

Major Research Paper

**Food, Ethnic Entrepreneurship and Acculturation: Exploring the trajectory
of Chinese immigrants and Chinese restaurant business in North America**

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Introduction

The Chinese restaurant business is one of the most representative examples of ethnic entrepreneurship of worldwide Chinese immigrants. In North America, Chinese food and restaurants emerged with Chinese immigrants' arrival in the mid-nineteenth century (Chen, 2014; Jung, 2010; Liu, 2015). During the past centuries, they have continuously changed with every wave of Chinese immigrants to the United States and Canada. As food is both a culture and a commodity, the development of Chinese restaurants not only portrays the trajectory of Chinese immigrant groups but also reflects the cultural interaction between them and the host society (Liu, 2015). Previous studies on Chinese restaurants were more likely from the perspective of economics, philosophy and history (such as Lui, 2007). There exists a dearth of scholarship focused on this specific industry in the realm of sociology. Moreover, some old narratives are not reflective of the twenty-first-century Chinese immigrant experience in the restaurant industry.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the development and changes in Chinese ethnic restaurants in North America during the past centuries. Drawing upon the theory of Ethnic Entrepreneurship and Acculturation, this paper tries to provide a better understanding of the changes of Chinese ethnic restaurants and the Chinese immigrants' life experience in this industry. More specifically, it hopes to discover the different characteristics Chinese restaurants exhibit over time and the factors contributing to those changes. Through examining the interaction among the Chinese restaurants, Chinese immigrants and the host environment, this paper seeks to know why Chinese restaurant operators engage in this industry, how Chinese restaurateurs utilize capital and resources to establish their business, what obstacles they

encounter and what strategies they take as the solutions. Apart from that, this paper also focuses on the latest changes in this specific ethnic business in North America, which might help update some information on this topic. Thus, this paper will address the following questions:

- How do Chinese restaurants evolve and change over time in North America?
- What shapes their specific characteristics in different periods?
- What process of acculturation can be seen from the development of Chinese restaurants?

This research paper has two broad sections. In Section One, I give an overview of Chinese immigrants' migration to North America and the Chinese restaurants business there. I also introduce the theory of ethnic entrepreneurship and acculturation. I explain the methods of my research at the end of Section One. In Section Two, I present the findings of my study by dividing the development history of Chinese restaurants into four different stages. This section ends with a discussion and conclusion.

Literature review

1. Chinese immigration to North America

The history of Chinese immigrants' migration to North America can be traced back to the 19th century. Since the 1840s, the government of the Qing dynasty has entered the last period of their governance (Zhang, 1999). China faced severe political and economic disorder at that time; the social upheaval, wars, poverty and natural disasters prompted Chinese people, especially those from the southeast coastal area, to flee from the country and seek opportunities (Zhang, 1999). In the 1850s, the first wave of Chinese immigrants arrived in North America; the California Gold Rush of 1849 was a significant pull factor that brought them there (Kung, 1961). The mining

activities attracted these early Chinese immigrants; later, the gold rush ended, and these immigrants continued to look for work as railroad workers to construct railroads both in the United States and Canada (Kung, 1962). When the railroads were completed in the 1880s, Chinese workers' cheapness became their disadvantage in the local labour market; under the background of the economy's downturn and increasing unemployment, the demand for cheap Chinese labour force dropped sharply (Holland, 2007). The competition between Chinese workers and white workers shifted public opinion strongly against Chinese workers' presence. Subsequently, the United States and Canada respectively enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and 1885; these moves interrupted the Chinese's entry into North America until the exclusion acts were repealed in the United States in 1943 and Canada in 1947 (Holland, 2007). From the 1960s, as the immigration policy changed in the United States in 1965 and Canada in 1967, immigrants of non-European origin were treated as equally worthy of immigrant status as those from Europe (Holland, 2007). Asian immigrants started to emigrate to North America in large numbers. New Chinese immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China formulated the second wave of emigration to the United States and Canada (Holland, 2007). In the late 1970s, The Chinese government opened its door, and the citizens were allowed to emigrate; in the 21st century, China became a large source of immigrants to North America (Holland, 2007).

2. Ethnic entrepreneurship

As a common economic practice by worldwide Chinese immigrants, the Chinese restaurant business can be explained by the theoretical framework of ethnic entrepreneurship to some extent. In social studies, the terms "ethnic entrepreneurship" and "immigrant entrepreneurship"

are used interchangeably as immigrant entrepreneurs are commonly regarded as minority entrepreneurs in academia (Chaganti & Greene, 2002). The term “ethnic entrepreneurship” is used to describe ethnic minorities and immigrant groups who conduct business and trade in their host society (Smart, 2003).

As a frequent social phenomenon, ethnic entrepreneurship raises concerns in many disciplines. In sociology, the research on ethnic business was initiated in the United States in the 1970s. After the immigration laws were reformed in 1965, the growth of new waves of immigrants to the United States contributed to the local economy and made ethnic entrepreneurship a topic of international concern (Aldrich, 1990). It is well-known that certain immigrant groups and ethnic minorities are more inclined to engage in entrepreneurial activities than others (Light, 1972; Waldinger et al., 1990). To many ethnic groups, acquiring the ownership of the small business is one of the most effective strategies to seek social and economic mobility (Razin, 1990). There are several typical examples of this kind of ethnic group, such as Jewish, Japanese and Chinese people (Light, 1972; Waldinger et al., 1990). In North America, Chinese immigrants tended to engage in certain small businesses in the early days, for example, hand-laundry businesses, retail stores and restaurants (Light, 1972; Smart, 2003). With the entry of new immigrants after the reform of immigration policy in the 1960s, Chinese ethnic business got substantial changes in many ways (Li, 1992).

Determinants and the related debates

Much attention has been paid to why ethnic entrepreneurship takes place and why certain ethnic groups tend to engage in self-employment and entrepreneurship more than others. In general, the explanations of ethnic entrepreneurship in sociology can fall into two major categories.

The first category refers to the structural approach. Light proposes the disadvantage theory in his 1979 study. He indicated that immigrant minorities, who are at a disadvantage, suffer from a range of structural inequalities in the labour market. Specifically speaking, immigrants are often insufficient in approaches to various capital approaches compared to the local residents, especially when they first arrive. When investigating Korean small businesses in Atlanta, Min (1988) found that immigrants have difficulty transforming their previous education and experiences into recognized qualifications in the local labour market. The blocked mobility, involving discrimination, financial difficulty and the lack of local culture, is another issue that forces immigrants to be self-employed (Volery, 2007). Moreover, studies also found that gender differences served as a barrier to immigrants in labour market participation. After investigating Caribbean immigrants' experience in the Canadian labour market, Branker (2017) pointed out that, apart from race discrimination, the female immigrant minority suffered from additional gender-based discrimination and stereotypes as a result of the traditional gender ideologies and divisions of labour. These hindrances prevented them from achieving ideal jobs, equitable promotion opportunities and salaries (Boyd & Yiu, 2009). Thus, from the disadvantaged perspective, ethnic entrepreneurship is more of a survival strategy for ethnic groups. Immigrants at a disadvantage in the labour market have to turn to entrepreneurship and self-employment to make ends meet.

The second category is the cultural approach, which explains entrepreneurship and self-employment of ethnic groups from the perspective of their cultural features. These cultural advantages may include “ethnic social networks, solidarity, kinship organization, entrepreneurial heritage, values, and attitudes” (Wong & Ng, 1998). The attribute of hard work, dedication to family, economic capital, solidarity and loyalty, the courage of risk, compliance with social value patterns, can contribute to ethnic groups’ self-employment (Masurel et al., 2004). The impacts of cultural factors on ethnic entrepreneurship can be noticed in many ethnic minorities. For example, it is found that Korean business owners work for 79 hours per week on average; they dedicate a lot to their business despite extreme mental and physical exhaustion (Light & Bonacich, 1988). Scholars also found that some specific Chinese cultural factors are helpful to Chinese entrepreneurs. Specifically speaking, Light (1972) examined the role of Chinese cultural elements in establishing rotating credit associations. He thought that the kinship and clan ties of early Chinese immigrants provided the basis for funding rotating credit associations, which contributed to the business behaviours of Chinese immigrants in America. In addition, Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs are considered able to make good use of hard work, flexibility, and their emphasis on money and land to achieve entrepreneurial success (Goldberg, 1985).

