

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains several basic general ideas of the research, including the research background, research questions, research objectives, and research significance.

1.1 Research Background

In the movie *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, the main character is an Asia immigrant living in the United States. She lives between two cultures. The movie shows that diaspora means more than just moving from one country to another. It is about daily life with cultural difference. The main character follows Asian values from her family. These include responsibility, respect for parents, and family duties. At the same time, she adjusts to American ways. These include independence, work, and personal success. The character's family fights, work problems, and personal issues show this experience. She does not fully return to her original culture. She also does not feel fully accepted in American culture how she sees herself. The movie shows diaspora is more than about ethnicity. It is a real experience that affects how she thinks and acts every day.

The movie *Everything Everywhere All at Once* mixes science fiction with family drama and comedy to tell the story of Evelyn Wang, an Asian immigrant living in the United States. Evelyn's life is shown as busy and stressful. She lives with her husband and daughter, runs a small laundromat, and struggles with financial and family problems. Her daily routine is filled with pressure, exhaustion, and tension, both within her family and in her interactions with the outside world.

An important element of the movie is the multiverse, which allows Evelyn to encounter different versions of herself in alternate realities. These parallel lives represent choices she did not take and show different possibilities of identity. Although the movie uses imaginative science fiction ideas, it remains focused on ordinary human experiences, such as parents-child relationships, marital conflict, disappointment, and feelings of inadequacy. Overall, the movie represents the

immigrant experience in a creative but realistic way, showing diaspora as not only physical movement to another country, but also an ongoing process of searching for meaning and identity while living in a different cultural environment.

Furthermore, the multiverse concept in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* can be seen as a way to show the main character's inner struggles in a deeper and more meaningful way. The different version of Evelyn that appear in various realities are not only used to make the story more interesting, but also represent the many possible lives she could have lived. Each version reflect different choices, suggesting that a person's life is closely shaped by the decisions they make. From this perspective, identity is not something fixed, but something that keeps developing over time through personal experiences.

When Evelyn encounters these different version of herself, she is naturally led to compare her current life with others lives that seem better or more successful. In some realities, she is shown as more confident, more accomplished, or living a more stable life. These comparisons slowly create feeling of doubt and dissatisfaction within herself. She begins to question whether the choice she made in the past were the right ones. This shows how imagining different life paths can influence how a person sees and judges their own life, especially when those imagined paths appear more ideal.

Even though the movie explores many complex and imaginative possibilities, it still keeps its main focus on Evelyn's everyday life. Her relationship with her husband and daughter remains at the center of the story and plays an important role in shaping her emotional journey. The family conflict such misunderstandings, differences in perspectives, and daily pressures, are presented in a simple but realistic way. This makes the story feel close to real life and easy to relate to. It also shows that, despite all the different possibilities presented, real life relationships and experiences remain the most meaningful.

In addition, the movie suggests that having too many choices does not always make things clearer. Instead, it can make a person feel confused and unsure. Evelyn is faced with many different version of herself, but she cannot easily decide which life is the best or most meaningful. This situation reflect how people can feel

overwhelmed when they have too many options to choose from. Rather than feeling free, they may feel pressured, because every choice comes with consequences that are not always as expected.

Evelyn's journey brings her to a better understanding of her own life. Instead of focusing on the lives she did not live, she starts to see the value in the life she already has. She realizes that constantly comparing herself to other possibilities only makes her feel less satisfied. Because of this, accepting herself and her current situation becomes very important. The movie *Everything Everywhere All at Once* shows that the meaning of life is not found in the choices we did not take, but in how we understand, accept, and live the life we have now. Evelyn's shift in perspective is not merely a personal experience, but also represents a broader process of identity formation.

To understand this transformation more deeply, it is necessary to explore how identity is constructed within spaces where different cultures intersect and interact. In this regard, Evelyn's experience as an individual living between two cultures demonstrates that identity is not fixed, but is continuously shaped through social and cultural interaction.

