

Assimilation as the Impact of Diaspora Reflected in Mrs. Parker's Family in *Karate Kid* Film

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Abstract

Concerning the major issue as to how the diasporan group faces the assimilation, diaspora brings to mind several assumptions; it can be positive and negative of adapting one's identity. Diaspora is affected by some aspects of life such as culture, language, people, and place. The immigrants who moved or scattered from their home countries depend on how they can adapt to the new cultures, languages to new communities in the host countries that are different from theirs. This study aims to find out how the impact of diaspora perceived by analyzing the main characters during their process of diaspora. The approach of this study is descriptive qualitative research through the process of gathering the data qualitatively and reporting them descriptively. This study shows how the issue of diaspora relates to assimilation as the impact of diaspora as reflected in Karate Kid film. The result of this study showed that the diasporan group integrates and it becomes a new type of human being as an immigrant in the new land. It represents assimilation in adoption values that exist in the host country.

Keywords: *Diaspora, immigration, assimilation, home country, host country*

INTRODUCTION

In this contemporary era, many people across the world intend something that they have not gained yet. "The factors leading to such a massive movement, inequalities within and among regions, the continuous expansion of capital, occupational mobility directly related to the people's desire for a better life" (Serban, 2013 : p. 96). It shows that a massive movement has been a common issue for a group of people who wishes a better life that moves from one place to one or more places. This movement can be called immigration.

The concept of diaspora has been widely known and studied to view the aftermath of international migration and the shifting of the state border populations. Moreover, the newer notions of diaspora in this category emphasize the cultural hybridity that illustrates the way these groups can be blended into the new society without totally erasing their origin culture. In an attempt to contribute a general-purpose, Steven

Vertovec (1997) argues that “the concept of diaspora refers at the same time to a social form created by the scattering, displacement of a population, a form of social identification, and a mode of cultural expression” (p. 36).

Hence, it is interesting to discuss the diasporic experiences as the process of diaspora itself. As the diasporans (people who move to a new place), it cannot be ignored for the diasporans to get confusing experience in adapting their new life. Mishra (1996) argues that “Diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its way” (p. 26). It can be defined that the uneasy about the feeling which used to experience to the emigrants because of the traumatic event that happened in their origin country, continued with the fact that the new place which they expect to be such a new community, does not give them a better situation. However, they should intercede to the memories of the homeland and tries to be mixed in a new community to exist as Clifford (1994) underlined:

Based on the above statement, there is a memory of the homeland when a group of people is displaced from their home country (ancestor home) to the host country (new land) which makes them may get some trauma or treatment being there. Also, talking about diaspora does not only relate to their experiences as the process that they will get as newcomers in the host country but also diaspora changes the condition and may affect to ethnic identity and culture of the people in the host land if a group of people does not maintain their identity and culture which that is possible to happen assimilation as the impact. “As with any exile, changes in conditions at home will affect subsequent relationships with the diasporan group. The distinction is made between forced and voluntary exile because the nature of the separation may affect the degree to which ethnic identity and culture are maintained or surrendered in favor of assimilation” (Butler, 2001 : p. 201). Based on the quote, it shows that when a group of people who dispersed or exiled from homeland to host land they will change some things and get assimilation as the impact of diaspora itself when they do not maintain their identity and culture in living there as a minority and yet they have to accepted and face that process.

Hence, talking about the impact of diaspora which is assimilation, Bardis (1979) argues that “assimilation was the social absorption of an ethnic, racial, or cultural group, or of an immigrant, into an adopted society, which produced a new, common, and fairly homogeneous culture” (p.152). This quote shows that when a group of people lives in new surroundings they will adopt and applied every single culture that is different from their culture that they found in the new home. Hence, in every single country in this world, there are so many cultures between one country and another that have their characteristics and differences symbolizing their attitudes, habits, etiquettes, and also something sacred. “Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its shape, its purposes, its meanings” (William, 1958 : p. 3). Based on the explanation above that culture involves an active personal quest and it has a meaning which is represented their characteristic. Related to the statement that there are so many ways to rise, introduce, convey a message and respect the culture itself with something entertaining to make the people of the audience easily get more comprehension about the different cultures and respect the cultures that exist in this world. One of the best ways to introduce kinds of culture in this world is through film.

