations by utilizing these psychological insights from *Dragonwings*. Research shows that diasporic people's psychological processes are improved by structured forms of connection, such as family, location, and spirit. This leads to increased cultural identification, resilience, and health ^[18,19].

Through an examination of the story's plot, characters, and symbolic elements, this research uses literary analysis to provide light on the hardships endured by the Chinese immigrants. By presenting Ferdinand Tönnies' tripartite community as a framework for differentiating immigrant connections (kinship, locale, and spirit), sociological theory offered context for these textual discoveries.

Consideration of studies in social and psychological psychology can enhance the framework's ability to explain. According to the Social Identity Theory, both the individual's sense of self and the group's capacity to persevere are strengthened by ties to extended family. The Berry acculturation paradigm proposes that geographical enclaves, such as Chinatowns, allow individuals to assimilate into a new culture while maintaining their cultural heritage. Community psychology provides an image of spiritual communities' collective efficacy and selflessness, particularly during crises.

Psychological theories explain the processes underlying resilience, adaptation, and identity formation, while sociological conceptions offer structural categories that might shed light on the integrated design. Through the integration of both methods, the research demonstrates how the literary piece **Dragonwings* functions as both a literary tale and a case study of the socio-psychological development of immigrant populations.

It is crucial to situate these ideas in a theoretical framework that can address the specific difficulties encountered by this group, even though this historical narrative does a good job of establishing the intellectual heritage of the Chinese immigrant community. Tönnies' paradigm has a solid basis, but it might benefit from discussions with psychological theories that shed light on diaspora life in order to improve its explanatory power.

This study builds a theoretical framework that explains how immigrant communities become resilient while keeping their identity by merging Tönnies' structural categories with specific sociological and psychological data. In order to show how such an interdisciplinary framework is operationalized, the given methodology section describes the integrative method of the work of Laurence Yep, *Dragonwings* ^[20,21].

3. The transformation of communities in *Dragonwings*

3.1. Community of kinship: The blood ties and role of lineage bonds

The minimum Chinese community in *Dragonwings* is revealed as a group of Guangdong immigrants connected by blood or familial relationships. Moon Shadow, the 8-year-old protagonist, was brought to America by Hand Clap, a cousin of his, and became a member of the laundry named “Company of the Peach Orchard Vow”. The Company was composed of Chinese men of various ages, with each person fulfilling distinct roles. At the transition between the 19th and 20th centuries, under the influence of The Chinese Exclusion Act, it was difficult for Chinese men to bring their wives over from China ^[22], so in most kinship communities, there were few women or wives, so central to Chinese culture. In this situation, men had to take on the role of a mother to care for the children. In the laundry, Uncle Bright Star, White Deer, and Hand Clap were partners, Lefty, Black Dog(Uncle’s son), and Windrider worked for wages until the day they could buy a junior partnership. Uncle Bright Star serves as a patriarchal figure, guiding and leading the community members in their collective endeavors. “If Uncle Bright Star was the father to us, White Deer was something like a mother”. They jointly manage the laundry shop and share the responsibility of educating the younger generation. Uncle and Windrider took charge of Moon Shadow’s education, while other community members contributed by bringing back English newspapers and magazines for the young people to use. Such a blood community is highly interdependent, mutually helpful and supportive. According to social psychology, such forms of kinship counter the impact of acculturative stress and reinforce the social identity, which cushions the immigrant against psychological alienation. According to Social Identity Theory ^[23], group affiliations such as kinship based clans contribute to strengthening of self-concept and support collective resilience in a strange social environment. As Uncle said, this was not just a laundry shop, “but it was a 'concept,' a 'dream,' 'a dream much older than you or I and only slightly younger than the world: Men must help one another in dangerous times and places”.