When it comes to the best explanation for ethnic entrepreneurship and ethnic business, there has been a long-standing academic debate concerning whether it is cultural or structural factors that lead to ethnic entrepreneurship (Wong & Ng, 1998). According to Lampugnani and Holton (1992), the cultural approach has been criticized for seeing values as independent influencing factors that have nothing to do with the surrounding economic environment. They argued that it is unrealistic to deny the relevance of cultural values and systems given many outstanding cases

indicating over-representation of ethnic groups in business activities. Another argument is that, as time goes by, the ethnic entrepreneurial practices and conditions have undergone dramatic changes with the evolution in immigration flow and their demographic background. Li conducted a study on the changes in Chinese ethnic business in Canada in 1992. He argued that neither structural nor cultural factors alone could provide an entirely rational explanation for the development of Chinese ethnic businesses in Canada in the new period. According to him, the blocked mobility thesis could no longer be applied to the recent Chinese entrepreneurs: with the abolition of discriminatory laws against the Chinese in the years after World War II, the employment situation of Chinese immigrants in the labour market improved; thus, many Chinese Canadians are not restricted in ethnic business as the former generations. He noted that the recent profound changes in Chinese business in Canada were related to economic and demographic factors of Chinese immigration (Li, 1992). Additionally, scholars also identified differences in ethnic entrepreneurs across generations. According to their study of the changing role of ethnic entrepreneurs in Australia, Chavan and Agrawal (2002) presented those entrepreneurial motivations are distinctively different among varied generations of ethnic entrepreneurs. They found that the first generation was pushed to enter the trade and business for addressing their concerns of economic demands and unemployment issues; the second generation seemed to be pulled into an ethnic business and attached great importance to the chances of business in Australia and the connection with their homeland. Similar to the second generation, the two “pull factors” also worked on the third generation of ethnic entrepreneurs, and the third generation was also driven by ethnic networks (Chavan & Agrawal, 2002).

Figure 1. Interactive Model of Ethnic Entrepreneurship Development (Waldinger et al., 1990, p22)



The Interactive Model (Waldinger et al., 1990) integrates some elements of ethnic entrepreneurship and then illustrates the phenomenon of ethnic business. As it shows, the development of ethnic businesses is dependent on an intricate interaction between group characteristics and opportunity structure. Namely, the opportunity structures are made up of two

dimensions. One is the market conditions linked with ethnic consumer products and non-ethnic markets. The other refers to the access to containing business vacancies, ownership, government policies, and competition for vacancies. The group characteristics are predisposing factors (selective migration, blocked mobility, aspiration levels) and resource mobilization (government policies, ethnic social networks, close ties to co-ethnics). “Opportunity structures and ethnic resources constantly interact” (Volery, 2007). Through such interaction, ethnic entrepreneurs keep adjusting ethnic strategies to achieve success. According to Waldinger et al. (1990), the appropriate ethnic strategies to the solution to the problems that ethnic entrepreneurs may encounter include: gathering information, raising capital, getting training and skills, formulating human resources (including family and co-ethnic labour, building the relationship with customers and suppliers), dealing with intense competition, and protecting the ethnic business from political attacks.

Consequences

Regarding the consequences of ethnic entrepreneurship, some arguments indicate that both the ethnic groups and the host environment are under the influence of these consequences. In Zhou’s 2004 study, she summarized the effects of ethnic entrepreneurship in detail. In her opinion, ethnic entrepreneurship is a major contributor to job opportunities for ethnic groups, especially for those who are rejected by the mainstream labour market; meanwhile, this softens the potential competition between ethnic workers and native workers in the local labour market to some extent. Besides, she thinks that these entrepreneurial ventures bring earning advantages to ethnic groups compared with other forms of employment, where human capital and backgrounds are listed as essential requirements. For instance, Min’s 1988 study on Korean immigrants in Los

Angeles indicates that self-employed Korean families achieved significant economic mobility than those not self-employed. It shows that due to the high rates of self-employment and doing business of Korean immigrants, in 1986 70% of Korean immigrant households in Los Angeles reached the median household income level for all U.S. households, which was \$24,897 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987:422, as cited in Min, 1988); besides, 30.6% Korean immigrant households in Los Angeles earned \$50,000 that year while only 16.8% American households achieved this income level (Min, 1988). Yet, this point of view is also controversial. According to the 2001 Canadian census, the income of Chinese immigrants that work in the enclave economy was much lower than their counterparts in the mainstream economy, regardless of the self-employed or the salaried (Li & Dong, 2008). Zhou (2004) also points out that ethnic entrepreneurship is beneficial to developing the entrepreneurial spirit of ethnic groups and the training of potential entrepreneurs. She emphasizes that ethnic entrepreneurship influences both inter-group members and the locals. Ethnic entrepreneurship can affect community building and the social mobility of ethnic groups as the different levels of ethnic business development can result in the differences in “the availability of and access to neighbourhood-based resources, especially those pertaining to socioeconomic integration of adult immigrants and to the education of immigrant children” (Zhou & Cho, 2010).

3. Chinese cuisine and the Chinese restaurant business in North America

It is widely acknowledged that Chinese food has a tight linkage with Chinese communities. The history of Chinese restaurants in North America can be dated back to the mid-1800s (Chen, 2018; Liu & Lin, 2009). The early Chinese discovered a business opportunity from the need for a taste of the homeland during the gold rush; since then, the early restaurateurs began to serve

Chinese food for Chinese gold-mining workers (Chen, 2014). The food they served was cheap and plentiful, and soon after, it became popular among a large group of non-Chinese workers (Zhang, 1999). For a long time after that, the Chinese restaurant and laundry business was the most symbolic representation of the Chinese ethnic business in North America (Smart, 2003; Zhang, 1999). Many Chinese immigrants relied on these two industries to make a living, especially in the days of the Chinese exclusion era where the host society marginalized Chinese labourers (Light, 1972). Unlike the decreasing laundry business, Chinese restaurants continued to expand quantitatively and geographically during the past decades with the influx of different waves of Chinese immigrants (Smart, 2003; Waldinger et al., 1990).

The aspects and roles of Chinese ethnic restaurants

Food is both a commodity and a culture. Chinese restaurants' two most apparent qualities are the commercial attribute as a business enterprise and the cultural attribute as a carrier of Chinese ethnic culture. Within the context of Ethnic Entrepreneurship, social scientists prefer to study the entrepreneurial side of Chinese ethnic restaurants, including the motivations, conditions, barriers and consequences of restaurant entrepreneurial ventures. As previously mentioned, Chinese ethnic restaurants, as the most common minority-owned enterprises, have a significant influence on both ethnic and local economies (Waldinger et al., 1990). The Chinese restaurants established in different times have various characteristics, and entrepreneurs' motivations and primary conditions for setting up Chinese restaurants keep changing. Understanding the changes in the Chinese restaurant industry helps study the ethnic business and the life experience of Chinese immigrants (Liu & Lin, 2009). Some scholars tend to study the cultural side of Chinese restaurants. Food is a significant way of studying ethnic minorities. As noted by Chen (2014),

food culture is an essential and visible marker for ethnic identity, and the ethnic and cultural identity of immigrant groups is presented and negotiated through their foodways. Chinese restaurants also perform as cultural institutions for promoting cultural interaction among intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic groups; more specifically, they bear several cultural functions such as holding holiday celebrations and ceremonies (Li, 2002). For non-Chinese customers, Chinese restaurants provide the chances of cultural exchange in both food and other certain ways; for Chinese immigrants, going to and eating at a Chinese restaurant is an effective way to experience their cultural heritage of Chinese ethnicity and maintain inter-ethnic ties within Chinese communities in the restaurants, and they can construct their Chinese cultural identity there (Li, 2002).

4. Acculturation

Acculturation is a process within which cultural groups and their individual members have cultural and psychological transformations due to their interaction (Berry, 2017). They may change themselves in the following aspects: languages, technologies, behaviours, social institutions, values, and beliefs (Sam & Berry, 2010). This phenomenon often occurs over time when people migrate to a new and multicultural society; although sometimes this process can be stressful, it usually leads to types of mutual accommodation (Berry, 2017). There also exists a research gap on this topic. According to Haugen and Kunst (2017), acculturation is seen as a two-way process because the majority group members are also affected as the minority group interacts with the majority group; however, little attention has been paid to the acculturation of the majority groups in the academic field.

Berry (1997) discussed acculturation strategies by analyzing two dimensions: first, to what extent cultural groups and their individual members value and adhere to their cultural identity and characteristics; second, to what extent they adopt other cultures in the new environment or reject other cultures. Based on this, there are four types of acculturation strategies for individuals and groups to deal with acculturation stress: assimilation (adopt the dominant or host culture, and over their own culture), separation (reject the dominant or host culture, and keep their own culture), integration (adopt dominant or host culture, and maintain their original culture at the same time) and marginalization (reject both the dominant/host culture and their own culture) (Berry, 1997).