Furthermore, a lot of things that the audience can get by the film itself such as message, values, feedback, interpretation and so on which cannot deny that watching the film can make the audience easily understand and get the point of the story directly. On the other hand, a film has a purpose to entertain and teach the audience based on the genre of the story itself such as drama, comedy, drama-comedy, tragic, war, and one of the best films that raise the different culture and especially reflects the issue of a diaspora is *Karate Kid* film.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Diaspora

A group of people or an immigrant that goes through the process of leaving homeland possibly succeeds to adjust to the new land but always longs for a homeland. “The factors leading to such a massive movement, inequalities within and among regions, the continuous expansion of capital, occupational mobility directly related to the people’s desire for a better life” (Serban, 2013: p. 96). It shows that a massive movement has been a common issue for a group of people who wants a better life that moves from one place to one or more places. To find one’s own identity in the host country is quite difficult for immigrants. They have to pass the problem that might be possible to face in the way of adapting the new culture which makes them becomes new types of human beings when they live outside of the homeland. It is inevitably linked to a new kind of genre has formed that commonly discusses explores immigrant term it is called “Diaspora”.

Diaspora is an encompassing term that denotes people who are displaced from their native place through migration, immigration, or exile. Diaspora as a movement can be explicated as an annex from a discrete geographic locale that is inevitably linked to the homeland of the diasporic subjects. The crossing of the border as a geopolitical experience and reality encompasses a dispersed population that intersects diasporic cultures. Diaspora implies a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries (Briezel and Mannur, 2003: p.1).

Diaspora is inevitably linked to movement by a group of people who leaves or displaced or even exile to cross borders from the homeland to the host land. The concept of diaspora has been widely known and studied to view the aftermath of international migration and the shifting of the state border populations. Moreover, the newer notions of diaspora in this category emphasize the cultural hybridity that illustrates the way these groups can be blended into the new society without totally erasing their origin culture. In an attempt to contribute a general-purpose, Steven Vertovec (1997) argues that “the concept of diaspora refers at the same time to a social form created by the scattering, displacement of a population, a form of social identification, and a mode of cultural expression” (p.36).

B. Assimilation

Assimilation theories try to describe the integration of humans into the new host country, the spotlights within social science were directed towards explaining how and why different groups created their communities that they hold on to even when residing in the new host-country (Anteby & Berthomière, 2005 : p. 264). When a group of people or it is called diasporan Group who moved from ancestral home to the host land they will get some experiences as the process of diaspora itself and it possibly happens assimilation to them if the diasporan group does not maintain identity and culture as a minority in the host country. "Voluntary exile, while also involving the intolerable relationship between the diasporizing group and the homeland, is the choice of the exiting group. "As with any exile, changes in conditions at home will affect subsequent relationships with the diasporan group. The distinction is made between forced and voluntary exile because the nature of the separation may affect the degree to which ethnic identity and culture are maintained or surrendered in favor of assimilation" (Butler, 2001).

Furthermore, according to Barna (2010) "assimilation is a particular process of socialization and individualization, a type of identification when the individual does not interiorize (build into his personality) simply an attitude, a value, a behavioral culture, but also the emotional, intellectual, volitional, cultural, political. values of another nation". It simply said that "assimilation was the social absorption of an ethnic, racial, or cultural group, or of an immigrant, into an adopted society, which produced a new, common, and fairly homogeneous culture" (Bardis, 1979: p. 152). "Assimilation as a state and consequence takes place in the case when members of a foreign or minority culture take over the language, customs, and values of the host culture. In this context, acculturation means cultural assimilation and defines the opportunities gained by the assimilated person as a consequence of the assimilation as social (structural) integration" (Barna, 2010: p. 66).

Barna (2010) states that assimilation also "integrates, it contains all the social and cultural changes characterized by accommodation, adaptation to and acceptance of the dominant culture" (p. 66). "The people who get assimilation it does not mean that they have intended to take over another culture, but simply realized that in certain social situations taking over that other culture gives access to new courses in society" (Barna, p. 76). "Assimilation just as the lifeworld is an intersubjective issue; the process is triggered in both cases by environmental changes" (Barna, p. 69).

Moreover, Park (1928) stated that "contact between people of various cultures leads to adaptation through competition and conflict, and results in assimilation. Assimilation means losing the former ethnic and cultural identity and thus fully integrating into the host society. This approach states that assimilation supposes also called a process of acculturation in the course of which the immigrants change the culture, i.e., they integrate into the host culture, and that is the price of adaptation" (p.71). Park also viewed "assimilation as a linear process and considered it an inevitable consequence of the immigration of groups of various ethnic background although in different cases it would happen in different rhythms and with different difficulty" (p. 72).

It is undeniably true that a minority group is possible to get assimilation. Simply said, the diasporan group becomes a medium which favour assimilation if they are do not maintain culture and identity by the surrounding in the host country that makes them forced to adopt every single cultural value in the host country (Butler, 2001). In another word, assimilation may affect their identity and culture as a result of the impact of Diaspora.