Despite the hardships even deaths, most immigrant families considered hard survival in America as their destiny. This phenomenon has profound socioeconomic reasons. In the mid-19th century, the discovery of gold mines on the west coast of the United States and the demand for labor in the construction of the transcontinental railroad gave rise to the first large-scale wave of Chinese immigration. In 1849, only 775 Chinese arrived in California, but by 1851, the number had surged to 2,761, and by 1860, the Chinese population in the United States had reached 300,000. During the 1870s—1890s, after the completion of the transcontinental Pacific Railroad, Chinese laborers—who had previously worked as railroad navvies—were hired by California farms to plow and harvest; others worked as tenant farmers, specializing in fruit and vegetable cultivation for market sale. Estimates suggest that Chinese workers constituted seven-eighths of all agricultural laborers in the state, yet their wages were markedly lower than those of white workers ^[24].

When scholars analyze the causes of early Chinese immigration to the United States, they typically point to two complementary dynamics. First, the collapse of China’s economic and social order in the mid-nineteenth century generated a powerful push factor ^[21]. Second, neoclassical migration theory interprets international migration as a rational strategy by individuals and families to maximize income. June Mei’s comparison of early Chinese miners’ and railroad workers’ earnings with the incomes of Chinese peasants

reveals a wage differential of at least ten to one. Many scholars characterize these migrants not as passive, impoverished, or helpless, but as proactive, entrepreneurial agents of development.

New economic of migration theory further argues that the relevant decision-making unit is not the individual but the family. Migration from Guangdong to the United States was financed and orchestrated by entire kinship networks; once overseas, successful immigrants remitted savings to relatives who were still in China, provided newcomers with lodging and meals, secured employment for them, and addressed their cultural and psychological needs in an alien environment. The spatial distribution and occupational choices of early Chinese settlements were overwhelmingly shaped by these lineage networks. For example, in early twentieth-century Chicago most Chinese hailed from the Mei lineage of Taishan, Guangdong Province; Phoenix was dominated by the Deng lineage of Kaiping; San Francisco's import-export firms were largely run by people from the "Three Districts", and Chinese butchers and their employees were predominantly from Jiujiang, Nanhai County. In Laurence Yep's *Dragonwings*, Uncle Bright Star—eldest among the laundrymen—had earlier worked on the transcontinental railroad, as is described in Yep's *Dragon's Gate*. Following its completion, he joined the San Francisco washing industry, paving the way for younger individuals like Moon Shadow to arrive in California. The familial networks common among Chinese immigrants often take this form of mutual aid [25].

A tight-knit community where everyone gets along fabulously is depicted in the book. Any effort, no matter how minor, is appreciated. Moon Shadow's claim exemplifies this phenomenology: they never tried to exert any form of dominant power over us. Everyone was fair with us when Uncle was in control. Instead of being a gang of guys motivated primarily by money, the chapter highlights that the group was more of a brotherhood of men and foreigners who had banded together to assist and protect themselves (*Dragonwings*, 30). The Peach Orchard Vow and other kinship-based ties are highlighted in *Dragonwings* as crucial to the immigrant families' social networks, which were relied upon for more than just financial stability. The laundry's principle of equal treatment was more than simply words on paper; it was a substantial mental challenge. Moon Shadow claims that the reason they were able to function cohesively in spite of the difficult cultural and societal conditions was that they did not impose any kind of lordly responsibility on anyone.

This perspective is supported by Social Identity Theory, which posits that when people form cooperative bonds, they feel more comfortable inside their own groups and less threatened by perceived power dynamics. This is especially true for members of marginalized groups, as they often face these challenges. By working together on tasks like decision-making and child-rearing and by lifting each other up when we were all down, the group was able to triumph over adversity. The emotional stability of Chinese immigrants was maintained by their sense of worth, even though they faced systematic discrimination and exclusion. As a result, acculturative stress was lessened. Friend gathering places, refuges, and ways of holding on to one's identity all developed in the laundry room as a result of the structural and psychological dynamics of kinship.

