

Asian-American Identity and Cultural Displacement in Everything Everywhere All at Once (2022)

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes *Everything Everywhere All at Once* from a postcolonial perspective, focusing on the formation of Asian-American identity through themes of diaspora, cultural displacement, and intergenerational conflict. Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and the "third space," the research demonstrates how the film portrays identity as a dynamic and ongoing process within a Western-dominated cultural framework. The characters of Evelyn and Joy serve as central figures in illustrating the tension between cultural heritage and assimilation, as well as the emotional complexities of navigating family expectations and personal autonomy. Using qualitative textual and visual analysis, this study examines narrative structure, dialogue, and cinematic elements to reveal how the film represents immigrant experiences in a nuanced and multidimensional way. Furthermore, the multiverse is interpreted as a symbolic representation of fragmented and fluid identities, where multiple realities reflect the instability and plurality of diasporic existence. The generational divide between Evelyn and Joy further intensifies these conflicts, highlighting differences in values, identity expression, and cultural adaptation within immigrant families. In addition, the film emphasizes how cultural hybridity functions not only as a site of conflict but also as a creative space for negotiating belonging and selfhood. Ultimately, the study concludes that the film successfully captures the complexities of diasporic subjectivity, emphasizing that identity is not fixed but continuously negotiated within intersecting cultural spaces.

Keywords: Hybridity; Asian-American Identity; Cultural Displacement; *Everything Everywhere All at Once*; Homi K. Bhabha

INTRODUCTION

The film *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022), directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, presents a unique narrative concerning the experiences of an Asian-American immigrant family navigating manifold challenges related to identity and culture in the United States (Huynh, 2017). Narratively, the film tells the story of Evelyn Wang, an Asian-American immigrant who owns a laundromat and is facing a tax audit and family conflict. Her ordinary life is suddenly disrupted when she must save the multiverse by contacting various versions of herself. This concept of the multiverse then becomes a central metaphor for exploring her complex pressures, choices, and identity (Kang & Kang, 2023).

Through the story of its protagonist, Evelyn Wang, the film addresses the theme of identity crisis experienced by first-generation immigrants who feel perpetually caught between the dualities of their culture of origin and American culture. The intergenerational conflict between Evelyn and her daughter, Joy, mirrors the frequent clash of values within diaspora families, where Asian tradition encounters the relative freedom of modern American life. It is clearly very different because in Asia not all countries normalize drugs, free sex, LGBT, and other prohibited things, but in America these things are no longer strange but have become their daily needs.

Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity provides an essential framework for understanding the formation of cultural identity in postcolonial contexts. Hybridity refers to the process through which new cultural identities emerge from the interaction and negotiation between different cultural traditions, rather than existing as fixed or pure forms (Rajeshbhai, 2026). Closely related to this concept is the idea of the "third space," which functions as an in-between space where cultural meanings are continuously produced, contested, and redefined (Hoek, 2026). Within this space, individuals can negotiate their identities beyond rigid cultural boundaries, allowing for the coexistence of multiple influences. In the context of Asian-American immigrant experiences, this theoretical perspective is particularly relevant, as individuals often navigate between their cultural heritage and the dominant Western culture. Therefore, this study employs the concept of hybridity to analyze how the characters in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* construct and negotiate their identities amid cultural displacement and intergenerational tensions (Bhabha, 1994).

Everything Everywhere All at Once (2022) is set in a United States that reflects a modern capitalist society, where state policies are often influenced by economic interests. One policy issue illustrating this dynamic is the legalization of recreational drugs in several U.S. states. This policy involves a significant fiscal component, as taxes from the legal drug industry serve as a crucial source of government revenue. However, it is important to note that drug legalization in the United States is driven not only by economic factors but also by considerations regarding civil rights, social justice, and the reform of a criminal justice system perceived as discriminatory against minority groups. As stated in Hammond (2021) research "Legalization/ decriminalization of marijuana was supported, but not in the case of other drugs, despite changes in apparent attitudes in other countries". This explains that even though many drugs are still illegal, there are growing efforts to legalize or decriminalize certain types of drugs, such as marijuana. At the state level, eight states and the District of Columbia have legalized recreational marijuana, while 29 states have legalized medical marijuana. American public opinion on marijuana legalization has also changed significantly, from only 12% in favor in 1969 to 61% according to a

2017 survey. However, support for the legalization of other drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine remains low.