In this context, Homi K. Bhabha (1994) introduces the concept of the third space, which refers to a hybrid cultural space where the culture of origin and the host culture intersect, interact, and generate new forms of identity. The third space challenges binary understandings of culture by emphasizing that identity is formed within an "in-between" position rather than through complete assimilation or cultural preservation. Since the late twentieth century, globalization has further intensified cross-border mobility and strengthened the transnational character of Asian diasporic communities. Consequently, these communities should not be viewed merely as passive migrants, but as active cultural agents who continuously negotiate their identities and contribute to multicultural societies. Contemporary diaspora studies also emphasize that Asian American experiences are diverse and layered, shaped by ethnic background, migration history, and sustained connections with the homeland, making diasporic identity a fluid and evolving process (Bhabha, 1994; Shah, 2024).

Bhabha's concept of the third space provides an essential theoretical framework for understanding how diasporic identities are produced through cultural negotiation. Rather than viewing identity as tied to a single cultural origin, Bhabha argues that identity develops within an interstitial space where different cultures meet and interact (Bhabha, 1994). This space enables the emergence of new meanings and hybrid identities that often challenge the dominance of the host culture. In the Asian American context, the third space represents a transitional position between inherited family traditions such as ancestral rituals, collectivist values, and filial responsibility and Western social expectations that emphasize individual achievement, academic competition, and professional success. Within this space, diasporic individuals gradually form identities that are neither fully rooted in their original culture nor completely assimilated into the host society. This process often involves inner tension, uncertainty, and continuous adaptation in everyday life.

Globalization has further expanded the third space by enabling ongoing transnational connections across national borders. Diasporic communities are increasingly able to maintain cultural ties with their countries of origin while at the same time participating in new social environments. As a result, diasporic identity becomes increasingly flexible and subject to change across time and generations. This view is supported by Gupta and Singh (2025), who note that second-generation diaspora members often manage feelings of cultural disconnection by balancing elements of their cultural heritage with influences from the host society. Therefore, diasporic identity can be understood as a long-term and evolving process shaped by continuous cultural negotiation rather than a final or stable outcome.

In the United States, Asian diaspora adaptation is not a linear process of assimilation. Based on Bhabha's concept of the third space, Asian American identity is formed through ongoing negotiation between Asian cultural traditions and dominant American values (Bhabha, 1994). This identity emerges as a hybrid form that combines cultural heritage with ideals of individual freedom and autonomy. Moreover, transnational practices allow migrants to maintain

connections with both their country of origin and the host society, shaping diaspora identity across national boundaries (Levitt & Schiller, 2004).

Empirical evidence also suggests that many Asian Americans perceive their identity as flexible and context-dependent, allowing cultural attachment to coexist with active participation in American social life (Pew Research Center, 2023). Accordingly, Asian diasporic identity should be understood as dynamic and continuously evolving, shaped by lived experiences across multiple cultural spaces rather than by complete assimilation into the dominant culture. This dynamic process of identity formation is particularly visible within the family, where cultural values are transmitted, negotiated, and sometimes contested across generations.

Bicultural tensions in Bhabha's concept of the third space are evident in Asian American diaspora families. First-generation immigrants often maintain traditional values, while second-generation individuals tend to adopt Western ideals of individual freedom and self-expression (Park & Chen, 2022). These differences frequently lead to intergenerational conflict, shaping Asian American identity as a continuous process of cultural negotiation.

The complexity of these diasporic experiences requires a representational medium capable of effectively portraying cultural tension, ambivalence, and conflict. In this regard, Movie emerges as a particularly powerful medium. Movie is an audiovisual form of mass communication that conveys meaning through moving images, dialogue, sound, and visual symbols organized within a narrative structure. According to Bordwell and Thompson (2013), movie functions not only as entertainment but also as a meaning-making practice that represents social realities and human experiences. Therefore, movie can be understood as a cultural text that reflects the values, ideologies, and social dynamics of the society in which it is produced.