3.2. Community of locality: Chinatown as a cultural enclave

From Tönnies' community theory, the key word of community of locality is neighborhood. That is to say, people live in the definite place as a unit, but they do not have blood relationships. For its members, the community was not only a place to live and reside, but also a hub to maintain connections.

Facing language barriers and hostile environments, in order to search for a place to live, a place to sink their roots in, Chinese laborers instinctively congregated to form mutual aid communities [3]. They adopted various strategies to support each other and survive in a foreign land. For instance, they established a range of family and territory organizations to provide aid and support. Immigrants with the surname Chen founded

the Yingchuan Hall. The “Six Major Companies” (also known as the Chinese Guild Hall), which was a consortium of six territory guilds such as the Three Districts, Yanghe, and Ningyang guilds, was jointly registered and applied for as a charitable and welfare organization for Chinese. Even though there were certain illegal activities that the organizations such as the Chee Kung Tong and Bing Kong Tong were involved in, they provided security and assistance to the Chinese community. A more important and larger-scale source of mutual support was the establishment of Chinatowns. The presence of Chinatowns is technically a story of overseas Chinese building living quarters against oppression. This territorial unity had a significant psychic element too. Based on the model of the acculturation psychology developed by Berry, these communities allowed immigrants to preserve cultural identity (heritage maintenance) and to deal with the question of how to fit in the host culture (participation). Furthermore, the emergence of Chinatowns is a case of what community psychologists refer to as ecological resilience- the establishment of supportive, culturally familiar, micro-environment which translates into emotional safety and social continuity in response to external aggression. San Francisco’s Chinatown, as the first in North America, began to take shape around 1850. Initially, it consisted of small teahouses, eateries, tofu shops, and laundries catering to the needs of Chinese laborers, and gradually evolved into a fully functional living area.

For most Chinese American writers, Chinatown is the place where “their heart was closest to home” [22]. In *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, Chu Louis depicted life of Chinatown, “Chinatown is a close-knit community, and everyone knows everything about the people and things around.” Maxine Hong Kingston’s Chinatown is not just a physical location but a cultural and psychological landscape. It is depicted as a place filled with ghosts and spirits, both literal and metaphorical, representing the haunting presence of the past and the struggles of the present. Laurence Yep [18], was born in the Chinatown of San Francisco, later on his family operated a Chinese laundry amidst a predominantly African American community. Laurence took a bus commuting to Chinatown for his primary and secondary education, so he was very familiar with the lifestyle of people in Chinatown. He admitted that “the settings of my novels are always small and quiet Chinatowns because that is where I grew up. His narratives of Chinatown always capture the historical memory, cultural traditions, and spiritual demeanor of the Chinese community.”

In the novel, Chinatown served as a “sanctuary” for Chinese people to collectively confront the white mainstream society [15]. In the very first night when he came to Chinatown, Moon Shadow witnessed the scene where the laundry was surrounded by a group of “demons”, who threw bricks towards glass windows, leaving shattered glass everywhere. Soon he was warned not to leave Chinatown, and he was told many tragic stories of Chinese who crossed the invisible border line. As is concluded by Zygmund Bauman, the designation of personal protective shelters as “communities” denotes an enclosed space intended to forestall theft and exclude strangers; consequently, the term “community” signifies segregation, isolation, and is materially instantiated in defensive walls and guarded gates.

The primary characteristic of the San Francisco Tang men’s town is the similarity with its China origin and the shared cultural heritage. Despite being geographically distant from their homeland, the Chinese maintained a strong attachment to their native land and traditional culture, which in turn preserved their Chinese lifestyle and cultural traditions. This was evident in the daily language, clothing, dietary culture, and value systems of the community members, all of which reflected a strong Chinese identity and a profound sense of Chinese culture. In *Dragonwings*, Chinese characters are depicted as wearing long braids and traditional gowns, and Chinatown looks like another version of the streets in Canton. Upon his arrival, Moon Shadow felt an overwhelming sense of familiarity. He was surrounded by two rows of three-story buildings, which housed a variety of establishments including grocery stores, clothing shops, traditional Chinese herbal shops, and laundries. “Before the fronts of the buildings were sensible safeguards against demons of any

kind. There were lions lying down protectively before some; other houses had pictures of the door guardians on their doors, and still others had scrolls of red paper on the doorways, asking a certain god to protect the inhabitants against demons". On the streets, peddlers with their goods-laden poles called out to attract customers, while vendors by the roadside sold fish and fresh chickens. In this environment, Moon Shadow felt as if he had returned home.