In the United States, shifting cultural and legal norms have contributed to greater visibility and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and identities. This transformation reflects broader societal changes in how human sexuality is understood and regulated. Juneja (2025) notes that "the post-Kinsey era marked a significant shift in the legal perspective on human sexuality," suggesting that legal frameworks began to reconceptualize sexuality as a matter of individual rights rather than moral regulation. The introduction of the 'Model Penal Code' by the American Law Institute (ALI) in 1962 was based on 'scientific authority' rather than religious teachings. In this era, consent became the determining factor for the legality of sexual activities". The shifting legal and social landscape in the United States regarding sexuality and individual freedom is particularly relevant to understanding the world depicted in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022), as the film is set against the backdrop of contemporary American society where such values are deeply embedded. The legalization of casual sex and the recognition of LGBT relationships in the United States reflects a broader transformation in legal and social perspectives, driven by an emphasis on consent and individual autonomy. As Bose argues, following Alfred Kinsey's influential research and the emergence of the Model Penal Code by the American Law Institute in 1962, "consent became the determining factor for the legality of sexual activities" (Christian, 2025). This shift signifies that the state increasingly repositioned itself from regulating the moral dimensions of sexuality toward protecting individual rights a value system that forms part of the cultural context the film both reflects and interrogates. The main reason behind the legalization of casual sex and the recognition of LGBT relationships in the United States is a change in legal and social views based on an approach that emphasizes consent and individual freedom. On one of the pages, Bose highlights that after Kinsey's work and the emergence of the Model Penal Code by the American Law Institute in 1962 he said " consent became the determining factor for the legality of sexual activities".

This legal transformation from state regulation of morality toward the protection of individual consent and personal freedom is directly relevant to the film's narrative, as *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) features a same sex relationship as one of its central subplots. The film portrays the relationship between Joy Wang and her partner Becky as a significant source of intergenerational and cultural conflict, reflecting the tension between traditional moral values and contemporary American norms that legally recognize and protect such relationships. As Bose notes, this shift reflects the privatization of morality since the Kinsey era, when "sex acts were viewed in America and elsewhere as public moral issues" but gradually became private matters no longer

strictly regulated by the state. Understanding this legal and cultural context allows for a deeper reading of why the film frames Joy's relationship not merely as a personal choice, but as a site of ideological conflict between immigrant cultural values and the individual-rights framework embedded in American society.

The film *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) is a film that defies easy categorization. On the surface, it presents itself as a chaotic science-fiction adventure, but beneath its absurdist humor and dizzying multiverse sequences lies a deeply intimate story about a middle-aged Chinese-American woman named Evelyn Wang who feels trapped by her failing laundromat, her distant husband, her demanding father, and her estranged daughter. What makes the film remarkable is how it uses the multiverse not merely as a plot device, but as an emotional mirror: every alternate version of Evelyn's life represents a path not taken, a choice unmade, a self she never became. Rather than offering escapism, the film forces Evelyn and the audience to confront the weight of an ordinary life and find meaning within it. The blending of slapstick comedy, martial arts action, and raw familial grief is not accidental; it reflects the film's central argument that joy and pain, absurdity and tenderness, are inseparable parts of human experience.

Characters such as Evelyn, her daughter Joy, and her father capture various facets of the Asian-American immigrant experience. Their interactions are rife with cultural misunderstandings and generational conflicts that are both specific to the Asian-American community and universal in their emotional truth. The film explores how family history, cultural heritage, and societal expectations intersect in layered and often conflicting ways.

It is appropriate to begin the analysis with the film's most obvious theme, which is the cultural dynamics as they are presented in the narrative. Evelyn's complex issues are revealed in the opening segment of the movie "Everything," which is better replaced with "act." In the first five minutes of the movie, basic issues like domestic or familial conflicts (Evelyn and Waymond's argument over who should paint the ceiling and put the tablecloth on; Evelyn's muttering because she has to cook more because Becky unexpectedly arrives as a guest; these two become solid examples) are already laid out (Wahyudiputra et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the film profoundly illustrates the cultural displacement experienced by immigrants who feel a lack of full adaptation anywhere, neither in their birthplace nor their new country. The identity forged within the film is not merely black and white but a state of cultural hybridity, reflecting the complexity of blending old and new values. The utilisation of the multiverse concept serves as a key metaphor, representing the numerous versions of individual identity that must struggle to adjust

under various social pressures (Sciences, 2025). Moreover, the film asserts that the contemporary meaning of being "American" does not necessitate the abandonment of cultural roots but rather the acceptance of diversity as an integral component of the national identity (South et al., 2023). This is particularly significant because Evelyn's inability to fully belong neither to her Chinese heritage nor to her American present is precisely what drives her existential crisis throughout the film. The multiverse, in this sense, does not offer liberation but rather magnifies her fragmentation: every alternate self she encounters represents not a better life, but a different form of incompleteness. The film therefore suggests that cultural hybridity is not a resolved condition but an ongoing negotiation, one that demands emotional labor and self-acceptance rather than a singular, fixed identity. It is this unresolved tension that gives the film its emotional urgency and distinguishes it from a simple immigrant success narrative.