In this sense, the changes that occurred in Chinese restaurants in North America are associated with acculturation. For example, Shi (2017) notes that “the emergence of American Chinese food is the consequence of creative acculturation.” Chen (2018) conducted a study on the naming practices of Chinese restaurants in the United States. The findings show that the names of American Chinese restaurants were not only an indication of restaurant type and the diversity of Chinese culinary traditions but also reflected a form of cultural assimilation due to that a number of the restaurants adopted English names and frequently used “express,” the take-out concept of American fast-food, as their names. Besides, the debates about the authenticity of the foods in Chinese restaurants is present both amongst clientele and scholars. It is a common stereotype that giving up specific cultural heritage features is a negative change for ethnic groups; in this perspective, the emergence of Westernized Chinese food may indicate the absence and dilution of Chinese immigration’s ethnic identity (Li, 2002). But Li (2002) countered this point of view by arguing that the fusion of Chinese and host society’s dining customs has preserved Chinese

restaurants' cultural identity: the continued change is necessary, and it strengthens the Chinese restaurant business. Barbas (2003) shared a similar view when examining the role of Chinese restaurants in America: the creation of Chinese American dishes in the first half of the 20th century, such as chop suey, "illustrates the way that restaurants have been able to initiate, however slight, cross-cultural interaction and culinary diversification."

Methods

In this research paper, my attention is focused on the Chinese restaurant industry in North America. This paper aims to explore the changes of Chinese restaurants and their interaction with the host society over the past hundred years. To achieve the goals of this paper, I apply a qualitative approach to conduct the study. I use both academic and media resources to understand the Chinese restaurant industry's specific qualities in particular historical periods in North America. In this paper, I conduct case studies on some representative Chinese restaurants, which could mark some specific qualities in specific contexts. For instance, the emergence of Chinese fast-food chains, such as Panda Express, represents the beginning of the Chinese restaurant industry towards corporatization and standardization. Thus, the analysis of Panda Express could offer depth on the topic. Conducting case studies is helpful to study the Chinese restaurant business in detail, such as the Chinese restaurant operators' ideas about their business and operation. Media resources greatly contributed to the case studies of this paper. Some of the data were obtained from magazines and newspapers (e.g., The New York Times, Eater, Fortune, The New Yorker, CBC News and radios, etc.) and the social media outlets of restaurants themselves (e.g., Official website) to achieve a cohesive understanding of the founding, operating details and the influences around Chinese restaurants.

For the topic and purpose of my research, the qualitative approach is the best research tool. But I still met some problems when collecting data. For example, there is limited research on early Chinese restaurants in North America, which may affect the comprehensiveness of some historical parts in my study.

Findings

The development of Chinese restaurants in North America can be divided into several stages. I present my findings chronologically by dividing them into four parts: (1) pre-1870: the early days of Chinese restaurants; (2) the 1870s-1940s: Chinese Exclusion era and the chop suey craze; (3) 1950s-2000: post-war period and the growth of post-1965 Chinese restaurants; (4) 2000s-present: structure upgrade and reconstruct Chinese restaurants. The reasons why I divide the history of Chinese restaurants into phases and choose the above time points to discuss the developments are: (1) Before the 1870s, the local society in North America provided a relatively stable political environment and labour market condition for early Chinese immigrants; (2) Between the 1870s and 1940s, Chinese immigrants went through several periods of the unrest and change in both America and Canada. It was not until post-World War II that the discrimination against Chinese immigrants was gradually alleviated. In these nearly 100 years, Chinese immigrants heavily relied on the restaurant business, and the chop suey craze led to a boom in the Chinese restaurant industry; (3) After World War II, the 1960s immigration policy reform marked a brand-new era for Chinese immigrants and the diversity of Chinese restaurants in North America. The first significant changes and innovations occurred in the contemporary Chinese restaurant industry; (4) From the 2000s, while the older generation of Chinese restaurants is fading, a new generation of Chinese entrepreneurs is redefining the Chinese

restaurant industry. A more tolerant and friendly environment has also helped them upgrade their Chinese restaurants.

For each part, I elaborate on the development of Chinese restaurants and their interaction with the host societies by presenting the social context of the times, Chinese immigrants' background, their ways of operating the restaurant business, the characteristics of their restaurant business, and the attitudes of the host environment towards Chinese restaurants. It should be noted that, although I choose these cut-off points to mark Chinese restaurants' development into another stage, this doesn't mean the characteristics of Chinese restaurants disappear at the next stage.

Pre-1870: The early days of Chinese restaurants in North America

The California Gold Rush was the starting point for Chinese restaurants in North America. As soon as gold was discovered in California in January 1848, a large group of young men were flocking to the state in a short amount of time, and by late 1848, the entire United States and many other countries were aware of the California gold rush (Clay & Jones, 2008). Adventurers from all over the world came to California, but the reality was not as rosy as they thought. In the process of gold mining, the effort and the reward were often not equal. Compared with non-miners, the economic results of miners were generally small or even zero, and to some extent, these miners' migration to California led to the reduction of their relative income (Clay & Jones, 2008). While a few miners made a fortune through luck, many remained miserable and exhausted after months of long trips and fruitless digging in the field; in addition, they had to endure hunger and homesickness (Liu, 2015). William Spine was one of the first gold seekers to go to California. In his letters to his family, William expressed his disappointment with the

reality in California and his impatience to return home; he told his brother that only trade could make money, not digging (Ward & Duncan, 1996). In fact, the objective conditions in front of the businessmen were indeed tempting. As the number of people coming to California increased, both consumer and producer goods increased in demand as well, including food, clothing, construction materials, transportation and so on (Clair, 1998). The pioneers who got rich from gold mining needed to spend their money (Coe, 2009). Many ambitious and clear-sighted people turned their attention to doing business. Since the vast majority of the miners were men who didn't have wives or servants to cook for them, going to restaurants for three meals had become an essential part of their daily life (Coe, 2009), which created excellent conditions for the development of local restaurant industry. Some businessmen were keenly aware of the business opportunities in the restaurant industry in California.

The advent of the earliest Chinese restaurants in North America emerged in the late 1840s with the arrival of Chinese immigrants during the Gold Rush era. They travelled great distances from China to California, dreaming of digging for gold and seeking the opportunity of making fortunes, and most of them came from Southern China (Zhang, 1999). It is widely known that the early Chinese immigrants to North America were originally imported to work for mining in California and then for railroad construction (Waldinger et al., 1990). But the pioneer Chinese immigrants were not all consistent with the stereotypes. Among the early Chinese immigrants were men equipped with wealth and ambition, having the ability and capital to engage in some business activities; these Chinese merchants were not "aliens" or "sojourners"; in contrast, they intended to stay and operate their businesses in California (Liu, 2015). The geographical factor and economic position, as well as the cultural traditions of Canton, explained why Cantonese

were the most common group among the first Chinese immigrants to North America (Liu, 2015). Canton was a wealthy Chinese port city and a centre of international trade and commerce for centuries; as the entrepreneurial classes from this area, Cantonese merchants keenly became aware of trade and business opportunities in California (Rude, 2016). Pioneer merchants who came first also established landing places for their companions who came later (Liu, 2015). Many Chinese merchants in California had rich experience in both the import and export of goods and dealing with foreigners; as increasing numbers of people joined the gold diggers, these Chinese merchants chose to establish small businesses in California, which served both Chinese and non-Chinese clients (Coe, 2009; Liu, 2015). In general, there were various social classes of early Chinese during the Gold Rush, and their occupations in California ranged from merchants, artisans to labourers (Coe, 2009).

The first Chinese restaurant in North America named Canton Restaurant, was quickly opened in 1849 in San Francisco, USA (Liu, 2015). At that time, the western customers were quite unfamiliar with Chinese immigrants and Chinese food. Hence, stereotypes such as the rat-eating habit of Chinese (Liu, 2015) made some barriers for the Chinese restaurant business. Chinese restaurants owners tried to find ways to improve the situation. As *Daily Alta California* reports, a Chinese restaurant operator named Jon-Ling sent two pies to the editors of the *Daily Alta California* newspaper in January 1850, presumably trying to call for positive coverage on Chinese restaurants in local mainstream newspapers (Daily Alta California, 1850, as cited in Peters, 2015). Early Chinese restaurants in North America gradually showed some attractive qualities that impressed the westerners. It is noteworthy that the cheapness of Chinese food was the most prominent advantage of Chinese restaurants. According to Coe (2009), customers can

eat at a Chinese restaurant for one dollar, and there were no restrictions on the type and quantity of food they could take; a meal at such a low price was very rare when compared with the price of other places in the city, as a steak, eggs and coffee combo offered in the tent down by the pier even cost 2.5 dollars. Even though Chinese restaurants served cheap food, their quality and service were decent (Coe, 2009). Apart from serving delicious Chinese food, some Chinese restaurants also provided dishes from other cuisines to appeal to customers of all backgrounds (Peters, 2015). In case there were customers unfamiliar with chopsticks, Chinese restaurants served them with regular forks and spoons, and sometimes Chinese restaurants also offered bread and even champagne in order to make the American customers more comfortable and at ease at the table (Peters, 2014). Coe (2009) notes that Chinese owners of Chinese restaurants that provided attentive service and cross-cultural elements in their business, including English-speaking staff, may have relevant experience in doing business in Canton or Hong Kong, which required an understanding of how to cater to the European tastes and drinking habits of foreign businessmen. As John Frost described when it comes to the environment and service of restaurants and the professionalism of the Chinese restaurateurs:

I once went into an eating-house, kept by one of these people, and was astonished at the neat arrangements and cleanliness of the place, the excellence of the table, and moderate charges. It was styled the "Canton Restaurant"; and so thoroughly Chinese was it in its appointments, and in the manner of service, that one might have easily fancied oneself deep in the heart of the Celestial Empire. The barkeeper----though he spoke excellent English----was a Chinese, as were also the attendants (Frost, 1851, as quoted in Coe, 2009, p111).