Chinese communities in America did their best to maintain age-old customs and practices. The laundry was named "Three Peach Tree", a name from the traditional Chinese historic story "The Three Kingdoms". The gift given to Moon Shadow from Uncle Bright Star was a wooden carving of Monkey, the King of all the monkeys who almost conquered Heaven — a story from the classic novel *Journey to The West*. The horse pulling the wagon of the laundry was named "Red Rabbit", the name of a speedy horse of the god of war, also from "The Story of Three Kingdoms". Despite the distance from Chinese hometown, Moon Shadow was raised in a cultural environment which had no difference from his home. Chinese immigrants sustained the observance of traditional festivals, which were faithfully celebrated as if they were in China. The novel's depiction of the Feast of Pure Brightness reveals that, despite material deprivation and structural pressures, the Chinese community leveraged robust associational networks to replicate the homeland in a foreign land through foodways, ritual performance, and vernacular arts. More significantly, these festivals and events functioned as critical junctures for relational repair and cultural hybridization. The Pure Brightness Feast provided an opportunity for Uncle and Windrider to make peace, providing evidence that "we were brothers, strangers in a strange land who had banded together for mutual help and protection. There were arguments, of course, but they were always worked out". The episode in which Moon Shadow and Robin jointly replace the Stove King pictures and smear honey on it not only displays cultural distinctiveness to an external audience but also signals the embryonic stage of syncretic practice. The early Chinese immigrants' festival celebrations in Chinatowns thus constitute an epic of cultural survival—one marked by resilience, ingenuity, and profound affective investment.

Although Chinatown always emerged as an independent and exclusive society, it has never been an isolated "island" from the very beginning. The commercial networks between Chinese immigrants in the United States and their counterparts in China not only supplied essential consumer goods, transformed immigrants' need into lucrative business ventures, but also played a crucial role in maintaining connections with the homeland. This was achieved through the facilitation of mail and news delivery between the migrants and their families in China, as well as through the provision of money remittance services. In the novel, part of Moon Shadow's job is to bring letters and money to the headquarters of the district association so they could be sent home and also pick up the letters arrived from hometown. It is precisely in the dense interactions among the Chinese in Chinatown that various guilds and associations, tied by kinship, territorial, and occupational relationships, have emerged. Although these guilds vary in size, their functions in communication, exchange, and social cohesion are unified.

In the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, numerous buildings were engulfed in flames, Chinatown was also devastated by the inferno, leaving behind a landscape of ruins and desolation. During the reconstruction process following the fire, the anti-Chinese movement gained momentum, and the San Francisco government attempted to relocate the Chinese population to the southern part of the city to establish a new Chinese enclave. Surprisingly, the Chinese community, which had long been docile and reticent in expressing their demands, united as never before and engaged in negotiations and resistance against the San Francisco authorities. Chinese associations, represented in the novel as the one that Uncle Bright Star participated, threatened to leave San Francisco. Chinese ran a lot of businesses and services that Americans needed. If Chinese were to leave the city completely, the whole economy would be wrecked.

Finally, the authorities knew that if they lost Chinese, their pocketbooks would be hurting. Through the concerted efforts of various parties, the first Chinese New Year following the great earthquake saw the reestablishment of the Chinese community on its original site.