This study aims to answer the following research question how *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) does portray the struggle of an Asian American immigrant woman in navigating between her cultural origin and her adopted homeland, and what does this struggle reveal about the formation of identity in a diasporic context. Consequently, the film is not merely positioned as a science fiction narrative; rather, it serves as a profound reflection on the search for selfhood within an Asian American immigrant family experiencing cultural intersections and tensions. It highlights the complexity of identity formation in the modern era, particularly in the context of diasporic life shaped by multiple cultural influences. The film is not merely a science fiction narrative; it is a deeply human story about a mother who feels simultaneously too Chinese for America and too Americanized for her own family. By taking the film's characters, conflicts, and emotional tensions as the primary point of departure, this study examines how the experience of cultural in-betweenness shapes Evelyn Wang's sense of self and drives the film's central narrative movement.

Addressing this context, this study offers a distinctive contribution not merely through its theoretical framework, but through the perspective from which the analysis is conducted. Although previous studies on immigrant representation have integrated postcolonial theory with cinematic analysis, most of that work has been produced within Western academic contexts specifically by scholars based in the United States or Europe. In contrast, this study is conducted from the position of a researcher rooted in a non-Western postcolonial society, shaping a fundamentally different reading of the cultural tensions depicted in the films. Rather than observing the diaspora experience from a distance, this study engages with it from a shared postcolonial consciousness a position that recognizes the pressures of cultural negotiation, the weight of inherited traditions, and the complexities of navigating

dominant Western cultural frameworks. It does so not as an outsider, but as a subject inhabiting a similar "in-between" cultural space. This positionality enables the study to highlight visual strategies such as color, camera angles, and editing as active sites of meaning-making, while generating knowledge that reflects a non-Western interpretive standpoint that remains underrepresented in postcolonial film studies. This study offers a novel contribution by integrating post-colonial theory and the concept of hybridity with a systematic analysis of cinematic elements. While previous studies on immigrant representation tend to emphasize narrative and thematic aspects, this research foregrounds the role of visual strategies such as color, camera angles, and editing in constructing and expressing diasporic identity. By positioning visual aesthetics as an active site of meaning-making, this study extends postcolonial analysis into a multimodal framework that captures both narrative and visual dimensions. Ultimately, the study argues that engaging with contemporary developments does not require the abandonment of cultural heritage; instead, it enables individuals to reinterpret and sustain their cultural identity within an evolving sociocultural landscape.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, chosen for its interpretative nature that emphasizes meaning, context, and subjectivity rather than numerical data. The symbolic and emotional complexity of cinematic storylines, particularly in depicting cultural identity and displacement, can be investigated by the researcher using a qualitative technique. This study attempts to determine how the movie *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) portrays the real-life experiences of Asian-American immigrants by concentrating on conversation, visual imagery, and narrative structure. The approach makes it possible to closely examine both verbal and visual components in order to uncover socio cultural settings, emotional undertones, and latent meanings that are difficult to quantify (Parasian et al., 2025).

This study's analytical basis is the postcolonial analysis, which looks at how cultural identity is created, in applying the postcolonial approach, this study examines how the film constructs and challenges power relations between dominant Western culture and the Chinese diasporic identity embodied by the Wang family. The analysis focuses on identifying scenes, dialogues, and visual cues that depict unequal cultural hierarchies, assimilation pressures, and resistance against dominant norms. Through this lens, the film is treated as a cultural text in which immigrant characters negotiate their identities within a Western-centered social order. By tracing how Evelyn and Joy navigate issues of cultural displacement, generational conflict, and hybrid belonging, the postcolonial approach allows the researcher to uncover the subtle forms of

domination, marginalization, and symbolic resistance that shape their lived experience. This method therefore highlights how the multiverse narrative becomes a space where diasporic subjects reclaim agency, redefine identity, and challenge established cultural boundaries." disputed, and negotiated in the wake of colonial influence. *Everything Everywhere All at Once* serves as a postcolonial book in this setting, illustrating the ongoing struggle of immigrants to find a place in a world dominated by the West.

The study's primary data consist of selected scenes, dialogues, and visual compositions from *Everything Everywhere All at Once* that reveal tensions surrounding identity, generation, and adaptation (Hopkyns et al., 2021). These elements are examined through close textual reading and visual semiotic analysis to uncover the deeper meanings encoded in the film. Particular attention is given to visual aspects such as color, framing, and editing which symbolically reflect psychological fragmentation and the pursuit of self-integration (Kristianto & Wahyuni, 2022).