METHODS

Descriptive qualitative research is the methodology used in this study. “By the term of exploration, qualitative research openly preserves identifying issues, assessing new implementation, and looking at the real-life context or sensitive topic to avoid causing distress” (Hancock et al, 2009 : p. 7). Qualitative research aims to obtain a deeper or broader understanding of something that happens in social life. It emphasizes in exploring people’s experience and their views toward certain objects. This research method describes the characteristics of diaspora and assimilation using the script of the Karate kid film by analyzing and interpreting the data research.

Five types used in this study in collecting data technique are: 1) Watching the film, 2) Reading the film scripts, 3) Identifying the data, 4) Classifying the data, 5) Reducing the data, 6) Reporting the data. The first step was watching the film, in this case is “*Karate Kid*”. During watching the film, the researcher had to get some issues to be exposed to the study. Moreover, watching the film repeatedly gave a better understanding of the overall content of the film itself. Reading the script was the next step to get the data. Basically, it is a crucial step to deal with. By the act of reading the script, the researcher got more detailed information on the topic. After watching the film many times, the next step was identifying the data. Here, the researcher identified and selected any related data toward the issues that wanted to be revealed in the study. Identifying the data was also done while the researcher was watching the film to ensure collection data embeds the issues in the study. Classifying the data concerned with data contribution in a column table based on problem formulation has made as a way to give the evidence for each problem formulation that is derived from the process of identifying the data. Reducing the data was done to make sure that the data have strong power toward the issues in the study. Reporting the data was the last process of analyzing the data. The researcher provided the final result of data that had to be written academically. In reporting the data clearly, this study used a descriptive technique to analyze the data. This technique was stated by descriptions, statements, and quotations or described through an explanation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Assimilation happens to the main characters in *Karate Kid* film

When a group of people dispersed or exiled from homeland to host land they will change some things and get assimilation as the impact of diaspora itself when they do not maintain their identity and culture in living there as a minority and exactly they have to accepted and face that process" (Butler, 2001). In China, there is a value that exists in the society that is Confucianism. Confucianism is a value that is generally accepted within Chinese society which means they need to adapt the value to being accepted in that circle. Chong (2007) stated, "there are six essentials qualities in Confucianism; *Xi, Zhi, Li, Yi, Wen, Ren*". It is dealing with the capacity of virtuous habit, the natural substance of a person, a social order, morality, and the loftiest of morals that are contained in Confucianism.

Karate Kid film itself depicts culture adaptation that is represented by a black American family who moves from Detroit, America to Beijing, China. The story is telling about a family is caught up between two different culture (American Culture) as the original culture and (Chinese Culture) as an adapted host culture. As the story goes, this family (Mrs. Parker and her son, Dre) is trying to adapt to Chinese culture such as lifestyles, cultures, and language as the impact of the diaspora based on a value that exists in Chinese society, which is Confucianism. The further explanation about assimilation as the impact of diaspora will be presented in the next explanation.

1. Capacity of Virtues Habit (*Xi*)

The first essential quality of Confucianism is *Xi*. "*Xi* relates to one's capacity to "instill in oneself certain virtuous habits" and "the original good, evil or nothing" in human beings. The concept of *Xi* provides a starting point for learning and assimilating ethics, compassion, truth, and morality. Confucius posits that people must learn to act ethically because it is not an original part of their nature. *Xi* is the capacity for learning virtue, but every person proceeds at their own step through practice" (Chong 2007).

Dre : "So, what are we learning today?"

Mr. Han: "Chi. Internal energy. The essence of life. It moves inside of us, flows through our bodies. Give us power from within".

Dre : "I get it" (00:52:26-00:52:46)

The dialogue is conveyed by Dre and Mr. Han, the maintenance man. In that scene, Dre who learns Kung Fu on the next day with Mr. Han gives a question to Mr. Han that is what they will learn for that day because he seemed to be impressed. The fact is, Dre already realized that he needs to learn more about Kung Fu itself and involved it in positive assumptions. It is based on his experience at the first time he wants to learn about Kung fu with Mr. Han. In that time, Mr. Han answered Dre's question by saying "*Chi, Internal energy. The essence of life*" as the result, according to Dre, all of the

people who learned Kung fu must learn it as well so he said to Mr. Han “*I get it*” because he realized about his capacity to learn it. To increase his Kung fu skills, Dre has to accept and adapting what Mr. Han will teach him about Chi the values of Kung Fu itself into his life because Dre realizes that he must learn to act ethically. This shows the avidity of attitude to adopt new things as one's own is an important factor responsible for the assimilation of the immigrant in the host land toward Dre.