When describing the scene of rebuilding Chinatown, this event seemed to provide a rich tapestry of early Chinese immigrants' efforts to build a geospatial community through kinship networks, mutual aid, and collective labor. The rebuilding drew Chinese from diverse locations—Sacramento, Los Angeles, Colorado, and even distant eastern provinces. “Uncle even got money from some kin and friends in the eastern provinces from whom he had not heard in twenty years” (*Dragonwings*, 247). People came to help were all kinsmen—Lefty's brother-in-law, White Deer's youngest brother, Hand Clap's young cousin, and others—represent a diverse array of skills and backgrounds. Their convergence underscores the importance of kinship and friendship networks in mobilizing labor and resources for communal projects, as if “taking part in some great common enterprise” (*Dragonwings*, 248). The construction of the stone building serves as a metaphor for the community's enduring spirit and their determination to create a stable and cohesive social structure. This underscores the importance of kinship and friendship in the immigrant communities and highlights the resilience and ingenuity of early Chinese settlers in North America.

The Chinese community's sense of collective identity prioritizes kinship-based clan relationships, followed by place-based regional connections. This hierarchical emphasis on social bonds is a significant reason why Windrider and Moon Shadow initially organized themselves into kinship-based clan associations and region-based guild organizations. However, Windrider was discouraged by his fellows to pursue his dream and the dispute with the Sleepers compelled him to leave Chinatown, the father and son seemed to be an outcast of Chinese community. Most of the first-generation immigrants preferred to remain within their familiar cultural circles and communicate in their native language. External exclusion and internal cultural psychology contribute to their inclination to preserve Chinese culture and maintain their Chinese identity. Unlike his fellows, Windrider and Moon Shadow took the first step into the world full of prejudice and peril and thus found an opportunity for spiritual community. Demonstrating a remarkable capacity for acculturation and an active commitment to mainstream integration, he exemplified the expansive vision and professional breadth that characterized the most accomplished cohort of early Chinese immigrants ^[20].

3.3. Community of spirit: shared aspirations as catalyst for transracial and transnational solidarity

Tönnies posits that the spiritual community can be understood as the truest and highest form of human community. The emergence of a spiritual community is contingent upon certain preconditions: it is through the similarity or affinity in professions or arts that friendships most readily develop. However, such bonds must be consolidated and sustained through frequent and easy association. Thus, it is evident that the spiritual community represents the most advanced form of community, capable of transcending the limitations of kinship and territorial communities.

The relationship between Windrider and his son, as well as the Whitlaws does not begin with immediate mutual understanding or acceptance. Instead, it evolves through several key factors that facilitate the development of a shared sense of community. The initial bond between Windrider's family and Miss Whitlaw's household is rooted in their respect to each other. During their first meeting, the father asked Moon Shadow to wash his face, put on his clean shirt, it was in such a formal way that the boy complained “you'd think we were visiting the Empress herself” (*Dragonwings*, 129). Moon Shadow was not ready to express his respect and kindness or anything that is good to the White demons. The reader expects to meet a monster instead of a petite lady, but when she welcomes him kindly and in a friendly way, Moon Shadow

started to feel peaceful and not afraid, even though he had a weird feeling that she was someone he had seen before, “She had a smile like the Listener, She Who Hears Prayer, and she was not to release her brothers and sisters out of sin as long as he could not release his own” (*Dragonwings*, 130). He later in the evening cogitates about the possibility that there had been time in another life when we were close to one another, mother and child, even (*Dragonwings*, 144).

Moon Shadow’s perception of Miss Whitlaw as the Listener reveals his cultural background and psychological state. The Listener, or Guanyin Bodhisattva is a goddess holding an extremely significant and multifaceted status in traditional Chinese culture, revered as a symbol of compassion, mercy, and benevolence. Guanyin is widely worshipped by both Buddhists and Taoists in China. Moon Shadow perceives in Miss Whitlaw a kindness and compassion that mirrors the protective qualities he associates with his own cultural ideals, particularly those embodied in Guanyin, the Listener. His psychological demand for protection and security is further demonstrated by his being in an unfamiliar and potentially hazardous location. As a young immigrant, he likely feels vulnerable and confused. His connection to Guanyin, a deity venerated for offering solace and safeguarding, gives him hope and solace.