Wherein Evelyn's fragmented realities mirror the broader efforts of marginalized individuals to redefine belonging within a global yet exclusionary culture. This lens positions the film not only as a story of personal transformation but also as a critique of Western-dominated ideals of normality and achievement. When read alongside Bhabha's theory of hybridity, this framework situates the film within a discourse of cultural resistance and identity reconstruction. Throughout the research, a reflexive approach is maintained to acknowledge that interpretation is inherently shaped by the researcher's personal experiences, academic training, and cultural perspective. Such reflexivity allows the analysis to remain empathetic and grounded, avoiding external biases in interpreting the film's portrayal of lived realities. The analytical process is thus iterative, moving between empirical observation and theoretical reflection to construct a nuanced, culturally aware interpretation (Beddoe, 2024).

Ultimately, this methodological design aims to uncover how *Everything Everywhere All at Once* transforms the immigrant experience into a cinematic expression that resonates both personally and universally. Through its use of absurdity, humor, and emotional resonance, the film becomes a mirror of the complex negotiations that define diasporic identity. By analyzing it through the frameworks of hybridity, identity formation, and visual symbolism, this study seeks to reveal the deeper cultural insights embedded within its multiversal storytelling.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This film is innovative both in the storytelling techniques and the blending of genres (sci-fi, fantasy, family drama) to capture the complexity of the experience of Asian-

American immigrant families. It is an artistic achievement and culturally relevant film. It addresses the questions of identity, belonging, and intergenerational tensions. *Everything Everywhere All at Once* focuses on Evelyn Wang, a stressed Chinese-American laundromat owner facing a tax audit, a troubled marriage with her kind husband Waymond, a complex connection with her daughter Joy, and the unspoken disappointment of her conventional father Gong Gong. When a version of Waymond from another universe reaches out to her, Evelyn realizes she is the sole individual who can stop Jobu Tupaki a nihilistic, omnipotent entity that happens to be her own daughter Joy, shattered by the burden of countless realities her mother never fully understood. Amidst stunning multiverse scenes from a dazzling alternate existence as a film star with a version of Waymond she never selected, to a gentle, silent moment between two stones on a serene cliff the movie removes its dazzling turmoil to convey one essential truth: that opting for kindness and connection, even in a cosmos that presents limitless possibilities, is the most extraordinary act of all. It is, at its core, a heartfelt message from a daughter to her mom, representing mothers everywhere who struggled to express themselves. It has won numerous awards including the Academy Awards (Vania et al., 2024).

The film captures the immigrant experience not through broad strokes, but through the painfully specific details of Evelyn Wang's daily life the suffocating paperwork of an IRS audit she can barely navigate in her second language, the laundromat that represents both her sacrifice and her entrapment, and the silent tension at the dinner table where her father Gong Gong's old-world expectations collide with Joy's thoroughly American sense of self. The multiverse itself becomes a metaphor for the immigrant's perpetual haunting by the lives they left behind or never chose Evelyn glimpses a version of herself who stayed in Hong Kong, became a celebrated actress, and never married Waymond. Yet it is precisely through these alternate selves that she learns what was lost and what was quietly worth keeping. Even the film's most absurdist moments carry emotional weight: the "googly eyes" Waymond places on objects are his gentle, stubborn insistence on finding joy in a country that has never made survival easy for people like them.

Scholars and critics alike emphasize that *Everything Everywhere All at Once* goes far beyond mere entertainment, performing crucial cultural work through its nuanced and authentic portrayal of Asian American identity. Rather than relying on outdated stereotypes, the film explores the tensions and overlaps between cultural roots, familial pressures, and individual aspirations setting a key benchmark for how Asian American stories emerge in popular media. This makes it a prime candidate for scholarly investigations of cultural identity and the experience of displacement within diasporic groups (Raja et al., 2025). *Everything Everywhere All at Once* opens with

Evelyn Wang, a middle-aged Chinese-American woman buried under the weight of a failing laundromat, a looming IRS audit, an emotionally distant husband, and a daughter, Joy, whose open relationship with her girlfriend Becky she has yet to fully accept in front of her traditional father, Gong Gong. In one chaotic afternoon at the tax office, Evelyn is contacted by an alternate-universe Waymond who reveals that she of all her infinite selves across the multiverse – is the only one capable of stopping Jobu Tupaki, a destructive force who turns out to be Joy herself, shattered by the burden of experiencing every reality simultaneously. What follows is a visually dazzling, genre-defying journey through parallel lives: Evelyn as a kung fu master, a hibachi chef, an actress each version a road not taken, each haunted by the choices her immigration foreclosed. It is precisely this narrative architecture that scholars and critics have recognized as performing crucial cultural work. Rather than relying on outdated stereotypes, the film maps the interior landscape of Asian American identity its tensions between cultural roots, familial pressures, and individual aspirations with rare authenticity. As Raja (2025) argue, this positions *Everything Everywhere All at Once* as a prime candidate for scholarly investigations of cultural identity and the lived experience of displacement within diasporic communities.