2. Natural Substance of a Person (*Zhi*)

Chong (2007) stated that “*Zhi* is the natural substance of which a person is made, but it is not an innate human quality. The individual acquires *Zhi* through education. The meaning of *Zhi* is “native substance” or “basic stuff” relating to building character traits through learning and practice”. As social creatures that interact with other people, sometimes people do anything for learning and practice. People who learning virtue in a society when they are being surrounded by the people itself, it is the example of people acquire through education. Shortly, it related to human sense. Those who learn and practice through adapting value within society when they are being in a host land. It is also concerned with a natural substance of which a person is made. This point is revealed in *the Karate Kid* film when Mrs. Parker tries to apply what they have learned before they arrive in China.

Mrs. Parker: “Dre, look. We're already in lesson 10.
How are you? Remember what that one is?”
Dre : “No”.
Mrs. Parker: “Dre, you're killing me” (00:02:28-00:02:38)

The dialogue presents the representative of black American people, Mrs. Parker as fulfilling the concept of a natural substance of a person. In the first line, Mrs. Parker seemed quite impressed at her son, how her son can greet in the Chinese language. The dialogue shows what exactly her intention, adapting the language. Mrs. Parker who wants Dre adapting the language can be categorized as assimilated people. Instead, Dre answered his mother's request by saying "No". On the other side, other words come from Mrs. Parker. She gets a bit mad at her son because he refused her demand. Briefly, the point of this situation is that Mrs. Parker has already shown the value of adaptation in Confucianism and represents the value of the natural substance of a person that relates to building character through learning and practice, asked her son who needs to practice the language. She realized that to interact within-host society they need to learn and practice the language itself to become one with society. This kind of action will build a better understanding of her son to build his character traits because of how important to adapt the host language among the groups as a minority in society.

3. Social Order (*Li*)

As explained by Chong (2007), “for those students who are truly learning through this manner of education; *Zhi* is utilized for the expression of *Li*. However, Confucius acknowledges that learned behaviors are easily mimicked, and consequently, only outer behaviors are affected without the development of inner values. *Li* has another meaning of certain rituals within the hierarchical social order. In a society where everyone understands their responsibilities to the community, *Li* is an essential attribute for motivating individuals to behave, desire, feel, and act in required ways”. As part of Confucianism’s concept, social order contains the values of responsibility in society. Responsible in this case means being realized towards other people in a society where everyone understands their responsibilities to the community for motivating individuals to behave, desire, feel and act in required ways. The point of this value is how the people understand the situation to adapt it, as described in the scene :

Dre : “Are you okay?”
Mey Ying: “My audition is tomorrow at 6:00”.
Dre : “But isn’t that what you’ve been practicing for?”
Mey Ying: “Yes, of course”.
Dre : “Don’t worry. You got it”.
Mey Ying: “What if they don’t pick me?”
Dre : “Mei Ying, wait! Okay, first of all, I’m gonna be there with you.
And B, all you have to do is what your teacher says. Play the
pauses. It’s easy, watch. See?”
(01:01:20-01:01:44)

The dialogue happens when Dre and his friend, Mey Ying, are being in the schoolyard. Mey Ying seemed to be confused about her violin audition and Dre asked her what happen to her. She was afraid if she is not picking on the audition. This scene shows that Dre understands his responsibility as a good friend toward this situation for Mey Ying. He tries to motivating Mey Ying to the right action toward this situation that she does not have to worry about it. Dre tries to convince Mey Ying to not worry about the audition. Dre speaks to Mey Ying dealing with the situation at the moment. Dre assumes that this is the best way to motivate Mey Ying from the situation that he faces now to do good action to her. Briefly, by saying “*Don’t worry. You got it. And B, all you have to do is what your teacher says and it’s easy*” *watch. See?*” to Mey Ying, Dre shows the flexibility of attitude to motivate someone which is a social order in Confucianism. To adapt the value as one’s own is an important factor responsible for the assimilation of the immigrant in the host land.

4. Morality (*Yi*)

The next point of essential qualities in Confucianism is *Yi*. “*Yi* translates as “morality”, but there are other meanings such as: “right action, duty, and righteousness”. *Yi* is an essential concept in Confucianism that is defined as the standard by which all

acts are judges. The essence of *Yi* has influenced by the individual's behavior by expressing ethics, values, compassion, goodness, and honesty" (Chong 2007). It is all about right action, duty, and righteousness. In another word, morality proposes people's open minded-view that all acts are judges. The essence of *Yi* has influenced by the individual's behavior by expressing ethics, values, compassion, goodness, and honesty.