They may form a spiritual community and deepen their understanding of one another due to Miss Whitlaw's extensive research of Chinese culture. This is a sign of a cultural exchange that becomes intense with time. The exchange of narratives especially the ones involving dragons is a critical tool towards the creation of a spiritual community. As a mythical being, the dragons have great cultural value in the Chinese as well as the Western society. The interchange of dragon stories helps Windrider and Miss Whitlaw to discover their differences and similarities in culture. This process of storytelling not only facilitates mutual understanding but also creates a shared cultural space where both parties can find common truths. The act of storytelling thus becomes a cultural practice that enables the transformation of individual perspectives into a collective understanding. Miss Whitlaw’s reflection on these stories encapsulates the essence of their evolving relationship: “We see the same thing and yet find different truths” (*Dragonwings*, 187). This statement highlights the characters’ ability to recognize and respect their different perspectives while seeking common ground.

The spiritual community is then further supported in the novel through its strategic invocation of a key historical crisis. As is discussed by many scholars that, in literatures, the relation between the theme of community and diagnosis of social crises can be observed repeatedly ^[25]. In 1906, there was an earthquake in San Francisco and a good number of homes were leveled to the ground. Before rescue efforts could be started, fires started throughout the area as several gas pipes blew. In time of crisis, it was Windrider and Moon Shadow gathered around Miss Whitlaw and formed work crews to clear the mounds from which people were calling. Most of the Americans were scared or too shocked for many people to offer help. There were also thieves and robbers, stealing Miss Whitlaw's possession. Windrider intervened during the chaos, halting a thief and returning stolen money to Miss Whitlaw, thereby reinforcing trust and solidarity. Psychological, such emergent communities can be traced back to collective efficacy, or a shared belief among a group of people about having conjoint capacity to organize and undertake activities that are required to attain shared objectives. This shared efficacy is a central determinant in the resolution of communities to adversity in the post-crisis context due to its role in both pragmatic and affective resilience. In the framework of Community Psychology, and particularly, the models of ecological resilience and social capital, mutual disasters - like natural disasters - become triggering events to enhance group unity, mutual support, and mobilize latent support groups. Such crisis meaning-making enables individuals to re-interpret traumatic experiences not only as personal loss, but as opportunities to redefine the community, and to connect with other groups.

The partnership between Windrider and Miss Whitlaw in *Dragonwings*, written by Laurence Yep, is a powerful example of this type of cooperation in the context of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. A belief in the inherent value of helping others transcends racial and cultural boundaries. This view highlights how prosocial action, which is voluntary and done with the intention of making a beneficial impact on others, can boost psychological resilience and moral solidarity. Furthermore, when cultural, language, and ethnic differences do not exist, transcultural unity is exemplified by their cooperation, which is characterized by emotional bondage and reciprocal aspirations. Intergroup contact in cooperative settings, which these encounters facilitate, can lessen bias and increase empathy, according to social psychology theories. ^[15]

One of the most important requirements for constructing interethnic groups that last is a feeling of psychological safety, which can be fostered through these experiences. Because of their psychological responsiveness and ability to provide a basis for healing, belonging, and purpose, spiritual communities are ideal, according to Tönnies. Moreover, it emphasizes how the protagonists' acts stand in stark contrast to the selfishness of others, demonstrating that a sense of community is about more than simply personal bravery; it's also about working together to establish a favorable atmosphere. The theories put forward by French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who suggested that people would be able to repair their damaged social ties by acts of solidarity after a catastrophe, are also reflected here. The attempts of Windrider and Moon Shadow to organize and help others in the chaos and destruction are the bright examples of building a particular community and overcoming the individual differences and paying attention to the common good. Their efforts reveal that a group of people can unite even during a disaster, creating an empathetic, supportive atmosphere of collaboration.