Early Chinese restaurants preferred not to set up far away from each other, and they used flags of yellow silk as their unique cultural representation to attract white customers (Liu, 2015).

Relatively centralized address selection and identical commercial signs allowed the Chinese restaurant district to be identified by both local patrons and diners from the mining fields. Rather

than being motivated by racial discrimination, the China quarter was set up for business reasons, and this reflects the business strategy of Chinese restaurateurs at that time (Liu, 2015).

Additionally, there were also Chinese community associations established by merchants that coordinated commercial activity between Chinese and whites and acted as guardians of Chinese tradition as well (Marcus & Chen, 2011).

1870s-1940s: Chinese Exclusion era and the Chop Suey craze

With gold mining and railroad construction continuing in Northern America, tensions arose between Chinese immigrants and native white workers mainly because of labour market competition (Holland, 2007; Zhang, 1999). The anti-Chinese sentiment among white communities was getting worse and then reached its peak during the last three decades of the 19th century. Some crimes and atrocities against the Chinese began to appear. In 1871, a serious riot targeting at Chinese community happened in Los Angeles; a mob of hundreds of white Angelenos entered Chinatown and attacked the Chinese with guns, ropes, and knives (Zesch, 2012), resulting in the death of 19 or more of Chinese immigrants, half of which were cooks (Lanza, 2020). As the anti-Chinese sentiment intensified, the Congress of the United States and the Parliament of Canada enacted Chinese exclusion laws in 1882 and 1885, barring or setting restrictions on Chinese labourers and their families' entry to North America (Kung, 1962).

Worse, in the Snake River Massacre of 1887 in Oregon, more than 30 Chinese gold miners were brutally killed by some white men, but none of the killers was convicted (Lee, 2008). Faced with increasing riots and hateful attitudes from hostile whites, Chinese immigrants in North America began to relocate to escape persecution and seek a relatively peaceful living environment. In the United States, they moved to eastern and central states from California and other less friendly

states (Zhang, 1999); while in Canada, the Chinese chose to settle in small prairie towns along the main railroad line instead of staying on the west coast (Jung, 2010).

Also, under the background of anti-Chinese agitation, Chinese immigrants were confronted with severe restrictions and challenges in terms of occupational selection. They encountered discrimination when looking for jobs and were expelled from manufacturing firms owned by whites (Light, 1972). In addition, they were driven out of mining, farming, shoe making and fishing as well at that time (Jung, 2010). The harsh employment conditions pushed Chinese immigrants to reconsider their strategies as few opportunities were left for them to earn a living. Many Chinese thus took up domestic service jobs, and some turned to be self-employed and engaged in laundry trade, small retail stores and restaurant businesses (Jung, 2010; Light, 1972). Whites particularly tolerated the laundry and restaurant business because white males didn't have interests in the laundry trade; as for Chinese restaurants, their existence was considered meeting the needs of the white working-class with inexpensive and savoury dishes (Light, 1972). Evidence shows that the Chinese restaurant business grew rapidly during the Chinese exclusion days in North America. For example, according to Takaki's statistics (1989, as cited in Lee, 2008), in America alone, the total number of Chinese employed declined between 1870 and 1920; the number of Chinese restaurant workers jumped from 164 to 11438 during these decades. In general, entering the restaurant industry was relatively a safe and favourable choice for Chinese immigrants during the Chinese exclusion era. First, it was possible for the Chinese to form partnerships and raise relatively small sums of money that were enough to open a restaurant. Among the Chinese community, there often existed an organization called "Hui," a rotating credit system, gathering equal funds from each member within the community; in this

way, members can take turns borrowing the money from the pool to start their own business, and this is a common way for the Chinese to raise business investments other than borrowing money from relatives or friends (Jung, 2010). Second, the merchant status as restaurant operators benefited the Chinese as they were allowed to enter the United States under the Chinese Exclusion Acts and bring back employees (Lee, as cited in Godoy, 2016). Historian Heather Lee (as cited in Godoy, 2016) believes that the 1915 change in the immigration law that added restaurants to the special merchant visa list by the U.S. Federal Court is an essential factor behind the boom of the Chinese restaurant industry in the United States in the early 20th century.

The explanations of the soaring number of Chinese restaurants are not only related to the fact that Chinese people were forced to enter the restaurant industry due to limited career choices but also closely associated with the changes which Chinese restaurants made to accommodate host societies. Despite being able to work in the restaurant business, the unstable political atmosphere brought barriers to Chinese restaurants, as Zhang (1999) notes that the Chinese diet habit was politicized and attacked in the anti-Chinese movement. These conditions reversely urged Chinese restaurateurs to take some measures. In the late 1800s, it can be seen that Chinese restaurants made conscious efforts to alter the taste and style of their dishes, shifting from Cantonese to a white-centric flavour in order to accommodate the racialized tastes of their local customers (Lanza, 2020).

A number of North American Chinese food items were born in this period, such as egg foo young, chop suey and chow mein (Barbas, 2003; Liu, 2015), representing the trend of adaptations made by Chinese restaurants. Within them, chop suey notably led the trends in the

early 20th century. What is chop suey? Generally, it is a stir-fried dish that consists of meat and vegetables (e.g., bean sprouts, celery, and so forth) and cooked in a sauce thickened with starch (Chen, 2014; Hayford, 2011; Jung, 2010). Much of the scholarship has attributed the origin of chop suey. One of the accounts is that this stew technique came from Toishan, Canton, and the term “chop suey” originated in the Cantonese phrase zapsui or zasui in Mandarin, which means “bits and pieces” (Chen, 2014; Hayford, 2011). Another popular set of claims linked the origin of chop suey with Li Hongzhang, the highest minister of the Chinese Emperor in the 19th century. The story has it that Li Hongzhang visited the United States in 1896, and his chef created chop suey during Li’s visit; Li immensely enjoyed this dish, and his celebrity status later helped the popularity of it in America (Liu, 2009). The emergence of chop suey brought a rebound to the Chinese restaurant industry in North America during the Chinese exclusion era. Bonner (1997, as cited in Lee, 2008) indicates that the number of Chinese restaurants in New York City was only six in 1885, but there were hundreds of chop suey houses located on 14th and 45th Streets and 3rd and 8th Avenues after about 20 years. King (2019) analyzes that the chop suey craze in America is a resurgence of Sinophilia. From King’s (2019) view of point, with America’s power entry into the Asia Pacific in the 1890s, Americans’ interest in China was raised and reflected through their passion for Chinese cultural products, such as chop suey. Another special symbol is the fortune cookie. Traditional Chinese restaurants didn’t have the habit of providing dessert after the meal; to meet white customers’ needs, Chinese restaurant operators started to serve fortune cookies before the 1940s, and over time, it became a ubiquitous snack that symbolized Chinese restaurants (Lee, 2008).

To briefly summarize, the rapid development of the Chinese restaurant industry during the Chinese exclusion days reflects several facts. It is the first time North Americans embraced Chinese restaurants and cuisine on such a large scale in its history. The characteristics Chinese restaurants exhibited through their food, service and operations during this era indicate their efforts in seeking survival and assimilation into North American society. The emergence of North American Chinese food, especially chop suey, is a successful marketing move by Chinese restaurant owners. In spite of the origin story, the invention and popularity of chop suey reflect the flexibility, resilience and creativity of Chinese immigrants (Lanza, 2020). Instead of losing hope and giving up to unfavourable conditions, they used their wisdom, as well as seizing the moment in time, to bring opportunities to their business and life in North America. The article by Hayford (2011) discusses the significance of chop suey, saying that chop suey provides economic support for many Chinese American families during the days of racism and oppression.