Within cultural studies, movie representation plays a significant role in shaping how social groups are understood and interpreted. Hall (1997) argues that media does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs meaning and identity through representational practices. In the context of diaspora, movie provides an important space for articulating lived experiences that are often marginalized within

dominant narratives, such as feelings of displacement, identity conflict, and cultural pressure faced by migrant communities. Through visual imagery and narrative structures, movie is able to communicate these experiences in both emotional and symbolic ways.

The history of Asian American cinema demonstrates a significant transformation in the representation of diasporic identity. Early Hollywood productions frequently depicted Asian characters through negative stereotypes, including villainous figures, perpetual foreigners, or passive servants. However, over the past few decades, Asian American movie makers have increasingly challenged these portrayals by presenting more authentic and human-centered narratives. movies such as *Minari* (2020) and *Past Lives* (2013) depict the everyday lives of diasporic families and their struggles with cross-cultural identity. Nevertheless, *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) stands out as one of the most comprehensive representations of Asian American diasporic identity, as it vividly illustrates the process of identity negotiation through the conceptual lens of the third space.

Everything Everywhere All at Once presents the Asian American diasporic experience not only through narrative storytelling but also through a philosophical and reflective exploration of contemporary identity. The movie portrays diaspora as an unstable and ongoing condition rather than a fixed cultural state. Its multiverse framework functions as a visual metaphor for diasporic reality, in which individuals At the same time confront multiple identities, life choices, and cultural pressures. In this sense, identity is not presented as singular or final, but as a continuous process of negotiation between the culture of origin and the dominant culture of the host society (Bhabha, 1994).

Research on Asian American diaspora communities further highlights the challenges produced by cultural negotiation within immigrant families. Previous studies indicate that intergenerational tensions particularly those related to autonomy, education, and cultural values are common and may contribute to psychological stress among younger generations (Pew Research Center, 2023). These patterns are reflected in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, where

differences in the understanding of cultural identity intensify emotional distance between family members across generations. The movie's multiverse narrative can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of fragmented diasporic identity, with each universe illustrating different cultural and emotional possibilities. The integration of these multiple versions of the self reflects an effort to construct a more coherent hybrid identity within Bhabha's conceptual third space.

According to Aditya Sudhakaran (2023), in his thesis *Motherhood in the Multiverse: Melodrama and Asian American Identity in Everything, Everywhere, All at Once*, the movie portrays the complexity of Asian American identity through the figure of an immigrant mother who exists between two cultural worlds. Sudhakaran argues that the movie challenges the "model minority" stereotype by positioning an Asian woman as a central character with agency who must continuously negotiate her identity within a diasporic context. This representation highlights the tension between traditional cultural values and the demands of modern life in the United States (Sudhakaran, 2023).

Han (2020), in his article "*Diasporic Identity and Transnational Belonging among East Asian Immigrants*," explains that diasporic individuals often occupy ambiguous identity positions, as they do not fully experience a sense of belonging either to their culture of origin or to the host society. This concept is relevant for understanding how diasporic identity shapes individual self-perception, particularly when individuals are continuously situated between two cultural systems.

Furthermore, Park and Chen (2022), in their Research "*Intergenerational Identity Gaps in Asian American Immigrant Families*," identify significant identity gaps between first- and second-generation members of Asian American immigrant families. First-generation immigrants tend to preserve traditional cultural values to maintain cultural continuity, while second-generation individuals are more influenced by Western individualistic values that emphasize personal freedom and self-expression. These differing cultural orientations frequently result in intergenerational conflict and illustrate the ongoing negotiation of identity within diasporic families.