Hailed as a remarkable achievement, the film paves a rich path for examining the layered authenticity of Asian American portrayals (Raja et al., 2025). In the following, I will elaborate on these three core themes: (1) Asian American identity, (2) cultural shift, and (3) cultural hybridity.

Identity negotiation between Joy and her parents

This film focuses on the Wang family, showcasing various facets of Asian-American identity and how generational differences shape distinct perspectives. What stood out most to me in **Everything Everywhere All at Once** is how the film refuses to reduce the Wang family to a single immigrant narrative – instead, it presents two realities coexisting side by side. Evelyn, as a first-generation immigrant, bears the weight of everything she has sacrificed to come to America: she left her life in Hong Kong behind, disappointed her father Gong Gong, and devoted decades of her life to a laundromat that feels less like a dream and more like a slow surrender. Her love is real, yet it is expressed through hard work, resilience, and hope the only emotional language she knows. Joy, on the other hand, was born and raised in America yet never truly felt like she belonged there. She navigates the space between her mother's Chinese world and her own identity as a contemporary queer American woman, never feeling fully accepted in either world. The film's central tragedy lies not in how different they are, but in the fact that both are equally lonely in ways the other cannot

immediately understand – until, finally, the multiverse forces Evelyn to truly see Joy for who she is.

Joy's identity as a queer woman adds depth to the story and makes the overall Asian-American experience on screen more complex. Joy's identity as a queer woman adds depth to the story and makes the Asian-American experience on screen far more complex. In this film, Joy not only struggles to bridge the gap between her mother's Chinese culture and her American life she also bears the added burden of being a queer woman in an immigrant family still bound by traditional values. This is clear when Evelyn awkwardly hides Joy's relationship with her partner, Becky, from Gong Gong while they're eating together a small moment that encapsulates a much greater pain that Joy must learn to live in silence, hiding part of herself in order to remain accepted by her own family. For Joy, being queer is not just about sexual orientation, but about an existence that is never fully acknowledged neither by her mother's culture nor by American society, which often overlooks Asian American women. It is this layered pressure that, in the film, is depicted as driving Joy toward her downfall as Jobu Tupaki, a figure who has seen everything across the multiverse and concluded that not a single world truly accepts her. Thus, Joy's despair is not merely an existential crisis, but a direct reflection of the real-life experiences of many queer immigrant children who feel trapped between two worlds that both demand they be someone different. Her strained relationship with her mother demonstrates how entrenched cultural norms create a deep gap between generations in terms of acceptance. The film humanizes these conflicts by showing how they affect real people. It demonstrates how many Asian-American families are constantly torn between their ancestral traditions and their own authenticity.



Figure 1. Joy's confusion over her identity made her almost lose her true self.
Source: Author's screenshot from the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

Problematic hybridity is a concept in postcolonial theory that highlights the complexities and tensions in mixed cultural identities, which often do not produce a smooth fusion but rather create uncertainty and identity conflicts (Umar et al., 2024). The identity conflict experienced by Joy, as seen in Figure 3, is a manifestation of what