Small-scale and family-run Chinese restaurants were common to be seen in this period (Jung, 2010). Between 1910 and World War II, family-run Chinese restaurants began to appear due to the growth in the number of families (Mendelson, 2016), which is a typical sketch of Chinese restaurants for several decades in North America. In such a restaurant, it is common to see all family members and relatives take responsibility for the daily operations of their restaurant, depending on its size. Jung (2010) describes that children usually undertake obligations ranging from customers' reception, bringing the menus to serving the meals; the specific duties are divided according to their age. Adult members are often responsible for the jobs in the kitchen, such as cooking, cleaning and dishwashing. The contributions from family members help

increase business profits as their division of labour reduces labour expenses as much as possible in family-run restaurants (Jung, 2010).

1950s-2000: Post-war period and the growth of post-1965 Chinese restaurants

World War II was a turning point in the situation of Chinese immigrants in North America. During the Second World War, Chinese immigrants served in the military and contributed to both the United States and Canada; and the Republic of China was a military ally of these two countries (Holland, 2007). In the war against Japan, Japanese propaganda kept referring to the discriminatory treatment that the Chinese immigrants received under the U.S. immigration laws to weaken the alliance between America and the Republic of China (Office of the Historian, n.d.). Under these conditions, it seemed necessary for the United States and Canada to make some changes to the Chinese Exclusion Acts. Besides, the awakening and increasing civic awareness concerning race and equity helped promote a peaceful environment in North America. After witnessing the horrible Nazi racism and a series of holocaust and genocide, white Canadians reconsidered their view on race; after World War II, voices were calling for equal treatment of Chinese citizens in Canadian society (Library and Archives Canada, 2017). At the same time, the Civil Rights Movement and the accession to the United Nations called for removing discriminatory acts in the United States (Holland, 2007). Consequently, these internal and external factors contributed to the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts in the United States and Canada in 1943 and 1947, respectively; in the 1960s, both Canada and America changed their immigration laws and allowed Chinese immigrants to enter, finishing the decades of restrictions on them (Holland, 2007).

Despite the removal of institutional discrimination against the Chinese, Chinese immigrants, including those entrepreneurial and professional ones, still had barriers in the local labour market, such as language problems and the lack of qualifications; and this situation left many new immigrants to still work in the Chinese restaurant industry (Liu & Lin, 2009). When it comes to the Chinese restaurant industry itself, it met some new challenges in the post-war era. For example, according to Coe (2009), the menus of Chinese restaurants in the United States stopped being updated around the 1940s, creating a situation where Chinese food was no longer exciting and gradually lost its competitiveness, especially when they faced competition from new fast-food restaurants for hungry and busy Americans. These Chinese restaurant owners still tried to keep their long-standing strategy of large portions and low prices to maintain their business, but things weren't going as expected (Coe, 2009). With the changes in immigration policy, this situation was broken. The influx of new Chinese immigrants brought significant changes to the Chinese restaurant industry. More and more Chinese restaurants offering regional cuisine started to appear on the market, replacing the dominant position of chop suey houses that have been popular for decades. With the Chinese restaurant industry booming, some remarkable Chinese restaurants providing genuine Chinese fare emerged and took Chinese food culture to a higher level in North America.

Case Study 1: Mandarin

“They think chop suey is the only thing we have in China, what a shame”
(Chiang, 2017, as quoted in Stump, 2020)

The Mandarin established by Cecilia Chiang was a high-end Chinese restaurant that was considered a bright mark of Chinese restaurants' history in America. Chiang was born in a

wealthy family in Southern China and grew up in Beijing (Mendelson, 2016). Her family had two classically trained chefs, one from Southern China and another from the North (Fowler, 2013). In the late 1950s, Cecilia Chiang came to the United States; as an upper-class Chinese who grew up eating authentic and gourmet Chinese meals, Cecilia Chiang found Chinese food in America particularly ridiculous, especially the chop suey (Fowler, 2013). To change the misunderstanding and biases of Americans towards Chinese food and culture, she was determined to start her own restaurant business. Cecilia Chiang refused to operate her restaurant in the way of previous Chinese restaurants: serving chop suey, located in Chinatown, or using stereotypical cultural elements like red, gold, dragons and lanterns (Mills, 2020). The food served in Chiang's restaurant was quite different from what Americans have seen before. The menus in Mandarin that opened Americans' view contained the following dishes: "potstickers, Chongqing-style spicy dry-shredded beef, peppery Sichuan eggplant, moo shu pork, sizzling rice soup and glacéed bananas" (Grimes, 2020), which were a combination of regional dishes. Cecilia Chiang preferred to create a restaurant with a Western-style service and ambience and the delicious food of northern China (Chiang and Weiss, 2007, as cited in Grimes, 2020). Chiang and her restaurant were described that:

In contrast to owners or cooks at most San Francisco Chinese eateries, her bearing effortlessly conveyed that she was a person of education and position. Everything about the Mandarin was conspicuously upscale and mandarin-worthy, including the prices. Like pathbreaking counterparts in Washington and New York, it was located outside of the city's Chinatown and pointedly distanced from images of Cantonese American food----which, Chiang let it be known, was utterly déclassé. Chop suey and red hanging lanterns would never darken her door, at either the restaurant's original location on Polk Street in Russian Hill or the grander, elegantly appointed Ghirardelli Square quarters to which it moved in 1968. (Mendelson, 2016)

"Defined upscale Chinese dining, introducing customers to Sichuan dishes like kung pao chicken and twice-cooked pork, and to refined preparations like minced squab in lettuce cups; tea-smoked duck; and beggar's chicken, a whole

bird stuffed with dried mushrooms, water chestnuts and ham and baked in clay” (San Francisco Chronicle, 2007, as quoted in Grimes, 2020).

Starting a restaurant business was not easy for Chiang, especially as a woman who did not speak Cantonese; at first, the vendors in Chinatown did not accept cheques from her (Fletcher, 2007). However, Cecilia Chiang’s restaurant business was undoubtedly a great success. From 1961, tourists, dignitaries, and celebrities such as Mae West and John Lennon, flocked to Chiang’s Mandarin to taste unfamiliar food (Ulaby, 2020). Food magazine *Saveur* comments on Cecilia Chiang and her restaurant: “nothing less than introducing regional Chinese cooking to America” (Stump, 2020). More than that, Chiang has made a huge difference and impact on the whole American Chinese food scene. Her son Philip co-founded a chain of Chinese restaurants as inspired by her (Krishna, 2018; Ulaby, 2020), and the son of a chef who worked for her started the famous Panda Express (Ulaby, 2020).

Case Study 2: Panda Express

Panda Express is a Chinese fast-food chain in the United States, established and operated by Cherng’s family. Andrew Cherng, and his chef father, Ming-Tsai Cherng, were from Yangzhou, China; they escaped to Taiwan after World War II ended and then moved to Japan (Eng, 2013). Andrew Cherng came to the United States in the mid-1960s (Hannon, 2018) and received his undergraduate degree from Baker University in Kansas, where he met his wife Peggy Cherng, who was born in Burma and grew up in Hong Kong (Eng, 2013). Afterwards, they both went on to study at the University of Missouri. Andrew majored in Applied Mathematics and achieved a master’s degree, and Peggy received a master’s degree in Computer Science and then a doctorate in Electrical Engineering (Hannon, 2018). Andrew Cherng used to work in a restaurant in New

York during his school holidays; unlike his father, who was a chef but didn't have his own business, Andrew understood that he wanted to run his own business (Eng, 2013). Andrew Cherng and his father began trying to run the Panda Inn restaurant, the predecessor of Panda Express, in the United States in 1973 (Eng, 2013). By chance, a customer of Cherng's restaurant in the real estate industry offered Andrew the opportunity to open a fast-food restaurant in a shopping mall (Hannon, 2018). Thus, Andrew Cherng opened the first Panda Express in the Glendale Galleria, California, in 1983 (Panda Express official website, n.d.). Peggy Cherng also joined the family business that year, applying her knowledge and work experience to customize Panda Express's operating systems; besides, she used a systems analysis approach to solve the logistics and standardization problems of their business (Eng, 2013).

Panda Express made a great effort in setting up a Chinese fast-food brand, and they succeeded. It has grown and expanded very quickly. After the opening of their first store in the food court of Glendale Galleria, Panda Express expanded to 100 stores within a decade; in the 1990s, their attempt to open the first two airport outlet stores at Denver International Airport as well as the first drive-thru store in California was successful (Panda Express official website, n.d.).

The success of Panda Express is based on their insistence on Chinese food and research on the taste of American customers. They adopted new ideas while still adhering to Chinese food. Orange chicken, which has been popular throughout the United States since its inception, is one of the signature dishes of Panda Express; it was invented in 1987 by Chef Andy Gao of Panda Express, who was inspired by Hunan flavour (Barco, 2017). As Flanigan (2001) comments:

Panda Express is a real innovation. Where most attempts at Chinese fast food have settled for egg rolls, rice and chow mein, Panda Express offers orange-

flavoured chicken, tofu with black mushrooms, beef with broccoli and many other dishes conceived by Chinese chefs and prepared on site by trained cooks (Flanigan, 2001).