Mey Ying: "I have to practice"
Dre : " Wait. Wu Gi Bi Fan"
Mey Ying: What?
Dre : I'm starting to think you don't speak Chinese. Wu Gi Bi Fan.
Too much-a good stuff is bad stuff?
Mey Ying: "Oh...Wu Chi Pi Fan" (01:01:47-01:01:59)

The dialogue happens when Dre is in the schoolyard and Mey Ying is going to practice for violin. Mey Ying is in a rush about her violin practice and she was thinking she needs to practice more and more to picking her on the audition. This scene shows that Dre's open minded-view toward the situation for Mey Ying. He tries to do the right action dealing with the situation at the moment toward Mey Ying that she does not have to worry about it. Dre tries to convince Mey Ying not to worry about the audition. Dre speaks to Mey Ying dealing with the situation at the moment. Dre assumes that this is the best way to express his compassion, goodness, and also the important one is a value which contained in morality that he learned from Mr. Han that is *Wu Chi Pi Fan* (too much of something is not good). He speaks it to Mey Ying from the situation that he faces now to do his duty as a good friend. Briefly, Dre shows the flexibility of a good attitude that refers to express ethic and value contained in the morality of Confucianism in Chinese culture as a host culture. It means that Dre is the symbol of people who assimilates the essential qualities of Confucianism that is morality in Chinese culture.

5. Loftiest of moral (*Ren*)

Ren is defined "the loftiest ideal of moral excellence, the most difficult of attainment, and the highest development of the individual's distinctive nature. Additionally, *Ren* is associated with benevolence, love, humaneness, and the summation of all the other virtues" (Chong 2007). The ideas of the loftiest of morals are closely related to morality. Loftiest essentially belongs to the way people achieve the highest level of moral excellence to the development of an individual's distinctive nature. It can be the form of benevolence, love, and humaneness. In this case, admitting someone's mistake who feels guilty is the way of loftiest moral as well.

Dre: "Sir.....my name is Dre Parker.
My actions have brought.....dishonor to your family.
Your daughter has been a great friend to me.
And from her, I have learned.....that a true friend.....is a person who makes your life better. But, if you give me a second chance.....I

promise that I will be.....the best friend your daughter has ever had.
That's it"
(01:17:50-01:18:26)

This scene describes when Dre feels guilty toward Mei Ying and her father. Then he asked Mr. Han to help him make a letter in the Chinese language. This letter is actually in the Chinese language but it was translated into English. In this case, Dre can just ignore this problem and tries to forget everything that was happened between him, Mey Ying, and also Mey Ying's family. With the highest benevolence, love, and humaneness, this scene shows Dre's great moral. Here, Dre tries to admit his bad mistake toward a Chinese girl named Mey Ying to achieve the highest level of moral excellence to the development of an individual's distinctive nature. He is equally comfortable in this situation. This shows his good intention through the value. Simply said, Dre is the symbol of people that represents the loftiest moral because of his attitude to admit his bad mistake and his avidity to learn something to achieve the highest level of moral excellence that is loftiest of moral within society as the minority in the host land.

CONCLUSION

Related to Diaspora in this study, the existence of characteristics of Diaspora gives an impact on the issue of assimilation. Once they live in the new land they will get new values from the society that affects their identity. In the case of *Karate Kid* film, the characters have adopted some values that exist in Beijing, China.

It is revealed at the beginning of the story when they were on the plane. Mrs. Parker asks Dre to greet in the Chinese language. It is kind of like learning something new as a newcomer in the new land. On the other hand, although it is hard for Dre to accept reality, he slowly accepts it by learning Kung Fu. Similarly, day by day Dre realizes that Kung fu is not about fighting but making peace. He also does his responsibility as a Mey Ying's friend. He tries to motivating Mey Ying when she gets a problem. It is kind of like a social order of Chinese people when they understand their responsibility to society. He also shows his morality as a Chinese society such as do the right action to Mey Ying by saying "*Wu Chi pi Fan*" which means too much something is not good. Furthermore, to complete the highest morality because that is the characteristic of Chinese people, Dre admits his mistakes to Mey Ying's father that he is wrong. That is one of the ways how Chinese people complete their morality as a good human being. In this case, to keep existing as a minority, the immigrant needs adoption. Considering with better social condition means something bad appears in the previous impression. In other words, assimilation appears. It drags someone to integrates and possibly to become a new type of human being as an immigrant in the new land. As a result, the characters in *Karate Kid* film represent assimilation in adoption values that exist in Chinese society.

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