can be called "problematic hybridity". In this context, the process of cultural mixing does not produce harmony, but rather creates an existential crisis. As an individual living at the intersection of Asian and American cultures, while also possessing a queer identity that is often unacknowledged by her cultural heritage, Joy is trapped in a painful middle ground. The scene in Figure 3 depicts an intense moment between Joy and her mother, Evelyn, in the laundry room. Joy appears stiff as she meets her grandfather; her halting Chinese language skills prompt a visible rejection of her cultural identity from her grandfather. Her vacant facial expression reflects deep disappointment, while Evelyn stands before her with a rigid posture and an expression of incomprehension. It is the pressure from this constant identity negotiation that pushes her into a state of "loss of self" and gives birth to the alter ego Jobu Tupaki a personification of the exhaustion born from having to bear too many conflicting cultural realities. It is the pressure from this constant identity negotiation that pushes Joy into a state of profound "loss of self." Each day, she is confronted with irreconcilable demands to be sufficiently Chinese in the eyes of Gong Gong, sufficiently American in her surrounding environment, and simultaneously to conceal her queer identity so as not to destabilize an already fragile family dynamic. There is not a single space in which Joy can exist fully as herself without having to suppress some fundamental part of her identity. This accumulated psychological exhaustion the relentless burden of navigating between worlds that each demand a different, diminished version of her ultimately strips her of the capacity to find meaning in any version of herself at all. It is from this breaking point that the alter ego Jobu Tupaki is born, not merely as a villainous figure, but as the cinematic embodiment of a soul pushed beyond the limits of what any person can bear. Within the film's multiverse mythology, Jobu Tupaki emerges after an alternate-universe Evelyn forces Joy to "verse jump" repeatedly and without restraint, compelling her to experience every possible reality simultaneously. Rather than granting her power, this infinite awareness destroys her because seeing every version of every world at once only confirms what Joy has always feared: that there is no universe, no culture, and no family structure in which she is wholly accepted. Jobu Tupaki is therefore not simply a personification of exhaustion, but a portrait of what happens when hybridity offers no resolution, only an endless, weightless void. Thus, through Joy, the film reveals the complex facet of hybridity: it can be a source of strength, but it can also become a heavy psychological burden when an individual feels they have no legitimate place in any culture.

Moreover, the multiverse concept dramatizes the fragmented self of Asian Americans who may feel pulled in multiple directions culturally, socially, and personally. Each

universe Evelyn visits reflects a different potential identity or life path, metaphorically capturing the fluidity and instability of immigrant identity.

The multiverse world depicted in this film shows many versions of characters and diverse cultures, as seen in the scene below:



Figure 2. In the multiverse, Evelyn meets Waymond with his best version.

Source: Author's screenshot from the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

At 52:12, during one of her verse jumps, Evelyn encounters an alternate version of her husband Waymond a version of him shaped by an entirely different set of choices and circumstances than the ones that defined their shared life in America. In this version, Waymond appears cleaner, neater, and more economically successful. The image depicts a sophisticated Asian male figure with rich visual significance. His appearance an elegant tuxedo, sunglasses, and pearl accessories demonstrates his successful assimilation into upper-class Western culture, while the Chinese language he uses in that moment strongly maintains his Asian identity. This fusion between formal American fashion and his continued use of Chinese language represents the concept of cultural hybridity. Waymond said: "这太荒唐了，我在广告牌上看到你的脸，想知道你是否还记得我" "It's ridiculous, I saw your face on a billboard, and I wondered if you still remember me" to which Evelyn replied: "但你本该在美国，而且很穷，怎么会这样？" "But you were supposed to be in America and very poor. How could this be?" This brief exchange is deeply telling Evelyn's surprise reveals how thoroughly she had internalized poverty and struggle as the inevitable fate of immigrants like them, making this alternate Waymond's success feel almost impossible, almost transgressive. His confident facial expression and firm posture reinforce the image of a new generation of Asian-Americans carving their own space without erasing their cultural roots. This scene highlights the contrast between the struggles of immigrant life and the idealized image shaped by American society, reflecting the dual identity dynamics often faced by Asian-American immigrants, who strive to adapt to a new culture without losing their cultural roots (Maharani et al., 2025).

The movie goes against the usual Hollywood stereotypes of Asian Americans by making its characters full, complex people instead of just caricatures. The film presents identity as a dynamic and complex process shaped by individual motivations and societal influences (Snyder et al., 2023).

This method is like important ideas in Asian American studies, which stress the importance of cultural fusion, ongoing adaptation, and resistance to mainstream stories. In the end, the movie has two goals: to show new ways of seeing things while also criticizing old ones. This changes how people think about Asian American life in the media today.

Cultural Displacement

The movie *Everything Everywhere All at Once* is all about cultural displacement. Cultural displacement, as theorized by Bhabha (1994), refers to the condition in which individuals who have migrated from one cultural context to another find themselves existing in an uncertain "third space" neither fully belonging to their culture of origin nor wholly accepted by the dominant culture of their new home. This sense of rootlessness is not merely geographic but deeply psychological, manifesting in fractured identities, ambivalent attachments, and the persistent feeling of being out of place in every space one inhabits. Halizah (2023) further elaborates that displaced individuals are caught in a constant process of "becoming" rather than "being" their identities never fixed, always negotiated, always contingent on the cultural forces surrounding them. It is precisely this condition that *Everything Everywhere All at Once* renders visible through both its narrative and its multiverse structure. It shows this through both personal conflicts and its multiverse setting, which shows how immigrants feel like they don't belong in any one place. The push and pull dynamics of the Wang family are at the heart of this theme. Evelyn and her husband are first-generation immigrants who find it hard to keep their culture alive in the tough life in America. Their children, on the other hand, feel trapped in a no man's land estranged from their roots yet not entirely comfortable within the dominant culture. The multiverse device cleverly reflects this alienation, with each alternate reality capturing the various paths and identities shaped by migration. As the story jumps between these realms, it emphasizes a sense of in-betweenness: characters grappling with multiple layers of self without fully anchoring in any of them. It's a clear nod to the reality of migration bridging cultures without ever fully fitting in (Wang, 2024).