The Mandarin and Panda Express cases show some trends and characteristics of the development of Chinese restaurants after the 1950s. The influx of new Chinese immigrants from the 1950s, especially the post-1965 Chinese immigrants, started a new chapter in developing Chinese restaurants and Chinese cuisine in North America. As Liu and Lin (2009) states, “instead of wholesale assimilation, post-1965 Chinese immigrants have selectively maintained some of their native cultural traditions such as food.” These immigrants came from different parts of China and were not limited to the Guangdong region. Their arrival brought in various tastes and new diets of the Chinese dishes, profoundly enriching local society’s culinary culture. Some people among these new immigrants were equipped with the knowledge, assets, and human resources. For Chiang, her dietary memory in China laid a solid foundation for her restaurant business in America. Female entrepreneur, upper-class status, privileged and affluent environment to grow up in China, these experiences, qualities and capitals enabled Cecilia Chiang to bring a mysterious and unheard world of genuine Chinese fare to American patrons. To some extent, restaurant entrepreneurs like Cecilia Chiang are the reformers of the entire Chinese restaurant industry in North America. She has overturned the traditional way of doing business in the Chinese restaurant industry and educated the locals about Chinese culture and cuisine. She has also successfully introduced Chinese cuisine to mainstream America and influenced Americans’ perceptions of genuine Chinese cuisine. Another remarkable change in this period was that some Chinese restaurants went corporate. As mentioned in the previous section, most North American Chinese restaurants were small-scale operations and family-owned in the early days of the 20th century. Instead of running restaurants in the way of family-owned small businesses, the new

wave of Chinese restaurateurs exploited the new way of business, establishing and operating restaurant business in the way of corporatization and restaurant chains. Several well-known Chinese restaurant brands began their history during this time, for example, *Panda Express*, *P.F. Chang's* in the United States, and *Mandarin Restaurant* in Canada. These Chinese restaurants contributed to developing popular Chinese food by preserving the flavour of traditional Chinese dishes and making innovative changes to cater to local customers at the same time. In addition, the easing of political relations between China and North American societies provided favourable conditions for the development of Chinese restaurants. For instance, Nixon's visit to China in 1972 led to an increased interest in Chinese food in American society (Liu, 2015).

However, controversies about Chinese restaurants also persisted. From the late 1960s to the 1980s, the representative debate about Chinese restaurants in North America was about the use of MSG (Monosodium Glutamate) in Chinese restaurants; the phenomenon was known as "Chinese restaurant syndrome" (Mosby, 2009 & 2012). This controversy was triggered by a letter from Dr. Robert Ho Man Kwok, a Chinese immigrant living in the USA, to the *New England Journal of Medicine* (Mosby, 2012). Kwok described some discomfort after having Chinese food at Chinese restaurants, such as palpitation and numbness in some areas of the body (Kwok, 1968, as cited in Mosby, 2012), and he believed this syndrome was related to the use of MSG in Chinese restaurants (Mosby, 2012). Though there was no necessary evidence to prove this assumption, the controversy of Chinese restaurant syndrome has long stigmatized Chinese food and Chinese restaurants in North America (Erway, 2021; Mosby, 2009). Mosby (2009) argues that this phenomenon reflects the local society's suspicion and imagination about the foreign nature of Chinese food and Chinese culture.

2000s-present: Structure upgrade and reconstruct Chinese restaurants

Since the 21st century, transnational economic and cultural activities worldwide are becoming more frequent. Chinese restaurants encounter various dilemmas and opportunities in this new era. A noticeable feature of the recent Chinese restaurant industry in North America is that older generations of Chinese restaurants are fading. As Nierenberg and Bui concluded in 2019 based on Yelp's data (Yelp, a restaurant reviewing website), Chinese restaurants had consistently lost market share in America's top 20 metropolitan areas; the average percentage of Chinese restaurants in these areas was 7.3 in 2014 but dropped to 6.5 in 2019. They found this problem was also evident in San Francisco, the birthplace of Chinatown in America: the share of Chinese restaurants there decreased from 10% to 8.8%. According to them, the most relevant explanation accounting for this phenomenon is that the older restaurateurs are going to retire; in the meantime, their children have no willingness to take over their parents' restaurant business (Nierenberg & Bui, 2019). Yong Zhao, an outstanding representative of the younger generation of Chinese restaurant operators in America, points out that Chinese restaurants are experiencing a "generational cliff" due to the economic mobility of the second generation (Erway, 2021). In general, restaurant work is very hard, time-consuming, and often less paid. Even when some second-generation immigrants choose to work in the restaurant industry themselves, it can be difficult for their parents to accept this career choice. Ann Hui, the author of *Chop Suey Nation*, which examines food and culture of Canadian-Chinese restaurants as well as the Chinese immigrants' experience in this industry, talked about the career expectations of Chinese restaurateurs for their children in the interview with CBC Radio (2019):

"I shouldn't speak for every single restaurant owner but what I heard from many of them was that they absolutely definitely did not want their children to enter the restaurant business. You know it had nothing to do with status or prestige or anything like that. It's simply that they having lived it, knew how

much work. These restaurants were--- a lot of these owners were starting their days at 8:00 in the morning and then working until 9-10, maybe sometimes later at night. They didn't want that for their children. Many of these owners were running these businesses as launching pads in hopes of you know being able to pay for a college or university education for their kids, so their kids wouldn't have to have these same lives.”

Not only Chinese immigrants, as Nierenberg and Bui (2019) state in their article, there exists a similar pattern among other immigrant groups; the children of immigrants are more likely to engage in technology or consulting field instead of the food industry or nail salons. Compared to their parents, second-generation immigrants are less likely to be self-employed; they have better social mobility and opportunities to integrate into the mainstream economy.

Another factor that impedes the further development of these old generations of Chinese restaurants is that many of them are outdated, including the menu, taste, decoration, etc. Digital news media *Quartz* made a video named *American foodies are finally embracing real Chinese food* in 2019, introducing and discussing the new trend that Chinese cuisine and Chinese restaurants are going through in recent years. Some specific examples of Chinese restaurants and their operation status were mentioned in it. For instance, Spicy Village is a small family-owned restaurant located in New York's Chinatown. Its owners are emblematic of a wave of immigrants who migrated to the US in the 80s and 90s from South China. As a woman said in the interview: “When we started a family, we got married and had kids, I really wanted to start my own restaurant. It was to support our family.” It is evident that “starting a restaurant was just a way to get by” for immigrants like them, as concluded in the video. Though Spicy Village is not upscale, its arrival was with the wave of post-1965 immigrants, bringing authentic regional flavour to American foodies (Quartz, 2019). Another example in this video is Human Slurp, a

rice noodle restaurant that opened in 2019 in one of New York's trendiest neighbourhoods. It is an upscale Chinese restaurant with a minimalist design style. The restaurateur, Chao Wang, is a young artist who came to the US for graduate school in 2014. It was the first time for him to be a restaurateur. For Wang, "having a restaurant is more about self-expression than survive." In the interview with Quartz (2019), Chao Wang commented on Chinatown and his restaurant business:

"Chinatown looks like it was put under a glass bubble, trapped in the 90s or even earlier, in the 80s. But right now food in China, is Sichuan food and Hunan food the same as what it used to be? Not at all. I don't treat this rice noodle place as a business. I see it as a personal art project. I don't want to make it ostentatious like the previous generation's aesthetic like what Americans think China is supposed to be. It's more about me showing you: this is what China is like today."

The new generation of Chinese restaurant entrepreneurs is entering this old industry and giving it freshness and energy. What they think about the Chinese restaurant industry and Chinese food and their efforts can be glimpsed from the following two specific case studies.

Case Study 3: Junzi kitchen

Junzi Kitchen represents the new fast-casual chain of Chinese food in the United States. It was incubated at Yale Entrepreneurial Institute and first opened in 2015 by Yong Zhao and a few of his Yale fellows (Junzi Kitchen official website, n.d.). The CEO of Junzi, Yong Zhao, noticed when he was pursuing his Ph.D. in the 2010s that some of the Chinese restaurants he frequented were about to close due to the increased labour costs and low profits; most of these restaurants were run by the older generation of Chinese immigrants whose children would not take over the restaurant business (Xinhua, 2019). He became interested in the field of Chinese restaurants in the United States and started thinking about this old but somewhat outdated industry, although his major at Yale was Environmental Science (Xinhua, 2019), which has nothing to do with the

restaurant business. The aim of Junzi Kitchen was also inspired and fuelled by the founders' longing for northern Chinese food (Hamilton, 2018). Based on these, the team came up with the idea of bringing authentic northern Chinese flavours to the American plate by using healthy and seasonal ingredients. The young company has lots of potentials and is growing very fast. After the first location, Junzi Kitchen has rapidly expanded into four stores in just three years (Junzi Kitchen official website, n.d.). Yong Zhao said in the interview with Xinhua (2019):

“The Chinese culinary culture is just way too profound for ordinary Americans to appreciate all the dishes. Although most of them love Chinese cuisines, they don't go to an ordinary Chinese restaurant every day, especially for those who live in small cities and the countryside. The Chinese immigrants who came here some 30 years ago didn't have the resources or support to do this. But we are born in an era of entrepreneurship in China and many investors are optimistic about our business potential. I think we are not just running a restaurant brand; we are actually building a new cultural symbol of China through food. I think this could be quite meaningful.”