The reason behind the flying of the *Dragonwings* is the collaboration between various cultures and is also the outcome of the interrelated occurrences that emphasize the aspect of mutual support and the collective desire. As an example, the fact that Robin gave a book about flying to Moon Shadow as a present is symbolic as it shows the exchange of the dreams and the care of hope in the community. This show of generosity is reflected in the active encouragement that Miss Whitlaw gives the dream of flight of Windrider. She does not only contribute to the building of the aeroplane by giving useful assistance like helping Moon Shadow write letters to the Wright Brothers but also emotionally advising Windrider not to give up in his endeavor. The act of Blackdog robbing the father and son and causing them financial ruin is a situation when Miss Whitlaw proved that the collective solidarity can help. As shown by the Company's financial backing and their practical assistance in elevating the *Dragonwings* to the peak, collective activity is crucial to achieve individual objectives. Joined by Moon Shadow and Robin, Windrider soars into the skies, turning flight into a team victory that represents the unity that has driven them so far. Moon Shadow learned a great deal about himself and the world around him, including the truth about Golden Mountain, at this moment of triumph. Just as he confessed, "I had found my mountain of gold, after all, and it had not been nuggets but people who had made it up: people like the Company and the Whitlaws" (*Dragonwings*, 268). In *Dragonwings*, the community of spirit is not just a backdrop but a driving force that enables the characters to overcome adversity and realize their dreams.

Dragonwings' commitment to community is best shown by Miss Whitlaw's multicultural relationship with the Windrider family. As an example of how religious communities may combat bigotry and foster kindness, their perseverance in the midst of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake exemplifies mutual regard and optimism. Participation of this kind reflects two tenets of community psychology: the value of collective wisdom and the power of the group to forge unity and resilience across cultural boundaries.

Additionally, there was a dearth of spiritual guidance. Interactions between the Whitlaws and the Chinese immigrants were impacted by power relations and cultural divides, despite periods of intimacy and collaboration. Despite Windrider and Moon Shadow being welcomed into the Whitlaw family home, the pervasive bigotry and prejudice stemming from the exclusionary laws persisted. In conclusion, the group's growth rather than its contraction exemplified the ways in which spiritual communities may bring people together despite their inherent animosity toward one another.

The difficulty of the task of adaptation for immigrants is highlighted by these restrictions. Different cultures' approaches to spiritual relationships and boundary-setting influence how people feel welcomed. Spiritual relationships facilitate mutual aid and cultural understanding.

4. Conclusion

In the midst of social and spiritual upheaval, *Dragonwings* depicts the early years of Chinese immigration to the US as a moment of tremendous communal requirement for survival. In the face of systematic exclusion, Chinese immigrants preserved their identity, cultural continuity, and resilience through spiritual collectives, enclaves based on geography, and networks based on kinship. We witness the transformation of weakness into strength and the possibility of redemption as a result of strong psychosocial resources and social structure in this story.

Emotional steadiness, resilience, and collective effectiveness were all enhanced by the practical and psychological tools provided by strong belief systems within the family, nation, and community. These findings, which are based on Tönnies' idea of community and supplemented by ideas from contemporary psychology, imply that diaspora members' efforts to establish communities are not one-time fixes for problems of exclusion but rather a continuous process that improves their identities and overall well-being.

This analysis holds great historical and contemporary importance for immigrant communities. Migrants continue to confront bigotry, cultural displacement, and marginalization, making the lessons of *Dragonwings* applicable even in today's more globalized societies. Strong family relationships, the capacity to sustain ethnic communities, and the creation of cross-cultural solidarity are survival mechanisms that have endured. Creating resilient communities is of paramount importance. Immigrants' well-being, as well as variety, intercultural understanding, and a shared sense of civic belonging in today's culturally diverse nations, depend on it.

Cultural resilience and the community framework impact the social integration and well-being of immigrants in the modern era. By situating these findings within the framework of previous research on migration and integration, this study will contribute to closing this knowledge gap.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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