Emotionally, displacement is seen in Evelyn and Joy's fraught relationship. Joy's desires and struggles symbolize the cultural and generational displacement felt by many second-generation Asian Americans, including issues of assimilation, language barriers, and cultural expectations regarding family and success.

One scene is when Evelyn sees Joy's bad side and she tells Joy's bad side how she feels about the difference between Joy's attitude in the past and now.



Figure 3. Evelyn talks about Joy's bad side

Source: Author's screenshot from the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*



Figure 4. Joy has a tattoo on her arm

Source: Author's screenshot from the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

A key moment occurs at the 56:13 mark, when Evelyn finally reveals her latent prejudices during a tense confrontation with Joy's rebellious attitude. She blames her daughter's transformation on a "big bad" that has led Joy astray into "American trends." Here, Joy's evolving mindset becomes clearer shaped by her years in the U.S. and her environment, she begins to act in ways that Eastern traditions would consider highly disrespectful. For example, the way she casually addresses Evelyn by her first name instead of something respectful like "mom" is a small but significant sign of the widening rift between them. This shift underscores the friction: Joy's acceptance of American rudeness and casualness stands in stark contrast to Asia's deep emphasis on respect and family order.

Evelyn constantly criticizes Joy's rebellious side, blaming her for everything from missing family calls and skipping college to getting tattoos and "thinking she's gay." At the root of her rebuke was a deeper belief: this was not just an individual decision but a blatant rejection of long honored Asian principles, replaced by what Evelyn saw as America's toxic influence. Things come to a head when Joy reveals her "life story vault", a symbolic vault full of all the emotions, hatred, and dreams she's been holding back. The space itself turns into a powerful emblem of Joy's mixed heritage, acting as

a mental crossroads where she grapples with and reconciles her conflicting cultural ties.

Joy's tattoo stands out as a visible and striking symbol of her mixed cultural identity. Within the framework of an ever-changing multiverse, it acts as a stable anchor a lasting sign of who she is amidst all the changes showing how people uprooted by migration yearn for a solid footing amidst endless cultural turmoil. Traditional Asian views tend to regard tattoos as taboo, but they are an everyday statement of personal freedom among young Americans. When Joy marks her body in this way, she literally inscribes the American ideal of self-determination, defying the expectations inherited from her heritage. So, it's more than just defiance; the tattoo becomes a cohesive symbol, a lasting record of the complex identity she has forged where her Asian background intersects with her life in the US.

The film also heightens this sense of alienation through its style and storytelling the rapid cuts, wild freneticism, and fractured family conversations all reflect the inner turmoil and disconnection that comes with feeling culturally alienated. Overall, the book *Hybridity* by Hutnyk (2016) captures the "in between" state that is so familiar to immigrant communities, pouring words and images into the struggles of the diaspora.

By articulating these themes, *Everything Everywhere All at Once* adds to the discourse on cultural displacement within Asian-American studies. Ultimately, the multiverse operates as a symbolic third space where cultural displacement is not resolved by choosing one identity over another, but by acknowledging the coexistence of multiple shelves shaped by migration. It shows displacement not only as loss but also as a space for transformation and reclamation of identity.

Cultural Hybridity as the Result of Human Identity Evolution

Cultural hybridity is a phenomenon that emerges as a result of the evolution of human identity, which continues to move dynamically in line with cross cultural interactions (Hutnyk, 2016). In the context of globalization and migration, identity can no longer be viewed as something fixed or pure, but rather as a process that is constantly undergoing mixing and recombination. This process gives rise to hybrid identities that combine elements of the culture of origin and the culture of residence, while also giving birth to new expressions that are unique and complex (Bhatia, 2011). These hybrid identities reflect how humans manage cross-cultural experiences in a modern context, which is no longer bound by traditional cultural boundaries.

In this film, it is evident that hybridity occurs among Asian immigrants living in America. One scene, at 01:05:55, shows Evelyn with her Asian accent and dialect saying the title of the film "Ratatouille," but she pronounces it as "Rakuncoonie".



Figure 5. Evelyn speaks English with an Asian accent.

Source: Author's screenshot from the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

This moment truly illustrates linguistic hybridity in action. Evelyn, whose roots are in Mandarin (or another Chinese dialect), twists an English term borrowed from French through her own sound system.