The menu at Junzi Kitchen is based on wheat-made staples, like bings (unleavened flatbread filled with other ingredients, such as vegetables and meats) and noodles, as northern Chinese prefer such a diet rather than rice (Hamilton, 2018). Lucas Sin, the chef of Junzi kitchen, thought this was a way to correct the misconception that all Chinese people eat rice; as the culinary director of this young business, he hoped to “bring new, modern ideas to Chinese food in America” by following the ancient and profound Chinese philosophy (Hamilton, 2018). As a fast-casual Chinese restaurant, Junzi Kitchen has an uncomplicated menu concept. When customers walk into the store, they can see the food assembly lines and choose their favourite staples and vegetables, meats, and original sauces that can be paired into the staples. Junzi kitchen is also different from the previous Chinese restaurants in terms of decoration; their interior was designed by some co-founders who studied arts and architecture at Yale University

(Xinhua, 2019). The main colours of the restaurant are white and green, which look clean and match Junzi’s concept for food. It is modern, stylish and simple:

“The New Haven location is bright and welcoming. It has an organic feel with its white brick walls, light wood accents, and lush greenery dangling from the ceiling. On one wall, there is a small display of featured artwork, including ceramics made by the China-based artist Junty” (Chesaneck, 2018).

On Junzi Kitchen’s official website, their introduction and goals are described as follows:

“In Chinese philosophy, a junzi (君子) is a person with integrity. Being a junzi is a pursuit: it means to be honest, kind, open to new ideas, and above all, the best version of ourselves. This is the guiding principle for everything we do: from how we make our food to how we relate to the world.....At junzi, we are committed to making flavorful and nourishing everyday Chinese food accessible to the many. One meal at a time, we hope to connect more individuals and communities to food, culture, and beyond.....Junzi is a young company with big ambitions. Our menu is inspired by Chinese culinary heritage and defined by next-generation cooking, yet we are more than just a destination for fresh, seasonal food. We are most passionate about reshaping the narrative of Chinese-American food through the meals we share and the communities we build by way of innovative food collaborations, products, and experiences..... As we grow our team, we’re looking for people who are as obsessed about food and as excited to make a positive impact on the community as we are.”

Figure 2. The interior of Junzi Kitchen, New Haven location (Retrieved from CTbites.com, 2018, photography courtesy of Junzi Kitchen)



Case Study 4: Málà Project

“The mission is to bring unaltered, most original Chinese dishes to New York in a 90s China inspired ambiance and provide an outstanding overall dining experience. Málà Project wants to be the fun Chinese restaurant that can be enjoyed by everyone” (Málà Project official website, n.d.).

Málà Project is a young and popular Chinese restaurant in America. In 2016, its first location was opened in the East Village in New York (Málà Project official website, n.d.). The specialty of Málà Project is “dry pot,” a spicy, numbing and tingling cuisine that originated in Sichuan. The restaurant was founded by Amelie Ning Kang and her three friends; two of the three friends are investors but don’t engage in daily operations, and another co-founder is in charge of managing the business’ financials from Shanghai (Forbes, 2019). Amelie Ning Kang, the CEO of Málà Project, was raised in Beijing and came to study in the Culinary Institute of America in 2010 (Wang, 2016); after graduation and several years of work experience in the restaurant industry (Sen, 2018), she decided to start her own restaurant business. The Chinese dish didn’t leave a good impression on Kang when she first came to the city. She described that there was no service, no dining atmosphere and sometimes the ingredients were not fresh in some Chinese restaurants in New York’s Chinatown; for Kang, she wanted to set up a restaurant which can provide authentic Chinese cuisine, and at the same time, it can also have good service, pleasant environment, and culture (Jiang, 2017). Málà Project is full of freshness and ambition. In terms of interior design, Kang refused to use the stereotyped elements that often can be seen in previous Chinese restaurants in America, such as dragons (Wang, 2016). She applied a retro-style Chinese design combined with romantic and nostalgic elements in Málà Project, such as brick floors, the bare bulb with warm lights, wooden tables and chairs, and the slogans of the 1990s that Chinese are familiar with (Málà Project official website, n.d.). Kang believes that the

value of Chinese food is severely underrated in terms of both the respect it received and its price, especially when compared with other ethnic cuisines in America, such as Japanese and Italian food (Wang, 2016). Málà Project tries to challenge stereotypes of Chinese food in America with high-quality service and authentic flavours. She shared her opinion and concept in the interview with NPR (Wang, 2016):

“When people think of Chinese food, they mostly think of American Chinese food or takeout. People always think we’re Thai or Korean; I want to educate people that this is what a Chinese restaurant can be, (one with) service, ambiance and design. It’s expected that more and more Chinese restaurants like this will be coming up, more and more Chinese natives are coming here to study and stay here.”

What’s more, led by a female immigrant entrepreneur, Málà Project is very focused on gender and racial equality in its operation. According to Forbes (2019), half of the employees of Málà Project are immigrants; concerning gender, sixty percent of the management team members are female.

Figure 3. Málà Project's newsletter, People's Paper, Vol 5. It introduces some traditional Chinese solar terms and seasonal foods and the cooking details.



大雪 (Dec. 7th)

The 21st solar term of the year, Major Snow, begins this year on December 7th. During Major Snow, the temperature drops significantly. Snow becomes heavy and begins to accumulate on the ground. Additionally, rainfall is less than the other times during this period. As a result, the weather is quite dry. This Poached Pears With White Fungus dessert soup helps to soothe and tonify the body to make the transition easier into the dryer and cooler temperatures.

银耳冰糖炖雪梨 (Poached Pears With White Fungus dessert soup)

Ingredients: 2-3 Asian pears, 1 cup snow fungus, a handful of red dates(optional), rock sugar to taste
Steps: Clean and peel pears. Slice into bite-sized chunks, discarding the core. Soak dry snow fungus in cool water for 30 minutes until softened. Tear fungus into bite-sized pieces. Bring all ingredients into a pot and add enough cold water to cover the ingredients by 1 inch. Boil over low heat for 15 minutes, add more water if needed. Add rock sugar to taste and simmer over low heat for another 10 minutes. Serve hot!

冬至 (Dec. 22nd)

Dongzhi, which literally means "the extreme of winter" in Chinese, marks the day with the shortest daytime and longest darkness in the North Hemisphere. Dongzhi is also celebrated as an end-of-harvest festival. Because the daylight hours will stay longer and longer after Dongzhi, the day signifies hope and a new start, and is a day to celebrate throughout China. In Suzhou, people drink Rice Wine Fermented with Osmanthus Flowers (冬酿酒) on Dongzhi. The strong floral scent combines harmoniously with the smooth yet upbeat taste of rice wine, making it a great hard drink to be enjoyed with family and friends on a chilly and dark day. Here's a simple recipe for you to make the rice wine at home!

Ingredients: 600 grams of rice wine, 80 grams of Osmanthus flower, 60 grams of sugar

Steps: Clean the osmanthus flower, filter out the flower stems. Place the flower under the sun for 1-2 hours. Make sure that the petals are dry! Mix sugar with the flower. Put the mix into a sealed jar for a few weeks. Soak the mix in rice wine. Seal the jar for 6 months. Enjoy!



The two cases above demonstrate some qualities of the new generation of Chinese restaurants and Chinese restaurant entrepreneurs. Compared to previous generations, these creators are young, ambitious, well-educated and -travelled. One of the extraordinary things they have in common is a strong sense of cultural identity. They are very interested in expressing their identity and introducing authentic Chinese food and Chinese culture to the public. In other words, they don't run restaurants to make a living solely. In Zhang's view (2018), the proliferation of new generation Chinese restaurants is not accidental. She attributes this surge to several different factors: the mainstreaming of Chinese food and the growing sense of cultural mission among Chinese restaurant entrepreneurs (Zhang, 2018). For example, Junzi Kitchen incorporates the Chinese philosophy into their daily operations; for Málà Project, they introduce a long tradition of Chinese culture (not just limited to food) to their customers. Both Junzi Kitchen and Málà Project directly use Pinyin, the official romanization system for Standard Chinese in China, as their names. *Junzi* is the Chinese pronunciation of Chinese term “君子” (a person with integrity), and *Málà* means “麻辣” (spicy and numbing tingling). Besides, skills of “grasp of branding, ambience and social media” are also equipped with the new generation of Chinese restaurateurs (Zhang, 2018). The two restaurants above opened accounts on social media platforms, and their publicity and interaction with the public and the media have produced positive results for their businesses.