Wu (2021), through his article “*Cultural Hybridity and Identity Formation in Contemporary Asian American Narratives*,” argues that Asian American identity is shaped through processes of cultural hybridity that produce identities that are fluid, complex, and often fragmented. Within this framework, the multiverse motif in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* can be understood as a metaphor for hybrid identities that branch into multiple possible selves, demonstrating how diasporic experiences influence the ways individuals understand and define themselves.

Based on these theoretical perspectives and previous studies, it can be concluded that *Everything Everywhere All at Once* not only presents a visually imaginative multiverse narrative but also offers a profound reflection on the identity crisis experienced by Asian American immigrant women. The movie illustrates how diasporic identity is continuously negotiated amid cultural conflict, family expectations, and intergenerational change.

Therefore, this Research entitled “*Representation of Identity Crisis and Diaspora in the Mother Character (Evelyn Wang) in the Movie Everything Everywhere All at Once (2022)*” is significant because it focuses on the representation of diasporic experiences, identity crisis, and cultural negotiation faced by immigrant women. The analysis is expected to contribute to literary and movie studies, particularly in discussions of immigrant identity, diasporic family dynamics, and processes of self-formation within multicultural contexts.

Although *Everything Everywhere All at Once (2022)* has been widely studied from various perspectives, such as multiculturalism, family relationship, and the multiverse narrative, only limited studies specially discuss how identity crisis is represented through Homi K. Bhabha’s concepts of hybridity, The Third Space, and cultural negotiation. Most previous studies mainly focus on diaspora experiences or intergenerational conflict without explaining how these cultural processes contribute to the formation of identity crisis. Therefore, there is still a gap in understanding how Evelyn Wang’s identity is continuously negotiated as she lives between Chinese cultural traditions and American social values to address this gap, this study aims to analyze the representation of Evelyn Wang’s identity crisis through the perspective of Homi.K Bhabha’s theory.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background discussed above, the researcher concludes that there are two main questions that serve as the focus on this resarc, they are.

1. How does Evelyn's living between to cultural spaces illustrates her identity?
2. How does Evelyn's resistance towards solid demands as diaspora subject?

1.3 Research Objective

Based on the research questions above, the researcher is inttented:

1. To examine how Evelyn's life between two cultural spaces reflects her identity as a diasporic individual.
2. To analyze how Evelyn's resistance to cultural and familial expectations represents her struggle as a diaspora subject

1.4 Research Significance

This research is significant within the broader scope of cultural and literary studies, particularly in relation to discussions of diaspora, identity, and representation in contemporary movie. This Research serves as an important effort to examine how identity crisis and generational trauma are depicted through cinematic narrative, focusing on the Asian American diasporic experience presented in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022), and further this movie will be referred as *Everything Everywhere All Once* (2022) Through this focus, the Research explores not only how diasporic identity is portrayed within the movie's narrative, but also how cultural tension, family expectations, and personal struggle are negotiated within a multicultural context. This analysis provides insight into the ways movie reflects the interaction between individual experience and broader cultural dynamics.

In addition, this research is relevant to the Research of cultural objects, particularly movie as a medium of cultural representation. *Everything Everywhere All at Once* offers a complex portrayal of an Asian American family, emphasizing intergenerational conflict, emotional fragmentation, and the pressures of cultural

negotiation. The significance of this Research lies in its exploration of how diasporic experiences are reimagined through narrative and visual strategies, allowing personal and collective struggles to be communicated in meaningful ways. By examining these representations, the Research contributes to a deeper understanding of how movie can articulate the realities of diasporic life that are often marginalized or simplified in mainstream cultural discourse.

This research is in line with the mission of the Faculty of Adab and Humanities to develop knowledge grounded in cultural values with a global orientation. By addressing issues of identity, culture, and family within a transnational context, this Research is expected to contribute to the strengthening of cultural awareness amid ongoing international cultural exchange. Furthermore, it is intended to serve as an academic foundation for the development of contextual and critical humanities studies that remain attentive to cultural complexity while being rooted in reflective and socially relevant perspectives.