The way Joy and Waymond burst out laughing at her pronunciation reveals the social underbelly of all this mixing. Sure, their laughter feels spontaneous, but it highlights the acculturation gap in immigrant families, where non-native accents are treated like minor mistakes. What's truly important, though, is how it unfolds: instead of adding to the embarrassment, they turn "Racaccoonie" into a shared family joke and a secret handshake. Ultimately, laughter sparks a real dialogue, transforming what might have been a linguistic mistake into a badge of their unique bond and resilience.

Hybridity in this film is not only evident in Evelyn's dialogue but also in the environment they have created for themselves. For example, at 01:28:44, Evelyn's family holds a Chinese-themed party at their home, which is clearly American because they are living there.



Figure 6. Evelyn's family held a Chinese-themed party at their house.

Source: Author's screenshot from the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

From the outside, the house blends right in with the neighborhood's standard American design. But step inside for that scene, and it's a total shift into a lively pocket of Chinese culture. Red lanterns dangle from the ceiling, lucky couplets (*duilian*) grace the doorframes, and a bold dragon or phoenix design takes center stage on the key

wall. The air carries scents from classic dishes like nian gao (sticky rice cake) and long-life noodles spread across the table, all while Mandarin chatter and chuckles fill the room during gatherings. Through these touches the decor, vibes, food, and conversations the space channels genuine Chinese customs, carving out a vivid cultural bubble smack in the middle of America.

Wrapping up this section's analysis on hybrid identity, the next bit pulls together a reflective summary of the third theme's insights. Hybridity in identity isn't just some abstract idea; it's a real, everyday reality, brought sharply to life in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. The movie turns the messy work of acculturation, bargaining, and self-shaping into relatable slices of life. Take Evelyn mangling "Ratatouille" into "Racacoonie" it's a perfect snapshot of linguistic and inner blending, crafting a personal "third space" that's its own thing, not fully melted into the mainstream or stuck in the past.

Simultaneously, the Chinese themed party held within their American home exemplifies the creation of spatial and communal hybridity, where a traditional culture is actively reconstructed and preserved within a new environmental context. These scenes demonstrate that hybridity is far from a loss of identity; it is a dynamic, creative, and cumulative strategy for survival and self-invention. Ultimately, the journey of the Wang family affirms that in the modern world, shaped by diaspora and globalization, the evolution of identity through cultural hybridity is not a path toward fragmentation, but a powerful, necessary, and enriching synthesis for forging a coherent self in a multifaceted reality.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) does more than simply celebrate the fluid, in-between nature of immigrant identity it exposes the uncomfortable reality that hybridity is not a uniform or liberating condition, but a fractured and deeply uneven experience that manifests differently depending on gender, generation, sexuality, and class. Rather than treating Bhabha's "third space" as a neutral ground of creative possibility, the film reveals it as a site of conflict, exhaustion, and negotiation that carries vastly different consequences for each member of the Wang family. For Evelyn, hybridity takes the form of strategic code-switching — she performs Americanness in the laundromat and at the IRS office while retreating into Chinese domesticity at home, never fully inhabiting either identity but using both instrumentally for survival. For Waymond, hybridity manifests as deliberate gentleness a conscious rejection of the model minority myth's demand for stoic masculine productivity, choosing emotional vulnerability as his own form of cultural resistance. For Joy, however, hybridity offers no such negotiable middle

ground. As a queer second-generation immigrant, she is denied the luxury of strategic positioning: her Chinese identity is questioned by Gong Gong, her queerness is suppressed within the family, and her American identity never fully claims her either. Her hybridity is not a third space but a no-space a condition so untenable that it births Jobu Tupaki, a figure who does not negotiate between cultures but annihilates the very premise that any of them matter. This suggests that the film, far from reproducing a comfortable narrative of multicultural blending, actually critiques the romanticization of hybridity itself exposing how the Asian-American experience in popular representation risks being flattened into a story of resilient adaptation, when the lived reality for many, particularly queer women of color, is one of irresolvable contradiction and psychological fracture. The novelty of the film, therefore, lies not in its celebration of the "third space," but in its insistence that the third space is not the same for everyone who is forced to inhabit it.

Ultimately, Evelyn's path to embracing her diverse self and, crucially, Joy's hybrid self underscores a crucial point for our interconnected world: true resilience comes from embracing chaos and uncertainty. Far from simply a family story, the film conveys a broader cultural argument: being "American" does not mean erasing your roots. Rather, it means recognizing that diversity and hybrid forms are integral to what constitutes a unified identity in today's complex landscape.

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