The new generation of entrepreneurs does more thinking on the relationship between cuisine and people. They are focusing not only on the taste of the food but also on a healthier diet, a better dining environment and service, and a more efficient and rational production line to accommodate a broader range of customers, including new Chinese immigrants and local

customers who aspire to better Chinese restaurants. They are trying to reshape the Chinese restaurant industry in North America by updating everything around the restaurants and making them catch up with the trend in China, or even better than the restaurants in China. They are trying to challenge the stereotypes of Chinese food that have been deeply ingrained in the minds of North Americans for decades, such as Chinese food is cheap and deserves cheapness, Chinese food is unhealthy (Erway, 2021), and so forth.

As *The Economist* (2019) suggests, high-end Chinese restaurants are rising in American cities based on two benign social factors: “Chinese Americans are becoming wealthier and more self-confident, and customers are shedding old stereotypes about Chinese food.” Chinese immigrants are more and more comfortable claiming their cultural identity. In contrast to the parents and grandparents’ generation, which encouraged assimilation, the younger generation seeks to retain their identity and expresses this assertion through food (Erway, as cited in Moskin, 2019).

Jiayang Fan, the staff writer at *The New Yorker* who writes about China, commented in the interview with Quartz: “Chinese restaurants are moving from places are on the fringes, both metaphorically and geographically, to the epicenter of American culture. The fact that Chinese restaurants don’t cook down, don’t pander to Americans, suggests to me a real growing openness of American culture and American society” (Quartz, 2019).

In addition, the demographic changes of Chinese immigrants are also attributed to the rising of the new generation of Chinese restaurants. As mentioned above, the increasing number of new Chinese immigrants and their demands for authentic Chinese food provide a vast market for the development of Chinese restaurants in North America.

Discussion

This research paper draws upon the theory of ethnic entrepreneurship and acculturation, exploring the trajectory of Chinese immigrants and the Chinese restaurant business during the past centuries in North America. The primary purpose of this study is to understand how Chinese restaurants evolve and change over time and how they interact with the host society during this process.

The findings of this paper show that the development history of Chinese restaurants in North America can be divided into four stages. Before the 1870s, the Chinese were more motivated by cultural factors to get into the restaurant business. Most of the early Chinese immigrants came from Canton, the south-eastern coastal region of China. They were attracted by the gold rush in North America and hoped to find opportunities to make a fortune here. The rudimentary conditions and the workers' need for food at the time led some of these early Chinese immigrants, who may have had experience in doing business and dealing with white customers in China, to discover the business opportunity of opening restaurants. Chinese entrepreneurs used resources, including money, ethnic network, etc., to establish their business in places like California. At this stage, Chinese restaurants were faithful to the authentic Chinese culture. They offered delicious, quality food with the advantage of low prices. Although local residents did not understand Chinese food at first and may have had some bad impressions of it due to rumours and stereotypes, Chinese food still gained some popularity during this period.

During the period of Chinese exclusion in North American society, Chinese immigrants were forced to work in the few industries that were open to them due to institutional discrimination,

such as the Chinese restaurant industry, on which the vast majority of Chinese immigrants relied for their livelihood. The Chinese restaurant entrepreneurship was more pushed by structural factors at this stage and can be explained by Light's (1979) disadvantage theory which indicates the structural inequalities for immigrants in the labour market. But cultural factors also played a role in this entrepreneurial process, such as Chinese restaurant owners using the rotating credit system to raise funds to open their restaurants. Chinese restaurants also exhibited great adaptations to the host society, as evidenced by the creation of Westernized Chinese food, such as chop suey, to cater to the local clientele. Chinese restaurants of this period were characterized by cheap, single-flavour, and the majority of them sold chop suey. In other words, they were low-end. Besides, most of the restaurants in this period were small-scale and family-run. This form of operation was beneficial for Chinese immigrant families to save expenses. Family members and relatives were dedicated to the restaurant's daily operations, playing the roles of cooks, receptionists, and so on. This phenomenon shows the importance of kinship and solidarity in ethnic entrepreneurship, as Wong and Ng (1998) concluded in their article. The number of Chinese restaurants in North America expanded rapidly during this period.

After World War II, the United States and Canada repealed their restrictive immigration laws against the Chinese. A new wave of Chinese immigrants poured into North America. Compared to the previous waves of Chinese immigrants, this generation of Chinese immigrants seemed to have more capital and higher qualifications. However, because there were still some restrictions in the job market, they could not work in jobs that matched their previous education and work experience. Thus, many of them had to settle for the Chinese restaurant industry for the time being. This generation of immigrants seemed inclined to retain their cultural and ethnic identity,

which was reflected in their demand for the authenticity of the Chinese food they serve in their restaurants. The Chinese restaurants experienced meaningful innovation and development during this period, which reflected in the authentic and regionalized taste of the food they served. Some upper-class Chinese equipped with capitals and experiences introduced the real Chinese food culture to North America, helping change the stereotype of Chinese food as low-end; at the same time, some well-educated Chinese entrepreneurs began to establish modern Chinese restaurant chains. Based on this, I argue that the changes in Chinese restaurants in North America in this period have a significant connection with the increasing capitals of Chinese immigrants and their diverse demographic factors. They put Chinese food and the restaurant business in North America to a higher level. The entrepreneurial spirit and behaviours of this generation of Chinese restaurateurs left significant influences on both Chinese ethnic groups and the host environment, which is in line with the idea that the development of ethnic entrepreneurship can have great effects on both inter-group members and the locals (Zhou, 2004), and can affect the social mobility of ethnic community members (Zhou & Cho, 2010).

In the 21st century, a new trend in Chinese restaurants in North America emerged with the increasing transnational business and cultural exchanges and the rapid development of mass media. This new trend is sparked by a group of distinctive entrepreneurs interested in the culture that Chinese food embodies. Among them are young, thoughtful Chinese restaurateurs with many capitals, such as wealth, higher educational level, and rich travelling experiences. Running a Chinese restaurant is more of an ideal career and a personal choice than a profession pushed by circumstances or limited by personal qualifications. The previous generation of Chinese immigrants has contributed to the innovative adaptation of Chinese cuisine between the 1950s

and 2000. Still, in the 21st century, many of the previous Chinese restaurants have failed to keep up with the development trend of the restaurants in China. They remained at the same level as in past decades, unable to satisfy the growing number of new Chinese immigrants and local diners with a renewed demand for Chinese food. As a result, this new generation of Chinese entrepreneurs wants to make a structural upgrade to the entire Chinese food industry. They are ambitious, enthusiastic and want to express themselves. Their insistence on cultural identity is reflected in their desire to bring detailed Chinese cultural heritage to the public. At the same time, they are renewing old cultural symbols rooted in the history of Chinese restaurants in North America, as reflected in the concept, products, décor, and even the names of their new Chinese restaurants. It is also worth mentioning that the growing openness and respect to ethnic culture of North American society provides favourable conditions for the development of their restaurant business.

In general, we can see that the development of Chinese restaurant business in North America consistent with the Interactive Model (Waldinger et al., 1990), which suggests that the development of ethnic business depends on the interaction of opportunity structures and group characteristics, and the entrepreneurs keep adjusting their strategies during this process. The Chinese restaurants play the roles of both business enterprises and cultural institutions in North America's history. However, this study did not examine the specific factors included in the Interactive Model. This study has some limitations. Because this study involves some historical parts, I have some difficulties finding enough documents and literature on early Chinese restaurants, which may result in the lack of elaboration on the first two stages of Chinese restaurant development. Secondly, this study used secondary literatures and information and did

not obtain first-hand information, so some of the points I want to investigate might not be studied in detail.

Conclusion

The history of Chinese restaurants in North America spans over a century and has had significant impacts on both Chinese immigrants and North American society. This study examines the trajectory of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and the Chinese restaurant business from the mid-1800s to the present in the context of ethnic entrepreneurship and acculturation. This study finds that the purposes, business practices, and operating characteristics of Chinese restaurant entrepreneurship vary greatly from one historical period to the next, depending on the social environment and the immigrants' conditions. The development process of Chinese restaurants shows that Chinese immigrants are gradually identifying with their cultural identity and reflects the increasing respect for diversity in the larger North American social environment. This research has implications for studying the specific Chinese restaurant industry in North America and the Chinese immigrants' experience within it. Future research on this topic could be more detailed and use empirical research methods such as interviews to enrich findings in this field.

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