ABSTRACT

The Binding Chair tells about a Chinese woman, named May Li, who bends to social rules for social acceptance but suffer from them instead. The story takes place in the late 19th to early 20th century. During that period, a girl must perform foot binding in which her feet are bound tightly with bandage to make them smaller. Small feet are believed to be identical with beauty and future welfare. A woman with small feet is believed to have a better chance to uplift her social status. The foot binding practice becomes the center of May Li's life journey.

The problems explored in this thesis are how May Li and Alice, the main characters, are characterized and what messages are conveyed in the novel. Accordingly, the goals of this thesis are to describe the characters and their characterization and to reveal the messages delivered through the characters.

From the analysis, May's personality is found to be in contrast with Alice's. For example, May is introvert, but Alice is extrovert. From their physical appearance, May is pictured as beautiful; on the other hand, Alice is not. The messages revealed are that problems should be solved, not avoided, there are good lessons to be taken from the past, and life appreciation is far more important than physical beauty. In brief, the novel tries to convey messages to make a better life.